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WITH EVERY
BAND
MEMBER

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Turner**

Opens up
about that
Hawkwind
legal case

Strawbs

Back to their
best with
a great new
album

Eloy

Talk about their
new concept
album about
Joan Of Arc



Tarja
Godsticks
Tiger Moth
Tales
Wobbler

Future

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PROG 83 JANUARY 2018

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IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE



KEVIN MAISON



We were
all young,
all out
there and
enjoying
it all...

Gentle Giant p34

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THE INTRO pg12

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What did the Prog writers vote as the best prog album released in 2017?



KAYAK

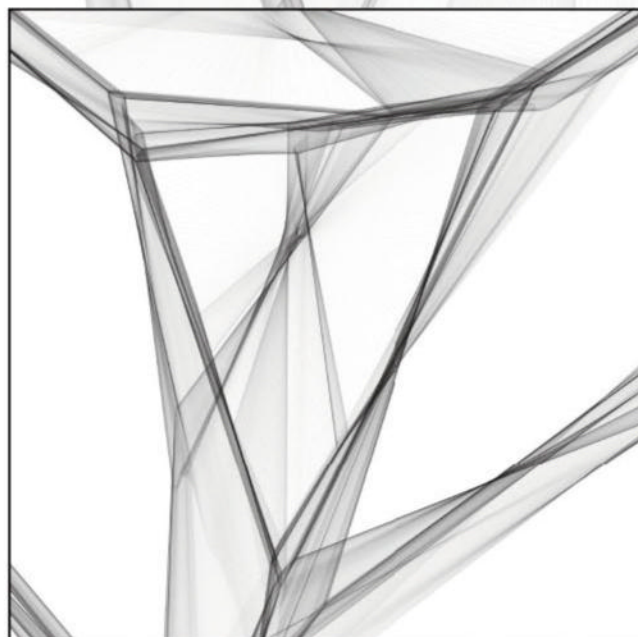
SEVENTEEN

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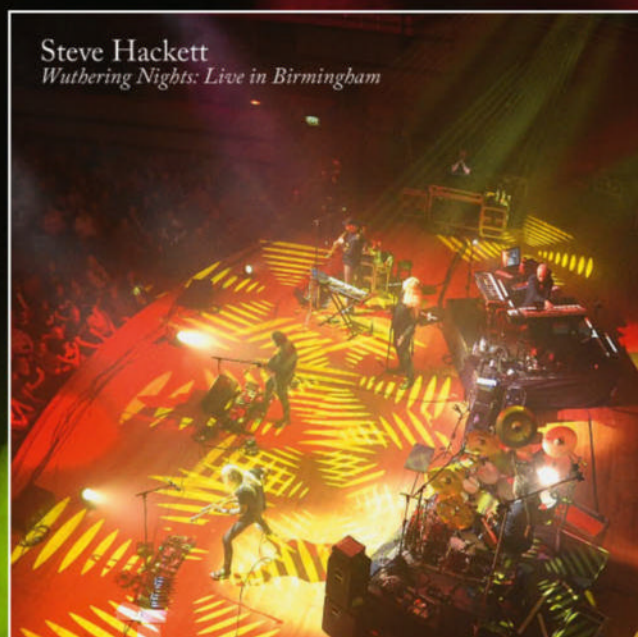
PERFECTBEINGS

Vier

In Stores 19th January 2018

LA-based progressive art-rockers Perfect Beings release their third album 'Vier' - veering between classic prog styles, intricate melodies, pop & jazz.

Available as Special Edition CD, Gatefold 180g 2LP + CD + LP-booklet & digital download.



Steve Hackett
Wuthering Nights: Live in Birmingham

Steve Hackett

Wuthering Nights: Live in Birmingham

In Stores 26th January 2018

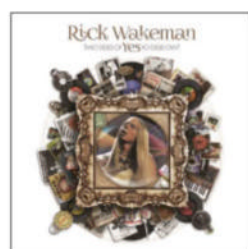
Legendary Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett celebrates his recent, critically-acclaimed studio album 'The Night Siren', as well as the 40th anniversary of Genesis classic 'Wind & Wuthering' in this new live package filmed at Birmingham Symphony Hall.

Features the tracks 'One For The Vine', 'Inside & Out', 'Dance on a Volcano', 'Every Day' & 'Behind The Smoke'.

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Attend an exclusive preview screening + live Q&A with Steve Hackett at Everyman Cinema King's Cross on 15th January 2018. Tickets available from www.everymancinema.com

MASTERPIECES IN MUSIC from RICK WAKEMAN



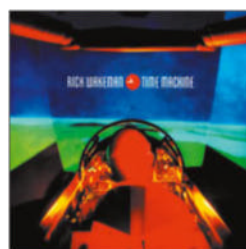
TWO SIDES OF YES

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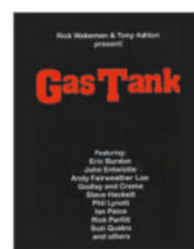
THE STAGE COLLECTION

Recorded live in August
1993 in Buenos Aires
MFGZ004CD



TIME MACHINE

Guest vocalists include John
Parr, Tracey Ackerman,
Ashley Holt, and Roy Wood
MFGZ012CD



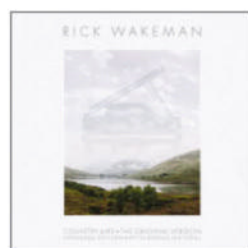
GASTANK

Double DVD set. Rick's
classic 1982 music
and chat show
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GOLÉ!

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and Jackie McAuley
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with two new tracks
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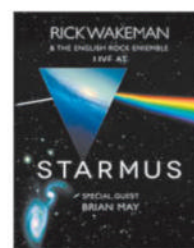
THE BURNING

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album, back in print at last!
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"There are rules in music and I'm trying to get rid of them. In this way, I'm trying to be more progressive. I love when nothing stays on a solid ground in music and it could change all of a sudden."

Tarja



So it was about this time last year, as we were finishing the issue that should have come out before Xmas (Prog 73), that things went a bit tits up (I believe that's the technical term). Twelve months on, here we are, fighting fit again.

Unfortunately, last year's Xmas card went by the wayside as a more important editorial needed writing. This year, I'm glad to say, John Langton's excellent work is back, with us riffing on Steven Wilson's take on 80s prog and pop. I'd like to thank John for his excellent work once again.

We can't think of another magazine that would put Gentle Giant on the cover (well, Italian magazine *Ciao 2001* did in 1973), but when we got news that all three Shulman brothers and Kerry Minnear were available for a photoshoot, we jumped at the chance. We tell their amazing story up to the release of *Octopus*, when Phil left. I hope you enjoy it. The rest of the mag shows, too, I think, that progressive music, with bands both old and new, remains in rude health.

As I hope you do too, over this festive period and into 2018. Who knows what this crazy world will fling at us over the next 12 months, but we'll continue to bring you the very best coverage of the music we all love, rest assured. Happy Christmas...

Jerry Ewing - Editor

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STRAWBS



The Ferryman's Curse

STRAWBS

'THE FERRYMAN'S CURSE'

- Esoteric Antenna is very pleased to announce the release of The Ferryman's Curse, the first Strawbs album of new material in eight long years. It is produced by the legendary Chris Tsangarides, whose studio is littered with diamond, platinum, and gold discs by the likes of Thin Lizzy, Judas Priest and guitar virtuoso Yngwie Malmsteen.

CURVED AIR



'AIR CONDITIONING'

- Newly remastered from the original master tapes.
- With 11 bonus tracks drawn from previously unreleased studio out takes & BBC sessions recorded between November 1970 & January 1971.
- Includes illustrated booklet with new essay by Malcolm Dome.

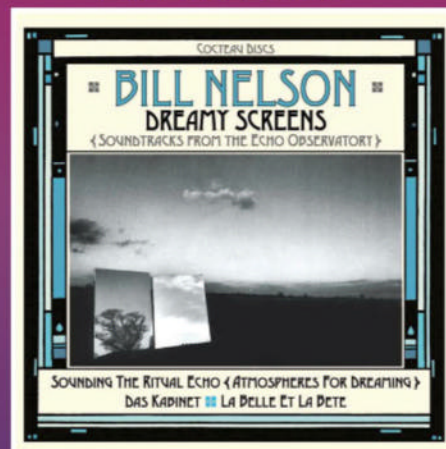
CURVED AIR



'AIR CUT'

- This new edition of "Air Cut" has been re-mastered from the recently located original master tapes for the very first time (with previous CD editions being taken from vinyl transfers). The illustrated booklet restores the original album artwork and features an essay by Malcolm Dome and exclusive band interviews.

BILL NELSON



"DREAMY SCREENS : SOUNDTRACKS FROM THE ECHO OBSERVATORY"

- Esoteric Recordings' imprint Cocteau Discs, dedicated to the work of BILL NELSON, are proud to announce the release of a deluxe 3 disc clamshell boxed set limited edition collection – "Dreamy Screens: Soundtracks from the Echo Observatory".
- A limited edition remastered 3 CD clamshell boxed set featuring three rare ambient albums originally recorded in 1981 & 1982.
- Featuring the albums "Sounding The Ritual Echo", "Das Kabinett" & "La Belle Et La Bete"
- CDs in replica card sleeves.

OSMOSIS



'OSMOSIS'

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release the first ever official CD release of OSMOSIS. This remarkable album was a fusion of early Progressive and Jazz Rock and was released by RCA Records in 1970. Long overlooked, Osmosis has been re-mastered from the original RCA master tapes. The booklet features an essay by Sid Smith featuring an exclusive interview with guitarist Andy Steinborn.

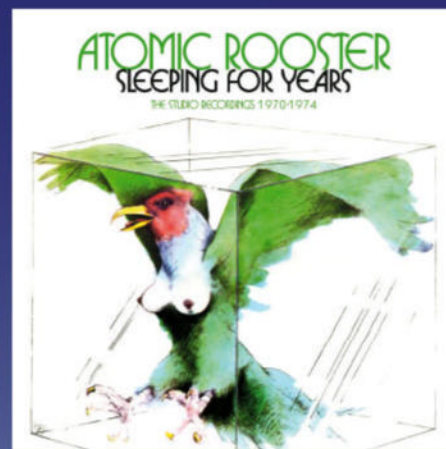
STRAY



'FIRE & GLASS: THE PYE RECORDINGS 1975-1976' (2CD REMASTERED EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings is proud to announce the release of a new 2 CD set anthologising all the recordings made by the legendary STRAY for Pye Records and its imprint Dawn Records between 1975 & 1976. Includes an illustrated booklet with a new essay by Malcolm Dome featuring an exclusive interview with Del Bromham.

ATOMIC ROOSTER



'SLEEPING FOR YEARS: THE STUDIO RECORDINGS 1970-1974' (4CD CLAMSHELL BOX SET)

- Esoteric Recordings label is proud to announce the release of the very first 4 CD collection of every album and single track recorded by the legendary ATOMIC ROOSTER between 1970 – 1974. Covering every track released by the band in the 1970s, Sleeping For Years is a newly re-mastered collection and also features six rare alternate versions and demos. The set includes an illustrated booklet with a new essay by Malcolm Dome featuring exclusive interviews with Nick Graham, Pete French, Steve Bolton and Chris Farlowe.

Bloody Well Write

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

AN ALTERNATIVE REVIEW

I thought Sid Smith's review of the new PFM album [*Prog 81*] was harsh. I would rate it alongside their classic 70s releases — it's highly crafted and while perhaps includes a little less musical and political rage than *The World Became The World* or *Chocolate Kings*, it's recognisably cut from the same tree. To propose it as having an AOR style would only fit if you apply the same criteria to *Selling England...* or *Foxtrot*. *Emotional Tattoos* returns PFM to their best form. Marco Sfogli's lead guitar is superb throughout and it alone should decry the AOR suggestion.

A real quality album that deserves a listen or two and grows and grows and grows, it promises a great tour for the new year. Hopefully they'll add some UK dates to the already booked Italian and US ones. If you ever liked PFM in the 70s, don't miss this album.

Pete Sutton

THE YEAR IN PROG

As the November *Prog* drops on my doormat, it's time to reflect on what has, in my view, been a bumper year for music. I'm sure readers will all have their favourites and that 2017 will be looked back on as a year full of wonderful music.

Where to start? Well, January provided the album of the year. I may be in the minority here, and there were some close contenders, but Pain Of Salvation's *In The Passing Light Of Day* was simply stunning, terminating with the emotionally charged title track. If any reader hasn't heard this yet, where have you been?

From this point, the music kept coming, with some wonderful surprises on the way (try PFM or Acqua Fragile). Big Big Train released two albums! Ian James Stewart released *Articana*. Barock Project continued their climb to success with *Detachment*. Anathema's *The Optimist* was followed by Daniel Cavanagh's solo album — which is better? Mariusz Duda put out a fifth Lunatic Soul album, and arguably the best so far.

And then, as the year closes, the Von Hertzen Brothers produce a stunner in *War is Over*, coupled with terrific live performances. The Riverside gigs in May had me close to tears.



Prog 81: complete with Opeth, unicorns... and a harsh PFM review.

Pain Of Salvation's January album: an early highlight of the year.



Anathema: providing one of many musical highlights of 2017.



SCARLETT PAGE/PRESS

These are just my personal highlights, and they're diverse in themselves. It just goes to show how safe and secure the genre of prog is, and what incredibly talented musicians are out there. Your magazine should take a lot of credit for the promotion of so many artists, many of whom I would never have heard of without *Prog*.

Roll on 2018 — if it's half as good as 2017 for music, we're in for a treat.

Martin Molloy

Don't forget to cast your votes in our 2017 Readers' Poll on page 53! — Dep Ed

ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

In reply to David Potter's letter in *Prog 82* regarding seating at venues, I'm in total agreement. As someone who was always down the front at gigs from the start of the 80s, I'm now in my mid-50s with

a dodgy hip. I spend all day on my feet at work in steel toecapped boots, which are crippling! So when a gig is announced, the venue is often crucial to whether I choose to attend or not. Three to four hours of standing, often on tiptoe to see, is simply not very pleasurable.

As classic rock/prog has an ageing demographic, maybe more venues should open the seated areas. If you go to a theatre, whether it be for a play or a musical, you expect a seat. I'm not suggesting all seating, just some! Let the younger, fitter audience stand at the front, like I did on Iron Maiden's *Metal For Muthas* tour. Oh, to be young again!

Bill Collins

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MUSICAL

As a fan of prog rock, classical music and musical theatre, I very much look forward

TWEET TALK

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GANDALF'S FIST

@gandalfsfist
Xmas single: the song is back from being mastered at @AbbeyRoad - you're all in for a festive treat!



CRAIG BLUNDELL

@craigblundell
Dragged out the SW 15/16 touring rig for tonight's final Frost show of the year. Nice to be behind this setup again.

NICK BEGGS

@NickBeggs
The writing of the third Mute Gods album feels like knitting a patchwork quilt using lobsters for knitting needles.

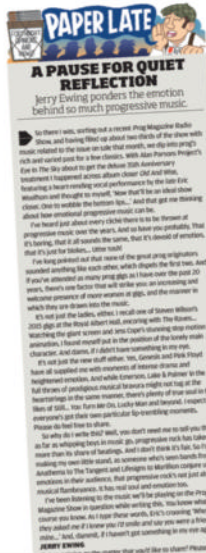
CARL PALMER

@ELP_carl
I was very sad to hear of the death of David Cassidy who I met in the late 1970s. We became good friends. A sad loss to his family, friends and fans. My thoughts go out to all.



With regards to [Jerry Ewing's Paper Late column, *Prog* 81] and how emotional prog rock can be, I can relate the following.

A short while ago, my good lady took me to the 'piccies' to see David Gilmour's return to Pompeii [Gilmour's *Live At Pompeii* film played in



cinemas nationwide]. From the first few notes, I became as one with the music, and by the time we came out of there, I was a gibbering wreck and was obliged to pop into the Wetherspoons across the road to calm myself down with an ale or two.

Even herself loved it. I've always been lifted by a soaring guitar solo or a great keyboard performance (à la *Firth Of Fifth*). And in the past, music has got me through rough times. Is prog emotional? Absolutely!

Prog on, brother!
Keith Gardner, Worcester

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

to hearing (and perhaps one day hopefully seeing on stage) Darryl Way's new rock opera, *Underworld*, as reported in the Q&A in December's *Prog*. I have fond memories of seeing Darryl in *Curved Air* in the 1970s, and enjoying his virtuoso violin playing.

However, I must take issue with Mr Way when he implies that musicals "tend to have optimistic outcomes" and must contain "song and dance". There are many musicals that do not conform to the stereotype he implies — i.e. the tap-dancing, falsely grinning, jazz-handing tropes of musicals like *42nd Street*, or the bubbly feel-good denouements of *Annie*.

It's quite simply wrong to assume that musical theatre doesn't deal with the weightier issues that are more commonly found within the domain of classical opera, or even that they must necessarily contain dance (although many do).

I could give a long list of examples, in addition to the obvious and well-known *Les Misérables*, but for starters, check out almost anything by Stephen Sondheim (but especially *Sweeney Todd*,



Musical theatre: not all tap-dancing feel-good fluff.

Follies, Pacific Overtures and Passion), Jason Robert Brown (Parade or The Last Five Years), and Adam Guettel (The Light In The Piazza). Even Robert Lopez's comic puppet satirical musical Avenue Q is awash with serious undertones lurking not too far below the surface.

Peter Auker

YES PLEASE

Might I suggest a recipe for Yes to record a new epic album again? Firstly, I mean the Steve Howe Yes: I consider Trevor Rabin's influence to be a different agenda from that required by long-term (original) fans.

One aspect of later albums, without Jon Anderson, has been the forgettable lyrics. To create the evocative fantasy-mystical world of the early albums, I suggest that Pete Sinfield be brought in to supply lyrics similar to the world of the first four King Crimson albums.

Next, give Steve Howe full rein to set these lyrics to music that could be a guitar concerto, employing all of his styles, especially jazz and classical acoustic. Geoff Downes is not a natural improviser/soloist, but his role would be to orchestrate Steve's work with his (unfortunately computerised) keyboards, and Billy Sherwood could help in arrangement and production.

Jon Davison's voice is very suitable and he seems to be an adept learner of material. It's also important to have Yes' traditional close harmony voices (Davison and Sherwood), and interesting, creative basslines.

There it is. Yes' management should contact Pete Sinfield without delay, then get the guys into the studio without touring commitments.

Barry Power

Yes: we have the secret formula for their continued success!

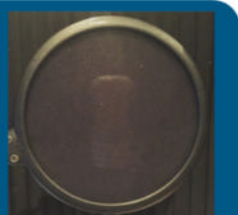


GOTTIEB BROTHERS/PRESS

MATT STEVENS
@mattstevensloop
Looking at inflatables for our gig in May.

RICK WAKEMAN
@GrumpyOldRick
Last Piano Portraits show at Cadogan Hall last night. Wonderful venue to finish at. Keep your eye on the Pledge site as we are going to do a special day of filming the show at Lincoln Cathedral in February.

BRUCE SOORD
@bsoord
My view for the day. Tracking vocals for my second solo album.



PROG

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INTRO

IF IT'S OUT THERE

TESSERACT RETURN WITH NEW ALBUM AND NEW SOUND

British djentlemen announce philosophical follow-up to *Polaris*.

▶ **Tesseract** are putting the finishing touches to their latest album, which will be released via Kscope next spring. It's their second full-length with vocalist Daniel Tompkins, who's brought in an inspired lyrical concept.

"Dan has been toying with the idea that we've entered an age where society has lost perspective on itself and everything around it," explains guitarist James Monteith. "The lyrics are a reflection of that and how, as humans, we experience very little of what the world has to offer. We isolate ourselves in our own little worlds, unaware of the brilliance and complexity of everything and 99.9 per cent of the world around us."

Although the album title won't be announced until the New Year, there are rumours that it will build thematically on the uplifting digital single *Smile*, which Tesseract released over the summer. It's not yet clear whether that song will appear on the album's final track listing, but Monteith confirms it does share some sonic elements.

"*Smile* was a stepping stone between the last album and where we are now. It hints a little at one of the directions we're taking, but it's certainly not representative of the whole album."

"Unlike [their 2015 album] *Polaris*, which was very much song-based, the music on this record is turning out to have much longer passages and more progressions, for want of a better word. There are some moments which are quite heavy, where we're experimenting a bit more with abrasive guitar tones. In places there are some more aggressive vocals, but it's more about dynamics than being all-out heavy and brutal. There are also some very atmospheric and layered details, so musically it's going to be quite eclectic."

"A heavy moment is only really heavy in the context of a track with quieter parts so the heaviness will be more like a texture or element on the record. As with all our albums, we want to do something different to what we've done before and get involved in experimentation. There will be some nice surprises in there. This is going to be our most diverse record yet."

Compared to their previous recordings, this album – the band's fourth – is a more collaborative effort, with main songwriter and guitarist Acle Kahney taking further input from the rest of the band. Tompkins' recent sonic experiments with White Moth Black Butterfly and Skyharbor have informed some of that



"This is going to be our most diverse record yet."

Jigsaw Falling Into Place:
Tesseract are finalising
their eclectic new album.



diversity, as have contributions from the band's 'sixth member' Aidan O'Brien. In fact, the producer and sound designer has been more involved in the songwriting than ever before.

"Aidan's influences have definitely helped shape the sound," confirms Monteith. "He writes a lot of soundscapes and electronica so that's really helped us expand our range. Also, Dan is a workhorse. He's got several projects on the go at any time and takes a lot of inspiration from the people he works with. That's definitely had an impact on the direction of the record."

Tesseract will be airing teaser tracks from the new album in the New Year and promise they will also be creating some exciting new video content very soon.

"Amos [Williams, bassist] in particular is very interested in visual arts so you'll see a lot more of that," says Monteith. "We'll probably be doing some more live studio videos too, where you'll get to see everyone playing their parts."

Tesseract will be touring Europe next year and have already begun to announce a handful of festival appearances. Further shows are still to be confirmed and the dates will culminate in an autumn tour.

For more, visit www.tesseractband.co.uk. **NRS**

This month, Intro was compiled by

Lin Bensley
Chris Cope
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
David Keevill
Jo Kendall
Hannah May Kilroy
Alex Lynham
Rhodri Marsden
Alison Reijman
Natasha Scharf
Sid Smith
Rick Wakeman
David West
Holly Wright

TONY BANKS MUSICAL RETURN

Third orchestral work due in February.



Tony Banks:
Five alive!

Genesis keyboard player Tony Banks will release a new album through BMG Records in February. Entitled *Five*, this will be Banks' third orchestral work, following on the back of 2004's *Seven: A Suite For Orchestra* and 2012's *Six Pieces For Orchestra*.

The album is a collection of five compositions written by Banks and produced by long-time collaborator Nick Davis. The work has been conducted by Nick Ingham, who has previously worked with the London Symphony Orchestra, David Bowie and Oasis. Ingham agreed to be involved in the project after hearing the initial demos that Banks played him.

Five breaks with orthodox classical recording tradition by being recorded section by section, a trait more common with rock and pop music. Solos and percussion were initially recorded at London's Angel Studios before recording moved to Prague where the orchestra and choir recorded. Banks has played all the piano parts on the new work.

The inspiration for *Five* was a piece that Banks recorded for the 70th Cheltenham Music Festival in 2014, titled *Arpegg*, which has been re-worked as the opening track *Prelude To A Million Years*. The final track, *Renaissance*, is based around a piece that Banks composed during his Genesis days.

The full tracklisting is: *Prelude To A Million Years*, *Reveille*, *Ebb And Flow*, *Autumn Sonata* and *Renaissance*. *Five* will be released via BMG Records on February 2. It will be available on CD and double gatefold vinyl. See www.tonybanksmusic.com. **JE**

TOUCHSTONE ANNOUNCE SPLIT WITH SINGER

But the band say it's not over yet!

Touchstone are looking for a new vocalist after parting with Aggie Figurska. The singer, who replaced Kim Seviour in 2015, performed her final show with them in December.

"It's kind of been on the cards for a while," admits guitarist Adam Hodgson. "She hasn't been entirely happy and I don't think she feels that things have progressed as they should have done. It was good to do the Christmas gig, draw a line under it, and we'll be looking at things again in 2018."

Touchstone have already written the best part of their fifth album, which they hope to record with a new singer next year.

"I'm quite positive really, and everyone is on board," says Hodgson. "I've put 14 years into this and I don't want to see the Touchstone that people love not be there any more."

See www.touchstonemusic.co.uk. **NRS**



Parting Shot: singer Aggie has now left the building.

TOM BARNES

SOORD ANNOUNCES HIS NEW SOLO ALBUM

The Pineapple Thief frontman reveals "melancholic" concept for side-project.



From Me: Bruce Soord wraps up his second solo album.

Bruce Soord releases his second solo album via Kscope next year. And he promises the recording – which has the working title of *Sirens* – will be even proggy than his debut.

"I didn't give it any musical boundaries," reveals the musician. "I remember when I wrote the first one, I wanted it to be a bit of a singer-songwriter album so the songs were quite short. This one has a concept and a story that runs through all the tracks. A lot of The Pineapple Thief albums are about my own experiences, but this one is different because it's about an event that I watched unfold third-hand. I won't say what it is though, as I'd prefer for the concept to remain in the music and lyrics, but it's been quite intense."

Unlike its self-titled predecessor, Soord's latest is structured around one continuous piece of music that's separated into tracks. The idea behind it was inspired by his passion for Pink Floyd and the second side of The Beatles' *Abbey Road*.

"I remember when I was a kid, those were the albums that I really enjoyed listening to," he reveals. "This is very much an acoustic guitar-led album and quite melancholic, but it also goes into some really dark and heavy places. I'm not talking distorted guitars or metal or anything like that, but it's heavy with drums and synths. It flips between dreamy melancholia then all of a sudden it goes into something really aggressive, almost sinister and unsettling."

The seeds of the new album were sown almost a year ago and follow on from the success of his 2015 debut. As with its predecessor, this one sees the musician team up again with his Pineapple Thief bandmate, Darran Charles. The Godsticks frontman and guitarist is the album's only guest, with all other instruments played by Soord himself.

"We've got a good relationship and we talk to each other daily," he reveals. "Now The Pineapple Thief has become such a different beast – it's not just me any more, it's a band – this has become a vehicle to do my own thing."

Meanwhile, the singer-songwriter has already begun working on ideas for The Pineapple Thief's next album, which is also tipped for release next year. The follow-up to *Your Wilderness* will be the band's 12th studio album and will once again feature Porcupine Tree and King Crimson drummer Gavin Harrison. **NRS**

For more, visit www.facebook.com/bsoord.

INTRO extras

CAMEL TO TOUR IN 2018

Camel will be performing their album *Moonmadness* live in the UK next September. Eight shows have been announced so far, including Manchester's Bridgewater Hall on September 7 and London's Royal Albert Hall on 17. The influential recording, originally released in 1976, will be performed in full by the current line-up comprising co-founder Andrew Latimer, Colin Bass, Denis Clement and Tiger Moth Tales' keyboardist Peter Jones. Tickets are on sale now.

Oceans Of Calm: The Sea Within enjoy some studio downtime.



WILL IRELAND

STOLT LAUNCHES NEW SUPERGROUP

The Sea Within are to release their debut album in Spring 2018 and confirm live date.

Roine Stolt has teamed up with fellow countryman and sometime Flower King/Agent Of Mercy Jonas Reingold and Daniel Gildenlöw (Pain Of Salvation), plus Marco Minnemann and Tom Brislin (Yes) for new prog supergroup The Sea Within.

Prog met the line-up at London's Livingston Studios as they put the finishing touches to their as-yet untitled debut album. Working song titles include *The Void* and *Broken Cord*.

"I think it's important that we all got together to record," Stolt told us. "It helps signify that we're a unit, not just a studio project. And as you've heard, it's a slightly different sound, for me at least. A bit more up-tempo..."

The line-up spent a week together in north London, working on demos and generally socialising. The bond between the five was clearly evident.

"That's important," said Reingold. "A lot of prog musicians seem to work with each other all the time. So what is there that makes this different to some other guy who works with a lot of other people? The fact we're all here, hanging out, making it feel like a band, not just guys emailing each other files, releasing a record and then disappearing. And we'll be taking this out on the road."

The Sea Within have already finalised their first show, and will be appearing at Night Of The Prog Festival on the weekend of 13-15 July. They'll be joined on the bill by the likes of Riverside, Big Big Train and Camel. Further dates will follow, and the debut album will be released by InsideOut Records in Spring 2018. **JE**

LONG DISTANCE CALLING ARE RETURNING TO THEIR ROOTS

German post-rockers ditch the vocals on heavy new album.

Long Distance Calling are returning to their trademark instrumental sound on their sixth album. *Boundless*, out via InsideOut on February 2, sees them move away from the commercial sound of 2016's *TRIPS*.

"[*TRIPS* vocalist] Petter Carlsen is one of my best friends and he's a great singer," says bassist Jan Hoffman, "but with this album, we wanted something easier for us, so it was just four guys in the room like in the early days."

It's the first time since 2011's *Long Distance Calling* that the band have worked exclusively as a four-piece, which awarded them more creative freedom.

"From the first rehearsal, we realised there was something special going on, and within about six months, the whole album was ready," Hoffman says. "It's definitely a bit heavier than the last two albums, but we always have a lot of melody and atmosphere."

See www.longdistancecalling.de for more. **NRS**



MICHAEL WINKLER

Cloudbusting: Long Distance Calling.



THE ENID * INNER SANCTUM

Inner Sanctum; the official home of The Enid back catalogue www.theenid.com

Inner Sanctum is very pleased to announce the 15th December release of "The Music of William Arkle and other recordings" by The Enid and Robert John Godfrey on CD in a fold-out cardboard wallet with sleeve notes by Professor Bruce Charlton especially commissioned for this release. Available now from Bandcamp on CD and digital download (includes digital booklet) at: www.innersanctumrecordings.com

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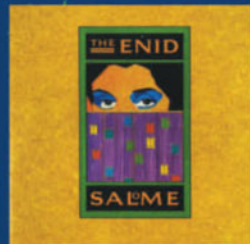
Six Pieces



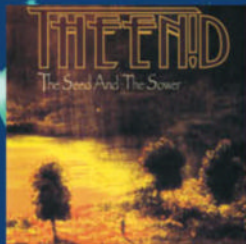
Something Wicked This Way Comes



The Spell



Salome



The Seed And The Sower



Tripping The Light Fantastic



White Goddess



Sheets Of Blue: Anthology 1977-08



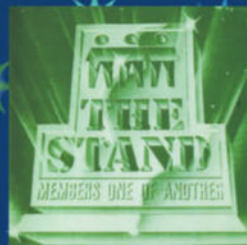
Live At Hammersmith Vol. 1



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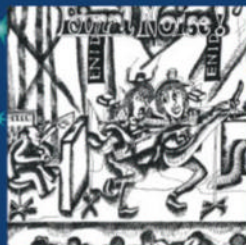
The Stand Vol. 2



Liverpool



Sundialler



Final Noise



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IAMTHEMORNING'S SOLO SIDE-PROJECT

Gleb Kolyadin teams up with Hogarth, Rudess, Harrison, Beggs and more on debut.



Piano Man:
Gleb Kolyadin.

Gleb Kolyadin is to release his self-titled solo album via Kscope on February 23. The Russian virtuoso, who's one half of iamthemorning, originally intended it to be a simple piano album, but it's taken on a life of its own.

"For me the album is a crossover in its truest form," explains Kolyadin, who has also released solo recordings under the name of Poloniumcubes. "There are things reminiscent of 70s prog, as well as minimalistic music, all entwined with ethnic motifs. Bits of neoclassicism are recognisable, especially during the grand piano solos. Added into the mix are also electro, ambient, jazz, and even allusions to the cinematic universe of David Lynch."

The 13-track was mixed and engineered by Vlad Avy, who also worked on iamthemorning's award-winning *Lighthouse*, and it features a host of impressive names from the world of prog. Gavin Harrison and Nick Beggs make up the rhythm section, and there are guest appearances from Marillion's Steve Hogarth, Dream Theater's Jordan Rudess, Theo Travis (Robert Fripp) and Mick Moss from Antimatter.

"I approached those musicians that I personally like, and, to my surprise, all of them agreed to participate," says the pianist. "The [vocal-led] songs were unusual in a sense that I didn't plan to have any at first. At some point I realised that the first and the last tracks are lacking vocals, but by that time the arrangements were ready and partially recorded. That meant that a specific voice type was required, so I asked Mick Moss. We met a few years ago while he was in St Petersburg, and his voice was ideal for *Astral Architecture*. Kscope suggested asking Steve Hogarth, since iamthemorning played at 2017's Marillion Weekend in the Netherlands. Not only did Steve agree to record vocals for the final song [*The Best Of Days*], but he also wrote the intro words for the album's central track [*Confluence*]."

As with iamthemorning's material, **Gleb Kolyadin** has a strong psychological theme running throughout. Its two-part concept revolves around a man who dreams of visiting a mysterious house where his doppelgänger lives, and explores the process of self-perception, metamorphoses and self-acceptance.

Although iamthemorning vocalist Marjana Semkina isn't part of this solo project, the pair have regrouped and are currently working on new material. "I am full to the brim with musical ideas," Kolyadin says. **NRS**

For more, visit www.glebkolyadin.com.

"I am full to the brim with musical ideas."

INTRO extras

NIGHTWISH 'BEST OF' DUE FOR 2018

Nightwish are to release a double album next spring that charts their musical career so far.

Decades will be out on March 9 via Nuclear Blast and will include songs from their eight studio albums as well as tracks from the demo that earned the Finnish band their first record deal.

The release will be followed by a worldwide tour with shows already confirmed for North America and Europe, including a headline appearance at the UK's Bloodstock Festival on August 12.

Tales From The Topographic Ocean? Geoff Downes will be taking part in a Q&A.



AHOY THERE! IT'S HMS PROG!

Geoff Downes and Roger Dean are set to join the UK's very first prog minicruise.

A prog minicruise between the north of England and the Netherlands is confirmed for next March. Yes! Geoff Downes, artist Roger Dean and Prog Editor Jerry Ewing are among the special guests confirmed so far for HMS Prog, which will feature live music from Caravan, Focus, Pendragon, Comedy Of Errors and Cairo, along with an art exhibition, cinema, prog-friendly retailers and an after-hours disco.

"We're looking to create something quintessentially British in HMS Prog, so what better than a journey across the North Sea and back?" says Steve Forster of promoters VMS Live, who are hosting the jaunt with P&O Ferries. "There are lots of great events that offer fantastic value but at a premium price. We're certainly not looking to compete, but if you want to spend some time with like-minded people in comfortable surroundings we think HMS Prog could be for you. We're offering a range of opportunities to enjoy, from live bands to Q&As, and all from £159, which includes accommodation."

The minicruise, which sails from Hull to Amsterdam from March 2 and returns on March 4, is an all-ages event with a capacity of less than 1,000. And with the exception of a secret gig in Amsterdam on the Saturday, all the entertainment takes place on board.

"It's not just a live music event; it's more of an experience," says Forster, who was part of the original team behind High Voltage Festival. "We've got a film tribute to John Wetton, or you might want to go and look at Roger Dean's art exhibition [he's designed the logo]. There's also the opportunity to play prog bingo!"

More bands will be announced in the New Year. For the latest, visit www.hmsprog.co.uk. **NRS**

UMPHREY'S MCGEE ARE BACK WITH A VERY MELODIC BANG!

US sextet channel their diverse influences on album 11.

Umprey's McGee are unleashing their eleventh studio album *It's Not Us* on January 12 via Nothing Too Fancy. It will see the genre-juggling band compress just about every facet of their sound, while maintaining their knack for melody.

"There's a little bit of everything," says guitarist/vocalist Jake Cinninger. "What's nice about being in a band like Umprey's is that we can kind of get away with anything and still sell the record at the end of the day."

The group are taking their shape-shifting show around North America from January to late March, with dates in Europe hoped for later in the year.

"The biggest problem with a band like us is that it's hard to invest time overseas because it costs so much money," Cinninger says. "If we can get inside of that prog rock niche that's over there [in Europe], I think people will really dig our sound."

For more information, head over to www.umpreys.com. **CC**



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FAD GADGETS

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

GUITAR-JO

I featured the Guitar-Jo in this column a few years back, and pointed out that inventor Jon Langberg had had trouble

persuading enough people to back his "make your electric guitar sound like a banjo" projects on Kickstarter. Jon's still trying, and if there's one thing

I admire it's determination in the face of public indifference. The Guitar-Jo now has dampening pads for a more banjo-like sound. I'm all for it, but evidently people still consider the act of making a Stratocaster sound like a banjo akin to putting ketchup on haute cuisine. Shame!

www.guitarjo.com



VENOVA

Wind instruments made of plastic are not traditionally thought to be very classy. But you'll increasingly see pro musicians turn to plastic for portability and durability. Yamaha have used something called Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene to knock out a £94 cross between a recorder and a saxophone, and it actually looks alright. "More powerful than it looks," is one of the understated descriptions used by Yamaha. It's certainly a cute little thing, and unusually for this column there are no electronics in sight whatsoever.

www.europe.yamaha.com

WINDMILL MUSIC BOX

Berlin-based artist Niklas Roy came up with this gorgeous combination of a music box and wind chime for the KIKK

Festival of digital and creative cultures. The video of a breeze prompting a tinkly rendition of *Für Elise* may prompt you to consider making

your own - and Roy provides instructions on his website. His 80-year-old neighbour knocked one up in an afternoon, but Roy did provide him with all the 3D printed parts, which is kind of cheating.

www.niklasroy.com



'TIS THE SEASON...

Rick's Christmas wish? A simpler way of communicating!

I remember with fondness the days when letters would pop through the letterbox. You could open them while eating your boiled egg and, if there was one that needed a reply, you could digest its contents and think about it before putting pen to paper later that day. There was time to give a proper and considered answer, possibly followed up with a telephone call. Not anymore though. Now we have bloody emails that waste hours every day and, more often or not, lead to hostility.

Picture this: It's eight o'clock in the morning, and I open my first email of the day.

"Hi Rick, Hope you don't mind me contacting you but I was wondering if you could possibly help us out with a charity event we're putting to help save the orange parsnip. We know you care vehemently about the environment and so if you could put on a concert for us that would be brilliant. Thanks, Jim Nasium."

There are another 63 messages waiting in my inbox so I flag that one for later and continue to plough through the rest. I'm only on the third when there's a ping from the computer to tell me a new email has arrived... and it's from Jim.

"Hi Rick, Did you get the email I sent 10 minutes ago?"

I ignore it and continue checking my messages. About a minute later, there's another ping.

"Why haven't you replied? We need to sort something out urgently."

Jim is now beginning to annoy me, and then there's another ping.

"I don't know what I've done to upset you, but

you obviously don't care about the orange parsnip so I'm going to post on Facebook that you were totally unresponsive to our pleas."

I take a deep breath and reply.

"Hi Jim, Sorry for the delay in replying but

I am up to my neck in emails and only have a limited amount of time before I go to the studio. Please supply the following information: Where do you want to hold the concert and when? Who else is taking part? Do you have PA and lights sorted? If it's a long distance, do you have hotels sorted? Are you a registered charity?"

I return to my inbox and, after a few minutes, there's another ping.

"The concert is in Northumberland. You would need to supply the PA and lights as your contribution, and pay your band as well. There are nice hotels around here that I'm sure would give you a good rate. We aren't a registered charity but we do care about the orange parsnip. As for a date, we're looking at Christmas Day."

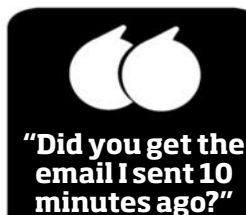
I take another deep breath and bash out a reply.

"Dear Jim, While I never charge for charity events, there are expenses for my crew and band which have to be covered. Also I'm afraid Christmas Day is a non-starter."

Ping!

"Very disappointed with your reply. You are an uncaring and nasty person. We're now going to contact Pink Floyd, who I am sure won't be as difficult to deal with as you."

I type my final reply, but delete it before hitting the send button. It read simply: "Dear Jim, Stick your orange parsnip up your arse!"



KEVIN FEBRUARY

THE KNELLS

New York-based classical composer explores rockier territories and three-part harmonies.

YOU KNOW THE feeling when you've got a tune buzzing around in your head? It's like an itch you can't easily scratch. So imagine the frustration of being a classical composer but hearing tunes of a decidedly rockier nature that are unlikely to go down too well in the New York contemporary classical music scene in which you work. What to do?

Faced with that dilemma, composer and guitarist Andrew McKenna Lee put a band together and, in 2010, The Knells sounded out for the first time.

"The real motivation for it was to do something different that got back to my rock roots a little bit," says the Brooklyn-based player, who first started playing guitar as a 12-year-old after listening to Led Zeppelin.

When The Knells' self-titled debut album arrived in 2013, *Prog* magazine declared it to be a "starkly beautiful and wholly remarkable debut". What made The Knells stand apart from other groups incorporating elements of classical and rock music within their compositions was the use of three-part vocal harmonies. These would perform McKenna Lee's striking melodies that weaved between ominous grooves and shifting textures. "It was pretty out-there," he laughs.

With the just-released follow-up, *Knells II*, the composer admits he has toned down some of the more astringent vocal parts that characterised much of the debut. "I would say that with that record I wanted to take a step in the direction of making the music more accessible, for lack of a better word."

Locking in deeper with fellow guitarist Paul Orbell, there's a harder, almost metallic edge in places, and a looser feel in which the group explore dynamics and contrasting textures.

"When Paul first joined the band I was pretty uptight about him playing the parts as written. For this one, we've worked on the parts together. I'm really happy with the way the guitars turned out on the second record."

The Knells' unique signature sound still emanates from the beautifully written, sweet and sour, harmony vocals performed by Nina Berman (soprano), Charlotte Mundy (mezzo-soprano) and Blythe Gaissert (contralto). "They sing together as a single unit that works together all the time rather than as three separate singers," observes McKenna Lee who, perhaps surprisingly, cites The Mamas And The Papas, CSNY and The Supremes as diverse influences in his approach to writing for the vocals.

Playing live, meanwhile, has garnered good reactions, though it hasn't been without its problems. "It's a big band and everyone is really busy," he explains. Trying to get us all into one place to rehearse and perform is a real challenge as well as the logistical and financial concerns."

Though juggling his time between teaching, playing solo concerts and working on commissions, he recently added stop-motion animation to his list of skills, creating the band's *Poltergeist* video. "Stravinsky said that your best ideas come to you when you're working. You just have to be ready to pick it up and run with it when it does." **SS**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP
Nina Berman (soprano), **Charlotte Mundy** (mezzo-soprano), **Blythe Gaissert** (contralto), **Paul Orbell** (guitar), **Andrew McKenna Lee** (guitar), **Jude Traxler** (Rhodes, electronics), **Jeff Gretz** (drums), **Joseph Higgins** (bass)

SOUNDS LIKE
 Medieval polyphony colliding with prog and psych

CURRENT RELEASE
Knells II is out now via Still Sound Music

WEBSITE
www.theknells.com



"Stravinsky said that your best ideas come to you when you're working. You just have to be ready to pick it up and run with it when it does."

The Knells, with Andrew McKenna Lee front and centre.



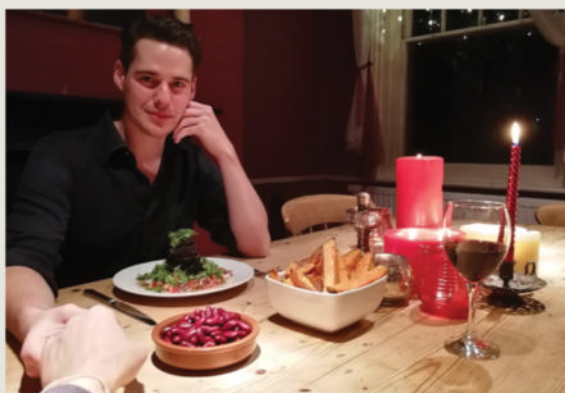
SCOTT FRIEDLANDER

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

YOUR PROG CHEF:

JOE PAYNE

The 'Gine Genie
(Aubergine Surprise)



“On January 1, 2016, mainly as a reaction to the methods of meat and dairy farming, I decided to explore veganism for the first time. I discovered that my physical health improved dramatically. Within the first six weeks, I had better skin and had lost about one-and-a-half stone in weight. The body transformation I'd been wishing for all these years finally happened with very little effort.

Since then, I'll admit to a few drunken slip-ups – honestly officer, the pizza fell into my mouth – but mostly, when eating at home, I've stuck to veganism. Nearly two years later, I still feel great, and although I'm a lot quieter these days about my ethics, I still get a thrill out of introducing vegan food to friends at dinner parties. I have a few specialities, but there's one clear winner: my Aubergine Surprise...”

Ingredients (serves 2):

Two large aubergines sliced into one-inch thick circles, one heaped tsp each of turmeric, chilli powder, paprika, garlic powder and ground black pepper, one level tsp of salt, six tbsp of sunflower oil.

For the salsa: one small red onion finely chopped, 400g finely chopped fresh tomatoes, four cloves of chopped garlic, 25g chopped coriander, tbsp of lemon juice, tbsp of white wine vinegar, tbsp of extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper to taste.

Preparation:

Make the salsa first by mixing most of the ingredients together in a bowl – only use half the coriander – and chill in the fridge. Next, preheat the oven to 220°C/ Gas Mark 7.

In a small dish, combine the spices. Pour in the sunflower oil, and mix into a thin paste. Place the aubergine slices on a non-stick backing tray, spoon over about half of the spice mixture and bake for 10 minutes in the centre of the oven.

Remove the slices, turn over and pour over the remaining mix then bake for another 10 minutes, or until tender. The slices should look a bit like black pudding. Finally, stack the aubergine slices on plates to create towers, starting with the larger pieces at the bottom, and smaller pieces on top. Spoon the salsa around the base, sprinkle the remaining coriander on top, and enjoy!

Although this dish is satisfying enough on its own, thick-cut sweet potato chips and red kidney beans compliment it perfectly.

You're probably thinking, 'What's the surprise?' That usually comes after dinner if everything goes well. I'll say no more...” **JK**

MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



Drum Hero: Jason Mendonça pays tribute to the genius of Pip Pyle, seen here with National Health.

COURTESY OF CLINEFORM RECORDS

TINA KORHONEN

JASON MENDONÇA

Akercocke's vocalist/guitarist is transfixed by Canterbury scene drummer **Pip Pyle**.

“I was introduced to Gong by some hippy friends when I was at school, and I started with *Flying Teapot*. Then I discovered *Camembert Electrique*: Pip Pyle played drums on that album and his playing absolutely shone through. I was completely transfixed by his breakbeats.

A lot of people associate breakbeats with drum and bass, but you'll find heaps of tough breaks if you go back to the fusion and prog bands of the early 70s. If you fast-forward Pyle's career to Hatfield And The North and National Health, he played breaks with such élan that there was almost a danger in his playing: he lacked the reserve and precision of other jazz-influenced players of the time. It was that danger that really excited me.

It's important to recognise that he had people like Bill Bruford among his peers but I don't think he was ever acknowledged to the same degree as Bruford or John Weathers from Gentle Giant. I don't know that Pyle ever received that kind of response until his death [in 2006]. That's when loads of fans came out of the woodwork and there were some really beautiful obituaries.

Although I'm a guitarist, I'm also a frustrated drummer. I've been playing for about 30 years so I started pretty much around the time I first heard Pyle. I have a drum kit at home and I love playing: I just play very, very badly. I'm in awe of people who play percussion really, really well. The ability to separate limbs and have control of them individually, while doing four different things at once, just leaves me flabbergasted. I'm someone who finds playing the guitar and singing in a different time signature challenging enough!

I discovered the Canterbury scene retrospectively as an adult and my prog leanings are incredibly eclectic. I haven't a clue about contemporary music but Mont Campbell from Egg is someone else I respect, and Sky's Francis Monkman. I appreciate great instrumentalism and prog is awash

with great players, many of whom never received any acknowledgement. I think it's important to remember those forgotten heroes.” **NRS**

Renaissance In Extremis is out now on Peaceville. For more info, visit www.akercockeofficial.com.

“There was almost a danger in his playing.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Hawkwind will play a one-off show with a live orchestra at the London Palladium on November 4. *In Search Of Utopia, Infinity And Beyond* celebrates 49 years of the band, who release a vinyl edition of *At The Roundhouse* via Cherry Red next year.



Within Temptation (left) are back out on tour next winter. Tickets are now on sale and include four UK shows in November. Meanwhile, the band are working on a new studio album. Singer Sharon den Adel also releases her solo debut in the New Year.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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VOTED ONE OF THE TOP THREE VENUES IN THE UK - PROG. 2016

New progressive project from the vocalist of Dead Soul

The Blank Page - Desolate

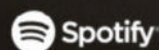
"Desolate is highly recommended for all fans of symphonic progressive rock, classic and modern. It's a beautiful composition and it makes me eagerly longing for a full length album."

- Mats Jonason, Sweden Prog

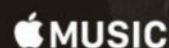
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www.theblankpage.nu





DON CHERRY

RELATIVITY SUITE

(JCOA, 1973)

Trumpeter Don Cherry had already secured lasting recognition as a member of the Ornette Coleman Quartet, with whom he recorded 1959's *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* and *This Is Our Music* in 1961, before turning his attention to world fusion music in the latter half of the 60s. With the release of *Organic Music Society* in 1972, he began to fine tune those ambitions and found even more purposeful expression in *Relativity Suite*. Assisted musically and financially by the Jazz Composers Orchestra Association - led by pianist Carla Bley - and supported by the likes of Charlie Haden (bass), Ed Blackwell (drums) and Dewey Redman (tenor sax), Cherry sought a communal jazz union that defied glib categorisation.

Drawing on myriad traditional sources, from the musicians of Joujouka to Vasant Rai, *Relativity Suite* embodies a universal language. As evidenced from the outset, where Tibetan bells usher in the contemplative strains of *Tantra*, Cherry provides carnatic vocals (he was a student of Hindu music) before sounding the hunting horn to commence the album's musical voyage into space, time and the infinite dimensions beyond.

On *Mali Doussn'gouni*, Bley supplies a six-note ostinato, allowing Cherry to improvise an unfettered flurry of notes and shredded quavers on his trademark pocket cornet that urge the orchestra to a climatic ennui. The first part of the suite closes with *Desireless*; underpinned by Bley's rippling arpeggios, Carlos Ward delivers a delicate, tremulous alto sax solo of immense fragility. Reminiscent of the spiritual musings of Alice Coltrane, its radiance is undiminished by age.

The second half begins in a mystical mood courtesy of Selene Fung who performs a suitably inscrutable solo on the guzheng, also known as the Chinese zither, on *The Queen Of Tung-Ting Lake*. A practised adept, Fung conjures up hypnotic phrasings that caress the soul in preparation for the trace-like drones of *Trans-Love Airways*. Haden's uncomplicated yet critical bass lines enrich this slow-burner and guarantee to give you much more on repeated trips on the astral plane.

