FUTURE
PROG 84

GENESIS

Life on the road with *Nursery Cryme* in 1971

PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC

How they became prog's new champions...

ANATHEMA

THE 2017 READERS' POLL RESULTS

ALAN PARSONS PROJECT
The enduring appeal of the classic *Eye In The Sky*

SONJA KRISTINA
"I am not easily intimidated or overawed by people."

+

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Isildurs Bane

The Dark Element
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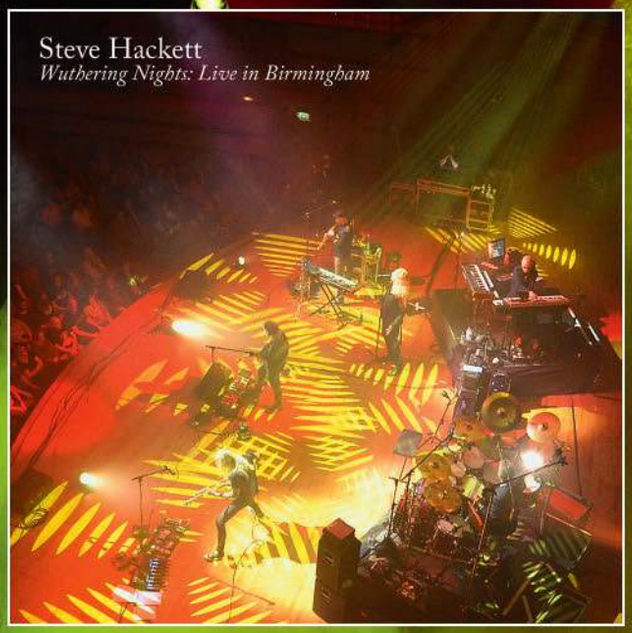

Steve Hackett

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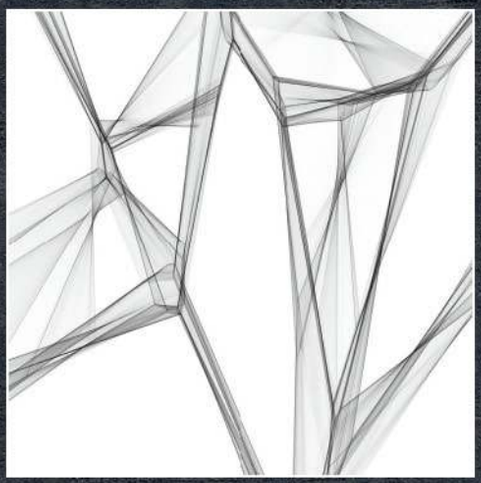
Perfect Beings
Vier



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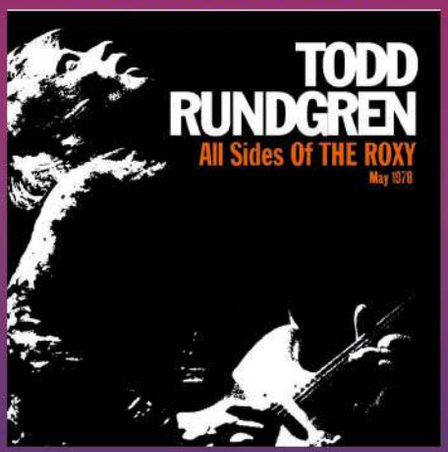
TODD RUNDGREN



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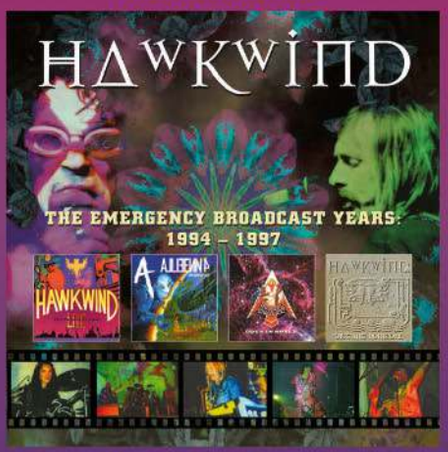
HAWKWIND



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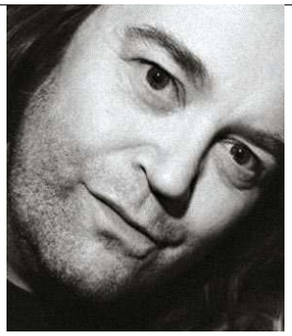
SHE ROCKS

"Anneke van Giersbergen is sort of like the modern-day prog Madonna, isn't she? I suppose she helped to give me a confidence boost: if she can do it, then maybe so can I."

Lee Douglas

WILL IRELAND

Ed's Letter



Welcome to the latest issue of *Prog*. The Readers' Poll issue, if you will. Always an interesting time, when we see what's filtered through to the readers, what you're really digging. It was a close call this year across the board, but one band came out on top, echoing the magazine's belief that they'd made the best album of their career. But what is perhaps most pleasing is the variety of the winners. There are established favourites rubbing shoulders with more left-field artists featuring in the poll for the first time, and evergreen favourites continuing their rise in popularity. And a few surprises to boot. In all, I'd say it's a good spread that reflects where prog is at these days.

This issue, I'd like to bring your attention to our feature on page 80, in which we celebrate the role of women in progressive music. In this post-Weinstein world, we ask: is our house in order? It's something that our sister titles *Classic Rock* and *Metal Hammer* are also doing within their respective genres this February, and the likes of Anneke van Giersbergen, Heather Findlay, Marjana Semkina and more shed fascinating insights into the way that progressive music has changed and continues to evolve. It's an important issue, and it's imperative we get things right: not simply for the sake of equality, but also in terms of treating your fellow human beings with decency and respect. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

It's already the end of January, but we have some great things planned for you this year. Last year was an interesting one, as the magazines were resurrected and we settled into our new home. Now is the time to truly push on, to challenge and defy convention, and help move progressive music ever onwards. As always, we cannot do this without you. Your support, as always, is something we hold dear.

So, welcome to 2018. It's going to be a great year. Let us prog on together...

Jerry Ewing - Editor

NEXT ISSUE Mar 1 ON SALE

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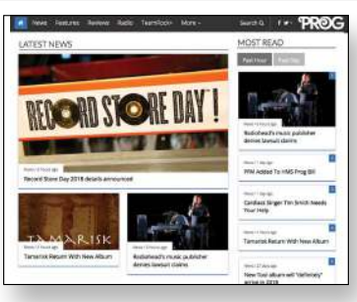

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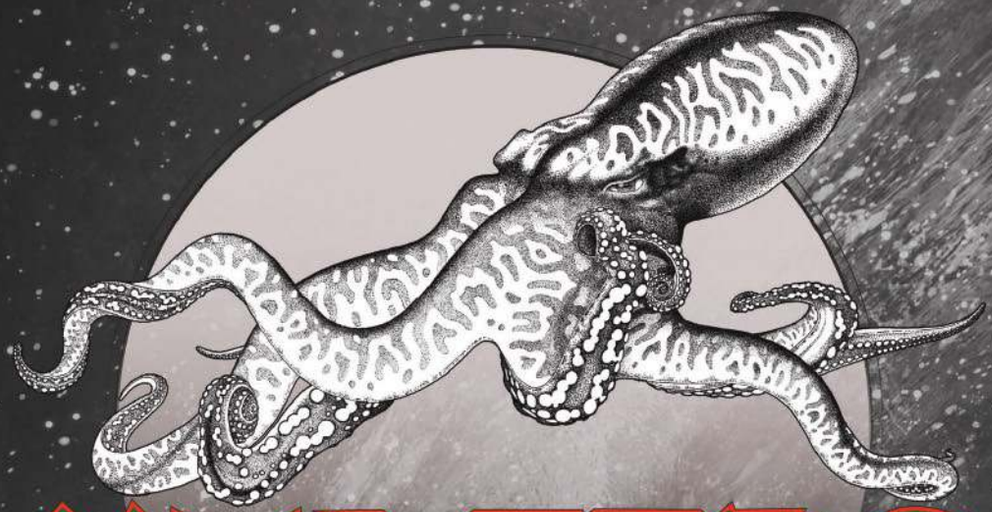

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We regret that we cannot reply to phone calls. For more comment and prog news and views, find us on facebook.com under *Prog*.

DITCH THE DISC

I've been following your wonderful magazine for more than a year. I'd like to tell you that I'm happy with most of the articles and interviews you publish, especially those related to classic bands or albums. I also read with interest those about not so well established bands, that in some cases are really interesting. Nevertheless, there's a thing I'm not very happy with.

The fact is that after more than a year, I've got a collection of CDs (the ones you insert with the magazine) that are not really meaningful to me. From my humble point of view, apart from a pair of songs in each CD, the rest are unimpressive and a waste of money that I'd rather prefer not to pay for.

My suggestion would be that the CD is optional. I suppose there are people who are really interested in it, so it would be good that they could continue having their monthly CDs. But I'd like as well to have the possibility of not having the obligation to pay for an item that I don't desire.

Thanks for all, and keep on progging.

Ignacio Loizaga Rio

WASTE OF WORDS

I just got the latest issue of *Prog* and Ian Dury comes flooding into my head with 'What a waste', which I think was a hit for poor old Ian, now sadly left us. But for me that is just what the magazine is. I love the music, I can't wait to get the latest CD and bang it on. I've got a big music set up in the garage where no one can tell me to turn it down. However the magazine for me is a waste and gets put pretty much straight into the recycling bin. I have tried but the words just don't gel for me, too much grey hair, no hair and old geezers. If you had some words about Porsches or Harley Davidsons that might sway me but for now it's recycle Michael.

And this is such a shame because the production of the mag is great, pictures, layout can't be faulted but the words bore me shitless. So is there any chance of a CD-only subscription? Unlike the other mags I buy on bikes and cars which get passed on to my mates for reading, nobody wants your piece. I thought I might take it back to Tescos to get my money back but they might notice the missing CD and I'd get a slap. So every issue I'm faced with joy for the CD, and pain for bunging the fine magazine. Perhaps you can put me in touch with someone with an opposing problem, that would be a result, in the meantime I reckon I should Prog on, or Prog off as is the case maybe.

Graham Kerr

Magenta: have they been ignored?

STUART WOOD

This Woman's Work: just a selection of the women who have featured in *Prog* recently.

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Over the years I have come to prefer the female voice in music. I just think the style blends in very nicely with certain types of prog. In the latest issue I notice there is virtually a complete blank on anything female. This seems to be a continuing trend with this magazine. Just wondering what you think? Also, during time I have been buying *Prog* I don't recall Roger Chapman and Family ever getting a mention. Correct me if I'm wrong. Just because they are my favourite band of all time is irrelevant. So please, something on Family — very prog, especially in the early days. Roger is celebrating 50 years in music, so the timing would be perfect.

Stephen Hughes

We've covered lots of women in prog over the years, Stephen — just look at the small selection of images to the left. Also, do check out our feature on some of the most innovating women in prog in this very issue on page 80, and our in-depth Sonja Kristina interview on page 94. — Dep Ed

WILSON WOE

I like Steve Wilson, I've seen him live, but his new album is a self-confessed pop album! It has one good track. You are so sycophantic it is beyond belief. None of the critics actually voted his album number one! So why have you voted it number one?

Why have Magenta been ignored? They have released their

TWEET TALK

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NOWHERE MAN
@ElGoodo63
@ProgMagazineUK
Published every five weeks? Figures that Prog Magazine is distributed in 5/4 time.

JAKKO M JAKSZYK
@JakkoJ
Pre-Xmas Level 42 reunion lunch with the class off '91/'92

MARJANA SEMKINA
@marjanasemkina
I finally understood the meaning of infamous "what happens on tour, stays on tour". It means you don't remember shit after the tour is over.

GREG SPAWTON
@bigbigtrain
Heaven knows I'm miserable now.

A quick word of appreciation for your excellent magazine, which I only discovered in August during a weekend in Adelaide. Before heading to the airport we stopped for some reading material, and there was *Prog* 77. Since then I have sought it out at various outlets, but only one was able to order it in, so *Prog* 80 duly arrived last week.

Firstly, I agree with your editorial comment about prog never really going away. I have always been able to access newer bands, partly because I worked in the record library for the National broadcaster ABC and mainly due to a few like-minded friends who would recommend bands to me.

It was a delight to discover an article on Caligula's Horse. CH have been one on my must-listen-to list since their first album. I would also like to recommend Unitopia, sadly now disbanded, but from the ashes Southern Empire arose and have an amazing eponymous debut album.

I go way back and my first prog purchase was *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, but I also have a love of quirky, clever pop with bands like XTC and 10cc.

I'm looking forward to receiving *Prog* on a more regular basis.

Colin Logue, Aspendale, Victoria

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

finest album since *Seven*, and you have ignored them.

Nigel Richards

It's a mathematical process where No. 1 gets 20 points and No. 20 gets 1 point. If we cheated on that, we'd be inundated with letters pointing that out. Hardly sycophancy, although if Wilson hadn't won we doubt you'd have bothered writing in. As for Magenta - a four page feature in issue 75 and a box out album review in 78 is hardly ignoring them! - Ed.

THE NEW KING OF PROG?

Thank you so much for the cover article on Mikael Åkerfeldt. I find him to be a giant of a musician. Able to hang with the likes of Jimmy Page, Joni Mitchell and Miles Davis.

His music takes me to some type of magical forest, full of mystery, darkness and most of all, epic power. He seems to come out of a different dimension and land on Earth to create his spellbinding music. There are few songs that transport me to another world like his do. And many of his songs are such a musical feast, full of so many signature changes and all the other things we prog lovers enjoy, but also so much melody, beauty, intensity and calm pastoral interludes.

I do prefer his earlier to mid-period work when he would combine the metal with the lighter passages: I really liked the interplay of the light and dark. But I respect whatever direction he wants to go and he has certainly earned the right.

I am a little sad that the CD you included with the magazine didn't have the greatest sound quality. Not that I'm blaming your magazine. But if you, as a reader, found the music at all intriguing I would highly encourage you to pick up one of their studio albums: most likely *Ghost Reveries* (my favourite), *Blackwater Park* or *Watershed*.

While I'm at it, I would like to quantify that, to me, the best metal is very prog. You will not find music with more amazing changes and variations than a really good metal song by Sabbath or Metallica or Opeth or Mastodon. Anyway, thank you again for the amazing article on one of my biggest musical heroes. I will hold on to this magazine as I would a treasured book. And what a great picture on the cover. Definitely captures the sonic wizard that Mikael is.

Benjamin Watson, Philadelphia, PA, USA

STEPHEN KELLY

All Hail Åkerfeldt!

THAT JOE PAYNE
@thatjoepayne
Late last night, @maxjosephread and I celebrating finalising the mixes of the new single and bonus tracks!

MARK BENTON
@markbenton100
@ProgMagazineUK Always makes my day!

PROG

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AN EXPECTED JOURNEY: KINO RETURN WITH A NEW ALBUM

John Mitchell, Pete Trewavas and John Beck regroup for long-awaited comeback.

Kino return with their new studio album, *Radio Voltaire*, which is released via InsideOut on March 23. It's the band's first release in 13 years and sees John Mitchell teaming up with keyboard player John Beck for the first time since It Bites' 2012 album *Map Of The Past*.

"After I finished the second Lonely Robot album [last year's *The Big Dream*], I wanted to keep going and do the next Lonely Robot, but Thomas [Waber, InsideOut founder] said, 'It's too soon, but why don't you…' And I knew what was coming next!" laughs frontman Mitchell.

Kino originally came about in 2004 at Waber's suggestion and provided a vehicle for Mitchell to work with Beck, Marillion's Pete Trewavas and Porcupine Tree drummer Chris Maitland. The four-piece released only one studio album, *Picture* in 2005, and played a handful of gigs before dissipating.

"Kino is a name I never thought I'd hear again," says Mitchell. "It didn't really fall apart, but Chris went off to do session stuff in the West End [including the musicals *Mamma Mia!*, *We Will Rock You* and *Wicked*] so we never actually did anything further with the original line-up. We did a couple of shows with various drummers [such as Bob Dalton from It Bites] but I thought my energy would be better channelled being a part of It Bites. However, Pete and I have always talked about collaborating on something again. The prog aligned and here we are."

"Pete and I have always talked about collaborating again. The prog aligned and here we are!"

Radio Voltaire teams Mitchell, Beck and Trewavas up with Frost* drummer Craig Blundell, who replaces Maitland in the studio. The result is 11 brand new tracks that expand the sound of the four-piece's debut.

"It's primarily me and Pete doing the writing this time round, but we've all had a go," says Mitchell. "Pete wrote the longest song which comes in around 10 minutes – he's Captain Prog! I tend to just go for the bastardised pop song angle. I wrote one that's about a minute long called *Warmth Of The Sun*: I think you can say more in a minute that you can in 10. The other song I'm extremely proud of is the last one, *The Silent Fighter Pilot*. The freeing thing with the first Kino record was there was no sound of Kino. It was the sum of the noise that Pete, John and myself made which was very much what it sounds like now. It doesn't sound like

Leave a light on! John Mitchell and Pete Trewavas hang out in the studio.

LEE BLACKMORE

Lonely Robot or Marillion, but it does sound a little bit like It Bites in places. It's an unusual record. I'm pleased with it, and it's been a fun experience so I hope people take that away from it."

The album title is a play on the French philosopher Voltaire and avant-garde club Cabaret Voltaire. Although the debut was mixed by Simon Hanhart, Mitchell took charge of mixing duties for *Radio Voltaire*.

"Voltaire was quite outspoken about the establishment of the time and I liked the idea of using his name to represent the idea of a radio station that wasn't full of bullshit," says Mitchell. "I've learned a lot since the first album and it's been a lot easier to make this one because I've been in charge of it 100 per cent."

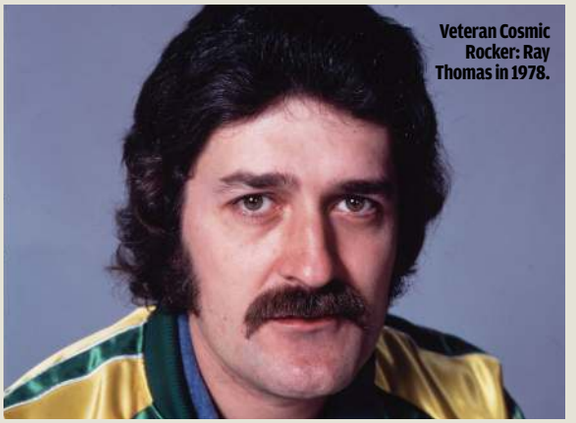
Mitchell admits he's not planning too far ahead with Kino, but says they may play some live shows if the logistics work out. In the meantime, the singer-guitarist-turned-producer has also been working on a Frost* DVD, which is expected later this year.

For more about John Mitchell's musical projects, visit www.johnmitchellhq.com. **NRS**

This month, Intro was compiled by
Chris Cope
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Rob Hughes
Jo Kendall
Hannah May Kilroy
Dom Lawson
Rachel Mann
Rhodri Marsden
Alison Reijman
Natasha Scharf
Phil Weller

A FOND FAREWELL TO RAY THOMAS

The Moody Blues co-founder dies unexpectedly at home on January 4.



Veteran Cosmic Rocker: Ray Thomas in 1978.

Ray Thomas has died at the age of 76. The musician and songwriter was a crucial part of The Moody Blues' history.

Born on December 29, 1941 in Stourport-on-Severn, Thomas started El Riot & The Rebels with John Lodge and Mike Pinder in the early 60s. Thomas and Pinder stayed together as the Krew Cats, before bringing in Denny Laine, Graeme Edge and Clint Warwick and becoming The Moody Blues in '64. However, it was when the classic line-up featuring Thomas, Pinder and Edge alongside Lodge and Justin Hayward came together in 1966 that the band found their musical direction and style.

He once said of his role, "I never thought of myself as being very gifted. I was happy, though, to have played a part in bringing out the talents of those around me."

When the Moodies went on hiatus in '74, Thomas released the albums *From Mighty Oaks* (1975) and *Hopes, Wishes & Dreams* (1976). Ill health forced him to take a decreasing role in the band, with his last appearance on 1999's *Strange Times*, and in October 2014, he revealed that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. At the time of his death, Thomas had been working on a new solo album.

In a statement, John Lodge said, "Ray and I have been on this magical journey through life together since we were 14... two young kids from a council estate in Erdington, Birmingham who reached for the stars... and we made it together. El Riot you will always be by my side." **MD**

ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF REVEALS MAGICAL FOURTH

Swedish organist embraces a brighter sound at one of Denmark's most unusual musical spaces.

Anna von Hausswolff releases *Dead Magic* on March 2 via City Slang.

The follow-up to 2015's *The Miraculous* is produced by Randall Dunn (Sunn O)))) and was part-recorded at Frederik's Church in Copenhagen, also known as The Marble Church. The venue has also hosted shows by Diamanda Galás.

"During the writing period, I was into heavier music like Swans and Einstürzende Neubauten, and I wanted a darker, heavier, more aggressive sound," von Hausswolff reveals. "I wanted to focus on the lower register but this organ sounded best in the higher register. It had a very intense, direct and beautiful sound and it changed the shape of the album. It surprised me and it was liberating."

Anna von Hausswolff will play at north London's Dome as part of her European tour this March. For the full list of dates, visit www.annavonhausswolff.org. **NRS**

Heavenly Voices: Anna von Hausswolff.

ANDERS NYDAM

NIGHTWISH SIDE-PROJECT REVEALED

Tuomas Holopainen and Troy Donockley team up with Iona musicians on *Auri*.

A Return To The Sea: Auri's Troy Donockley, Johanna Kurkela and Tuomas Holopainen.

Nightwish's Troy Donockley has confirmed more details about his new project with bandmate Tuomas Holopainen. Auri – which also features Finnish vocalist and Holopainen's wife Johanna Kurkela – release their self-titled debut via Nuclear Blast on March 23, just two weeks after Nightwish's *Decades* compilation and tour begins.

"We've been really secretive about the whole thing because we didn't want people to think this was the end of Nightwish!" says the British multi-instrumentalist, who reveals that the project's name comes from a character in Patrick Rothfuss' *The Kingkiller Chronicle* book series.

"I'm sick of hearing bands saying, 'This album is quite dark,' so we've gone full-on light," he says. "Lyrically, *Auri* is quite complex but it has a message of optimism and a love of life, which carries on from the theme of Nightwish's *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*. Musically, it's celestial-progressive-wonderland-ethereal-pop-rock-based-ambient-classically-infused cosmic metal! Johanna's voice is really unique – she's a muse to both me and Tuomas."

Kurkela – who also sang on Holopainen's 2014 solo album, *Music Inspired By The Life And Times Of Scrooge* – and Donockey began writing the material that would become Auri back in 2011. Once Holopainen came on board, the project began to take shape and Donockley brought in his former Iona bandmates Frank van Essen and Phil Barker to help out with additional instrumentation. The 11-track album was mixed by Tim Oliver (Brian Eno/Sinead O'Connor) at Real World Studios last summer.