Bley, possibly in her forte, explores eternal rhythms in the questing dissonances of *Infinite Gentleness*, complete with Hitchcockian orchestral accompaniment, while avoiding the operatic excesses of her earlier work. Its calming summation proves the perfect intro to the final track, *March Of The Hobbits*, a military two-step that owes more to Basin Street than the Shire and offers a sense of form to the otherwise loose-limbed proceedings. Relatively speaking, Frodo's mojo energises Einstein-a-go-go and equals one quantum leap for music.

LIN BENSLEY



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Mood Elevators: Half Past Four, minus their new drummer Adrian Garcia.

HALF PAST FOUR

Meet singer **Kyree Vibrant** from the Canadian-Russians who want to make *permanent waves* in prog.

Canada and Russia might have a complex relationship, but Half Past Four stride both, and their music is all the more distinctive for it.

Guitarist Constantin Necrasov, keyboard player Igor Kurtzman and Dmitry Lesov (bass and Chapman stick) were all born in the former USSR but emigrated many years ago in search of a better life. They formed the band in their adopted home city of Toronto nearly two decades ago.

Listen closely to their 2008 debut *Rabbit In The Vestibule*, which features the charismatic Kyree Vibrant, and you'll hear hints of Eastern European folk genres including the polka and the Jewish klezmer.

Explains Vibrant, "When I joined, I started to write lyrics and melodies to complement this style and the Half Past Four sound was born. We all bring different elements to the table. It's a collaborative project with our many influences - progressive rock, jazz and folk - flowing through it."

Finding opportunities to play live to local audiences hasn't been easy though.

"Touring opportunities here are practically nil,"

says Vibrant. "However, lately, there's been a small surge of Toronto progressive bands that have formed a sort of community, and more promoters are coming up to organise shows. We try to play when we can but playing in our hometown isn't usually that productive."

The band brought in Summer's End co-promoter Stephen Lambe to help promote last year's *Land Of The Blind*, which led to their welcome appearance at the festival and a gig at Robin 2 in Bilston with fellow Summer's Enders, Karibow. Both appearances featured their new drummer, Adrian Garcia.

With a dearth of musical opportunities in Canada, the band relished the chance to play here.

"There are much bigger prog audiences abroad and in the USA, where we've found it very challenging to play without having to obtain expensive permits and visas," Vibrant explains. "This is why we really appreciated being included in the Summer's End Festival. It really does make it all worthwhile." **AR**

For more info, see www.halfpastfour.com



PROG IN BRIEF

Remastered versions of **Curved Air's** (right) *Air Conditioning* and *Air Cut* are out via Esoteric on January 26. The expanded former has 11 bonus tracks, including unreleased material, and new sleeve notes from Prog writer Malcolm Dome.



Former Pink Fairy Twink and The Pretty Things' Jon Povey have teamed up again for the new project, **Star Sponge Vision**. Their debut, *Crowley And Me*, will be out via Mega Dodo next spring. It's based around the life and poetry of occultist Aleister Crowley.

GOLD KEY

Former Gallows, SikTh and Krokodil members and Arcane Roots tourmates prog it up.

GOLD KEY MAY be newcomers to the UK music scene, but they're already making waves, partly due to a brace of excellent singles at the end of last year and partly due to the track record of the musicians involved, who have been in the ranks of Blackhole, SikTh, Gallows and Krokodil.

"First and foremost, we're all friends," explains frontman and guitarist Steve Sears. "Lags [Laurent Barnard] and I, and James [Leach], have known each other for, well, I don't want to think about how long. Lags and I actually went to school together. We tend to write bittersweet, darker stuff, and I think it's a band that was always going to happen. I've wanted to be in this band for ages..."

Unsurprisingly given their credentials, Gold Key can be righteously heavy, but more unexpected is the amount of time given over to atmospheric touches, sparse guitar work and cinematic use of texture.

"I think the thing that connects us is that we all like darker music that isn't necessarily dark because it's heavy," says Sears, namechecking Radiohead, Pink Floyd and Modest Mouse as influences.

He also notes the contrasts between Gold Key and the members' other bands: "I think the album has a macabre edge... and I think that comes from us liking pop music that has a dark twist to it."

With their first LP *Hello, Phantom* in the bag and a tour with Arcane Roots just completed, things are

ramping up for Gold Key, but they've got their feet firmly planted on the ground. "I think we've always been quite serious about it — it's a priority for all of us," says Sears. "It kind of makes me cringe when people call it a side project because I think I speak for everyone when I say that we really do love doing this."

They're also fiercely DIY: Sears handled all of the recording and mixing duties at his studio, and the record is coming out on Barnard's label. "That's the other thing that ties us all together. We played DIY gigs when we were younger and we don't have the attitude that we're owed something. We wrote the record ourselves, recorded it ourselves and released it ourselves. It's a DIY band in that sense. I meet a lot of people who aren't like that, and I think it's because they haven't come from a town like Watford, where we just sort of got on with it and did it until people cared."

As for what motivates Sears, what he loves about music is simple. "Music is everything to me, I've never wanted to do anything else. I decided when I was 10 years old that I wasn't going to do anything else, and my relationships, my part-time jobs when I was younger, everything was geared towards music, and music would always come first. I don't know anything else, and it's the same for all of us, y'know?" **AL**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Steve Sears (vocals, guitar), **Laurent Barnard** (guitar), **James Leach** (bass), **Jack Kenny** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

Queens Of The Stone Age-style alternative rock with a real progressive twist

CURRENT RELEASE

Hello, Phantom is out now via Venn Records

WEBSITE

www.goldkeymusic.com



"I think the thing that connects us is that we all like darker music that isn't necessarily dark because it's heavy."

Gold Key, L-R: Jack Kenny, Laurent Barnard, Steve Sears, James Leach.



DEREK BRENNER



ARRANGING TOURS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

A *Prog* writer looks at how Brexit could kill touring as we know it...

► Brexit – the ever-rolling blob of uncertainty that continues to confound the public and politicians alike. Regardless of which side you fall – and you’d be forgiven for having changed your mind since putting pencil to paper in June 2016 – the impact of the UK’s decision to leave the EU is less clear than ever.

This uncertainty, particularly around freedom of movement, is turning out to be a real issue for the music industry. Proggers, who by their very nature are whimsically souled but hard-heeled tourers, face the very real prospect of having their touring lives up-ended within the next couple of years.

Countless bands are now staring down the barrel of this particular gun. The Fierce And The Dead are one such act. They had planned a two-year tour cycle following the release of their next album, but not knowing whether European promoters will actually bother to work with British bands once we leave the EU is proving to be a major concern.

“The model for a band like ours is to go out and play lots of one-off festival dates in Europe over the course of the summer,” explains guitarist Matt Stevens. “If you’ve got to get a visa for each individual show or a carnet that will allow you to bring goods in and out of the country, it would become hard for us to tour.”

The music industry is already mobilising to make the best out of what many would consider to be a bleak situation. Industry bodies are calling for a ‘touring passport’ that would ensure visa-free travel for musicians after Brexit, but how this will play out remains to be seen.

While this feels like the best way forward at this stage, there are serious question marks over whether those at the top could get it done in time. With the Brexit negotiators yet to get down to brass tacks, it feels optimistic in the extreme that they’ll have ironed out all the nitty-gritty detail by March 2019.

Then there are those who, somewhat blithely, point to the ‘halcyon’ days of British acts touring in the 70s as a model of how bands could proceed post-Brexit. This argument tends to totally disregard the way that the industry has changed over the last 40 years – the majority of proggers are now on DIY labels run by a handful of people, not socking great record companies with deep pockets.

With uncertainty weighing heavily on the music industry, and the British government seemingly unable to negotiate its way out of a wet paper bag, the future of bands, especially progressive ones, touring outside the UK seems less sure than ever.

DAVID KEEVILL

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



HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene’s supporting crew



Making Waves: Tim Charles and Eli Chamravi with Opeth’s manager Andy Farrow in Melbourne.

PROGFEST AUSTRALIA

Eli Chamravi and Tim Charles reveal how they took on the Antipodes’ longest-running prog event.

► Australia: home of *Neighbours*, Vegemite, and for the last decade, Progfest. Originally founded as a one-off event by Mushroom Giant’s Craig Fryers, it’s grown into a multi-city extravaganza that unites thousands of prog fans Down Under.

“The original aim was simply to open people’s minds to different types of progressive music while showcasing the incredible prog scene that we have in Australia,” says co-promoter Tim Charles, also vocalist with Ne Obliviscaris.

Under the banner of Welkin Entertainment, Charles revamped the event into a touring festival in 2010, hosting more than 30 bands across Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra. A change in Charles’ touring schedule and the closure of their Melbourne venue forced a break in 2015, but the festival returned the following year with co-promotion from Wild Thing Presents’ Eli Chamravi.

Says Chamravi, “I came from more of a classic rock/grunge/alternative rock background, and didn’t really know much about the scene until my first Progfest in 2013. I was totally blown away by the level of playing, the performances and by

how strong the prog community was. I fell in love with the scene and I started managing Caligula’s Horse, and bringing international acts out, like Orphaned Land and Haken. The Australian prog scene is just amazing: it’s very supportive with a real community vibe and there are a lot of great bands coming from here.”

Previous line-ups have included the likes of Ne Obliviscaris, Twelve Foot Ninja, Caligula’s Horse and Plini, as well as Voyager and Orsomed Welles who’ll both be returning for next year’s 10th anniversary. This multi-city event, which takes place in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne at the end of January, is the second Progfest that Chamravi has worked on and features the festival’s very first international headliner, Leprous.

“It’s only going to get bigger from here,” he says. “Progfest is a celebration of the last 12 months, it’s one stage, one after the other for nine hours.

It’s all about the music and all about the bands. We’ll hopefully be expanding it to another city and have more international bands, but it’s step-by-step at the moment.” NRS

For more, visit www.facebook.com/Progfest.

“It’s all about the music and all about the bands.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Focus are currently working on their new studio album, *Focus II*. The Dutch band say they plan to complete it next year but in the meantime, fans can preview two songs – *Winnie* and *Clair Obscur* – on the recent *Focus Family Album*.



The Fierce And The Dead (left) release their third album *The Euphoric* via Bad Elephant Music and Spencer Park Music on May 18. The lead track will be out digitally in January. They’ll be launching the album at their sold-out London show in May.

The Enid’s ex-frontman **Joe Payne** releases his first solo single in the New Year. *I Need A Change*, recorded under the name of That Joe Payne, is out on March 2. He will launch it with a live show at Northampton’s The Picturedrome.

Gandalf’s Fist release their first single with their new line-up in time for Christmas. *Winter’s Mourning* features Ben Bell (keys) and Keri Farish (vocals). The six-piece are currently working on the follow-up to last year’s rock opera *The Clockwork Fable*.



Take A Trip Down Under: Alithia.

ALITHIA

Aussies and Leprous tour-mates unleash their “weird astral space core” on the world...

ALITHIA'S LIVE SHOWS are a thrilling ride. On their last European tour, supporting Leprous and Agent Fresco, they crammed their travelling entourage on stage and let their “weird astral space core” loose upon the crowd. Fusing tribal percussion with psychedelic vibes to a chaotic patchwork of punk attitude and heavy riffs, they mark a new chapter in the evolving prog scene coming out of Australia.

On their recent stop-off in Amsterdam, the Melbourne-based outfit hammed up their Aussie roots for some life-on-the-road video fun. “We were sat outside a cafe calling each other dickheads and all sorts. We went full bogan,” laughs bassist Tibor Gede. “We got it all on camera. It was total cultural association satire and it was so horrible, but hey.”

But Alithia are anything but your typical bogans. “We have a Hungarian Spaniard (that’s me),” says Gede, “a Chilean, a Malaysian Chinese, a Vietnamese, an Italian, Maltese and a Russian.” This cultural melting pot, combined with the band’s diverse musical interests that range from salsa to punk, has produced a debut album that is a pan-global odyssey with heavy prog as its crux. *To The Edge Of Time* blends the eastern sensibilities of a band like Orphaned Land and the horizon-reaching emotion of Karnivool coupled with a taste for chaos.

“The essence of the band is very punk rock. We get a bit dirty and raw,” enthuses Gede.

Now that *To The Edge Of Time* has had three years to bed in and Alithia have enjoyed countless shows supporting some of Australia’s best prog bands,

including Dead Letter Circus and Ne Obliviscaris, they’ve been able to open up their world to the bigger stage thanks to Leprous. Several of the shows have already sold out and although Alithia have had to slum it in their 9-seater van, they have nothing but gratitude for the prog scene.

“Wherever you are in the world, the prog scene is really tight, really close and really supportive,” Gede enthuses. “All the bands we’ve played with have been so supportive: they watch the set, they give feedback, they share their rider with you and they don’t create any sense of barrier. I don’t think that happens much in other scenes.”

Much of Alithia’s success lies in their adventurous spirit that has taken them on tours that have tested their mettle. In 2014 they gigged in Russia, knowing that the novelty of a touring band from Australia would sell tickets.

“It was minus 17 degrees in St Petersburg,” recalls keyboard player Danny Constantino. “And there we are, five Aussie guys with all this musical equipment, dragging it through the snow, freezing cold, just trying to get to the venue.” The warm reception from the Russian gig-goers was the pay-off, but it also helped to put them in touch with Marjana Semkina who has been filling in for their singer on the Leprous tour while guitarist and vocalist John Rousvanis recuperates from a recent injury.

“We’ve been building up this community and now, when we need support, it’s just there,” says Gede. And with their second album ready to drop in 2018, long may that support continue. **HW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

John Rousvanis (guitar, vocals), **Nguyen Phambam** (guitar), **Tibor Gede** (bass), **Danny Constantino** (keyboards), **Jeffrey Ortiz Raul Castro** (percussion, keyboards), **Mark ‘Vel’ Vella** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

Part erratic, part spaced-out world music with attitude

CURRENT RELEASE

To The Edge Of Time is out now via www.alithia.bandcamp.com

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/alithiaband



“Wherever you are in the world, the prog scene is really tight, really close and really supportive.”



US, THEM & YOU

What got us all
grooving this month...

Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

November 2017

Compiled by Official
Charts Company

- 1 **JEFF LYNNE'S ELO** Wembley Or Bust (RCA)
- 2 **DAVID GILMOUR** Live At Pompeii (COLUMBIA)
- 3 **RADIOHEAD** OK Computer (XL RECORDINGS)
- 4 **TAME IMPALA** Currents (FICTION)
- 5 **MOGWAI** Every Country's Sun (ROCK ACTION)
- 6 **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** Every Valley (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)
- 7 **RICK WAKEMAN** Piano Portraits (UMC)
- 8 **ROGER WATERS** Is This The Life We Really Want? (COLUMBIA)
- 9 **STEVEN WILSON** To The Bone (CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL)
- 10 **TANGERINE DREAM** Quantum Gate (KSCOPE)
- 11 **TARJA** From Sprits And Ghosts (EARMUSIC)
- 12 **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** War Is Over (MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT)
- 13 **JANE WEAVER** Modern Kosmology (FIRE)
- 14 **GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** Luciferian Towers (CONSTELLATION)
- 15 **KING CRIMSON** Live In Chicago (DGM/PANEGYRIC)
- 16 **MASTODON** Emperor Of Sand (REPRISE)
- 17 **KING CRIMSON** Sailors' Tales (PANEGYRIC)
- 18 **PETER HAMMILL** From The Trees (FIE!)
- 19 **KANSAS LEFTOVERTURE** Live & Beyond (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 20 **GOAT** Fuzzed In Europe (ROCKET)
- 21 **PREMIATA FORNERIA MARCONI** Emotional Tattoos (INSIDEOUT)
- 22 **STRAWBS** The Ferryman's Curse (ESOTERIC ANTENNA/CHERRY RED)
- 23 **MIKE OLDFIELD** Return To Ommadawn (MERCURY)
- 24 **KATE BUSH** Before The Dawn (FISH PEOPLE)
- 25 **NO-MAN** Returning Jesus (KSCOPE)
- 26 **ARCANE ROOTS** Melancholia Hymns (EASY LIFE)
- 27 **MIKE & THE MECHANICS** Let Me Fly (BMG)
- 28 **KING CRIMSON** Earthbound (PANEGYRIC)
- 29 **PINEAPPLE THIEF** Where We Stood (KSCOPE)
- 30 **ENSLAVED** E (NUCLEAR BLAST)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! A SUPER DELUXE A FAREWELL TO KINGS BOX SET!



Rush are celebrating the 40th anniversary of their fifth album *A Farewell To Kings* with a lavish box set, and we have one to give away. The Super Deluxe Edition includes three CDs, one Blu-ray audio disc and four 180-gram vinyl LPs. The set encompasses the Abbey Road Mastering Studios 2015 remastered edition of the album for the first time on CD; a complete Rush concert recorded in February 1978 at London's Hammersmith Odeon, newly mixed by long-time Rush engineer and original *A Farewell To Kings* producer Terry Brown from the multitrack live tapes; four new cover versions by Dream Theater, Big Wreck, The Trews and Alain Johannes; and an instrumental outtake of the spacey sound effects the band has titled *Cygnus X-2 Eh*.

The Hammersmith show features, for the first time ever, over 34 minutes of unreleased performances, including a complete 2112 suite, *Lakeside Park*, a drum solo and *Closer To The Heart*. The Super Deluxe Edition's audio content on its CDs is duplicated on its vinyl discs. The Blu-ray audio disc contains a brand new 5.1 surround mix of the album by four-time Grammy-nominated producer Steven Wilson, along with three original 1977 promo videos from a newly found two-inch quad video master, significantly improving the video quality of *Closer To The Heart*.

The Super Deluxe package also includes an elaborate new 40th-anniversary cover treatment by long-time Rush creative director Hugh Syme, who has also created a new piece of artwork for each of the album's six songs. There are also extensive 12,000-word liner notes by Grammy-winning rock historian Rob Bowman.

The set also includes several exclusive items, such as a unique King's Ring, with custom velvet pouch and neck chain; two lithographs with original artwork by Hugh Syme; a special 12-inch turntable mat featuring distinctive artwork by Hugh Syme; and a reproduction of Rush's original 1978 *A Farewell To Kings* tour program.

For your chance to win, answer the following question:

Where was *A Farewell To Kings* recorded?

- a) Advision Studios
- b) Toronto Sound Studios
- c) Rockfield Studios

Email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject line Rush Comp. See www.rush.com for more information.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from December 22 to January 24. Postal entries can be sent to: Prog, Future Publishing, 1-10 Praed Mews, London W2 1QY. By entering online you agree to our competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing and carefully selected third parties. The winner will be drawn at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition.

Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



LEGEND OF THE SEAGULLMEN
Legend Of The Seagullmen
DINE ALONE RECORDS

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



MURDER AND PARLIAMENT
Murder And Parliament
BAD ELEPHANT MUSIC

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



MYRKUR
Mareridt
RELAPSE

The Musician
Clive Mitten



FROST*
Falling Satellites
INSIDEOUT

The Writer
Ian Fortnam



XTC
Black Sea
VIRGIN

The Reader
Zachary Nathanson



SCHOOLTREE
Heterotopia
SELF-RELEASED

I AM THE MANIC WHALE

Science fiction, electric shocks and the solo project that became a band.

I AM THE Manic Whale have exceeded all expectations. At the very least, the band have accomplished much more than founder Michael Whiteman ever imagined. In 2015, Whiteman was creating his first prog album and needed some helping hands, so he called his friend Dave Addis.

"I was at secondary school with Dave," says Whiteman. "We've played in various bands since we were 14 or 15. I was playing in a ska band at the time and I wanted to write prog but it didn't fit, which is why I started I Am The Manic Whale as a solo project. I started writing and recording and I needed a brilliant guitarist. I can play a few bits on guitar, but it needed some serious shredding, so it seemed obvious to ask Dave."

It wasn't long before another old pal, Ben Hartley, came in to play drums, followed last but not least by John Murphy on keys.

"It started off with, 'Would you like to play on one song on the album?'" says Whiteman. "They all did one song and gradually it evolved until they all played on the whole album and it became a band."

For I Am The Manic Whale's 2015 debut, *Everything Beautiful In Time*, Whiteman started with a run of 300 copies on CD. Within two months he'd sold out.

"I posted about it on some Facebook groups, people seemed to like it, a few people did reviews, it got posted about on some blogs and someone played it on a radio station," he says. "It gradually grew and we've sold nearly a thousand copies of that first album now, which I'm amazed about."

They've just released their second album, *Gathering The Waters*, and in light of the fact that I Am The Manic Whale started life as a studio project,

they're trying to keep one eye on how they can play their new material live. "The first album had umpteen layers of keyboards and guitars, and to play them live they've got to be relatively stripped-back to pull that off," says Whiteman. "For *Everything Beautiful In Time*, I don't think we'd had the four of us in the same room at the same time when that album came out. Playing some of those songs live was a really big challenge and that's definitely something we thought about when we made the second album."

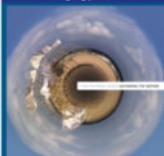
Whiteman has a proclivity for finding inspiration for lyrics in unusual places, inspired by the example of Big Big Train's Greg Spawton. "The first song I heard of theirs was *East Coast Racer*, which is about a steam engine," he says. "I'd never have thought to write a song about a steam engine, but why not? You can write about anything that's inspiring."

Case in point, *The Man With Many Faces* looks at Doctor Who from the perspective of his foes. "It doesn't portray the Doctor in a positive light the way he's seen by viewers on television. It's more the way the Daleks would see him as evil."

By contrast, *The Milgram Experiment* references the infamous 1963 case in which volunteers administered electric shocks to participants in a staged memory trial. "They could hear people from next door yelling in pain from these electric shocks, and they'd have a scientist telling them, 'You've got to keep going, you've got to shock them again,'" says Whiteman. "What they were really testing was how far people would go and that's what the song is asking — how far will you go?"

For this Manic Whale, the sky's the limit. **DW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Ben Hartley (drums),
John Murphy (keys),
David Addis (guitar),
Michael Whiteman
(bass, vocals)

SOUNDS LIKE

Smart, contemporary prog with tasty vocal harmonies and a Loyalty Card from the library

CURRENT RELEASE

Gathering The Waters is out now and is available via bandcamp

WEBSITE

www.iamthemanicwhale.com



"What they were really testing was how far people would go and that's what the song is asking - how far will you go?"

DAVID ADDIS

I Am The Manic Whale, L-R: John Murphy, David Addis, Ben Hartley, Michael Whiteman.

**WITHOUT A GUITAR
ALL THIS
WOULD JUST BE
VANDALISM.**

**THE POWER
OF MUSIC!**







TOM STADE

You can't go wrong when Rush is your national pop treasure. But what else is *Closer To The Heart* of this Canadian stand-up maverick?

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** David Wala

The very first proggy thing I ever heard was Rush. Of course it was, I'm Canadian. You cannot hear *Tom Sawyer* for the first time without realising that it will be played at every party you'll go to from the age of 14 onwards.

I'm from a *South Park* town called Quesnel, in Alberta, British Columbia, a tiny little logging community. There's only about 20,000 of us living in the mountains.

Our record shop was the department store, Zellers, so we were lucky to get Rush. Whatever was in stock came in through the approval of the store. My mum worked in radio so I knew that Canadian radio stations have to play a certain percentage of Canadian music. So we didn't get King Crimson to listen to, we got Gordon Lightfoot, and I don't think we can include him in this list...

Rush's prog was just as popular as AC/DC's *Back In Black*. They kept up with these huge rock acts but they didn't try to be like them. My favourite album is *Exit... Stage Left*, and songs such as *The Spirit Of Radio* and *Closer To The Heart*. To me this is smoke-a-joint music. It's also, like most music, a time machine. When I listen to it, I'm transported back to a time before I knew what I might be doing in life.

Pink Floyd are one of my all-time favourite prog bands. I'll never forget an acid trip I was on when I couldn't stop listening to *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. This is when I was about 17 or 18 and I'd just moved to Vancouver and every weekend was about getting fucked up — at that point I had no goals in life [laughs]. I'd bought *A Collection Of Great Dance Songs* and I'd put it on the stereo and lie down on the floor and with the two big speakers beside my head.

I think Floyd's music gives you courage, makes you feel cool and tougher. Money? You don't need money! You can do anything! We're also talking about lyrics, too. Prog rock songs have a message — the lyrics are as important as the music.

I ended up in Vancouver because I dropped out of school. In junior high I was the president, believe it or not. In senior high I was only interested in drama and English. I realised I didn't like going to places where they made me feel

I was failing and I told my mum I was quitting and would do some night classes, some tree-planting and apply for the CBC [Canadian Broadcast Company]. I went into General Casting and they liked me, but I didn't have an agent and that's when showbiz stuff fell on me, hard.

Music helped me a lot. I went to Vancouver and ended up working in comedy clubs. Once I was there, my musical influences went through the roof. I got to go to concerts for the first time. Here I met [comedian] Chris Molineux — who got me into King Crimson — and a musician called Dave Evil. He had a lot of weird shit and introduced me to **Blind Faith**. *Can't Find My Way Home* is one of my favourite woe-is-me tunes. Now we're getting into prog melancholy. When you take a journey, being an artist it can get confusing — you're doing well but you're scared of what lies in the future. This song puts everything in perspective — you can go far but you can still get lost.

The **Grateful Dead** remind me of figuring out who I was at 18. I regret never seeing them, it must have been something to witness. Nobody *plans* a six-hour set, do they? *Steal Your Face* is an album I'd go back to and listen to for meaning. I was part of a scene letting it all hang out on Wreck Beach. Drugs expose who you are. Some people smoke a joint and can't play, but if you're one of those guys that can, when you get on that guitar, there's nothing but confidence. That shows a lot about who you are. Once I got to my 19th birthday, the world changed and I had a focus.

Easily in my top five bands are **The Doors**. *LA Woman*, *The End...* these are road soundtracks for me. Jim Morrison wasn't just really good-looking, he was a killer beat poet as well. The music was poetic too, and they seem to have pioneered the keyboard in rock — it was their main instrument. They soundtrack every awesome time I've ever had. Any great performer has an audience that wants to be liked by that performer more than the performer likes them. The Doors had that effect.

When I hear **Supertramp**, I have memories of my dad. We listened to *Breakfast In America* so many times and it was too good. When Supertramp came out, was there anyone like them? No. These weren't songs to dance to, these are stories about people's lives.

The first time I heard **Steely Dan** was on the jukebox of a bar I was playing pool in and I started playing better to Peg! *Bodhisattva* is their proggiest song. But on *Aja*, they might have been unpopular with their methods to get the sound they wanted, but sometimes you just gotta go there or you'll never find what you're looking for.

My brother had **The Police's** *Synchronicity*. He was older and had the money to buy albums. I was 14 and I fell in love with *King Of Pain*, I played that over and over. I wouldn't have known to call them prog at the time, but their sound was definitely very new, with a little Rush in this. They brought a bit of prog rock to mainstream pop, like Green Day brought punk. The Police were never going to be like King Crimson — just a cool band to listen to. They wanted to be big and make pop records. With this one it seemed that once people were hooked, they'd bring them over to prog, possibly the real music they wanted to make.

I didn't know **Peter Gabriel** from Genesis, I knew him from MTV. *Scratch* [Gabriel's second solo album from 1978] was him being him. Me and Peter Gabriel probably have one thing in common: I'm a comedian's comedian, I'm liked because I'm more daring and I'm not trying to be popular. There's bite in this album and if another musician heard this album, they might be inspired by it. The songs I like best are *Animal Magic* and *DIY*. Not killer songs, but you acquire a taste for them.

One of the jokes I have is, 'I'm about to fuck up your moral compass.' I hate conditioned people coming to comedy. Leave that outside and get a taste of this. This album has the same attitude to it — he's not trying to please you. If you don't like it, you can go feed off Ed Sheeran or someone who knows what you want to hear and gives it to you. Compare *Scratch* to a pop album — you'd know which one's the caviar and which is the McDonald's."

Tom Stade's live show, You're Welcome, is available to download now from www.tomstade.co.uk. Find him on Twitter at @TomStadeComic.



"Compare Peter Gabriel's *Scratch* to a pop album - you'd know which one's the caviar and which is the McDonald's."





CHARLIE CAWOOD

The multi-instrumentalist who skilfully blends Eastern and Western musical philosophies has just released a debut album seven years in the making. *Prog* finds out what took him so long.

Words: Grant Moon **Portrait:** Bo Hansen

He plays bass in Knifeworld, took over from Kavus Torabi as the multi-instrumentalist for the Mediaeval Baebes, teaches music and has plenty else on besides. At 29, Charlie Cawood is treading a fascinating path, blending classical Western music with Asian and Oriental styles, all with an avant-garde, psych sensibility. His first solo album, *The Divine Abstract*, is a transcendent work of art, an erudite instrumental exploration of both culture and spirit. It's been seven years in the making and has seen him bravely confront the depression that has dogged him for years.

How did you become so well versed in non-Western music?

I started learning classical music in school, did my grades, sight reading, theory. I was living in Ilford, which is a great cosmopolitan part of London, and I was asked out of the blue if I'd like to learn sitar. From there I got into Indian classical music, but also flamenco, which is probably the hardest thing you can do on guitar. I also studied the pipa – the Chinese lute – at summer school at the Royal Academy Of Music. I went to a Japanese music concert on the South Bank when I was 16 and that really opened my eyes to that part of the world. I didn't do A-Levels, but got a diploma from the Guitar Institute in London, then a degree in Contemporary Music from the London Centre Of Contemporary Music, where I now teach. I went on to study East Asian Music at SOAS [School Of Oriental and African Studies].

Was there any rock or prog in your musical diet back then?

Early on I was into Aerosmith, Iron Maiden, Bad Religion, then as a 16-year-old I got into Zappa, Gong, Ozric Tentacles. I never really considered these prog, but because I was into more exploratory music, that was a label people started applying to me! Later I discovered Porcupine Tree, Tool, Opeth. [Miles Davis'] *Bitches Brew* gave me a real taste for jazz, as did Mahavishnu, but particularly John McLaughlin's work with Shakti, which was a bridge between guitar music and Indian classical. I was oblivious to any prog scene before I got into Knifeworld. But Kavus

[Torabi] got me into that Cardiacs-y scene – Stars In Battledress, Thumpermonkey, North Sea Orchestra, those guys.

How did your association with Knifeworld come about?

Ten years ago a friend took me to what would be the Cardiacs' last Astoria gig. I didn't know a single song, but I loved it – it's probably my favourite gig ever. Weirdly, Knifeworld's then-drummer Khyam [Allami] was a fellow student at SOAS. I went to a gig in 2011 and met Kavus through him. We got talking and soon after, he asked me to join the band.

And Kavus was the Mediaeval Baebes' instrumentalist before you, wasn't he?

He's known [lead Baebel] Katharine Blake for years. I remember my GCSE teacher making disparaging remarks about them as they were on the classical crossover charts. But I listened and heard them do all this weird, complex psych stuff too. When Kavus joined Gong, he asked me if I'd be interested in the gig because he knew I played saz, oud and all these non-Western instruments. That was three-and-a-half years ago. I've played with them a lot at gigs and festivals, and they've got an album out next year.

The Divine Abstract brings together the many diverse strands of your experience. Why did it take over seven years to make?

It's like it needed that time to gestate into something meaningful. I've got many friends playing lots of different parts, a cast of people who've only come into my life in the past few years. Amir [Shoat] who engineered and co-produced it with me, Katharine's on it, Chlöe [Herington] from Knifeworld's on bassoon, Diego [Tejeda, of Haken]. But Knifeworld's been busy, so have the Mediaeval Baebes, and my other bands Tonochrome and My Tricky Spirit. Between gigging, teaching and touring, the album got pushed aside.

You've been very open about your battle with depression. That must have been a factor too?

Yes. I started to accept I suffer from depression about three years ago, when it was really starting to affect my life, my ability to function. Then last year I went through a particularly bad bout. Being open about it brings you closer to the people around you; talking about it without the fear of stigma makes you more socially engaged. It turns out that practically all my musician friends suffer through depression and anxiety. When I got back into the album a few years ago, the depression scuppered it – it made me very fearful and created a barrier between me and the music. Then I realised that the one thing I had to hold on to, when all other meaning had disappeared, was the album.

And did focusing on the album help?

It did. When I settled down to work on it, I knew I was in the right place. But it's not like it cured my mental health – it brought a lot of stress of its own! But through the anxiety there was an end goal in mind. I write myself out of the state, rather than make music that draws on it. The music doesn't express it, but dispels it.

Some parts of the title track reference William Blake – *Fearful Symmetry*, *The Earth's Answer*. Are you a fan?

Yes, and not just his poetry but his ideas about creativity and the imagination, that transcendental thing he had. I'm really interested in how instrumental music can form a liminal space between two different states.

Eh?

[Laughs] The middle part of *Earth Dragon* combines musical themes from the first and third parts, so it's this in-between space with elements of both the past and future. I was watching a lot of David Lynch at the time! I just love the universality of the language of instrumental music. It comes from a purer, more abstract place, and helps us access something that's higher than music just tied down with words.

The Divine Abstract is out now on Bad Elephant. For more information, see charliecawood.bandcamp.com.



"A friend took me to what would be the Cardiacs' last Astoria gig. I didn't know a single song, but I loved it."



The Giant Awakens



Prog takes a trip to the south coast to witness **Gentle Giant** being inducted into the Portsmouth Hall Of Fame, and to discuss the early days with the band to mark the release of the Steven Wilson-produced *Three Piece Suite*.

Words: Daryl Easlea
Illustration: George Underwood

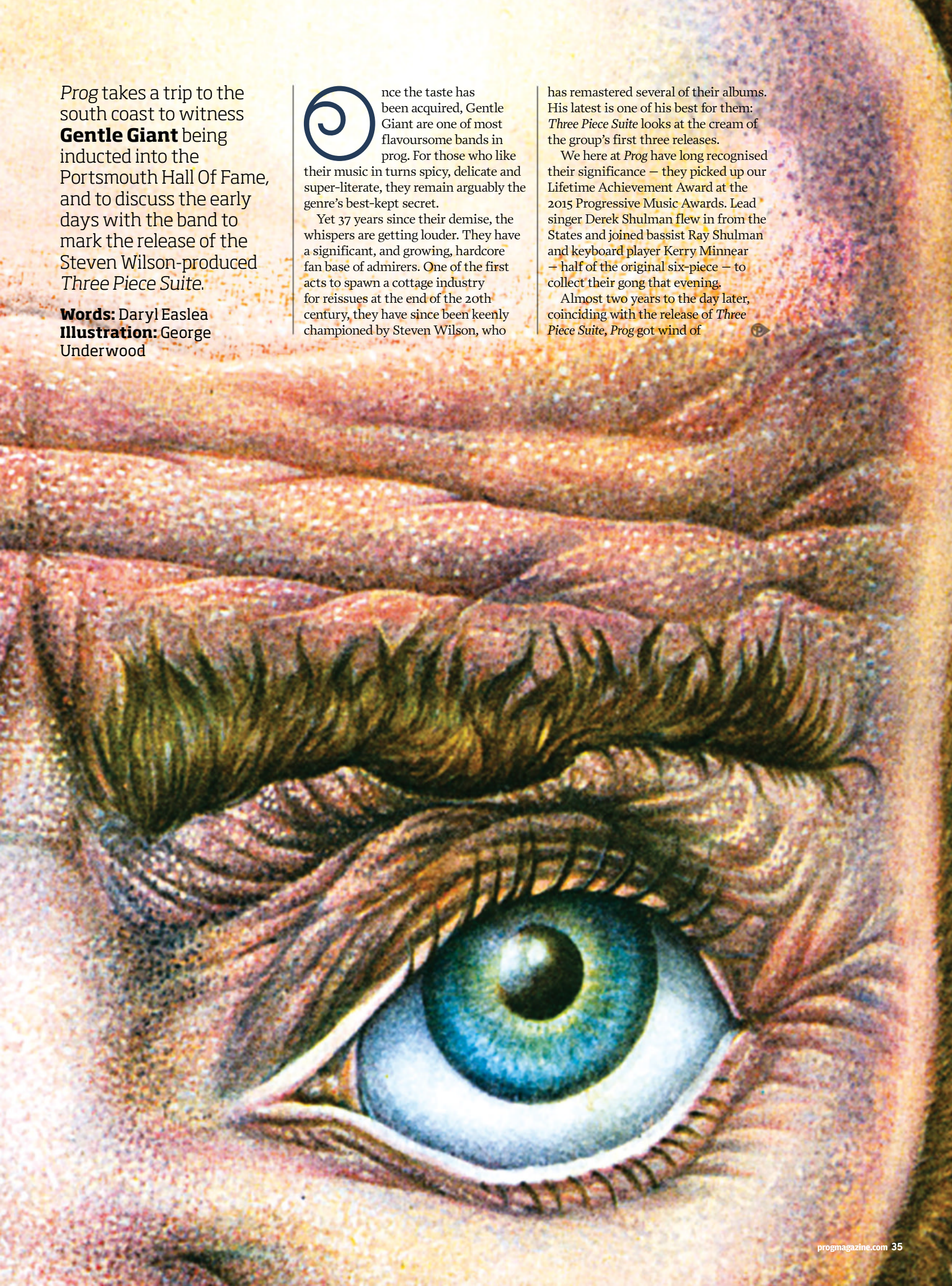
Once the taste has been acquired, Gentle Giant are one of most flavoursome bands in prog. For those who like their music in turns spicy, delicate and super-literate, they remain arguably the genre's best-kept secret.

Yet 37 years since their demise, the whispers are getting louder. They have a significant, and growing, hardcore fan base of admirers. One of the first acts to spawn a cottage industry for reissues at the end of the 20th century, they have since been keenly championed by Steven Wilson, who

has remastered several of their albums. His latest is one of his best for them: *Three Piece Suite* looks at the cream of the group's first three releases.

We here at *Prog* have long recognised their significance – they picked up our Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2015 Progressive Music Awards. Lead singer Derek Shulman flew in from the States and joined bassist Ray Shulman and keyboard player Kerry Minnear – half of the original six-piece – to collect their gong that evening.

Almost two years to the day later, coinciding with the release of *Three Piece Suite*, *Prog* got wind of



a very special event taking place in Portsmouth, the band's home town, and soon were on a fast train to the south coast. The group — and Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, their hit-making precursors — were being inducted into the Portsmouth Hall Of Fame at the Guildhall, right there in the middle of the city.

It was here in the Guildhall that the Stones, Jimi Hendrix and many others played. Davy O' List stood in for Syd Barrett when Pink Floyd played here in 1967, and it was where *Dark Side Of The Moon* was first played in its entirety five years later. It was here, too, that a 12-year-old Derek Shulman bunked off school to see The Beatles, but was



This year's *Three Piece Suite*, featuring remastered tracks from the band's first three classic albums.

"I love Acquiring The Taste, I love the atmosphere of it. It feels so ethereal; it's a magic noise."

Gary Green

caught in the queue on a Southern TV news bulletin that got him in trouble.

At a beautifully organised and tremendously sincere event, the brothers who founded Gentle Giant — Derek, Ray and, most importantly, Phil Shulman — were together, along with founder member Kerry Minnear. This was *huge* news as Phil, the eldest brother and the group's original visionary, now a very spritely 80-year-old, hadn't been in the same room publicly with his brothers since 1973. Although Gentle Giant were to play the hall twice themselves in '74, and '75, Phil had long left the group.

Surrounded by the extended Shulman clan, it was like being at a sizeable family wedding: children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren mingled with cousins, wives, nephews, nieces and old friends from the Portsmouth music scene. Even Tony Ransley, the drummer from Simon Dupree, was there.

Gentle Giant join a Hall Of Fame that already includes other well-known



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

MIKAEL ÅKERFELDT (OPETH)

Favourite: *Octopus*

"I stumbled upon Gentle Giant through my record collecting in the early 90s. To this day I've never heard a band that can compete with them. Not only were they technically amazing but they delivered every note with great feel. It's quite rare to hear that within complex progressive rock. I think the full 'classic' line-up with John Weathers on drums was as close to prog perfection as you can get. The song *Peel The Paint* is a classic. There's a section in that song where the violins change modes in a falling melody. That makes me seasick, irritated, amazed. How can you write stuff like that? It's absolutely stunning!

"I think they started going downhill on *The Missing Piece*, but prior to that, all the albums are great, and some are outstanding! Prog usually doesn't have the groove that Gentle Giant had. They had *soul*." DL

Class And Quality: Gentle Giant shot exclusively for *Prog* in Portsmouth, August 2017. L-R: Kerry Minnear, Derek Shulman, Phil Shulman, Ray Shulman.



exponents of Pompey showbiz, Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Joe Jackson, Mick Jones from Foreigner and Mark King (from the Isle of Wight).

After the ceremony, *Prog* enjoys an exclusive audience with Gentle Giant. The repartee is priceless. At the start of our interview, we discuss Phil being back in the fold for the day and, just as *Prog* says, “Which is...” Derek chips in with “very sad” and Ray retorts simultaneously with “historic”, which offers a remarkable insight into the fraternal dynamic of the band. Phil jokes that he feels something of an imposter in the city as “I live in Gosport”. A cursory look at a map will tell you it’s less than two miles away.

We were initially to talk about the three albums *Gentle Giant*, *Acquiring The Taste* and *Three Friends* from which *Three Piece Suite* is made, but on returning to London, we felt we should expand our article to include their ground-breaking fourth album *Octopus*, and assess Phil’s years with the band as a whole. Calls were made to Wales, America and Sussex and soon our Giant tale was complete.

Hear how their first four albums – lauded, loved and, in their original

south coast, would consider opening one. The Shulman family had relocated there from Glasgow in the late 1940s. Their father, a professional musician (and sales rep by day), had been posted there during the war and realised that he wanted to move his family out of the Gorbals.

The three Shulman brothers grew up in a very musical household: youngest Ray recalls learning the trumpet at the age of five, and the violin two years later. Phil, the eldest brother, was born in 1937, eye-wateringly prehistoric for pop, and was a jazzier.

After teenage bands the Howling Wolves and the Road Runners, the brothers morphed into Simon Dupree And The Big Sound. Derek, the lead singer, ‘became’ Dupree.

Signed to the Arthur Howes Agency and EMI, the group were on package tours and moved quickly away from their R&B roots after hitting the post-Pepper UK Top 10 in 1967 with the pop-psych novelty *Kites*.

From then on, as the group chased another hit single, the returns diminished. After one too many cabaret appearances, in 1969 the Shulmans decided, as was the mood

“Ray was the peacemaker. Phil and I were at each other’s throats all the damn time!”

Derek Shulman

Vertigo pressings, extremely collectible – are the gold standard in progressive rock, and marvel as Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, Phil, Derek and Ray, were in the clubs one moment, then on *Top Of The Pops*. Next, they’re touring Scotland with the future Elton John as their keyboard player, then – as Gentle Giant – they’re playing with members of the Royal Academy Of Music and being produced by Tony Visconti. It all happened very quickly. In fact, it all seemed a bit like a fable...

In the early 60s, it seemed unlikely that the Shulmans would enter a Hall Of Fame, or that Portsmouth, a vital but somewhat unloved hub on the UK’s

of the times, to head in an altogether jazzier, proggy direction.

“There was this whole change in the air anyway,” Ray explains. “As Simon Dupree we played a gig with Cream in Bournemouth.”

“We blew them off the stage,” Phil says. “There was a big cultural shift in the 60s. We were that generation. The first thing Cream said when we came off: ‘What are you on, lads?’ Nothing – we were just a sweaty band.”

“Jeff Lynne was in the Idle Race, Robert Plant was in the Band Of Joy, Robert Fripp in the League Of Gentlemen,” explains Derek. “We were all going through a similar



Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, L-R: Eric Hine, Tony Ransley, Ray Shulman, Pete O'Flaherty, Phil Shulman, Derek Shulman.



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant’s first four albums.

NAD SYLVAN

Favourite: *Three Friends*

“My favourite of the early ones is a draw between *Acquiring The Taste* and *Three Friends*, I regretfully must confess! But *Three Friends* has my all-time favourite Gentle Giant track on it, the title track, because it has that spine-tingling moment in the second half, with vocal harmonies, Mellotron and organ, and an impossible guitar and bass riff that even loses their drummer in the end! That was Malcolm Mortimore, who made just one album with them. It’s a standout in their whole catalogue.

“Their live version of *Peel The Paint* from *Playing The Fool* [their 1977 live album] is what made me go back and discover their earlier work. *Three Friends* was also their first self-produced record. They were in full control, and it shows.” DL



thing: people started to move away from pop music.”

The brothers — who soon dispensed with most of the rest of the Big Sound — had a champion in manager Gerry Bron, who put them on a weekly wage, with a road crew to build their dream. It was Bron, too, who was instrumental in their new name: “Colin Richardson, a wordsmith who worked for Gerry, titled us,” Phil recalls. “‘You play gently and you play loud: Gentle Giant.’ At first I cringed: it sounded like someone selling sweetcorn.”

“We were putting the music together,” Derek says. “We said, ‘Call us what you like!’”

The Shulmans, along with Southampton-based drummer Martin Smith, who’d graduated from the Mojoes to the Big Sound, needed some like-minded souls to accompany them on their journey. In early 1970, they were to come across Minnear by chance: “Kerry’s arrival was very important to us,” says Ray.

“My house was a student house and a big lad from Kerry’s school in Dorset said that he knew someone who was in a band and that the poor bastard was starving,” Phil says. “I told him I was interested. When he mentioned the Royal Academy, I thought, ‘Well, he can’t be half bad.’”

Minnear had graduated from the Academy with a degree in percussion. He had joined a band called Rust, and had been stranded in Germany when the group imploded. “I got a phone call out of the blue,” he recalls. “I brought Eric Lindsey from Rust with me, as I heard they needed a guitarist.”

Minnear was in. Lindsey — who now owns a music shop in South London — was not. “We told Kerry he was a great player but a crap talent scout!” says Phil.

Minnear relocated to Portsmouth and stayed with Phil and his wife Roberta for the next six months. “I wrote a lot of stuff there,” he says.

A regime was established that was straightforward. “We were writing and rehearsing,” Derek says. “Rehearsing all day and every day.”

The next giant step for the band was to get a guitarist, and so they duly placed an ad in *Melody Maker*. In March 1970, 19-year-old blues player Gary Green was the 45th person they saw. Green was dazzled by their professionalism.

“It was another world for me — they had these guys at their beck and call,” he says. “Martin Smith stood up and motioned he needed a cigarette, and Frank [Covey], the roadie, lit one and gave it to him. There was all this equipment: two 4x12 stacks for each player. I was a little bit intimidated: it was only the cannabis that kept me sane!”

He impressed the others as he was the first guitarist to tune up. "Gary was such a blues player," says Ray. "Steve Hackett is not a blues player, he plays his lines like a classical guitarist. That was what made us unique."

After a subsequent audition, Green was in, staying with Ray in Portsmouth as the band continued rehearsing and beginning to play shows – their first at the city's poly in May was billed as 'Gentle Giant featuring ace singer Simon Dupree'. The Dupree moniker would never fully leave Derek Shulman. "I was a pop star," he laughs. "I still am."

"He used to say, 'Call me Simon,'" says Phil. "Oh, he was Simon."

"I still *am* Simon," Derek retorts.

Brothers in pop are never the easiest of bedfellows. This billing must have been the sort of thing that caused a rift between them? "Of course!" Derek replies, relishing the moment.

"In one interview I was asked: 'What's it like having a famous brother?'" says Ray.

"I was never *that* comfortable with it," says Derek. "I had the two brothers behind me going, 'Yeah, right, you're Simon! That brought you back to earth!'"

And 'down to earth' they remained in 1970, as the gig was poorly attended, but it didn't stop them taking support slots and, importantly, playing, playing, playing.

When their much-loved debut album was released, producer Tony Visconti wrote a suitably in-era sleevenote about the group getting their heads together in their country cottage, taking you very much into their world. The truth, of course, is a tad more prosaic. "That was the time people were retreating to the country," Minnear remembers.

"We retreated to a pub!" Ray laughs.

Gentle Giant set up camp at the Cambridge Arms, just off Portsmouth's Commercial Road. The band formed a tight-knit community. "After living with Kerry and Lesley, Derek and I had a flat together for about a year," Green recalls. "We used to go bait digging and fishing; we really were in each other's pockets. It wasn't that we'd just



see each other in rehearsals – we'd pop round, go for a drink, a curry afterwards, rush home to see *Monty Python*. I also stayed with Derek, Ray and Phil's mum, Becky: they'd bought her a terrace out of the proceeds of

Simon Dupree. She'd cook up Arabic rice for everybody."

The band soon became a much in-demand support act: "You use what you've got. Kerry and Ray were very good musicians," Phil recalls. "Derek and I were very good showmen. On stage, we could turn something round by a grimace, or a gesture. There was a showbusiness schtick in us. Certainly an energy."

This showmanship would see them open for most of the prog hierarchy of the day, and to herald their first time at the Marquee, they supported Slade.

It was time to capture the material they had been stockpiling, and so the band went to Trident Studios in August 1970 to cut their self-titled debut. "Gerry Bron suggested Tony Visconti to produce," Derek says.



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

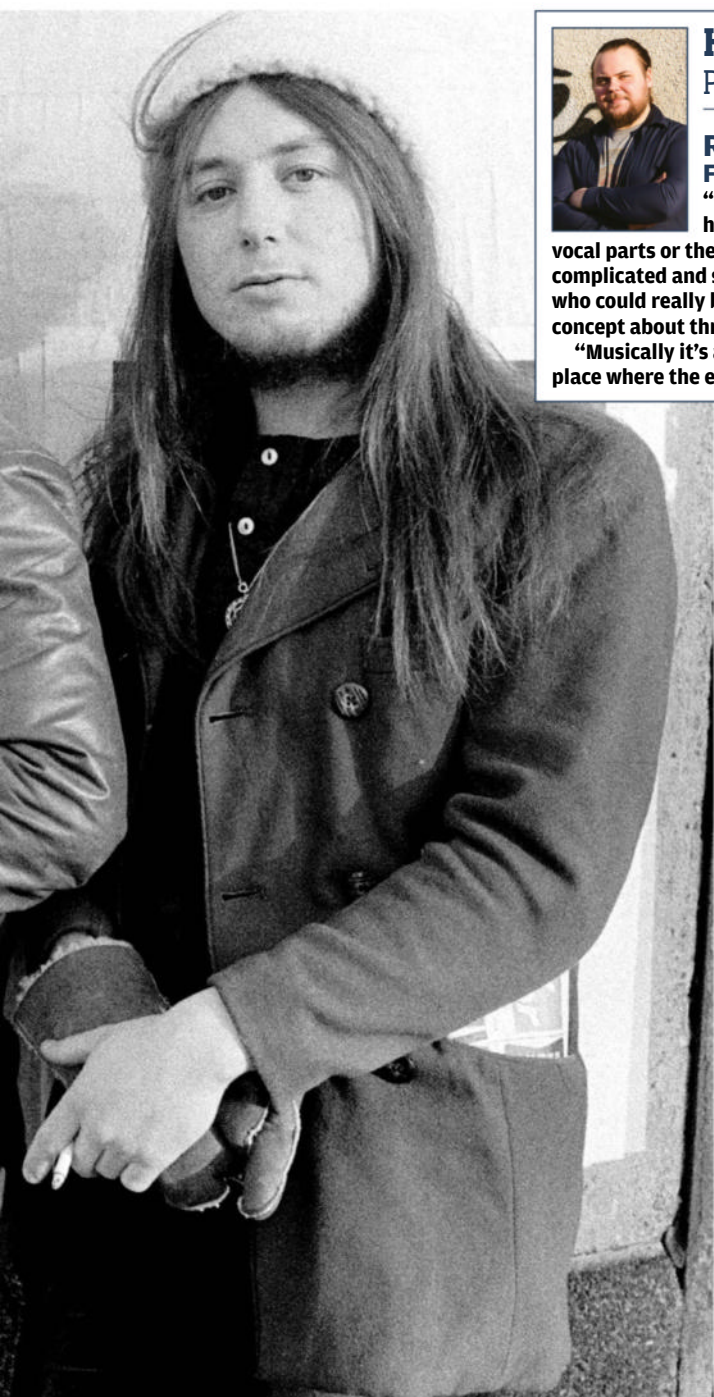
Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

ROINE STOLT (THE FLOWER KINGS/TRANSATLANTIC)

Favourite: *Acquiring The Taste*

"You can't really talk about the British prog scene of the 70s without mentioning Gentle Giant. The first few albums were an eye-opener for a growing underground audience. These were the days of grand creations and individualism being allowed in the music business. Gentle Giant took prog to the extreme, in a way. No other band has displayed such a diverse vision of what can be put into rock music. The truth is, Gentle Giant's music is probably more folk, classical, burlesque, vocal a cappella and chamber music than it is rock. It was all very elaborate and elevated.

"But all of their albums stand tall alongside the finest of Yes, Genesis or ELP. Gentle Giant were a treat live, too, and I got to see them twice!" DL



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

RIKARD SJÖBLOM (GUNGFLY/EX-BEARDFISH)

Favourite: *Three Friends*

"Gentle Giant are simply unique, with a sound that many – oh yes, guilty as charged! – have tried to mimic or tap into, but no one really comes close. Whether it's their intricate vocal parts or their complex instrumental workings, it's theirs and theirs alone. While their music was complicated and sophisticated, they still managed to actually rock out as well, and with a lead singer who could really belt it out! I love *Three Friends* in particular because I can particularly relate to the concept about three childhood friends who grow apart as they get older due to different circumstances.

"Musically it's a fantastic album, and although there are many highlights, I would probably pick the place where the epilogue hits in the title track at around 2:25... I'm a sucker for the drama!" DL

Funny Ways, always a group favourite, which highlighted their delicate, madrigal-influenced side, while the stomping *Why Not?* blared their hard-rocking intent. *Nothing At All* was their first truly standout track, moving from floating CSN-style vocal harmonies – learned while the Shulmans were in Simon Dupree – mixed with Minnear's off-the-wall Cornelius Cardew-influenced musicianship.

"The first album was the stage show, which is why there was a drum solo," says Derek. "You don't do that on an album for the most part."

"We'd never played any of those songs live," Ray says. "We did a lot of experimentation; it was very much a studio record."

"It's a moody album," Phil adds. "If you look at the lyrics, you can't pin down what it's about. I went through an art book and got ideas from that – *The Moon Is Down*, for instance: the moon doesn't come down, the moon goes up! It's a surreal album. I really like it. *Black Cat* was a tribute to William Blake's *Tyger Tyger Burning Bright*."

It was these concepts that set Gentle Giant apart. Phil, who'd taught art

"There was a lot of sibling rivalry. Phil, the older brother, was our kind of gangmaster in a way. Derek was the singer and had a lot to say for himself. Ray was gentle: the youngest, nearest to my age. There was obviously a dynamic between the three of them that I just did not understand."

Malcolm Mortimore

"He lived in a scruffy little flat in Putney," Phil remembers. "We used to stay on his floor."

Visconti was another jobbing producer then: *The Man Who Sold The World* had just been released, but the whole T.Rex explosion was yet to happen. "Mick Ronson and Woody Woodmansey – the guys from Hull – used to turn up at Trident," Phil adds.

"I think Bowie turned up once, too," says Derek.

"We didn't shoo anyone away," says Phil.

Visconti had a fan in Gary Green: "I thought he was a little bit of a magician. He was a really good musician, and he really understood what we were doing."

Among the album's seven tracks that showcased their versatility, there was

Gentle Giant in January 1972. Back row, L-R: Kerry Minnear, Derek Shulman, Phil Shulman, Gary Green. Front: Malcolm Mortimore, Ray Shulman.

A Giant Leap: the band's self-titled 1970 debut album.



"Like it or not, it was still rock'n'roll that had to be performed," adds Phil.

Gentle Giant appeared with little fanfare in November 1970. With its sleeve designed by David Bowie's school friend George Underwood, it was melodic, quirky and loaded with gravitas.

"People said *Gentle Giant* didn't do that well, but it did okay," Derek says. "It certainly wasn't a big chart burner, but it got our name on the map and enabled us to make another record."

Visconti was to return for the next album, too, recorded at AIR and Advision in the first months of 1971. *Acquiring The Taste*, released that July, has become the connoisseur's Giant album. "I love *Acquiring The Taste*, I love the atmosphere of it. It feels so ethereal; it's a magic noise," Green says.

at Eastney Secondary Modern Boys' School, was full of ideas and happy to put them into songs. And, of course, there were a lot of references to giants.

"François Rabelais [author of the *Gargantua And Pantagruel* series of novels], the giant bit, I read that before it was popular because it's filthy! I looked for anything coarse! The warm goose neck, a wonderful way of wiping your arse. I tried to turn that into a song."

With its sleeve a reference to licking the backside of the music business, there was a factor at play that similar prog groups didn't have: cynicism.

"The Shulmans had one bite of the apple, but now they wanted a bigger one," Green recalls. "Phil certainly had his eyes wide open about this ruthless, cut-throat business. He wasn't

gonna let naivety through the door, and we'd got the thick skin."

"People were now getting intrigued by whatever the hell it was we were doing," says Derek.

There was someone who wasn't intrigued, however. Gerry Bron decided amicably to move on. "Gerry hated *Acquiring The Taste*," Ray says. "Well, he would!"

"He didn't know what to do with it, did he?" Minnear reveals.

"He was having success with Uriah Heep, more traditional rock groups," Ray explains. "I think he thought after our first record, we'd go more in that direction."

In came World Wide Artists (WWA), the father and son team of Pat Meehan Snr and Jr to look after the group's affairs. Derek and Phil constantly looked for opportunities to build the group's success: one of the first things WWA did was to look at better exposure for the group in America. They signed to Columbia, as the Meehans understood the size and scale of the market.

There was to be another change – drummer Martin Smith was out. "Martin's playing was a bit 'tappy' for Phil," Green recalls. "Martin loved traditional jazz – if he'd been offered to play with Kenny Ball, that would have been his gig."

An advert was placed in *Melody Maker*, and Malcolm Mortimore was selected. "Even though I was just 18, I'd been playing the drums for a little while," Mortimore says. "I was in Train with [future Damned guitarist] Brian James, who'd opened for King Crimson. I was keen to get out in the biz."

After an audition at the Roebuck pub, in Tottenham Court Road, and a second in Portsmouth, Mortimore received "a telegram from World Wide Artists informing me I had got a place in the 'very talented musical group called Gentle Giant'. That's when I knew who I'd joined."

"Malcolm played incredible stuff," says Green. "Everything, all the time, all in one song. He was the best of the bunch."

Mortimore went down to Portsmouth and slept on a mattress



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

JON POOLE (LIFESIGNS/EX-CARDIACS)

Favourite: *Three Friends*

"Gentle Giant were one of many big influences on Tim Smith in Cardiacs so they're definitely in my DNA too. On the *Cruise To The Edge* things that I've done with Lifesigns, we all became very tight with 'Three Friends', the sort-of current version of the band. It features Gary Green and Malcolm Mortimore, who are both salt-of-the-earth geezers. I like them a lot. Malcolm gets the whole punk thing too. He's mates with Rat Scabies from The Damned! They're not fussed about the whole prog label. They're good lads!

"That's the album that Malcolm Mortimore played on. Did you know he used to be in Kilburn And The High Roads with Ian Dury?" DL

"We were plonked together with Sabbath a fair bit. It was an odd combination, but I think it did us more good than harm in the long run in terms of exposure."

Kerry Minnear

on the floor at the Minnears' home. After a week's rehearsal, Giant were out again playing shows, supporting Jethro Tull in Europe. "We were well-received," Mortimore recalls. "They loved the grandiose nature of it all."

It was also time, thanks to their incredible work ethic, to return to the studio. The time with Visconti had been pleasurable, but, as Green says, "We could produce ourselves. Anything went."

It cemented the close relationship with engineer Martin Rushent who, a decade later, would be the feted producer of the Human League's *Dare*.

"We became really chummy," Green continues. "We just fell into lockstep with him – he was as mad as we were."

After the Tull shows in January 1972, the group began sessions for *Three Friends*, a concept album about schoolmates taking different paths in life, at the recently opened Command Studios in Piccadilly.

Three Friends, the band's third album, released in 1972.



One of the key songs on *Three Friends* was *Peel The Paint*, which includes a three-minute improvised drum and guitar solo from Mortimore and Green.

"Phil told Malcolm to 'Go out there and make a noise,'" Green recalls. "We both played at the same time. I'd borrowed Mike Ratledge's Echoplex [Green's brother Jeff was a Soft Machine roadie]; it was totally improvised. We had an outline – start loud, get a bit quiet and then end up loud. That was as far as it went."

"It's a nice little album," says Minnear.

"People were listening in," adds Phil.

Mortimore began adapting to the group's funny ways: "There was a lot of sibling rivalry. Phil, the older brother, was our kind of gangmaster in a way. Derek was the singer and had a lot to say for himself. Ray was gentle, the youngest, nearest to my age. There was obviously a dynamic between the three of them that I just did not understand."

"It's funny really, Phil. Did we disagree at any time?" wonders Derek.

"Not a lot," Phil replies.

"Ray was the peacemaker," says Derek. "Phil and I were at each other's throats all the damn time!"

"It was always like the Marx Brothers," adds Green. "They were indeed huge fans. Phil would always talk about Marx Brothers movies."

In March 1972, Mortimore was involved in a serious motorcycle accident. "I broke my arm and leg, and cracked my pelvis. I was lucky I didn't total myself."

A tour was pending and so a replacement was needed. After considering ex-King Crimson drummer Mike Giles, Ray called up recent Grease Band drummer John 'Pugwash' Weathers. When in Eyes Of Blue, Weathers had supported Simon Dupree in South Wales in 1966 and they'd stayed in touch. In 1970 they'd shared a bill when he was playing with Graham Bond.

"I went down to Portsmouth for a knockabout. They liked it and offered me the job temporarily," Weathers recalls. "It was pretty obvious that I could pick up things quickly. After a couple of weeks, they asked if I fancied taking it on."



JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

FRANZ DI CIOCCIO (PFM)

Favourite: *Gentle Giant*

"We liked Gentle Giant because they were very creative. In some ways their approach to music was similar to ours: they mixed many sounds and languages – classical, jazz and the folk music of their own country... and rock as the glue! At the time of their first three albums, we became friends and we would spend time together during their Italian concerts. They were successful in Italy and both the audiences and the press appreciated them a lot.

"Some of the songs I love most are *Funny Ways* and *Alucard* from their first album, and *Pantagruel's Nativity* from the second. The Giants were always trying to be creative and innovative. That's how they surprised their audience." DL

Giant Steps: Derek Shulman
live on stage in Copenhagen,
January 1972.





GENS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

"I went to see them," Mortimore says. "I was in a wheelchair. They were keen to keep working, keep as tight as they could. Phil called me up and said 'Malcolm, I'm sorry to say this, you're fitting in really well, but John's got to stay.' I said, 'Alright, that's it' – they were off to America and that was that."

Like Phil Collins in Genesis, Weathers was ideal for Giant. The band were booked to promote *Three Friends* in the US, but prior to that, WWA had got them the strange gig of supporting the new Jimi Hendrix film, *Jimi Plays Berkeley*, around the UK.

"We'd do about 40 minutes, clear the stage, the screen would come down and they'd show the film," Weathers recalls. "It was a very strange setup. But after we'd seen the movie once, we didn't need to hang around."

WWA also looked after the interests of Black Sabbath, and Giant often supported Ozzy's legendary crew. "We were plonked together with Sabbath a fair bit," Minnear recalls. "It was an

The Boys In The Band,
L-R: Gary Green,
Ray Shulman, Derek
Shulman, John Weathers,
Kerry Minnear.

odd combination, but I think it did us more good than harm in the long run in terms of exposure."

"Black Sabbath had their portentous opening music – whenever they'd

are performing it like this. We were never being serious musos – 'Look at our virtuosity' – it was always a question of, 'We'll entertain you, so you'll enjoy it.'"

"We were never being serious musos – 'Look at our virtuosity' – it was always a question of, 'We'll entertain you, so you'll enjoy it.'"

Ray Shulman

hear that, the Shulmans, especially Phil, would sing '*one meatball and no spaghetti*' – they had a very dry sense of humour," remembers Mortimore.

On August 24, 1972, Giant began a North American tour with Sabbath. "The only hangover from Simon Dupree was stagecraft," Ray recalls. "A Sabbath audience was *not* a Gentle Giant audience. But I think we knew how to sell it, almost by exaggeration in a way: you *will* like this because we

Sweet Stuff: 1971's
Acquiring The Taste.



There was one notorious night at the Hollywood Bowl on September 15. "All the Columbia hierarchy were there," Derek recalls. "Before we went on, I got into a row with a bloke who said I was looking at his girlfriend, and he sprayed a water pistol at me."

"I said we should extend the things like *Peel The Paint*, and do about four numbers, real heavy stuff. But oh no. We thought, 'This is Los Angeles, they've got to be broad-minded musically.' *Wrong!*" says Weathers.

The audience could take no more madrigal: at the start of *Funny Ways*, firecrackers were thrown onstage. "One almost blew my shoes off!" Phil recalls. "I asked 15,000 people for a fight."

"It was what you called them..."

Minnear says.

"A bunch of cunts?" Phil says.

"They sat quite quietly," Minnear remembers. "It was my teacher's voice. 'Now *don't* do that again!'"

"We finished the set," Weathers says. "That was about the worst reception we ever got."



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

TIM BOWNESS (NO-MAN)

Favourite: *Three Friends*

"As with all the band's albums between 1970 and 1976, there's a constant sense of invention and discovery in the music on the first few, which effortlessly incorporates classical, rock, jazz and R'n'B elements. They brilliantly combined aspects of the past, like the baroque flourishes and the subtle modern jazz quartet touches, the then-present and a taste of things to come, through Gary Green's wonderfully knotty and echoed guitar parts.

"It's almost impossible to choose between *Three Friends* and *Acquiring The Taste* for me, but due to its unusual concept and the presence of the exquisite *Schooldays*, my favourite ever Gentle Giant song, *Three Friends* just about edges it." DL

Their next US tour with Yes and the Eagles was another strange experience. However, redemption was to come in the form of the final American jaunt of the year, back again with Jethro Tull, a simpatico band and audience.

"We were very compatible," Weathers says. "We'd go down an absolute storm – they were perfect for us, as that was the music that the audience were there for."

Recorded at Advision at the end of July 1972, *Octopus* was released that December. From its eye-catching Roger Dean cover onwards, it set the bar high for what prog rock should be: complex, intelligent, with a warm heart. What made the album so different? "Me!" Weathers laughs.

Minnear agrees: "John's solid approach changed the way we sounded as a band and the way we wrote. We could be more rhythmically adventurous with such a strong foundation. We were settling into our identity as a band and what characteristics were unique to us."

Weathers introduced Minnear to James Brown's music. "I played him *Sex Machine* and he thought it was brilliant, because he got it – suddenly, he just took off on it and started writing all these beautiful rhythmic pieces and doing all the clavinet stuff. Although he had a degree in percussion, he couldn't rock!"

"In the end, of all the albums we released, the cutest songs are on *Octopus*," Phil says.

"It was the zenith of Phil's time in the band," Derek says.

"I think *Octopus* as an album sounds confident both in the playing and in the way it's recorded," muses Minnear. "Even if the original idea of a concept album based on the characters in the band – a bit like Elgar's *Enigma Variations* – didn't materialise, each track seemed to develop confidently in its own right."

"John's drumming makes the music appear – and I say 'appear' purposely – simpler," says Green.

"*Octopus* was heavier prog, as it were," Weathers says. "We were rocking a lot more. Kerry and Ray had come up with some very good tunes, some good ideas from Phil."

"The lyrical content fitted the music absolutely brilliantly," says Green. "I'd heard some of Yes and Genesis – they were too far out for me. We all liked something a bit more real that you could get your teeth into – we were a bit more of a working-class prog band than the others. Even though we had highfalutin concepts: RD Laing, Camus and Rabelais, they made more real-life sense to me. We were a bit more down in the dirt."

As 1973 dawned, and the release date loomed for *Octopus* in America, the



HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

BENEDIKT MOMRAK (TUSMØRKE)

Favourite: *Acquiring The Taste*

"The first album I heard was *The Power And The Glory* and I absolutely hated it! [Laughs] But then I bought *Acquiring The Taste* and that was a lot closer to what I liked. There weren't so many horns! Gentle Giant used so many interesting sounds to illustrate moments in their songs. They made it sound easy. They never broke a sweat, even when they were playing wildly complicated things. The song I always dug the most was *Wreck*. I've included it in my DJ sets many times. I even suggested it as a cover song, but the other guys laughed at me and said it was a sea shanty! But it's an incredible song. "*Acquiring... was my first Gentle Giant love. *Three Friends* is possibly a superior album, objectively speaking, but *Acquiring The Taste* has a special place in my heart."* DL

single most significant shift in Gentle Giant's decade-long history occurred – Phil Shulman, ideas man, gangmaster, left the band. Of course, it wasn't just music – it was family too. Today, Phil is reflective: "It's done. It's history."

"To tour, and to record, took an immense amount of time and energy

returned to work quickly: by March they were back on the road in America, promoting *Octopus*.

"I'm naturally quite lazy so when Phil left, I probably moaned inwardly that I would now have to learn to play the missing trumpet and sax parts on one of my seven unpredictable

"In the end, of all the albums we released, the cutest songs are on *Octopus*."

Phil Shulman

and forward thinking," Derek says.

"It was very difficult for Phil."

"Believe me, had I been a single man, it would have been a different situation altogether," Phil says. "But I wasn't, and I had to remind myself of that."

"It was difficult for him and it was difficult for us, but the fact is, we decided to continue, even though it was tough for Ray and I – this is our brother," Derek says.

"We were very unsure if we could continue," Ray adds.

"We were pretty close," says Phil.

"We are again now," says Derek.

"His wife was in her 30s, with two young children," Weathers says. "He was homesick, whereas we were all in our mid-20s. Phil, being 10 years older, didn't have what the Welsh call 'hwyl' – a mood, a fervour to be on tour. Phil had said he was thinking about leaving, then he didn't, then he said it again, and didn't."

"When we were on our Italian tour, Pat Meehan Snr got Phil in and said that we'd had enough – 'Are you leaving or are you not!?' Phil said, 'I'm leaving.' Pat said goodbye and that was that. He didn't have any chance to change his mind. Derek and Ray had their heads in their hands. We still had the writers – what was the point in finishing?"

"Phil was the first director of the band – he established its moral authority," says Green. "We made the bulk of the sound, we were the noise. We became a harder-edged band."

There's no doubting the importance of Phil Shulman to Gentle Giant. In a way, his work was done. The band

keyboards," Minnear suggests. "Phil was missed as a lyricist and general 'envisioner'. We got on with the job of writing *In A Glass House* in the same manner as previous projects, by me and Ray writing music and sharing ideas and Derek getting involved with vocals and lyrics as things moved along."

"We were all young, all out there and enjoying it all," Weathers says. "Derek was now the leader of the pack: we used to take the mickey out of him something terrible. He used to take it all so seriously at times!"

Poised to make headway in America as a five-piece, and depart from *Vertigo*, that's where we wind up our tale. So, on reflection, how were the first 25 months of Gentle Giant?

"As a band we were possibly at our most comfortable and stress-free, and looking back through rose-tinted glasses, I'm pretty sure we were a happy bunch," Minnear concludes.

"We weren't chasing anything – we just wanted to do something a bit different," Derek adds. "Did we want to make a living? Yes! Did we want to be really big? Of course! But it was more than that. We enjoyed composing, playing and learning music. We were surrounded by great players and learning all the time. Even in the times when supposedly the albums became more pop, we were still learning."

Ah, the time when the albums went pop – but that's another tall story, and one that we shall tell at some point in the future... ☺

Three Piece Suite is out now via Alucard. See bit.ly/gentle-giant-official for details.

Squid's in: the hugely influential *Octopus*.



Arc de Triomphe

Fifty years into their career, German proggers **Eloy** are still going strong. They've recently released the first part of a double concept album about Joan Of Arc that they're planning to take on the road as a full-on rock opera. Founder member **Frank Bornemann** reveals all...

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Kate Cymmer

Adored by a huge fan base in their native Germany but very much a cult concern everywhere else, Eloy must surely be progressive rock's greatest unsung heroes. Founded by singer/guitarist Frank Bornemann in Hannover in 1969, they emerged at a time when all eyes were on the English scene and the very notion of German prog rock was still in its infancy.

Against the odds and 50 years on, Eloy are very much alive and well and enjoying a fresh surge in popularity following the release of elaborate new concept piece *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre*. Bornemann may now be in his seventies, but as he graces *Prog* with an impressively detailed history of his band's five decades, his energy levels and unbridled enthusiasm for making adventurous music remain undimmed. That said, he does note that Eloy very nearly fell at the first hurdle.

"In Germany it was very, very hard at times, particularly in the very beginning," he recalls. "There just weren't that many bands in Germany that played their own music at that time. We started in 1969 and our first steps, well, let's just say that it wasn't a brilliant start. We made one album for Philips (1971's *Eloy*) and it was a complete flop. So I changed the line-up and we tried harder to find our own style of music. We were influenced by some English bands, of course, like Genesis,

Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd and so on, but we were determined to find our own thing, which wasn't so easy in the beginning."

The accepted wisdom about Germany's contribution to the prog rock realm in the 70s is that the wildly experimental efforts of Can, Faust, Tangerine Dream and Amon Düül II were the only show in town. In truth, the Krautrock movement existed in parallel with a more recognisably prog-inclined splurge of bands, all of whom were somewhat overshadowed by their more consciously cool fellow countrymen and the heavyweights of the English prog scene, despite producing some extraordinary music along the way. Eloy's second album *Inside* is a great example of how distinctive German prog swiftly became: released on Harvest Records in September 1973, it single-handedly confirmed that Germany had its own credible prog rock force, even if the world at large was to remain stoically immune.

"We had signed to Harvest and it was the home of Pink Floyd and Deep Purple and other famous groups, so I was very pleased about it!" Bornemann remembers with a chuckle. "*Inside* was the first step in a new direction. That one was released in the United States too and it was quite successful. And now we were doing okay in Germany. We played many, many concerts, and over time we became more and more popular at home."

Buoyed by vociferous support from German rock fans, Eloy's second crack at the whip proved to be decisive. The next few years saw the band release a steady succession of bold, ingenious and idiosyncratic albums that enabled them to consolidate their support at home while gradually accruing attention from other parts of the world. Unfortunately, as Bornemann recalls with a rueful sigh, Eloy were seemingly cursed to undergo relentless line-up changes and sudden splits. However, their leader's good-natured determination somehow propelled them onwards, and by the late 70s Eloy were enjoying major commercial success in Germany.

"I was also producing the band by that point," says Bornemann. "The first one I produced was *Dawn* [1976] and that was our first very big success in Germany. The follow-up, *Ocean*, was the best-selling progressive rock album ever in Germany. We sold 350,000 copies, which is a lot! But then I thought we had to come out with something different and so we made another album, *Silent Cries And Mighty Echoes*, and that was also very successful in Germany but, once again, there was a lot of quarrelling in the band. So, once again, we split!"

As with most bands that survived prog's late-70s downfall, Eloy were an intermittent and sometimes tentative force during the 80s. Bornemann's quiet persistence kept the



“

No one else is trying to produce a rock opera right now, that's for sure! It's very expensive and it takes a long time, so it doesn't happen very often, but the response has been very positive.

”



A Dog's Life: Frank Bornemann and furry friend.

show on the road for the most part, even when the band were reduced to a two-man unit (the other man being keyboard player Michael Gerlach) for 1988's *Ra* album and the six years that followed it. But international success continued to elude them, despite occasional forays into the wider world.

"We did play shows in America in the 80s and they were very successful," Bornemann notes. "We also played in England, at the old Marquee Club. That was one of the greatest moments of my life, I must say. The response in England was incredibly positive. So we were accepted in many other countries, but it didn't compare with our German success. We had an artist contract with EMI in Germany for 12 years but our record company was not able to build or support our career in foreign countries. Unfortunately the band split up right after our successful concerts in America. That was a great mistake. We were getting offers from very good agencies in England, but sadly it was all in vain. I had to start from scratch and it wasn't the best conditions for sustaining the success. I had no musicians! [Laughs] It was just Michael and me for six years almost, but I also produced a lot of heavy metal bands, like Helloween for example. I had to find a way to survive, for economic reasons, but it was very interesting."

Thanks to the necessities of financial survival, Frank Bornemann now has a formidable reputation as a producer, but it's obvious that he has only ever viewed the job as a means to an end. In fact, he has just retired from producing other bands and has thrown himself wholly into the task of creating new Eloy music. The first results are *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre Part I*, the band's first album since 2009's much acclaimed comeback effort *Visionary* and, unquestionably, the most wildly ambitious record Bornemann has ever produced.

"From my side, *Visionary* was a thank you to the fans, who kept the band popular and kept the band alive around the world for all these years," he states. "Then, when we decided to play live again, that was an amazing success too. So then I was asking myself, 'What can I do now?' And that is how *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre* came to be."

The first half of a sprawling and almost alarmingly detailed rock opera based on the life and times of Joan Of Arc, the new Eloy album is a gloriously extravagant and atmospheric affair, and a self-evident labour of love. The result of many months of exhaustive research, coupled with Bornemann's rejuvenated songwriting, it's the kind of grandiloquent statement that could easily fall flat on its face. But, once again, Bornemann's rapacious dedication has ensured that the whole thing hangs together beautifully.

"I had a dream since the early 90s that I wanted to make a record about Joan Of Arc," he says. "That's the simple reason why I started to do it now. I adore Joan Of Arc. In the 90s I started to speak with writers and historians in France, I watched *all* the movies and I read many books about the subject, maybe every book there is! I must say I know the story very, very well, but the films always

Main Pic: Frank today.
Far Right: the 1971
Eloy line-up.



“

We did play shows in America in the 80s and they were very successful. We also played in England, at the old Marquee Club. That was one of the greatest moments of my life.

”



ELOY ARCHIVE

disappointed me. They never get it right and the story is never complete. No one ever seems to notice that Joan Of Arc had so many problems with her service and so many mixed emotions because of the war and the activities on the battlefield. She was a person with a big and complex love and compassion. Even for foes and enemies, she had compassion. But I never noticed that in any of the movies. It would always be a very compressed version of what happened. So I wanted to write something that would bring Joan Of Arc much closer to the audience than ever before, something more emotional, with more details. That's why I need two albums to do this!"

Prog is no stranger to historical narratives, of course, but it's incredibly rare to hear an album that prides itself on meticulously conveying the truth, rather than revelling in the mischievous possibilities of artistic licence. In truth, *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre* is a sincere attempt to shine a light on a legendary life, one that was lived with the kind of values and respect for humanity that appear to be under siege in the 21st century. Bornemann is making no attempt to draw a specific political or social allegory here, but there's no mistaking the album's overriding air of exasperation at man's cruelty to man and our inability to learn from our mistakes.

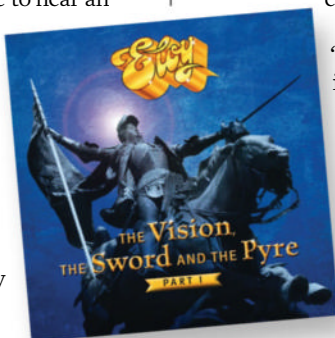
"Joan Of Arc was a true and honest person. The way the world is at the moment and the kind of situations we have, with so many problems, I think the behaviour of people of honour is an incredibly positive thing and it has a positive influence, by teaching these important values, of compassion and respect. She had all of that and demonstrated it through her life. No one could give more for something than she did, and that's an important lesson at any time in history. Okay, so the problems we have today are different, but this is also a very hard time and a big challenge for all of mankind."

Speaking of big challenges, Frank Bornemann is about to embark on an even more ambitious project. Currently working on the second part of *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre*, he has plans to turn the whole two-part caboodle into an eye-frazzling stage show, its premiere expected to take place in France, where Eloy have long retained a passionate fan base. With typical attention to detail, Bornemann has been learning French for many years and plans to translate the entire album into the language for its live incarnation. Even more impressively, Eloy hope to be taking this unashamed rock opera on the road, with onstage spoken dialogue translated into the language of each respective territory.

"In France, they call it 'spectacular musicale', although it's not a musical in the traditional sense because I hate to have sung dialogue," Bornemann explains. "For foreign countries, the music will be completely in English and then the spoken word will hopefully be in the language of the country we're playing in. That's my concept and my hope. In France they're very interested in helping me to

make this all happen. When I finish the second part of the album, which will be next year, I will have to write everything again from scratch in French and that will be very difficult. The languages don't work the same at all. I started to learn French from the ground up, but I'm still learning. There are not enough clear words in French – nearly every word has many different meanings. It can be very frustrating! [Laughs]"

72 years old and still thoroughly obsessed with the refined art of making daring, dramatic music, Frank Bornemann may still be an unsung hero but he really doesn't care. Instead, he's thinking big, speaking the truth and loving every minute of it. Joan Of Arc, you may speculate, would wholeheartedly approve.



Above: the first of a two-part album release from Eloy.

ELOY'S TOP FIVE

The band's classic albums for the uninitiated.



Inside (Harvest, 1973)

Transformed from the rather workaday blues rock of their 1969 debut, Eloy blossomed into something special on their sprawling second effort. Worth hearing for gargantuan opener *Land Of No Body* alone.



Power And The Passion (Electrola, 1975)

A mind-bending concept album that tells the tale of a scientist's son, his time-travelling exploits, penchant for marijuana and unexpected involvement in a peasants' mutiny in 1358. The tunes are brilliant, too.



Ocean (Electrola, 1977)

Arguably Eloy's masterpiece and their biggest success in Germany, *Ocean* both cemented the band's distinctive sound and allowed them to expand into more wildly atmospheric territory.



The Tides Return Forever (ACI, 1994)

After drifting away from their trademark sound for a number of years, Eloy's 16th album marked a welcome return to flat-out prog glory and kept the band's name alive during a rather tricky period for the whole genre.



Ocean 2: The Answer (GUN, 1998)

A long-awaited sequel to Eloy's magnum opus, *Ocean 2* didn't quite scale the heights of its illustrious predecessor, but it did confirm that Frank Bornemann had lost none of his exploratory zeal, or knack for penning a big tune. **DL**

"No one else is trying to produce a rock opera right now, that's for sure!" he laughs. "It's very expensive and it takes a long time, so it doesn't happen very often, but the response has been very positive. I'm astonished because at the beginning I thought that a rock opera with so many spoken parts would be a little bit dangerous! But somehow it works and I'm very, very happy." ☺

The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre Part 1 is out now via Artist Station. See www.eloy-legacy.com.

He's gone from being a piano-playing child prodigy to an *X Factor* contestant to working alongside prog royalty such as Andy Latimer and Francis Dunnery. Now **Peter Jones** is concentrating on his own music once more, with a particularly seasonal slice of prog for **Tiger Moth Tales'** third album...

Words: Grant Moon **Images:** Stuart Wood

From touring with Camel to recording with Francis Dunnery, the last few years have been a blizzard of activity for Peter Jones. But as he releases *The Depths Of Winter*, his third album as Tiger Moth Tales, the one-time pop wannabe reveals how his success in the prog world has come at a price.

"Japanese audiences are so enthusiastic, and so polite," says Jones. He was there in May last year, playing keyboards for Camel on their mini tour of the country. "There'd be this real explosion of applause and then... it'd stop dead, and they'd be absolutely silent during the performance."

Let's mention it here, and only once: Jones has been blind since he was just 15 months old. He experiences the world through such 'sound pictures' — audio and no video. It's a pretty humbling and sobering thought for those of us blessed with sight, and while his impairment is not the crux of his many achievements, it still makes them that bit more admirable.

Andy Latimer was pointed his way on the strength of *Cocoon*, the remarkable 2014 debut album of Jones' one-man prog-ject, Tiger Moth Tales. Latimer asked him to audition, so Jones sent him the keyboard parts for *Ice*, rendered as faithfully as he could make them.

"I hate to admit, I didn't really know any of Camel's stuff at the time," says Jones. "But since then I've been really drawn into it — they're so impressive. During *Lady Fantasy* I have to play just two chords while Andy

solos, and one night on tour I was there thinking, 'Wow, when I was a kid I wanted to be Tony Banks in Genesis, but now I'm Pete Jones in Camel!' It's such an honour."

At 37, Jones has found himself coming full circle, back to the bosom of the prog world. He was something of a child prodigy on the piano, taking his grade exams early and composing music of his own from the age of eight. By the time he was 11 he had discovered his parents' records — Queen, Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds*, Phil Collins and Abacab-era Genesis, later moving on to the Gabriel era — and began writing his own long, complex instrumentals.

"*The Cinema Show, In The Cage, Seconds Out* — I could play it all. Tony Banks was a guru for me. I was probably a better player then than I am now. My teachers encouraged me to become a concert pianist."

And then he went and discovered girls. His songwriting took a poppy turn involving "slushy love songs", before he went on to model himself on his other hero, Paul Carrack, plus Bryan Adams, George Michael and other leaders of the 'adult contemporary' market. He and his school friend, singer Emma Paine, decided to take a gap year after school and try for a career in music. One year turned into 13 as the duo made a decent living playing the UK's pub and club circuit, going under the none-more-cabaret name of 2 To Go.

In 2004 they hit real paydirt when they made the last few rounds of UK TV talent show *The X Factor*, but although the gigs kept

coming and Jones released an album, *Look At Me Now*, he didn't find his artistic career going as he'd hoped.

"I was writing pop, rock, funk, ballads, and one big pop producer actually told me I was too good at doing *everything*, and I should try 'to cultivate an excellent standard of mediocrity'. I was so disillusioned with it all, and three or four years back I thought, 'Well, that's it then, I'll never get recognition for writing my own songs.' That's when I started writing *Cocoon*."

An affectionate and fun tribute to Trumpton-era childhood, the proggy *Cocoon* showed off Jones' gifts as a seriously gifted multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer, well versed in the musical vocabulary and lyrical whimsy of progressive music's golden age. It was as if he was finally back where he belonged.

He followed it up with the acclaimed *Story Tellers Volume 1*, recorded over February 2015, which recounted fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*. When instrumental prog group Red Bazar were looking for a vocalist and lyricist, fellow Nottingham boy Jones offered his services, and the resultant album, 2016's *Tales From The Bookcase*, earned them plaudits in the prog press. Now Jones fronts them live, and when he plays out as Tiger Moth Tales, Red Bazar are his band.

Since *Cocoon*, Jones hasn't really stopped. He played at Summer's End festival, Prog Dreams in Holland, and this year's ProgStock in New Jersey. There he joined Dave Kerzner onstage for a tribute to *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, and Francis Dunnery was there on the bill too. Jones played keys on Dunnery's 2016 album *Return To The Wild Country* after they were introduced by a mutual friend. ("He's a great guy to play with," says Jones. "He certainly knows what he wants!")

Add Camel into this mix and it's perhaps understandable why the third Tiger Moth 

Winter • Is Coming

A photograph of Peter Jones, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark jacket, sitting at a grand piano. The piano's lid is open, and the internal mechanism is visible. The background consists of light-colored, patterned curtains. A large, dark, curved object, possibly a part of the piano or a prop, is in the foreground, partially obscuring the view.

Tiger Burning Bright:
Peter Jones.

“The Cinema Show, In The Cage, Seconds Out – I could play it all. Tony Banks was a guru for me. I was probably a better player then than I am now.”



“I can listen to the album with an air of detachment, and it’s good. I’m pretty chipper now! This year really has been amazing.”

Tales album, *The Depths Of Winter*, has been so long in coming. But it wasn’t just time that was against Jones. Not only did his trusty 8-track cassette studio setup start breaking down, but so did he.

“I’m not generally a tortured soul, but this time last year I had a bad bit of depression going on. I can’t tell you why, because I was having what should have been some of the best times of my life. But as the highs got higher, the lows got lower. This voice in my head kept telling me that the music wasn’t worth it and I should jack it in. I’d never had it to that extent, but then I’d never been quite so earnest about anything as I was with the prog. I’d been hard at it for four years and was so determined, and maybe that made me question myself and doubt myself all the more.”

Some of that angst permeated the album itself. Sophisticated, mature and utterly breathtaking in parts, *The Depths Of Winter* presents many sides of the fourth season. Its bleakest moment is *Exposure*, a desolate, dark piece inspired by Wilfred Owen’s First World War poem of the same name. Its warmest peak is the welcome hug of *Hygge*, a Genesis-style ballad that evokes that trendy Danish sense of cosiness, of hearth and heart on a cold day. If Radio 2 had a progressive bone in their body, they’d seize on this and put it on their playlist in time for Christmas.

Indeed, initially Jones saw *The Depths Of Winter* as a Christmas album, but White

Knight’s label head, Magenta’s own Rob Reed, advised against it, concerned the album would be seen as a novelty and dropped quicker than a *Top Gear* annual on New Year’s Day. And so winter is here in all its physical and allegorical forms. Tiger Moth Tales’ trademark quirkiness is present on *Sleigh Ride*, an unashamedly jolly piece of trek music that owes a large debt to Steve Hackett, with an irresistible motif made up of long, sustained guitar lines and volume swells.

Featuring a Salvation Army-style brass section and a terrifying guitar solo from guest player Luke Machin, the epic *Winter Maker* (which drove this writer to put the heating on while listening) draws on Biboon, the wind spirit in the culture of the Ojibwe, a Native American tribe.

Co-written with friend and talented voice actor Jamie Ambler, *The Ballad Of Longshanks John* retells the fabled death of Robin Hood, and comes complete with an evocative radio play-style spoken-word intro — as well as a cheeky nod to Clannad’s famous *Robin Of Sherwood* TV theme.

“It’s this great, alternative Yuletide thing,” says Jones. “I’m big into radio plays. I know not everyone’s into spoken parts in songs, but I am. *The Tears Of Frigga* was also written with Jamie. It’s this Viking mythology thing set to a prog soundtrack, I’m very pleased with that one. It’s got this plinky-plonky 5/4 glockenspiel part that I think of as a Rob Reed bit — it’s very Mike Oldfield.

And while I don’t do many keyboard solos, I’m very proud of the one on there.”

Jones underplays his musicality, but the album’s full of it. Complete with jazzy clarinet, the elegiac *Take The Memory* deals with loss and how that is amplified for families during the festive period. *Migration*, despite its politically charged title, was actually inspired by a story Jones read about... a *stoat*.

It’s a beautifully produced, highly evocative album imbued with the spirit of its season, and of progressive music. Far from being a novelty, *The Depths Of Winter* is Jones’ finest work to date.

“To be terribly metaphorical, it’s been like getting through a winter myself. Now I can listen to it with an air of detachment, and it’s good. I’m pretty chipper now! This year really has been amazing.”

And 2018’s set to be pretty good for him too. With some Tiger Moth Tales dates in the works to support *The Depths Of Winter*, there’s a new Red Bazar record imminent, and even talk of *Story Tellers Part Two*. He’ll play keys for Dunnery in January on his three UK dates marking the 30th anniversary of *It Bites’ Eat Me In St. Louis*, and will also rejoin Camel as they tour *Moonmadness*, including a Royal Albert Hall show in September.

Firmly back in the prog fold, Peter Jones is becoming a man for all seasons. 🐾

The Depths Of Winter is out now via White Knight. See www.tigermothtales.com for details.

Vote in the **PROG** READERS' POLL

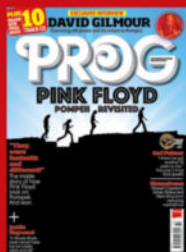
2017

So here we are at the end of 2017. A year that began with a big question mark over the future of the magazine, and ends with another 12 months of great releases, memorable gigs and 10 issues of your favourite magazine. Along the way, we've lost some good friends and amazing musicians. But now is your chance to take stock of 2017, the year in prog, by voting in the *Prog* magazine Readers' Poll.

There are a couple of new categories this year. Person Of The Year is for, in your opinion, the prog musician who has truly stood out from the pack this year. The Unsung Hero category is there to honour those who work tirelessly behind the scenes when it comes to supporting progressive music,

be it promoting gigs, sorting merch, anything that means their efforts are rarely thrust into the limelight. Now's your chance to give them their dues.

To vote, fill in the form to the right (or send us a copy) and mail it to us by **Jan 2** to **Prog, Future Publishing, 1-10 Praed Mews, London, W2 1QY** – or you can e-mail us with the subject line 'Readers' Poll 2017' to prog@futurenet.com.



CATEGORIES

BEST BAND

Last year's winner - Marillion

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

Last year's winner - Marillion *FEAR*

FEMALE VOCALIST

Last year's winner - Marjana Semkina (iamthefirst)

MALE VOCALIST

Last year's winner - Steve Hogarth (Marillion)

GUITARIST

Last year's winner - Steve Rothery (Marillion)

BASSIST

Last year's winner - Pete Trewavas (Marillion)

KEYBOARD PLAYER

Last year's winner - Mark Kelly (Marillion)

DRUMMER

Last year's winner - Ian Mosley (Marillion)

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

Last year's winner - Yes *Tales From Topographic Oceans*

MULTI-MEDIA RELEASE OF THE YEAR (BOOK/FILM/BLU-RAY)

Last year's winner - Big Big Train *Stone And Steel*

EVENT OF THE YEAR

Last year's winner - Marillion *FEAR* Tour

DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE YEAR

Last year's winner - Deaths of Keith Emerson and Greg Lake

VENUE OF THE YEAR

Last year's winner - Royal Albert Hall

BEST UNSIGNED BAND

Last year's winner - Ghost Community

PROG PERSON OF THE YEAR

PROG'S UNSUNG HERO



Strawbs, shot exclusively for Prog, October 2017.

Beware That Hooded Old Man At The Rudder!

New album *The Ferryman's Curse* is **Strawbs'** first new music in eight years. **Dave Cousins** talks health hold-ups, geographical inspiration and the importance of looking both backward and forward.

Words: Sid Smith **Images:** Will Ireland

When Dave Cousins answers the phone to *Prog*, he sounds in good spirits. And so he should be, given that the conversation occurs just ahead of Strawbs' UK tour, and as preparations for another jaunt to the USA in November are completed ahead of the release of *The Ferryman's Curse*, the first new studio album by Strawbs in eight years.

His adventures in geography, both recent and long ago, tend to feature in any chat with Cousins, who turns 73 in January 2018. A natural storyteller, when Cousins is asked about a particular song, he'll invariably refer to the location where an idea for the tune or lyric came to him.

Having penned between 250 and 300 songs over several decades, he's covered a lot of ground. Alongside various towns and cities



around the UK, places as diverse as Egypt, the Czech Republic, Italy, America, and Scandinavia all crop up as he talks.

"A friend of mine who owned a shop in Copenhagen had a man come in who put his hands on the counter and said to him, 'Hi, I'm Jesus.' So that gave me the idea that if Jesus came back, what would he do to make himself recognised? I'm not religious but I wondered what would happen in that instance and whether people would accept Him if he did return," Cousins says of *The Man Who Called Himself Jesus*, which appeared on Strawbs self-titled 1969 debut.

Subsequent albums such as *Dragonfly* (1970), *From The Witchwood* (1971), *Grave New World* (1972), *Bursting At The Seams*

"We were at the top of the second division I always call it, although I was told that in New York especially we were considered to be in the first division."

(1973), *Hero And Heroine* (1974) and *Ghosts* (1975) not only saw Cousins emerge as a writer frequently referencing moral, ethical and spiritual dilemmas within his work, but

they also reflected an astonishing powerful musical development as line-ups changed.

Strawbs' move from being a largely acoustic, folk-based outfit to an overtly progressive rock act with all Mellotrons blazing felt natural, Cousins says, and was something their fan base was happy to go along with. When Bob Dylan plugged in and turned up the volume, there was a cry of 'Judas!' Not so in Strawbs' case.

"When we first started we were playing in a folk club I was running at The White Bear pub in Kingsley Road, Hounslow. When we added Rick Wakeman to the line-up, our sound changed. Gradually we started touring

with Roy Harper, but people grew with us. There were no fans protesting about it. They liked where we were going musically.”

Building on the success of the Cousins-penned *Lay Down* and the infamous *Part Of The Union*, written by Richard Hudson and John Ford, which peaked at No.2 in the UK chart, Strawbs entered their most obvious progressive rock phase – one that would be consolidated with *Hero And Heroine* and *Ghosts*, the latter enjoying US chart success.

“We were at the top of the second division, I always call it, although I was told that in New York especially we were considered to be in the first division of the top 20 bands visiting at that time,” Cousins says. “The thing is, we never consciously sat down and said, ‘This week we’re going to be a pop band, or a rock band.’ Strawbs was and is continual evolution. Bringing Dave Bainbridge into the band means we’re evolving into something different again.”

The mention of keyboard player and guitarist Dave Bainbridge, probably best known for his band Iona, as a relatively recent recruit to Strawbs not only excites Cousins but also reminds us that the group have exercised good judgment when it comes to those who tickle the ivories and twiddle the knobs. After Rick Wakeman, the likes of Blue Weaver, John Hawken, famed Nick Drake orchestrator Robert Kirby, Oliver Wakeman, Lifesigns’ John Young and Oliver’s younger brother Adam Wakeman are among those to have enjoyed stints with the band.

In a somewhat spooky instance of history repeating itself, Oliver quit after 2009’s *Dancing To The Devil’s Beat* to join Yes. “Like father, like son,” Cousins ruefully laughs.

In recent years, the Acoustic Strawbs, featuring long-time fellow members Chas Cronk on 12-string and bass, and Dave Lambert on electric guitar, have often been the primary outlet for the band’s extensive repertoire, abetted by occasional tours and appearances with a full group. However, as new material began to accrue, Cousins decided it was time to put together another full-scale electric line-up.

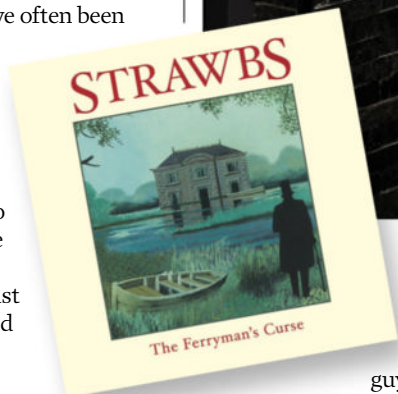
“It was Carl Palmer’s guitarist Paul Bielawicz who suggested to me that I get in touch with Dave. I’m glad we did because I happen to think Dave Bainbridge is one of the most talented musicians I’ve ever worked with. He’s extraordinary.”

Evidence of the rapport they share can be found in *When The Spirit Moves*, one of the key songs from *The Ferryman’s Curse*, suggests Cousins. With a sentiment inspired by the chance sighting of the Pope when the singer was on holiday, Cousins stresses that the song is about the spiritual impulse rather than any homage to organised religion. In explaining to Bainbridge what kind of arrangements he felt the song required, the singer told the keyboard player, “I could hear Vaughan Williams’ *The Lark Ascending*, by which I meant I could hear a whole rolling orchestral piece where everything evolves, develops and builds. Of

“The reason why we changed labels from Witchwood was my health. I cannot run the record company, run the band, and do it all myself.”



Strawbs, L-R: Dave Bainbridge, Dave Lambert, Chas Cronk, Tony Fernandez, Dave Cousins.



course, it isn’t *The Lark Ascending* but rather an evocation of that kind of sound world. The guy is remarkable in that he

understands what I’m trying to say. It was just extraordinary working with him.”

Even when the material is written, the making of any album can be a difficult business. In August 2017, as Cousins stepped up to the microphone in producer Chris Tsangarides’ Ecology Rooms studio, he was wracked with pain.

“All the while I’m singing through the pain of this hernia which had developed. It was done under considerable duress. I’m holding my hernia in while I’m singing the songs. I was in serious agony, but curiously, it worked.”

Cousins reveals that work on the album would have started a couple of years earlier had it not been for a bout of ill-health that dogged him and required hospitalisation on

several occasions. In June 2015 he had a fall at home, and although he was able to resume touring and writing in 2016, he was laid low on several occasions during 2017. “I’ve had more operations in the last year than some people have in a lifetime,” he quips gamely.

As a result, Cousins has had to relinquish the business end of the operation. Witchwood Media, the label he founded in the early 2000s to handle the albums emerging from both the acoustic and electric versions of the group was a cottage industry, but one successfully delivering music to a fan base on both sides of the Atlantic.

“The reason why we changed labels from Witchwood was my health. I cannot run the record company, run the band, and do it all myself. I had an approach from Esoteric a couple of years ago and so was happy to hand over to them to put out *The Ferryman’s Curse*.”

With another long-time Strawbs associate, Tony Fernandez, on drums, and



Dave Bainbridge adding guitar, keyboards and arrangements, Chas Cronk, Dave Lambert and Cousins, despite the latter's personal challenges of late, have never sounded better.

There's a chemistry between Cronk, Lambert and himself, says Cousins, that stems from the fact that they've worked together for over 43 years. "Chas and I write songs together very easily, with me tending to do the lyrics. Dave Lambert is a rock guitarist, very much in The Who tradition. His idol is Pete Townshend. The combination of that, with my tunings and Chas playing his 12-string, bass and foot pedals, gives us a sound that works with both the acoustic and electric band.

"Dave is an out-and-out rocker but he loves the gentle folkie parts. You can hear it in his playing. On *The Song Of Infinite Sadness* from the new album, the solo in the middle is him using an EBow on an acoustic guitar. It gives you an eternal sustain, and has that peculiar singing noise."

While the album is forward-looking, it also deliberately evokes the band's past in places.

"The actual title track of the album, *The Ferryman's Curse*, is the sequel to *The Vision Of The Lady Of The Lake*, which was on the second album we ever made, *Dragonfly*," Cousins says. "That song was based on getting up early one morning to drive up to Scotland to do a gig. At seven o'clock on an autumnal morning, there was a mist over a reservoir near Barnet. With the myths of King Arthur in mind, I wrote that epic with its 14 verses there and then.

"Forty-seven years later I've written a song about what happened to the boatman in that song. There's a twist at the end that would, in theory, allow me to do a sequel to that one as well. I just need another 47 years to write it!" he laughs. ☺

The Ferryman's Curse is available now via Esoteric Antenna. See www.strawbsweb.co.uk for more information.