"It's got flavours of my last solo album, *The Madness Of Crowds*, and Tuomas' *...Scrooge* album," says Donockley. "It has a cinematic sound: we have a live strings section, lots of grand pianos, atmospheric guitars, low whistles, multi-layered voices – it's very wide and orchestral, but Johanna floats above everything. One song, *Desert Flower*, is a duet between me and her and it really is killer: she transforms it."

> **"*Auri* has a message of optimism and a love of life."**

The Nightwish piper hopes he will have the opportunity to play the album live, but admits it's unlikely happen anytime soon. "We'd love to do an Auri show in the ruins of Tintagel Castle in Cornwall [where some of the promotional photos were taken] but our Nightwish schedule is really wild now."

A video for the lead single, *Night 13*, is due out before March. **NRS**

To pre-order, visit www.nuclearblast.de.

INTRO extras

CROPREDY LINE-UP ANNOUNCED

Fish has been confirmed for this year's Cropredy Festival, which takes place in Oxfordshire between August 9-11. It'll be the singer-songwriter's second performance at the award-winning event. The annual festival, organised by Fairport Convention, also includes two sets from the pioneering progressive folk act. Early bird tickets are on sale now from Fairport Convention's official website.

Lazuli: treading their path to Summer's End.

SUMMER'S END 2018 LINE-UP CONFIRMED

Warm-up show announced as weekend tickets go on sale for the 12-band festival.

Lazuli, Magenta and Moonparticle – the new project from former Lifesigns guitarist Niko Tsonev – are among the bands confirmed to play at this year's Summer's End. The event returns to the Drill Hall in Chepstow on October 5-7.

"We expect the tickets will sell out very quickly – last year, we'd sold out by the end of March – so snap them up!" says Stephen Lambe, who co-promotes the festival with Midnight Sun vocalist Huw Lloyd-Jones. "We're trying out a standalone pre-show gig at Winter's End [in April], and we'll have one at Summer's End on Thursday October 4 as well. We'll announce the line-up closer to the date."

This year's Summer's End line-up is completed by Tim Bowness, Landmarq, Kaprekar's Constant, Toxic Smile, Frequency Drift, Edensong, September Code, Golden Caves, and When Mary, who are signed to Summer's End sister label Sonicbond.

"From a personal point of view, obviously I'm looking forward to When Mary," says Lambe. "I'm also really looking forward to seeing Golden Caves from Holland – I thought their album *Collision* was just fantastic. It'll also be Landmarq's first gig for some years, one of Moonparticle's first shows and Toxic Smile's first gig in the UK since 2011 – they feature Marek Arnold [UPF, Damanek, Seven Steps To The Green Door] who's played the last few Summer's End in various bands. It's a very international line-up."

The early bird 'Leap Of Faith' tickets went on sale last year, and weekend tickets are available from January 25. Order online via www.summersend.co.uk. **NRS**

OSIRIS CLUB'S SECOND ALBUM

Former masked band describe the follow-up to 2014's *The Blazing World*'s as a "darkly psychedelic journey".

The Osiris Club release their second album *The Wine-Dark Sea* on February 23 via Indie Recordings. The mysterious London proggers promise that it will take listeners on a "darkly psychedelic journey into sound".

"It's more song-based this time," says drummer and band illustrator Andrew Prestidge. "There's lots of influences: it's like proto-goth mixed with 70s prog rock, early Genesis, King Crimson."

Also in the melting pot is comic books, with the band paying homage to the apocalyptic world of *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola.

With a new album comes a new look, and The Osiris Club have dropped the white plague masks and black robes which gave them a haunting live presence.

"It was difficult to play in them, and a lot people would ask, 'Are you copying Ghost or something like that?'" Prestidge says. "For the new album, we'll have more film projections. But we'll still be in some kind of uniform."

For more, see www.facebook.com/Osirisclub. **CC**

Miles And Miles Away: The Osiris Club seek other-worldly inspiration.

"Kathmandu shows off Goya's bold, dynamic approach."

PROG

GOYA

"Goya's music is a bit different... get lost in it... it's a good trip!"

POWERPLAY MAGAZINE

"Goya not only make mighty initial impressions, they also allow their music to unfold and reveal new depth with every subsequent revisit."

FIREWORKS MAGAZINE

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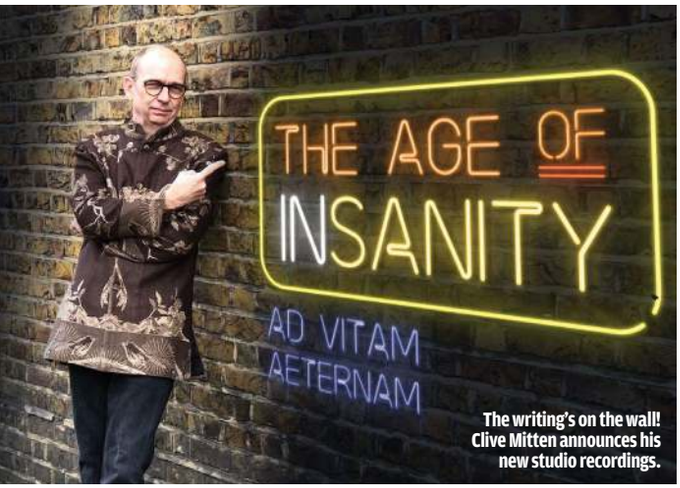
C:LIVE COLLECTIVE ANNOUNCE ALBUM

Ex-Twelfth Night man joins up with LaHost and Geoff Mann's son on eclectic project.



The writing's on the wall! Clive Mitten announces his new studio recordings.

Clive Mitten is preparing two releases for his new project C:Live Collective, the first of which will be out on March 1. The five-track *The Age Of Insanity* will be followed by a double album, *The Fifth Estate*, in the autumn. Mitten promises he'll be making further downloads available soon, but, he warns, the new material doesn't sound anything like his former band.

"It's a complete break from my past," he confirms. "I've been subject to a lot of influences over the last 30 years: classical, American classical and dance music, such as Orbital, Underworld and Pendulum who are big influences on what I do now. They've all been re-cooked in my head and it's come out sounding quite different; it's still progressive because it's pushing some musical boundaries which people wouldn't normally expect. There are sections where I'm using a lot of strings and some brass, and in other places, it's purely orchestral. There's another section which is pure dance and there are all sorts of other styles that crop up, but I would *not* classify it in the world of symphonic rock.

"The album also includes a complete rework of [Twelfth Night's] *We Are Sane* but it's a very different beast from the one people have known in the past. There's also a 20-minute dance remix by me."

Mitten began work on the C:Live Collective over a year ago, and the six-piece features former members of Twelfth Night support band LaHost — Stephen Bennett, Mark Spencer and drummer Fudge Smith — as well as singer James Mann, whose late father Geoff was Twelfth Night's original vocalist. They will make their live debut with the project at a secret London show this spring, which will be followed by a performance at Winter's End Festival on April 28.

In the meantime, author Andrew Wild has confirmed he's updating Twelfth Night's official biography *Play On*. The revised edition will be published independently later this year and will be preceded by a new Twelfth Night 'best of' triple album entitled *Fact And Fiction* which will be out via F2. The release of the album and book coincide with the 40th anniversary of the band's very first show.

For the latest updates, visit www.twelfthnight.info. **NRS**

"It's a complete break from my past."

For more about C:Live Collective, visit www.facebook.com/theclivecollective.

INTRO extras

CHRIS SQUIRE REMASTERED

Chris Squire's solo debut *Fish Out Of Water* is being given the deluxe treatment by Esoteric. It's out on March 30.

The 7CD box set includes a remastered version of the original 1975 recording as well as a 5.1 mix by Jakko Jakszyk, gatefold vinyl, two 7" singles, DVD footage and a 36-page book containing exclusive interviews.

A 2CD expanded edition will also be available.

Holy Divers: The Legend Of The Seagullmen suit up for new musical adventures.

THE SEAGULLMEN'S LEGEND REVEALED

Tool and Mastodon musos get up to fishy business with Hollywood movie director.

Legend Of The Seagullmen release their eponymous debut on February 9 via Dine Alone. It's reviewed in this issue on page 104. The madcap concept band, which also features Zappa Plays Zappa bassist Pete Griffin, say their live debut supporting Primus on New Year's Eve is just the beginning.

"We're doing a video based around [album track] *The Fogger*, which has a huge drum solo by Danny [Carey, Tool]. It will be fuckin' rad!" says guitarist Jimmy Hayward, who's best known for directing the movie adaptation of DC comic book series *Jonah Hex*.

The Seagullmen's sci-fi theme comes from the mind of frontman David 'The Doctor' Dreyer, who pieced together the project several years ago.

"He grew up in Cocoa Beach, Florida, which is near NASA [Kennedy Space Center], so he was living in this beach community with seagulls, dolphins and sharks, and then there's these rockets going off," explains Hayward. "He and Brent [Hinds, Mastodon] go way back, and he suggested the idea to me and we wrote [album closer] *Ballad Of The Deep Sea Diver* together. [Synth player and fellow movie producer] Maddog wrote parts, Danny drummed on it... and the whole thing formed like Voltron!"

Meanwhile, Carey has confirmed that the long-awaited follow-up to Tool's *10,000 Days* will be out later this year.

"I've been saying this for the last three years though," he laughs. "It's probably the weirdest thing that anybody's heard in the history of mankind!"

Both Tool and Legend Of The Seagullmen plan to tour this year. See www.toolband.com and www.theseagullmen.com. **NRS**

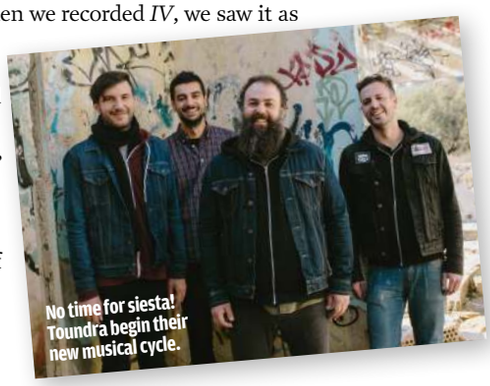
TOUNDRA WRAP UP NEW CD

Spanish post-rockers return to their instrumental roots with their stripped-back fifth studio release.

Toundra release *Vortex*, the follow-up to 2015's *IV* on April 27 via InsideOut/Century Media and guitarist Esteban Girón describes it as "more rock'n'roll" than anything the four-piece have done before.

"It's been three years since our last album and we wrote this one over a period of four months because we wanted to focus on the strength and anger that we had on our first album," he reveals. "When we recorded *IV*, we saw it as the end of a cycle and [last year's flamenco side-project] Exquirla was part of that cycle. After that, we wanted to go back to rock music so the songs we've written on this album are heavier, darker and deeper."

Toundra will embark on a European tour this May with four shows already confirmed for the UK. For the full list of dates, visit www.toundra.es. **NRS**


No time for siesta! Toundra begin their new musical cycle.

'Perfect in just about every way' ★★★★★ THE TIMES

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1988 2018

TIME

30 YEARS OF CELEBRATING PINK FLOYD

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MON	12	**SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION**
TUE	13	**MARGATE WINTER GARDENS**
THU	15	**BIRMINGHAM ARENA**
FRI	16	**BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE**
SAT	17	**BRIGHTON CENTRE**
MON	19	**GUILDFORD G LIVE**
TUE	20	**READING HEXAGON**
THU	22	**STOKE VICTORIA HALL**
FRI	23	**OXFORD NEW THEATRE**
SAT	24	**CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA**
MON	26	**BATH FORUM**
TUE	27	**LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL**
WED	28	**SCUNTHORPE BATHS HALL**
FRI	30	**PRESTON GUILD HALL**

DECEMBER 2018

SAT	01	**GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO**
SUN	02	**EDINBURGH USHER HALL**
TUE	04	**CARLISLE SANDS CENTRE**
THU	06	**LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA**
FRI	07	**NEWCASTLE CITY HALL**
SAT	08	**MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO**
MON	10	**CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE**
TUE	11	**NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL**
THU	13	**HARROGATE INTL CENTRE**
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NEW SHOW FOR 2018

FAD GADGETS

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

TRUENO

Synth fetishists tend to get excited about retro instruments the size of a barn that look as if they've been salvaged from a decommissioned telephone exchange.

Trueno stands in opposition to this: it's an analogue synthesiser small enough to fit onto a USB stick. Made from "aerospace grade aluminium" (because who would trust a plastic USB stick?), you plug it into your computer to power it up, and thereafter it behaves just like an audio plugin. Get it beeping and squelching using your computer, just like a digital synth – but this one is analogue.
www.truenosynth.com

VOCHLEA

We've all found ourselves attempting to emulate a famous instrumentalist by using our voice, whether it's trying to make a noise like Louis Armstrong's trumpet, Brian May's guitar or Jack Costanzo's bongos.

Vochlea is a technological attempt to harness the power of the voice by turning mimicry into sound. Based around a diamond-shaped microphone called the VM1, you make the noise you're striving for with your mouth, and the technology makes it sound more realistic. Human beatboxers should be able to sound like real drums – but Vochlea claims to go beyond even that.
www.vochlea.co.uk

VOYAGER MUSIC

When musicians are stuck for inspiration they try to provoke emotional strife to give themselves something to write about, or nick someone else's riffs and disguise them. But scientists at Anglia Ruskin have used data from Voyager 1's Low-Energy Charged Particle Instrument to make an orchestral work, so data resulting from the spacecraft's movement has translated to melody, harmony and orchestration. It recently debuted at the SC17 Supercomputing Conference in Denver, Colorado.
www.bit.ly/voyager-music

INTRO extras

PROCOL HARUM 50TH BOX SET

Procol Harum are celebrating their 50th anniversary with a commemorative box set, which is out through Esoteric on March 23. *Still There'll Be More: An Anthology 1967-2017* contains material from all the band's albums spread across five CDs and three DVDs. The DVDs feature more than three-and-a-half hours of footage including previously unreleased *Sight & Sound* In Concert recorded at the London Hippodrome in 1977.

No aerie faerie nonsense! Joe Payne prepares to launch his solo career.

JOE PAYNE GOES SOLO

The Enid's ex-frontman previews his eclectic new material with help from his former bandmates.

Joe Payne releases his debut single this spring – and he believes his solo career will showcase his diverse range of musical tastes.

"When I listen back to what I've written, it really sings true to all of my influences," he says. "I've somehow managed to create a weird hybrid that is this sort of cheesy pop, theatrical, classical, proggy thing."

Payne left The Enid in 2016 after falling ill with depression and anxiety, but has enlisted former members Max Read, Nic Willes and Duncan McLaughlan to help out with his solo work.

"I was with the band for about five years, and things had just been niggling away at me," he says. "One day, rather than my mind telling me to stop, my body did. All of a sudden I had this physical reaction to all of the stress, whereby I couldn't even move. I was paralysed by it."

Payne sought medical help and then spent a year working in a bar, which allowed him to regain his individuality.

"With The Enid, we lived together in basically a commune, so no one had any independence from the band," he says. "Working in the pub surrounded me with a network of new friends. It gave me the strength I needed to just go, 'You know what, fuck it! I'm whatever artist I am. You can take it or leave it'."

Payne releases his first single *I Need A Change* under the moniker That Joe Payne on March 2.

For more, visit www.thatjoepayne.com. **CC**

SUSANNA'S BAROQUE RELEASE

Norwegian singer-songwriter revisits melancholic themes with her haunting new collaborative collection that's inspired by American folk.

Susanna Wallumrød releases *Go Dig My Grave* via SusannaSonata on February 9. She's teamed up with harpist Giovanna Pessi on the unusual selection of American and British folk covers.

"I've been travelling to the States quite a lot over the last few years and I really like going to music stores to find new things. I found vinyl copies of Jean Ritchie and Elizabeth Cotten albums and found their tragic stories really interesting," reveals the Norwegian musician. "My previous collaboration with Giovanna, *If Grief Could Wait* [2011], had a lot of songs about solitude and loneliness, but we wanted to go deeper into tragic stories and bring American folk songs to the European material."

Go Dig My Grave is reviewed this issue (see page 110). Wallumrød has also written an hour of new music inspired by the 15th century Flemish artist Hieronymus Bosch, which she plans to record later this year.

For more info, visit www.susannamagical.com. **NRS**

Grave News: Susanna Wallumrød digs out her favourite funereal folk.

PRESS/ANNE VALEUR

Bottoms Up: When Mary have reason to celebrate.

WHEN MARY

Multi-layered Norwegian musical project put the vocals first.

AMID A PLETHORA of extraordinary female prog voices – think Judy Dyble, Anneke van Giersbergen and Sonja Kristina just for starters – it takes real talent to stand out. Trude Eidtang, the driving force behind When Mary, manages this and more. She's the chief songwriter and part-time glockenspiel wrangler in When Mary, but it's her voice that first catches your attention. Not only is it clear and shining, but it's also notable for the strange harmonies that she weaves within her songs.

"If there's anything that's genuinely me, that defines me as a performer, it's my love of harmony," explains Eidtang, speaking to *Prog* on a cold Norwegian night from her home 30 miles outside of Oslo. "I've been singing since before I could speak. Growing up, in my choir I sang alto and always got the difficult lines. Harmony just comes naturally."

Indeed, her harmonic gifts are impressive: they give her music that special sprinkling of fairie dust also found in the work of Kate Bush and Björk.

Eidtang's extensive experience in the music business also adds to her creative skill. "I've worked as a musical actress, I used to be a dancer years ago," she says. However, it was only after a stint singing vox for art rock band White Willow that Eidtang decided to strike out musically on her own.

"I'd been writing songs for years, but I was nervous about sharing them with someone," she says. It was when she met guitarist and programmer Christian Paulsen that it all came together. "He's really into hard, industrial music, thrash metal. But we really clicked: we have a common musical intuition."

It's this symbiosis that has led to When Mary's fascinating combination of sounds. "I took my influences from the 90s, the 80s and the 70s," Eidtang explains, and the effect is dizzying: part art rock, part symphonic prog, part vocal-programming and dance beats.

When Mary's new album *Tainted*, which follows on from the band's 2013 debut *7Summers7Winters*, is among the first releases on Summer's End maestros Stephen Lambe and Huw Lloyd-Jones' new Sonicbond label. She became friends with Lambe after singing at Summer's End with White Willow. When *Tainted* was under way, she asked Lambe if he was interested. "He just went, 'boom!'" Eidtang laughs. "He's very idealistic – he just wants to put the music out there!"

Unlike *7Summers7Winters*, *Tainted* draws less on the Laurie Anderson school of Art Performance, and shows Eidtang finding a more complex sound. Based on the Faust myth, it features quotes from Franz Schubert, strange doomy bells, and moments of transporting beauty. Like many performance artists, Eidtang is unafraid to do some field work to get authentic sounds. The clanging chimes at the beginning of *Tainted* were, she reveals, "recorded by me in a small south German village that had this cathedral with huge bells".

Eidtang is both thoughtful and funny. At one point, she unexpectedly says, "I'm a sociologist more than an artist," and that the Faust story "has something to say to us about greed and shallowness and vulnerability". She's equally happy talking about Mia, Paulsen's Jack Russell terrier, who, as a reward for patience while the album was being made, makes the credits of *Tainted*. She's also amused when it's suggested she's one of the few artists to feature glockenspiel in her work. "I'm still nervous when I play it live," she admits. "But as an ex-dancer, I like its percussive possibilities."

But overall, it's all about the vocals. Eidtang believes that most songs are written by people using keyboards or guitars: "My songs are written by a vocalist," she says, likening the experience to weaving a carpet – and a beautiful one it is, too. **RM**

"I've been singing since before I could speak."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Trude Eidtang *(vocals, synth, percussion, glockenspiel),* **Christian Paulsen** *(guitars, programming, synth, engineering),* **Vidar Uthaug** *(guest keyboards, backing vocals)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Laurie Anderson on holiday with Kate Bush and Talk Talk

CURRENT RELEASE

Tainted is out now via Sonicbond

WEBSITE

www.whenmary.no

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

YOUR PROG CHEF: **ALAN REED**

On The Menu: Kingdom Of The Fried

"A hungry band is not a happy band, and I've discovered I can keep the whinging down to manageable levels if I feed them from time to time. It's also a good opportunity for a post-gig debrief and I can butter them up a bit before handing out the usual fines for inappropriate note and timing choices.

Being Scottish, a healthy fried breakfast is a tradition I was brought up with. I know other parts of the UK have their own versions, but Scotland (as ever) has its own particular vision."

Ingredients (serves a band):

Eggs, bacon, pork sausage, lorne sausage, black pudding, fruit pudding, white pudding, haggis, potato scone, scones.

Prepartion

"The key to this is meat – lots of it – and particularly lorne sausage. For those who've not come across this, it's a mixture of ground pork and beef formed into square slices, so you can avoid any Spinal Tap 'doesn't fit on the bread' issues. To this, add the usual bacon, pork sausages (known as 'links') and fried egg.

The other area where a Scottish fry-up differs is in the quantity and variation of its accompaniments. Black pudding will be joined by its Scottish cousin, fruit pudding, which is a sort of suet and sultana-based concoction that tastes wonderful fried. There's also white pudding. It's similar to black pudding but without the blood. Haggis, cut into small slices, may also feature.

The tattie scone – a flat, floury bread made of potato flour – is especially great at soaking up leftover fat, and is usually cooked last for that reason. Normal scones (with or without sultanas) can be substituted or added if available, or white bread – again cooked towards the end to soak up leftover fat. Needless to say, all of this is shallow fried. The more health-conscious may choose to grill some of the meat, but I'd argue against this. Serve with toast, fruit juice (if you really *have* to), tea or Irn-Bru – a 'wee voddy' (if it's been a particularly heavy night) may be appropriate." **JK**

MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...

GOBINDER JHITTA

In For A Ride: Federica Gialanze's progressive journey of discovery began with Anekdoten.

FEDERICA GIALANZE

When Black Moth's guitarist discovered **Anekdoten**, she developed a passion for modern Swedish prog.

"I've always been interested in alternative music, but I developed a passion for atmospheric prog and 70s prog rock when I moved to the UK from Italy 16 years ago. When I came to London, my best friend gave me a bunch of mix CDs which included bands like Porcupine Tree, Paatos, and No-Man. He'd included Anekdoten's *The War Is Over* from *Gravity* as well, and I fell in love with their songwriting. It was a difficult time for me so their atmospheric, melancholic music hit the spot.

Back in the 1970s, there was a massive prog scene in Italy and my dad used to listen to some of those bands. As far as I'm concerned, Anekdoten take it to the next level. What I enjoy about them is the sound of the Mellotron and electric organ. They've got pretty much everything; they're heavy, they're fuzzy, they're atmospheric and they can be quite dark as well. None of their songs are less than seven minutes long and they really tell you a story, they're very engaging. I'm most emotionally attached to *Gravity*, that's when they found their trademark sound. There have been times when I've listened to three albums of theirs back-to-back without stopping – they're incredible and definitely my favourite band from the Scandinavian scene. Unfortunately I always seem to miss them live. The last time I had tickets, they cancelled the tour and I was so gutted. Their *Official Bootleg – Live In Japan* album is probably the closest I've got to the live experience and it's incredible. If we ended up on the same bill as them, it would be a dream come true.