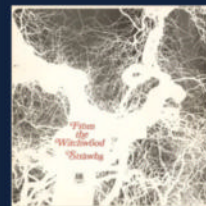
PICKING STRAWBS

A newcomers guide to Strawbs' studio albums from their 70s heyday.



Dragonfly (1970)

Heralding an artistic turning point, this is Strawbs' first melding of folk and progressive rock and sees the debut of Rick Wakeman, who would go on to join the band following his appearance as a session player. Cousins' romantic inclinations are well to the fore on the swooning ballad *Forever*.



From The Witchwood (1971)

The glorious evocation of lovers in a pastoral English landscape on *The Shepherd's Song*, with Wakeman's autumnal Mellotron and dappled Minimoog, finds a stark contrast with the caustic *The Hangman* and *The Papist*. It's a visionary classic.



Grave New World (1972)

Bombastic bursts of brass, eerie keyboards and a sense of foreboding stalk Cousins' account of the growing troubles in Northern Ireland during *New World*. John Ford's punchy bass adds a distinctive heft to the track. This is the sound of Strawbs upping their game.



Bursting At The Seams (1973)

Forget the dodgy singalong *Part Of The Union* that nearly netted them a No.1 hit. Tracks such as *The River* and *Down By The Sea* possess an impressionistic, expansive reach. Elegant playing from Blue Weaver, knotty riffs, dramatic performances and thoughtful lyrics showcase a coherent artistic trajectory.



Hero And Heroine (1974)

The ruminations of keyboard player John Hawken in *Autumn*, along with the bite of Dave Lambert's fiery guitar, create a backdrop against which Cousins sparkles on the title track and manic rocker *Round And Round*. With the band hitting their stride at home, the album also marked the start of a cult success in America.



Ghosts (1975)

Tape loop experiments, choirs and massed harmonies sit alongside pop songs in a curious but compelling mix of styles. *The Life Auction*, beginning with a sinister poem, bursts into a raucous prog rock *j'accuse!*, with Dave Cousins spitting out a caustic rebuke to metaphorical vultures picking over a life lost. This track alone finds Strawbs at their fiery, abrasive best. **SS**

With a new line-up, their first record deal and the heaviest album of their career, Wales' **Godsticks** are shaking things up with new album *Faced With Rage*. **Darran Charles** discusses being influenced by watching childhood friends fall into addiction, Freddie Mercury singing gibberish, and the importance of giving it some welly.

Words: David West **Images:** Diana Seifert and Eleanor Jane

Darran Charles likes to be busy. He's just wrapped up a tour where he pulled double duty every night, first fronting his own band – the pummelling progressive metal quartet Godsticks – after which he would return to the stage as guitarist for The Pineapple Thief.

"It was a lot of hard work, but to be honest with you, the adrenaline usually gets you through each day," says Charles. "It's the travelling that's the tiring part of the tour. I enjoyed doing two sets. Boredom is the biggest enemy on tour, so keeping busy all the time would be my preferred choice."

Over the course of an EP and three albums, Godsticks have steadily honed their sound, with the band embracing their heaviest

feel that [2015 album] *Emergence* hinted at and that we've realised on *Faced With Rage*. We've not just turned up the gain on the amp, we've explored darker sounds compositionally, as well as producing heavier guitar sounds, and those two definitely had an impact."

Showing they haven't lost their progressive proclivities, *Faced With Rage* includes the longest piece of music in the band's catalogue to date in the form of the thickly knotted rhythms of *Everdrive*.

"I never thought I'd write something that was eight minutes long," confesses Charles, who usually prefers shorter tracks, despite growing up listening to Yes, a band not exactly known for their love of the concise composition. "It used to annoy me, the 20-minute epics, not because they were long

In addition to leaving more room lyrically, Charles sought to explore different facets of his own voice. "When we went on the first leg of this tour, I remember after a few gigs the sound guy, Simon, said, 'Why don't you just let yourself go a bit vocally?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'I always have the impression that you're holding back a little bit.' It wasn't something I was conscious of but later on I thought, 'I'll explore this a little bit.'"

"I think I'd been holding back. I always thought if you sang with power, you wouldn't get your melody across. I found that my voice is able to handle it, I'm able to put some welly into it and still retain my pitch. What I've done on this album is where the songs are more aggressive, I'm singing more aggressively, and on tracks like *We Are Leaving*,

FUELLED BY

RAGE

instincts on 2015's *Emergence*. Now *Faced With Rage* continues in the same furious vein while pulling in new sounds and influences. Alongside the industrial intensity of *Guilt* and *Unforgivable*, there's the melancholic mood of *We Are Leaving* and the off-kilter syncopated epic *Everdrive*.

A host of factors have fed into Godsticks' evolving sound, including the presence of two new faces in the group, with Gavin Bushell joining on guitar and Tom Price taking over the drum stool from Steve Roberts.

"We didn't purposely go in a heavier direction – all the albums were pointing in that direction," says Charles. "The heaviness was inevitable. Having Gavin and Tom on board, they're on the same page musically. We explored not just heavy sounds on guitar but heavy textures and a darker, atmospheric

but because I wished they'd done little points in the middle where you could skip ahead to a particular section. I like to make a statement pretty quickly, but with *Everdrive* it just kept going. I didn't feel the point had been made after four or five minutes. It just ended up at eight minutes. Then you've got a song like *Avenge* which is less than four minutes long because I think I'd made my point after four minutes, whatever that point was."

Another mission for Charles has been refining his lyric writing, trying not to load every line with as many words as he could.

"One conscious effort I made on this album was to phrase things a little bit differently, so I'm trying to convey the meaning using fewer words, rather than ramming something down someone's throat. I'm borderline rapping on some earlier stuff."

I've tried to sing softer and to use a different part of my vocal range. I think this is probably my best vocal performance on all of the albums, just for those reasons."

The lyric-writing process often begins with Charles just improvising around a melody. "Apparently Freddie Mercury used to just sing gibberish and then refine the vocals afterwards," he says. "That's what my process is like – I usually tend to find some words and vowels that sound the way I want them to for a song. It's the vowels, the sounds and the inflections that are the most important part. Then I come up with a theme afterwards that I think best suits the feel of the music."

In the case of *We Are Leaving*, he came up with the titular refrain before he actually knew what the song was about. "I wouldn't say it's autobiographical," he says. "I had a very

"Me and Dan are bleak characters, I would say - we're not exactly the life and soul of the party. Tom and Gavin have got really positive, uplifting personalities, so it's actually rubbed off on us."

Anger Management:
Faced With Rage
mastermind
Darran Charles.



good upbringing, my parents always looked after me, but the area I grew up in, it was rife with crime and heroin. When I was in my 20s, loads of my friends fell into that trap and became addicted to heroin, so in that song, the 'We are leaving' part is someone trying to extricate themselves from that situation.

"It's the music and the melodies that inspire the lyrics, rather than the other way around. I grew up in a place called Panside Estate, which is a bizarre name. Don't get me wrong, we're not talking Toxteth and other

riddled-with-crime areas, but I do remember loads of my friends descended into addiction. It's different there now but at that time, when I was about 20, in the early 90s, it was particularly sad seeing friends you grew up with turn into completely different people, people you couldn't trust because they were addicted to a drug and they would steal from you. I only experienced it directly a few times, but it was still unpleasant to see."

On a cheerier note – "I'm depressed for the day now!" laughs Charles – the new blood

in Godsticks has transformed the dynamic within the group. The frontman believes he has been guilty in the past of taking on too much of the musical heavy lifting, covering all the guitar parts on stage while having to deliver as a vocalist. The arrival of Gavin Bushell has allowed him to share the load.

"It has an effect on your performance when you've got that much to concentrate on, the singing and the playing, and bringing Gavin in has made my life a lot easier," says Charles. "I'm quite confident to pass on

Godsticks, L-R: Gavin Bushell, Darran Charles, Tom Price, Dan Nelson.



any complicated guitar parts, leaving me to concentrate on simpler things, and also my singing, which I think has improved quite a lot since Gavin has been about.”

Regarding the new face behind the drums, Charles says, “Yeah, we recycle in this band quite well – that’s what it feels like. Steve left not long after we did *Emergence* and Tom was the first person to audition. Fortunately he was the right person straight away. He’s fitted in marvellously well. He’s certainly put his stamp on the new material and I really enjoy

playing in this line-up. Me and Dan [Nelson, bass] are bleak characters, I would say – we’re not exactly the life and soul of the party. Tom and Gavin have got really positive, uplifting personalities, so it’s actually rubbed off on us. We enjoy ourselves a lot more than we used to in the past and that’s been translating into the recent live performances.”

The fresh faces have helped shift Charles’ mindset about how bands function. “Back when I first started out, I wouldn’t say I treated it as a job,” he says, “but I never thought it was essential that you got on with your all your band members and were socially comfortable with them. I thought it was more important to have people who are able to play the music that you want to create than it was to spend



Godsticks’ new album *Faced With Rage*, their first for record label Kscope.

entice their interest. He nearly succeeded with *Emergence* in 2015 – “I think they only sign a certain number of bands per year and they’d already reached their quota,” he says – before finally cracking the nut with the new album.

Just as Bushell’s arrival has lightened the load of the guitar duties, so signing to Kscope has lifted the administrative chores from the shoulders of the bandleader – no longer does he have to worry about sorting

out barcodes for the albums. But on top of that, he has another set of ears to provide feedback during the creative process.

“I would send demos to Johnny [Wilks] at Kscope,” says Charles. “I always send stuff to Bruce [Soord] of The Pineapple Thief, he always gives me feedback. But I always limit

“I always send stuff to Bruce Soord of The Pineapple Thief, he always gives me feedback. But I always limit the people I send stuff to because there are not many people who are genuinely honest. Bruce is always honest.”

time with them. But especially over the last few years when Tom and Gavin have come on board, I’ve realised it does have a positive effect on the music when everyone gets along and everyone chips in and is working towards the same goals. It has changed my viewpoint of what a band should be about.”

After almost a decade of navigating the music industry as an independent act, Godsticks signed their first record deal with Kscope for *Faced With Rage*. The label is home to Anathema, Ian Anderson, The Pineapple Thief and more, but getting Kscope interested in Godsticks has been a war of attrition.

“I’ve been pestering Kscope for about nine years,” says Charles. “Back when we released the EP, in 2009, I didn’t know much about the music industry and this EP was getting positive reviews online. I thought, ‘Well, that must mean we’re worthy of being signed.’ I started ringing around record companies, basically expecting to be offered a deal. I learned quite a lot of harsh lessons.

“I was educated by Tony Harris at Kscope for quite a few years. Even though he was one of the many people who said no to me, which was the word used in most of the conversations I had during that time, he was always giving me pointers and advice.”

With every subsequent release, Charles went back to Harris and Kscope to try to

the people I send stuff to because there are not many people who are genuinely honest. Bruce is always honest. I always send stuff to the first bass player from the band, who I’m still in touch with, and they’re always brutally honest. If they think something is shit, they’ll say they think it’s shit. They’ll give me the reasons why – it’s always constructive – but they aren’t afraid to tell me that something’s rubbish and I quite like that.

“Johnny is the same. There’s a track called *Guilt*, I sent it to Johnny, and there was a minute intro to the song. He said, ‘I think you should cut it.’ Immediately I went defensive, ‘I ain’t cutting anything! Nothing!’ Then I thought about it and when we cut it out, he turned out to be right.

“If anybody else had said that to me over the course of the last few years recording the other albums, there’s no fucking way I would have cut anything. But because he’s been so constructive with everything else, I value his opinion. It’s not just the bureaucratic side, they’ve provided me with a lot of support as well, which I otherwise had never experienced when writing an album, so it has been an immensely positive experience so far. I hope it continues.” 📍

Faced With Rage is out now via Kscope. For more information, see www.godsticks.co.uk.



Charlotte Hatherley

She played with chart-toppers Ash in the 90s/noughties, loves sci-fi soundtracks and is “obsessed with Robert Fripp”. She’s also released her own sci-fi-influenced concept album in which she morphs into a character called ‘Traveller’. So now we have to ask: **how prog is Charlotte Hatherley?**

Words: Paul Lester

For an ex-member of a chart-bound 90s/noughties punk pop band – 18 Top 40 singles and five Top 10 albums – Charlotte Hatherley, formerly the guitarist and backing vocalist with Northern Irish alt rockers Ash, is pretty prog.

She’s a fan of film composers Ryuichi Sakamoto, Trent Reznor and Angelo Badalamenti, and specifically the sci-fi/dystopian future-world soundtracks of Vangelis (*Blade Runner*), Cliff Martinez (*Solaris*) and John Carpenter (*Dark Star*). She worked on her second solo album, 2007’s *The Deep Blue*, with Eric Drew Feldman, keyboardist and bassist with Pere Ubu and Captain Beefheart, who introduced her to Beefheart and Frank Zappa, Todd Rundgren’s *A Wizard, A True Star*, early Yes (circa *Heart Of The Sunrise* and *Siberian Khatru*) and King Crimson – she was already, via David Bowie’s Berlin Trilogy, “obsessed with Robert Fripp”.

Something of a polymath, she has been a session musician with, and collaborator with, everyone from Bryan Ferry and Bat For Lashes to XTC’s Andy Partridge and extreme electronicist Squarepusher. In 2014, she composed the score for *The Last Man*, a dystopian sci-fi short directed by designer and VFX artist Gavin Rothery, and is about to start work on her first feature-length score. She is currently studying orchestration, and has ventured into theatre – writing the music for the acclaimed NHS-themed London stage play *This May Hurt A Bit* – and the world of advertising. And she has just made available for

“I didn’t want this album to be shiny 80s, but muddy and dirty, with a nod to 70s soundtracks and Italian horror movies.”



Above: new album True Love.

streaming the *Night Vision* EP, comprising radical reconstructions, heavily industrialised in some cases, of movie music, from *Repo Man* and *Rejoice In The Sun* to a barely recognisable *How Deep Is Your Love*.

Her latest foray is her proggest yet. Her fourth solo album, and first in almost nine years, *True Love*, is influenced by what she calls “science

fiction realism”. It is a “cinematic, melancholic pop record”, a break-up concept album about an Earthling travelling to far-off planets looking for love. It was composed using vintage keyboards, several of the songs written with fellow sci-fi enthusiast, Michael Lovett of NZCA Lines, who is also a “big prog fan”, with whom Hatherley shares a fondness for Genesis’ *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. Not that you can hear it on *True Love*, but what it and ...*Lamb*... do have in common is an epic scope and a protagonist whose story you follow from beginning to end.

“My reference points were Vangelis’ *Blade Runner* and Bowie’s *Low*,” Hatherley tells *Prog*. “Over the last few years, I’ve got more into writing with keyboards and I wanted to stop writing on guitar because I wasn’t coming up with anything particularly exciting. Now I’m a massive synth geek.”

For the project, the erstwhile indie musician has metamorphosed into a flamboyant, fully developed character called Traveller. You can see her in the video for the single *A Sign*, directed by Rothery, featuring Hatherley in full Traveller make-up and space suit, walking along a beach in a far-flung oceanic world, with two suns in the sky and a ringed planet on the horizon. Roeg one, anyone?

“The idea of someone adrift and unmoored, who is lonely and wants to get home, does have similarities with Thomas Newton in *The Man Who Fell To Earth*,” she agrees. “By her own choice, she is travelling around the universe, in self-imposed exile, trying to find love.”



Ash in 1999, L-R: Tim Wheeler, Mark Hamilton, Rick McMurray, Charlotte Hatherley.



The Truth Is Out
There: Hatherley
as 'Traveller'.



This isn't Hatherley's first dalliance with an alias. Circa 2012, after a few years out of the indie spotlight, she re-emerged as Sylver Tongue.

"I wanted to be a bit unknown and escape the 'Charlotte from Ash' thing," she offers of a guise that had more of a garish 80s vibe, with, Hatherley notes, "lots of Mad Max fake fur and leather". This Traveller incarnation is, by contrast, "less 80s revisited, more weird and arty, more [Soviet filmmaker] Tarkovsky and Roeg".

For the interview in a bar in London's Barbican Centre, Hatherley, sad to report, doesn't arrive in full Traveller regalia. Instead, she is wearing an electric blue shirt and corset which, she says, make her resemble "an intergalactic witch". Still, it's a far cry from the jeans and T-shirt mode with which we became familiar during her tenure with Ash. Then again, a lot has changed since she left the band in 2006.

"*Grey Will Fade* was my XTC-meets-Weezer punk pop record, not far from Ash," she recalls of her 2004 solo debut, made while she was still with the band. "Then I made *The Deep Blue* just after I left Ash. I was in Italy, having a major fucking meltdown, trying to get my head around the fact that I'd left this band I'd been with for eight years, since I was 18. I went a bit mad making that record.

"Some people really like it. I don't know..." She sighs. "It's a weird one. I was listening to a lot of Kate Bush."

The Deep Blue included *Dawn Treader*, co-written with Andy Partridge.

"He liked *Grey Or Fade*, so I went to Swindon and wrote some songs with him in his famous shed," she says of her team-up with one of her all-time heroes, who she found "eccentric but pretty normal". As for the record, which cost a small fortune to record, she considers it "moody", concluding of an album that peaked at No 109 in the UK Albums Chart, "I'm not sure if it's what people wanted."

Her third solo album, 2009's *New Worlds*, was recorded live in a week and saw a return to her straight pop punk roots, or as straight as she could manage: Hatherley's songs tend towards the sectional and complex, with lots of chords and twitchy shifts in tempo. Or as she puts it, "Some of that stuff is fucking bonkers. I don't know if I'd ever write anything like that again. I was aspiring to, not quite math rock, but more adventurous songs with key changes and time

HARRY HERD/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Performing as Sylver Tongue in 2012.

"I was aspiring to, not quite math rock, but more adventurous songs with key changes and time changes."



Hatherley's first three solo albums, from top: *Grey Will Fade*, *The Deep Blue*, *New Worlds*.

changes. The sort of records that musicians like and no one else."

Make that musicians and comedians. Tim Smith from the Cardiacs is "a big supporter" of hers, as are Partridge and Kavus Torabi of Knifeworld. After writing a song called *Kim Wilde* for her debut album, she was invited to record a version of *Kids In America* with the 80s pop star herself. And for Hatherley's 2005 single *Bastardo*, her ex-boyfriend Edgar Wright (*Spaced*, *Hot Fuzz*, *Shaun Of The Dead*) directed a splendid comic strip-type video, featuring cameos from David Walliams, Simon Pegg, Lucy Davis and Julia Davis.

True Love should see her reach an even broader audience. Hatherley is happier than ever with her songwriting. Amid the atmospheric electronica and analogue synthsounds, there are some supremely infectious pop songs (the last track, *You Said Goodbye*, features Green Gartside of Scritti Politti). *Prog* suggests that, in

parts, it sounds like a Madonna album produced by Thomas Dolby.

"I'll take that," she says. "Sylver Tongue was very 80s-infatuated but I didn't want this album to be shiny 80s, but muddy and dirty, with a nod to 70s soundtracks, Italian horror movies, with frizzy, fucked-up, wonky synth sounds."

That said, she accepts that it is "very melodically driven. No matter how hard I try to write atonal, weird stuff, I always end up more McCartney than Lennon." She laughs. "I don't know how I feel about that."

True Love doesn't just feature her best set of songs and most advanced sonics. It's also her most emotionally resonant work.

"Those first three records weren't very emotional," she admits. "There wasn't much of me in there. For this record I thought, 'Fuck it, I'm just going to put it out there...' In a sophisticated pop way, of course."

"It's a very personal record — I had an awful break-up. I won't say who with — he was a musician. It was a very unhealthy relationship, at a time in my life when things were quite difficult. So I spent the last five years being single, travelling and working. The songs came out of this period of loneliness. I'd never been single before so it was an important, soul-searching time.

"I felt so confused by what true love really was," she continues. "I was lost in the landscape of this relationship, completely unmoored: ruined by it, really. Maybe it was collateral damage from previous relationships, or maybe I'm just rubbish at the relationship thing. It opened up all sorts of shit!"

Hatherley spent long stretches on the road, touring with KT Tunstall and others, simultaneously isolated and alone and enjoying the solace in cities as alienating as Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Into the unknown as 'Traveller'.





STEFAN M. PRAGER/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



ANDY WILSHIER/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Below: Hatherley's single with Kim Wilde, and the film poster for *The Last Man*, 2014.



"I'd be with all these people [in bands] but I'd be alone at the end of the night," she remembers. "I began to romanticise this idea of loneliness, the melancholy of being single and all those tragic, lonely, fucked-up people in films like *Blade Runner*."

Since making *True Love*, Hatherley, if not Traveller, has found love, although she still recognises the benefit of "being confronted by the scary terrain of your own mental health", which is why she enjoys meditating and is currently studying, in what little spare time she has left, to become a yoga teacher.

"I'm immersed in futurism and science fiction but I also like being connected to something ancient, like the ritual of meditation," she explains. "I want to help people, because everyone is in pain, whether it's mental or physical."

Other plans include solo gigs next year, at a to-be-confirmed London-based space and science festival,

currently being assembled by a senior adviser at the Space Agency. And working with visual artists in Poland "who have done a lot of work with the European Space Agency". There's a theme here.

"I just want to do stuff I'd like to see," she clarifies. "I'd be bored if I was just doing a four-piece band thing."

It's a long way from Ash.

"People change, don't they?" suggests the sometime intergalactic witch and Traveller. "When I joined that band I was so young and it defined me in terms of my personal creative output. But I've done so much now that I feel quite removed from it, and that's liberating."

"You know," she adds, explaining how her penurious circumstances indirectly led to *True Love* while offering a sense of the scale of her imagination, "I was having a really shit time and [former Creation Records boss] Alan McGee advised me to write an acoustic album and just go and tour the songs without have to pay anyone. So I went off and made a mental fucking concept album that I don't know how on earth I'm ever going to make work live. But I'd have hated the idea of having to lessen my ambitious vision just because of budget concerns or whatever."

"I think I do make life harder for myself," she allows, finally. "I've made a record that is pretty pop, but also quite esoteric. It's somewhere in the middle. And that's where I've always been, really. If I was more calculated I'm sure I could have made it more pop or more weird." She laughs again. "But I prefer to be in this awkward place in between." ☺

True Love is available now and is self-released. See www.charlottehatherley.com for more information.



YOUR SHOUT!

Best known as being the lone female in indie rockers Ash, Charlotte Hatherley has made some fine exploratory solo sounds. But, we ask, how prog is she?

"On a scale of one to Yes?"
Palmer Eldritch

"Eleven. And then some!"
Mark McCaughrean

"The Charlotte Hatherley? I've never heard of her, has she featured in *Prog*? Should I investigate?" [Yes, you most certainly should. - Ed]
Mike Sargent

"Erm... Who?"
Steve Harrison

"How about *Clear Blue Sky*?"
Paul McHugh

"Sorry, it's cloudy here..."
Steve Harrison

"Funny!"
Paul McHugh

"Some of her stuff is, though not all. Songs based on SF and fantasy (eg *Dawn Treader*). *The Deep Blue* is a great album."
Andy Hall

"An artist with a proper prog ethos who has truly progressed from catchy, raw punk pop to extensive electronic sci-fi atmospherics and Gabriel-esque images and theatrics. Prog in my book!"
Kevin Braithwaite

"Never having been an Ash fan, I'd never paid any heed to her solo work. But I stumbled upon it last year and have been really enjoying her albums. However, it had never crossed my mind to describe her as prog in any way."
Phil Morris

"Like a lot of bands that get lumped into the prog genre, she's written some great stuff that could be considered prog - personally I preferred her as 1/4 of Ash, a great addition."
Stacy Doller

"Who?"
Karl Huatokoski

"I'm only aware of her first two solo albums and she was more like a precursor to KT Tunstall, who I think for whom she now plays."
Nicholas John Payne

"Someone new for me to try out."
Jane Armstrong

"*Bastardo* is one of my favourites of hers."
Gareth Cole

"Bloody indie pop rubbish."
Mike Henriksen

"I find more of her later work really interesting, if you're talking about proggily-inclined music."
Jane Shepherd

"Not interested in listening to anything that I don't think is prog. And Charlotte Hatherley isn't prog!"
Ed Mills

Back In The Saddle

In the 90s, **Galactic Cowboys** were destined for great things, backed by a big label and endorsed by the likes of Dream Theater. But it wasn't meant to be. Seventeen years on from their last release, the Cowboys have returned for another ride...

Words: Dave Everley
Images: Stephanie Cabral

There's timing, there's bad timing and then there's truly lousy timing. And Galactic Cowboys can tell you all about that.

Back in 1991, the Houston, Texas four-piece were holding a strong hand. They had a so-crazy-it-shouldn't-work sound that was one part Beatles, one part Metallica and one part prog, a larger-than-life image that was just the right side of 'wacky', and, in the shape of Geffen Records, one of the world's most successful labels behind them.

"We were being touted as the next big thing," says guitarist Dane Sonnier. "People were telling us we were going to be the biggest

band in the world, all this kind of stuff. We were thinking, 'Wow, this is gonna be an exciting ride.'"

But Galactic Cowboys clearly didn't become the biggest band in the world. They didn't even become the biggest band in Houston. Just three weeks after their debut album came out, Geffen released *Nevermind*, the second record by a little-known band from Seattle named Nirvana. Suddenly, the eyes of the world were unexpectedly diverted towards the Pacific North West. Lousy timing, right?

"Oh, totally," says Mike Portnoy, whose then-band, Dream Theater, invited the Cowboys to open for them on their *Images And Words* tour. "Galactic Cowboys were one of the great bands of the time. It's a crime that they never got the success they deserved."

Today, the members of Galactic Cowboys largely look back at those days of high expectations and thwarted dreams with a mix of bafflement and wry amusement. This is partly because of the distance that comes with time, and partly because they have other matters to focus on – namely *Long Way Back To The Moon*, their first album in 17 years.

"Does the world need a new Galactic Cowboys album?" says singer Ben Huggins. "They didn't need the first six or seven!"

Space Invaders: Galactic Cowboys are back!

He's being disingenuous. Galactic Cowboys' small-scale success was dwarfed by that of their more illustrious labelmates, but a small yet dedicated band of fans — Portnoy among them — recognise them for the maverick visionaries they are.

With hindsight, though, they were never really superstar material from the start. Like fellow Houstonites King's X (a band with whom they shared a manager and producer, Sam Taylor), they sweetened their heavier moments with big multi-part harmonies. But the Cowboys' sound was even broader, a full-spectrum, genre-hopping approach that took in thrash metal, classic 60s pop and the envelope-pushing intricacy of such prog icons as Rush, King Crimson and Kansas.

"I was into the whole thrash movement," says bassist Monty Colvin. "At the same time, we all grew up on The Beatles and Elton John. And I was a huge Kansas fan: Kerry Livgren was my hero. I wanted to fuse all those things together and have a lot of harmony vocals and this extreme metal thing. So we put it in a blender to see what came out."

What came out was striking enough to attract the attention of Geffen, who had money to burn thanks to the blockbusting success of Guns N' Roses. Galactic Cowboys were signed by Gary Gersh, the hotshot A&R man who also brought Nirvana to the label around the same time. Gersh made it clear his priorities were with Galactic Cowboys.

"Nirvana?" he told the Texans. "Those guys are just paving the way for you."

Their self-titled debut album was released in August 1991. It was a technicolour clash of steel-plated riffs, oddball time signatures and sly humour. Its schizoid diversity set it apart from everything else going on at the time, and the reviews were positive.

But there was trouble brewing. The Galactic Cowboys' album had barely cooled on the shelves when Nirvana's *Nevermind* was released. Over the subsequent weeks and months, the musical landscape was drastically reshaped. For a bunch of long-hairs in waistcoats and comedy glasses, things suddenly looked a lot less rosy.

"I honestly think none of those guys at the label knew it was gonna blow up," Huggins says. "They thought, 'We're just gonna get in with the grunge thing.' The label were pumped for us. There were constant conversations. When Nirvana took off, it was like [makes shutting down sound]. Nothing. We had to fight for everything we needed after that."

It didn't help that Geffen didn't really know what to do with Galactic Cowboys. They were too heavy for melodic rock fans, they weren't heavy enough for the thrash metal crowd, and prog was in a commercial lull. The label opted to put them on the road with New York speed metal band Overkill. It was a memorable experience, not always for the right reasons. Crowds either loved or — more frequently — loathed them. "You get hit by a nickel coming at you at 120 miles an hour, that's pretty discouraging," says Sonnier.

More successful was a tour with Dream Theater on the *Images And Words* tour. The bands became fast friends. "By the third or fourth gig, we were onstage with them every night singing back-up on a couple of songs," says the guitarist. "I look back at videos of the tour and we were so tight as a band."

But Galactic Cowboys were out at sea commercially. Their debut album had been swept away by the grunge tide, and the band had gone from potential Next Big Things to Also-Rans. It wasn't like they were doing

"Galactic Cowboys were one of the great bands of the time. It's a crime that they never got the success they deserved."

Mike Portnoy





Galactic Cowboys, L-R: Alan Doss, Ren Huggins, Dane Sonnier, Monty Colvin.

“I was really into the whole thrash movement. At the same time, we all grew up on The Beatles and Elton John. And I was a huge Kansas fan: Kerry Livgren was my hero.”
Monty Colvin

anything wrong. It’s just that the rest of the world’s attention was focused elsewhere.

There was still hope. The band cameoed as heavy metal band Sons Of Thunder in the 1994 Adam Sandler and Steve Buscemi movie *Airheads*, one of the heavy metal movies that appeared after *Bill & Ted* and *Wayne’s World*. “Adam Sandler hung out in our trailer playing these songs that would end up on *Saturday Night Live*,” says Sonnier. “These songs were not safe for work. I honestly do not know that I’ve ever laughed as hard as I did that day.”

Despite their flirtation with the big screen, they were living on borrowed time, at least as far as their relationship with Geffen went.

“We were out there in Nowhereland,” says Colvin, “which is when the label lost interest in us: ‘Yeah, you’re gonna have to leave now.’”

Dane Sonnier left soon afterwards, frustrated with the band’s situation (he was replaced by guitarist Wally Farkas). Ironically, just a few months later, the band signed with US indie label Metal Blade.

“They were real cool,” says Colvin. “They told us we could make whatever album we wanted to make, they weren’t going to tell us what to do, there was no expectation.”

The Cowboys carried on releasing records through the 90s via Metal Blade. Diehard fans still carried the torch, but the rest of the world had long forgotten them, if they even knew who they were in the first place.

By the end of the decade, the glue that held the band together began to disintegrate. Tour offers dried up, money became scarce, original drummer Alan Doss left for personal reasons and the band were eventually sued by his replacement. It was death by a thousand cuts.

“We were all kind of discouraged,” says Colvin. “We felt we’d taken it as far as we could. It wasn’t a bad thing, but I’d moved to Kansas City and I was just kind of wanting to move in a different direction.”

Galactic Cowboys’ 10-year space race was over. The members poured their energy into various new projects. Some of them dealt with the band’s split better than others.

“I gotta tell you, I missed Galactic Cowboys for a long time,” says Ben Huggins. “I was the last one holding on back then, I didn’t want the band to end. It was difficult for me.”

Towards the end of the 00s, the band reunited for a handful of local reunion shows. They repeated it a few years later. Each time it was purely for fun, and the fans, rather than any desire to take another shot at the big time. Which is just as well, as the big time had packed its bags and left town a long time ago.

“Every time we got back together, we were like, ‘Hey, this is fun, we ought to do something,’” says Colvin. “And then we go back home and forget about it. But Ben and I did start writing some tunes. I guess we were thinking about it even then.”

That may have been the case, but they weren’t thinking about it too hard, largely because most record labels had zero interest in a band who had barely reached ‘cult’ status while they were active. But they did have one unlikely champion in the shape of Bill Evans.

Evans is a friendly American multi-hyphenate producer/musician/manager/audio whizz whose connections to the prog scene run deep. He’s worked with Kansas’ Kerry Livgren and currently manages Flying Colors. He was also a huge Galactic Cowboys fan.

“They’re one of my absolute favourite bands,” says Evans, who also played drums in Monty Colvin’s post-Galactic Cowboys outfit Crunchy. “Along with King’s X, they invented a whole genre of music that combined progressive metal and those Beatles-esque harmonies. I always felt that band never really got its fair chance. One of the things on my bucket list was somehow to right that wrong.”

The success of Flying Colors impressed that band’s label, Mascot. When they asked Evans if he wanted to do another project, his response was instant: he wanted to get Galactic Cowboys back together.

“I called Monty and said, ‘What would it take to reunite the band?’” he recalls. “He just said, ‘Yeah, we’ll do it.’ It was that easy.”

It wasn’t difficult to persuade the original Cowboys line-up to get back in the saddle. They all admit to having missed the band.

“We’ve all grown up,” says Colvin. “We’ve matured a little since we started out. It was just fun to get back together with the guys.”

The new album, *Long Way Back To The Moon*, picks up where the band left off at the turn of the millennium. It’s still a sonic jigsaw puzzle made up of pieces that shouldn’t really fit together but somehow do, even if they’ve tempered down some of the obtuse musical angles of old. “We’re just as heavy as we’ve always been, and just as pop-orientated as we’ve always been,” says Sonnier. “But it’s more streamlined. There’s not as many crazy jumps from one section to another.”

Those “crazy jumps” may well have been one of the things that counted against Galactic Cowboys first time around. But tastes change over time, and what once existed on the fringes slowly drifts towards the centre.

“We were this oddball band at the wrong time,” says Colvin. “If we were starting out now, people would have really gotten it.”

Almost 30 years on, there’s little in the way of lamenting what might have been. As Monty Colvin points out, it pays to be careful what you wish for: just look at how Nirvana’s story ended. “You don’t know what success will do to you,” he says. “I would have loved to have had a taste of the big time. But it might have destroyed us as people.”

Dane Sonnier is equally philosophical. The ride might have been wild at times, but at least they’ve made it this far. “We’ve been through the good and the bad together,” he says. “The good was always great, the bad was never as bad as it seemed at the time.”

Long Way Back To The Moon is out now via Music Theories Recordings/Mascot. See www.galacticcowboys.com for more information.

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Surf's Up!

Life's a beach for Manchester men **Trojan Horse**, who've hooked in Pete Trewavas, Kavus Torabi and Jimi Goodwin from Doves to get their broadcast a wider hearing.

Words: Jo Kendall



Secret radio stations? Atomic disasters? Prog snooker player Steve Davis on a *synth*? Salford boys Trojan Horse have always been eclectic, but with their third record, *Fukushima Surfer Boys*, the band have really pushed the thematic boat – or surf board – out. Trouble is, it's taken three years and the loss of long-time drummer Richard Guy Crawford to get here.

"We were the essence of a touring and recording band," vocalist/guitarist Nick Duke explains of life after Crawford's departure over a table in a greasy spoon in Camden Town. "We were everything a band was supposed to be. You get to a point where you're like, 'Okay we can carry on doing 'band' things indefinitely', or we can say, 'We're supposed to be progressive, doing things that are new, always

Trojan Horse:
musical chops and
beard required.

changing, so what can we do that's going to change ourselves?"

With spectacular 2014 psychedelic maelstrom *World Turned Upside Down* just out of the traps the answer was to head into the studio – Red Eccles, their production hub since forever – and work as a three-piece to quickly prepare a new release. The remaining TH core – the three Duke brothers Nick, Eden (vocals/keys/synths) and



“

WE'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO FOSTER LINKS BETWEEN DIFFERENT MUSICIANS, DIFFERENT FANS, DIFFERENT AGES. OUR MUSIC HAS THAT EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK THING GOING ON. IT WOULD BE DISINGENUOUS OF US TO DISREGARD THAT SIDE OF THE BAND.

”

Lawrence ‘Loz’ (vocals/bass) — enlisted the percussion skills of their steadfast producer/collaborator Danny The Red, who knew his way around a kit a bit. Duke admits they went in “with nothing”, then the ideas started to flow, inspired by the experimentation of Flying Lotus and Thundercat, the soundtrack to *The Wicker Man* and a long-standing fascination with weird electronica.

“We went, ‘Let’s change our approach, do something completely different, something abstract.’ And a couple of tracks went that way, starting with *UVB-76*.”

Ah, *UVB-76*, aka ‘The Buzzer’. Discovered at some point in the 70s, if you can tune a shortwave radio to 4625 kHz you might stumble across its mysterious, continuous signal that’s allegedly a beacon from the Russian

Armed Forces. Originally a repeating two-second pip, in 1990 the broadcast changed to a buzz sound interspersed with short bursts of spoken messages. Duke discovered it after falling down a rabbit hole on Wikipedia and became obsessed with it.

“It’s just bizarre. You tune in and there’ll be someone speaking in Russian, then screaming in the background, then countdowns,” he



continues. “Nobody really knows who broadcasts it or what the purpose of it is. Even the location is a bit of a mystery. I came in with this recording, saying, ‘We should do something like this. Let’s take that and write something over the top of it.’”

Work began on this spaced-out oddity, and what would become the midpoint of the album took shape around an off-kilter, non-time-signatured two-minute pulse of a trippy stream-of-consciousness. Duke also brought in “demos of stuff that I was going to do as a weird noise project, then we stripped back the layers and rebuilt it.

“We had an idea of where we wanted to take

we were doing *World Turned Upside Down*, or [the 2010 debut]. Just doing the album artwork took me a year... and that’s when the album was going to be named after another track, *The Ebb*.”

A grand, 10-minute glitch-tronic overture for the album, *The Ebb* was the first track from the sessions to be named, and as the album’s initial title track, symptomatic of what Duke identifies as “the idea I have at the start isn’t what will be there at the end”.

Later, the track *Fukushima Surfer Boys* would be promoted to headline status. “It’s a completely ridiculous title, but it suits the comedic part of us,” he says. “It sounds nice and airy but lyrically it’s about



IT’S A LOT MORE DIFFICULT TO GET STUFF OUT THERE AND HEARD. SOMETIMES YOU’RE SMASHING YOUR HEAD AGAINST A BRICK WALL AND YOU CAN’T PAY THOUSANDS OF POUNDS FOR A PR. YOU CAN SEE WHAT YOU DO HAS VALUE, BUT OTHER PEOPLE DON’T HAVE TIME TO LISTEN TO IT.

the record but we didn’t know whether our competency would get us there,” he says. “We thought about Thundercat – a virtuoso and obviously amazing – but we couldn’t compare ourselves, so we went, ‘Don’t think about it, just see what comes out.’ We’ve always had that punk sensibility. We know where the finish is and we steam head in that direction. Whether we’ll get there in one piece or not, who knows?”

Staying in one piece over the course of the project seems to have been problematic, and Duke reveals that the album is more personal and emotional than previous records.

“We’ve all had personal struggles and to deal with shifts in our mental state. It wasn’t a difficult album in the respect of, ‘It’s hard to write a song,’ but it was a difficult album in, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’

“It was tough to motivate ourselves,” he continues. “Working with the music industry now is harder, although we have friends everywhere – people in bands, labels – who are all very supportive of us. It’s just a lot more difficult to get stuff out there and heard. Sometimes you’re smashing your head against a brick wall and you can’t pay thousands of pounds for a PR. You can see what you do has value but other people don’t have time to listen to us.

“So we thought we’d work quickly, but the album took three years,” Duke laughs. “Life got in the way. You start a new job, you’ve got kids... We don’t have the wealth of time we had when

atomic death, it’s horrific – and the language we use is a working man’s poetry. We’re always suggesting more than what we’re saying.”

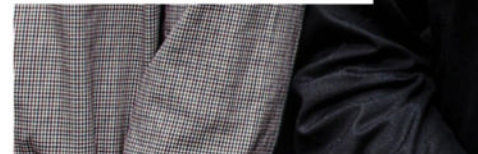
At the time of the *Fukushima*... sessions, Duke was studying a music and business degree in Manchester at BIMM – the British and Irish Institute Of Modern Music – which would lead to the Horse’s newest recruit, current drummer Joe Wood.

“I was hosting a BIMM live event, an end-of-term thing,” says Duke, “and I was getting the next act to go onstage when I just heard this phenomenal drumming. It was J Dilla-esque, weird, syncopated and off-time. I put my head round the door to see what this young guy was doing. I’d had these beats in my head and he was already playing that kind of stuff. He’s been in the band for over a year now and the music that’s come out of that, the change our mindset and the way we’re working has all coalesced in a really positive way.”

Drummer sorted, the album spread its strange tentacles, making room for trademark TH tracks such as the psych pronk rocker *How You Gonna Get By?* and the gurgling dream pop of *I Want To See My Daddy*. In-between, the textural electronic madness lurked, finding favour with a Trojan Horse champion, former *Prog* columnist, *Interesting Alternative* radio show host and now superstar DJ Steve Davis. Davis was exploring a more musicianly side, too.

“Early on in the recording process we played him a load of our new stuff and

”



he was like, ‘I’ve just bought a modular synth, I don’t know what to do with it.’ He came up to see us with this box with loads of knobs on it, saying, ‘I don’t know how to make proper noises,’ and we were like, ‘Well, here are all our synths, fuck around on these.’ So we very nearly had Steve Davis on our record... in fact there is a track that Steve has written and recorded, it just needs to be finished...”

While Davis’ musical debut hangs in the ether, *Fukushima Surfer Boys* has three other guest appearances, one being former Doves frontman Jimi Goodwin, who lends a vocal to indie psych-out *The Modern Apothecary*.

“Jimi’s been a long-time fan,” Duke explains. “We have connections with his manager and we’d already asked if he could help us when *World Turned Upside Down* came out. He shopped it around but most people were like, ‘It’s way too heavy’ or ‘Too psychedelic’ or too this, too that. That album was all of those things, we knew that. He did his best to help, though, and got us some support slots with Jimi when he did his first album tour.”

One of the shows was at Manchester Roadhouse, just before it closed in 2015 – and while the Horse was in a line-up flux.

“Two of the band couldn’t do it,” says Duke. “So there was me and Eden



going, 'It's too big a gig to cancel, we'll make this a two-piece.' It became a comedy cabaret stand-up thing, us playing songs and interjecting with things like, 'At this point you have to imagine that there's this grand, sweeping psychedelic whirlwind around us.' Then we'd stop halfway and have conversations.

"We were so far out of our comfort zone and absolutely shitting it. Jimi's crowd are old Manchester heads: we thought, 'We are going to bomb.' In fact, we won them over. They were laughing, clapping and having a good time and that probably endeared us more to him than any of our music."

Old friend and Stabbing A Dead Horse tour mate Kavus Torabi also stepped up to add guitar to *The Modern Apothecary*, too.

"I wanted to write my version of [album-length stoner epic] *Jerusalem* by Sleep," says Duke. "It's nothing like that, there's a bit in the middle that sounds like Sparks. Kavus tried to compose a part for this while he was in Manchester one time and couldn't get his head around it. He said, 'I don't get this song, you're gonna have to let me take it home.' He came back with a guitar line which made me go, 'I want to do a duelling lead on that.' It's as close to Thin Lizzy as we'll get... and we were lucky to get him as he's such



**Above: new album
Fukushima Surfer Boys.**

a busy man with Gong and Knifeworld and everything. Kavus is one of my favourite people in the world."

There was one final guest: Marillion bassist Pete Trewavas, colouring in the ambitious *...Ebb*.

"Danny used to be in a band with Pete years and years ago," Duke nods. "When Marillion played Manchester we got tickets and managed to meet him. He's a really nice guy and when we asked him to contribute he said, 'Yeah, send me some stuff,' so we did. It was bizarre. If I'd known it was that easy I'd ask everyone [laughs]."

Having special guests can add interest and buzz, but there's a risk that a band's identity and dynamic can be compromised. Trojan Horse have side-stepped that by keeping their collaborative urge pragmatic.

"Whenever we've put gigs on, or done collaborations, or been on a compilation album, or hooked people up, it's always a case of widening the net and creating an organic cross-pollination," says Duke. "We've always tried to foster links between different musicians, different fans, different ages. Our music has that everything but the kitchen sink thing going on. It would be disingenuous of us to disregard that side of the band."

But now that Trojan Horse have broken free of the traditional band

unit rules, what can they see themselves doing next?

"We'll do some shows next year, we just need to find time to get together — Joe lives in Stoke so we have to plan things really well. We're also talking about how, as the album has a more electronic focus, we could incorporate that in to a live set-up and if we have to do it as a full band or we can go off in splinter groups and do interpretations," Duke says. "My idea is along the lines of the Crimson ProjeKcts, so we can go off in groups of whatever. We've all talked about it and agreed that's a positive way of doing it, especially if someone can't make a gig. It's like being in a relationship but you're not joined at the hip — I'll go to the art exhibition I want to see on my own. And I'll take the drum machine with me, ha ha."

So throwing all the gear in the back of the van for a trip around the toilet circuit isn't on the cards this time?

"We probably won't tour," says Duke. "When you're at our level it's a mental strain, you having to do everything yourself. Trojan Horse DJ sets, that's what I'm hoping for. If Steve Davis can do it, anyone can!" ☺

Fukushima Surfer Boys is out now via *Bad Elephant*. See www.trojanhorse.bandcamp.com.



The Nightmare Before Christmas

Tarja Turunen explores the dark side of the festive season on her new classical solo album *From Spirits And Ghosts...*

Season's Greetings: Giulia Mascheroni **Images:** Tim Tronkoe

"Women now have so much power in this male genre and we managed to do that without losing our femininity and without the need to show anything else."

It's been 12 years since Tarja Turunen left Nightwish. Since then, she has released a mixture of classical and rock solo albums, and is acclaimed, alongside the likes of Anneke van Giersbergen, Sharon den Adel and Simone Simons, as a fantastic prog vocalist. Her confidence and talent have helped set her up as an artist whose course seemingly knows no bounds.

Her latest release expands on both her first solo album, 2006's *Henkäys Ikuisuudesta*, a set of classical Christmas-themed songs, and her tradition of playing Christmas tours back in

her native Finland. She's also released four solo rock albums, but new endeavour *From Spirits And Ghosts* is another classical collection of traditional seasonal favourites. And this time, the music is more international.

"The first Christmas album consisted of mainly traditional Finnish songs," explains Turunen. "This time I decided to put songs that the majority of people would know, but I've done them in a different way, in a very cinematographic and dark way, and very beautiful at the same time."

Christmas, Turunen admits, can be a very difficult time for many, and she explores this on the album.

"It has the theme of the contrast between the light and the dark and in us, the happiness and darkness," Turunen explains. "Christmas time, when it comes, hits all of us, no matter if you like it or not, so I started to think about all these people that don't like the Christmas feeling, don't like the jingle bells."

"Some of us also tend to become really sad around Christmas because we have lost people dear to us around that time, we're lonely and we don't have anybody to share the Christmas celebrations with. So I started to think about that and I decided to give some hope and peace through music to all these people."

Turunen's own approach to the Yuletide period was somewhat tainted by personal tragedy. "I lost my mother in 2003 and after that I didn't feel like celebrating Christmas for many years, until I became a mother five years ago. The whole experience of becoming a parent and seeing the enjoyment and excitement in my daughter's eyes every Christmas is something impossible to explain to other people. So, since then, I started to be able to feel the Christmas spirit again after my mother's passing."

For the album, Turunen teamed up again with American score composer Jim Dooley, famous for his work with Hans Zimmer. "*Deck The Halls*, for example, is such a silly Christmas song and I wanted to make a huge twist on it. When I was in the studio with Jim, I told him I wanted it to sound like a horror movie and he completely understood my intent and took it into that direction, which was actually unbelievable! It's such a great challenge taking a well-known song like that, to completely forget about the original version and make it sound as if it was coming from another world."

"He managed to do that with the help of my daughter too, who is actually singing the 'fa la la la la' part and this makes it sound even more spooky! I am super happy with the result and particularly with this song because it sounds natural, as if the song was meant to be like that, in a minor key."

Turunen's experience of her Finnish Christmas concerts also left their mark on *From Spirits And Ghosts*.

"I've been touring for the Christmas concerts since 2005 and I've been changing the programme a lot through the years," she says. "I selected my favourite ones for this record for personal reasons. For some it's the melody that drags me to a certain emotion and for this reason I feel really connected to the song. For others, I feel that the lyrics are so beautiful. A song like *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* is a song that I didn't know before I heard Enya's version."



Lady In White:
Tarja Turunen.

However, some classic Christmas songs, and the overly commercial aspect of Christmas, are not for her.

"I don't like *Jingle Bells* and all those things because for us in Finland Christmas is a completely different thing," she states. "It's a quiet Christmas and we spend it with the family and we listen to some melancholic music for the celebration. We don't have this commercial side of *Jingle Bells* and happiness."

Turunen studied at Helsinki's Sibelius Academy and her roots in classical music mean that she knows exactly what she wants when it comes to the sound of the new record.

"The main thing I wanted to capture on this album was the sound of the orchestra: the emotion that only the sound of a symphonic orchestra can really give you. It could be very peaceful, but at the same time it's so bombastic when it's needed."

That bombast, a typical trait of symphonic prog and metal, is often an easy target for critics. Turunen's heard it all before...

"I've always been picked on by all those people who don't like breaking the rules of the music business... I don't get it!" she exclaims. "For me, music has always been about emotion and I'm a hard-working person: I commit myself to it 24/7 and I always try to get better at what I do. It's tough to work like that cause I continuously challenge myself, but I like it!"

Her full commitment to her cause is also reflected in her extremely varied music taste. She loves classical: "Puccini is definitely one of my favourite opera composers, but I'm more of a lyrical singer rather than an opera singer. I have to say that Sibelius is another of my favourites because he's my classical father, the pride of my country! I also love Schumann, Mendelssohn, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky... yeah, I prefer the melancholic side of music!"

However, she's also passionate about metal – "If I go to the gym or if I go running I need something more rocking, that helps me to keep the pulsations high, so I usually listen to Disturbed or In Flames or Ozzy Osbourne" – prog and classic rock. "When I'm home relaxing with my husband we listen to everything, from Tom Petty to The Beatles, Genesis, Peter Gabriel."

Turunen is proud to be a figurehead and inspiration to female performers in the prog and metal scenes.

"Many singers have approached me in the last few years because they see me as an inspiration," she smiles. "Women now have so much power in this male genre and we managed to do that without losing our femininity and without the need to show anything else. I, myself, have never had to do these kind of things on stage, nor behind the scenes. Me and only my voice have always been enough."

"Nevertheless, I have to say that in the last couple of years the whole music business has changed: it's now so difficult to break through with your music and be heard, because the business itself is suffering and the music industry is sinking. I guess there must be a lot of talent as it has always been around, and this fortunately hasn't changed. The issue is

getting these talents to be heard: we now need social media, but there are no more record labels to support you with advance payments and proper record deals. Nothing like that is existing any more. Nothing. Nothing of what I was used to."

Nevertheless, soon Christmas will have come and gone. And Turunen already has her eyes on the future.

"I'm getting more and more into writing in a progressive way and I've already started on my latest album," she says. "It's definitely something that's coming out now because being a classical musician and educating myself in a classical way, I've been kind of boxed in a certain way. There are rules in

"I decided to put songs that the majority of people would know, but I've done them in a different way, in a very cinematographic and dark way, and very beautiful at the same time."

Queen Of The Night:
Turunen goes over to the dark side.

music and I'm trying to get rid of them. In this way, I'm trying to be more progressive.

"It's been hard for me and it's been a struggle to really be free in my compositions. Recently I've realised that I'm getting used to this freedom and this challenge is giving me wings to fly from one place to another with my emotions and this is fantastic! I feel that in my next album, there are definitely going to be more progressive songs, because I love when nothing stays on a solid ground in music and it could change all of a sudden." ☺

From Spirits And Ghosts is available now on earMUSIC. See www.tarjaturunen.com for more information.

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★ CLASSIC ★
Rock

Life is good for Lee Abraham right now. The musician has just released his sixth solo album *Colours*, and he's also rejoined old bandmates Galahad, with the group preparing to release a new record too. It's something of a two-pronged attack on the prog world by the hard-working Englishman.

"Galahad will shift more units than I will, but that's a fact of life," the axeman smiles when asked if there will be any healthy competition between the two projects.

His admission might be a little bit pessimistic, however, with *Colours* proving a more accessible affair than Abraham's previous five efforts as it channels a more mainstream sound.

"It's a bit different from what I've done before," he says. "I've got a bit of a mutual love of prog and AOR rock, so it's kind of a mix of the two. We just have to wait and see what people make of it, but at the end of the day, I just followed what I was writing. I didn't

Abraham has enlisted the likes of FM's Steve Overland, Gary Chandler and Dec Burke to provide vocals, keeping up his penchant for recruiting guests, and the result is a fine selection box of singers.

Completing the core line-up is drummer Gerald Mulligan, Rob Arnold on piano and Alistair Begg on bass, with Abraham on guitar and keys duty.

"Using Steve Overland was a massive, massive deal for me," he says. "I've been a huge FM fan ever since I was a teenager, and I've always wanted to work with Steve. I think when I was interviewed last for *Prog* magazine for the last album, the interviewer signed off by saying, 'Who would you like to work with in the future?' I actually said Steve Overland, so I managed to achieve it for this album. I think I mentioned Steve and John Petrucci from Dream Theater, so you never know, I might get John Petrucci next time..."

Abraham's first album, *Pictures In The Hall*, was released in 2003, but his desire to

I thought, 'Well, I could either take some singing lessons, or I could get people in who would probably do it more justice.' So I decided to go for the second route.

"I'm a great believer in making the music the best it can be. If that means getting other people to do bits... I can't play drums to save my life, so I get a friend of mine in to do it.

"I can play bass and a bit of guitar, so I'm okay with those two bits — but piano, I'm no good, and it's the same with vocals. I can just about get away with backing vocals. There are backing vocals all over my albums from me, but when it comes to lead, I usually shy away.

"It's not a vanity project for me. I really do want the music to speak for itself and be the best that it can be."

Abraham rejoined Galahad earlier this year — this time taking up a guitar role — after calling it quits in 2009 following four years in the band.

He was suggested to the band for their vacant guitarist slot by Groom, who was

It's been two solo albums in less than two years for guitarist **Lee Abraham**, and now he's rejoined his old group Galahad. *Prog* finds out what makes the prolific player tick.

Words: Chris Cope **Images:** Kevin Nixon

A Splash OF COLOUR

"I've got a bit of a mutual love of prog and AOR rock, so it's kind of a mix of the two."

have to force it in any way, and it's the material that came out."

What did come out was seven impressive tracks which feel succinct and concise, with only one song — album closer *The Mirror Falls* — breaking that hallowed 10-minute mark.

He cites nods to the likes of Toto and Asia but there are still a few hardened prog chops amid all the melody — although you might have to dig a bit deeper to unearth them.

seek feedback from those in the industry — specifically Martin Orford from IQ — ultimately saw him phase out his own vocals.

"When I sent Martin the finished copy of [2004's *A View From The Bridge*], he sent me back this email that said, 'Your songwriting is really coming on. But there's a couple of things: you need to work on your production skills, and you're certainly no lead singer.'"

While some musicians may have been derailed by such curt feedback, Abraham took it with typically good grace.

Around the same time he joined Dorset prog rockers Galahad on bass and he used the band's *Empires Never Last* recording session with Karl Groom to pick up on Pro Tools production tips, casting an eagle eye over the Threshold man at work.

"I was able to sit next to him for the 40-odd days we spent recording that album," Abraham recalls. "That gave me the production angle. As for the singing,

impressed by Abraham's solo CV and the way he honed his skills over the years.

It was an ill-fated tour of Poland that previously saw the multi-instrumentalist leave Galahad after a perfect storm of problems, with it all coming to a head when the band returned to the UK. "We had done some dates in Poland, and I'd been ill while we were out there, so I'd not enjoyed it. My wife wasn't very well either — she had a heart condition which she was awaiting surgery for at that time, so I was worried about her as well," he says. 

Back In The Saddle: Abraham
returns to Galahad, and
continues his solo work.





“Galahad will shift more units than I will, but that’s a fact of life.”

“I probably wasn’t particularly nice to my band members whenever small things went wrong, as they invariably do when you’re on tour,” he says. “We’d gone away for a week to do these five dates, and I just felt really rough about the whole thing. I came home, discussed it with my wife and a few friends, and I just thought I’d probably had enough of doing that.”

Abraham admits he didn’t speak to his bandmates for a “long time” as both parties delved into their own projects – but it was after a moment of tragedy that he began to reconnect with his Galahad comrades.

“The guy who came in to replace me was a previous bass player called Neil Pepper, and he sadly died in 2011, I think it was – he had cancer. I sent the guys a message just saying that I was really sorry to hear about Neil.

“That kind of healed a few bridges, and I started chatting to Stu [Nicholson] the lead singer now and again. In 2014 I played

guitar for Cosmograf and he was invited to do Celebr8 festival in Islington, and Galahad were also on the bill, so I met up with the guys then for the first time in five years. It was like those five years never happened.”

It feels Abraham has come a long way since picking up his first bass guitar as an Iron Maiden-loving teenager. He was later given an old acoustic guitar – “I remember taking it to school and getting somebody to tune it for me” – before he sourced an electric and never looked back, with pub gigs slowly leading to prog.

“I’d always listened to bands like Queensrÿche,” he says. “I liked bands like Marillion as well. I was in a covers band in the late 90s and we had a drummer join us. He kept mentioning this band Dream Theater, and he lent me *Images And Words*, which was maybe three or four years old at that time. I was just blown away by it. ‘Wow, this stuff is brilliant – it’s really heavy rock but it’s got really complex structures.’

“I had a few albums by people like Genesis and Yes in my record collection that I’d kind of acquired over the years, but I was a great one for listening to an album maybe once or twice and then never listening to them again, because I tried to listen to so much stuff. I remember going back through all my CDs,

thinking, ‘Well actually, I’ve got some Genesis albums here, let’s revisit them.’ It was around that time that I’d finished with a particularly busy covers band and I started to write some fairly long and complex tracks, and found myself really enjoying it.”

And to the future. Abraham will have little time to twiddle his thumbs in 2018 as Galahad release their latest record *Seas Of Change* and promote it on the road around the globe – including a return to Poland.

But it’s safe to assume that the musician will keep chipping away at his solo career too – when he can – and will keep trying to improve. It’s a constant cycle of seeking perfection, and making the best music he can.

“Some people are good at songwriting, some people are good at playing guitar, some people are good at being the producer, some people are good at being the mix engineer,” he says.

“On this album, I’ve had to do all of that. It’s through my own choice. I’m no good at singing or playing drums, but I’d like to think that in terms of playing the guitar and doing the production, those are the bits that I really, really do enjoy. I’ll make sure I’ll get better and better at it.” ☺

Colours is out now via F2 Music. For more information, see www.leeabraham.co.uk.

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*'Here I lie, at peace in solitude forever
Until I am stirred from my nest like a bird
And soar into the world once again...'
(From Silence To Somewhere, Wobbler)*

Wobbler: waiting for the world to catch up with their progressive sounds.

Norwegians **Wobbler** recreate the epic sounds of early 70s prog rock, and with a new label and line-up, they're poised to finally get the recognition they deserve.

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Terje Skår

ARR

Connoisseurs of Scandinavian prog will already know about Wobbler. Formed in 1999 in Hønefoss, Norway, they have spent much of their 18 years of existence mooching around in the shadows: an intermittent force for progressive good, far

from prolific but always impactful when they do emerge from their old school, analogue-driven cage. This time, however, things are a little different. The brand new Wobbler album, *From Silence To Somewhere*, emerges into a world that's much more open to music with a limitless, wide-eyed remit. As a result,

the band are getting used to the idea that the world is finally beginning to come round to their way of thinking, and to a musical philosophy that could hardly have been more radical when Wobbler started their journey.

"We started playing in '99, very much inspired by the classic prog era of 1969 to



1974,” nods keyboard maestro Lars Fredrik Frøislie. “We lived close by and musical interests tend to draw people together, don’t they? Eventually we found each other and thought, ‘Why not try to do things our own way?’ We were inspired by all the bands we love. We wanted to capture that *magic*, the incredible magic of that period.

“Prog was definitely looked down upon when we started. We were pretty unfashionable, but we didn’t care. We almost did it out of spite! None of us were really into any of the contemporary music that was being made, except for black metal.”

“That was a big inspiration,” adds bassist Kristian Karl Hultgren. “It was the way the black metal bands ignored the music scene in Norway and completely did their own thing.”

Evidence of Wobbler’s idiosyncratic approach to music was laid bare on the band’s superb debut album *Hinterland*. It emerged to little fanfare in the autumn of 2005 but slowly exerted its unique allure, drawing in discerning fans and confirming that Norway now had a fervently old school prog band to stand beside the likes of Swedish pioneers Änglagård and Anekdoten.

Even as progressive music was splintering off in all manner of strange directions, Wobbler seemed determined to honour the ageless sound of the genre’s first wave, even to the extent of becoming notoriously obsessed with accumulating as much authentic analogue equipment as possible. Over a decade on, Frøislie admits that the band have calmed down a little, but that their original ethos remains intact to a great extent.

“Well, the analogue obsession didn’t happen right at the beginning because we couldn’t afford to buy the right equipment initially,” he grins. “I remember the turning point. I had emulations of Mellotron and organs on my computer but then it broke down. So I knew I needed something where I could actually see what’s going wrong and I could stop and fix it with a screwdriver, you know? But we were pretty young when we first teamed up so buying that stuff was unrealistic. Eventually I got the Minimoog and the Mellotron, so when we recorded the first album, it was time to go all the way. It was quite extreme, I must admit. We even had drumsticks from 1974 and they broke during the soundcheck because they were old and rotten!”

“The problems with this stuff start when you leave the studio – you can’t just order a Mellotron if you’re playing in some small place in Italy,” Hultgren notes. “Going on tour makes that stuff difficult. So you have to cater for some modern ways to be able to perform.”

It’s easy to forget how hostile the music world was to anything remotely prog-centric a little over 10 years ago. Wobbler’s debut album went down extremely well with a substantial but largely untapped audience that were desperate for new music of this ilk, but as far as the band were concerned, their prospects were limited and their expectations were relatively low.

“For me it was quite a shock to discover that people loved us,” Hultgren states. “I can remember, especially after we played

“Prog was definitely looked down upon when we started. We were pretty unfashionable, but we didn’t care. We almost did it out of spite!”

Lars Fredrik Frøislie



Wobbler, L-R: Lars Fredrik Frøislie, Martin Kneppen, Andreas Prestmo, Kristian Hultgren, Marius Halleland.

at NearFest in 2005, I was going off stage, just happy because it was the first major concert we’d done, and suddenly there was this commotion. One of the guys came and dragged me out, saying, ‘You have to come and sign!’ I was like, ‘Sure, I’ll sign a CD...’

“I came round the corner and there was this huge line of people waiting for us to sign stuff, and that was the first time I realised we had an audience outside of a few people in Oslo. Then we started to think maybe we should start writing in English!”

The release of Wobbler’s new album takes place in a much more welcoming environment for bands devoted to the ways of the early 70s. As with their previous two records, 2009’s *Afterglow* and its blissful follow-up *Rites At Dawn* (2011), *From Silence To Somewhere* pulls off the ingenious trick of sounding simultaneously like some long-lost relic from 1972 and like an entirely fresh new take on that old school musical code.

Almost creaking under the weight of its own inspired ideas, it’s an album that has been painstakingly pieced together over the last five years, during which Wobbler have undergone one major line-up change and, it seems, a focusing of their creative endeavours.

“Our previous guitar player quit in 2011 and so Andreas [Prestmo, guitar] joined and he’s a very creative soul,” Frøislie explains. “Since then he’s got us gigs in Italy and England and we’re very happy that he took on that manager/booking agent role. He’s much better at it than the rest of us! We did those gigs and tried to get as many more gigs in other countries as we could, just to break Andreas in and get comfortable with the new line-up.

“We just enjoyed playing for a while,” he adds. “We were always saying we should make a new album, but without a new guitar player, it was hard to get that collective stuff going.”

“We actually started on some of the songs in 2012 and 2013,” Hultgren adds. “Then we jammed at my house and made the outline for the third song on the album, *Fermented Hours*. I don’t do the lead guitars, so then Andreas joined and the pieces all fell into place and the separate parts we had turned into songs.”

The arrival of Andreas Prestmo in the Wobbler ranks has had a subtle but significant impact on both the way the band operate and the music they make. *From Silence To Somewhere*’s towering, 20-minute title track comes with lyrics penned by the band’s new guitarist and is simply the most adventurous



and absorbing piece of music Wobbler have produced to date. As a fan's introduction to the band's new recruit, it's unbeatable.

"It's more and more clear to me that it's a true Wobbler opus," Prestmo states. "It wouldn't be the way it is if we hadn't worked on it collectively. I brought in the lyrics, but what really made the song is what everyone put into it. The song started in a kitchen at a party. I just picked up a guitar and started

From Silence To Somewhere is potent on a lyrical level too. In among its strange, psychedelic musings and skewed, lysergic poetry, the album delves deep into more profound, existential notions. As Prestmo explains, his first foray with a new band provided a great opportunity to exorcise some demons.

"In 2010 my mother died in an accident, and that pulled me into this maelstrom of very peculiar emotions and a lot of thinking,"

"We even had drumsticks from 1974 and they broke during the soundcheck because they were old and rotten!"

Lars Fredrik Frøislie

to play the chords for the verse. I started to sing this melody over it and then I felt it was something. I had a feeling it was not a four- or five-minute song – it was a big song!"

A sprawling but meticulous epic that takes Wobbler through all manner of strange sonic environs while also hammering home the band's laudable adherence to old principles,

he says. "There was lot of hard stuff going on for the next two, three, four years, and this song became a kind of catharsis for me. It's about a will to survive in this nothingness, this endless void that life is a part of. I was swimming in a big ocean of a lot of different life thoughts, on survival and evolution and many other things. In many ways, this kind

of thinking shaped the thematic for the whole album too. It really flavoured the pot."

"Those themes, like alchemy, rebirth, death, they're all there and the ending is quite gloomy," adds Hultgren. "But it's quite serene as well. The ending, the coda at the very end of the song, it's very peaceful. But at the same time the lyrics are about lying and awaiting death and then rebirth again, so for me it's a journey through elements of life."

"It's very hard to talk about without sounding pretentious and ridiculous!" laughs Prestmo. "We had this idea to focus on darker aspects but not in a frightening, horror movie, heavy metal way. More in a naturalistic 'this is how it is!' way. Life is merciless. *Rites At Dawn* was such an optimistic record, but it was clear that this material was going to be darker and more introspective and would have a broader palette of emotions."

One listen to the new Wobbler album should be enough to make you ask why this band aren't a lot better known. The truth is that four albums in 18 years isn't the most impressive return, but it's clear the band are so thrilled by their new album and the enhanced creative process that grew from Prestmo's assimilation that, at last, they have decided to hurl themselves into the whole process of being an active band. Now signed to esteemed Norwegian imprint Karisma Records, Wobbler may be about to make up for lost time.

"We're not lazy but we're so used to doing things at our own tempo," shrugs Frøislie. "If someone has a good idea, we jump on it. But before we didn't push it and things evolved naturally. I think we're past that now and there's a collective feeling that we want to be more efficient, put out more stuff and drag ourselves into this creative process and see how far we can go."

"We have a lot of material that wasn't used on *From Silence...* so that will be the next album," Hultgren confirms. "If we can keep up that level of progress, making new stuff as we're out playing shows and promoting the new record, we'll always have something to work with."

Signing to Karisma has plainly made a big difference to Wobbler's expectations. For the first time in their chaotic history, the band have a label behind them that fully understands the prog world, and that wants to push their new charges as far as they can go. With plans to play as many gigs as possible over the next 12 months, and preparations for their fifth studio album already underway, Wobbler are about to be stirred from their nest and cajoled into the bright, limitless sky.

"That's why we jumped at the chance with Karisma," says Hultgren. "They're fans and they said from the start that they wanted to do stuff for us. We know a few bands that have been on the label for some time and they gave us very good reviews. So right now, this is all we need. It's been so long since the last album that this almost feels like a comeback. We're all very happy!" ☺

From Silence To Somewhere is available now via Karisma. See www.facebook.com/wobblerofficial for more information.

2017 PROG @critics' @choice

Another year, another nigh on impossible task of whittling down all the great progressively minded releases into some kind of meaningful list. Somehow, the writers of *Prog* have managed to cull lengthy lists into the required 20, from which we create the overall Top 20. It goes without saying that 2017 was another year of incredible quality...

"Even when I make a big flirty tart of a record you guys still vote it top of the progs, haha! That's amazing, thank you so much!"



2 ANATHEMA

THE OPTIMIST (KSCOPE)

WE SAID: "The album of their career thus far. A delightfully conceived, emotional yet uplifting masterpiece."

Jerry Ewing, *Prog* 77



3 PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

EVERY VALLEY (PIAS)

WE SAID: "PSB's latest epic, technicolour testament to the human spirit and heroic endeavour." Paul Lester, *Prog* 78



4 ROGER WATERS

THIS IS THE LIFE WE REALLY WANT? (COLUMBIA)

WE SAID: "If you embrace him as an irascible genius, then this is the album you really want."

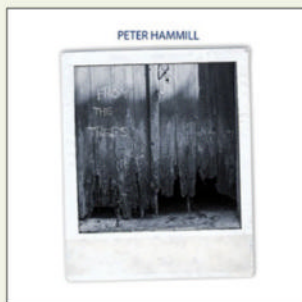
Grant Moon, *Prog* 77

1 STEVE WILSON

TO THE BONE (CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL)

WE SAID: "What could have been a self-conscious paean to the wide-eyed 80s sounds more like a fervent and meticulous tribute to the very notion of the song itself." Dom Lawson, *Prog* 79





5 PETER HAMMILL
FROM THE TREES (FIE)
WE SAID: "This is a finely crafted masterpiece that grapples fearlessly with the varied psychological aspects of old age." Sid Smith, *Prog 81*



6 MASTODON
EMPEROR OF SAND (REPRISE)
WE SAID: "Like a band who have flipped a coin and watched as it landed on its edge, this is the work of both Mastodons, New and Old." Dave Everley, *Prog 75*



7 BIG BIG TRAIN
GRIMSPOUND (ENGLISH ELECTRIC)
WE SAID: "The album reaches peak prog on *A Mead Hall In Winter*; 15 minutes of sublime twists, turns and textural sleight of hand." Dom Lawson, *Prog 76*



8 STEVE HACKETT
THE NIGHT SIREN (INSIDEOUT)
WE SAID: "Hackett's evident ease at flitting between styles, textures and sound is still a welcome surprise." Philip Wilding, *Prog 74*



9 LEPROUS
MALINA (INSIDEOUT)
WE SAID: "There's a playfulness about this record that, at its best, is nothing short of infectious." Alex Lynham, *Prog 79*



10 MOTORPSYCHO
THE TOWER (RUNE GRAMMOFON)
WE SAID: "An expansive but consistently excellent double album, and nothing less than a creative rebirth." Joe Banks, *Prog 80*



11 AMPLIFIER
TRIPPIN WITH DR FAUSTUS (ROCKSMOS)
WE SAID: "An immersive experience and quite possibly their finest album to date." Joe Banks, *Prog 78*



12 ENSLAVED
E (NUCLEAR BLAST)
WE SAID: "It's impressive to hear how far Enslaved have travelled from their black metal origins." David West, *Prog 80*



13 VON HERTZEN BROTHERS
WAR IS OVER (MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT)
WE SAID: "War Is Over continues a rich seam of work from the VHB." Philip Wilding, *Prog 82*



14 ARCAINE ROOTS
MELANCHOLIA HYMNS (EASY LIFE)
WE SAID: "They have an uncanny ability to straddle prog, alternative rock and tech metal." Dom Lawson, *Prog 80*



15 ULVER
THE ASSASSINATION OF JULIUS CAESAR (HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY)
WE SAID: "The debt to the sleek and sleazy sheen of 80s electro pop is clear." Briony Edwards, *Prog 76*



16 PAUL DRAPER
SPOOKY ACTION (KSCOPE)
WE SAID: "While this album is peppered with peculiar sounds, it is anything but inaccessible." Johnny Sharp, *Prog 79*

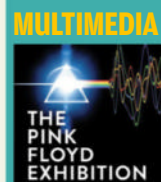


REISSUES
1. RADIOHEAD
OK COMPUTER OKNOTOK 1997-2017 (XL)
2. MARILLION
MISPLACED CHILDHOOD (PLG)
3. KING CRIMSON
SAILORS' TALES (PANEGYRIC)
4. GENTLE GIANT
THREE PIECE SUITE (ALLICARD)
5. JETHRO TULL
SONGS FROM THE WOOD (PARLOPHONE)

GIGS



1. MARILLION
ROYAL ALBERT HALL
2. BIG BIG TRAIN
CADOGAN HALL
3. YES FEAT ANDERSON RABIN WAKEMAN
EVENTIM
HAMMERSMITH APOLLO
4. TEARS FOR FEARS
ROYAL ALBERT HALL
5. PHIL COLLINS
ROYAL ALBERT HALL



MULTIMEDIA
1. PINK FLOYD
THEIR MORTAL REMAINS V&A EXHIBITION
2. DAVID GILMOUR
LIVE AT POMPEII (TRAFALGAR RELEASING)
3. AUBREY POWELL
VINYL. ALBUM. COVER. ART: THE COMPLETE HIPGNOSIS CATALOGUE (THAMES & HUDSON)
4. MARILLION
OUT OF THE BOX (RACKET)
5. ELO
WEMBLEY OR BUST (COLUMBIA)



17 MOGWAI
EVERY COUNTRY'S SUN (ROCK ACTION)
WE SAID: "Mogwai approach their variations on a number of themes with conviction." Mike Barnes, *Prog 79*



18 BENT KNEE
LAND ANIMAL (INSIDEOUT)
WE SAID: "As an art rock record at the poppier end of the spectrum, it's atmospheric and cinematic with hooks aplenty." Alex Lynham, *Prog 78*



19 KOYO
KOYO (88 WATT)
WE SAID: "Born of live improvisations, the band edit for the studio yet retain the sonic spectacle." Ian Fortnam, *Prog 80*



20 SOEN
LYKAIKA (UDR)
WE SAID: "Their forte is strong melodies, atmospheric soundscapes and sonic Sturm Und Drang." Johnny Sharp, *Prog 75*

JERRY EWING (Editor)



1. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
2. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
3. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
4. **ARCANE ROOTS** - Melancholia Hymns (*EASY LIFE*)
5. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
6. **VOYAGER** - Ghost Mile (*NOVA DISTRIBUTION*)
7. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
8. **DANIEL CAVANAGH** - Monochrome (*KSCOPE*)
9. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)
10. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
11. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
12. **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT*)
13. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
14. **TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
15. **BENT KNEE** - Land Animal (*INSIDEOUT*)
16. **ALAN REED** - Honey On The Razor's Edge (*RED DWARF*)
17. **SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
18. **WIRE** - Silver/Lead (*PINK FLAG*)
19. **PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
20. **HIMMELLEGE** - Myth Of Earth (*KARISMA*)

HANNAH MAY KILROY (Deputy Editor)



1. **ULVER** - The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
2. **HIMMELLEGE** - Myth Of Earth (*KARISMA*)
3. **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT*)
4. **ARCANE ROOTS** - Melancholia Hymns (*EASY LIFE*)
5. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
6. **SÓLSTAFIR** - Berdreyminn (*SEASON OF MIST*)
7. **MYRKUR** - Mareridt (*RELAPSE*)
8. **ZOLA JESUS** - Okóvi (*SACRED BONES*)
9. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
10. **MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
11. **GOLDRAY** - Rising (*AKASHIC/CARGO*)
12. **BEATRIX PLAYERS** - Magnified (*ARDENT*)
13. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
14. **JANE WEAVER** - Modern Kosmology (*FIRE*)
15. **GODSTICKS** - Faced With Rage (*KSCOPE*)
16. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
17. **GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** - Luciferian Towers (*CONSTELLATION*)
18. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
19. **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** - The Endless Shimmering (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
20. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)

RUSSELL FAIRBROTHER (Art Editor)



1. **BENT KNEE** - Land Animal (*INSIDEOUT*)
2. **TROJAN HORSE** - Fukushima Surfer Boys (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
3. **REFLECTIONS IN COSMO** - Reflections In Cosmo (*RARENOISE*)
4. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
5. **PAIN OF SALVATION** - In The Passing Light Of Day (*INSIDEOUT*)
6. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
7. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
8. **ULVER** - The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
9. **CHEER-ACCIDENT** - Putting Off Death (*CUNEIFORM*)
10. **STEIN URHEIM** - Utopian Tales (*HUBRO*)
11. **GOLDRAY** - Rising (*AKASHIC/CARGO*)
12. **SÓLSTAFIR** - Berdreyminn (*SEASON OF MIST*)
13. **SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
14. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
15. **EXQUIRILA** - Para Quienes Aún Viven (*SUPERBALL MUSIC*)
16. **NOVA COLLECTIVE** - The Further Side (*METAL BLADE*)
17. **VOYAGER** - Ghost Mile (*NOVA DISTRIBUTION*)
18. **MYRKUR** - Mareridt (*RELAPSE*)
19. **SCHIERMANN** Schiermann (*PURPLE SUN*)
20. **THE MOTHERS EARTH EXPERIMENT** The Mothers Earth Experiment (*SWORDFISH*)

THE BEST
THING I'VE
HEARD ALL
YEAR...



PRESS/TINA KORHONEN

STEVE HACKETT

"Orphaned Land's *Unsung Prophets And Dead Messiahs*. It combines an operatic quality and world music exotica with driving rock sensibility. Kobi Farhi also has a beautiful, emotional quality to his voice. Check out the detailed arrangements too."



STEVE ROTHERY (MARILLION)

"It's from my friend Riccardo Romano. It's a concept album based on *The Little Prince*. It features guest appearances by myself, Dave Foster, Steve Hogarth, Martin Jakubski and my daughter Jennifer Rothery, and is truly stunning."



BEATRIX PLAYERS

"*I Am Snow* by the Heather Findlay Band. It's a nostalgic hug, perfect for this time of year. It has the earthy tones of Jethro Tull, with melodies reminiscent of Karen Carpenter and Pentangle, with a medieval sensibility and strength of delivery that tells of experience."

NATASHA SCHARF (News Editor)



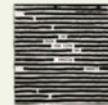
1. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
2. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
3. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
4. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
5. **ULVER** - The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
6. **PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
7. **SÓLSTAFIR** - Berdreyminn (*SEASON OF MIST*)
8. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
9. **EIVØR** - Slør (*A&G*)
10. **CHELSEA WOLFE** - Hiss Spun (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
11. **MYRKUR** - Mareridt (*RELAPSE*)
12. **SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
13. **GODSTICKS** - Faced With Rage (*KSCOPE*)
14. **THRESHOLD** - Legends Of The Shire (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
15. **THE MUTE GODS** - Tardigrades Will Inherit The Earth (*INSIDEOUT*)
16. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)
17. **VOYAGER** - Ghost Mile (*NOVA DISTRIBUTION*)
18. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
19. **NOVA COLLECTIVE** - The Further Side (*METAL BLADE*)
20. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)

JO KENDALL (Reviews Editor)



1. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
2. **ANDY LEWIS AND JUDY DYBLE** - Summer Dancing (*ACID JAZZ/PIAS*)
3. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
4. **KAIRON; IRSE!** - Ruination (*SVART*)
5. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
6. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
7. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC/GIANT ELECTRIC PEA*)
8. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
9. **RICHARD DAWSON** - Peasant (*DOMINO*)
10. **SCHNAUSER** - Irritant (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
11. **JANE WEAVER** - Modern Kosmology (*FIRE*)
12. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
13. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
14. **POND** - The Weather (*MARATHON ARTISTS*)
15. **SPARKS** - Hippopotamus (*BMG*)
16. **VALERIAN SWING** - Nights (*SMALL POND*)
17. **ONCE AND FUTURE BAND** - Once And Future Band (*CASTLE FACE*)
18. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
19. **PYE HASTINGS** - From The Half House (*CARAVAN*)
20. **COBALT CHAPEL** - Cobalt Chapel (*KLOVE*)

MALCOLM DOME (Lives Editor)



1. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
2. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
3. **KIM SEVIOUR** - Recovery Is Learning (*WHITE STAR*)
4. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
5. **MIKE OLDFIELD** - Return To Ommadawn (*VIRGIN EMI*)
6. **TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
7. **HAWKWIND** - Into The Woods (*CHERRY RED*)
8. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
9. **WIRE** - Silver/Lead (*PINKFLAG*)
10. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
11. **PRIMUS** - The Desaturating Seven (*ATO*)
12. **KEPLER TEN** - Delta-V (*WHITE STAR*)
13. **BEATRIX PLAYERS** - Magnified (*ARDENT*)
14. **ULVER** - The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
15. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCAST** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
16. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
17. **DANIEL CAVANAGH** - Monochrome (*KSCOPE*)
18. **SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
19. **LONELY ROBOT** - The Big Dream (*INSIDEOUT*)
20. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)

CHRIS COPE (Writer)



- 1. BENT KNEE** - Land Animal (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 2. STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
- 3. NOVA COLLECTIVE** - The Further Side (*METAL BLADE*)
- 4. LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 5. IGORRR** - Savage Sinusoid (*METAL BLADE*)
- 6. ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY** - Health (*BIG SCARY MONSTERS*)
- 7. MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
- 8. AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** - The Endless Shimmering (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
- 9. LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)
- 10. THE PHYSICS HOUSE BAND** - Mercury Fountain (*SMALL POND RECORDINGS*)
- 11. ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE** - The Observer (*SELF-RELEASED*)
- 12. KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
- 13. O.R.K.** - Soul Of An Octopus (*RARENOISE*)
- 14. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
- 15. SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 16. PAIN OF SALVATION** - In The Passing Light Of Day (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 17. VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT*)
- 18. AYREON** - The Source (*MASCOT*)
- 19. SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
- 20. DISPERSE** - Foreword (*SEASON OF MIST*)

ISERE LLOYD-DAVIS (Writer)



- 1. ULVER** - The Assassination of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
- 2. ZOLA JESUS** - Okovi (*SACRED BONES*)
- 3. CHELSEA WOLFE** - Hiss Spun (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
- 4. LAIBACH** - Also Sprach Zarathustra (*MUTE*)
- 5. THE SOUNDBYTE** - Solitary IV (*TEMPLE OF TORTUROUS*)
- 6. GHOST AGAINST GHOST** - Still Love (*OUR SILENT CANVAS*)
- 7. GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** - Luciferian Towers (*CONSTELLATION*)
- 8. BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA** - Diving For Roses (*RIGHT TRACK*)
- 9. ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
- 10. MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
- 11. MIKE OLDFIELD** - Return To Ommadawn (*VIRGIN EMI*)
- 12. MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
- 13. BEATRIX PLAYERS** - Magnified (*ARDENT*)
- 14. ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
- 15. TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
- 16. STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
- 17. OHHMS** - The Fool (*HOLY ROAR*)
- 18. PALLBEARER** - Heartless (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
- 19. SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
- 20. PRIMUS** - The Desaturating Seven (*ATO*)

DARYL EASLEA (Writer)



- 1. PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
- 2. PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
- 3. ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
- 4. STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
- 5. MIKE OLDFIELD** - Return To Ommadawn (*VIRGIN EMI*)
- 6. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
- 7. POND** - The Weather (*MARATHON ARTISTS*)
- 8. MOON DUO** - Occult Architecture Vol 1 (*SACRED BONES*)
- 9. MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
- 10. STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 11. MEW** - Visuals (*PIAS*)
- 12. BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
- 13. AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
- 14. KAPREKAR'S CONSTANT** - Fate Outsmarts Desire (*URANIUM CLUB*)
- 15. TOM SLATTER** - Happy People (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
- 16. GIZMODROME** - Gizmodrome (*EARMUSIC*)
- 17. TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
- 18. BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
- 19. RICHARD BARBIERI** - Planets + Persona (*KSCOPE*)
- 20. GHOST AGAINST GHOST** - Still Love (*OUR SILENT CANVAS*)

THE BEST
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PRESS/SAM RILEY

SEL BALAMIR (AMPLIFIER)

"Highmare by the Dead Pirates sounds like the Melvins spending a drunken weekend in a laudanum den. I've never seen this band live but I would hope that they're incredibly aloof and hold their audience in complete contempt. And good Lord, the riffs."



BRUCE SOORD (THE PINEAPPLE THIEF)

"Faced With Rage by Godsticks. Having Godsticks touring with us, my vote must feel like Greece giving all 10 points to Cyprus. But it's such a unique, edgy and frankly challenging ride at times. The mix is powerful, aggressive and risky, but it serves the music perfectly."



WILL IRELAND

ROBERT REED (MAGENTA)

"Roger Waters' Is This The Life We Really Want? has been a long time coming. Roger is still angry and it shows. The music is relatively simple, but it's so emotionally charged. The album is very depressing and a hard listen, but challenging - everything you want from Roger Waters!"

ROB HUGHES (Writer)



- 1. POND** - The Weather (*MARATHON ARTISTS*)
- 2. MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
- 3. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
- 4. GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** - Luciferian Towers (*CONSTELLATION*)
- 5. COBALT CHAPEL** - Cobalt Chapel (*KLOVE*)
- 6. WIRE** - Silver/Lead (*PINK FLAG*)
- 7. SLEEPMAKESWAVES** - Made Of Breath Only (*BIRD'S ROBE*)
- 8. STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 9. JANE WEAVER** - Modern Kosmology (*FIRE*)
- 10. THE TANGENT** - The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 11. NORDIC GIANTS** - Amplify Human Vibration (*KSCOPE*)
- 12. IDA WENØE** - Time Of Ghosts (*KAROUSEL*)
- 13. MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
- 14. PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
- 15. AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** - The Endless Shimmering (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
- 16. SPARKS** - Hippopotamus (*BMG*)
- 17. MAMMÚT** - Kinder Versions (*BELLA UNION*)
- 18. FAUST** - Fresh Air (*BUREAU B*)
- 19. HANNAH PEEL** - Mary Casio: Journey To Cassiopeia (*MY OWN PLEASURE*)
- 20. RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP** - Burials In Several Earths (*ROOM 13*)

DOM LAWSON (Writer)



- 1. MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
- 2. RIKARD SJÖBLOM'S GUNGLY** - On Her Journey To The Sun (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 3. PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
- 4. THRESHOLD** - Legends Of The Shires (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
- 5. ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
- 6. DISPERSE** - Foreword (*SEASON OF MIST*)
- 7. VUUR** - In This Moment We Are Free - Cities (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 8. GALLEY BEGGAR** - Heathen Hymns (*RISE ABOVE*)
- 9. STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
- 10. ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
- 11. WOBBLER** - From Silence To Somewhere (*KARISMA*)
- 12. BARDSPEC** - Hydrogen (*BY NORSE*)
- 13. BJÖRN RIIS** - Forever Comes To An End (*KARISMA*)
- 14. THE VICIOUS HEAD SOCIETY** - Abject Tomorrow (*SELF-RELEASED*)
- 15. LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)
- 16. LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 17. VULTURE INDUSTRIES** - Stranger Times (*SEASON OF MIST*)
- 18. SÓLSTAFIR** - Berdreyminn (*SEASON OF MIST*)
- 19. CIRCLE** - Terminal (*EKTRO*)
- 20. GODSTICKS** - Faced With Rage (*KSCOPE*)

PAUL LESTER (Writer)



- 1. PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
- 2. TODD RUNDGREN** - White Knight (*CLEOPATRA*)
- 3. STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
- 4. RE-TROS** - Before The Applause (*MODERN SKY*)
- 5. CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY** - True Love (*PLEDGEMUSIC*)
- 6. THE FLAMING LIPS** - Oczy Mlody (*BELLA UNION*)
- 7. WIRE** - Silver/Lead (*PINK FLAG*)
- 8. MEW** - Visuals (*PIAS*)
- 9. JOHN FOXX AND THE MATHS** - The Machine (*METAMATIC*)
- 10. VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MASCOT*)
- 11. STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 12. MOON DUO OCCULT** - Architecture Vol. 1 (*SACRED BONES*)
- 13. TIM BOWNNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
- 14. HAWKWIND** - Into The Woods (*CHERRY RED*)
- 15. RADIOPHONIC WORKSHOP** - Burials In Several Earths (*ROOM 13*)
- 16. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
- 17. BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
- 18. GIZMODROME** - Gizmodrome (*EARMUSIC*)
- 19. MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
- 20. RICHARD BARBIERI** - Planets + Persona (*KSCOPE*)

DAVE LING (Writer)



1. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
2. **LONELY ROBOT** - The Big Dream (*INSIDEOUT*)
3. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
4. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
5. **SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
6. **AYREON** - The Source (*MASCOT*)
7. **HAWKWIND** - Into The Woods (*CHERRY RED*)
8. **THRESHOLD** - Legends Of The Shires (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
9. **THE MUTE GODS** - Tardigrades Will Inherit The Earth (*INSIDEOUT*)
10. **PROCOL HARUM** - Novum (*EAGLE ROCK*)
11. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
12. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
13. **THE TANGENT** - The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (*INSIDEOUT*)
14. **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MASCOT*)
15. **MOSTLY AUTUMN** - Sight Of Day (*SELF-RELEASED*)
16. **NAD SYLVAN** - The Bride Said No (*INSIDEOUT*)
17. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
18. **KIM SEVIOUR** - Recovery Is Learning (*WHITE STAR*)
19. **NEXT TO NONE** - Phases (*INSIDEOUT*)
20. **KEPLER TEN** - Delta-V (*WHITE STAR*)

ALEX LYNHAM (Writer)



1. **ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY** - Health (*BIG SCARY MONSTERS*)
2. **THE CONTORTIONIST** - Clairvoyant (*EONE*)
3. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
4. **BLACK MAP** - In Drones (*EONE*)
5. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
6. **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** - The Endless Shimmering (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
7. **ARCANE ROOTS** - Melancholia Hymns (*EASY LIFE*)
8. **SLEEPMAKESWAVES** - Made Of Breath Only (*BIRD'S ROBE*)
9. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
10. **WHITE MOTH BLACK BUTTERFLY** - Atone (*KSCOPE*)
11. **TROJAN HORSE** - Fukushima Surfer Boys (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
12. **BLACK MAP** - In Drones (*EONE*)
13. **NORDIC GIANTS** - Amplify Human Vibration (*KSCOPE*)
14. **VALERIAN SWING** - Nights (*SMALL POND*)
15. **VESSELS** - The Great Distraction (*DIFFERENT RECORDINGS*)
16. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
17. **BENT KNEE** - Land Animal (*INSIDEOUT*)
18. **GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** - Luciferian Towers (*CONSTELLATION*)
19. **MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
20. **GODSTICKS** - Faced With Rage (*KSCOPE*)

CHRIS MCGAREL (Writer)



1. **DISCIPLINE** - Captives Of The Wine Dark Sea (*LASER'S EDGE*)
2. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
3. **DANIEL CAVANAGH** - Monochrome (*KSCOPE*)
4. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
5. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
6. **TROJAN HORSE** - Fukushima Surfer Boys (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
7. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
8. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
9. **PRIMUS** - The Desaturating Seven (*ATO*)
10. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
11. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
12. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
13. **CHEER-ACCIDENT** - Putting Off Death (*CUNEIFORM*)
14. **LIFESIGNS** - Cardington (*SELF-RELEASED*)
15. **THE TANGENT** - The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (*INSIDEOUT*)
16. **IT** - We're All In This Together (*PROGRESSIVE GEARS*)
17. **CHARLIE CAWOOD** - The Divine Abstract (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
18. **TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
19. **UFOMAMMUT** - 8 (*NEUROT RECORDINGS*)
20. **LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)

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DAN TOMPKINS
(WHITE MOTH
BLACK BUTTERFLY/
TESSERACT)
"Clairvoyant by
The Contortionist is
masterfully crafted and
carefully balanced. It's
a stylised and mature
record that sees the
band rise above their
peers with a technical
yet accessible sound:
warm, serene and
full of heart."



ADRIAN GOLEBY
(CALIGULA'S HORSE)
"There's something
unforgettable about
Pain Of Salvation's
*In The Passing Light
Of Day*. It evokes
empathy, frustration,
revelation and joy so
fast that you arrive 71
minutes into the future
with a bag of Daniel
Gildenlöw's memories
and a sudden need
to be held."



GEOFF DOWNES
(YES/ASIA)
"It's hard to top Big
Train's *Grimspond*.
They really are a quite
unique band that
blend prog and folk
with mature classical
elements. Never afraid
to embrace a wide
variety of influences,
they continue to be
driven by themes of
nostalgia, pastoral and
a good dollop of pure
old Britishness."

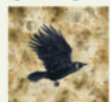
PRESS/LENN GOTTILIER

GRANT MOON (Writer)



1. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
2. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
3. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
4. **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MASCOT*)
5. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
6. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
7. **LONELY ROBOT** - The Big Dream (*INSIDEOUT*)
8. **COSMOGRAF** - The Hay-Man Dreams (*COSMOGRAF*)
9. **WIRE** - Silver/Lead (*PINK FLAG*)
10. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
11. **CHON** - Homey (*SUMERIAN*)
12. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
13. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
14. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
15. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
16. **MEW** - Visuals (*PIAS*)
17. **PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
18. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
19. **NORDIC GIANTS** - Amplify Human Vibration (*KSCOPE*)
20. **AYREON** - The Source (*MASCOT*)

CHRIS ROBERTS (Writer)



1. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimspond (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
2. **SPARKS** - Hippopotamus (*BMG*)
3. **ELBOW** - Little Fictions (*POLYDOR*)
4. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
5. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
6. **RICHARD BARBIERI** - Planets + Persona (*KSCOPE*)
7. **NAD SYLVAN** - The Bride Said No (*INSIDEOUT*)
8. **TANGERINE DREAM** - Quantum Gate (*KSCOPE*)
9. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
10. **STRAWBS** - The Ferryman's Curse (*CHERRY RED*)
11. **THE TANGENT** - The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (*INSIDEOUT*)
12. **ROBYN HITCHCOCK** - Robyn Hitchcock (*YEP ROC*)
13. **THE WAR ON DRUGS** - A Deeper Understanding (*ATLANTIC*)
14. **PHILIP SELWAY** - Let Me Go OST (*BELLA UNION*)
15. **THURSTON MOORE** - Rock n Roll Consciousness (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
16. **KING CRIMSON** - Live In Chicago (*PANEGYRIC*)
17. **MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
18. **GIZMODROME** - Gizmodrome (*EARMUSIC*)
19. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
20. **BEATRIX PLAYERS** - Magnified (*SELF-RELEASED*)

PAUL SEXTON (Writer)



1. **PROCOL HARUM** - Novum (*EAGLE ROCK*)
2. **WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR** - Proud Disturber Of The Peace (*LOOSE*)
3. **KAPREKAR'S CONSTANT** - Fate Outsmarts Desire (*URANIUM CLUB*)
4. **GALLEY BEGGAR** - Heathen Hymns (*RISE ABOVE*)
5. **MEGAN HENWOOD** - River (*DHARMA*)
6. **TODD RUNDGREN** - White Knight (*CLEOPATRA*)
7. **WILDWOOD KIN** - Turning Tides (*SILVERTONE/SONY*)
8. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
9. **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** - 50:50@50 (*MATTY GROOVES*)
10. **GIZMODROME** - Gizmodrome (*EARMUSIC*)
11. **JETHRO TULL** - The String Quartets (*BMG*)
12. **STRAWBS** - The Ferryman's Curse (*CHERRY RED*)
13. **PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
14. **LIANNE HALL** - The Caretaker (*MARKET SQUARE*)
15. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIE!*)
16. **DEAR READER** - Day Fever (*CITY SLANG*)
17. **JAMES EDGE AND THE MINDSTEP** - Machines He Made (*JAMES EDGE*)
18. **MOSTLY AUTUMN** - Sight Of Day (*SELF-RELEASED*)
19. **LANKUM** - Between The Earth And Sky (*ROUGH TRADE*)
20. **SIOBHAN MILLER** - Strata (*SONGPRINT*)

JOHNNY SHARP (Writer)



1. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
2. **SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
3. **RIKARD SJÖBLOM'S GUNGLY** - On Her Journey To The Sun (*INSIDEOUT*)
4. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)

(COLUMBIA)

5. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
6. **COSMOGRAF** - The Hay-Man Dreams (*COSMOGRAF*)
7. **THE TANGENT** - The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery (*INSIDEOUT*)
8. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
9. **PAUL DRAPER** - Spooky Action (*KSCOPE*)
10. **MOGWAI** - Every Country's Sun (*ROCK ACTION*)
11. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
12. **LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)
13. **MOTORPSYCHO** - The Tower (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
14. **GODSTICKS** - Faced With Rage (*KSCOPE*)
15. **PFM** - Emotional Tattoos (*INSIDEOUT*)
16. **NORDIC GIANTS** - Amplify Human Vibration (*KSCOPE*)
17. **MARK STOERMER** - Filthy Apes And Lions (*ST. AUGUST*)
18. **TOM SLATTER** - Happy People (*BAD ELEPHANT*)
19. **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** - The Endless Shimmering (*SARGENT HOUSE*)
20. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)

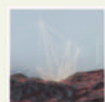
SID SMITH (Writer)



1. **REFLECTIONS IN COSMO** - Reflections In Cosmo (*RARENOISE*)
2. **ORION TANGO** - The Apple Of No (*IK RECORDINGS*)
3. **RICHARD BARBIERI** - Planets + Persona (*KSCOPE*)
4. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIEI*)

5. **A FORMAL HORSE** - Made In Chelsea (*SELF-RELEASED*)
6. **KROKOFANT** - Krokofant III (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
7. **ORCHESTRA OF THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE** - Theta Three (*DISCUS*)
8. **THE KNELLS** - Knells II (*STILL SOUND*)
9. **BUCK CURRAN** - Immortal Light (*ESP-DISK*)
10. **JOHN MCLAUGHLIN** - Live At Ronnie Scott's (*ABSTRACT LOGIX*)
11. **BRAND X** - But Wait... There's More! (*SELF-RELEASED*)
12. **VARIOUS ARTISTS** - Sky Music: A Tribute To Terje Rypdal (*RUNE GRAMMOFON*)
13. **DUNGEN** - Håxan (*SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND*)
14. **ISILDURS BANE & STEVE HOGARTH** - Colours Not Found In Nature (*ATARAXIA*)
15. **WINGFIELD REUTER STAVI SIRKIS** - The Stone House (*MOONJUNE*)
16. **CHEER-ACCIDENT** - Putting Off Death (*CUNEIFORM*)
17. **KAIRON; IRSE!** - Ruination (*SVART*)
18. **THINKING PLAGUE** - Hoping Against Hope (*CUNEIFORM*)
19. **BOBBY PREVITE** - Mass (*RARENOISE*)
20. **GENTLE GIANT** - Three Piece Suite (*SOULFOOD*)

PHIL WELLER (Writer)



1. **ARCANE ROOTS** - Melancholia Hymns (*EASY LIFE*)
2. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
3. **MEW** - Visuals (*PIAS*)
4. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)

5. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)
6. **ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE** - The Observer (*SELF-RELEASED*)
7. **PAIN OF SALVATION** - In The Passing Light Of Day (*INSIDEOUT*)
8. **SIKTH** - The Future In Whose Eyes? (*VICTOR ENTERTAINMENT*)
9. **SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
10. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
11. **VUUR** - In This Moment We Are Free - Cities (*INSIDEOUT*)
12. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
13. **PERSEPHONE** - Aathma (*VICISOLUM*)
14. **THE PARALLAX METHOD** - The Squid (*SELF-RELEASED*)
15. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
16. **WHITE MOTH BLACK BUTTERFLY** - Atone (*KSCOPE*)
17. **ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY** - Health (*BIG SCARY MONSTERS*)
18. **SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
19. **LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)
20. **PRIMUS** - The Desaturating Seven (*ATO*)

THE BEST
THING I'VE
HEARD ALL
YEAR...



PRESS/ALEXANDERKUZNETSOV

MARJANA SEMKINA
(IAMTHEMORNING)
"It's difficult to write about any other album but *Malina*, since I've spent a month on tour with Leprous and I've heard these songs beautifully executed in a live setting. Powerful songwriting, Einar's beautiful voice and great production."



JAMES MONTEITH
(TESSERACT)
"Anthemic, emotive, intricate, ethereal, immersive... Danny Cavanagh's *Monochrome* is a stunningly beautiful collection that shows off his songwriting mastery, but also his ear for musical and production detail that makes a great piece of music special."



MIKE PORTNOY
"I wanna give props to Leprous, The Contortionist and Pain Of Salvation for amazing albums in 2017, but my top spot goes to Caligula's Horse for *In Contact*. Great songs, great players... reminds me of all the things I love about Haken too. The future of prog is in good hands!"