I would totally recommend listening to Nicklas Barker's side-project Morte Macabre. He did a covers album of horror movie soundtracks called *Symphonic Holocaust*. That's another album I can listen to over and over again.

Prog rock has influenced my playing in the way odd time signatures have made their way into my music. I've never really had an outlet to be experimental, but it's something I want to take a bit further in the future." **NRS**

"They're heavy, they're fuzzy, they're atmospheric."

Anatomical Venus is out now via Candlelight. See facebook.com/themothpit.

PROG IN BRIEF

PRESS/ROBERT SMITH

Neal Morse (right) releases a new solo acoustic album, *Life & Times*, via Radiant/Metal Blade on February 16. The singer-songwriter will perform material from the album on his spring solo tour, which includes four shows in the UK this April.

Andy Poole has announced he's leaving **Big Big Train**. They will continue as a seven-piece with an additional live musician. The band have also announced they will play a warm-up show in the UK in July ahead of their gig at Germany's Night Of The Prog.

GLEB KOLYADIN

The debut solo album from the virtuoso Iamthemorning pianist

featuring an impressive list of guest performers from

DREAM THEATER, MARILLION, PORCUPINE TREE, KING CRIMSON & ANTIMATTER

23/2/18

LP/CD/DIGITAL

The record features a staggering who's-who of performers, including: the unmistakable voice and lyrics of Steve Hogarth (Marillion) alongside Mick Moss (Antimatter); Gavin Harrison (King Crimson / Porcupine Tree) on drums; Nick Beggs (Steven Wilson) on bass; Theo Travis (Robert Fripp / Porcupine Tree / Steven Wilson) on flute and saxophone; and Jordan Rudess (Dream Theater) on additional keys.

"The single greatest pianist I've ever met in my life"
DANIEL CAVANAGH (ANATHEMA)

"Gleb is a beautiful pianist and a great musician."
STEVE HOGARTH (MARILLION)

"Gleb is a rare talent. A virtuoso classical pianist with tremendous compositional skills."
NICK BEGGS (STEVEN WILSON)

"Gleb is an extremely rare talent as a pianist and as a composer... he's breaking new ground on the instrument."
GAVIN HARRISON (PORCUPINE TREE / KING CRIMSON)

IAMTHEMORNING

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ALBUM OF THE YEAR
PROGRESSIVE MUSIC AWARDS 2015

kscopemusic.com/gleb

CAPTAIN BEYOND

CAPTAIN BEYOND

(CAPRICORN, 1972)

On the surface, it would seem there's little to commend this album to prog fans. Captain Beyond formed in LA in 1971 and featured former members of Deep Purple and Iron Butterfly: bands that were, at best, lurking on the periphery of the progressive genre. But what that combination succeeded in doing was creating a sound that had the expected hard rock elements, yet combined them with a wide range of other influences. This took the music on the four-piece's self-titled debut into the realms of jazz rock and psychedelia. Moreover, the musicians (Rod Evans, Bobby Caldwell, Larry 'Rhino' Reinhardt and Lee Dorman) rarely stuck to obvious straight line patterns within songs; they were prepared to vary dynamics almost at will. In fact, they went even further, because while there were 13 tracks in total on the album, most of them are actually the components of three suites.

The first of these begins with the psychedelically evocative *Dancing Madly Backwards (On A Sea Of Air)*, continues through the wailing *Armworth* and ends with the haunting Floyd-esque *Myopic Void*, before reprising the opening song. There's then a brief break from the suites, with *Mesmerization Eclipse*, which has the tone of The Electric Prunes, and *Raging River Of Fear*, owing something to Jethro Tull in its song construction.

It's a clever move to have two unconnected songs ending the first side of the album; to have begun the next suite at this juncture would have necessitated interrupting the overall flow of the release. Instead, the second suite announces itself with *Thousand Days Of Yesterdays*, a short introductory piece that's redolent of The Moody Blues. This expands into the chaotic cadence of *Frozen Over*, before *Thousand Days Of Yesterdays (Time Since Come And Gone)* ends this section. Here, guitarist Reinhardt (the Iron Butterfly connection) displays touches right out of Steve Howe's otherworldly repertoire, and vocalist Evans (Deep Purple's original frontman) even strays a little into Jon Anderson's cosmos.

The final suite takes us through the rest of the album. It's bookended by *I Can't Feel Nothin' (Part 1)* and *I Can't Feel Nothin' (Part 2)*, nodding towards the jazz timbre of Jimi Hendrix's later work. The middle section – comprising *As The Moon Speaks (To The Waves Of The Sea)*, *Astral Lady* and *As The Moon Speaks (Return)* – is an elegant acid trip that's piloted by psychedelic rockers Strawberry Alarm Clock and early Pink Floyd.

Captain Beyond is breathless and breathtaking, bold and beatific: it's a psychedelic masterpiece that doesn't acknowledge any musical rules. Isn't that what being progressive is all about?

MALCOLM DOME

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

Dark Elements: Weend'ô's moody melodies mix Pink Floyd with Evanescence.

WEEND'Ô

Meet **Laetitia Chaudemanche**, frontwoman of the French band that's bringing their savoir faire to Britain.

Some serious alchemy is transmuting the career of France's Weend'ô, whose moody melodic metal has caught the imagination of several leading prog lights.

It was Arena's Clive Nolan who first noticed their heady rock textures and riffage, which chanteuse/keyboard player Laetitia Chaudemanche describes as "a mix between Pink Floyd and Evanescence", which also tips its chapeau at Tool. He invited them to play an intimate gig in France promoting his *Alchemy* show in 2013. This led to them accompanying Arena on their 20th anniversary tour two years later.

Their luck continued when Alan Reed espied them on the tour, asking Chaudemanche to sing backing vocals on his recent solo album, *Honey On The Razor's Edge*. Weend'ô returned the compliment last year and invited the former Pallas singer to join them on stage at top French rock venue, Chez Paulette.

Weend'ô's roots go back to 2002 when the singer met her guitarist husband Térence Nguyen Van. The first line-up of Weend'ô, named after their son Ewen and the Japanese word for Art, appeared in 2007. The current line-up now includes bassist Maxime Rami and drummer Nathanaël Buis.

Says Chaudemanche, "I couldn't do anything without Térence. Of course, it's not always calm; we both have strong personalities because we're both the main composers and leaders of the band. But we follow the same goal and same path in our life: music. So, all our efforts in life are for Weend'ô – to spread our music far and wide for everyone to enjoy."

Their first studio album, *You Need To Know Yourself*, came out in 2012 and was followed by the live DVD, *Weend'ô Fairytalacoustic* in 2014. Their second, *Time Of Awakening*, is a wake-up call to humanity to keep faith and hope. Mastered by TesseracT's Acle Kahney and released as a limited edition last autumn, it will be reissued via Sonicbond at the end of January. It's followed by a stripped-down support slot with Alan Reed & The Daughters Of Expediency. Expect to hear more from Weend'ô this year! **AR**

> **"We follow the same goal and same path in our life: music."**

For more, see www.weendo.fr.

PROG IN BRIEF

Time Flies: The Story Of ***Porcupine Tree*** is out via Rocket 88. It's been written by *Prog*'s Rich Wilson and is billed as the first in-depth book about the band. It contains interviews with band members, friends and people connected to Porcupine Tree.

Corvus Stone's **Colin Tench** (left) has passed away. The 63-year-old guitarist died on December 29, just days after his final album, *Minor Masterpiece*, came out. The Colin Tench Project release included vocals from Tiger Moth Tales' Peter Jones.

MYRKUR

Haunting, nightmare-fuelled Danish folk from this enchanting songstress.

"I'VE HAD WHAT I would classify as bad sleep since I was three years old," states Amalie Bruun, the Danish singer-songwriter who plies her trade as Myrkur. "But the nightmares really intensified over the last couple of years. They got so bad that I started seeing a Jungian therapist. I was tired of waking up screaming, so I decided to make a conceptual record about it, with the humble hope that I could maybe sleep again."

Bruun was able to reach deep into her subconscious and document her night terrors on *Mareridt*, which is every bit as intense and powerful as you might expect. Riding the extremes of her emotions, Bruun summons up a breathless dream life of rich Nordic folk, sweeping prog metal and expansive choral arrangements. The title track, Danish for 'nightmare', is a perfect illustration of Bruun's vivid interior world.

"That song triggered the whole thing," she explains. "I dreamt about a wicked deer that was hovering over me and falling towards me to spear its horns into my chest. It really upset me, but my boyfriend at the time said, 'Wow, that's really cinematic. Why don't you try writing about it?'"

Helping realise Bruun's dark visions was producer Randall Dunn (Earth, Sunn O))), Wolves In The Throne Room), who recorded the album between Copenhagen and Seattle. Its otherworldly feel is further heightened by the use of instruments both modern and ancient, mixing scudding guitars and strings with nyckelharpa (a traditional Swedish key harp) and Kulning (an old Scandinavian herding call).

The multi-faceted Bruun, who once appeared in a Martin Scorsese-directed ad for Chanel, had previously recorded under her own name, and, alongside Brian Harding, as indie rock duo, Ex Cops. The idea for alter ego Myrkur took hold in 2014, indulging her passion for black metal with a self-titled EP. Co-produced with Ulver's Kristoffer Rygg, debut album *M* followed a year later.

"The name 'myrkur' means darkness," she says. "So for me it meant going into my shadow side and my anima, the masculine energy combined with the feminine. It was my goal to come out as a more whole human being and to have connected with almost a divine energy, whether it be the archetypal goddess or Mother Nature or something with magical powers. Another ambition was to give new life to Nordic folk music, especially in my country, where we were so fucking Christian."

Bruun has started to come to terms with her nightmares, discovering that the symbolic nature of her disturbing visions — be they scorpions, tigers or demonic deer — relate to themes of truth, resilence and adaptability. Much like her transformation into Myrkur, which resulted in online death threats from some pitiful members of the black metal fraternity, Bruun is embracing her intuitive sense of survival.

"The more distance I get from it," she says, "the more I realise that any big growth and important transition in life is going to fucking kick you in the teeth. It's not supposed to be pleasant, so I just keep walking into the fire or into the lion's cave." **RH**

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Amalie Bruun *(vocals, piano, violin, guitar, nyckelharpa, synths, percussion, organ)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Ulver, Björk and Enslaved fighting it out on a mythological Nordic plain

CURRENT RELEASE

Mareridt is out now on Relapse

WEBSITE

www.myrkurmusic.com

"I decided to make a conceptual record about my nightmares, with the humble hope that I could maybe sleep again."

ESTER SEGARRA

Embracing The Dark Side: Amalie Bruun.

I KNOW WHAT I LIKE IN YOUR WARDROBE

Prog's Reviews Editor says, "Bands, stop dressing down. Bring out your wild and wacky threads!"

Codpieces, capes and pointy, propellerhead pixie hats. Yes, prog's earliest days were peppered with an array of of brilliantly out-there visuals. As the pop art and paisley of the psychedelic 60s became the florid LSD hangover of the 70s, competition was rife and every music act needed something eye-catching. And if a man in a red evening dress wearing a fox head didn't do it, there'd be a head-to-toe medieval leather two-piece just over the horizon, its wearer wielding a selection of knives to throw at his keyboard *just to make sure you were really paying attention*. Re-read the first sentence of this column – you'll know three bands instantly just by association.

It's a different era now, and fashions have changed. The stuffing's been knocked out of things politically, socially and economically since the 80s, and everything seems grimmer and *greyer* these days. But does that mean that prog bands can't bring back a bit of Technicolor, some inspirational visual signifiers? Isn't it more of a reason to do so, as a counterpoint to the ocean of shit that we're bobbing about in on a daily basis?

A perennial problem magazine teams have is the press shots and artwork we receive from acts. Either there are none – the old chestnut of "We're letting the music speak for itself" – or the ones we do get are several blokes lined up in band T-shirts or leather jackets, looking uncomfortable. And playing live? The same people hiding behind instruments and laptops in dimly lit rooms, with the barest attempt at between-song communication. Live settings are also where we need your visual side to shine through. Obviously a light show helps, but so does how you look. It's part of the performance, and how you fit together as a band. Female artists seem to be expected to make the effort – as Kim Seviour mentions in our Women In Prog feature this issue (see page 80), "I saw a review of a gig. My outfit was the first thing that was commented on. You wouldn't see that for guys."

Well, that's a whole other kettle of sexist aquatic craniates. Prog's visual quirks can be more subtle these days – Mike Portnoy's blue beard, the red flash of Steve Hackett's velvet scarf, Fripp and co's suited elegance. Even Steven Wilson has designer specs and Big Big Train look smart, splendid and individual. You might not have Tarja's couturier, or the confidence to go the full fur'n'feathers of Nordic Giants, but look at Public Service Broadcasting's J Willgoose Esq – it could all start with a great bow tie. Maybe in five years it'll be time for the full Slipperman costume, or the dunce hat and tutu...

JO KENDALL

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

Into The Woods: DPRP's co-founding programmer and reviewer Jerry van Kooten.

DUTCH PROGRESSIVE ROCK PAGE

From fan site to prog portal, **Jerry van Kooten** reveals DPRP's humble origins and plans for the future.

"We must be doing something right because people keep coming back!" laughs DPRP co-founder Jerry van Kooten. It was the Dutch computer programmer-turned-reviewer's idea that led to the creation of one of the longest-running prog websites.

Fanzines, paper fliers and pen pals may have kept the underground scene alive in the early 1990s, but the advent of the world wide web helped spread the word further afield. Arena fan Martijn Albering spotted the potential and set up a dedicated website to the British band in 1995. Van Kooten approached him with the suggestion of expanding the online portal to a general prog fan site soon after, and the rest is history.

"I've been a prog fan since the early 80s but, living in Holland, it was hard to get information," reveals van Kooten of his inspiration. "I made some friends in England, who sent me information and mix tapes, but in the mid-90s there was nothing [dedicated] on the web. We were one of the first sites providing information on the genre so we got a very loyal following which has grown over the years."

> **"We got a very loyal following which has grown over the years."**

Early versions of the Dutch Progressive Rock Page included a news section and gig guide, but by the time 1998 swung round, reviews had been added and the pair even dabbled in promoting. The Dutch Progressive Rock Stage was held the same year, although the festival – which featured IQ's Martin Orford, Abraxas, Helreidh Lizard, and Quidam – is an experience van Kooten has no wish to repeat.

"Musically, it was a success, but financially it was a disaster!" he admits.

Although Albering stepped down from his duties around 10 years ago, van Kooten still looks after and contributes to DPRP along with an ever-expanding team of contributors. The Saga fan, who's currently digging the likes of Toundra and Russian Circles, will be relaunching the website this year with a new look.

"It's no longer about spreading the information because that's happening all over the internet so right now, so we're focusing on telling people about new releases," he says. "So we'll keep on doing much the same... although that's not very progressive, is it?" **NRS**

For more, see www.dprp.net.

PROG IN BRIEF

Gazpacho have announced a handful of European dates this May, including a show at Dutch venue De Boerderij on 26 and The Dome in London on 28. The Norwegian band are currently working on their new studio album.

Beatrix Players (left) have announced four UK shows this February. They'll be playing at The Robin 2 in Bilston on 11 (supporting Serpentyne) and at Cardiff's Acapela Studios from 14-16. They'll return to the Welsh venue on April 22.

Matthew Fisher's self-titled album and *Strange Days* are being remastered and reissued through Angel Air this February. The Procol Harum co-founder is best known for playing the Hammond organ on *A Whiter Shade of Pale*.

Charlie Barnes has teamed up with Oceansize guitarist and producer Steve Durose on his latest prog pop album *Oceanography*. The 12-track is out via Superball on March 9 and is said to be heavily influenced by Oceansize and Amplifier.

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Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

December 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	**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**	Every Valley *(PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)*
5	**TAME IMPALA**	Currents *(FICTION)*
6	**RUSH**	A Farewell To Kings *(UMC/VIRGIN)*
7	**MOGWAI**	Every Country's Sun *(ROCK ACTION)*
8	**ROGER WATERS**	Is This The Life We Really Want? *(COLUMBIA)*
9	**RICK WAKEMAN**	Piano Portraits *(UMC)*
10	**JANE WEAVER**	Modern Kosmology *(FIRE)*
11	**MASTODON**	Emperor Of Sand *(REPRISE)*
12	**HAWKWIND**	At The Roundhouse *(CHERRY RED)*
13	**STEVEN WILSON**	To The Bone *(CAROLINE)*
14	**MARILLION**	Misplaced Childhood *(PARLOPHONE)*
15	**TARJA**	From Spirits And Ghosts *(EAR MUSIC)*
16	**MOODY BLUES**	Days Of Future Passed *(DECCA)*
17	**GODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR**	Luciferian Towers *(CONSTELLATION)*
18	**TANGERINE DREAM**	Quantum Gate *(KSCOPE)*
19	**KING CRIMSON**	Live In Chicago *(DGM/PANEGYRIC)*
20	**MIKE OLDFIELD**	Return To Ommadawn *(MERCURY)*
21	**MIKE & THE MECHANICS**	Let Me Fly *(BMG)*
22	**VON HERTZEN BROTHERS**	War Is Over *(MUSIC THEORIES)*
23	**ANATHEMA**	The Optimist *(KSCOPE)*
24	**XTC**	Black Sea *(APE HOUSE)*
25	**ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**	Eye In The Sky *(ARISTA)*
26	**STRAWBS**	The Ferryman's Curse *(ANTENNA ESOTERIC/CHERRY RED)*
27	**JETHRO TULL**	Songs From The Wood *(RHINO)*
28	**JETHRO TULL**	The String Quartets *(BMG)*
29	**PETER HAMMILL**	From The Trees *(FIE)*
30	**OPERATION MINDCRIME**	The New Reality *(FRONTIERS)*

Find out more at **www.officialcharts.com**

WIN! WONDEROUS STORIES BOOK!

Wonderous Stories: A Journey Through The Landscape Of Progressive Rock is an in-depth look at the prog rock genre, from its beginnings to the present, and written by *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing. We have one signed, deluxe edition copy to give away, that will include a personal message for the winner from Ewing.

Wonderous Stories goes from prog's origins, through the glory years of the late 60s and 70s, to its contemporary resurgence led by, amongst others, Steven Wilson and Opeth. It also includes a foreward by Steve Hackett and over 450 extensively researched images including band pics, press cuttings, ticket stubs and album artwork.

The deluxe edition is limited to 600, and has been designed by Carl Glover. It includes a bound-in certificate of authenticity signed and numbered by Jerry and Carl, an 8x10" art print and is presented in a clothbound cover inside a hardboard slipcase.

The book is reviewed in this very issue on page 117, where it is described as "A beautifully designed archive and an impeccably cogent defence of our favourite genre." It is available to order from the Flood Gallery, Burning Shed and Pledge Music.

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

In what year did Jerry Ewing launch *Prog* magazine?

a) 2007

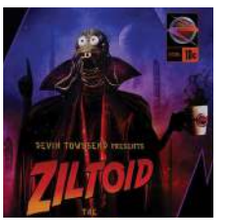
b) 2008

c) 2009

Email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject 'Prog book'. See www.thefloodgallery.com for more information.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This comp will be open from January 25 to March 1. 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	The Art Guy	The Lone Office Lady	The Musician	The Writer	The Reader
Jerry Ewing	Russell Fairbrother	Hannah May Kilroy	Jake Cinninger	Eleanor Goodman	Alan Waine
					
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Jump For Joy! Arch Echo are ready to take their band to the next level.

ARCH ECHO

Berklee graduates fuse djent and jazz with colourful results.

"WE'D JUST GOT out of music school and had this sudden sense of reality of needing to put what we'd learnt to good use," explains Arch Echo keyboardist Joey Izzo. Izzo and three of his now-bandmates had just graduated from the prestigious Berklee School Of Music, and they all needed a vehicle for conveying their new-found knowledge and glorious technical ability. Playing on their mutual love for meandering jazz fusion and aggressive prog metal, Arch Echo were born.

"There are songs where we give our all to our instruments and give a sense of what we can do. That's part of what makes this band fun for us," Izzo says, "but we wanted to make it melodic and very inspiring too, so there's something to take a hold of when you listen. The primary focus is about making it as listenable as possible without compromising the musicianship."

They released their debut self-titled album in May, and it bristles with a vibrant chemistry. Their ideas are spoken through a slew of stirring emotions, lively with cinematic melodies and choppy, aggressive rhythms. From the dazzling pianos and grunting djent of *Color Wheel* to *Spark*'s hurricane infused notation and *Bloom*'s genteel Plini-meets-Allan-Holdsworth guitar work, their songs are full of colour and flair.

"We wrote the album from the listener's perspective," says guitarist Adam Rafowitz, opening up on a songwriting process hinged on patience. They'd write, step back and listen, separating themselves from the song. Where a song travelled to next was dictated by where they, as listeners, would have liked it to.

In the studio, the drums and bass were tracked live together, giving them a very natural heartbeat, feeding off each other's playing and allowing Martinez's personality to ooze out into every improvised drum fill. Elsewhere, Joey Izzo's luscious pianos provide an earthy yet ethereal counterpoint to the twin attack of djent guitars: light and shade meeting in the middle. It is pure, personal and provocative, methodically arranged but delivered with genuine heart and humanity.

It's hard to believe that it was only three days before their first live show together that the band actually all played together for the very first time. Only then, as they headed out on the road for a run of tour dates across the East Coast of the United States, did they feel as though the band had truly come to life. Now they're shifting through the gears.

"Playing live has been the full realisation and experience of what we wanted this band to be from the start," says Izzo. "We have a lot of mutual respect for each other because we can all do things the other guys can't, so when we come together it really comes to life."

"We've loved the energy on stage," adds Rafowitz, with a glance to the future, "Now we're writing the second album and we feel like we're a flower blooming. We're gonna continue working like the world's against us. Then maybe this can be more than a hobby." **POW**

"The primary focus is about making it as listenable as possible without compromising the musicianship."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Joey Izzo *(keyboards)*, **Adam Rafowitz** *(guitar)*, **Richie Martinez** *(drums)*, **Adam Bentley** *(guitar)*, **Joe Calderone** *(bass)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Plini and Allan Holdsworth taking on Animals As Leaders and Periphery in tag team wrestling

CURRENT RELEASE

Arch Echo is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE

www.archecho.com

Agusa: "Blissfully nostalgic and oddly timeless."

AGUSA

Psychedelic folky Swedes take 'flute rock' into a new dimension.

THE GREATEST PSYCHEDELIA grabs the listener by the synapses and swing-chucks them into a thrillingly alien, kaleidoscopic world. Sweden's Agusa have clearly studied the genre with more diligence than most, the result being a fresh strain of psychedelic rock that is both blissfully nostalgic and oddly timeless. As bassist and co-founder Tobias Petterson explains, conjuring that sound is far from an exact science.