DAVID WEST (Writer)



1. **GIZMODROME** - Gizmodrome (*EARMUSIC*)
2. **HIMMELLEGE** - Myth Of Earth (*KARISMA*)
3. **BENT KNEE** - Land Animal (*INSIDEOUT*)
4. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)

5. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
6. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
7. **THE MUTE GODS** - Tardigrades Will Inherit The Earth (*INSIDEOUT*)
8. **LONELY ROBOT** - The Big Dream (*INSIDEOUT*)
9. **THE LOW SPARK** - Few But Many (*SELF-RELEASED*)
10. **RIKARD SJÖBLOM'S GUNGLY** - On Her Journey To The Sun (*INSIDEOUT*)
11. **THE PARALLAX METHOD** - The Squid (*SELF-RELEASED*)
12. **COSMOSQUAD** - The Morbid Tango (*MARMADUKE*)
13. **O.R.K.** - Soul Of An Octopus (*RARENOISE*)
14. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
15. **MAGIC BUS** - Phillip The Egg (*BACK TO THE GARDEN*)
16. **VUUR** - In This Moment We Are Free - Cities (*INSIDEOUT*)
17. **WOBBLER** - From Silence To Somewhere (*KARISMA*)
18. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
19. **CAIRO** - Say (*HEAVY RIGHT FOOT*)
20. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)

RICH WILSON (Writer)



1. **ROGER WATERS** - Is This The Life We Really Want? (*COLUMBIA*)
2. **TIM BOWNESS** - Lost In The Ghost Light (*INSIDEOUT*)
3. **ISILDURS BANE & STEVE HOGARTH** - Colours Not Found In Nature (*ATARAXIA*)

4. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - Grimsound (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
5. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
6. **SONS OF APOLLO** - Psychotic Symphony (*INSIDEOUT*)
7. **KOYO** - Koyo (*88 WATT*)
8. **VON HERTZEN BROTHERS** - War Is Over (*MASCOT*)
9. **RICHARD BARBIERI** - Planets + Persona (*KSCOPE*)
10. **LONELY ROBOT** - The Big Dream (*INSIDEOUT*)
11. **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** - Every Valley (*PIAS*)
12. **BIG BIG TRAIN** - The Second Brightest Star (*ENGLISH ELECTRIC*)
13. **PETER HAMMILL** - From The Trees (*FIEI*)
14. **DANIEL CAVANAGH** - Monochrome (*KSCOPE*)
15. **VUUR** - In This Moment We Are Free - Cities (*INSIDEOUT*)
16. **STEVE HACKETT** - The Night Siren (*INSIDEOUT*)
17. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
18. **AMPLIFIER** - Trippin With Dr Faustus (*ROCKOSMOS*)
19. **THE MUTE GODS** - Tardigrades Will Inherit The Earth (*INSIDEOUT*)
20. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)

HOLLY WRIGHT (Writer)



1. **ANATHEMA** - The Optimist (*KSCOPE*)
2. **MASTODON** - Emperor Of Sand (*REPRISE*)
3. **LEPROUS** - Malina (*INSIDEOUT*)
4. **CHELSEA WOLFE** - Hiss Spun (*SARGENT HOUSE*)

5. **NORDIC GIANTS** - Amplify Human Vibration (*KSCOPE*)
6. **AYREON** - The Source (*MASCOT*)
7. **SOEN** - Lykaia (*UDR*)
8. **SÓLSTAFIR** - Berdreyminn (*SEASON OF MIST*)
9. **PROSPEKT** - The Illuminated Sky (*SENSORY*)
10. **VOYAGER** - Ghost Mile (*NOVA DISTRIBUTION*)
11. **STEVEN WILSON** - To The Bone (*CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL*)
12. **ENSLAVED** - E (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
13. **ARCANE ROOTS** - Melancholia Hymns (*EASY LIFE*)
14. **CALIGULA'S HORSE** - In Contact (*INSIDEOUT*)
15. **THRESHOLD** - Legends Of The Shires (*NUCLEAR BLAST*)
16. **ULVER** - The Assassination Of Julius Caesar (*HOUSE OF MYTHOLOGY*)
17. **ELDER** - Reflections Of A Floating World (*STICKMAN*)
18. **GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR** - Luciferian Towers (*CONSTELLATION*)
19. **LUNATIC SOUL** - Fractured (*KSCOPE*)
20. **UFOMAMMUT** - 8 (*NEUROT*)

THE PROG INTERVIEW

NIK TURNER

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 maverick saxophonist and flute player **Nik Turner**, best known as one of the driving forces behind Hawkwind in the early 1970s. In a long and colourful career featuring numerous bands and collaborations, the veteran space rocker has played everything from psychedelic punk to jazz fusion, and continues to regularly tour and record.

Words: Joe Banks

Nik Turner is a man for whom the phrase “force of nature”

could have been invented. He might now be in his late 70s, but he shows no sign of slowing down any time soon. *Prog* catches up with him as he travels to the Space Mountain festival in Granada, Spain, before then flying to the US to begin a tour in support of his latest album, *Life In Space*.

It's clear that he still lives for the opportunity to play music to a crowd, with a question about Erich von Däniken leading to a lengthy anecdote about falling in with a troupe of Chick Corea-loving jazz musicians in Mexico City, and finding himself playing romantic Latin music in a transvestite strip joint.

It's also clear that he's a man who both lives in and for the moment — when asked about his new album, he admits that he was happily surprised to discover he had one coming out, and says, “I haven't heard it since we recorded it — I'm very intrigued by it!”

Turner has collaborated with numerous bands, both live and on record, over the past 40 years, but it's still the time he spent as Hawkwind's sax and flute player, and de facto frontman, during the group's classic early-70s period that still defines him in most people's eyes.

While the progressive bands of the time were creating rock that aspired to the complexity and

virtuosity of classical and jazz music, Hawkwind were travelling in the opposite direction, playing a new type of deep space psychedelia that valued rhythmic intensity and miasmic noise over technical perfection. Turner was central to both, conjuring and channelling the sonic chaos of the Hawkwind sound, his squalling, free-form sax often indistinguishable from the band's

barrage of electronics.

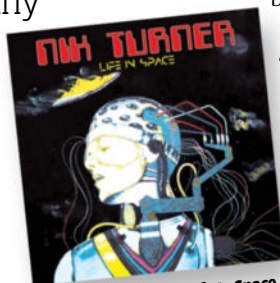
With flame-red hair and beard, and standing at well over six feet tall, he transformed into the Mighty Thunder Rider on stage, a persona midway between master of the universe and cosmic clown prince.

While *Life In Space* contains plenty of the driving,

mind-expanding music he's best known for, it also finds Turner in a more reflective mood on tracks such as *End Of The World* and *Back To Earth*. The album also features guest spots from ex-Hawks Paul Rudolph and Simon House. “I never fell out with anybody really,” he says. “I've always remained friends with people. The only person I haven't remained friends with is Dave Brock...”

Despite his key role in the original band, Turner has become a deeply controversial figure for many Hawkwind fans over the past few years, with band founder Brock launching legal action against Turner to prevent him from using the Hawkwind name in the US. The case recently concluded, with the judgement going in Brock's favour.

From his early years as a teenage jazz fan in 1950s Margate right up to the present day, Turner's story is full of incident and colour. As *Prog* soon discovers, he'd already experienced a lifetime's worth of adventures even before joining Hawkwind in 1969...



Turner's new album, *Life In Space*. “I'm intrigued by it!” he says.

“ Acid sort of created Hawkwind's reputation, the alternative attitude. People still come up to me and say, ‘You changed my life,’ and I say, ‘Well, I hope I didn't do you any damage!’ ”

Does music run in your family?

Yes, my mother played the piano. She was a fan of Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, Oscar Peterson. The piano was always being played, and I wish I'd learnt it — she was always trying to encourage me. But I eventually learnt to play the clarinet. I was then really inspired by Charlie Parker, so I got a saxophone. I was particularly excited by Earl Bostic — he had an alto sax and had a hit record called *Flamingo* and I just thought, “Wow, that's the sound I want!”

Did you have formal training?

Yes, I learnt to play a scale and to read music. A guy up the street from me was a bandmaster for the marines band — he played in local dance bands, and he got all the local boys to play. There was a whole cult of players who were playing modern jazz at that time — MJQ, Thelonious Monk,



Nik Turner (right) with Hawkwind, circa 1971.

MICHAEL BUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Nik Turner: a man
of many masks.



Charlie Parker, John Coltrane – and I just lapped it all up. I used to watch these bands regularly, then I would go and play on the beach and serenade the seagulls!

Growing up in a seaside town at the time could be interesting...

I worked on Margate seafront selling funny hats and postcards for a time, and the mods were all friends of mine, but I was friends with the rockers too. The mods would throw a dustbin through the window of a chemist's shop and come out with bags of they didn't know what, and they'd give it to me to look after. And I'd look after the motorcycles for the rockers. I was sort of in both camps, really.

After a stint in the Merchant Navy and further travelling, you eventually ended up in Berlin in the late 60s...

Yes, I spent Christmas at the parents of a German guy I knew. His family had a jewellery factory, and so we hired a space in this big hall selling joss sticks, hippie stuff, and jewellery as well. At night I used to go out on my own, cruising around the psychedelic clubs. I was quickly accepted by the people there, and I used to hang out with Edgar Froese.

I got adopted by all these arty German musicians, who would take me around all the local venues. The Pretty Things were playing at one place doing *S.F. Sorrow*, and Amon Düül were playing in a commune, which is where I first encountered [future Hawkwind bassist] Dave Anderson.



Nik Turner (left) outside the Old Bailey Court in London, protesting against the OZ magazine obscenity trials in 1971.

CAMERA PRESS / RON REID

How did your time in Berlin change your attitude to music?

I was also hanging out with all these free jazz musicians at the Blue Note club. They were banging away on a piano with hammers, feeding back on a double bass with a microphone on it; very experimental. And they said, "You don't need to be technical to express yourself," and I thought, "Oh, great!" Free jazz in a rock band – that's what Hawkwind were to me eventually.

How did you meet Dave Brock?

I was working in Holland, banging stakes into the ground as a roustabout in a rock'n'roll circus. In Amsterdam, one of the bands that turned up were the Famous Cure, which was Dave Brock and Mick Slattery. When I went back to England, I kept in touch with them. I used to stay with Dave, slept on the floor in

his cold water flat in Putney. We used to have a great time. Then they said they were getting a band together, and I was going to be their road manager!

Because you had a van?

Yes, a Thames van, nothing fancy, but useful for ferrying equipment around. I went to one of their rehearsals and mentioned the fact that I had my saxophone with me, and they said, "Oh, bring it in." I played it and they said, "Great! Do you want to join the band?"

You've referred to Hawkwind as first and foremost a community project. Did you set out to create a different kind of band?

Not really, but I tried to encourage freedom – free thinking in the music and a democratic attitude. Everybody in the band was from different backgrounds. Dave Brock and Mick Slattery were

blues players, while our bass player, John Harrison, used to be with the Joe Loss Orchestra. And we had a drummer [Terry Ollis] whose family were scrap metal dealers – he'd had one lesson from Phil Seamen. Then there was DikMik, who I'd known in Margate.

You also knew Robert Calvert from there?

Yes, we hung out a lot together. We'd go out and get drunk and take a load of drugs: speed, LSD, magic mushrooms. Unfortunately, he was manic depressive – his mother, who was a state-registered nurse, told me that he had breakdowns every 18 months on a regular basis.

How did your role in the band evolve over time?

I became frontman by default. I said, "I've written this song called *Master Of The Universe* – who's going to sing it?" and they said, "You're going to sing it!" I'd never sung or aspired to be a singer, and suddenly I found myself in a recording studio in front of a microphone. Suddenly I was the frontman in the band.

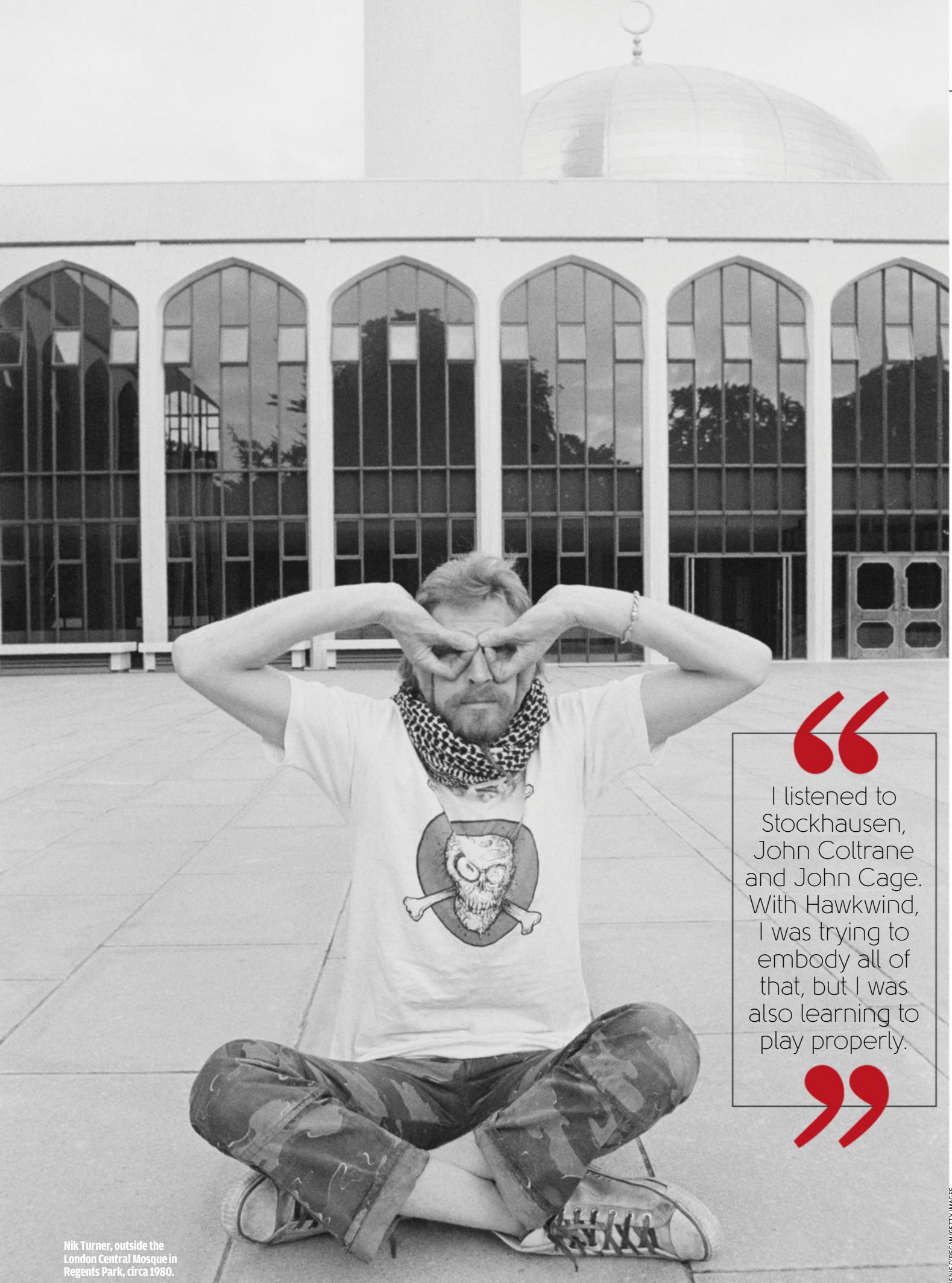
What are you most proud of from those early years playing with Hawkwind?

The spontaneity of it, doing free gigs and community benefits, playing on the back of a lorry, playing in prisons, going to Aldermaston on CND rallies, and just being community-spirited. I really liked the whole London underground scene – Hoppy [John Hopkins], Jeff Dexter, Mick Farren. I used to sell *International Times* on Margate seafront!

Nik Turner and Robert Calvert at Earls Court Exhibition Centre, London, June 1976.

ERICA LEHNERBERG/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES





Nik Turner, outside the London Central Mosque in Regents Park, circa 1980.

“
I listened to Stockhausen, John Coltrane and John Cage. With Hawkwind, I was trying to embody all of that, but I was also learning to play properly.
”

DENIS O'REGAN/GETTY IMAGES



Silver Machine: Nik Turner pipes up.

A lot of the dealers were friends of mine, and they gave me bottles of liquid acid. I ended up with a refrigerator of the stuff, so I took it to the gigs and gave it away to the audience! It sort of created Hawkwind's reputation, the alternative attitude. People still come up to me and say, "You changed my life," and I say, "Well, I hope I didn't do you any damage!"

Hawkwind were a unique band in the early 70s – nobody else was really doing what you were doing...

I'd say so. I went to college in Canterbury and I knew The Wilde Flowers, who became the Soft Machine, along with East Of Eden and Caravan, but none of them were really doing anything like what we were doing.



Hawkwind's 1971 album *In Search Of Space*, featuring *Silver Machine*.

You've talked about using your sax as an "electronic medium" rather than a conventional instrument. What effects did you use to achieve that?

Everything! I had a wah-wah pedal, I had a doppler, phasing, echo, anything I could get my hands on. People from the Arts Lab were making stuff and used to give it to me – they gave DikMik his first audio generator too. For instance, the siren sound at the start of *Master Of The Universe* is actually me. I listened to Stockhausen, John Coltrane and John Cage. With Hawkwind, I was trying to embody all of that, but I was also learning to play properly.

Can you describe what having a hit with *Silver Machine* meant?

I just thought it was fantastic. I never imagined we'd become successful like this. But then money suddenly crept into the picture, which was sad because that wasn't really what it was about to me. I organised a gig in Bayswater and got introduced to Larry Parnes. He said, "I'd really like to manage your band!" I said no thanks, but I actually rather regret that now!

Did you see Hawkwind fitting in with the contemporary progressive scene at all?

Not really, I thought we were more avant-garde. A lot of those musicians had classical training, but they lacked soul, I think. I preferred Arthur Brown and Edgar Broughton, those sort of bands.

Did you follow what people like David Jackson and Mel Collins were doing in terms of integrating sax with rock?

Yes. Dave Jackson used to come and have a blast with us when I had my band Inner City Unit. But I was very much more self-taught.

There was some controversy when you first left Hawkwind, a feeling that the band weren't going in the right direction. Did you see it this way?

I just got bored with it really – all the back-stabbing and control-freakery. I was quite relieved to leave. And then going to Egypt and recording flute music inside the Great Pyramid was just this thing I did on the spur of the moment.

What was that like?

It was awe-inspiring. I went inside the Great Pyramid, clapped my hands and whistled, and realised what a great sound it had. I thought, "Wow, I must record this just for myself." But when I got back to Britain, I was still under contract to Charisma Records, so I chatted Tony Stratton-Smith up...

I'd been adopted by these Bedouins in Egypt and they lent me a horse to go riding in the desert. They invited me to this engagement party where they had all these fabulous Arab horses dancing on their hind legs, even when somebody fired a shotgun in front of them! I took a load

of photographs and showed them to Tony, who was a horse owner, which really inspired him.

Gail Colson, who was his right-hand person, thought we should go into a studio with Steve Hillage and put an album together [Xitintoday by Nik Turner's



Pyramid Scheme: Nik Turner's *Sphinx's* 1978 album *Xitintoday*.

Sphynx], based on the *Egyptian Book Of The Dead*.

How did Inner City Unit form?

I was working with Barney [Bubbles] at the time and he was a big inspiration. I also wanted to do something a bit more exciting. Barney was working for Stiff Records at the time, and Nick Lowe, who had his own studio, gave him some recording time.

Nik Turner busking on the street during the 2013 Brecon Jazz Festival.

Barney asked me if I wanted to do a single, but we did an album instead, which was *Passout*.

Was punk an influence on ICU?

I used to hang out with Malcolm McLaren and he introduced me to the Sex Pistols. They'd just played the Marquee with Eddie & The Hot Rods, and they bragged about how they'd smashed all of Eddie's equipment up. And I thought, "Oh, that's what punk's about then..." A bit sad really. I was more into music than punk, which was one-dimensional. I didn't want to be limited by just one chord!

How did you come to rejoin Hawkwind in 1982?

ICU had got into hard drugs and I couldn't really deal with that, so I broke the band up. I'd been made an offer by Dave Brock to go on the road again with Hawkwind and I was happy to accept. I started improvising all these weird costumes, wearing a luminous body stocking based on blood corpuscles, an idea from Barney, and then this strange kind of space clown outfit, and I did gigs on roller skates with a wireless microphone.

Later on, I had flashing lights in my saxophone and I was carried on stage in a coffin. I had my head shaved with just a spike of luminous pink hair on top. It was quite bizarre.

After leaving Hawkwind again, you formed Nik Turner's Fantastic Allstars, and then Space Ritual, a band that included ex-members of Hawkwind. Was this born out of a desire to reconnect with the ethos of the original band?

Yes, that's what I was trying to do, to embody the original Hawkwind spirit.

But you started to run into various problems over the use of the Hawkwind name...

I just like to play music – I'm not interested in the men in suits. They have their place, but I'm not a great fan of theirs. There's all this fractious, bullshit legal stuff



JEFF MORGAN 05 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

going on that I'm not really into. I got coerced into being involved. I try to distance myself from it.

Do you regret getting involved in the legal action over the band name?

Yes, I do. I feel that it shouldn't have been necessary, and I find it rather embarrassing. My label in America, Cleopatra, got a bit bullshit music



Space-Punk: Inner City Unit's 1980 debut album, *Passout*.

I would be quite happy to go out in America as myself, as Nik Turner, not as Hawkwind or any other facet of Hawkwind. Just Nik Turner and his music – that's how I'd like to be seen.

businessy, and I'm not really into that sort of thing.

Do you feel you've been misrepresented in this process?

Yes, I do. It's just not me. I'm now in the process of trying to extricate myself from that situation and get back to reality. It's all so divisive. I would be quite happy to go out in America as myself, as Nik Turner, not as Hawkwind or any other facet of Hawkwind. Just Nik Turner and his music – that's how I'd like to be seen.

If you could say something to those Hawkwind fans who blame you for this situation, what would it be?

That I feel I still embody the spirit of what Hawkwind was originally about. I like to play good music, and play with heart and soul.

You've gone through a bit of a renaissance in terms of your recorded output in the last few years, with Space Fusion Odyssey featuring guest spots from Billy Cobham and Robby Krieger...

Brian Perera [head of Cleopatra] said, "You should make a jazz fusion album," and I said, "Yes!" I was amazed how well received it was. I mean, wow, me and Billy Cobham! It's also got the guitarist from Megadeth on it [Chris Poland], and John Weinzierl [Amon Düül II]. It was fantastic, though I didn't physically play with them – I did most of the recording in Wales. But that's the direction I want to go in really.

You're setting off on tour again soon. Where does the urge to keep performing come from?

I'm an exhibitionist and I like music! I want to play awesome and exciting music. It's not my ego, really. I don't think I have one, though some people might beg to differ!

Finally, how would you like to be remembered?

I'd like to be remembered fondly and kindly and positively. As somebody who was innovative. And modest! And that I've done something by using music to heal people...

I did a gig in Brighton where they were showing the *Do Not Panic* film, and during the Q&A, I said that when I came back from Egypt, having spent so much time inside the Great Pyramid, I found I had this healing power in my hands. I never made anything of it, I just tried to heal people if I could. And a woman in the audience said, "I've got this terrible pain in my shoulder, do you think you can heal it?" "Well, I can try!"

I put my hands on her and thought about what I call my Egyptian mumbo jumbo, transmitting positive sunshine energy into people and breathing out all the negative energy. And the woman said, "Oh, the pain's gone!" I don't go round saying I can do this thing, but I think I can. ☺

Life In Space is available now via Cleopatra. See www.nikturner.com for more information.

New spins...

KING CRIMSON

All aboard for this 27-disc round-up of *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, *Lizard* and *Islands*! Just watch out for sea-sickness, biscuit weevils and 30-plus versions of *Groon*.

Words: Chris McGarel **Illustration:** Duncan Storr

Few catalogues have undergone the rigorous remastering and re-examination that King Crimson have in recent years, and even fewer actually warrant such scrutiny of their vaults. This latest addition to their ongoing box set treasure trove shines a torch on an often overlooked early period, sandwiched between their genre-defining debut and the zenith of the *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* and *Red* era, where curious incarnations of the Crimson King from 1970-72 are overdue some critical observation.

The timing of this box is notable. The 2011 Jakszyk, Fripp and Collins album *A Scarcity Of Miracles* provided the impetus and means for a new format King Crimson to launch in 2014. The return of Mel Collins presented opportunities to expand the sonic palette. Saxophone foghorn blasts and flighty flute escapades were once again part of the Crimson sound as they had been from the blaring opening of *21st Century Schizoid Man* to 1972's *Earthbound* and resurrected on *Red* in 1974.

The many-headed beast which tours today has revisited the material to which Collins contributed, sounding the depths to play tracks for the first time in over 40 years and premiering others which audiences have never witnessed live. *In The Wake Of Poseidon*, *Lizard* and *Islands* appear here on CD, DVD and Blu-ray. These are the Steven Wilson and Robert Fripp mixes from the 2010 DVD-Audio releases although a wealth of bonus material across 27 discs might tempt the potential buyer to upgrade. As with previous box sets there are alternate albums comprised of newly uncovered outtakes and early versions alongside rehearsals, B-sides and needledrops of the original vinyl.

After the success of *In The Court Of The Crimson King* the good ship Crim had navigated into choppy waters. This trilogy found a band in flux, shedding members like jetsam, kept afloat under the stewardship of

Sailors' Tales 1970-1972

PANEGYRIC



**A behemoth
undergoing growing
pains... leaving
some of the most
visceral prog up to
that point.**

Captain Fripp. The revolving door scenarios are recounted in detail by band biographer Sid Smith in the accompanying booklet which also includes notes from producer and engineer David Singleton on the discovery of additional content on multitrack tapes. Current singer/guitarist Jakko Jakszyk spans the decades with a yarn about seeing King Crimson in 1971.

Sadly, no video content exists. For visual stimulus Panegyric have once again styled a handsome box full of reproduction memorabilia – vinyl gatefold replicas, tickets, programmes and press cuttings – to pore over.

Where *Sailors' Tales* excels is in the plethora of complete live shows from '71/'72 – six

concerts from the *Islands* band and every existing soundboard recording from the 1972 US tour. The rhythm section of Ian Wallace and Boz Burrell took the more polite studio material and gave it primitive power and swing onstage. There are enough off-the-cuff blows and variance to keep the listener coming back to this set for years to come.

Many of these shows have been available before via the mail-order King Crimson Collector's Club (KCCC) or as DGMLive downloads. If you've already got these then you might question the sagacity of forking out for them again but there is much more you'd be missing out on, not least their upgrade to hi-resolution audio.

One of the best KCCC releases was 2000's *Live at Summit Studios* which, here, has been expanded and presented in stereo, 24/96 and quadraphonic varieties. The quality of this Denver radio broadcast is pristine. The same can't be said for *Earthbound* which is notorious for its poor audio, but has nevertheless found its defenders over the years. It's a raw, downright rude record and it too has been expanded and given the quad treatment. No amount of spit and polish is going to make it sound any better than it does here which is, of course, part of its face-melting charm. *Earthbound Expanded* is also available separately on CD/DVD.

The repetition of previously available material might make *Sailors' Tales* a less essential purchase than previous sets for some but, in preparation, they've probably made space on the shelves for this set months ago. An exhaustive (and potentially exhausting) inventory, none but the most seasoned Crimhead needs 30-plus versions of the avant-jazz B-side *Groon*. But it's also a beautifully curated time capsule which echoes through the years of a behemoth undergoing growing pains and leaving in its wake some of the heaviest, most visceral prog up to that point.

Landlubbers beware – here be dragons!



DHANI HARRISON

IN///PARALLEL BMG

Debut solo album from Grammy-winning son of George.



In spite of the fact that we've encountered him before – emerging from the shadows to complete his father's final album and to appear at 2002's Concert For George, and as frontman and guitarist for Thenewno2 – it's almost impossible to approach Dhani Harrison's debut album under his own name without harbouring certain expectations.

Up until now, Dhani's *modus operandi* has been something of a dichotomy. On the one hand, by embracing the anonymity of Thenewno2, he appeared to be purposefully distancing himself from his cumbersome legacy. Yet to encounter his band, however briefly, it was impossible not to notice that Dhani not only sounded like his father, a situation Thenewno2's guitar-based format only served to accentuate, but that – all middle-parted, dark-browed and brooding – he offered a resemblance as uncanny as it was flaunted. It seemed that while Dhani strove to be his own artist, he could no more dismiss his father's legend than we could.

Harrison draws upon his inner strength and finds himself.

With *IN///PARALLEL*, Dhani Harrison has discarded a good deal of his inherited baggage, drawn upon his inner strengths and ultimately found himself. When recently encountered, he was almost unrecognisable: hair cut, side-parted, beard, heavy horn-rim spectacles masking that unmistakable proto-Gallagher brow. It's a new look, clearly timed to complement a new sound. Material based in the melodic sensibilities of tradition are swathed in contemporary electronica, there's the suggestion of Thenewno2 alt-rock, but atmospheric ambient and trip-hop devices season each composition to perfection. And while there are sure signs of inherited stylings here – *Never Know's* sitars and tablas, the haunted-by-the-ghost-of-*I Want You (She's So Heavy)* closing crescendoes of *Admiral Of Upside Down*, the tonal quality of Harrison's vocal and guitar – *IN///PARALLEL* is an intrinsically progressive album that marries the psychedelic spaciness of modern electronica with an intuitive understanding of the dynamics of pop, the taut melodic power or rock and the free spirit of unfettered fusion.

Arriving into an era of marketing-led generic apartheid, the album harks back to an era of boundless experimentation (*All About Everything's* 'It's not like it used to be' coda merely presses the point home). Perhaps, it's only the Harrison name that allows Dhani the uncommon artistic freedom to experiment under corporate auspices in the current market. Whatever, it would appear that of all the things Dhani has inherited from his father his priceless spirit of adventure and boundless capacity for invention are both put to good use on this remarkable and wholly satisfying collection.

IAN FORTNAM

ARABS IN ASPIC

Syndenes Magi APOLLON

Norse time travellers at the zenith of their powers.

Norway's prog scene seems to be flourishing more than ever right now, so *Arabs In Aspic's* time to be more widely appreciated must surely have come. *Syndenes Magi* will not bamboozle long-time fans of the band: this is very much more of the same immaculately constructed retro prog with strong Sabbath-saluting undercurrents and a big, sepia-tinted analogue grin on its face. For the thus far uninitiated, the band's sixth album simply denotes the moment that you all fall in love with them too, because from the opening slow-build crescendos and Hammond tsunamis of the title track to



the euphoric, Floydian sweep of sleepy-eyed closing epic *Mörket 3*, this is a stunning, multidirectional trip. The fact that vocalist Jostein Smeby sings the entire thing in Norwegian continues to be the secret weapon in the quintet's arsenal, adding a dash of

the hazily exotic to what are already wildly psychedelic pieces (unless, of course, you speak Norwegian). As a result, even when locking into one of their trademark Uriah Heep-like turbo-blues riffs, AIA sound like a band with a unique perspective and deep roots in a sound and style that, let's face it, will never stop hitting the spot. **DL**

BJÖRK

Utopia ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Iceland's force of nature now cheerful but challenging.

Nobody could deny that this is the work of a wilfully progressive artist, untethered by musical convention. It floats through shifting electronic soundscapes, drones, warped beats and treated samples, blending harps, synths and birdsong until you feel as if the ground beneath you is melting. Whether you'll feel emotionally moved – rather than just bewildered – is another matter. Björk clearly never read the old ad which claimed tunes help you breathe more easily. She's now disinterested in melodies, choruses or anything resembling a structure, so her voice is the only thing taking us by the



hand and leading us on a vaguely linear path through it. Luckily it's one of the great voices: huge, oceanic and still rolling its "R"s gleefully. 2015's *Vulnicura* was her bleak, angry break-up album, but the Icelandic star has described this as her

"Tinder album", a return to more upbeat dating tales, and it does, alongside some patriarchy-baiting, allow light in. Its 71 minutes feel bright and buoyant, if trembling with nerves. Yet even a lyric about a couple who text each other mp3s wonders if they were more in love with the music than each other. Endlessly uncompromising. **CR**

BILL GROGAN'S GOAT

Third Eye DETROIT CAPRINE

Celtic-prog shenanigans from Motor City.

Folk has never been afraid to revisit old classics. This is a case in point with Bill Grogan's Goat. Three albums in, this Detroit five-piece are confident, uncompromising and, well, rollicking fun. They take traditional shanties and songs like *Haul Away Joe* and *Ye Jacobites By Name* and work them inside out. To call this music 'Celtic Rock' is too safe. For newcomers, think ceilidh meets piratical roistering, hardcore punk, a pinch of Tool, and Irish balladeering, and you begin to get the picture. Frankly, it could be a hot mess, but *Third Eye* is marvellous. It's held



together by the skill of the personnel. Mindy Whalen and Gerry Smith have winsome voices, and the band deliver a delicious confection of bagpipes (yes!), mandolin, fuzz guitar, and fiddle. At the centre is folk-prog-rock set *Knockdu*, which snakes and

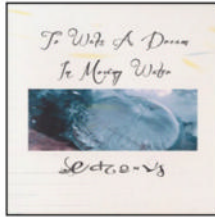
swirls and injects folk prog with a sense of fun that is sometimes absent from the genre. It's music to caper around the kitchen to – they even have bouzouki. Unlike John Cleese in the famous *Cheese Shop*, you won't be shouting 'shut that bloody bouzouki player up'. Fire up the bodhrán and prepare to have a smile on your face. **RM**

ECHO US

To Wake A Dream In Moving Water SELF

Ambient master explores Celtic grooves.

It's twenty years since multi-instrumentalist Ethan J Matthews began making music with prog metal outfit Greyhaven. *Wake*, Matthews' fifth solo album in the guise of Echo Us, hones those years of experience and represents his most complete offering yet. Fans will find oodles of ambient goodness on tracks such as *Awakening Current*, and Matthews' guitar virtuosity shimmers on *May Morning Dew*. However, it's the exploration of Celtic themes which adds illuminating new dimensions to his work. *Wake* includes reworked traditional Irish and Breton tunes like *Doina*. The stand-out track,



however, is new. At 14 minutes, *From The Highlands* is as epic as it's beautiful. As Matthews' sings 'running from the violence', he conjures misty valleys and snow-capped mountains without straying into cheesy nonsense.

Admittedly, there are elements of *Wake* which may grate with some listeners. Two-part meditation *Begin To Remember* involves Matthews' chanting the title repeatedly; for some this is mesmeric, for others distracting. Nonetheless, this LP is a significant achievement, combining influences from Fripp and Eno, Floyd, Oldfield and Ianaudi to make a distinctive whole. **RM**

EXCALIBUR

IV: The Dark Age of the Dragon THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RECORDING COMPANY

A fourth, star-studded pull at the sword for the French showman.

Ian Simon's 1999 album *Excalibur* featured Fairport Convention, Roger Hodgson and other prog notables, and morphed into a live musical extravaganza of Trans-Siberian proportions. Its two spin-offs attracted Jon Anderson, John Wetton and Justin Hayward among others, and now that trilogy (all 60 tracks of it) has become a tetralogy. The French composer found fresh creative relish for his Arthurian theme, and the resultant *Excalibur IV* was played to rapt audiences on tour in Germany in 2016. Once again, there's no denying the grandiose ambition and sheer scale. Prague's Bohemian



Symphony Orchestra and a wealth of soloists weave a West End quality sound that's both live and epic in scope. The prog quota is still high too - Supertramp saxophonist John Helliwell and Tull's Martin Barre are all over this, with Saga's Michael Sadler, Sonja

Kristina and Clannad's Moya Brennan adding their inimitable brand of class. British audiences may be slightly more resistant to this than our European neighbours, but Simon's vision is to be admired. Fans of Jeff Wayne, TSO, Ayreon and musical theatre/arena rock will find much enjoyment throughout the Celtic twists and Floydian turns. **GRM**

LORENZO FELICIATI

Elevator Man RARENOISE

Prolific bassist strikes again with album number three.

Lorenzo Feliciati is fast becoming a man with a golden touch. From the delightfully demonic *Berserk!* to the Colin Edwin project *Twinscapes* and the jazztastic *Naked Truth*, there is little in the Italian bassist's catalogue that feels like a dud. Feliciati's latest musical outpouring is *Elevator Man*, his third solo album, and it's a strong follow-up to his lauded 2015 effort *KOI*. As with most of his projects, there is a keen sense of collaboration here, with a cornucopia of notable prog-certified musicians - including Roy Powell, Chad Wackerman, Pat Mastelotto and Marco Sfogli - all



involved in some guise, even just for a fleeting cameo. Try the opening title track for a slice of King Crimson inspired bite, or the brooding *14 Stones* for some creepy, brass-laden jazz exploration, and while the tracks often threaten to veer off into directionless wanderlust, it's usually kept in check. Part of *Elevator Man*'s charm is nodding to music of old - there's touches of fusion and 70s prog too - while keeping one foot firmly in the 21st Century. *The Third Door* exploits the talents of DJ Skizo, while the snaking, spunky *S.O.S.* is Primus at their most left-field. The Midas touch strikes again. **CC**

KAYAK

17 INSIDEOUT

Resilient Dutch durables refuse to lie down.



One of Holland's biggest bands in the 70s, Hilversum-formed Kayak have closed shop then re-opened more than once, exercising a belief that the music matters beyond the personnel. Ton Scherpenzeel is now the carrier of the torch, the writer, keyboardist and all-rounder reviving the name and assembling a fresh line-up after a three-year break brought on by sudden departures. Bart Schwertmann is his new vocalist, Marcel Singor the guitarist. A rhythm section well known to fans of the Neal Morse Band joined as this album was already nearly finished. Guesting on the instrumental *Ripples On The Water* is Andy Latimer, Scherpenzeel having written the track with him in mind after working with him in Camel.

The extended tracks push upstream with a swagger in their stride.

If this all suggests the type of camel that is a horse designed by committee (wonky, pasted together), rest assured that Kayak still sound like Kayak. Scherpenzeel's firmly at the helm, and when he's not playing everything, the others are (mostly) performing parts he's penned. And what Kayak do best is blend melodic, adult pop songs with longer, symphonic prog pieces. Their mastery of the former is exemplified by three-minute opener *Somebody*, which echoes *Cold As Ice* by Foreigner with a lick of Supertramp at their most staccato. Schwertmann's confident vocal declares he's not going to be a perfunctory hired hand and has every intention to sing the living daylight out of this material.

The more concise numbers do a sterling job of keeping matters lively, but it's the extended, definitively progressive rock tracks which see Kayak push upstream with a swagger in their stride. *La Peregrina* revels in bombast and makes frequent leaps from heavy riffing to syrupy opulence. *Walk Through Fire* opens like it's scoring the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 before easing into piano-led balladry, eventually revving up for a climax which isn't a million miles away from Steve Hackett's latest work. The third biggie, *Cracks*, enjoys a lolling guitar motif and stays in a high gear verging on the histrionic.

To *An End* makes for a rather saccharine, maudlin closing piano ditty, but that's been counterbalanced by Latimer's earlier cameo, a textbook piece of restraint which encourages the more showy tracks to take flight.

You may be able to deduce from its title how many albums Kayak have made in their 45-year history (well, it counts as 45 if you overlook their complete split from 1982 to 1999), and given their apparent Lazarus-like ability to shrug off key members and regenerate, they might even make another 17. The abiding bravado and enthusiasm is infectious.

CHRIS ROBERTS

JORDAN RUDESS AND STEVE HORELICK

Intersonic LAZY BONES

When Dream Theater wizard and electronic boffin unite.



It sometimes feels that Jordan Rudess has a volcano of inspiration brewing up inside him that day-job band Dream Theater never truly tap into. The prog metallers' sound is well defined, with the keyboard player's vital role a cog in a vast, well-oiled album-tour machine. It's in his extramarital musical affairs that it seems the keys maestro can truly indulge himself, from his many solo albums and the wacky Levin Rudess Minnemann project to his Wizdom software company, which has devised a number of apps to allow people to make music on their mobiles and tablets.

A blank canvas gradually filled with reactionary creativity.

Rudess' latest project hidden up his velvety wizard sleeve is a collaborative record with composer and electronic musician Steve Horelick, and the result is an absorbing collection of instrumental musings and ruminations. It's not exactly the finger-mashing displays of virtuosity or high-jinks frolics you're used to in Dream Theater's blitzkrieg instrumental salvos. Instead, it's a more restrained exploration of the stratosphere of sound. Opener *Child Mind* dips its toes into more ambient hues and reveals the nucleus of this project, as floating, glistening piano marries with electronic soundscapes. While Horelick has written scores for a number of TV shows and films – landing him an Emmy nomination in the process – electronic music is said to be his true passion, with his home no doubt brimming with a smorgasbord of gadgets.

Intersonic is largely about the feeling, with the album's creation more like a blank canvas that's gradually filled with call-and-response, reactionary creativity – Rudess often providing the flourishes and Horelick laying down the foundation. *Northern Lights*, for example, is a glittering cascade, while the standout *Beyond Time* is an at times aching lament that pulls at the ol' heartstrings by introducing some welcome dark turns and brief, mournful meanderings.

There's still room, of course, for some finger gymnastics – it wouldn't quite be Rudess without it – with *Quantum Fuzz* giving the piano a real workout, while *Swarm* is a tornado of haunting movie soundtrack majesty tossed in a blender with electronic bleeps and blurts before diverting into near noise. It's otherworldly tracks like these that you would imagine will never be seen in Dream Theater's catalogue, and show why Rudess' latest dalliance outside of Petrucci and co deserves a bash. *Intersonic* doesn't always reach the dizzy heights, nor is it likely to be many people's album of the year, but this chance to witness two men's minds melting together so effortlessly in aural harmony is a rare treat.

CHRIS COPE

GALACTIC COWBOYS

Long Way Back To The Moon MASCOT

Time to dust off that spacesuit.

The Galactic Cowboys were always an intriguing and hugely entertaining proposition. Formed in the early 90s, they made a breakthrough with 1993's *Space In Your Face*. Yet by the end of that decade, after numerous personnel changes, they disbanded with the release of *Let It Go*. The key to their unquestionable appeal was an ability to seamlessly fuse heavy riffs with Beatles/Cheap Trick melodies, and thankfully, that knack hasn't decayed over the last 17 years. *Long Way Back To The Moon* opens with *In The Clouds*. With a pseudo doom metal riff accompanied by sumptuous



vocal harmonies, it's a deliberate statement of intent. *Zombies* is similarly alluring and calls to mind The Wildhearts at their peak, with timeless pop riffs propelling the song. Elsewhere, the title track highlights their softer side, and lovers of Built To Spill will appreciate this innovative direction. Those who prefer a more restricted definition of progressive music will no doubt find much to bemoan here, but there can be no denying the band's technical ability or boundless talent. Experimental but retaining an accessible edge, the Cowboys have returned with style and aplomb. **RW**

ANDREW HEATH

Soundings DISKO GECKO

A seductive ambient blend of instruments and field recordings.

Soundings is a collection of pieces that work on different levels of activity. *Wanderlust* starts with someone typing followed by footsteps slowly walking away, as if embarking on a journey. Heath's synth and piano then begin a laconic conversation joined by background voices. The reverbed notes hang in space like unanswered questions, reminiscent of Morton Feldman or Brian Eno's *Thursday Afternoon*. But rather than the pristine environment that Eno presents to the listener, Heath invites them to enter an inhabited space. After about eight minutes of its 14-minute



length, Heath and guest guitarist Anne Chris Bakker play a sparse melody over bells and background crackles. Each piece has a distinct character. On *Winter On Noorederhaaven*, the chill outside is palpable as a clock ticks away the minutes in the fading afternoon light. On *Days In Between*, Stéphane Marlot's rich cello lines weave around a distressed musical box mechanism, and there's absent-minded whistling on *Happenstance*. A *Break In The Clouds* is the most lyrical. Across distant birdsong and tiny bells, Heath's piano engages in a striking duet with Bill Howeggo on clarinet. **MB**

JAMES HOLDEN & THE ANIMAL SPIRITS

The Animal Spirits BORDER COMMUNITY

Restless album of pagan trance electronica recorded live in a room.

Lauded as a key player in electronic trance during the 00s, James Holden took a left turn on his brilliant 2013 album *The Inheritors*, incorporating live instrumentation and creating a head-spinning blend of pagan psychedelic rave music. *The Animal Spirits* sees him push this aesthetic further, producing an intense 50 minutes of ecstatic folk trance informed by the experimental jazz of Pharoah Sanders and Don Cherry, and the systems music of Terry Riley and Philip Glass. Recorded live in single takes with no overdubs, the cyclical patterns made by Holden's self-built modular synths are burnished



by brass and woodwind, while the sequencing software follows the complex flow of drummer Tom Page. The title and structure of *Each Moment Like The First* encapsulates Holden's MO, a creaky shamanic synth melody playing in repetition while ghostly chords hover. *Pass Through The Fire* sounds like an overdriven pipe organ presiding over a carnival of misrule, while *Thunder Moon Gathering* is a spooked VdGG pursued through the forest by techno wolves. It's breathtaking progressive music from an unexpected place, a restless invitation to some serious inner voyaging. **JB**

I AM THE MANIC WHALE

Gathering The Waters SELF-RELEASED

Michael Whiteman's Reading-based project gathers pace.

After crowdfunding this follow-up to their 2015 debut set *Everything Beautiful In Time*, this Reading quartet have certainly given investors their money's worth with the sheer volume of musical and lyrical ideas crammed into this hour and a bit. You know you're in for quite a ride when the album's first line tells us, 'He's got a 14-foot scarf, knows how to ride a giraffe, hear his maniacal laughter.' *The Man With Many Faces* delivers it sandwiched between gutsy guitar riffs and fizzing Mark Kelly-ish keyboards, making for a strong opening gambit. Further in, chief songwriter



Michael Whiteman gets a little more literal on *The Lifeboatmen's* tribute to the titular lifesavers, and *The Milgram Experiment's* musings on the infamous 1960s psychological study, featuring stirring melodic passages and instrumental fireworks. It's patchier on the longest tracks. The 18-minute centrepiece *Stand Up* and the 13-minute *Strandbeest* are strident lyrically but the music meanders, seemingly only there to accompany a narrative that needs a more ruthless editor. Still, a 45-minute album's worth of strong material out of a slightly flabbier 65? You'd buy that for 10 quid. **JS**

INTERVALS

The Way Forward INTERVALS MUSIC

Irresistibly upbeat instrumental guitar fun.

Canadian guitar virtuoso Aaron Marshall, better known by his project name Intervals, has been travelling along a parallel path to his djent brothers-in-amps for some time now. Employing many of the same techniques as technical progressive metal but in a major-key, upbeat framework has been Intervals' calling card, and on their last album, *The Shape Of Colour*, Marshall nigh on perfected the sound he was trying to achieve. Throughout *The Way Forward*, the influence of Steve Vai and other guitar heroes is written large across effervescent, legato runs on tracks like *Impulsively Responsible*,



but it's the other influences that are often more interesting, from video game soundtracks to jazz. There's a trace of the dearly missed Brits The Safety Fire on *Rubicon Artist*, in particular on the bouncy, angular middle section, while *The Waterfront* has more of a Periphery vibe. Marshall has always stayed on the healthy side of taking himself too seriously, and it has once again paid off. A fair criticism is that *The Way Forward* doesn't reinvent the wheel compared to *The Shape...*, but it's perhaps even more fun, and with a run time of half an hour, it represents a purer distillation of his aim. **AL**

ISILDURS BANE

Off The Radar ATRAXIA

Sweden's best-kept prog secret fly high.

Following their acclaimed 2017 collaboration with Marillion's Steve Hogarth, *Colours Not Found In Nature*, the Swedish ensemble have returned to the international stage with an entirely instrumental album. Directed by Mats Johansson, keyboardist and the band's musical director of nearly 40 years, *Off The Radar* showcases the group's near orchestral reach. Given the band have tuned percussion, keys, guitar, woodwind, strings and a double-drum set-up at their disposal, they produce a richly textured, versatile sound that knits electronic, rock, jazz and contemporary classical elements



into a highly nuanced force. Compositions move from the anthemic *Drive 1-3*, with its pounding rock beats, fat analogue synth timbre and luscious folds of elastic brass through to the more menacing, amorphous clouds of *Endless Air*. Here, glowering ruminations on bass clarinet and vaporous drones could soundtrack a contemporary horror flick. Through their annual IB EXPO event, now in its 11th year, they've performed alongside Terry Bozzio, David Torn, Phil Manzanera, various members of King Crimson and ex-Japan alumni - providing ample testimony to their phenomenal musicality. **SS**



POST-ROCK

Alex Lynham guides us through the peaks and valleys of essential post-rock.

It's been a busy couple of months in the experimental guitar world, but probably the most impressive release has been the new **Human Pyramids** album. The brainchild of composer Paul Russell from math poppers Axes, their contemporary orchestral pieces have seen the group perform everywhere from post-rock festival ArcTanGent to the West Holts stage at Glastonbury. With *Home* (self-released), Russell builds on the work of previous LP *Planet Shh!* with an invigorating and uplifting set of tracks that will surely cement his reputation as a genre-blending mastermind. There's often more than a hint of electronic proggers North Atlantic Oscillation - for example, on opener *Louise* - but fans of Mike Oldfield, The Flaming Lips and Mogwai, should such an intersection be commonplace, should also take note.



JYOCHO is the post-breakup project of Daijiro Nakagawa from Japanese math rockers Uchu Conbini, and their September mini album, *Days In The Bluish House* (No Big Deal Records) is a welcome reminder of just what a virtuoso-level modern guitar band looks like. While their debut release *A Prayer In Vain* picked up from where Uchu Conbini left off, this release takes the foot off



the gas, representing a greater diversity of moods. As with fellow rising Japanese math poppers Tricot, the question of how they manage to fit vocals into music so intricate is anybody's guess.

From Pune, India, **The Reasonable Hope** drop their first release, *Reminiscences*, (self-released) in November, the post-rockers managing to clock up nearly 20 minutes over two tracks. Recalling early Hammock as well as Explosions In The Sky, their earnest and powerful music is a welcome



reminder that more than perhaps most genres, instrumental music really does translate particularly well across borders and cultural boundaries.



Closer to home, Scottish instrumentalists **Dialects** release their debut album, *Because Your Path Is Unlike Any Other* (Through Love). Building on 2015's mini album *Let The Kids*

Light These Lanterns and extensive touring, this release finds them in fine form. While comparisons to genre heroes And So I Watch You From Afar are somewhat inevitable, Dialects are beginning to find their own sound. This is most evident on tracks such as *Light Echo*, which has a more modern, progressive rock vibe to it; the Mars Volta-like *Lorentzian*; and the mathcore-esque *Escape Velocity*.

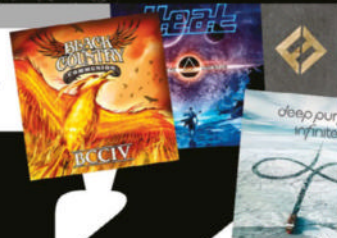


Finally, Liverpool's **Kusanagi** returned last month with *Aeon* (self-released), a sprawling and cinematic follow-up to 2015's *Yugen*. The average track length is probably north of eight minutes, but the arresting instrumentals, which recall greats like Oceansize and Russian Circles, never disappoint. For a taste, start with the concise, electronic post-rock crossover track *Repeat/Static/Movement* before delving deeper into the fuzzy, 10-minute opener *I See You*.

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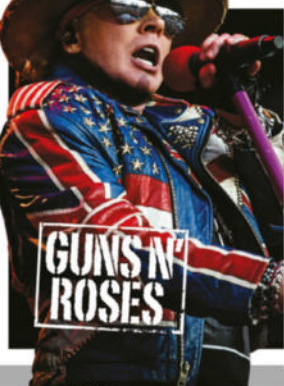


★ CLASSIC ★ ROCK

THE ULTIMATE REVIEW

2017

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LEF

Hypersomniac RARE NOISE RECORDS

Why not dream big?