"The songs are all worked out in jams between us. Sometimes it can be funky, sometimes it's reggae, but then we shape it up and bring it back into the Agusa fold, so to speak," he says. "We all know what we sound like, you know? Sometimes we're far from it and sometimes we're very close to it, but we're all working towards the same end, but from different angles. It's very difficult to explain. We just want it to sound like Scandinavian trolls, being nice but still quite scary, in the depths of the forest."

Key to Agusa's warped woodland vibes is the omnipresent flutter of Jenny Puertas' flute, an instrument that hardly requires an introduction in the prog world, but one that seldom gets due recognition for its magical qualities and importance to prog's sonic vocabulary. Agusa began life as a studio project specialising in what Petterson defines as "organ-based heavy progressive", with the bassist doubling as flautist when the mood took him. Once it expanded into a full live band, his longheld fascination with the sideways woodwind instrument took over and since Puertas' recruitment in 2015, Agusa have become proud purveyors of the more succinctly named "flute rock".

"I have an obsession with flute rock," Petterson notes. "I collect all kinds of progressive flute music. The flute has its own frequencies, of course. It's very light and also a little bit magical, it reminds you of childhood or of ancient times. It has the sound of *shivering*. It's been my favourite instrument since I was 20 or something. I would even say that The Beatles and Metallica would've sounded better *with* the flute! [Laughs] The flute *always* adds something."

> **"We just want it to sound like Scandinavian trolls, being nice but still quite scary, in the depths of the forest."**

Now that *Agusa* has been released into the wild, its creators are gearing up for as many live shows as they can logistically handle, given the meagre financial benefits of playing music this gloriously pie-eyed. Clearly in favour of giving value for money, Petterson promises that if you do catch Agusa live, the music on the new album will already have evolved into something new.

"We've rewritten *everything* from the studio versions for performing live," he chuckles. "It changes all the time. At every new rehearsal there is a new riff or a new melody or a new break or whatever, so it always differs. Sometimes what we do is *too* progressive. Sometimes we rehearse with three people and the other guys don't know about it, and then we play live and it becomes very difficult because everything's changed. But I guess that's exciting too."

Agusa make no bones about their obsession with music made between the late 60s and, as Petterson states precisely, "late 1974 or early 1975". As with their previous albums, *Agusa* could easily be marketed as a long lost gem from the early 70s Vertigo Records catalogue, such is the unerring authenticity of the band's shimmering, all-analogue sound. Ultimately, you can't fake this kind of mind-bending musical trip and while Petterson is understandably cagey about the influence of illicit substances on his music, he does concede that they have played a significant role along the way.

"To be honest, I've tried singing and writing and recording and rehearsing during an LSD trip," he grins. "I would say that everyone should do what they please, but if I'm going to perform it's better if I only use beer! The music is difficult to play. But I'd say that mind-altering experiences have definitely helped out with writing some of the material. But those experiences can make even very poor music sound good. I once listened to John Denver's *Take Me Home, Country Roads* 80 times in one sitting and even *that* worked!" **DL**

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Tobias Petterson *(bass)*, **Mikael Ödesjö** *(guitar)*, **Tim Wallander** *(drums)*, **Jeppe Juul** *(organ)*, **Jenny Puertas** *(flute)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Effervescent flute-driven psychedelic rock splendour beamed direct from moonlit Swedish forests

CURRENT RELEASE

Agusa is out now via Laser's Edge

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red essential

Q&A

GEOFF DOWNES

The Yes keyboard icon tells *Prog* about his latest musical venture: a new, third album with Downes Braide Association, that might just be their proggiest yet…

Words: Dom Lawson

Geoff Downes needs no formal introduction to the readers of this magazine, who will know him best as the keyboard player for Yes as well as his work with The Buggles and Asia. His latest release, however, is with Downes Braide Association, the project he began in 2012 with songwriter, record producer and singer Chris Braide, known for writing and producing within pop circles for the likes of Sia, Britney Spears and Beyoncé – but who also harbours a love of prog.

DBA's third album *Skyscraper Souls* features an all-star cast including Andy Partridge, Kate Pierson of The B-52's and Big Big Train's David Longdon, and effortlessly blends pop and prog to great effect…

This is the third DBA album in five years and it's a much more elaborate and progressive affair than the previous two. Was that a conscious move?
The first album was very much a case of putting one foot in the water to see what we could come up with. That extended into the second album [2015's *Suburban Ghosts*], and then with *this* one, Chris [Braide] came up with the idea that it might be nice to get a proper rhythm section and get some guests in. But I think we got a lot of positivity, certainly from prog fans, on the first two albums. I think it was a guilty pleasure to be enjoying a bit of pop music. At the time, those albums were both quite nostalgic, 80s-driven pop albums. There are still a lot of pop elements on this album too.

"Big Big Train are very much the flavour of the month in the prog world and the last two albums are among my favourite albums of recent times."

With records like this and Steven Wilson's *To The Bone*, there seems to be a resurgence in the notion of progressive pop…
A lot of bands from the early pop era, like 10cc and ELO, they were breaking boundaries in musical terms. There were quite a lot of progressive elements in what was, to all intents, mainstream pop. There were always some of those sideways things being thrown in. So we were trying to open up more of that left-field approach to some of our new stuff.

Chris is best known for writing songs for pop artists, but clearly he's a prog fan too…
Of course. He's very much a big prog fan. He was drawn into the mainstream pop area in his career, so we've run similar paths to some extent. At one time I was a pop guy, as you know. I went full circle. When I first got into music my favourite bands were things like Yes, Caravan, Procol Harum and The Nice, those early keyboard-driven bands. Then I went down to London and got involved in session work and ended up in the mainstream pop world. In latter years I've gone round again and back into the full-on prog world. So there's an innate understanding between Chris and I somehow, because of the way we've both developed.

Andy Partridge contributes to several tracks and seems to be gradually beefing up his prog credentials these days…
Dave Gregory was in XTC as well and he played on the last DBA album so there's a connection there. XTC were around just before the Buggles in that sort of post-punk era, so there's a lot of cross-pollination with where Chris and I are coming from. Andy's such an eclectic musician. Having seen what he's come up with for us and where he's gone with various other projects, I think he's a very far-ranging musician too. On the track *Darker Times* he really ran with the ball. He liked one of Chris' lyrics and then composed this whole vocal arrangement, almost like a chant, in the background.

One thing that came as a surprise is what a strong and pure voice Kate Pierson of The B-52's has…
Yes, I think that's one thing we aimed for on this record, a purity. Not just in terms of a wonderful voice like hers… but the blend of all those elements. Chris has a very pure voice as well, so it blends very well with Kate's. The same is true of Marc Almond too, he has a very unique, pure voice.

***Prog* readers will be most excited to note the presence of Big Big Train's David Longdon…**
Big Big Train are very much the flavour of the month in the prog world and I know a lot of *Prog* readers agree with me that the last two albums are among my favourite albums of recent times. So I was really happy that David could come on board and play on a track. It was really nice to have some *real* instruments on the record. He's a *great* flautist as well. The song [*Tomorrow*] has that folky, very English feel to it, revisiting prog from yesteryear when you had bands like King Crimson and early Genesis. Those bands could only ever have come from this set of islands, you know?

What's post-Brexit prog going to sound like?
Oh, God knows! [Laughs] We'll probably be so insular that we'll just have our own thing. Or we'll have a domestic market and an international market like Japan. I don't think it'll change anything too much but it's something we need to think about.

How do you find the energy to be this busy all the time?
It's amazing and it's a privilege, really, to know that the three bands that I was involved with in a very short space of time, I'm still a fundamental member of all three. That's credit to the incredible people I've worked with over the years and the great empathy we've shared. Working with people like Trevor Horn, Chris Squire, John Wetton and Greg Lake… I've been very privileged. I'll do it for as long as I can, really. As long as I can still get out of bed in the morning and get up on my feet, I'll keep enjoying it.

And what are the chances of DBA live shows in the future?
I'm very busy with a number of things on the live front. We've got the Yes 50th anniversary coming up next year. We're still looking at some more Asia dates at some point next year and I've been working with Trevor Horn on some stuff and we're thinking that maybe we might do some one-off shows with Buggles. Chris is busy too. But we've built up a nice catalogue of music and it would be great to take it out live.

Skyscraper Souls is out now via X2X/Cherry Red. See www.geoffdownes.com for more information.

FILTER
EFFECTS
OSC2

Q&A

PETE BALLAM

Bram Stoker might have had connections to Roger Daltrey and The Rolling Stones back in the 70s, but they split up before they could even release their debut album. Now their guitarist Pete Ballam has taken some of their long-lost music and reimagined it as a solo album…

Words: Malcolm Dome

For a short period in the early 70s, Bram Stoker seemed to be at the vanguard of the progressive movement. The Bournemouth band's debut album, *Heavy Rock Spectacular*, was recorded in 1970 and it still sounds pioneering today as it introduced a steampunk slant to prog. Led by guitarist Pete Ballam, Bram Stoker made quite a splash among their peers and seemed destined to make a major impact on the scene, but the band split just two years later. An attempt to reunite the original line-up in 2004 led nowhere. Four decades on, Ballam has released *Manic Machine*, a solo album featuring fresh recordings of older songs, many of which were earmarked for a follow-up Bram Stoker album that was never made. For Ballam, it's a chance to finally show the world what might have been.

There was a connection with The Shadows in the band's early days, wasn't there?
Three of us from what would become Bram Stoker — myself, Hammond organ player Tony Bronsdon and drummer Rob Haines — were in a band with Jet Harris, The Shadows' bassist, for a little while. That was early in 1969, but it didn't work out. I came up with a heavy progressive arrangement of *Scarborough Fair*, but Jet couldn't get his head round it, so I knew this wouldn't work. Then one day Jet rode into our rehearsal hall on horseback and ruined the floor. As a result, we were thrown out of there, and the whole project fell apart. Soon after that we started Bram Stoker.

You briefly had Roger Daltrey as your producer. What happened there?

"Roger Daltrey invited the band to his cottage to do some recording…"

We did a gig with The Who in Bournemouth, and I persuaded Roger to watch our set. He was impressed enough to ask to listen to any rehearsal tapes we had, and then invited the band to his cottage to do some recording. We did six tracks towards an album, but then he had to abandon the project, because The Who were going on tour in America. But asked us to keep in touch, and did give us valuable advice a little later on. It's such a shame we never got to finish the album with him. I have no clue what happened to those recordings. It would be great to get them properly released one day.

You got signed through the Rolling Stones, didn't you?
We did a gig at Brunel University, and five labels came down to see us. After the show, this guy came up to me and said he'd booked a London studio and also a hotel for us the following week. He also left us £100 in cash. He turned out to be Tony Calder, who was heavily involved with the Stones. So, we went to De Lane Lea Studios as instructed, and worked with Tony Chapman, who was the Stones' spare producer, for a week. But he was dreadful. Those recordings did not represent what we sounded like. I asked Calder if we could have the album remixed, but he told me that it would have stay as it was. This turned out to be *Heavy Rock Spectacular*, which as far the band were concerned was a waste of time. It was only in 2004 that I even found out the album had been put out [in 1972]!

How on earth did the album get released without your knowledge?
I assume the tapes were subsequently sold on by the Stones people, and eventually reached Audio Archives, who put it out on CD in 1997. I discovered this by chance when the landlord of a pub showed me his copy.

You were renowned for your Doppler speakers. What exactly were they?
They were rotating speakers. I built my own cabinet with speakers at either end of a box. When this spun, I got an amazing three dimensional guitar sound. I controlled the box manually, but shan't give any more details, as that'll be giving away trade secrets!

Why did the band split up in 1972?
I lost my voice at a gig in Cardiff, and had to get the train home. I was exhausted and collapsed in bed for a week. Our bassist Jon Bavin, meanwhile, had told me that he wanted his royalties paid up in advance. If not, then he was giving six months notice that he was quitting the band. The combination of that threat and my illness left me fed up, so I decided to end the band.

There was an attempt to reunite the band in 2004. What happened?
After I found out *Heavy Rock Spectacular* had been put out without our knowledge, I found the rest of the guys and got them to agree to a music publisher having a go at getting at least some of the money we were due. We got together at a pub in the New Forest. The atmosphere was very odd. But I suggested we should think about recording the album in the way we always wanted. Rob was up for getting stuck into doing rehearsals immediately. But Tony was now managing director of an electronics company and didn't have the time and Jon [Bavin, bass] also showed little interest, so that fell apart.

You've just put out new album, *Manic Machine*. How did that come about?
I was offered sponsorship for any project that I wanted to do. I had recordings of songs, some of which dated back to 1969, and when I got this money I decided to get studio time at Cube Recording in Cornwall to finish it. What I was missing were a vocalist and drummer: I was fortunate to find Matt Roberts to do the former, while Gareth Young, who runs Cube, is a drummer in his own right.

There's a new Bram Stoker line-up now out there, featuring Brondson and Bavin. Do you have anything to do with this?
I was asked by the guys if I minded them doing a few local gigs, and I had no problem in agreeing to that. But because they are based some 300 miles from where I now live in Land's End, there's no direct contact.

Manic Machine is out now. See www.bramstokerarchives.com.

PZ
DANGER

Top Of The Progs: The PROG READERS' POLL 2017

It's that time again: last issue we revealed to you the *Prog* Critics' Choice of 2017, and over Christmas, you, the readers, had your say.

One band in particular has topped part of the poll, but we hope you'll agree that the variety of bands in the results across the board shows how healthy the progressive music scene is at present.

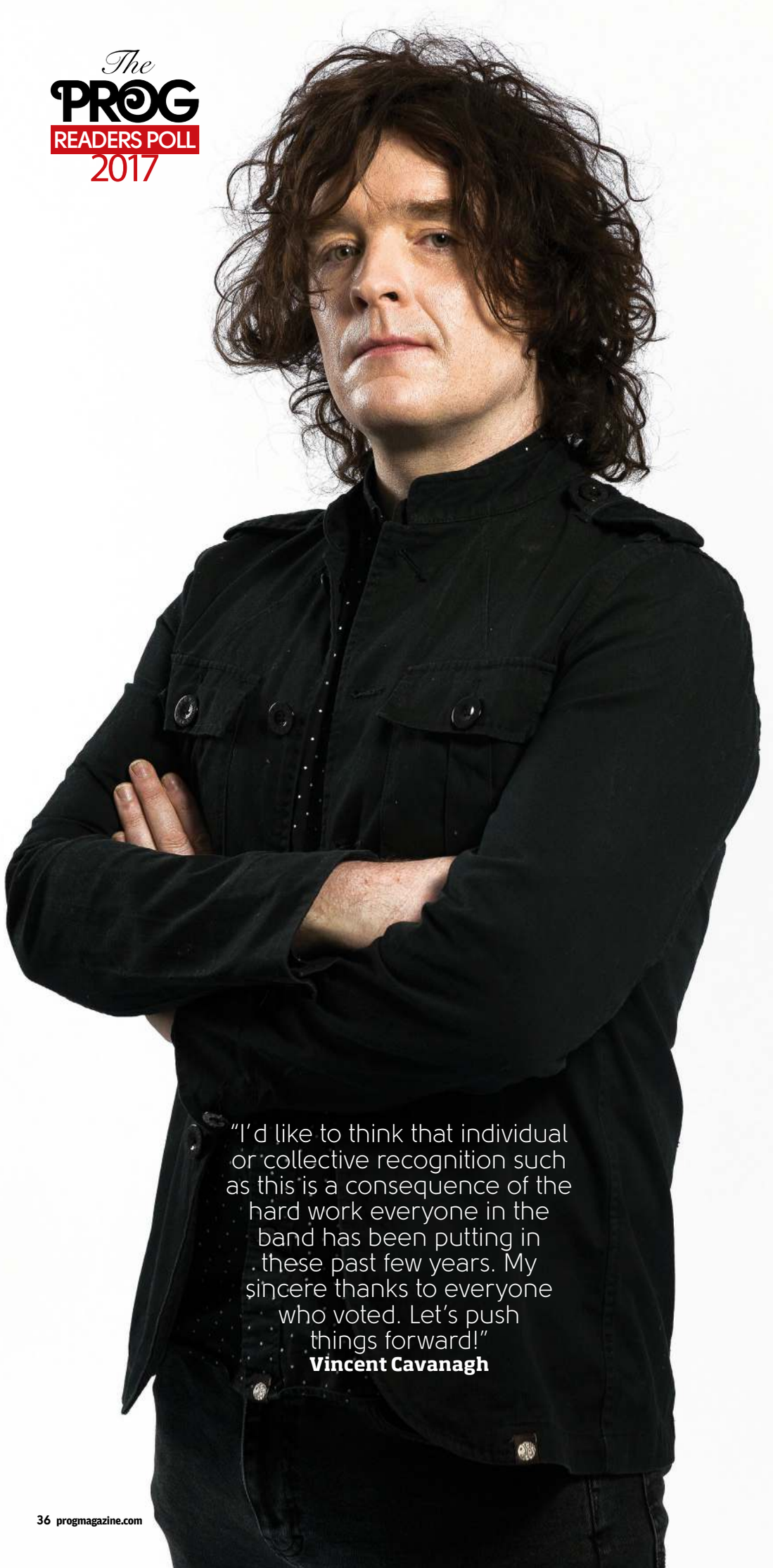
This time last year, we didn't even know if we would ever have a *Prog* magazine Readers' Poll again. So thanks very much to you, the readers, for taking the time to vote: we easily had our biggest response to the Readers' Poll yet. And a big congratulations to all of the winners, who are doing their part to keep the scene thriving.

BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

1. ANATHEMA
2. BIG BIG TRAIN
3. MARILLION
4. BENT KNEE
5. STEVEN WILSON
6. YES FEAT. ANDERSON, RABIN, WAKEMAN
7. KING CRIMSON
8. LIFESIGNS
9. THE PINEAPPLE THIEF
10. THE NEAL MORSE BAND

"This group I founded with my best friends has stood together through tough times by being people of integrity, making music of searing honesty. The fans are of the same mindset: candid, honest people who feel what we do. The fans are a better judge of whether what we're doing works or not. That's why this award is special."
Daniel Cavanagh

The PROG READERS POLL 2017



"I'd like to think that individual or collective recognition such as this is a consequence of the hard work everyone in the band has been putting in these past few years. My sincere thanks to everyone who voted. Let's push things forward!"
Vincent Cavanagh

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1. ANATHEMA – *The Optimist*
2. STEVEN WILSON – *To The Bone*
3. BIG BIG TRAIN – *Grimspound*
4. LIFESIGNS – *Cardington*
5. THE TANGENT – *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery*
6. BENT KNEE – *Land Animal*
7. BEATRIX PLAYERS – *Magnified*
8. LONELY ROBOT – *The Big Dream*
9. PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING – *Every Valley*
10. SONS OF APOLLO – *Psychotic Symphony*

MALE VOCALIST

1. VINCENT CAVANAGH (Anathema)
2. DAVID LONGDON (Big Big Train)
3. STEVE HOGARTH (Marillion)
4. JON ANDERSON
5. STEVEN WILSON
6. EINAR SOLBERG (Leprous)
7. JOHN YOUNG (Lifesigns)
8. DANIEL GILDENLÖW (Pain Of Salvation)
9. PAUL DRAPER
10. DANIEL CAVANAGH (Anathema)

FEMALE VOCALIST

1. LEE DOUGLAS (Anathema)

2. ANNEKE VAN GIERSBERGEN
3. COURTNEY SWAIN (Bent Knee)
4. MARJANA SEMKINA (iamthemorning)
5. OLIVIA SPARNENN (Mostly Autumn)
6. NINET TAYEB
7. AMY BIRKS (Beatrix Players)
8. CHRISTINA BOOTH (Magenta)
9. ANNE-MARIE HELDER (Panic Room)
10. CATHERINE-ANNE DAVIES (The Anchoress)

"Thanks so much *Prog* readers! It's been quite a year for us as a band, and it's not easy, but we seem to have this magic in us that enables us to keep going. I want to thank the lads for their hard work and dedication in all of this. Also I just wanna shout out to all the female singers, too: we're doing a grand job."
Lee Douglas

The PROG READERS POLL 2017

GUITARIST

1. STEVE HACKETT
2. STEVE ROTHERY (Marillion)
3. DAVID GILMOUR
4. RIKARD SJÖBLOM (Big Big Train)
5. LUKE MACHIN (Maschine)
6. STEVE HOWE (Yes)
7. JOHN MITCHELL (Frost*/Lonely Robot)
8. DAVE GREGORY (Big Big Train)
9. GUTHRIE GOVAN
10. ERIC GILLETTE (The Neal Morse Band)

"I'm both thrilled and honoured to have won the Guitarist category. Thanks to *Prog* magazine and everyone who voted for me. It'll be a lively year of touring coming up, so I'm practising like mad and keeping fingers warm and nimble on these bleak midwinter nights..."
Steve Hackett

CHAD JENKINS

DRUMMER

1. NICK D'VIRGILIO (Big Big Train)
2. GAVIN HARRISON (King Crimson)
3. MIKE PORTNOY
4. IAN MOSLEY (Marillion)
5. CRAIG BLUNDELL (Steven Wilson/Frost*)
6. CARL PALMER
7. MARCO MINNEMANN
8. VIRGIL DONATI
9. FROSTY BEEDLE (Lifesigns)
10. ALAN WHITE (Yes)

"I am truly honored by this. There are so many amazing artists out there, so to be on top of this list is a very big deal for me. I owe huge thanks to my band, all of the BBT fans, Sweetwater, *Prog* and everyone who supports our art and prog music. We wouldn't be here without you."
Nick D'Virgilio

BASSIST

1. NICK BEGGS
2. PETE TREWAVAS (Marillion)
3. TONY LEVIN (King Crimson)
4. GREG SPAWTON (Big Big Train)
5. JONAS REINGOLD (Karmakanic)
6. LEE POMEROY (Yes feat ARW/ELO)
7. YATIM HALIMI (Panic Room/Steve Rothery)
8. ROGER WATERS
9. GEDDY LEE (Rush)
10. JOHN MYUNG (Dream Theater)

"Uh oh! Have I been drawing far too much attention to myself... again? Thank you to one and all for noticing. You've made an old lady very happy."
Nick Beggs

KEYBOARDIST

1. ANDY TILLISON
(The Tangent)
2. RICK WAKEMAN
3. MARK KELLY (Marillion)
4. JOHN YOUNG (Lifesigns)
5. GLEB KOLYADIN (iamthemorning)
6. ADAM HOLZMAN (Steven Wilson)
7. DEREK SHERINIAN (Sons Of Apollo)
8. PETER JONES (Tiger Moth Tales)
9. RACHEL FLOWERS
10. JORDAN RUDESS (Dream Theater)

"I am quite amazed and delighted. Thank you to everyone who made this happen. It was an amazing year for The Tangent and Karmakanic, so for this to wrap up 2017 is special. I'd like to thank my comrades Jonas, Luke, Theo, Steve, Marie Eve, Sally and the InsideOut gang. And *Prog* mag. Should I mention that I am just about to release a solo album? Ha ha!"
Andy Tillison

The PROG READERS POLL 2017

MULTIMEDIA

1. DAVID GILMOUR – *Live At Pompeii*
2. SPOCK'S BEARD – *Snow Live*
3. PINK FLOYD – *Their Mortal Remains*
4. KING CRIMSON – *Live In Toronto*
5. THE PINEAPPLE THIEF – *Where We Stood*
6. JEFF LYNNE'S ELO – *Wembley Or Bust*
7. AYREON – *The Source*
8. STEVEN WILSON – *To The Bone* Deluxe Edition
9. PANIC ROOM – *Screens: Live In London*
10. GREG LAKE – *Lucky Man*

VENUE

1. ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON, UK
2. BOERDERIJ, ZOETERMEER, THE NETHERLANDS
3. ROBIN 2, BILSTON, UK
4. CADOGAN HALL, LONDON, UK
5. TRADING BOUNDARIES, SUSSEX, UK
6. 013 POPPODIUM, TILBURG, THE NETHERLANDS
7. THE MUSICIAN, LEICESTER, UK
8. BUSH HALL, LONDON, UK
9. THEKLA, BRISTOL, UK
10. EVENTIM HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON, UK

"We're thrilled to be *Prog*'s Venue Of The Year for the third year in a row. It's always nice when the hard work that goes into these concerts is recognised, but that's especially true when it's been voted for by music fans. 2018 promises more of the same, with Steven Wilson and Camel taking to the Hall's famous stage. See you then!"