Prog is a genre that's no stranger to bold, multimedia projects. Nevertheless, LEF's *Hypersomniac* is an ambitious project. Singer and composer Lorenzo Esposito Fornasari, or LEF, has created a dark and cinematic prog concept epic to bring his and co-writer Pier Luigi Rocca's dystopian story to life. There's an enviable supporting cast of musicians, including Rebecca Sneddon of Free Nelson Mandomjazz; Kenneth Kapstad of Motorpsycho; and Norwegian organist Ståle Storløkken from Supersilent, Motorpsycho and Reflections In Cosmos. Though the



album is meant to be experienced as a whole, there are standout moments: for example *Aran Has Changed*, where vocal acrobatics and deliberate screeches create a dramatic, *Great Gig In The Sky* vibe, offset against muscular guitars.

In general, the feel is very King Crimson 'classic prog', though other influences include modern jazz, hints of industrial and electronica. The melodrama might not be to everyone's taste, and some of the vocal parts are on the more eccentric end of the spectrum, but fans of concept works will enjoy the album, videos and online graphic novel. **AL**

OCS (OH SEES)

Memory Of A Cut Off Head CASTLE FACE

Back to the garden for the relentless San Fran heads.

Last August, idiosyncratic San Francisco-based garage band Thee Oh Sees dropped the first word in their name and released *Orc*, their 19th album since forming in 1997. If *Orc* was an electric psychedelic monolith, this, their 20th album in those 20 years (and 10th on Castle Face) sees mainstay John Dwyer and long-time collaborator Brigid Dawson reaching back to the acoustic OCS roots, then coating the results in magic mushroom twists and luminescence. Dawson's opening gambit on the scuttling title track - 'Oh what a day, I think I lost my body' - ignites a hallucinogenic feast where *The Baron*



Sleeps And Dreams can start with Heather Lockie's autumnal strings before its pizzicato carpet is stained with Mikal Cronin's mariachi brass, then engulfed by electronic bloopers. *On And On Corridor* forges a typical scene in which flutey fibres and Donovan-lite vocals

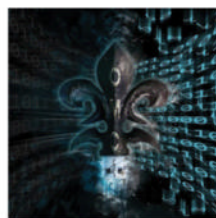
can turn darkly ominous, while *The Chopping Block* recalls *The Man Who Sold The World* Bowie, before drowning in a dense violin forest. By *Time Tuner*, the sound has swelled into a shimmering drone, engorging Dawson's vocals while highlighting the gamut of moods and textures that propel this bewitching set out of the ordinary. **KN**

OPERATION: MINDCRIME

The New Reality FRONTIERS

Reality bites for Geoff Tate's post-Queensrÿche project.

Geof Tate's post-Queensrÿche releases haven't generated the career momentum he was hoping for, and that's clear by the bottom-of-the-rung venues his band are set to perform in on their upcoming UK tour. Indeed, the two previous albums released under his Operation: Mindcrime moniker (essentially Tate with countless guest musicians) have been frustratingly lethargic. Perhaps predictably, the music on *The New Reality* is patchy. *My Eyes* hints at past triumphs, with assertive melodies and inventive vocal lines only hindered by a shackling production. There's even



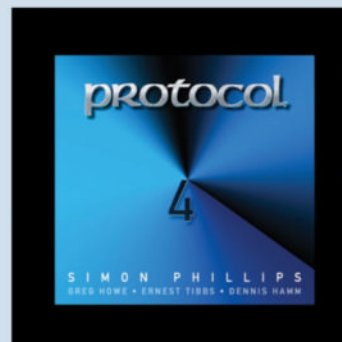
a Kashmir vibe to *All For What*, which at least proves Operation: Mindcrime retain some ambition. Yet for all these relative, fleeting high points, the remainder of the album limps along painfully. The tired riff and off-kilter guitar on *Wake Me Up*

makes you wonder if *Vim Fuego* of Bad News has been drafted in to the roster of guest musicians. *The Fear* is padded out with a bizarre drum solo, replete with David Bowie tribute-act vocals. The album ironically ends with a run-of-the-mill song entitled *The Same Old Story*, which provides a perfect epitaph to this trilogy of awkward disappointment. **RW**

SIMON PHILLIPS

Protocol 4 PHANTOM RECORDINGS

Phillips and his new friends add some heavy funk to their fusion.



There are some new faces in the line-up for Simon Phillips' fourth album under the Protocol banner as the veteran session drummer and former Toto member continues his impressive run of releases as a bandleader. This time around, Greg Howe takes over the guitar duties from Andy Timmons, while Dennis Hamm steps into Steve Weingart's spot behind the keyboards. The other constant besides the drummer himself is the dependable pulse that Ernest Tibbs brings on the bass.



The musicianship can be knotty, but there are still hooks here.



Despite the changing roster, *Protocol 4* is not a marked departure from its predecessors. Instead, the music builds and expands on Phillips' singular vision. This is heavy progressive fusion played with enough wit and invention to rival any of the classic fusion albums of the early 1970s, when Billy Cobham invaded the charts with *Spectrum*.

Nimbus highlights Phillips' remarkable facility on his instrument as he sets up a melodic counterpoint to Howe's harmonics. The guitarist adds a deep sense of groove to everything he plays, which really brings out the funky side of the material. Case in point: *Pentangle* features a slick drum solo from Phillips, who plays over the vamp, while *Solitaire* is a study in twisted, inventive syncopation.

Hamm's keys lead the way into the fat, chunky riff of *Celtic Run*, which unfolds into a conversation between keys and guitar as Howe and Hamm pass ideas back and forth. The midsection sees the band drop down into a quiet interlude that provides a reminder of their jazzy side before Howe uncorks a characteristically attention-grabbing solo.

His sinuous and fluid guitar lines in the bluesy *Phantom Voyage* recall Jeff Beck in his fusion period as Howe flows elegantly around the melody. That influence shouldn't be a surprise as Phillips' played with Beck in the 1980s and was a major contributor to the writing on Beck's album *There And Back*. However, the production on *Protocol 4* far outstrips the aforementioned effort from Beck, with richer tones and a far fuller, more unified sound.

As knotty as the musicianship can be, there are still hummable tunes here and hooks to hold the ear while the players are flexing their instrumental muscles. Tibbs lays down a thick bass pocket beneath *All Things Considered*, providing the foundation for the soloists to launch their salvos, while *Azorez* epitomises what this band is all about, switching briskly between jazz, funk and rock passages.

If you only know Phillips from his long association with Toto, this is the perfect example of what makes his own recordings so compelling.

DAVID WEST

SPOCK'S BEARD

Snow Live RADIANT

Time to get the band back together...



Released in 2002, *Snow* marked Neal Morse's first foray into the full-blown concept album with Spock's Beard. Unfortunately, once the record was done, he promptly left the band and went solo (at the risk of sounding facetious, because he thought God wanted him to). Fourteen years later, Morse reunited with his former bandmates to perform *Snow* from top to bottom at MorseFest 2016, recorded for posterity in this CD/DVD set.



Neal Morse's musical approach is to craft a rock opera.



The gang's all here — Nick D'Virgilio shares drum duties with Jimmy Keegan, although they generally switch off from song to song, rarely going for the double-drummer approach. Even current Spock's Beard frontman Ted Leonard gets a song, *Devil's Got My Throat*, although otherwise he's mostly constrained to a supporting role.

It's always tempting to compare *Snow* with Genesis' *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. Aside from the circumstances of the frontman quitting, they're both double albums that follow the story of a protagonist in New York City. For Genesis, it was a young Puerto Rican hustler called Rael, for Spock's Beard it's an albino hero called, ahem, Snow.

Unsurprisingly for Morse, there are heavy religious overtones to his tale, but that's very much his wheelhouse and not likely to be an issue for his fans. The significance of the MorseFest reunion is that it marks the first and only time all this material has been performed live, although the players are faithful in recreating what they did in the studio.

On *Ladies And Gentlemen, Mister Ryo Okumoto On The Keyboards!*, the keys player extends the introduction, but the bulk of the track is played verbatim as he channels Jon Lord. D'Virgilio takes his fair share of lead vocals and hits the high notes more comfortably than Neal Morse, who sounds strongest on the tracks where he gets to use the lower end of his register, such as *I'm The Guy*.

Both D'Virgilio and Morse are shameless hams onstage — the latter can't resist an opportunity to dramatically fall to his knees in *I'm Dying*, while D'Virgilio is ridiculous trying to look like one of the Beastie Boys (presumably) in *Welcome To NYC*. Wardrobe choices aside, the live version really brings out the song's groove.

Morse's musical approach to progressive rock isn't so much about pulling in disparate influences but more about crafting a rock opera. *Snow* boasts overtures, movements and refrains that the band return to, but it's all firmly rooted in Morse's bombastic hard rock approach. It's often cheesy — *Wind At My Back* is nauseatingly saccharine — but the musicians throw themselves into it all with gusto.

DAVID WEST

ORPHEUS NINE

Transcendental Circus SELF-RELEASED

All-encompassing prog madness from Sopranos country.

Audacity is an underrated virtue, particularly in a genre that has flamboyancy and ambition etched into its DNA. Orpheus Nine are audacious to a fault, both in their gleeful and unapologetic plundering of 40-plus years of prog indulgence and in the levels of wide-eyed invention that, somewhat against the odds, rescue *Transcendental Circus* from being a sustained game of 'spot the influence'. In truth, it's the joy that oozes from every one of this album's myriad stylistic pores that seals the deal. Across 74 minutes of insanely elaborate and yet aggressively melodic



symphonic prog, these virtuoso New Jerseyites salute everyone from Yes, ELP and Zappa through to Fish-era Marillion, 80s Rush and the warm-hearted splendour of Spock's Beard and The Flower Kings.

That they do it via their own beautifully crafted songs, all sung with plummy aplomb by founder and frontman Jason Kresge, is testament to the band's cleverness. Moments like the wonky *Intergalactic Clown Festival* and the fairground psych of *Reaper's Carousel* will tick every box for prog aficionados, while confirming that Orpheus Nine are among the best bands ploughing this ageless furrow. **DL**

RTFACT

Life Is Good AFL MUSIC

Russian actor-director-producer reveals a handsome nu-prog contender.

Forgive this loose collective their awful moniker, Russian native Yuri Volodarsky's debut album is a loving throwback to 70s prog in all its guises: it's grandiose, genteel and star-studded, inasmuch as music fans will recognise at least a half a dozen names of the cameos here (Nad Sylvan, Will Champlin, Oz Noy). Volodarsky even manages to rope in one-time Journey singer Jeff Scott Soto to add mellifluous vocal lines to the mix. It's an odd choice given that the musical references here are pointedly old school — Gentle Giant, Yes, ELP — but Volodarsky's clearly not afraid to add some pop notes. Case in



point, the six-minute *Money In My Pocket*, which hints at classic mid-period Saga with a bassline that could have surfaced around Styx's *Kilroy Was Here*. Sounds confusing? Surprisingly, it's not the case — he melds different decades of prog and pomp with ease. From

the languid guitar on *Gotika* to the Keith Emerson-like piano refrain on *The King, The Master And The Timekeeper*, which sounds like it's about to introduce a Greg Lake vocal, and the animated strut of *Hollywood Walk Of Fame*, it's an intriguing melding of styles and eras. Goodness knows where he'll find the band to reproduce it live. **PW**

SENDELICA

Cromlech Chronicles II STRANGE FISH

Two evocative pieces of improvised inner space exploration.

After last year's *Cromlech Chronicles* comes this, its companion album. It was recorded near the same ancient burial sites in Wales, but this is very much yang to its predecessor's yin. Whereas that album approached a sort of Hawkwind-like sonic attack, this meditative acoustic offering is space rock without the rock. The group's guitarist, Pete Bingham, has said that Sendelica's approach here is close in spirit to the loose improvisations of Japanese collective Taj Mahal Travellers, and one could add to that the ritualistic feeling of their compatriots Ghost. And with the guest



musicians on violin and cello, those pioneers of quasi-medieval acid raga the Third Ear Band also spring to mind. Cheryl Beer features on all manner of percussion and vocal incantations, but rhythms are sporadic. The 18-minute *Ripples Of The Megaliths*

meanders on its course as if the journey is an end in itself, with spartan guitar chords and a saxophone just breaking free towards the close. *Even Though My Mouth Is Silent* is of similar length and made of similar stuff, with the addition of what sounds like the Mellotron choir from Popul Vuh's *Aguirre* floating around like massed backing vocals. **MB**

SINISTRO

Sangue Cássia SEASON OF MIST

Beauty in the darkness with the Lisbon doom crew.

When there's a mention of 'female vocals' and 'doom' in the same sentence, the word 'kitsch' may never be far behind. But this Lisbon-based band have far more to offer – and that's mainly to do with their high priestess, Patricia Andrade, who is truly this record's revelation. Allied more closely with the realms of sludge and post-metal than doom here, those scenes are often ugly, gnarly places, but Andrade's voice is brighter than the rays of a thousand suns. No matter how crushing the guitars are – and they can be damn heavy – they never overshadow her performance, which is



enhanced by the delicacy of the arrangements, twilight soundscapes and lysergic tempos. This almost hour-long third album is like watching the sun setting on the desert: even if you know that once it's complete only darkness will prevail, it's still so enthralling that you can't help but stare. While there are almost cinematic moments on *Sangue Cássia* – *Lótus* intro brings to mind Earth, for instance – their bold choice to use only lyrics in their native tongue actually makes them the metal equivalent of fado: beautiful yet extremely sad music, made to deal with even sadder emotions. **OB**

TOM SLATTER/MURDER AND PARLIAMENT

Murder And Parliament BIG ELEPHANT MUSIC

Tom Slatter's instrumental project is an admirably unpredictable affair.

It's a bold move for this British progger to make an instrumental album, because part of the charm of the handful of albums he's released under his own name are his eccentric yarns and streaks of lyrical humour. But Tom Slatter clearly loves challenging himself and his audience. If there are hints of Slint and their post-rock guitar tangles in the lo-fi opening bars of *A Scattering*, that represents relative calm before a storm of anxious jazz rock that somehow manages to coagulate into something satisfyingly hook-laden. *Crookedness* is bookended by indie punk thrash, either side



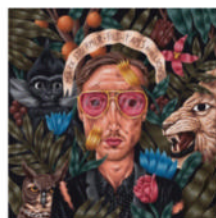
of more contemplative puddles of noise. Inevitably, it can be hit and miss. The angular, shredding metal guitar on *Grey Malkin* and the slightly zany uptempo passages don't appeal to this reviewer, but in the context of a piece asking you to expect the unexpected, it works. And sure enough, *Embers* is a complete mood change, a beautifully alluring cloud of smoky violin and mournful guitar musings mutating into stargazing dream vistas. Then *Clamour*'s hooky, heavy riff lifts the atmosphere, and once more all bets are off. When your music has this much character, what are words worth? **JS**

MARK STOERMER

Filthy Apes And Lions ST AUGUST

Killers bassist's third solo outing is a joyously derivative psychedelic trip.

If you're one of those people who likes to listen to new artists and sneeringly point out where they've 'ripped off' various elements of their sound from, you'll have a high old time with Mark Stoermer's latest offering. Bearing little relation to his alma mater's melodramatic indie rock, it sometimes sounds like a man cherry-picking the sounds of his favourite late-60s psychedelic records and lovingly recreating them. However, with a sprinkling of his own mischievous, stoned humour, engagingly weird instrumental touches, barking lyrics and catchy tunes thrown into the mix,



he pulls it off in style. You won't need a musicologist to help trace the *Helter Skelter*-ish grindings that punctuate *Beautiful Deformities*, nor the discordant intro to The Byrds' *Eight Miles High* that ghosts in elsewhere on that track. Meanwhile, you'll be expecting to hear *The Perennial Legend Of Dr Mabuse* show up as a bonus track on the next reissue of *The Pretty Things' SF Sorrow*, or *The Zombies' Odessey & Oracle*. But he gets away with it because Stoermer's instinct for arresting riffs and wobbly pop hooks distracts us from such reference-spotting. What's that old saying about how talent borrows? **JS**



PSYCHEDELIC PROG

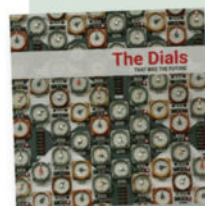
Take a trip with **Rob Hughes** as he seeks out the latest mind-expanding music.

New studio albums by **Nick Garrie** are as rare as original copies of *The Nightmare Of J.B. Stanislas*, his 1969 baroque-pop masterpiece. *The Moon And The Village* (Tapete) is only his third in nearly 50 years. A captivating set with a wistful air, it sees the Yorkshireman unpacking narratives about people undergoing their own private crises. Garrie verses it all in pastel tones, backed by sensitive arrangements on acoustic guitar, piano and strings. The ghost of Procol Harum looms over *My Dear One*, while the more kinetic *Bacardi Samuel* outlines the story of a drunken bum who suddenly vanishes.



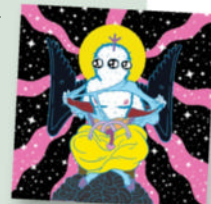
A similar bucolicism informs *A Different Light* (Paisley Parade), the debut from **Dream Giant**, also known as London-based musician/producer Harry Dean. He tackles a variety of instruments – lead guitar, synths and melodica included – to fashion lush, psychedelic pop with fluffy hooks and oodles of phased effects. *Tune In* exudes acid traces of I Monster, as well as 60s cult heroes Nirvana. And the weirdo charm of *Hello Sunday* suggests that Dean knows his way around The Beta Band's catalogue too.

The Brainiac 5 have been around for nearly as long as Nick Garrie and they're just as elusive. *We're Ready!* (Reckless) is their third album since reforming in 2013 and finds the UK veterans in rude health. Frontman Charlie Taylor sounds not unlike Nick Saloman or Robyn Hitchcock, his voice a perfect vehicle for delivering the churning English psych of *Drinking Song* or *My Time*. Pick of the bunch, however, is *She's Free*, a rewired version of *Trotsky* (originally heard on the band's 1978 EP, *Mushy Doubt*), in which returning singer Jessie Pie recounts a tale of toxic lust over a skanky rhythm and mad flurries of guitar.

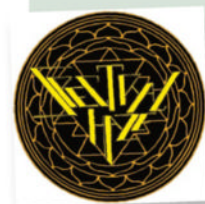


Brighton quartet **The Dials** have been delivering a plural strain of psychedelia for over a decade now. *That Was The Future* (Gear Discs) is underpinned by funky grooves with plenty of lysergic stuff swimming around on top. Farfisa and vintage keyboards provide rich textures, while disengaged vocals drift in on curls of incense smoke. Cue Kinksy dreaminess, Byrds-ish harmonies and what feels like a tribute to Cardiacs offshoot The Sea Nymphs on the parping prog pop of *The Moon And The Stars And The Tides Of The Sea*.

Further afield, Atlanta instrumentalists **Chew** deliver glitchy psych, heads-down riff rock and contorted prog on terrific mini album *A Fine Accoutrement* (Stolen Body). They ramp up the spaciness on *Crunchy*, which ends with what sounds like a spaceship hovering in to land.



Those of a heavy disposition may also enjoy *Turning Electric* (Totem Cat), the third album from Norwegian quartet **Spectral Haze**. The sounds of 70s Hawkwind permeate the blizzard rush of the title track, led by gruff yelper Spacewölff. For pure stoner ritualism, however, it pales next to the eight-plus minutes of *Cathexis/Mask Of Transformation*.



TIGER MOTH TALES

The Depths Of Winter WHITE KNIGHT

Pete Jones' wintry tales bring comfort and joy.



Ah, winter! Season of ice, snow and fairy lights. A time to wrap up warm, drink comforting beverages and listen to cheering music. Prog has produced many wintry offerings over the decades, not least from the likes of Tull, and Genesis in *Trespass* mode. Now Pete Jones, also known as Tiger Moth Tales, has brought his burgeoning talent to prog's frostier reaches.

Jones' capacity to channel classic prog exceeds expectations.

2013's debut *Cocoon* set the bar high for Jones. *The Depths Of Winter* not only develops Tiger Moth Tales' Genesis-influenced sound, but works its hibernial themes to the fullest. Not only do we get references to *Game Of Thrones'* most famous catchphrase, but there's a cutesy seasonal offering, *Sleigh Ride*, and a tune devoted to Denmark's world-conquering cosy concept, *Hygge*.

The Depths... begins quietly with *Winter Is Coming* – a dreamy prelude full of Emma Friend's flute chops – but it's the magnificent *Winter Maker* that sets the benchmark. Part Floydian groover, part hymn to Old Man Winter, it showcases Jones' soulful voice and gift for arranging brass, woodwind, guitar and piano. Many prog fans have rightly enjoyed Jones' capacity to channel classic progressive sounds, but this 12-minute track exceeds all expectations.

There are tributes to Genesis, Barclay James Harvest and *Animals*-era Floyd, for starters. It also has one of the finest guitar wig-outs, from Maschine's Luke Machin, you're likely to hear for years. If it were mere pastiche, that would be fine. What takes it to another level is Jones' capacity to weave these influences into his own sound.

Another epic is *Exposure*, which takes Jones' love of classic connections deeper. In both its sweet guitar soloing and its handling of war themes, it bears comparison to Steve Hackett's exploration of World War One ideas on *Spectral Mornings*. There have been a lot of musical takes on the famous 1914 Christmas Truce, but Jones' is right up there.

The Depths... is incredibly rich, with four songs at least nine minutes long. Admittedly, *Sleigh Ride* is a bit throwaway compared to the rest, though it does showcase Jones' vibrato tekks, but his passion and precision saturate everything. *The Tears of Frigga* uses every part of its 11 minutes to create a magical world. Chimes, sleigh bells and the shiniest techniques in the seasonal armoury are used to conjure the wintry theme, but Jones resists tacky tinsel.

Recent years have seen a renaissance in bands exploring the classic sounds of prog, from Big Big Train to Damanek. *The Depths Of Winter* confirms that Tiger Moth Tales have every right to be mentioned alongside the best of them.

RACHEL MANN

SWEDISH DEATH CANDY

Swedish Death Candy HASSLE

Sweet-toothed London psych stoners erupt.

Understanding the impact of a good name, Swedish Death Candy actually hail from London, but that should have nothing to do with their debut album's exhilarating blitzkrieg of stoner doom riffage and snaking flights mixed with transcendent vocal harmonies. They cut a stellar dash and boast influences as diverse as Black Sabbath, The Beatles and Can. Lead single *Last Dream* and *Living Your Life* Away bend trusty riffs to their own devices, with Hendrix-style dual guitar and soaring chorale, all doused in spangled widescreen production. *Broken Engrams* is a scorching example



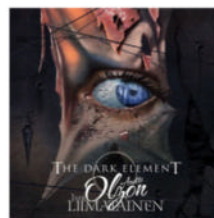
of how they can suddenly turn an express train Motörhead rampage (with motorik undertow) on its heel and lurch into slow-mo log todger heave before flicking a switch and going off again. After an initial three-song bombardment, *Avalanche* sees Perry reliving his experience of being rescued in the Alps with a crystalline guitar blizzard, while *Liquorice, Pt II & III* is a sequel to 2016's debut EP track about a nutter becoming the sun and destroying the planet, switching between wah-wah funk and Blue Cheer bombast. There are some interesting things going on here. **KN**

THE DARK ELEMENT

The Dark Element FRONTIERS

Pop meets metal as Olzon and Liimatainen join forces.

Three years after her solo album, ex-Nightwish vocalist Anette Olzon teams up with Jani Liimatainen, former guitarist of Sonata Arctica, in *The Dark Element*. The band's sound is a blend of Scandinavian symphonic metal and a surprisingly strong pop sensibility. There's heaviness here but the tunes are super catchy – *Here's To You* and *Someone You Used to Know* are the sort of lighters-in-the-air, arena-friendly anthems that made Desmond Child a wealthy man in the 80s. Olzon sounds in fine voice and unlike her fellow Nightwish alumni Tarja Turunen, she sings



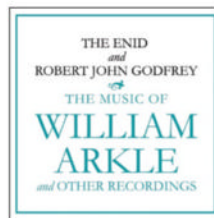
the melody rather than indulging in operatic vocal gymnastics. *Dead To Me* boasts some extra crunch in Liimatainen's guitar riff, while the keyboards and programming in *Halo* showcase his very contemporary approach to the arrangements, one that isn't too far away from Exit Eden's recent album featuring metal covers of pop and R&B songs. The lyrics can be a little awkward – 'I've been wasting away like Christ on the cross,' sings Olzon in *I Cannot Raise The Dead* – but the album is loaded with big musical hooks that add up to a hugely accessible slice of sweeping, dramatic grandeur. **DW**

THE ENID AND ROBERT JOHN GODFREY

The Music Of William Arkle And Other Recordings INNER SANCTUM

Mystic-inspired classical ambience.

William Arkle's easily overlooked. Born in 1924, he gravitated from public school to naval war service to painting, specialising in spiritual subjects. After hanging with Colin Wilson, Arkle wrote *The Geography Of Consciousness*. It described eight levels, with Higher Man, a God-like state, at the pinnacle. Henceforth, to a small faction, Arkle was considered a mystic, philosopher and theologian, as well as an artist – though some might say he was always more bloke than Blake. Arkle composed the opening trio of tracks here in '68, but they were only arranged and performed in '86



by The Enid's Robert John Godfrey – two years before, Arkle's painting *The Father And The Mother* was used as the cover of the band's reissued *In The Region Of The Summer Stars*. The three pieces – *Seascape*, *Somerset Sketches* and *Snowdonia* – are very English, and very romantic: imagine Delius stripped back to the verge of ambience. They were originally given away to The Stand (The Enid's fan club) on cassette. Now padded with three further tracks (both movements of RJG's classically ambient *Reverberations*, plus a sax version of *Evensong*) it's pleasant, but more diverting than essential. **IF**

TOEHIDER

GOOD SELF-RELEASED

Manic world of Michael Mills impresses again.

You might think that for a band that have unleashed a seemingly never-ending tidal wave of releases in the last decade, and at one point 12 EPs in as many months, the creative juices might be running bone dry. Not Toehider. Led by octave-spanning vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Michael Mills, the Australian prog rockers' latest full-length *GOOD* shows that things can still be kept fresh. The title track opener evokes comedy rockers Tenacious D, the following *funnythings* nods to the off-kilter prog-punk of Cardiacs and *Millions Of Musketeers*



sounds at times like the pumped-up metal chops of Protest The Hero doing the tango with Queen. And then there's the peculiar storytelling in the lyrics amid the phantasmagoric music. 'Dan VS. egg, it's not that hard to get,' Mills soars in, erm, Dan VS Egg.

'There's Dan seated there with the egg at a six-sided table - and the table's not set.' The musician recorded and wrote almost everything on *GOOD*, and the album feels like another crystallisation of Mills' masterful, musical mind. Dream Theater's James LaBrie says the "man can do anything", and with little to nitpick here, he might be right. **CC**

WHEN MARY

Tainted SONICBOND

Trude Eidtang keeps the smooth prog flag flying.

When White Willow dared to steer away from the symphonic prog genre in 2006 with *Signal To Noise* in favour of a more pop-friendly and modern sound, to say that not all their fans were thrilled would be quite an understatement. Their then recently recruited vocalist Trude Eidtang became their primary target and by the time the band returned four years later, she'd been let go. A decade later, she's sticking to her guns with the second album for her solo project, said to be inspired by both the tale of Faust and Franz Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade* -



hence its scattered lyrics in German. Musically, it's inspired by trip-hop, classical music and even blues, even if sometimes it's hard to detect a trace of that. Unsurprisingly, *Tainted* is a platform for her vocal performance, and although clearly

using Kate Bush as a role model, she's in a class of her own. But if *Tainted* has a fault, it's that musically it tries too hard to please. Mostly electronic-fuelled and often slick, they don't shy from the stylings of the flashy 80s, tracks such as *Are You Really Sleeping* revelling in smooth-sounding progressive pop. **OB**

WINGFIELD REUTER SIRKIS

Lighthouse MOONJUNE

Surfing the improv-rock wave.

Some albums say hello with a gentle introduction while others grab you by the lapels. *Lighthouse*, born from a single improvised session without overdubs and only the most minimal post-production editing, sits in the latter category.



Hailing from the UK, Germany and Israel respectively, the unwavering velocity and momentum generated by this international trio within the album's opening seconds remain irresistible. Although entirely spontaneous, each of the seven tracks possesses the structure and dynamic foundations of composed material. Throughout, Mark Wingfield

coaxes unorthodox textures and long, snaking melodic lines from his guitar. Capable of moving between a luminous beauty to snarling, barbed ferocity within a moment means he's well-equipped to respond to the variegated backdrops fashioned by

Asaf Sirkis' driving rhythm and Markus Reuter's bulldozing bass patterns. With occasional echoes of early King Crimson's roving angularities surfacing through their intense exchanges, as their punchy, racing grooves seamlessly dovetail with shimmering atmospherics, there's an exhilarating unpredictability present here. **SS**



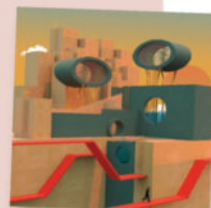
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the Prog sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Good to hear from **Looking-Glass Lantern** again. Versatile musician Graham Dunnington follows his brace of Sherlock Holmes-themed albums with *Candlelight And Empire* (Looking Glass Recordings), which portrays a day in the life of a middle-class Victorian household through his trademark strong storytelling and neo-prog palette. Again, the homemade production doesn't do justice to his ambitious, high-grade music, which will appeal to fans of literate, Genesis-informed prog.



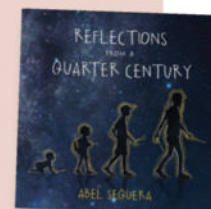
If Tame Impala, Mogwai and Radiohead are more your thing then seek out **Klangstof**, the Dutch-Norwegian band making waves at the indie end of things. Their 2016 debut *Close Eyes To Exit* saw them play Coachella and tour with the likes of Flaming Lips, and new four-track EP *Everest* (Mind Of A Genius) is a strong slice of imaginative, wonky synth pop music. They're at their most replete when they ditch the *Kid A*-isms and combine fresh hooks and invention. So much promise here.



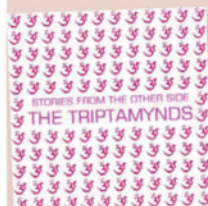
Goya are a three-piece instrumental power trio whose self-released debut EP *Kathmandu* shows off their bold, dynamic approach. There's a King's X chug to opener *Collider* and *Ashoka* sees them dust off their book of Eastern scales, but they're in their full pomp with 13-minuter *Venenatus*, which switches from fragile, dreamy guitars to full-on Sabbath sludge and back again. This was recorded live, and it'll sound all the more rewarding witnessed 'in the room'.



At the grand old age of 25, jobbing Spanish drummer **Abel Sequera** takes stock of life on his own prog-inclined EP. *Reflections From A Quarter Century* draws on Dream Theater, Porcupine Tree and Transatlantic, with a crack band bringing his four eclectic and vibrant instrumentals together. The last one's called *The End Of The Beginning*, and the good news for him is that the best is surely yet to come.

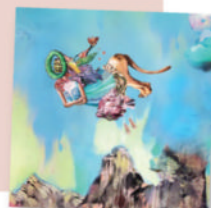


Gaz Hunter's more of an accidental musician. In 2006 he wrote a concept album about an acid trip under the name **The Triptamynds** and recently rerecorded it after buying a bunch of software that simulated classic 60s instruments. *Stories From The Other Side* is bare-knuckle psych that owes



a lot to Hawkwind and, of course, The Beatles. These *Stories* feel a little artificial and gleefully unrefined, but Hunter's heart, soul and melty mind are in them.

But if it's something *truly* progressive you're after, don't miss *Ahwar* (Nawa), from Cairo's **Nadah El Shazly**. Her vocal style ranges from the ravishing to the unsettling; her songs a mesmerising, alienating mix of Arabian instruments, electronic textures and experimental jazz. A simple touchstone might be Björk at her most avant-garde, but *Ahwar* has to be experienced to be believed. It'll leave you invigorated, unsure about the world and your place in it, and more deeply in love with music.



THE ALAN PARSONS PROJECT

Eye In The Sky 35th Anniversary Box Set SONY

Older, wiser and expanded.



The argument as to where the dividing line lies between what might be pigeonholed as progressive or pop can occupy lots of time and energy, often causing grown men to weep. Just ask *Prog*'s long-suffering editor. Worrying about such distinctions is probably not something that troubled The Alan Parsons Project.



Positively revels in an unfettered, poppish pomp.



Their sixth album, released in 1982, positively revels in an unfettered, poppish pomp with its mix of uncluttered tonality, hooks and impeccable, frequently opulent production. Remaining largely fresh and undated, the half-speed mastered vinyl copy and a Blu-ray 2017 surround sound mix, both of which are as impressive as you'd imagine, provide the main reason for grabbing this set, although the supporting items exert a significant charm.

A whole disc of Eric Woolfson's piano demos provides an insight into an artist at work. Unable to write or read music, he would fill up cassette tapes as he worked at home on the different permutations and arrangements of the material. Inevitably there's a degree of repetition but in some respects, the most lo-fi disc provides this collection's most intimate moment. Away from Parsons' legendary studio gloss, we are at the stripped-back source and it's a curiously poignant experience that places the listener right next to Woolfson there at the piano. At one point the telephone rings and, like him, we are jolted out of the composer's reveries. His daughter Sally observes that for her and sister, Lorna, who compiled the tracks from boxes of unmarked tapes, these cassettes form the soundtrack to their childhood, noting "we were often in the room next door and would hear him writing songs and playing like this all the time".

Arriving at a finished album doesn't necessarily involve a grand plan. It's an intuitive process that goes through several stages as performers and producers sift and grade the elements before them. From this remove, the rationale behind some choices can seem elusive, with Parsons admitting he can't recall why they added air-raid sirens to *Psychobabble* other than it just worked. Another disc of previously unreleased material finds the team in Abbey Road. The subtle details of the finished sound are revealed through alternatives or early mixes. Thus we hear isolated tracks, abandoned Beach Boys-style backing vocals on *Old And Wise*; Parson's own guide vocal for *You're Gonna Get Your Fingers Burned*, which, to these ears, remains the best song Elton John never recorded. Not everything collected here feels essential but it does offer access to Woolfson and Parsons' approach and thinking regarding what was a commercially successful formula.

SID SMITH

FISH

Suits CHOCOLATE FROG

Lavish reissue of Fish's fourth solo album.

There's an argument, which we're about to make, that Fish's solo career was cooling by the time he came to make 1994's *Suits* album. Polydor had ditched him, record sales were becoming something of a diminishing return and he'd recorded a covers album in the shape of *Songs From The Mirror*. A nod to Bowie's *Pink Ups* it might have been, but a covers album always gives off the faint whiff of an artist casting around for ideas when there are none.

Argue that all you like, but *Suits* is the sound of a singer coming out swinging: he sounds like he's actually squaring up to fight in the lyrics to *Emperor's Song*. Little surprise then that it went Top 20 in the UK, though it would be Fish's last commercial hurrah for some time. And its success sits at odds with ever-revealing liner notes that Fish provides in this dense and colourful three CD set. As engaging as the extra disc of demos and live disc are, it's the essay and notes themselves that make this reissue such a gem.



Which is not to discount the album itself. Fish hit a rich creative seam with *Suits*, he was embracing the musical zeitgeist - the production, the arrangement, the tone - but age has not withered its magic, which you don't often

get to say about an album released in the 1990s.

Pipeline, *Mr 1470* and *Bandwagon* are especially strong still, and while Fish leaves little of himself off the page lyrically, he's even more direct when it comes to conjuring up the life and times that surround the making of this album and the aftermath. You'd be hard pushed to describe a Fish album as upbeat, but this sounds like a record of high end pop songs juxtaposed with the downbeat end to the essay that accompanies it; poorly attended shows, family woes, times of trouble looming up ahead like clouds crowding the horizon. This only adds to its irresistible charm, one final splash of colour to enjoy before the crash. **PW**

MAGMA

Retrospektiw SOUTHERN LORD

Lush vinyl package of 1981 live albums.

It was interesting to read that Christian Vander does not regard Magma as a prog act (*The Prog Interview*, issue 81). The French outfit's place in music history as creators of zeuhl goes without saying. But like many who enjoy the music of Christian Vander and co, this writer has always been tempted to view zeuhl as a sub-genre of progressive music. Not that it matters, unless you subscribe to the "If he says it's not prog, then I won't listen to it" school of thought. Because Magma sound pretty damn proggy to us on these reissues. And my, have Southern Lord done a particularly grand job, releasing *Retrospektiw* on vinyl for the first time since its 1981 release on the RCA Victor label in France.

Recorded at a series of shows at Paris' Olympia Theatre in June 1980 to celebrate the band's tenth anniversary, *Parts I & II* have long been cited by hardcore fans as essential listening, containing, as they do, two parts of Vander's epic triptych *Theusz Hamtaahk*, his space opera centred



around the planet Kobaïa, which gave its name to the Kobaïan language in which Magma sing. In typical Magma style, you don't get the whole thing here. It opens with a truncated *Mëkanik Dëstructiiv Kömmandöh* (the band's 1973 album), misses out 1974's *Wurdah İtah*

entirely, but does include the previously only performed live opening segment, also titled *Theusz Hamtaak*, recorded here for the first time. Both feature Klaus Blasquiz, the material's original vocalist, and are widely regarded as seminal versions of the material.

Part III features the jazz funk of *Retrovision*, and both *Hhai* and *La Dawotsin*, both of which featured on a French single from 1981. The final track boasts a particularly fine, if somewhat understated, vocal from Vander himself.

True, much of this material appeared on 2015's impressive *Köhnzert Zünd box set*, but having them back in vinyl format somehow seems all the more fitting, given the era in which Vander originally conceived his masterworks. **JE**

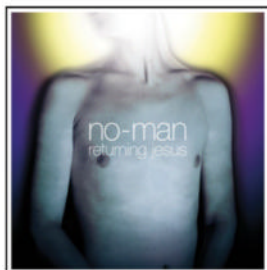
NO-MAN

Returning Jesus KSCOPE

Wilson and Bowness' 2001 spaced odyssey, resurrected.

No-Man entered the 21st century with an album which, like most of their luscious, languid work, sounds like it could be from any time in their three decades of existence. Near the start of that period they were described by one reviewer as "conceivably the most important English band since The Smiths"; near the end of it as "the most underrated band of the last 25 years". It's been a rather unconventional, slow-burning journey, with Steven Wilson now a prog pop best seller and Tim Bowness making slyly delicious meta-albums. *Returning Jesus* was, in 2001, their fourth offering, and itself a product of many years of writing and honing.

At the time they weren't sure if the growing success of Porcupine Tree would mean it was their swansong, so they sweated the details: as Bowness' sleeve notes reveal, it swung between 70 and 35 minutes before they decided on the 52-minute version. This epic two-disc reissue – remastered of course by Wilson and, as is their wont,



quite lovingly packaged – includes the *Carolina Skeletons* and *All That You Are* EPs plus demos and alternate versions. It's a thing of great beauty and typical melancholy.

Mostly downplaying the beats they'd dabbled with in the late 90s, it accepts that

their forte is mildly fretful serenity. Strings and other swoony instruments weave around, and the mood's as delicate as David Sylvian in a feather factory. The presence of ex-Japan drummer Steve Jansen and guests such as Colin Edwin and Theo Travis keep it from settling on a complacent plateau, but elegant understatement rules. There's a hint of *Rain Tree Crow's Pocket Full Of Change* in the gorgeous *Lighthouse*, and *Only Rain and Close Your Eyes* flow like Talk Talk playing Nick Drake. On the flawless *Outside The Machine*, Bowness gilds his sleepy vocal with a choral effect which pumps up the pining. The angst is so alluring that you hope the answer to whether these men will record together again is a yes. **CR**

PENGUIN CAFÉ ORCHESTRA

Union Café ERASED TAPES

The group's final album from 1994, released for the first time on vinyl.

The brainchild of composer and multi-instrumentalist Simon Jeffes, the Penguin Café Orchestra's music was first released on *Music From The Penguin Café* on Brian Eno's Obscure label in 1976, a haven for the era's avant garde oddities. Jeffes was disillusioned with both rock and classical music, but the group's music wasn't really avant garde either. His vision was, though, both largely undemonstrative and highly original and *Union Café* was the culmination of his career, which was cruelly curtailed by his death in 1997. It's full of tunes that you can whistle, but they are typically framed in idiosyncratic arrangements that border on the eccentric.

A puckish wit was also involved. *Scherzo And Trio* sounds like a sort of chamber ensemble boogie-woogie with strings and parping trombone, which runs through some odd key changes. *Discover America* starts off with a stately string quartet playing an amalgam of *When The Saints Go Marching In* and *Home On The*



Range. Then see-sawing cellos usher in the melody of Johnny & The Hurricanes' 1959 hit single *Red River Rock*, which is, in turn, played simultaneously with first two themes, each forming a perfectly fitting counterpoint.

Vega is a much more serious creation.

A seesawing Philip Glass-like piano motif runs through most of its 10-minute span with some lovely melodic explorations on brass and strings and occasional dark downturns in mood.

The music often exists in a curious area that overlaps with minimalism and hints at all kinds of traditional forms, but with everything viewed from a new angle, as on the perpetual motion echoed guitar and accordion of *Yodel 3* and the uilleann pipes and strings of *Organum*.

There's also greater use of strings here than before and their luminous arrangement on *Lie Back And Think Of England* puts it stylistically somewhere between Arvo Pärt and Vaughan Williams. **MB**

ART ZOYD

44½: Live And Unreleased Works CUNEIFORM

RIO icons' opulent Holy Grail.



While the musical evolution of legendary bands like Genesis and Pink Floyd can be roughly divided into album-sized chunks, the music of Art Zoyd has long felt like an ongoing and remorseless process: music made to evolve in real time, within and beyond its apparent initial potential. Ostensibly part of the Rock In Opposition movement, the amorphous French crew share very little with Henry Cow beyond a fearless, intrepid spirit: something that will come in very handy if you take the plunge into this frankly mind-boggling box set.

Extraordinary, genre-defying... a monolithic challenge.

Apparently designed to plug the gaps between the band's studio records, thus illuminating a greater degree of detail in Art Zoyd's relentless shape-shifting, *44½* is simply a monolithic challenge to the senses: 12 audio discs, two DVDs, and barely a moment contained within that doesn't sound fervently, almost aggressively original. Drawn from various periods in the band's lengthy history, this is plainly not meant to be consumed in one sitting. The first disc alone – a sizzling, partial performance of 1986's *Berlin* album in that same city – contains more ingenious or perverse ideas within its 74 fluid minutes than most bands have teeth and toes. The act of describing what Art Zoyd actually sound like risks straying into dancing-about-architecture territory, but there are elements of 20th century classical music, free jazz, experimental electronics and all manner of shadowy art rock indulgence bubbling away at the heart of pieces such as *Epithalame* and *A Drum, A Drum*. Undeniably and persistently cinematic in execution, hypnotic melodies and rhythms disintegrate and reform in new shapes, sometimes played by what sounds like a chamber orchestra, sometimes by a futuristic jazz ensemble and sometimes what could easily be some spectral Einstürzende Neubauten tribute band. In fact, the two DVDs of live footage present the slight drawback of allowing us to peek behind the creative curtain and see who is doing what at any given time. In truth, the kind of extraordinary, genre-defying music that Art Zoyd are making on disc three's document of a 1996 show in Copenhagen, for instance, is so thrillingly visual in the first place (not to mention the actual soundtrack for Danish director Benjamin Christiansen's 1922 film *Häxan*) that prosaic live performance footage doesn't quite cut it. It all *sounds* incredible, however.

Diehard fans will ignore the hefty price tag and treat this like some kind of opulent Holy Grail, and rightly so. For the uninitiated, this might seem like a ludicrous place to start, but there is a wild, wonderful and frightening world to be explored here, and it's always worth taking a punt, right?

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SOFT MACHINE

Seven MUSIC ON VINYL

Seventh heaven vinyl for Softs fans.

As with any long-lived band, fan opinions as to what counts as the best line-up will often be sharply split. In Soft Machine's case, the most common divide usually starts with Robert Wyatt's departure in 1971 and the arrival of Karl Jenkins in 1972.

Aside from sentiment and personal taste, as with any group with an evolving line-up, the truth is that one is not inherently better than another but simply different.

Originally released in the winter of 1974, *Seven* finds a group far removed from their psychedelic origins. The tessellated rows of interlocking compositions are cosily homogenous when compared to some of its free-flowing predecessors.

However, even within the album's compact delivery, the fire and passion within the soloing counters the received wisdom that this era lacks feeling. It's an album bristling with persuasive solos that leap with a rapid-fire invention, from Mike Ratledge's darting synth runs on *Nettle Bed*'s roller-coaster rifferama to Jenkins' ardent soliloquy in *Tarabos*.



Then there are the sawing harmonics of Roy Babbington's arc-bass in the dying embers of *Down The Road*, John Marshall's continually shifting grooves, and the razor-sharp fuzz organ of *Day's Eye*, one of Ratledge's very best. It all flows with startling expressiveness.

Yet, outstanding as these moments may be, the cosseted ambient glow and textures permeating what is arguably the best-produced album of their career are just as vital. The constellations of high-register notes and purring, bass-end loops elicited from massed Fender Rhodes swirl in mesmeric drifts and snow globe patterns. Within that twilight world is a band comfortable and confident in their own skin.

With Music On Vinyl finally bringing together the five albums SM recorded for CBS, this pressing is particularly outstanding. Played back to back with an original '73 release, the new 180gm edition of *Seven* wins out on clarity and adds extra depth in the bass, providing a richness that long-term aficionados should relish. **SS**

XTC

Black Sea PANEGYRIC

XTC expansion series enters deep dark ocean.

It's no secret - in fact it's a point of pride for the band - that XTC never quite fitted in. Whatever the prevailing breezes, they resisted them or blew along in an awkward marriage of convenience. In 1980 they were roped in with New Wave, pushed as an English Talking Heads because they used 'jagged' rhythms somewhere between punk and pop and blurted wilfully smart lyrics.

Black Sea, their fourth album, kept up the hefty - often overbearing - drum sounds of *Drums And Wires*, consolidated the twin guitars and upped the sociopolitical snark. Yet while critics flocked to call their work "perfect pop", it was, despite frequent catchy melodies and hooks, just too dark at heart to pass as such with the general public.

Producer Steve Lillywhite was having a wild breakthrough year - in 1980 alone his key collaborations included U2's *Boy*, the third Peter Gabriel solo album and *Psychodelic Furs*' debut. The shiny gated reverb drum sound was the new deal of the day. Sexy at the time, it hasn't aged well, and on



occasion drowns out the songwriters' wit here. So as Steven Wilson remixes go, perhaps this expanded edition presented our man with different challenges. There's not much he can do about the crashing rhythms - the elephant in the room - but as ever he skilfully takes

a duster to the sounds and allows Andy Partridge and Dave Gregory's interplay to deliver defter dynamics. Only the repetitive seven-minute closer *Travels In Nihilon* is still a slave to domineering big beats.

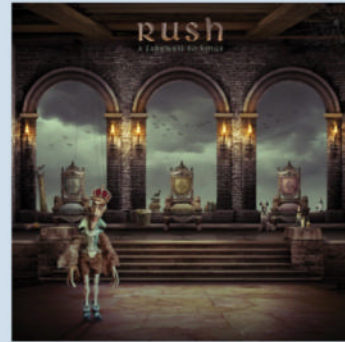
These are minor reservations about a largely upbeat album - originally titled *Work Under Pressure*, until the manager's feelings were hurt - which powers through bona fide hits like *Generals And Majors*, *Towers Of London* and *Sgt. Rock (Is Going To Help Me)*. *Living Through Another Cuba* grates, but Colin Moulding's *Love At First Sight* is bright and precise.

The additional versions, mixes and from-the-period songs stress how busily fizzing XTC were back then. *Black Sea* remains full of fresh water. **CR**

RUSH

A Farewell To Kings UMC/MERCURY

The crown slips a little on a patchy 40th-anniversary package.



Gods and astronauts, savants and seers. Never let it be said that Rush ducked the epic subjects during their grandiose 70s peak. And they were never more grandiose than on *A Farewell To Kings*, the album that ushered in phase two of their career.

When it's good, it's phenomenal; when it's not, it's frustrating.

Originally released in 1977, *AFTK* gets a 40th-anniversary reissue. Like last year's souped-up *2112*, it comes with added bells and whistles in the form of a full live set and a quartet of covers from contemporary artists (let's gloss over the appalling 21st-century 'reimagining' of the cover artwork).

The original album remains a flawed masterpiece. It starts with the never-bettered one-two of the title track and the Coleridge Taylor/Orson Welles-referencing *Xanadu*. But then the pacing goes screwy: its central run of three short, stylistically similar songs (*Closer To The Heart*, *Cinderella Man*, *Madrigal*) starts strong but gets less and less interesting.

Then there's *Cygnus X-1*. The least successful of their 70s epics, it possesses neither the controlled structure of *2112* itself, the mystical, breaking-fast-on-honeydew aura of *Xanadu* or the dazzling musicianship and batshit crazy battle-of-the-gods theme of its sequel-of-sorts, *Hemisphere's Cygnus X-1: Book II*. Instead, it's unfocused and for the most part unmemorable, with the exception of the grand finale where the crew of the spaceship *Rocinante* - spoiler alert! - plunge into a black hole to a soundtrack of Geddy Lee's ear-piercing shriek. Perplexingly, it putters to a stop, like they couldn't be arsed to finish it. Maybe that's just black holes for you.

More frustrating are the two live discs. Not because of the quality - recorded at London's fabled Hammersmith Odeon on February 20, 1978, this set is the missing link between *All The World's A Stage* and *Exit... Stage Left*, combining the flow of the former with the latter's sense that there's an actual audience present. No, 11 of its 15 tracks were released as part of 1997's *Different Stages*. While you do get unreleased versions of *2112*, *Lakeside Park* and *Closer To The Heart*, plus a terse Neil Peart drum solo, it all feels a bit second-hand.

The cover versions on the end of the second live disc are almost an afterthought, more interesting in theory than reality. Dream Theater galumph through a near carbon copy of *Xanadu* and Canadian makeweights Big Wreck turn *Closer To The Heart* into a Nickelback power ballad. Only Alain Johannes' delicate version of *Madrigal* emerges with dignity intact, and he was starting from a pretty low base.

This reissue isn't perfect. When it's good, it's phenomenal; when it's not, it's frustrating. But then Rush's flaws are still more interesting than most other bands' perfections.

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HAWKWIND

At The Roundhouse CHERRY RED

No rust on Hawkwind's glistering machine.

“We know you like a bit of quiet acoustic music,” quips Dave Brock at the start of this live CD/DVD captured at London's Roundhouse last May. True to his word, Brock and the band start with three unplugged numbers of which *The Watcher* works particularly well in the format. But once they turn electric for *Born To Go*, it's a plunge through a wormhole straight to the outer limits. The set flits back and forth between their classic 70s output and their last two studio albums, *Into The Woods* and *The Machine Stops*, with no nods to their 80s albums or 90s electronica period at all. The band



sound fired up and guest saxophonist Michal Sosna's improvisations are superb throughout. The live DVD is a one-camera, one angle affair, presumably to focus your attention on the light show, which is suitably swirly, but a close-up here or there of the musicians surely couldn't hurt. Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell joins them on a barnstorming *Brainbox Pollution* and the inevitable *Silver Machine*, while other highlights include a fantastic version of *The Machine*, with Sosna blasting out a killer solo, and the stomping *You Better Believe It*. They've still got it. **DW**

ECHOES FROM THEN: GLIMPSES OF JOHN McLAUGHLIN 1959-75

Colin Harper MARKET SQUARE

Words of fire.