Lucy Noble, Artistic Director at Royal Albert Hall

BEST NEW/UNSIGNED BAND

1. SCHOOLTREE
2. TIGER MOTH TALES
3. A FORMAL HORSE
4. THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA
5. THIS WINTER MACHINE
6. TINY GIANT
7. L'ANIMA
8. KAPREKAR'S CONSTANT
9. TILT
10. CAIRO

"Sending out our warmest thanks! 2017 was a beautiful year of accomplishment; after years of hard work and challenges, we released our rock opera double album, and made new friends around the world. We couldn't have done it without you. Ready to rock 2018!" **Schooltree**

REISSUE

1. MARILLION – *Misplaced Childhood*
2. RUSH – ***A Farewell To Kings***
3. JETHRO TULL – ***Songs From The Wood***
4. GENTLE GIANT – ***Three Piece Suite***
5. ALLAN HOLDSWORTH – ***The Man Who Changed Guitar Forever!***
6. EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER – ***Fanfare 1970-1997***
7. BILL BRUFORD – ***Seems Like A Lifetime Ago***
8. ALAN PARSONS PROJECT – ***Eye In The Sky***
9. RADIOHEAD – ***OK Computer OKNOTOK***
10. BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST – ***Octoberon***

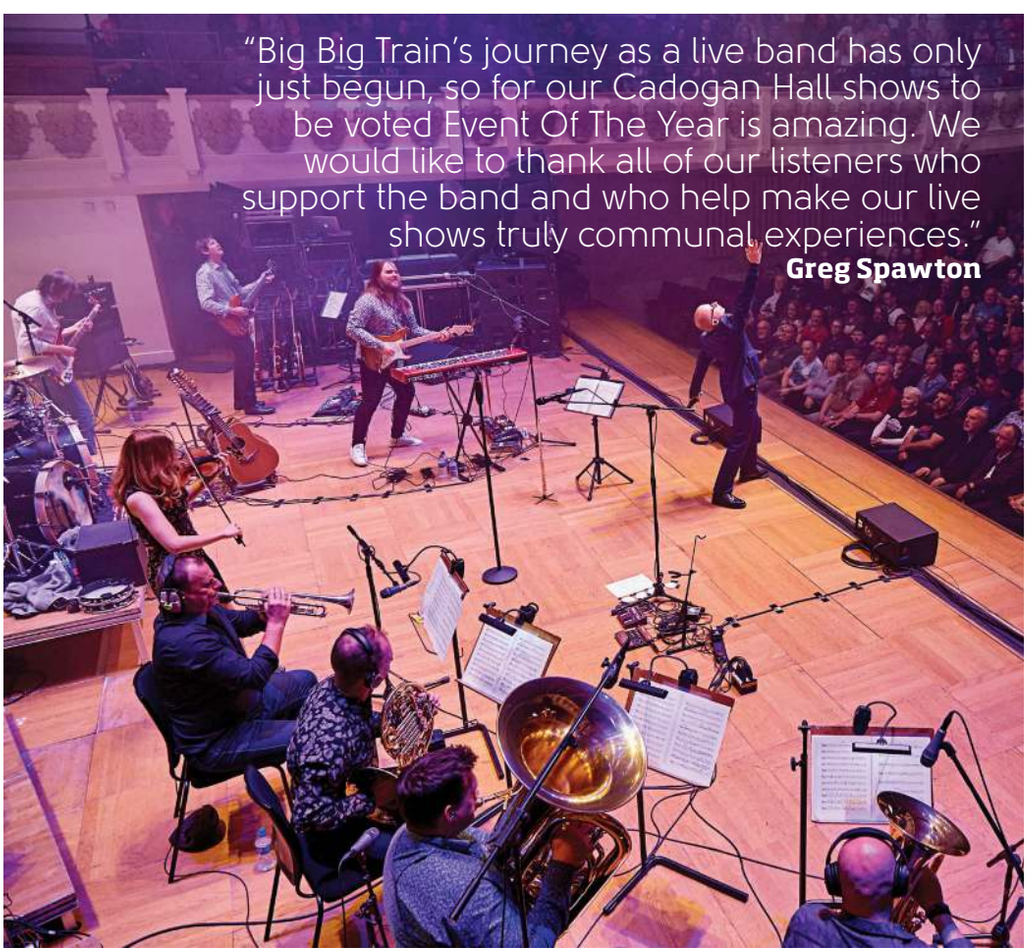
DISAPOINTMENT

1. JOHN WETTON R.I.P.
2. ALLAN HOLDSWORTH R.I.P.
3. STEVEN WILSON – *To The Bone*
4. VIRGIL HOWE R.I.P.
5. TOOL – No new album
6. YES – Hall Of Fame induction
7. RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR – Prog Stage down to one day
8. KANSAS – Cancellation of European Tour
9. ROGER WATERS – *Is This The Life We Really Want?*
10. KARNATAKA – The band's split and the way it was handled

"It is uplifting that *Prog* magazine's readership have voted for John. We are all devastated but committed to keeping his amazing legacy alive, and I am personally committed to finishing the songs we had started in 2015/2016".
Geoff Downes

EVENT

1. BIG BIG TRAIN – Cadogan Hall Concerts
2. MARILLION – Live At The Royal Albert Hall
3. The return of *Prog* magazine
4. YES. FEAT ARW – UK Tour
5. CRUISE TO THE EDGE
6. YES – Hall Of Fame induction
7. BE PROG! MY FRIEND
8. HRH PROG
9. AYREON – Ayreon Universe
10. NIGHT OF THE PROG



"Big Big Train's journey as a live band has only just begun, so for our Cadogan Hall shows to be voted Event Of The Year is amazing. We would like to thank all of our listeners who support the band and who help make our live shows truly communal experiences."
Greg Spawton

UNSUNG HERO

1. NELLIE PITTS – The Merch Desk

2. LUCY JORDACHE – Marillion Manager
3. STEPHANIE BRADLEY – Marillion Merch
4. STEPHEN LAMBE/HUW LLOYD-JONES – Summer's End
5. OCTAVIA BROWN – 2 Days Prog + 1
6. DANNY MAYO – Danfest/ Prog Promoter
7. GEORGE ROLDAN – RoSfest
8. ROB AUBREY – Producer
9. PETE MORGAN – Burning Shed
10. CLIFF PEARSON – Progzilla Radio

"Massive thanks to *Prog* magazine, the internet and all who sail in her for this stupendous accolade in recognition of my wee shoppe and tour dabblings. I try to listen to what people need, and do my best to make that happen, so I'm glad that it seems to be working."
Nellie Pitts

PERSON OF THE YEAR

1. STEVEN WILSON

2. GREG SPAWTON
3. STEVE HACKETT
4. BRUCE SOORD
5. JOHN YOUNG
6. ROB REED
7. STEVE HOWE
8. ANNE-MARIE HELDER
9. NEAL MORSE
10. STEVE HOGARTH

Dreaming Light

Anathema have topped the *Prog* Readers' Poll, winning best band, best album, best male singer and best female singer of 2017. For brothers and bandmates Danny and Vinnie Cavanagh, it's been a rocky road to get here. *Prog* speaks to both brothers about Anathema's past, present and future, from their turbulent childhood to the band's extreme metal past, to mental health issues and family conflict, to the creation of arguably their best album yet.

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Will Ireland

The day Anathema released their eleventh album, *The Optimist*, Danny and Vinnie Cavanagh were in different places. Not physically — the brothers were gearing up to play a show that evening in Russia, one of the many overseas strongholds their band has built up across their sometimes turbulent, frequently triumphant 28-year career.

But mentally, they were in separate headspaces. Danny, the band's guitarist and chief songwriter, was online, scanning reviews of the new album. He was keen to see what people were saying about an album that he had poured heart and soul into. Most of the notices were positive, but there were one or two bloggers who were unimpressed.

"Yeah, I looked to see what people were saying," he says, his Liverpool accent undimmed after several years of bouncing between other cities and other countries. "And anyone who doesn't like it, I think they're stupid. Because I know it's brilliant. But at the end of the day, there are far more important things in life. Like health, family, mental well-being. They're the things that really matter."

By contrast, Vinnie — Anathema's vocalist and guitarist, and Danny's younger brother by 10 months — wasn't remotely interested in what anyone else had to say. He knew the band had produced their best album yet, one that was simultaneously epic and intimate, tumultuous and cathartic.

"I have a different outlook," he says. "No nerves. If I'm happy with a record, I'm bulletproof. We try to make albums that are a reflection of who we are and where we are and what we can do. If we can get that right, I'm happy. And I know we got it right."

That's as perfect a snapshot of the relationship at the heart of Anathema as you'll get. Danny is Anathema's emotional core, a man who wears his heart on his sleeve and gives the band the personal edge that many of their peers lack. Vinnie is the one who helps make those emotions real, the pragmatist who keeps things anchored, who holds things together when they threaten to fly apart (and they have threatened to fly apart more than once over the years).

It's a combination that has worked for them. *The Optimist* isn't just the

Half of Anathema, L-R: Vincent Cavanagh, Lee Douglas, Danny Cavanagh. Shot exclusively by *Prog*, December 2017.

"We've always had fun, despite the hard times. You shouldn't think we've had years and years of misery, because it's not like that. We've had an incredible laugh."
Vinnie Cavanagh

Wildfires: Anathema shine a light in the dark.

"It's *our* band. Not just mine and Vinnie's, but John's and Jamie's and Lee's and Daniel's. We've been through too much together for it not to be."

Danny Cavanagh

best album in a career that has been marked with great records, but it's also the best album of the year according to our *Prog* Readers' Poll (see page 34).

But their journey hasn't been without its trials. There have been periods of personal and professional darkness, when it looked like they weren't going to make it through. *The Optimist* itself was born of a troubled time in Danny Cavanagh's life, though like the character at the centre of the record, both he and Anathema have emerged stronger and better.

"There's personal pain and anguish, sure," says Danny. "It doesn't have to be about that. It can also be songs about gratitude for life — I've done them before. This one had that pain, cos the songs are all autobiographical. So if we're singing about being in *Springfield*, feeling lost, that's because I actually felt lost."

We're sitting in a pub in Paddington, just around the corner from the *Prog* offices. As we talk, Danny nurses a coffee. He gave up alcohol around 2005. "It was really easy," he says of the initial decision behind his abstinence. "I just decided to have a month off. I'm still living in that month."

Danny, Vinnie and co-vocalist Lee Douglas have just finished their photo shoot (the remaining three members of the band, drummer/keyboard player John Douglas, keyboard player Daniel Cardoso, plus Danny and Vinnie's younger brother, bassist Jamie Cavanagh, are absent). The guitarist recalls a moment during the shoot that struck a chord.

"There's one bit we did, a staged photo, where our hands are interlocked and Vinnie is pulling me up," he says. "He's literally done that at times in the past. John and Vinnie, they've saved my life. Where would I be without them?" He laughs. "And where would they be without me…"

The Optimist is a continuation of the events of 2001's *A Fine Day To Exit*, the album that found Anathema shaking off their extreme metal past, expanding their horizons and their ambitions. Its picks up where *AFDTE* left off, with its troubled central character dragging himself out of the sea where he'd planned to end it all, then charts his physical and mental journey from the brink of oblivion to some kind of redemption. Its central theme is bleak, undoubtedly, but there's hope in there too.

But *The Optimist* is really Danny Cavanagh's story. Its moments of darkness and moments of light reflect his own life. "I had a couple of dark years on a personal level," he says, then pauses. "It was a breakdown, basically. I was addicted to Valium, and it was fucking horrible." He breathes deeply then exhales slowly. "That's the most candid thing I've ever said in an interview, it really is."

Danny says he doesn't want this to be "a depression interview". He's done a lot of those recently, especially on the back of his recent solo album, *Monochrome*. Still, it's hard to avoid the subject that weighs most heavily on *The Optimist*, and on Danny himself.

In the period between Anathema's last album, 2014's *Distant Satellites*, and the new record, Danny found himself struggling, mentally. He became a father for the first time just over four years ago, and the combination of parental responsibilities and the pressures that come with being an ambitious musician began to take their toll.

Above: Anathema, circa *The Silent Enigma* album (1995).

"I had pretty permanent anxiety, I couldn't sleep, my mind was racing all the time," he says. "I got prescribed these pills, but instead of a week it was for a month. And then I stopped taking them, and it was even worse — there was a rebound. So I got some more. And that was it for a couple of years."

This wasn't the first time Danny has struggled with mental health issues. In the late 90s, he suffered an LSD and magic mushroom-induced breakdown. ("It was an accident, but it was horrendous," he says now.) But sleeping pills, he says, caused another level of anguish.

"It was the most addictive thing I've ever known," he says. "It never stops feeling good, but if you haven't got it, if you run out for a couple of days, it's fucking horrible. It's like having a mini-nervous breakdown."

He reached rock bottom in 2016. "I went to the doctor and said: 'This is happening, help me out,'" he says. The doctor gradually reduced his dose. "I just tapered off over the course of a few months," he said. "It got less and less, and it just stopped."

He broke free of his addiction around Christmas 2016. These days he's on anti-depressants, which help both his state of mind and his general levels of optimism. "Things have definitely taken a step in the right direction since then," he says. "Health and happiness is on the up. I feel much better, cleaner and leaner."

Vinnie Cavanagh can remember watching his brother going through his personal hell. Even though he was the younger of the two siblings, he says that he felt protective of Danny.

"There are no two brothers who are closer than Danny and I," he says. "So it was important for him to realise that I was there for him as a brother and as a mate before we even thought about doing music together."

It was music that helped set Danny on the road to wellness. In late 2015, at Vinnie's behest, the band's management cleared their touring and promo schedule. The singer then set up a studio for the pair to play music simply for the sake of playing music.

"It got him out of the house, it gave us something to do," says Vinnie. "Danny and I would meet up and have coffees and talk about everything. But actively working together as well, it was a form of therapy. And that was the beginning of *The Optimist*."

Prog is speaking to Vinnie a couple of days later, in a hip, concrete-chic café in East London, close to where his artist girlfriend has a studio. Where Danny is candid and unfiltered, Vinnie is serious and thoughtful. He chooses his answers carefully, though there's spikiness just below the surface (his response to whether he's planning

Internal Landscapes

For *The Optimist*, Anathema once again turned to artist **Travis Smith** to add the necessary visuals...

When it came to providing a set of visuals to accompany the physical release of *The Optimist*, there was only one man for the job: Travis Smith.

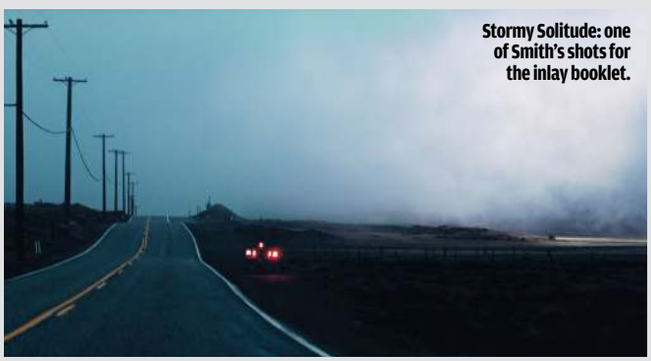
The California-born graphic artist made his name designing artwork for 90s metal bands such as Death and Nevermore, but he'd branched out into prog via the cover of Opeth's 1999 album *Still Life*. His working relationship with Anathema began with *A Fine Day To Exit*, for which he designed and photographed the striking booklet.

"I'd been a fan of them forever," he says. "I discovered them when *Pentecost III* came into my friends' record store. With *A Fine Day To Exit*, they were looking to do something different."

The label put Smith in contact with the band, who told him their ideas. The album's striking cover, featuring an abandoned car and a trail of clothes leading into the sea, was shot on Silver Strand near his home in San Diego. *The Optimist* returned to the character at the centre of that album, and once again Smith was enlisted to add an extra visual dimension.

"Danny told me he wanted to start at the beach, and then chart a journey through the locations that told the story of *The Optimist*," says Smith. "I immediately started thinking of places I knew between San Diego and California."

Over the ensuing weeks and months, he hit the road, travelling to various towns, cities and remote locations to shoot the images that appear in *The Optimist*'s inlay booklet. One of the most striking images is of the original beach just before a massive thunderstorm strikes.



TRAVIS SMITH

Stormy Solitude: one of Smith's shots for the inlay booklet.

"I went back to the beach to shoot, but it turned out to be severely stormy," says Smith. "It was dark, the sand was blowing everywhere. It was hard to shoot. But then I heard what they were doing with the music, and it fitted perfectly."

Unsurprisingly, Smith laments the decline of conceptual cover art in the digital age. "Think about all those classic albums, like *Dark Side Of The Moon* – the artwork was integral to the album. If it visalises the story, it adds a whole new dimension to the experience." **DEV**

a solo album is an amusingly sharp: "You'll know about it when I'm ready. Until then it's none of your business.").

When asked to describe his brother's strengths, Danny doesn't even pause to think: "Vinnie's got insight, intelligence. He's pragmatic and practical. He's caring and loyal. He's talented and supportive. And he's daft and funny. He's fucking amazing."

"I'm just a brother, mate," says Vinnie with a shrug, when it's brought up. "Just a good brother. I hope I am, anyway, to both of them. And to my friends as well."

Vinnie concedes that he's less emotional than his older brother, and he's managed to avoid the mental health issues that have plagued Danny. "I've always been the strong type — more self-reliant and self-contained," he says. "Danny lives and breathes music, it's in his every pore, it's in his soul, and I'm the guy who facilitates it because I've got the studio. He's sitting there, recording bits on his phone, but they're going to stay on his phone unless he comes and meets me and I go, 'Right, let's do something...'"

The Cavanaghs' closeness isn't surprising. They have certainly endured more hardship than most family members. They and Jamie were born and raised in working class Liverpool. Their mother was an alcoholic, and their dad was frequently violent.

"Our childhood, our whole lives, was absolute chaos for a long time," says Vinnie. "But I was able to deal with it in a certain way, which was by being self-reliant. It was a sort of defence mechanism to begin with. I remember just being able to deal with the chaos around me a lot easier."

Anathema was an escape from all that. Before the band formed as Pagan Angel in 1990, Vinnie had never been "more than two hours' drive from Liverpool — I literally had no money to do anything". The first time he stepped on a plane was in 1994, when the band flew to Romania to play some shows and generally act like a rock band in their early 20s should.

"We were kids acting like dickheads," he says. "Innocent dickheads, but dickheads. But we were just having fun."

The brothers grew up listening to The Beatles and Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Queen, Black Sabbath and U2. But their initial incarnation — featuring Danny and Vinnie, John Douglas, singer Darren White and bassist Duncan Patterson — was a world away from those bands, and just as far from what they themselves would eventually become. Anathema's first few releases found them pinning their colours firmly to the extreme metal mast, but there were occasional glimpses of a different future, such as the 23-minute ambient-leaning track *Dreaming: The Romance*, which closed their 1993 debut album, *Serenades*.

"Our influences were evolving rapidly, but our music wasn't following suit to begin with," says Vinnie. "But eventually you strip away those layers of adolescence and get to the truth of what it is you're trying to do. It was natural that the more experimental would come to the fore."

Anathema began to change direction after the departure of Darren White in 1995. Previously just the guitarist, Vincent took over vocals duties on their second album, *The Silent Enigma*, but it was the follow-up, 1996's *Eternity*, that marked a watershed. That album found them starting the process of phasing out their extreme metal past in favour of a more expansive sound that nodded to their beloved Pink Floyd. Vinnie was a reluctant singer at first. "I was learning on the go, and you can hear that," he says (Danny is less critical: "Vinnie becoming the singer changed everything," he says).

Anathema's metamorphosis continued with 1998's *Alternative 4* and the following year's *Judgement*, but three things happened in quick succession that threatened to derail things. First, John Douglas left the band due to personal issues (Douglas doesn't do interviews, but he rejoined the band before *A Fine Day To Exit*). A year later, longtime bassist Duncan Patterson followed him out.

Between these two events, something even more devastating happened: the Cavanagh's mum died. It's an understandably emotional subject, and in this case a complicated one too, but Danny doesn't shy away from it.

"It wasn't the death, it was the 10 years before that," he says. "She was very, very badly psychiatrically ill, and she was a horrendous alcoholic. But it was cos me dad battered her like fuck for 15 years and put her down and persecuted her. She had all these kids, no phone, no money and nowhere to go. In October 1990, three days after my 18th birthday, she had a complete mental and emotional breakdown. She died then. It took eight years to die of alcoholism after that." (He's less

sympathetic towards his father, who passed away a few years ago: "Fuck him, I barely cried for him.")

The Cavanagh brothers dealt with their mother's death in their own individual ways. The healing process was long and sometimes painful. Inevitably, it impacted on the band.

"After our mum died, we tried to rebuild, but it took us a few years to get there," says Vinnie. "But then any bad times you go through in life, it's important to recognise how you react to it and learn from that reaction, and to understand that if anything like that was to happen again, you're more mentally equipped to deal with it."

Vinnie says he's the only one who has "never spent any time out of Anathema". According to the singer, Danny walked away from the band for a few months between *A Fine Day To Exit* and its follow-up, 2003's *A Natural Disaster*. Ever the pragmatist, Vinnie wasn't about to let his brother's (albeit temporary) absence ruin things. He did what he did best: started organising things.

"I got a studio together in Liverpool and said, 'Okay lads, let's get some music together,'" he says. "Cos the focus of this band has always been the music. That's what we do, that's what has got us through some of the tough times."