If you thought *Bathed In Lightning*, Colin Harper's 2014 authoritative biography of John McLaughlin was the last word on the guitarist's work, then think again. Harper's back and his forensic and exhaustive research adds an extra 176,000 words on top of the previous title. This limited edition companion provides yet more depth to McLaughlin's passage through trad jazz, blues, jazz and his eventual elevation to Tony Williams, Miles and beyond. It reminds us that McLaughlin's phenomenal talent wasn't enough on its own to take him to his goal. Being prepared to sacrifice and do whatever



was necessary to get there was hardwired into his psyche as much as any spiritual aspirations. The inclusion of numerous small ads and article cuttings culled from the pages of the music press of the 50s through to the 70s not only brings a nostalgic whiff but amplifies the period details. Alongside previously unpublished interviews and commentary, Harper helpfully weighs in on what he thinks are the best-sounding editions of McLaughlin's voluminous back catalogue, both as sideman and leader. Can you have too much detail? Not when it's presented as cogently and as clearly as Harper has done here. **SS**

TARJA: FROM SPIRITS AND GHOSTS (NOVEL FOR A DARK CHRISTMAS)

by Peter Rogers and Conor Boyle EARMUSIC

The visual companion to a gothic yuletide.

The battle between darkness and light has been a popular storytelling trope for centuries, but it's given a new spin with Finnish soprano Tarja's official festive comic. Released to complement her haunting new LP *From Spirits And Ghosts*, this limited edition, glossy-covered graphic novel has been inspired by the melancholic album track *Together* and is best viewed while listening to the song itself. 'Novel' is the wrong word to describe it though – the 40-pager has no text but comprises illustrated panels that



could be a storyboard for one of the singer's videos. Featuring a sinister (dark) and angelic (light) Tarja, the story follows those who find Christmas a less joyous occasion: the homeless, the elderly, the grieving, and those whose Yuletide is spent in hospital. It's bleak stuff, but keep going to the end. Although a nice souvenir of the album, *The Amory Wars* it is not, and if you're after insight into Turunen's recorded work or *From Spirit*'s concept, you won't find it here. Fans will love the illustration, colouring and fairy tale tradition though. **NRS**

TANGERINE DREAM

Revolution Of Sound TAG/TAUM

Essential viewing for Krautrock and electronic music fans alike.



A man in black motorcycle gear and helmet walks alone through a desert landscape. He scrambles up sand dunes, his breathing laboured and his heart pounding, before finally he reaches the sea shore. Flinging the helmet aside with relief, he surrenders himself to the waves and is quickly submerged.



Wonderfully meditative – no wild parties here.



This astonishing sequence opens *Revolution Of Sound*, a fascinating feature-length documentary on electronic music pioneers Tangerine Dream. The man in black is group founder and leader Edgar Froese, one of the most important figures in progressive music, something which this film by Margarete Kreuzer (and co-produced by his widow Bianca Froese-Acuaye) seeks to make abundantly clear.

Following Froese from his early years playing beat music in West Berlin up until his death in January 2015, it depicts him not only as the driving force behind TD, but also its philosopher-in-chief, an evangelist for the near-mystical power of the “regulated sounds” that new synthesiser technology could achieve. Indeed, images of the band's latter-day incarnation in flowing white robes suggest some kind of benign religious cult as much as a musical ensemble.

Throughout the film, TD are positioned as being explorers of both inner and outer space. In that opening sequence, we see that Froese has wired himself up, recording his heartbeat and breathing to be played back and manipulated later as part of his music, “experiencing oneself with the greatest possible intensity”, as he puts it. Elsewhere, Froese talks about how TD can help listeners escape their own “personal gravity”, but they must concentrate and collaborate with the music in order to achieve this. The flip side, of course, is the band as science fiction made dramatically real, “space adepts” sent to Earth to channel the universe's cosmic waves.

The film benefits enormously from having a calm, lucid voiceover by Froese himself, created from a series of interviews conducted just prior to his death, which give it a wonderfully meditative feel – no tales of wild parties or groupies here. Instead, there's Jean-Michel Jarre describing them as being a perfect combination of “poetry and mathematics”.

It's by no means completely po-faced, though – there's also a priceless clip of Froese dressed as an alien, complete with springy antennae, from a 1980 German sci-fi movie.

Featuring fantastic footage from late-60s happenings at Berlin's Zodiak Arts Club, plus classic-era concerts and home movies, there's plenty to delight the eye, but it's Froese's words that make *Revolution Of Sound* special. As he would say, it's “a synchronised heart/music experience”.

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Take a bow

OPETH

VENUE	BARROWLAND, GLASGOW	DATE	16/11/2017
SUPPORT	ENSLAVED		

Enslaved have to offer a reasonable account of themselves in around 40 minutes tonight, so a five-song set is all we're getting, with much of the intro to new track *Storm Son* trimmed off. Undeterred, they present a potted history of their career – which, like Opeth's, has become more and more prog. For those who don't know, frontman Grutle Kjellson describes their sound as "100 per cent Norwegian hard rock and also some Swedish folk rock."

Roots Of The Mountain (from 2012's *RIIITIIR*) is a tour de force as they power into a set that sometimes feels like well-controlled jamming. *The River's Mouth* follows, from latest album *E*, and is introduced as "a Rod Stewart cover"! *One Thousand Years Of Rain* (from 2015's *In Times*) comes before another high point in *Sacred Horse*, also from *E* – so-called, claims Kjellson, because it's easy to remember.

The sound has been somewhat overblown and some subtleties have been lost in the mix, with new keyboardist Håkon Vinje suffering most from the imbalance, but when they take their bow, and Kjellson pretends he's about to throw his bass into the crowd, Enslaved have delivered at all levels.

The Barrowland has a reputation

for being home to a responsive audience. Sadly that's not massively in evidence, with Enslaved receiving a polite but detached reaction. And it's surprising that Opeth, while giving a powerful and adept performance, get a similar response. That's despite Mikael Åkerfeldt's outfit having put a little bit of everything into their 10-track setlist.

"It must be a confusing experience to see us," he says at one point, referring to the fact that, here at least, fans still don't

seem to know what to make of the band's movement away from death metal towards prog. The show starts with *Sorceress*, the title track from their latest 2016 album, before proceeding through *Ghost Of Perdition* (2005's *Ghost Reveries*), *Demon Of The Fall* (1998's *My Arms, Your Hearse*), *The Wilde Flowers* (*Sorceress*) and *Windowpane* (from 2002's *Damnation*).

In that time they offer a blend of growled and clean vocals, dynamic riffing and subtle melodic passages, genuinely brow-blasting thrust and awe-inspiring beauty, and appear to be happy while taking every twist and turn. Drummer Martin Axenrot seems to be having the gig of his life, always on top of everything, even if bassist Martín Méndez shows a little doubt at times.

Åkerfeldt remains quirky and chatty, even against a determined strain of heckling. Told to "Tune your fucking guitar!" he replies: "I am! It has to be perfect for you."

He tells another hater: "I can't understand your accent, so take the piss all you want."

Responding to a demand to "Play the heavy things!" he simply replies: "No!"

And yet, they do. By the time Opeth play *Häxprocess* from 2011's *Heritage* – the album that caused the fan rift – the band have already explained through the medium of sound why they mattered so much

Right And Below:
Enslaved deliver their
heavy prog sounds.



"Opeth offer a blend of growled and clean vocals, dynamic riffing and subtle melodic passages, genuinely brow-blasting thrust and awe-inspiring beauty."

in the past, and matter so much now. "We started touring for this record before it was released and people didn't know the songs," Åkerfeldt says of the 2011 record. "They also didn't like the songs!"

Next comes some white-knuckle action: we're treated to *Moon Above, Sun Below* (from 2014's *Pale Communion*), which the band have only attempted once before. "We played it last night, but there will be less hiccups this time," Åkerfeldt predicts, and it's another triumph, propelled by Axenrot's rhythmic confidence.

Next comes *Hessian Peel* from 2008's *Watershed*, on the bench since 2013, and delivered despite the admission that it was "difficult". That's followed by the title track from *Blackwater Park*, not heard live since 2014. "We were supposed to play it last night but we chickened out – oh, it was technical difficulties," Mikael Åkerfeldt says with trademark cheeky expression.

They've proved everything that needed proving amid a relatively minimal but inspired lighting display (especially when it strobes in time with some of the most complex rhythms) and a sound that's vastly improved from Enslaved's set.

"You sure you want more?" Åkerfeldt asks before the encore, and it's difficult to ignore the fact that, while rabbles of conversation have been heard over the quieter moments, the sight of one solitary crowdsurfer during encore *Deliverance* (and isn't that the kind of thing they wanted?) is saddening.

It's an awe-inspiring show where even the weariest of reviewers hasn't thought once about heading off early. It's to be hoped that many of those who gave the bands a lukewarm response will later realise just what a hot ticket they had all along.

MARTIN KIELTY



Opeth guitar maestro
Fredrik Åkesson.



Mikael Åkerfeldt: playing the heavy things, and the proggy things.



Heritage: Åkerfeldt digs into the band's back catalogue.



Bassist Martín Méndez in the spotlight.



Opeth rocked - even if the Barrowland crowd didn't.

HRH PROG 6

VENUE HAFAN-Y-MOR, PWLLHELI
DATE 16-18/11/2017

THURSDAY

Deserving of its status as one of the biggest progressive rock festivals in Europe, the second HRH Prog of 2017 gets underway with a low-key evening for the early birds in the sizeable main arena. The tasteful guitar of Dave Cureton provides the main highlights of **IO Earth's** opening slot, with entertaining Hawkwind-influenced trio **Krankschaft** bringing the comedy and **Mostly Autumn** delivering the classy, beautiful show that we've come to expect from them.

FRIDAY

The first day proper is a dash to catch snippets of newer bands on Stage Two between the more established bands on the main stage. London-based prog metallers **Kyros** (formerly Synaesthesia) are all good players, but fail to hit their stride until late in the set, by which time **Edgar Broughton** is delivering his familiar Marmite acoustic set.

While **Third Quadrant** are again proving to be tuneful and inventive, they suffer a mass exodus to see **Heather Findlay**, who is rapturously received for her simple but highly evocative set, and her heartfelt tribute to former Mostly Autumn bandmate Liam Davison, who died earlier in the week.

Over on Stage Two, **L'Anima**, **Godsticks** and **Wheel** all provide fans of heavier prog with punchy, intricate riffs and quirky melodies. The exuberant Godsticks in particular are thriving as they reel in an increasing number of browsers from the nearby stalls.

Harvey Bainbridge and his youthful **Hawklords** are exactly as expected, and fun to watch. **Caravan** dispatch timeless classics with a nonchalant wit and skill. Unfortunately, the overloud **David Cross Band** render much of their leader's fiery violin work inaudible, thanks to an all-conquering Gibson Flying V.

The main stage closes with **Uriah Heep** unusually revisiting their 70s heyday for most of their triumphant set, while Stage Two ends with Glynn Morgan returning to

front the UK's premier prog metal exponents **Threshold** after a gap of over 20 years. Morgan handles material from all eras with nary a chink in his armour, even regularly picking up a guitar to complete trademark harmonies, much to the obvious enjoyment of bandmate Karl Groom.

SATURDAY

Touchstone's cancellation gives the early Stage Two bands uninterrupted attention, starting with the enjoyable reformed prog/AOR hybrid **Multi-Story**, tuneful neo-proggers **The Tirth**, and **The Far Meadow**, whose best moments are mostly instrumental.

Unfortunately some of the time slots on the two stages overlap today. Catchy instrumentalists **The Fierce And The Dead** are the first to suffer a small attendance as they clash with an inspired **Magenta** in the main arena, where stunning sound and a perfectly paced setlist leave fans happy and casual browsers impressed.

Similarly, superb, Rush-inspired trio **Kepler Ten** would have wowed more people if they hadn't been up against Dutch legends **Focus**, the irrepressible Thijs van Leer and his troops having reached a level of performance that few others could ever reach.

The very impressive **Ghost Community** have a great singer in John Paul Vaughan, and melodic crossover potential, but across the road the day belongs to **Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy**. Along with classic tunes, interesting anecdotes and incredible drumming from the main man himself, this lot have recently

added keyboard backing tracks to give some of the pieces added authenticity.

As the day winds down, Rob Cottingham's **Cairo** seem to still be finding their feet, while **Magnum** play a great set of old and new tracks, with ex-Pallas firebrand **Alan Reed** rounding things off with a lively set that's as bold and flowery as his guitarist's suit.

HRH Prog continues to go from strength to strength, providing a wonderful on-site experience and a great showcase for both new and established artists.

PHIL ASHCROFT

Class Act:
Mostly Autumn's
Olivia Sparnenn.



"L'Anima, Godsticks and Wheel all provide fans of heavier prog with punchy, intricate riffs and quirky melodies."

Focus mainman
Thijs van Leer.



Red Hot: Magenta's
Christina Booth.

GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR

VENUE THE BOILER SHOP, NEWCASTLE
DATE 25/10/2017

Paul Auster, the celebrated American novelist, hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "We are ruled by the forces of chance and coincidence." Tonight his observation seems especially

true considering Godspeed You! Black Emperor, a band sometimes described as being 'industrial', are performing in a building that once played a key part in the Industrial Revolution. It once resounded to the clang and clatter of metal, and that cacophonous assault previously pounded into the brickwork finds a modern echo in the Canadian collective's slow, chugging

start that builds pace, volume and intensity with incremental movements.

With Sophie Trudeau's eerie, sustained violin notes shimmering like a skein of rising smoke against the smouldering distortion of the guitars and bass, drummers Timothy Herzog and Aidan Girt lock into a sombre, almost funereal march. The instant they do, the thump to

the solar plexus is palpable, causing the near-capacity crowd to momentarily sway backwards. The visceral punch results in many of them raising their arms in exultation, or possibly supplication to the band's remorseless grind.

Standing in near darkness, save for small guide lights next to their mountains of foot pedals, the eight musicians are



Carl Palmer: building on ELP's legacy.

Back In Black: Glynn Morgan fronts Threshold for the first time in over two decades.

SIMON DUNKERLEY

JANE WEAVER

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	26/10/2017

What grabs *Prog* on entering the Assembly Hall is the diversity of tribes here tonight. The capacity crowd is testament to the crossover appeal of an artist who has transcended from psych folk siren to electro Krautrock experimentalist. Arty hipsters mingle with folksters and pop, dance and rock fans.

A pulsing light show and throbbing synths accompany the entrance of Weaver's four-piece band as *H-A-K*, the lead track from current album *Modern Kosmology*, neatly coalesces. Weaver takes her mark centre stage behind a keyboard. Her voice, powerful yet ethereal, is just one thread in a tapestry of sound in which no shade fights for prominence.

There follows a selection from the aforementioned latest album. The mellower vibe of *Did You See Butterflies?* and *Modern Kosmology* hark back to the psychedelic heyday. Hypnotic, muted guitar chords and abstract synth effects form a swaying kaleidoscope. And recent single *Slow Motion*'s major-key organ reverie is a blissed-out, mantric take on Stereolab's art school chic.

Loops In The Secret Society transposes a patchouli-scented Carnaby Street to the Berlin of Neu! and Cluster. Weaver's music is a cauldron of influences that spans culture, geography and time, with Hawkwind being an obvious and self-confessed touchstone. *The Electric Mountain* clearly owes much to the space rockers' *Levitation* period.

What's perhaps most remarkable about these songs is that although they're forged in counterculture esoterica, they're repackaged into radio-friendly bursts of technicolour. Current single *The Architect* wakes us from the THC slumber, its Gary Numan-esque sequences injecting a dance culture dynamism.

Weaver's immaculate yet understated vocals mirror her self-effacing stage presence. She has an air of cool detachment, rarely engaging with her audience. Spoken words would be a distraction, breaking the spell she has woven.

Don't Take My Soul from 2014's *The Silver Globe* is extended with layer upon layer of interlocking guitar and synth. It's here that the gig takes on a new complexion, with long-form Krautrock jams in the ascendant. *I Need A Connection* is Krautpop, while *Argent* is an earthy yet coruscating encore redolent of Neu!'s seminal *Hallogallo*.

If these reference points hint at unoriginality, the aesthetic is forward-looking modernism. Jane Weaver is less a curator than the architect building new skylines from the bricks and mortar of the past.

CHRIS MCGAREL

pale silhouettes against the strips of film being projected onto the stage by long-time collaborator, filmmaker Karl Lemieux. The set is drawn mostly from new album *Luciferian Towers*, and as it unfurls, movie loops of industrial parks, ticker-tape displays, nose-diving aeroplanes, protestors and deserted high-rise houses form a kind of

improvised, dystopic Adam Curtis film with a JG Ballard script. The random collisions between film and music produce powerful narratives.

Then, more than halfway through the thrumming two-hour performance, the forces of chance and coincidence lend another hand as the fire alarms go off. There's no fire, but the criss-crossing

dissonance of the malfunctioning siren briefly bleeds into the music, and when a fire engine rolls up outside, its flashing blue lights strobe perfectly with the band's howling crescendo.

Not so much a gig, then, as an utterly magnificent, totally immersive audiovisual arts installation.

SID SMITH

ARCANE ROOTS

VENUE THE SCALA, LONDON

DATE 02/11/17

Arcane Roots have a well-deserved reputation for fiery live performances. Over the last few years, the Kingston-upon-Thames three-piece have honed their gigging chops on the festival circuit and have supported explosive trios Muse and Biffy Clyro on European tours.

Their almost effortless ability to deliver complex time signatures while doing their best to self-inflict whiplash has earned them a rightfully large, equally frenzied fan base. So it's really no surprise that a sold-out Scala is straining with fans tonight – latecomers have to fight through knotted crowds half an hour before Arcane Roots even hit the stage. The thrum of adrenaline is already so palpable you can almost taste it.

Vocalist Andrew Groves' typically frenetic stage persona cuts a rather more sedate figure during the fizzing electronics and warm hues of opener *Before Me*, as he delivers walls of Anathema-like synth and near celestial vocals, before pushing back from his keyboard and taking up his trademark high-slung guitar.

This is the proverbial calm before the storm, as one clueless punter shouting for "more energy" quickly finds out. The rolling drumbeat and stabbing guitar line of *Matter* churns the audience into a frenzy that rarely dies off for the rest of the evening.

Half of this evening's setlist is, perhaps unsurprisingly, made up of songs from Arcane

Roots' new album, *Melancholia Hymns*. If it was ever in doubt, tonight lays bare just what a triumph of complexity and craft the band's newest album really is.

Whether it's the fist-pumping chorus of *Off The Floor*, the shimmering homage to clubland electronica *Indigo* or the densely layered, mesmerising *Curtains*, seeing ...*Hymns* performed live feels like you're discovering this material all over again.

Then there are the hooks. Complicated music – call it math rock, prog or post-hardcore – isn't generally known for its melodies, but Arcane Roots have them. This is captured in the emotive strains of *Leaving*, a song Groves admits is probably their favourite to play live. From the opening salvo of '*Hold the rope now baby*', the crowd take the lyrics and the venue fills with hundreds of voices.

By the time the evening closer *If Nothing Breaks, Nothing Moves* comes around, the cavernous room is considerably warmer and, as a result, slicker than it was a couple of hours before. The feast of riffs and whirlwind drum rolls is a veritable maelstrom, and a suitable finale to the show.

As the track's title suggests, unless you're willing to tear everything up and start again, you'll never progress – and nothing captures this exploratory band's ethos more, so it's a fitting showstopper.

DAVID KEEVILL

"If it was ever in doubt, tonight lays bare just what a triumph of complexity and craft Arcane Roots' newest album really is."

Andrew Groves: a dazzling performance.

WILL IRELAND



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

TEARS FOR FEARS

VENUE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON
DATE 27/10/2017

Tears For Fears are clearly enjoying their first British headline concert for 12 years, and their first at the Albert Hall since the era of Live Aid. It's visible in the grins Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith exchange when the crowd roar over the intro of another prog pop classic, or the way whenever one isn't singing – they both retain astonishingly strong voices – they groove contentedly when the other's at the front of the stage, happy to take turns. It's also in the sly look they give each other when they tweak the 'come on' refrain in *Shout* with a new harmony and it works perfectly.

Any differences the pair had are clearly now bygones, and while they've been reunited for several years, this high-profile blitz feels like the launch of a proper comeback. Next year's new album and full tour will be unmissable.

The atmosphere tonight is euphoric. Any group that can bang out unimpeachable anthems like *Everybody Wants To Rule The World* and *Sowing The Seeds Of Love* (the song that brought pop and prog into a happy marriage they didn't even know they wanted) within the first 15 minutes knows they have a ridiculously stacked setlist. Yes, the audience are bellowing along with every word, but the adrenaline doesn't drop for the album cuts, which distinguish TFF from mere 80s nostalgists.

For every glorious sweeping chorus – *Pale Shelter*, *Change*, the curious fusion of darkness and light that is *Mad World* – there's a detailed musical flourish like the jagged blues of *Badman's Song* or *Break It Down Again*. They know exactly which high points to cherry-pick from their lesser-known work (like the plush, underrated *Elemental* album, which was Orzabal under the TFF brand name) and again, there's no sense of rivalry.

We tend to overlook what a gifted player Orzabal is, and with just three other musicians (and a male backing singer) the band are a gale of smooth yet busy sound, a funk Floyd, able to glide effortlessly from perkiness to pomp and back again. Even the surprise cover of Radiohead's *Creep*, an odd choice, works, with the song's melodrama downplayed, except for Orzabal's passionate vocal.

By the time *Head Over Heels* wraps the main set with its heaven-sent hooks and rousing 'la la la's to outdo *Hey Jude*, we're reminded that this unlikely duo from Bath are one of British music's shining jewels. As the reputations of other 80s success stories have slid, theirs has slow-burned to a state of grace. 'Funny how time flies,' the epic ends, but few here are enjoying any other moment but this.

After a warm, lush *Woman In Chains* has opened the encores, a tumultuous *Shout* brings the house down. You've never seen so much fist-pumping and hollering in the Albert Hall, not least from your reviewer, who, when Orzabal walks into the audience, thrusting the mic into our faces, cannot resist taking the chance to let it all out.

CHRIS ROBERTS

TINA KORHONEN

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

VENUE THE GARAGE, LONDON **DATE** 16/11/2017

For a cold Thursday night in the capital, Finland's foremost purveyors of prog/alt-rock/quasi-symphonic grunge draw a sizeable and, more to the point, enthusiastic crowd. Extra kudos points too for making the new album *War Is Over* the focus of their set: in all, they play six of its 10 tracks tonight, including the 12-minute title number.

In fact, the three brothers – Mikko (the one with the flicky hair) on vocals/guitar, Kie (the one with the hat) on guitar/vocals, and Jonne (the one with the man bun) on bass/vocals, with additional help from a pair of non-Von Hertzens on keyboards and drums – open with *War Is Over*. In the process, they manage to recreate onstage the soaring splendour and nuanced dynamics of the studio version. There are choral parts that posit VHB as a hard-rock harmony band – Crosby, Stills, Nash & Din, anyone? – and it all builds towards a huge, rocking crescendo, as though it's the end of the show already.

Fortunately, there are still a dozen blasts of hymnal heaviness to go. *The Arsonist* is catchy riff rock that has taken the mere weeks since its release to insinuate its way into the assembled throng's collective cerebral cortex, hence the fist-punching and singing along from



Cat In The Hat: Kie puts the pedal to the metal.

the audience, who apparently even forgive the somewhat hackneyed 'You're a liar/ You set my soul on fire' rhyme.

"It's good to be back in London town," Mikko tells an appreciative crowd, ahead of *Jerusalem* (not the William Blake one, although we feel sure he'd dig it). *Coming Home*, from 2013's *Nine Lives*, is greeted with cheers, and why not? It sounds like a dirtier *Highway Star* and is both catchy and heavy – the two are not mutually exclusive. *Miracle*, the opening song from 2011's *Stars Aligned*, features pure, high, unison vocals and deep, growling bass.

Long Lost Sailor is thunderously urgent and melodically engaging, like a heavy version of Yes (Yes circa *Drama*, basically). *Kiss A Wish* is 10 minutes of moody jazz prog complexity, and by *Flowers And Rust*, Prog's Anthem of 2013, Mikko is dripping with sweat.

For *Frozen Butterflies*, Kie is sufficiently elated to do a jig – a jig! – while *Sunday Child* finds Mikko mock-chastising us for our poor call and response. "That was as bad as Sheffield," he says, pausing for comic effect. "We had four people there."

Gloria – "the anthem of the Brothers", according to Mikko – is as tempo-twitchy as Mew/Muse, while *Beyond The Storm* is as stern and severe, staccato and stentorian, as you could wish.

There are two encores – *Insomniac* and *New Day Rising* – by which point Von Hertzen Brothers are surfing from peak to peak.

PAUL LESTER

"Coming Home sounds like a dirtier Highway Star and is both catchy and heavy - the two are not mutually exclusive."

Mikko von Hertzen: "Hands up if you've just played a blinder!"



LEPROUS

VENUE	THE DOME, LONDON	DATE	02/11/2017
SUPPORT	AGENT FRESCO, ALITHIA, ASTROSAUR		

Releasing albums every two years like clockwork since 2009, Leprous have spent just under a decade establishing themselves as masters of prog metal's new guard, with a gamut of songs that could already fill a greatest hits album. And with Agent Fresco in tow, it's little wonder that tonight's stop-off on their 30-date European tour is sold out.

That said, the audience is a little thin on the ground when Astrosaur kick the night off. Not

that it bothers them: their instrumental alt rock, which is reminiscent of Cult Of Luna, is a mesmerising opener. Equally, Aussies Alithia

perform remarkably well with seven members crammed onto the stage and stand-in singer Marjana Semkina who brings a folky vibe to their astro-spacecore chaos. "No AC/DC!" says guitarist Nguyen Phambam to a well-meaning heckler. These guys are more like Anathema anyway, and it totally works.

Agent Fresco are rapidly on the rise, knowing how to perfectly balance sharp-edged erratic hooks and melodies that are made for singing. The Icelandic four-piece turn up with Nicolai Mogensen from Vola, replacing bassist Vignir Rafn Hilmarsson who is about to become a father, and collectively they play an extensive, passionate set that erupts with art rock awesomeness and a drive to entertain.

Leprous are known for switching up their repertoire according to the tour, show or venue, so it shouldn't be a surprise per se when fan favourites like *Rewind* are left off the setlist. But while other stops on their tour get popular smashers like *Restless* and *Echo*, London is just a tad short-changed at times.

This aside, Leprous go beyond expectations, introing the show with a performance from

cellist Raphael Weinroth-Browne, who appears on new album *Malina*. The cellist stays for the entirety of the night, his long strokes adding a forlorn, other-worldly dimension to the Leprous sound.

Opening track *Bonneville* sets a plaintive, semi-morose atmosphere, transitioning from delicate, twinkling harmonies to an explosion of sheer emotive power that leaves jaws on the floor. Einar Solberg, ever the star of the show, is incredible, especially on the pulsating, cathartic *The Flood*, a song built for stadium lasers and full audience participation. *From The Flame* is undeniably rousing, while *The Valley* glides from synth undercurrents to a charging spree of crescendos.

The days of Leprous being known as Ihsahn's backing band are long behind them. Now this Norwegian five-piece prove that any persona they choose to adopt works, because the strength of their songs and musical prowess can stand up in any environment.

HOLLY WRIGHT



"The days of Leprous being known as Ihsahn's backing band are long behind them."



ZOLA JESUS

VENUE	THE VILLAGE UNDERGROUND, LONDON
DATE	07/11/2017

"This is a song about my uncle trying to kill himself," says Zola Jesus with candour and grace, before belting out a crescendo of notes poignant enough to lower every camera phone in unison for her fifth song *Witness*.

Zola Jesus' latest album *Okovi* sees the Wisconsin singer return to her woodland roots after four industrial pop albums. This has had an effect on her appearance: flowing black hair covers her face as

she creeps up from her knees to grab the microphone for the mystical intro of new song *Veka*. Pounding electronic percussion and strobe lights follow, as her piercing gaze entrances the crowd.

That crowd comprises curious progressive music enthusiasts and underground electronica fanatics. As they sip overpriced cans of trendy East London beer, there's a sense that the attendees are the type of crowd that would gladly sit on the floor at an illegal rave, but you might also find a Royal Albert Hall membership card in their wallet too.

After the deep sadness of *Witness*, the energy in the room is regained with

the ever so slightly more positive song *Siphon*, a continuation of the grieving process, this time ending on a high note as she sings, 'We just want to save you/ Pull you from those dark nights/We just want to show you there's more to life.'

The setlist for this tour is clearly intended for new and old fans alike, as there's plenty from the deep and complex *Okovi*, but there are also older tracks like *Hikikomori* from *Conatus* (2011) and the groovy tones of *Dangerous Days* from *Taiga* (2014).

As the audience begin to loosen up and move to the rhythm of the loud beats, Zola Jesus is a continual spectacle

of goth shamanic dance moves and wild lunges across the stage. Electronic programmer Alex de Groot, providing some spirited rhythmic guitar, and Melbourne musician Louise Woodward on viola, plucking at the musical heartstrings, accompany her on stage.

As the rain taps on the venue's glass roof panel, the alternating slow-paced ballads and catchy dance tunes create a chilled-out night with an arty rave twist. Finishing with some outstanding vocals on a haunting a cappella version of *Skin*, the show has an uplifting end, making the night a full circle of emotions.

ISERE LLOYD-DAVIS

NORDIC GIANTS

VENUE TALKING HEADS, SOUTHAMPTON
DATE 31/10/2017

Nordic Giants are among the most enigmatic and visually fascinating post-rock outfits, so the idea of this soulful duo beginning their *Amplify Human Vibration* tour at the Talking Heads on Halloween is one that sends Southampton's prog fanatics into an excited frenzy. On a night that celebrates the darkly mysterious and the elaborately costumed, the two men known only as Loki and Rôka fit right in with their avian outfits and tribal masks, disguised by darkness as they take to their small stage.

Their enrapturing performance is gradually lulled to life with the slow-building *Evolve Or Perish*, the dulcet tones of Nordic Giants' guttural percussion and heartfelt keyboards punctuated by, and perfectly integrated with, the emotive short films projected onto their backdrop. Such extracts as Mischa Rozema's apocalyptic *Sundays* and the black comedy *This Way Up* are especially effective, connected in their notably depressive tone and wickedly subversive nature.

Monologues from historical greats ranging from Charlie Chaplin to Martin Luther King, Jr unite with the often heart-wrenching visuals to very quickly craft a theme of unity and togetherness against the corruption and the injustices of the world.

All the while, Nordic Giants themselves maintain their shroud of blackness, the entire stage dimly lit to allow the visual backdrop to guide the ebb and flow of the evening. The affair feels akin to the halcyon days of early-1900s silent cinema, with charismatic clips being given their emotional weight by live, predominantly unseen musicians.

This façade only breaks during the tranquil openings of such tracks as the remix of *Dark Clouds Mean War*, during which Rôka stands with his feather-laden, bowed guitar. It's during these slow, patient moments that the lighting of the show becomes beyond exceptional.

Throughout the evening, the ambient lighting has played a key role in the band's presentation: the dim, shifting blues, purples and greens serve as the sole illumination for the two onstage, maintaining their cryptic aura. As Rôka stands with his guitar, however, he's lit from beneath with a gorgeous red that counteracts the cold colours behind him.

Whenever Nordic Giants' drummer stands up and slings his second instrument around his neck, tonight's large crowd know that they're in for yet another visual treat.

However, with that said, the entirety of Nordic Giants' Halloween can be described as a visual treat. From the short films being played on-screen to the lighting to the musicians' animalistic and eye-catching attire, every aspect of this duo's awe-inspiring performance remains just as embedded in the brain as their magnificently orchestral music.

MATT MILLS

ULVER

VENUE ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON **DATE** 15/11/2017
SUPPORT STIAN WESTERHUS

Make no mistake: Ulver's *The Assassination Of Julius Caesar* is a sublime album. But the Norwegians' long journey from eerie, folklore-inspired black metal into something entirely disconnected from their early days — where sumptuous, uplifting instrumentation mixes with the giddy kick of the dancefloor — presents something of a problem: how do you make this stuff work live?

The answer, it would appear, is to get the light show to do the heavy lifting. But more on that later. It all starts out with a short set of angular solo guitar from former Puma and Jaga Jazzist man Stian Westerhus (who contributed to *...Caesar*, and has joined Ulver for this tour), and as the last notes of his set fade, the band assemble and launch into the languid throb of album opener *Nemoralia*.

The band are huddled onstage, only visible in silhouette as lasers dance, wheel and spin pictures in the air. It's a slow-burning, gently atmospheric beginning, and is followed by *Southern Gothic* (the setlist rearranges the album's running order slightly), a song that manages to be both sombre and quietly exhilarating at the same time.

Something doesn't quite translate though. Plumbed through an otherwise decent sound system, the machine-tooled perfection of the album is suffocated. All those moments of woozy, honeyed brilliance are rendered rather inelegant, the album's lightness of touch and personality lost to the limitations of the PA.

The laser show doesn't help. It's probably another hat-tip to the past — along with the nods to Depeche Mode, The Cure, Yellow,

Laser Quest: the retro light show in full effect.

The The, Banco de Gaia and the rest — with graphics that recall Yes' 90125 tour laser show, or the early thrill of computer gaming. But the band remain in darkness throughout, making it all rather impersonal, like a visit to the planetarium rather than a real-life show involving real-life musicians. It's a human experience that feels perplexingly inhuman.

It's not all bad. In fact, it's not bad at all: it's just not as good as it should be, or as good as Ulver deserve. The crescendo at the close of *Rolling Stone* is both chilling and triumphant, and the tracks from the band's new *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi* EP at the set's conclusion are the night's highlights. *Bring Out Your Dead* is graceful and atmospheric, while *Echo Chamber (Room Of Tears)* finishes with an elongated, acid-drenched, off-yeer-tits wig-out.

They encore with a stirring rendition of Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *The Power Of Love*, and an audience that probably never gave a fuck what Frankie said roar along with great gusto.

Perhaps the key ingredient to enjoying an Ulver show — at least for the moment — is to only listen to their music *after* you've seen it performed live.

FRASER LEWRY

Out Of The Shadows:
Ulver guitarist Daniel O'Sullivan.



"It's all rather impersonal, like a visit to the planetarium rather than a show with real musicians."

WIRE

VENUE THE GLOBE, CARDIFF

DATE 08/11/2017

You come to a Wire gig well aware that they're revered. They straddle the worlds of rock, punk and new wave, have influenced bands from Black Flag to The Cure to Blur, and their evolved, art school ethos elevates them above most of the gob-soaked Class Of '77. They've always cocked a snook at the trappings of

Graham Lewis:
blistering bass.



rock stardom, though it's still striking how unceremonious their approach remains.

The house lights are still up, the pre-gig tape's playing, and there's Graham Lewis, kneeling at his effects unit and tuning his bass. Matt Simms is hanging stage left, guitar strapped on and waiting for the nod, while Colin Newman — baseball cap wedged low over his head — is twiddling knobs. No dramatic walk-on here, then. The 100-plus punters patiently let Wire do their thing, with a minimum of hand-shaking.

This compact, shabbily lovely venue hosts one of the last shows of this year's run in celebration of Wire's 40 years as a four-piece (Simms replaced founder member Bruce Gilbert, who quit a decade ago). It's typical of their forward-looking nature that with 15 other albums in the catalogue to draw on, nearly half of tonight's set is taken up with tunes from their new one, *Silver/Lead* — the latest fruit of their creative Indian summer.

And from the opener *Ahead*, Wire are loud — Robert Grey's kick drum kicks you in the chest from beat one. Then, in a row, we get *Diamonds In Cups*, *An Alibi* and *This Time*, all from the new record. Lean, strident and very catchy, the spartan architecture of these pieces is swathed in Newman and Simms' loud, swirling guitarscapes, with the former's laconic vocal delivery plangent and clear overhead. If some new psych band had just released these, the music press would be all over them.

After a fuzzy read of fan favourite *Three Girl Rhumba* (the one dip into seminal debut album *Pink Flag*), they turn things up to assault levels. Always defiantly raw, the thrashy avant-punk of *Underwater Experiences* is painful tonight, though the blokes-of-a-

certain-age dominating the room lap it up, feet tapping, heads nodding.

For all their avant-garde credentials, Wire rock hard. Grey powers the ever-building *Red Barked Trees* beautifully, while Simms shows off the squalling textures many post-rockers have copped from this band, often indirectly and at several removes. A throbbing read of *Split Your Ends* beats you into submission, and new song *Short Elevated Period* has to be among their all-time best.

It's a crisp, satisfying 75-minute set, with barely a word spoken. With a lot of road behind them, Wire's tank is still brimming. They don't stand on ceremony tonight, they just ride right over it, ever onwards.

GRANT MOON

Drummer Robert
Grey and frontman
Colin Newman
make some noise.



**"For all their
avant-garde
credentials,
Wire rock
hard."**

STRAWBS

VENUE UNDER THE BRIDGE, LONDON

DATE 29/10/2017

"This happened when we headlined Wembley Stadium," says Dave Cousins drolly, as there's a pause for bass player Chas Cronk to replace a broken string. Strawbs never quite reached that level of popularity, and tonight's crowd doesn't match what you'll see for some of their more celebrated peers. Yet their diehard fans display great affection for them, and tonight enjoy two well-judged sets of older favourites and new tracks.

The 72-year-old Cousins had health problems not long ago, and quips that during the interval the band will be charging their pacemakers. His voice always had a reedy, sandy quality, and there are moments where he strains, but he compensates with stentorian, headmasterly anecdotes.

The enduring band have had a strange career, moving whimsically between folk, prog and random pop hits. Tonight loosely honours the 1974 *Hero And Heroine* album, but there's plenty of other fertile ground covered. From their legacy, the best spells include *Down By The Sea* and the standout of *Bursting At The*

Seams, where the complex riff powers real emotion. Dave Lambert remains a lightning-quick guitarist, and he's often the musician sparking the flame here.

There's a pathos to their charming new album *The Ferryman's Curse*, where Cousins deals with themes like time, mortality, religion and mobile phones. He likes a twist too, as shown on *The Nails From The Hands Of Christ* and the melancholy *The Familiarity Of Old Lovers*. Keyboardist Dave Bainbridge (ex-Iona) has already impressed when he switches to guitar for a duel with Lambert.

Cousins then introduces "a 21st-century version" of *Hero And Heroine*, which he

recalls went gold in the US and is often rated among prog's greats. It's distilled into a moving surge through selections like the lovely *Autumn* and *Round And Round*. A greater degree of gravitas fills the room and there are one or two with something in their eye by the end.

That razor-sharp riff of 1972 hit *Lay Down* leads the encore. It was a one-off, where Strawbs condensed their musings into three minutes of glam pop, and it still hits the spot. Before heading off, the group leave us with new anthem *We Have The Power*. Cousins adds poignantly, "We'll see you again in 25 years. Don't be late."

CHRIS ROBERTS

SÓLSTAFIR

VENUE	HEAVEN, LONDON
DATE	17/11/2017
SUPPORT	MYRKUR

Fittingly for a gloomy November evening, tonight is all about embracing the darkness, which makes Denmark's Myrkur – aka Amalie Bruun – the perfect support act.

There's something slightly studied about Myrkur, who has an electric fan carefully aimed to keep her hair billowing dramatically while she sings. But what a voice!

Backed by three hooded musicians, she begins with the drama of *The Serpent* from new album *Mareridt*, launching her vocals up into the heavens. *Ulvinde* showcases the contrast between Myrkur's angelic singing and the post-black metal riffage pumped out by the band. The dark folk influences of the records are less prominent live, with the set favouring the heavy side of her output.

It's very much a one-woman show, with no guitar solos to distract from the vocalist, and the musicians stand firmly in place, nodding their heads in time to the music. Myrkur uses her scream very sparingly, but when she does on *Skøgen Skulle Dø*, the effect is fairly blood-curdling. The riff of *Onde Børn* has a Celtic flavour, while *Måneblót* is a snarling display of menace. She finishes her set with a brief "Thank you" and a curtsy, which is certainly charming, if not very black or bleak.

You have to admire the guts of the self-described 'Antichristian Icelandic Heathen Bastards' of Sólstafir for singing in their native tongue: given that their country has a population of around 334,000, it's not exactly the world's lingua franca.

Tonight marks the band's biggest London show to date and the room is full to capacity as they jump into *Silfur-Refur*. The song sets out their musical stall, and the rest of the performance essentially follows the same blueprint. They set up a droning post-metal riff, play it loud, play it soft, play it louder, then finish.

There's not a lot of musicianship or chops – drummer Hallgrímur Jón Hallgrímsson plays very simple beats and completely eschews fills and flashiness. Aðalbjörn Tryggvason's voice is pure Marmite, likely to be received as either heartfelt and keening, or grating and thin. Guitarist Sæþór Marius Sæþórsson intriguingly plucks a banjo on *Ótta*, but it struggles to cut through the wall of ambient noise.

There's almost a trance-inducing quality to tracks like *Ísafold*, with the emphasis on pummelling repetition, churning out a riff slathered in guitar effects until it becomes hypnotic.

Long breaks between songs don't help the band maintain the momentum: it's unavoidable when bassist Svavar Austmann breaks a string, but too much fiddling about dissipates the mood.

Sólstafir finish with *Goddess Of The Ages*, the perfect song for anyone who finds Katatonia too cheery or Sigur Rós just too rock'n'roll.

DAVID WEST

STEELY DAN

VENUE	BLUESFEST, O2 ARENA, LONDON
DATE	29/10/2017



Steely Dan – minus the much-loved Walter Becker.

KEVIN NIXON

By the very name and nature of Bluesfest, we know we might not be getting the hugely experimental end of Steely Dan's canon. That they're appearing here at all is a surprise as the dynamic (sardonic) duo are down to Donald Fagen (and band) following the unexpected passing of long-time musical partner Walter Becker just a month earlier. But the show has gone on.

Although we don't get the retrospective slideshow backdrop projected at previous dates on this tour, three songs in, Becker's absence is marked in typically deadpan fashion, Fagen expressing that some changes have happened within the organisation, but "I'm gonna have to live with that." And then, after a ripple of applause that builds to a venue's appreciation for the late major dude, he aptly, and poignantly, plays solo track *New Frontier* ('The key word is survival', indeed).

Previously, the pace starts at a lick with *Bodhisattva*, their super-tight *Countdown To Ecstasy* rock'n'roll jazz cut that showcases the whole band perfectly, from Keith Carlock's drumming to Jon Herington's lively lead. Herington is the sole guitarist this evening, a Dan family member since 2000's *Two Against Nature* and, if not an actual 'replacement' for Becker, the 63-year-old New York vet handles any song – from *Hey Nineteen* to *Kid Charlemagne* – with unshowy ease and skill.



"It's a too-short set at one hour and 20 minutes, but it's a fine performance – and a much-loved icon is subtly saluted."

Fagen hunches over his keyboard, tinted glasses affixed, oversized leather box jacket over a grey shirt with fat-striped black and burnt orange tie... for some reason, Deckard from *Blade Runner* springs to mind, Fagen as a rock gumshoe 'retiring' other replicant jazz rock acts who've run their course. His vocals are in good shape: he throws his head back for characteristic emphasis and he gets a rest when backing trio the Dan-ettes take on the Joe Tex song *I Want To (Do Everything For You)*.

If there's one episode of the *Classic Albums* TV series that everyone talks about, it's *Aja*. Firstly, it's a heck of an album, much sampled and influential beyond rock. Secondly, it demonstrates how two perfectionists (Becker and Fagen) drive the crème de la crème of jazz, rock and blues sessioners mad with their constant tightening of precision and purity screws. Tonight *Peg*, *Aja* and *Josie* are aired to our delight, as the audience get to their feet.

And that's the secret to Steely Dan – the natty rhythms and smooth melodies smuggling in self-deprecating wit, intricate arrangements and a truckload of those creamy mu chords that defined their sound (and the era).

Ending on *Reelin' In The Years*, it's a too-short set at one hour and 20 minutes, but it's a fine performance – and a much-loved icon is subtly saluted.

JO KENDALL



Dan man Donald Fagen behind his keyboard setup.

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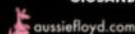
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Where's home?

Hammersmith, West London.

Your earliest prog memory?

It was a performance of Gustav Holst's *The Planets* suite, in Bath. There was this amazing sound and light show and the twiddly widdliness of it, I liked that. It was very sophisticated. I went with my friend Tim and his father, who was a composer. Tim was a drummer and I ended up being in a band with him. We used to sit around a lot, listening to lots of widdly records.

First prog gig attended?

Rick Wakeman, in London somewhere. I remember a lot of keyboards. I was very impressed and thought, "I want that amount of keyboards at some point in my life." Plus a cape is a much underused item of clothing.

Favourite gadget?

This electronic theremin that I have. Theremins were always quite tricky to play because you just pluck a note out of the air. This new one is a Moog but it's called a Theremini: it's gone digital. This means you can play pre-set scales and increments of notes by moving your hand closer to the aerial. I want to try and play both this Theremin and my original one at once but I'd have to stand equidistant between them then move my arms in tandem...

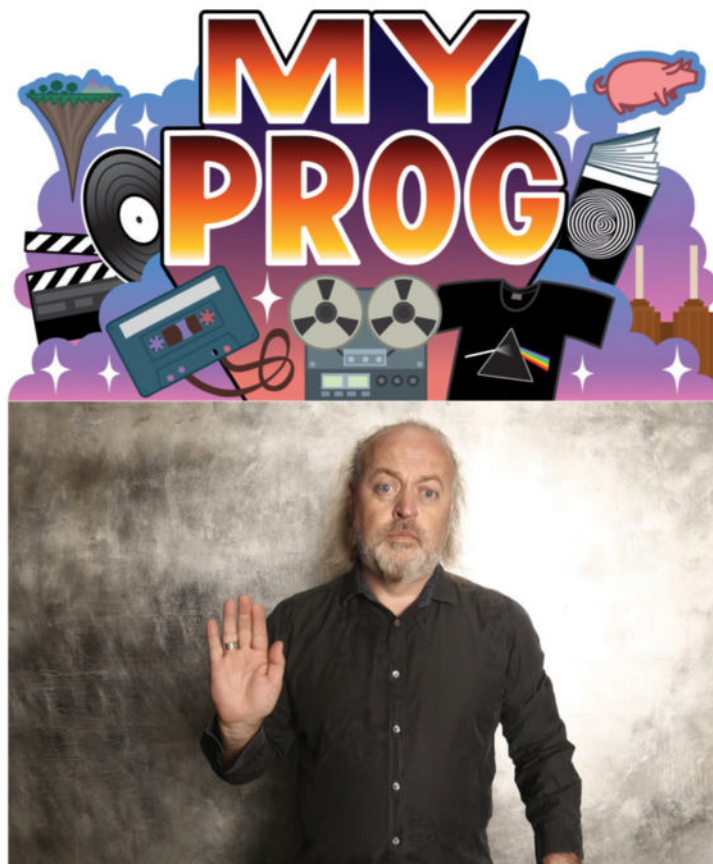


Any guilty musical pleasures?

My very good pal Sean Lock and I like to go on country walks and someone gave us a good book on walks in Hertfordshire. For an ironic laugh I bought 25 *Great Driving Rock Tunes* at a garage when we were on our way to one. Later, I was on the M4 and there's a sequence of *More Than A Feeling*, *Don't Fear The Reaper*, *Black Betty*. I have to say, cranked up to 11, barreling down the M4, singing 'She slipped awaaaaay' to Boston while driving into the setting sun, it's extraordinary. I was quite taken with it.

What's your greatest prog extravaganza?

The 25-foot ant. When I was recording my DVD *Cosmic Jam* I had a song in it which was a rock opera,



ANDY HOLLINGWORTH/PRESS

Bill Bailey

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Jo Kendall.**

Insect Nation, and for the finale I wanted something spectacular. We made a space backdrop with a giant hole in that you could look through to another universe of stars. I thought it would be great if a giant ant came down and peered through the hole, and his eyes would light up. So we had this thing made. It was stored in the front garden for a long time. The neighbours weren't that bothered by it. "That's Bill's garden." "What, the one with the giant ant in it?" "Yeah."

Your all-time prog hero?

Robert Fripp is up there because of what he did with Adrian Belew in the 80s. I saw King Crimson at Bath Moles Club. Actually, that would have been my first prog gig, in 1981. That was so intense – it's my favourite prog gig ever.

Favourite prog venue?

Obviously a castle, if you could arrange it. Or a Spanish galleon. For *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* it would be a pot-hole. Bit tricky getting the gear down there, but once it's in, perfect.

Outside of prog, what else are you into?

I love the outdoors, I like to go yomping in the countryside. Or go out on a bike. Doing what I do I spend a lot of time in studios or brightly-lit theatres. Any time I'm not doing that I want to be out in the fresh air.

What was the last prog album you bought?

The Joy Formidable, *The Big Roar*. Listen to *Whirring*, which is seven-minutes-odd of anthemic guitar thrashing.

Ever had a prog date?

You could interpret that in two ways, either you go out with someone who's

into prog or the whole date is



“That's a pretty prog date, Valentine's with a goose.”

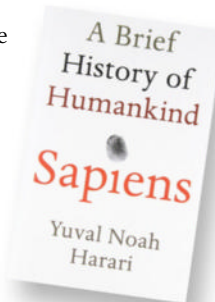
prog. "We met on a floating island, the date was to retrieve the magical crystal from the forbidden castle." One night I was out with my wife for Valentine's and on the way home we saw something flapping in the road – a goose had been hit by a car. So we wrapped it up and put it in the back of the car, rescued it. That's a pretty prog date, Valentine's with a goose.

What's the most important prog song?

In The Court Of The Crimson King. I did my first Edinburgh festival show in '95 and the following year I did something more ambitious. I had a set made with a giant hand carved out of a polystyrene holding my keyboard. Behind me was a giant picture of my face peering through these curtains, so subconsciously it was a tribute to that. It had such an impact that from there I went on to have a comedy career.

What's a good proggy read?

Sapiens, A Brief History Of Humankind. It's the history of how we've evolved in detail. It turns lots of things on its head, like agriculture being the foundation of our civilisation: he says, no, we were enslaved by that. We were wild, powerful, independent creatures until then.



Which prog album always puts you in a good mood?

Something widdly like The Mars Volta's *De-Loused In The Comatorium*. It gets the blood pumping. A brisk walk would ensue after listening.

What are you up to at the moment?

I'm about to tour – looking forward to some gigs in Finland and Norway. Then I'm doing some filming, and very excited to be working with Idris Elba in a comedy drama thing.



Christmas Larks! is at Shepherd's Bush Empire 23, 27-30 Dec. Larks In Transit tour starts Jan 29. See www.billbailey.co.uk for more.



Photo taken by Paul Adam

*"What kind of guitar do you choose when you're asked to join King Crimson?
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