Danny returned, of course, though the mid-00s were a strange time for Anathema. Between *A Natural Disaster* in 2003 and 2010's semi-comeback album, *We're Here Because We're Here*, the band stepped back from recording. This was in part due to the fact that their record label at the time had been closed down and they had no management. But there were other reasons too.

"The musical chemistry was disrupted, and I couldn't really function within the group," says Danny. "A manager or a record label could maybe have sorted that out. The wisdom at the time was that we didn't need them. Fucking big mistake."

"I think it was bravado," says Vinnie. "We were still writing music: 'Yeah, we'll be alright.' It wasn't stubbornness, it's just that we were on our own."

It wasn't quite a hiatus — they still toured, and even released an album, *Hindsight*, that featured acoustic versions of older songs — and both Cavanagh brothers are insistent that the band never split. But the impetus they had built up began to dissipate. "It held our career back big time," says Danny.

There was one unexpected positive that emerged from Anathema's years in

"John and Vinnie, they saved my life. Where would I be without them?"
Danny Cavanagh

Light And Shade: Danny goes deep.

Vinnie Cavanagh: Anathema's frontman. Or is he!?

"We try to make albums that are a reflection of who we are and where we are and what we can do. If we can get that right, I'm happy."
Vinnie Cavanagh

the wilderness. In the mid-00s, Danny started to see a therapist in order to try and help untangle his past mental issues, his complex family background and the death of his mother.

"I was still drinking at the time, and I'd started reading this book about alcoholism, and how it runs in the family," he says. "I had breakthrough therapy in 2005, it was wonderful. It was a beautiful, cathartic experience. Then I quit drinking. I started writing all the material that appeared on *We're Here Because We're Here*. It just took five years to get that out…"

When it did emerge in 2010, *We're Here Because We're Here* was the sound of a band replanting their flag on top of the mountain. More than anything that came before it, that album set them on the path that brought them to *The Optimist*. There was barely any trace of the band they were a decade-and-a-half before left. Now, they were truly channelling the visionary spirit of the great acts of the past — from Pink Floyd to Tangerine Dream — and adding real life emotion to it.

"That core of emotion is exactly what this band's about," says Vinnie. "If you were to have one definition of what this band is, it's emotional music. There's a melancholy in there, which can be joyful at the same time. You interpret the big things, the big emotions through music."

There are other emotions you could associate with Anathema, and with the Cavanaghs specifically. At various points over the years, there has been plenty of conflict between the brothers, even if it's never quite hit Noel and Liam Gallagher levels.

"Yeah, the relationship has been fairly combustible," concedes Vinnie. "Especially in our 20s. Danny and I didn't get on for many years. But then we grew up and we realised that we had more in common than not."

"It got much better after I got clean," says Danny. "And as we got older. If we have a slanging match now, which isn't that often, it's gone the next day."

Have Anathema ever properly split up?

"No," says Danny. "It's not even come close. It's just a way of life. There's been times when it's been a strain, and I've thought, 'I could do without this bollocks.' But you get over it, cos this is the best thing in the world."

Would they still both be in the same band if they weren't brothers?

Vinnie: "It's possible. It all depends. I don't think there's anyone better to sing Danny's songs than me, apart from himself."

Danny is less cautious. "No," he says simply.

Why not?

"Some of the things that have been said in private over the years. The kind of things only brothers can say and get away with."

When the band played London's Shepherd's Bush Empire last autumn, there was a moment when the tension between the brothers appeared to be playing out in public. At one point, there was an onstage conversation between the two of them about who was the band's frontman, while the show ended with a song from Danny's solo album. While it wasn't testy enough to count as an argument, it still suggested that it's a question that preys on their minds.

"Ah, that was a joke," says Danny emphatically. "Banter."

So who is the frontman in the band?

"[Laughs] Well, officially it's Vinnie, but really it's me."

Will he agree you on that?

"No, of course not."

So is Anathema your band? He's suddenly serious.

"No, it's *our* band. Not just mine and Vinnie's, but John's and Jamie's and Lee's and Daniel's. We've been through too much together for it not to be."

A pause and a smirk. "But I'm behind it all."

Despite Danny's reservations, Anathema's period away from the frontline in the 00s turned out to be a smart decision on more than one level.

"2005 to 2009 were magic years for me," says the guitarist. "I'd come out of therapy, stopped drinking. I'd got out of a bad relationship. It was the first time I felt free."

That sense of freedom fed into Anathema. By the time of their comeback, *We're Here Because We're Here*, they sounded like a band reborn, utterly unrecognisable from the "dickheads" who had crawled out of Liverpool 20 years earlier.

"David Bowie put it best," says Vinnie. "He always said that he liked to walk out into the ocean — he knew where the shore was, but his feet weren't quite touching the floor. He was out of his comfort zone but not too far. That's fucking spot on. You shouldn't pander to your record company or the radio or even your audience, cos that's fucking dangerous if you want to stay true to yourself as a creative person. That's the true spirit of rock'n'roll."

Subsequent albums have built on the artistic the success of *We're Here*…. Commercially, too, each one has outsold the one that came before. Yet Anathema still find themselves in a strange place in 2018. Their career is on an upswing — the album sales, chart placings and gigs all say as much. But Anathema haven't quite made the leap to the next level of acceptance in the way that Opeth or Steven Wilson — two artists who started out at roughly the same time and broadly exist in the same musical space — have. Sure, it's not a competition, but it's odd that they're lagging behind in commercial terms — their music is more emotional, more welcoming, more direct than either of those bands. Are they happy being under the radar?

"No," says Vinnie emphatically. "I don't think our music is so complicated that a mainstream audience wouldn't find something in it. A song like *Untouchable* (from 2012's *Weather Systems*), for example, there's a huge audience for music like that. When we were kids, we grew up on songs with great melody, and melodies are always the most important thing for us. We write catchy music as far as we're concerned. Granted there are experimental parts, but on the whole it has broader appeal."

Vinnie has a theory about why Anathema aren't more successful in mainstream terms. He thinks that people still judge his band by their distant past. "I think there's a stigma around us because of our earlier records," he says. "You never get away from it. Even the name makes us sound like a 1990s metal band. Ironically if we'd have stayed on that path we were on years ago, we'd have been much bigger than we are now. The metal scene is fucking massive. But you paint yourselves into a corner."

Vinnie says that he pushed for the band to change their name in the long gap between *A Natural Disaster* and *We're Here Because We're Here*, to no avail. "I couldn't get enough support for the idea from the people around us at the time," he says. "Every fucking year I'd bring it to the table: 'Just change the band name.' But no one was having it."

Danny insists that the band did talk about changing the name "years ago", but couldn't find anything that would have worked. Anyway, he gave up on the idea of Anathema connecting with a broad mainstream audience a long time ago.

"There's a glass ceiling for this band," says the guitarist, "and it's the Royal Albert Hall. To do a headlining show in that place and fill it is about as good as it's going to get."

That's a bit unambitious, isn't it? He shrugs.

"I'm just being realistic. I think it dawned on me about 2005, around the time I stopped drinking. It used to make me unhappy trying to break through all the time. When we did *A Fine Day To Exit*, it was like, 'When are we gonna tour with Muse?' or 'When are we gonna tour with Radiohead?' Never, is the answer

to that. I just chilled out and gave up trying to be Radiohead. I think it was Lemmy who said that unless you're in the right place at the right time, no matter how good you are, it won't happen. And we weren't, and it didn't."

Do you feel like outsiders?

"I don't think we're outsiders as such, but I am not as connected as some of those other people. They manage their careers better than I do. [Laughs] They have less to put up with. But on the other hand, we're better than anybody else in this scene. Nobody else can touch what we do. Fucking no one. Name one."

Steven Wilson?

"Too clean."

Opeth?

"They're great at what they do, but nah. Radiohead are better than us. U2 at their best. Nirvana. Pink Floyd. Led Zeppelin. The Beatles. Kate Bush. Dire Straits. All the greats — they're all better than us and always will be better than us. But in this scene? Nah."

> "I don't think our music is so complicated that a mainstream audience wouldn't find something in it."
> **Vinnie Cavanagh**

Three's Company: the Cavanagh brothers and Lee Douglas.

That kind of bullishness would sound ridiculous if it didn't have a ring of truth to it. Even in a year in which prog's new gods have served up an array of stellar albums — from Steven Wilson's *To The Bone* to Big Big Train's *Grimspound* — *The Optimist* certainly stands out. Few bands in recent memory have matched its emotional resonance, the way it displays its moods — desperation, hope, everything in between — so openly without actually feeling the need to spell everything out.

"Yeah, it's not black and white," says Vinnie. "Anyone can interpret how they want, but the way I see it, there's some resolution, finally, but *The Optimist* character has to go through some very intense… *things* before he can get there. You've got to go there to come back."

"Is it an optimistic album?" says Danny. "I would say so, yeah. I've never really said the way I think it ends, but I personally think it's a happy ending — to be continued, anyway. He didn't dive in the water at the end and sink."

It's a typically open-ended and ambiguous finale, one that would lend itself to an extension of *The Optimist*'s story. This is something that both Cavanagh brothers have thought about.

"I was considering an EP to close up the story, about *The Optimist*'s childhood — our childhood," says Danny. "What made him this person. But I don't know if that will compromise the next album. You might end up putting songs on it that are good enough for a full album. That's what happened with (2012's) *Weather Systems*. It was gonna be an EP, and it turned into an album cos we thought, 'We need to put more songs on it.'"

If they do go down that route, they already have one potential song in the bag. There's a secret track hidden in *The Optimist*'s intro track *32.63n 117.14w*, or at least a snippet of one — as the title character fiddles with a car radio, an Anathema song suddenly comes into focus, then

disappears just as quickly. This is *Dreaming In Reverse*, recorded for *The Optimist* then held off at the last minute. It takes confidence for a band to do that.

"That's a full fucking song," says Vinnie. "We spent a good few days on that, putting it together, recording it, then we just put it on the radio for 10 seconds."

Another potential future could see Anathema playing the album from start to finish, maybe even with an orchestra. Given *The Optimist*'s narrative structure and ambition, it would make sense. "I think we will at some point," says Vinnie. "We've played virtually every song so far — the only one we haven't played so far is *Close Your Eyes*, the jazzy one. We haven't done that one yet. But if we go down that route, we'll have to do something special musically and visually."

If the future isn't quite carved in stone, then the recent past is. Last September, *The Optimist* was crowned Best Album at the Progressive Music Awards, a culmination of the respect that Anathema had gathered over the past few years. While he's happy with the accolade, Danny insists that it's not the be all and end all of everything.

"It's not that I don't care," he says. "I am proud of the recognition, and I am proud that people like it. And I'm proud that even in the difficult years, the band managed to keep creating these things. But that's not the most important thing. The biggest deal to me would be health and happiness."

The Cavanaghs are keen to dispel the idea that life in Anathema has been a quarter century of doom and gloom. "The start, when we were all innocent and a bunch of kids, yes, that was amazing and fun and eye-opening, especially for a bunch of kids coming from where we came from and the life that we came from," says Vinnie. "But we've always had fun, despite the hard times. You shouldn't think we've had years and years of misery, because it's not like that. We've had an incredible laugh."

For Danny, life in Anathema — and out of it — is better now than it has been in a long time. "Right now, I feel some contentment with how it's going," he says. "The music's getting better and better, the togetherness of the group is incredible. Music is healing for me, and it's healing for people who listen to it. But it's also the healing power of family. It's the band that's healed me, not the music. It's being with them that's cathartic."

The Optimist is out now on Kscope. See www.anathemamusic.com for more information.

Fragile Dreams

Charting Anathema's 25-year sonic journey into the heart of prog...

Dreaming: The Romance

Emerging as part of a groundswell of British extreme metal bands, Anathema's original incarnation was a harsh and gloomy one. But the final song on their 1993 debut album, *Serenades*, took another path entirely. A 23-minute ambient electronic piece that nodded to Tangerine Dream and John Carpenter, it suggested there was a different band hiding behind the dirgey guitars and impenetrable vocals.

Hope

Anathema had previously kept their love of 70s prog, folk and classic rock hidden, but they stepped out of the shadows on 1996's *Eternity* with this faithful cover of a 1985 Roy Harper song, whose billowing central riff was originally written by David Gilmour. Harper himself gave it his stamp of approval, providing the spoken word intro in the form of a re-recorded version of his own *Bad Speech*. A glimpse of the future opening up for Anathema.

Regret

Released in 1997, *Alternative 4* was a pivotal album for Anathema – the point where they noticeably began to move on from heavy metal roots. At nearly eight minutes, *Regret* was the sound of a band dipping their toe into the prog pool – a heavily textured mix of the acoustic and the electric, underpinned by some vintage keyboard work, it succeeded in throwing off the shackles.

One Last Goodbye

Since his tentative vocal debut on 1995's *The Silent Enigma*, Vinnie Cavanagh had come on in leaps and bounds as a singer. 1999's *Judgement* features his best performance as a singer, on *One Last Goodbye*, a song written in tribute to the Cavanagh's late mother. Anathema had dealt in emotion before this point, but this was something else.

Release

By the turn of the millennium, Anathema had decided they didn't want to be a heavy metal band any more. 2001's *A Fine Day To Exit* was their attempt to make a Radiohead album – and it was a successful one at that. Big, billowing and charged with emotion, *Release* feels like a dry run for the later part of their career.

Flying

With 2003's *A Natural Disaster*, the band pulled back from their Radiohead fixation and opted to scratch their Pink Floyd itch instead. Rather than simply copy Gilmour and co, they took that band's ebb and flow and spun their own version from it. The hazy, balladic *Flying* is Floydian in its emotional pull, building towards an understated but impactful Danny Cavanagh solo.

Universal

A seven-year break between studio albums did the band no favours, but when they returned with 2010's *We're Here Because We're Here*, it was with renewed vigour. Perhaps it was the presence of producer Steven Wilson, but it suddenly felt like the game had changed – something that was never more evident than on *Universal*, a symphonic prog power ballad that they could only have dreamed about making a decade before.

Untouchable Pts 1 & 2

With 2012's *Weather Systems*, Anathema staked a claim as one of the most visionary British bands of the decade. This is a bit of a cheat, as it's actually two songs – *Pt 1* starts off with a picked acoustic guitar before building up a head of steam, while the lushly orchestrated *Pt 2* works as a fantastic showcase for Lee Douglas, whose crystal clear voice was by now an integral part of the Anathema sound.

Distant Satellites

A very different kind of progression came with the title track of the band's 2014 album. A glitchy introduction soon erupts into a full blown electronic prog anthem, complete with thumping backbeat and crashing piano chords – put it down to Vinnie's love of late 80s and early 90s dance music. In another universe, it could easily have led them in a completely different direction for the next album – instead they incorporated the electronics in a much more subtle way.

Back To The Start

The final – and finest – song on their latest album, *The Optimist*, might wrap up the story of the central character, but it opens up yet another possible future for Anathema. What starts as a hushed, low-key ballad suddenly changes gear and shifts into entirely new territory. The result is a kind of symphonic terrace anthem, one that crackles with verve and, yes, optimism, and suggests that whatever they do next will be worth waiting for. **DEV**

The Sky's The Limit

The Alan Parsons Project are celebrating the 35th anniversary of *Eye In The Sky* with a deluxe box set that uncovers a treasure trove of tapes and demos that belonged to the late Eric Woolfson. *Prog* speaks to Parsons and Woolfson's daughter Sally about the deluxe package…

Words: Johnny Sharp

Play the dramatic opening bars of The Alan Parsons Project's 1982 album *Eye In The Sky* to anyone, anywhere in the world, and you're likely to see a flicker of recognition. They might not be able to name the track they're listening to, but they'll feel they know it.

If you repeat that experiment in the US, the likelihood of familiarity is even greater. Many will mention something to do with basketball, due to the use of the piece *Sirius* as the walk-on music for the Chicago Bulls in the NBA ever since their all-conquering 1990s prime. Some might mention one of the umpteen hip hop tracks it was sampled on, or the work conference where they heard it introducing the keynote speaker.

But ask anyone to name the artist who co-wrote and gave his name to it and they might well struggle. Then ask them to pick Alan Parsons out of a police line-up, and the odds are multiplied further.

Even in America, where The Alan Parsons Project have sold tens of millions of albums and had several Billboard chart hits, much the same is true.

"There's an old story about me going into Tower Records on Sunset Strip in LA," Parsons tells *Prog*. "I bought several copies of my own albums to the counter because I didn't have any to give away to friends and so on. I slapped down a credit card, which clearly had the words 'Alan Parsons' on it, and the cashier said, 'Have you got ID?'

"So I've never been someone that gets recognised, which I think is probably a blessing, really."

As we talk over a phone line from the Netherlands, Parsons and his current band are preparing for a solo show in Nijmegen, as part of a handful of shows playing APP's 1977 album *I, Robot*, in full to celebrate its 40th birthday. But we're here to talk about *Eye In The Sky*, which has just been reissued to celebrate 35 years of existence.

In His Element: Alan Parsons in the studio.

"I find it faintly ironic that I'm promoting one 35-year-old box set over the phone and promoting another 40-year-old album on stage," he says. But there's a reason why *Eye In The Sky* rather than *I, Robot* has been reissued as a sumptuous box set. And that's the recent discovery of a veritable treasure trove of old tapes and demos belonging to Parsons' long-time APP lieutenant, musical partner and songwriter-in-chief, Eric Woolfson, who passed away in 2009.

"Back in 2014 we found hundreds of hours of ideas and demos my dad had recorded, much of it just recorded on a little Sony Walkman," says Eric's daughter Sally Woolfson. "He'd write and record his ideas on cassette, then return to it later."

If anyone is doing more than Parsons himself to maintain the global profile of the Alan Parsons Project, it's Sally who, since the early 2000s, has used her background in product management to tirelessly promote the band's back catalogue.

"I spent hours auditioning the material," she says of the new archive, "whittling it down to a CD's worth."

Then came the difficult bit — the baking.

No, really. To resurrect ancient old tapes, whether reel-to-reel or cassette, special ovens are used to

Main Pic: Eric Woolfson with wife Hazel, and daughters Sally (centre) and Lorna (left). Below: the tapes that Sally found.

dry up the sticky residue that develops on old tapes over years of storage.

"It brings them back to life, often for one last time," Sally explains. "You extract the music and that can be the end of it."

The fruit of the "40 or 50" tapes can be heard on the third CD of the new *Eye In The Sky* box set, one of four discs nestled amid a sumptuous package that includes a coffee table hardback book delving into the making of the record (and Parsons' 5.1 surround sound remastered Blu-ray and HD version of the album) in detail, gatefold double vinyl version, 7-inch promo single, postcard and poster.

They show songs such as the title track in various states of development, and in many places it offers glimpses of what might have been: *Children Of The Moon* is stripped back to its initial chords on a 12-string guitar rather than the synth-led version that made it onto the final cut, then a demo reading features a different guitar solo. Elsewhere, highlights include an alternative orchestral decoration of *Psychobabble*, and Chris Rainbow's "one-man Beach Boys" layered harmonies on the album's show-stopping final ballad *Old And Wise*.

> "Back in 2014 we found hundreds of hours of ideas and demos my dad had recorded, much of it just recorded on a little Sony Walkman."
>
> **Sally Woolfson**

Perhaps surprisingly, many of the final chord flourishes are already present, even if essential furniture such as vocal melodies, lyrics and arrangements are absent.

"That's the way Dad often wrote," says Sally. "Sometimes he would just sit for hours on the sofa in silence and you'd wonder what he was up to – in fact he was writing a song. He would literally write it in his head and then finally, sit down at the piano and play the whole thing."

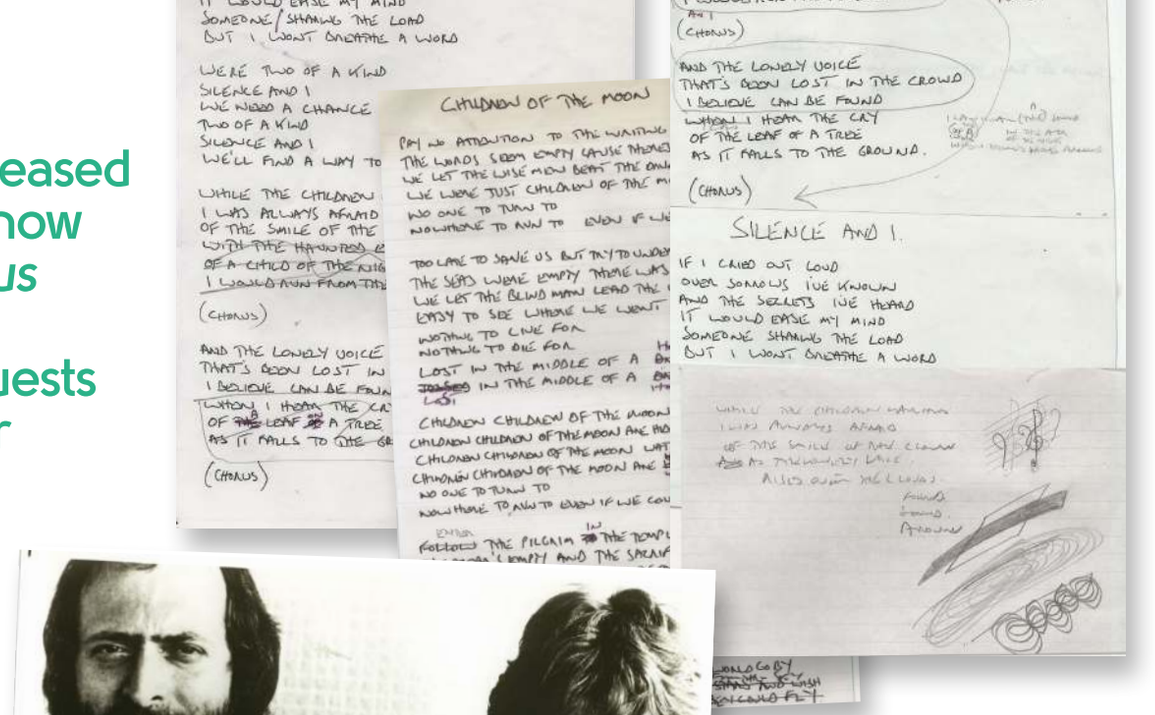
The discovery of the tapes wasn't a huge surprise to Eric Woolfson's former bandmate, however.

"I knew it was his MO," says Parsons. "He would develop songs just sitting at the piano and by the time he'd play them to me he'd gone through several stages of that process."

All the same, you can't really argue that any of those roads not taken during the creative process would have made for a better album. *Eye In The Sky* is one of those records that it

"It has never ceased to amaze me how much use *Sirius* gets. We get countless requests to licence it for commercials, movies, and it's become a sports anthem. It's just incredible."

Alan Parsons



Above: Eric's notes and handwritten lyrics. Left: *Eye In The Sky* press photo. Below left: *Eye In The Sky* 35th Anniversary boxset.

seems impossible to improve on. Or so you'd imagine until you've sat down to listen to the new 5.1 surround sound mix that Parsons himself has produced from the original master tapes.

The new overhaul gives the sonic vision a new grandeur that begs you to turn out the lights and immerse yourself.

"Quadraphonic had existed 10 years before (*EITS*)," says Parsons, "but it died a rather miserable death so I didn't really revisit surround until the late 80s, when 5.1 became a new format. But it was always there at the back of my mind — wouldn't this sound good in quadraphonic or surround — and it was a real treat to get the tapes out again and reformat them. Really good fun."

It's never sounded more like a record built for arenas, and as the opening bars of *Sirius* swirl around you, you're already imagining a son et lumière scene in a giant arena, which of course, many sporting promoters long ago noticed themselves.

"It has never ceased to amaze me how much use that one tune gets," says Parsons. "We get requests for commercials, movies, and it's become a sports anthem. It's just incredible."

Not all uses are legitimate. For instance, during the campaign for the Republican presidency nomination, Donald Trump used the track as his intro theme, without even asking permission. A stern letter was fired off.

"It was the fact he didn't even ask," Parsons admits. "If they'd made a request I might have thought, well, it's exposure and people will talk about it. But Sally is, to say the least, not a Trump supporter, and she put a stop to it."

But if such tracks are so well-suited to big arenas, does their producer regret that APP never took the logical step of playing them live in such settings?

"Hugely, yes," he says without hesitation. "If Eric had recognised that I could have made a contribution as a member of the band then it could have worked. I think it was just assumed that I was the guy behind the glass, so by definition, I didn't venture out to perform live, and that's what we always said — we were a studio recording outfit. There were other limitations as well, such as the difficulty of taking an orchestra out with us to recreate a lot of the music — I think only The Moody Blues had attempted that before that point. But I think if we had taken the plunge, we could have been as big as anybody — a stadium act."

Even if APP weren't as big in the UK than they were across the Atlantic, though, they weren't just influential over there. One fan is Steven Wilson, who hired Alan Parsons to engineer his 2013 solo set *The Raven That Refused To Sing*.

"That was fun," says Parsons brightly. "Shame it was only a one-off, it seems. He gets a lot of the surround sound production work that I'd like to do, but I can't really begrudge him that. I think Steven epitomises where prog is right now, and he's taking it forward — so it's no wonder he's in demand."

The 69-year-old has never been one to rely on his vintage sound, as he showed when he invited guests ranging from electronica duo The Crystal Method to John Cleese for his last solo outing, 2004's EDM-influenced *A Valid Path*. But his next solo album, which he's started working on in his new Santa Barbara home studio, promises to be "more prog — more in the style of APP".

Meanwhile, any reservations about live performance long forgotten, the Alan Parsons Live Project (est. 1999) still tour regularly, and as we speak he has just performed again at a 5,000-seater arena in Israel, no doubt to the chagrin of one man he once famously shared a studio with. Roger Waters tried in vain to get Alan to join the artists' boycott of gigs in Israel via a public Facebook appeal, and despite Parsons responding, "music knows no borders, and neither do I", Waters begged the erstwhile Floyd engineer to reconsider. Has there been any communication since?

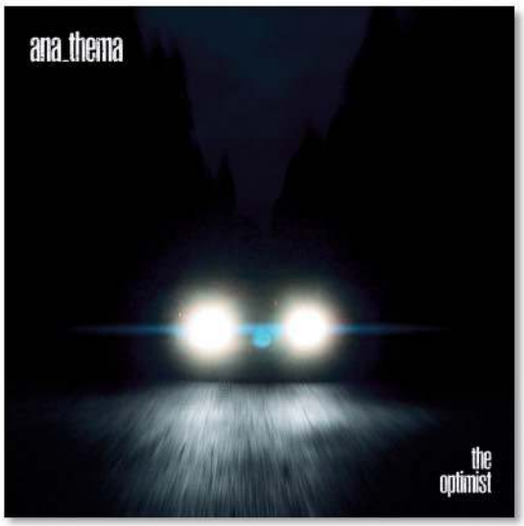
"No, we haven't spoken. And he didn't come forward to slap me on the wrist this time," he says. In fact, he adds, "I've actually been actively supporting Israeli organisations that oppose the boycott."

And when will he play in the UK again?

"I'd love to, it's just a case of finding a promoter ready to take the risk. We played Shepherds Bush a couple of years ago and it went well but believe it or not it didn't sell out. So I'm still waiting for the phone to ring."

Don't they know who he is? Maybe someone should play them that tune they play at the basketball...

Eye In The Sky 35th Anniversary box set is out now via Sony's Legacy Recordings. See www.alanparsonsmusic.com for more information.



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MAKIN'

Dutch proggers **Kayak** came close to breaking America in the 70s, but a number of factors got in the way. Now back with a new album and lease of life, the band's last remaining original member **Ton Scherpenzeel** looks back over their career and discusses what went wrong, his hopes for the future and his fear of flying…

Words: Dave Ling

Kayak have been staples of the Dutch progressive music scene for a whopping 45 years, releasing 17 albums along the way. For their keyboard player and remaining original member Ton Scherpenzeel, it's been quite a ride. Besides pursuing a parallel career as a member of Camel during some of that time, he held things together through myriad line-up changes as Kayak came close to a priceless breakthrough in the American market during the late 1970s, only to split up five years later.

Following a reunion in 1999, Scherpenzeel followed an independent path with his group's most recent records, but thanks to a last minute intervention from InsideOut Music, who offered an international deal for their just-released new album *Seventeen*, Scherpenzeel hopes that it's time to become better known outside of the lowlands.

Holland, it seems, still boasts a thriving progressive music scene. "You've got Ayreon, who are more metal than Kayak will ever be," said Scherpenzeel during a recent Skype conversation (he was among the many guests on Arjen Anthony Lucassen's 1998 rock opera *Into The Electric Castle*), "but that's just the tip of the iceberg."

When *Prog* enquires whether Kayak are Holland's second biggest Dutch prog band outside of Focus, Scherpenzeel merely shrugs.

"I don't think about those things," he smiles disarmingly. "I know Thijs [van Leer, Focus keyboardist] and together with Jan Akkerman [Focus' ex-guitarist] Kayak did a tour of England back in 1977, but there's no sense of competition."

Left: new album *Seventeen*.

"IT'S ONLY AFTERWARDS WHEN YOU SEE THE PAPERWORK AND STATISTICS, WHEN THEY'RE OUT THERE ON THE INTERNET, THAT YOU REALISE, 'HEY, KAYAK COULD REALLY HAVE BEEN SOMETHING.'"

Kayak, with Ton Scherpenzeel second from left.

WAVES

Nor should there be any, of course. Kayak's history dates back to 1972, when the teenaged Scherpenzeel and drummer Pim Koopman became friends at a volleyball club in Hilversum. The pair knew their eventual lead vocalist Max Werner as a fellow student at a local music conservatory, completing the team with guitarist Johan Slager and bassist Cees van Leeuwen. The band achieved huge success right off the bat with the following year's debut album *See See The Sun* and its hits, *Lyrics* and *Mammoth*.

"We were very young then. Too young, in fact," Scherpenzeel considers. "They called us a supergroup, but we hadn't even left Holland. All the same, with two Top 20 singles at home, it was as good a start as anyone could have wished for."

For a period of five albums, Kayak enjoyed stability, until, in a reverse 'Phil Collins in Genesis' scenario, Max Werner decided to abandon the mic and become a drummer. The timing of such a switch could not have been any worse, as 1978 had seen their single, *Want You To Be Mine*, reach Number 55 on America's Billboard chart and threaten to climb higher still. Forced to seek a replacement singer and unable to tour there thanks to Scherpenzeel's fear of flying, Kayak's American dream was abandoned to wither and die.

"Max hated his own voice — he had never wanted to be the lead singer when we started," Scherpenzeel states. "So he told us, 'If you want me to remain in the band, I will drum.' He wasn't the best drummer in the world, but we rationalised that if he stayed, we'd still have his voice along the drums, and we'd find a new singer. In those days, without the internet, America felt a lot further away than it does now. Everything was done by letters and phone calls but without having to change things around something very big could have happened for Kayak there."

Decades afterwards, disappointment can still be heard in Scherpenzeel's voice. To have come within touching distance must have been especially heartbreaking?

"At the time, the full significance didn't really dawn on me," he admits. "We had a number one album in Holland and we were busy, but it's only afterwards when you see the paperwork and statistics, when they're out there on the internet, that you realise, 'Hey, Kayak could really have been something.'"

In 1982, the group called it a day due to what Scherpenzeel now describes as "a combination of many different setbacks, including financial issues and personal and musical problems". The fact that Max Werner had a solo hit in Germany represented an additional hurdle. "There were also difficulties with our manager and we just didn't function anymore," Scherpenzeel relates sadly. "The spirit was gone: it was like Spinal Tap all over again."

Scherpenzeel used Kayak's absence to join Camel from 1984 onwards. With the two bands sharing a US label, Janus Records, Scherpenzeel was thrilled to hook up with Andy Latimer and company, alternating between full-time band membership and touring muso status and appearing on *Stationary Traveller*, the live album *Pressure Points*, *Dust And Dreams* and *Rajaz*. It was the keyboardist's problems with aviation

that made it difficult for this relationship to continue. Despite having sought various potential remedies, things haven't really changed for him.

"If it is not really necessary for me to fly, I won't do it," he sighs.

Almost two decades after they broke up, Kayak were invited to appear on a popular Dutch TV show. Things went so well that Scherpenzeel had no qualms with a permanent reunion, though this wasn't as simple as it sounds.

"I had remained in contact with Pim Koopman, the other important member of the band who, besides drumming, also wrote and produced, and we took things slowly at the start," he relates.

In fact, Scherpenzeel and Koopman first discussed working together again in 1995, but it would take a further four years for Kayak to be reborn. "We had a manager

Retro Chic: Kayak circa 1975.

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Salvation, though Scherpenzeel played most of the album's bass parts himself.

So belated was Kayak's tie-in with InsideOut that, following a Pledge Music campaign, an original pre-sale date was

but the format of verse-chorus-verse-chorus is just as fulfilling. Pop music has been a part of our repertoire: we are a two-sided band and that has sometimes confused our audience, but it's something that I cannot change."

Andy Latimer is a guest on *Ripples On The Water,* a beautiful instrumental piece that Scherpenzeel wrote intentionally for the guitarist.

"Andy has such a style, he plays one note and you know it's him," Scherpenzeel smiles. "I've always loved Camel's music. His playing and my own are a good fit, I think. We come from the same soul. Maybe I'll go back to Camel someday: it's up to Andy."

In the meantime, Kayak look set to be busy over the next couple of years. As mentioned above, they last performed in the UK back in March 1977 on a bill with Jan Akkerman and singer Kaz Lux who were promoting their concept album *Eli*.

"THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES WITH OUR MANAGER AND WE JUST DIDN'T FUNCTION ANYMORE. THE SPIRIT WAS GONE: IT WAS LIKE SPINAL TAP ALL OVER AGAIN."

who forbade us to use the name," Scherpenzeel explains. "He was a lunatic — a genius, but a lunatic all the same. It took his death in '98 for us to receive the all-clear."

Regrettably, Koopman also died unexpectedly in 2009. In 2014, several line-ups later, a further obstacle arose when Kayak lost co-lead singers Edward Reekers and Cindy Oudshoorn before a tour for the rock opera *Cleopatra — The Crown Of Isis*, a project that the group had spent two years preparing for. Kayak's current biography pointedly describes those exits as "unexpected and inconvenient".

"I cannot say it any better than that," comments Scherpenzeel through gritted teeth. Kayak replaced a man and woman with a solitary male — Bart Schwertmann — and their latest, all-new line-up also includes Kristoffer Gildenlöw, formerly of Pain Of

delayed. However, Scherpenzeel is thrilled by the possibilities of association with one of the biggest and most forward-thinking labels of the genre.

"This is the first time in 12 or 13 years that we've had a record label," he chuckles. "Self-releasing your music is fine, but the experience taught us that to take things further you really do need extra support."

Kayak's music is certainly blessed with commercial potential. The tracks *Somebody* and *God On Our Side*, for instance, are melodic enough to pass as pop songs, though at 11 and 10 mins respectively the grander pieces *La Peregrina* and *Walk Through Fire* really allow them to stretch out.

"For me, music must sound organic — it's not a matter of how clever it is," Scherpenzeel stresses. "I love shorter songs just as much as the epic ones. Those are more of an adventure,

"Jan didn't want to play any Focus material which left the audiences disappointed, so it was cut short," Scherpenzeel recalls.

Unfortunately, this was the band's one and only foray to Britain to date. After such a long time, of course Scherpenzeel is anxious to return under more favourable circumstances. And luckily, with just the English Channel between our two nations, transatlantic flights are unnecessary.

"No," he laughs. "European gigs are always possible — I did some two years ago with Camel. Of course Kayak want to play wherever possible. It's all down to budgets. If people buy the album, everywhere we can play we will play. After three weeks the bus gets stinky, but I love being on the road."

Seventeen is out now via InsideOut. See www.kayakonline.info for more information.

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Penguin Cafe Orchestra

It's been 20 years since their founding member passed away, but the band still live on through his son. The musical collective praised randomness, caught the attention of Brian Eno and were self-described as "modern semi-acoustic chamber music", amongst other things. So now we have to ask: **how prog are Penguin Cafe Orchestra?** **Words:** Mike Barnes

In 1972, Simon Jeffes was on holiday in the South of France when he contracted food poisoning from fish. During a high fever, he experienced a series of hallucinations, including a dystopian vision of the future. He recalled the incident in 1988.

"The next day, when I felt better, I was on the beach sunbathing and suddenly a poem popped into my head. It started out, 'I am the proprietor of the Penguin Cafe, I will tell you things at random,' and it went on about how the quality of randomness, spontaneity, surprise, unexpectedness and irrationality in our lives is a very precious thing. And if you suppress that to have a nice orderly life, you kill off what's most important. Whereas in the Penguin Cafe, your unconscious can just be."

> **"It's similar to what Syd Barrett was doing: it's quite English."**
> ***Emily Young***

1976 debut album *Music From The Penguin Cafe*, released on Brian Eno's label, Obscure.

And so the idea for the Penguin Cafe Orchestra was born. This strangest of group concepts defined a mental space, which Jeffes could fill with musical ideas. While leading the instrumental ensemble, with its shifting cast of over 30 musicians, he produced some of the most singular music of the 70s and 80s, until his death in 1997, aged 49.

DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Garden Party! PCO at Kew, 1981. Simon Jeffes gets his alter ego on (centre). To his right, partner, cover artist and sculptor Emily Young.

Jeffes started out performing in a classical guitar group, but by the late 70s he was disenchanted with both classical repertoire and rock'n'roll. His former partner Emily Young is now one of the UK's foremost sculptors. As a teen, she had been to some of Pink Floyd's earliest London shows. She knew Syd Barrett – "Just in passing" – and is thought to be the inspiration for the song *See Emily Play*. This was the milieu in which she met Jeffes.

"It was the 60s when he started being who he was in terms of a musician and composer, and leaping out of the rather dismal past," says Young. "And in that kind of optimism, it's similar to what Syd Barrett was doing: it's quite English."

So much of Jeffes' music is hard to pin down, mercurial in nature, and full of contradictions. For example, Young is right that with its strong melodies, whimsicality, wit and generally unassuming nature, it carries a distinct feeling of Englishness. But then it's also pervaded by the rhythms and melodic figures of Africa and South America.

"He wanted to put all that together," says Young. "[He used] guitar and percussion, ukulele and cuatro, with the classical strings playing together so beautifully and so tight, but then there was also the looseness, the way your body can go with the rhythm."

When asked to categorise his music in 1988, Jeffes chose the descriptions "imaginary folklore" and "Modern semi-acoustic chamber music." Young recalls that when the Orchestra were in their early stages, one of their gigs was, fittingly, listed in the "other" category in *Time Out* magazine.

MATT_ANKER/PRESS

And now for some fin completely different... Jeffes brings his lunch to the shoot.

THE OUTER LIMITS

Caravan's Geoffrey Richardson (second right) joins the Cafe line-up, 1983.

In the mid-70s, Jeffes' music caught the attention of Brian Eno. Eno was setting up his Obscure record label, which served as a haven for some of the avant-garde composers of the day.

"It was a bit of a fluke," Young explains. "Brian had these other people he was working with in a left-field zone. And then Simon turns up and what he was doing was so unlike anything else, that Brian, bless him, said, 'We'll do something, we'll see what happens.'"

The Orchestra's 1976 debut album, *Music From The Penguin Cafe*, features a core of four musicians with vocals by Young on *From The Colonies*. It was the only time she sang on record, as Jeffes decided to pursue a purely instrumental tack thereafter, but she helped define the group's aesthetic by painting the surreal album covers which featured Penguin-headed humans in strange tableaux.

Penguin Cafe Single sounds like an old parlour tune done ragtime style, with see-sawing string figures which drop right down in a middle section of twinkling electric pianos. On first listening – like many Penguin Cafe Orchestra pieces – it feels uncannily like something that one has heard before. And as Young says, stylistically it's almost impossible to date.

"He wanted it to be a universal pleasure so that anybody, anywhere in the world could listen to it and get as much pleasure out of it as he did," says Young. "It was intellectually interesting, but at the same time he wanted his emotional world to sing and feel free."

From appealing to Brian Eno in the mid-70s, in 1985 Penguin Café Orchestra appeared as the musical interlude on the BBC chat show *Wogan*, on which they played the jig-like *Music For A Found Harmonium*, which the host described as "like The Chieftains with Japanese undertones".

Young remembers that Jeffes would sit for long periods at a piano listening to the harmonics and overtones of single notes, then those of notes played together. This fascination with sound led to the couple enjoying rather some unusual nights out.

"We'd smoke a little dope and go down to Heathrow Airport and wander around late at night, at like 1am, when there were very few people," she recalls. "The sounds of the airport were fantastic, all these different hums and knocks, and noises coming from behind locked doors. It was the notion that the whole airport was one huge musical instrument.

> **"Simon was really interested in harmonics, and how sound affects you."**
> ***Emily Young***

1981's Penguin Cafe Orchestra, featuring the highly experimental track *Telephone And Rubber Band*.

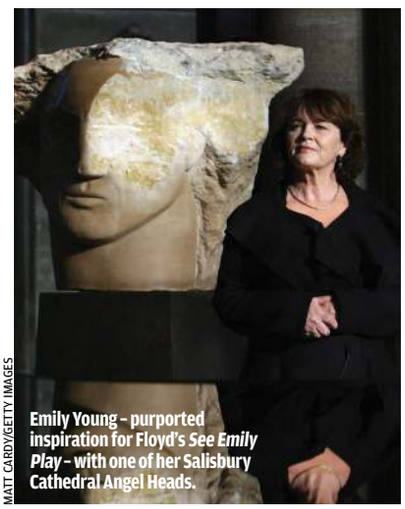
1993's *Union Cafe*, now newly reissued.

"Simon was really interested in the harmonics, and how sound affects you. Sometimes you would get two different noises going at the same time and they were making a chord, and sometimes it's major and sometimes it's minor. There's a click-click-click of an escalator, so you've got a rhythm going on at the same time as the air conditioning hum."

Penguin Cafe Orchestra's most experimental piece, *Telephone And Rubber Band* (from 1981's *Penguin Cafe Orchestra*), is based on recordings of a telephone's engaged and ringing tone. It was also their most widely heard, as it was used in mobile phone network One2One's TV ads in the late 1990s.

The Penguin Cafe Orchestra members continued to play Jeffes' music – some of which was composed in collaboration – after his death as The Orchestra That Fell To Earth and played a trio of memorial concerts at London's Union Chapel in 2007, joined by Jeffes' and Young's son Arthur. He was thrilled to hear it live once more, the pieces being "like old friends you thought you wouldn't see again".

Arthur Jeffes has since headed his own band as Penguin Cafe, who play his father's music in concert as well as his own new material. One ex-Orchestra player approached for this piece politely declined to be interviewed, feeling that their contributions were now effectively written out of history.



MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES

Emily Young – purported inspiration for Floyd's *See Emily Play* – with one of her Salisbury Cathedral Angel Heads.

"I was a very inexperienced musician at that point and all the musicians had their own ideas about how the tunes should go and there was no central authority," Arthur explains. "I wouldn't have been able to continue with them so we just left it there. That was beautiful but we've closed the chapter. I think there was a general agreement that it had to be that way."

In December 2017, Penguin Cafe played a concert to mark the 20th anniversary of Simon Jeffes' passing, which coincided with the label Erased Tapes reissuing the Penguin Cafe Orchestra's last album, 1993's *Union Cafe*. The group played it in its entirety.

"In a funny way, learning all these pieces from *Union Cafe* has been a bit like playing with him," Arthur says.

Emily and Simon's son Arthur Jeffes, the current Cafe proprietor.

ALEX KOZOBOLIS/PRESS

EDU HAWKINS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

"It's been emotionally turbulent and fun. It was really interesting because there is a complexity there that I hadn't clocked first time around."

Arthur gives the example of *Lifeboat*, on which he played piano live with Neil Codling (of Suede) on cuatro. It took a while to get the timing of their respective patterns — in different time signatures — spot on, but when they did it yielded "a melodic result you wouldn't otherwise have".

The composition that most clearly demonstrates this relationship between rhythm and melody in his father's music — and his impish sense of humour — is *Discover America*, on *Union Cafe*. The strings play *Home On The Range* and *When The Saints Go Marching In* at the same time, which works delightfully. This curious counterpoint produces an unexpected bonus. "There are three occasions where you get this enormous chord which is straight out of *Appalachian Spring* by [Aaron] Copland," says Arthur.

Arthur also plays in Sundog, in a piano/violin duet with Oli Langford, but as Penguin Cafe he has recorded three albums that are certainly cut from similar cloth to the parent group. He describes his own music as "more filmic", and it feels more expansive, more opened out. So is it a homage to his fathers music, a continuation of a style, or is it all just in the genes?

"All three," he replies. "I know when I am happy with a particular piece going in to a Penguin Cafe project, but there are some things that are just not right for it. It's quite instinctive."

Arthur is considering another tribute concert in 2018, as well as performing a mix of his and his father's music with Penguin Cafe. He feels the activities are complementary, and he's still coming up with new compositions.

"That has to be the point," he says. "Every year or so I think about just stopping. But then I find something and think, 'Oh, that would be really good, that would work.' So we are being pulled forward rather than being pushed forward."

Arthur's music also demonstrates a familiar fascination with sonics.

"On the last Penguin Cafe album *The Imperfect Sea*, there's a four to the floor, slightly house-y drum sound. It sounds just like a [Roland] 909. But actually there was a floorboard in the kitchen of my old house that had this lovely resonance if you tapped it with your finger and so we put a Neumann U87 [microphone] on a dishcloth on the floorboard and played that. So what I'm looking for is to find ways to recreate electronic sound organically and played on real instruments. And that rather sounds like fun." PP

Union Cafe 20th Anniversary reissue is out now via Erased Tapes. See www.penguincafe.com for more.

New Orchestral Manoeuvres: live in Cheltenham, 2016.

***The Imperfect Sea*, the Cafe's latest album from 2017.**

YOUR SHOUT!

Are we in the swim with **Penguin Cafe Orchestra**, or are they just getting us in a flap?

"Been a fan since 1981. Simon Jeffes wrote some very progressive stuff. Maybe not prog as we know it, but definitely great. He is missed."
Wedgepiece

"Maybe. Crossing some boundaries for sure. Maybe not. But does it matter? What matters to me is that it still sounds fresh and utterly beautiful today. Simon Jeffes was a genius with vision and I love his work."
Bas Langeris

"While not prog per se, the music was good and they had a strong following."
Yserbius Gandalf

"Not very prog imo, but depends on your definition."
Mercurious

"Working on the basis that they're not afraid to experiment and push boundaries, I'd say quite prog - perhaps 7/10? And, of course, they also have very strong prog connections through Geoffrey Richardson!"
Paul Coulthread

"Very much so. Their music is eclectic and hard to categorise. It draws on traditional British and European music, US folk/bluegrass, and classical music. There was nothing else like it at the time. Simon Jeffes was a true original. His son, Arthur, successfully keeps the flag flying with Penguin Cafe. North Sea Radio Orchestra are at times similar..."
Nigel May

"Brian Eno was involved early in their career, so most probably, yes."
Steve Harrison

"Neoclassical progressive pop, with just a hint of country and western... obviously."
Andrew Buckley

"Simon Jeffes was definitely progressive with his ideas (*Telephone And Rubberband*, for example) but essentially they are more classical or chamber orchestra. Having said that, North Sea Radio Orchestra are considered prog, so..."
Stacy Doller

"They are very progressive, I've always seen them that way. I happened to be listening to them the moment I saw this post (*Signs Of Life*, since you ask, also just had *Broadcasting From Home* on)."
Duncan Parsons

"Pppp prog up a Penguin."
James Allen

"Very cool name. But never heard of them!"
Richard Mallett

"Very progressive: their creative approach to orchestral music makes each song sound unique. Maybe not progressive rock as such, but all of their music is beautiful."
Ed Wilkins

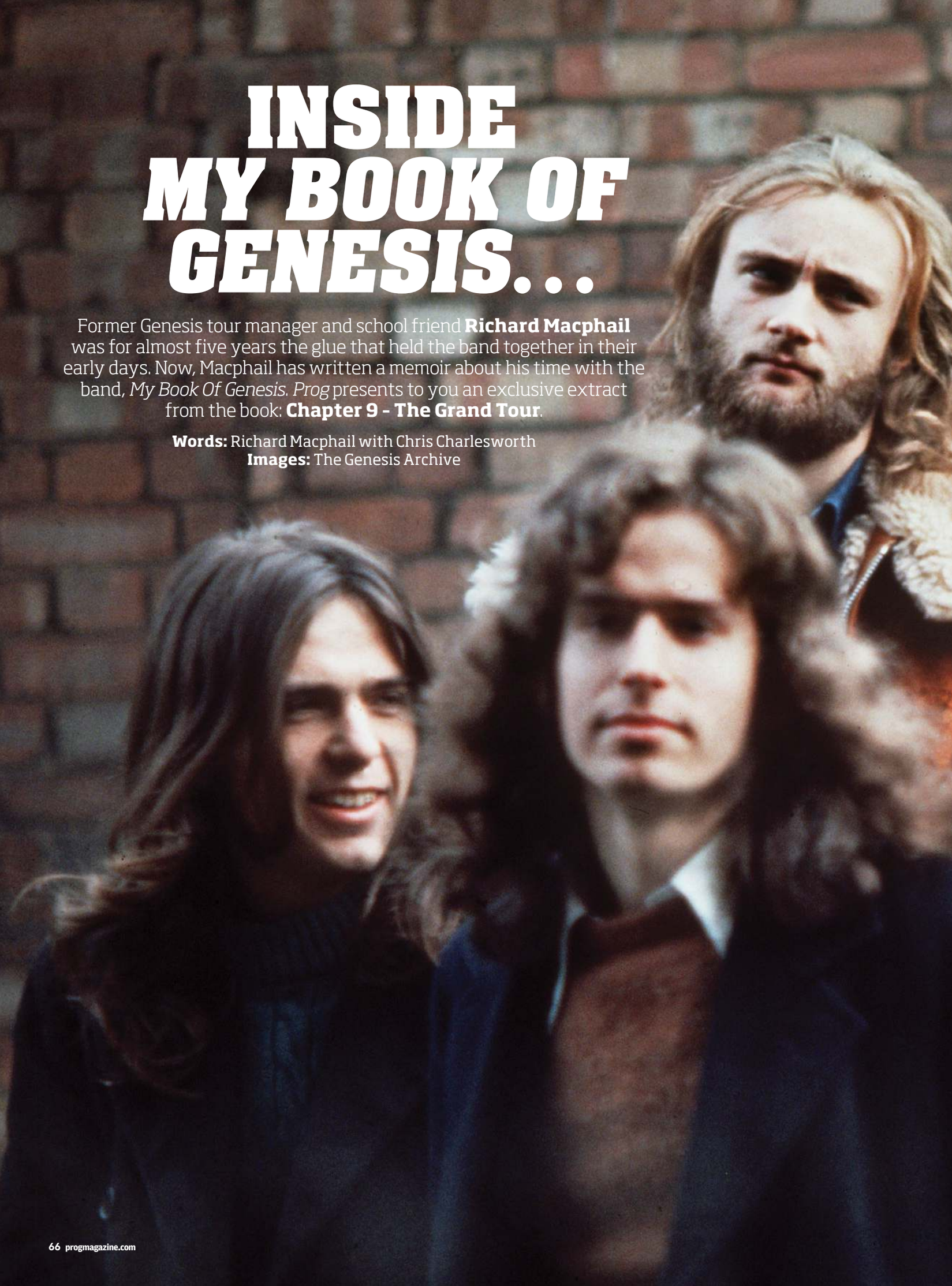
"They certainly were idiosyncratic. The mix of musical genres was different than most prog, but I don't think that should disqualify them as such."
Keith Wilkerson

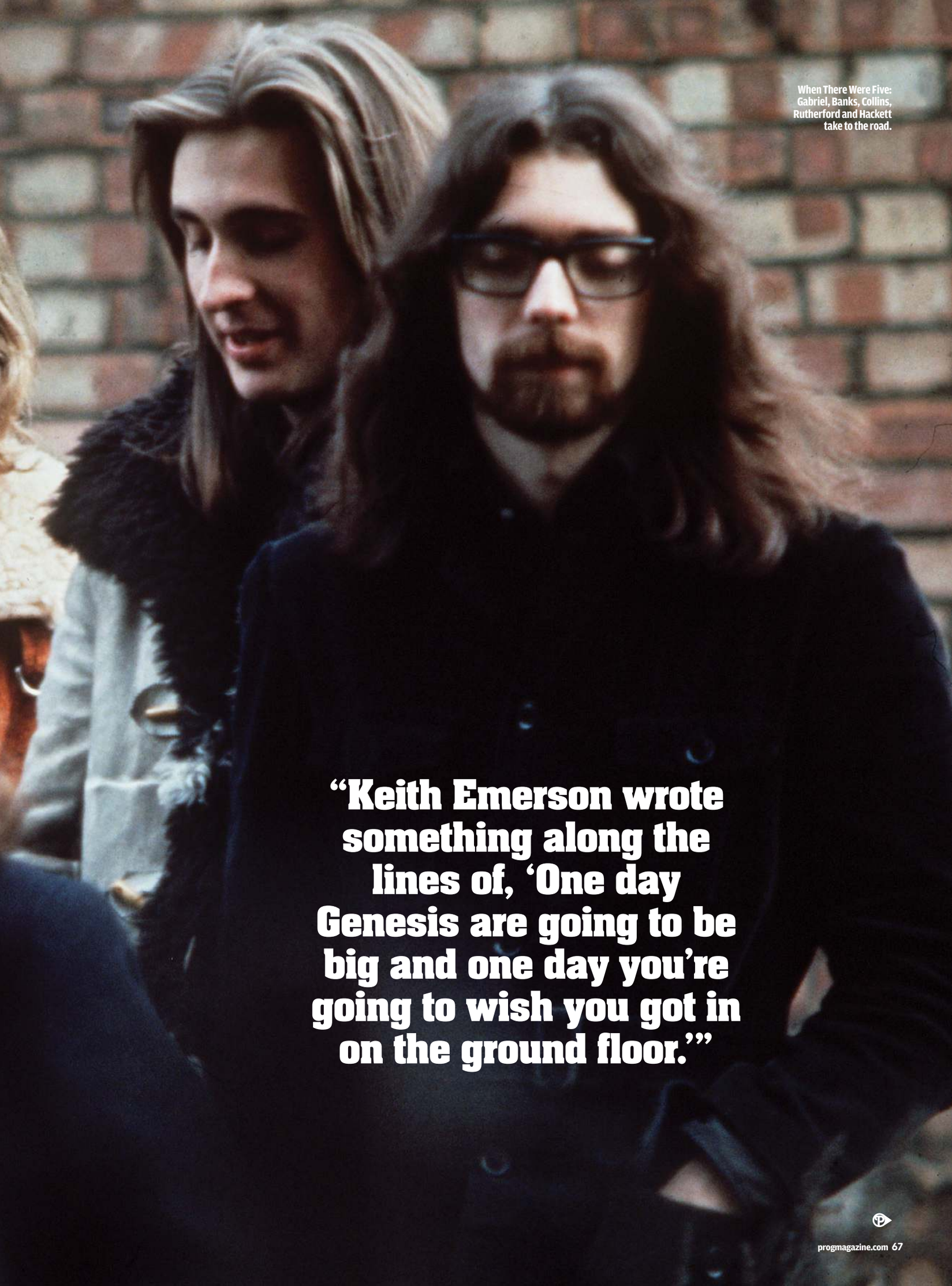
"Isn't everything on E.G. Records prog by default?"
Martin Ingram

INSIDE MY BOOK OF GENESIS...

Former Genesis tour manager and school friend **Richard Macphail** was for almost five years the glue that held the band together in their early days. Now, Macphail has written a memoir about his time with the band, *My Book Of Genesis*. *Prog* presents to you an exclusive extract from the book: **Chapter 9 - The Grand Tour**.

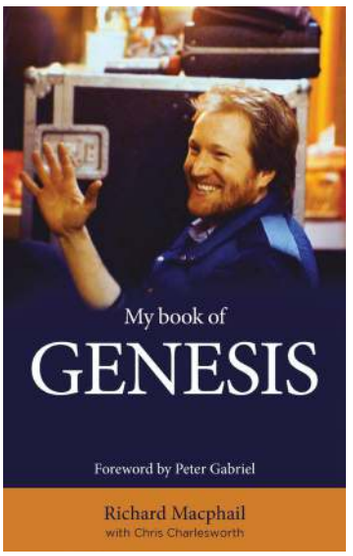
Words: Richard Macphail with Chris Charlesworth
Images: The Genesis Archive





When There Were Five: Gabriel, Banks, Collins, Rutherford and Hackett take to the road.

“Keith Emerson wrote something along the lines of, ‘One day Genesis are going to be big and one day you’re going to wish you got in on the ground floor.’”



Chapter 9
THE GRAND TOUR

'Catholic countries throughout the world subscribed to early Genesis. They liked the stories. These were very religious countries and it struck a chord deep within them. I have to go on record and say it was theatrical.'
Steve Hackett

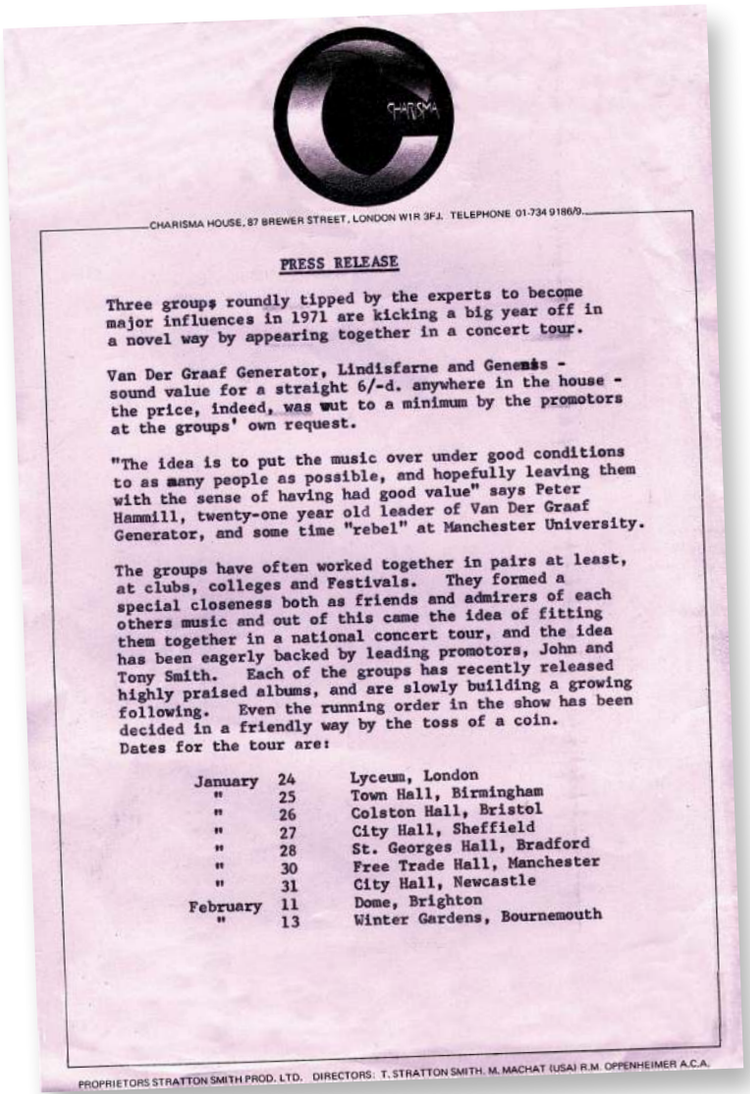
Genesis were back on the road in the autumn of 1971 promoting *Nursery Cryme*. Apart from the 'Six Shilling Tour' it was still random dates here, there and everywhere, still working as hard as we could. I don't ever remember more than a couple of days off a week and anyway, a day without a gig was never a day off for me because I was always chasing around, going to the office, picking up wages, dealing with Fred, buying tambourines and strings, getting microphones repaired. A roadie's work is never done. I used to go to Charlie Foote's legendary drum shop in Golden Square for Phil's sticks. Fortunately it was around the corner from Brewer Street, where Charisma's office was located.

Aside from my rather liberated relationship with Betsy, there wasn't much interaction between the bands on the label, or even with other bands playing the same venues. They might have appeared next to each other in the pages of *Melody Maker* but they never saw each other because they were all out on the road working. Not long ago, Tony Banks appeared on a Prog Rock Awards show and the presenter asked him what he thought about other prog bands like Yes, ELP, Jethro Tull and Pink Floyd. His reply was, "We absolutely hated them. They were the competition." (Tony's always been incredibly honest, often to his own disadvantage.) So this idea of them all being lovey-dovey prog groups together, all supporting and admiring one another was a complete fantasy. I know Tony wouldn't have admired Lindisfarne musically because their style was too harmonically simple for his taste, yet he couldn't not be impressed by the way they got the audience going.

Any rivalry between the bands didn't extend towards the road crews. There was certainly plenty of camaraderie among the roadies who worked for the bands on Charisma. We were all doing the same job, as well as we could. Van der Graaf Generator had an outrageous pair called Crackie and Nodge. Crackie ended up becoming Strat's trusted driver. He was a largish, chronically asthmatic Welshman while Nodge, also Welsh, was a skinny little guy with a patch over one eye. They were chalk and cheese. At one of the gigs on the 'Six Shilling Tour' we could move the gear to and from the stage through a trap door that would have been used for special effects. Crackie, in his lovely Welsh accent, said something about how it was like being down the mines. Of course he'd never been near a coal mine in his life.

On that tour, to ring the changes and alleviate the boredom that comes with staying in the same hotels and driving from one grimy northern town to another, we decided to swap passengers around in the vans. Two of the VdGG members, Guy Evans, the drummer, and Dave Jackson, the saxophone player, came with me in our van and

Christmas Cottage: The Macphail family's bolthole where it all began.



CHARISMA HOUSE, 87 BREWER STREET, LONDON W1R 3FJ. TELEPHONE 01-734 9186/9

PRESS RELEASE

Three groups roundly tipped by the experts to become major influences in 1971 are kicking a big year off in a novel way by appearing together in a concert tour.

Van Der Graaf Generator, Lindisfarne and Genesis - sound value for a straight 6/-d. anywhere in the house - the price, indeed, was cut to a minimum by the promotors at the groups' own request.

"The idea is to put the music over under good conditions to as many people as possible, and hopefully leaving them with the sense of having had good value" says Peter Hammill, twenty-one year old leader of Van Der Graaf Generator, and some time "rebel" at Manchester University.

The groups have often worked together in pairs at least, at clubs, colleges and Festivals. They formed a special closeness both as friends and admirers of each others music and out of this came the idea of fitting them together in a national concert tour, and the idea has been eagerly backed by leading promotors, John and Tony Smith. Each of the groups has recently released highly praised albums, and are slowly building a growing following. Even the running order in the show has been decided in a friendly way by the toss of a coin.
Dates for the tour are:

January	24	Lyceum, London
"	25	Town Hall, Birmingham
"	26	Colston Hall, Bristol
"	27	City Hall, Sheffield
"	28	St. Georges Hall, Bradford
"	30	Free Trade Hall, Manchester
"	31	City Hall, Newcastle
February	11	Dome, Brighton
"	13	Winter Gardens, Bournemouth

PROPRIETORS STRATTON SMITH PROD. LTD. DIRECTORS: T. STRATTON SMITH. M. MACHAT (USA) R.M. OPPENHEIMER A.C.A.

Three-Headed Beast: press release for the Charisma label 'Six Shilling Tour' featuring Genesis, Van der Graaf Generator and Lindisfarne.

from that day friendship grew between us. On another occasion, we needed to swap vans with them for some reason and it was pouring with rain, so I came up with this really clever idea of making the swap beneath the underpass at Paddington. We parked the vans back to back but slightly off-kilter so you could still get into both vehicles and transfer all the gear by sliding it along the floors of one van into the other.

Gradually the gigs got bigger and better. The equipment was improving too. It was around this time that we got a multicore — a long cable for all the on-stage mics — and this meant that I could position myself with the mixing desk half way back in the audience. On *Foxtrot*, the album after *Nursery Cryme*, there's a picture of me in a top hat, taken at Tony and Margaret Banks' wedding. Peter wrote a caption that read: 'Faithful barefooted Richard, stage sound and sound friend'. I never wore shoes in those days. I didn't see the point and I was letting my freak flag fly.

There were 10 or a dozen mics on stage to mix, certainly enough to mic up the drums. At one end of the multicore, there was a box into which they were all plugged; the cable then ran to the desk where it separated into more connections that plugged into the mixer. They were all numbered so you would know what was coming through what, and as the mixing process became more complex, it became more important for us to do a sound check before the show to get it all in balance. We always started with the drums and built the rest of the sound picture from there.

I taught myself to mix the sound on stage. I didn't find it hard. My reference point would have been the recordings, even though, as I said earlier, I thought the first two records lacked the power Genesis had when they played live. Nevertheless, I knew what the balance should be. Mostly, my preoccupation was driven by trying to get Peter's vocals to be audible through the instruments. He's never had a naturally powerful voice and has always struggled to be heard clearly at live shows. As our tours wore on, he would also inevitably tend to lose vocal strength. I would do what I could to compensate, but it was difficult getting the vocals out as much as I would have liked. Tony Banks didn't mind at all because he saw the vocals as being like another one of the

"The idea of the prog bands being lovey-dovey groups together, all supporting and admiring one another was a complete fantasy."

instruments. This would always be an issue when they were mixing in the studio because Peter would always want the vocals up and Tony disagreed. Mind you, that's not an uncommon thing with groups: singers wanting to be heard and the rest not really caring. Look at the Stones. You often can't hear what Mick is singing but it doesn't matter at all, it's part of their style. I think that it also adds to the mystery.

Steve took care of most of the guitar parts and Mike, who was playing bass a bit on stage, would soon get a double-neck Rickenbacker, with bass and either 12-string or six-string guitar, that was specially made for him. He would switch between guitar and acoustic and bass pedals, which he got the following year at the time of *Foxtrot*. The lack of designated bass player was something

Happy The Men: Macphail (second right) skinny-dips with roadie Guy, Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks, Italy 1972.

Life Jacket Required: the boys' first trip to Brussels, by ferry.

unique to Genesis. Apart from The Doors, I can't think of any other bands that didn't have one.

One of our regular venues was Eel Pie Island, an eyot on the Thames near Twickenham with a footbridge that was just big enough to drive a small car across. The promoter there had a minivan so we would load it up — it would take three or four goes — and he would trundle the gear across. The hotel on the island was semi-derelict but it had a ballroom that was just about serviceable. I was amazed to discover that it had stages at either end. We performed there with Free, them at one end and us at the other. They did a set, we did a set, then they did another and we did another, all because we could leave the gear in place. Free were huge at the time, much bigger than Genesis, with a great bass player in Andy Fraser, and Paul Kossoff, a superb guitarist. Both are dead now, but what a band they were.

After the gig I stashed our mics into a duffle bag with a drawstring to tighten it at the top. We used the Mini for the larger pieces of equipment, quite possibly putting a strain on the footbridge. It was left to me to carry the last few smaller pieces over the bridge including the bag of mics. Somehow, the top mic fell out and landed in the river with an ominous plop. It's still there. I certainly didn't go in after it. This is the sort of incident that a roadie wishes he could forget.

It was always a slow build for Genesis. Strat, with his indefatigable belief in the band, was always looking for ways to promote his beloved protégés. He hit upon the idea of getting Keith Emerson, who had just formed Emerson, Lake And Palmer, to write a piece endorsing Genesis for publication in the music press. Keith wrote something along the lines of, "One day Genesis are going to be big and one day you're going to wish you got in on the ground floor." *Nursery Cryme* didn't set the world alight but live it was terrific, particularly *The Musical Box*. It was a very well structured song and people used to go nuts at the end. Just last year Steve Hackett was doing his Genesis revisited show at the Royal Albert Hall and he played *The Musical Box*. I was in tears because the response was exactly the same as it had been with Genesis all those years before. Fifty years had gone by but the song still generated the same strong reaction in the crowd.

"I think Italians appreciated the emotional content of Genesis' music. It was romantic, like opera, and the songs resembled long suites."

In retrospect, the most important events for Genesis during 1972 were the two first Italy tours, one in April and the next in August. Sandwiched between them were intense writing sessions of what would become *Foxtrot*. These took place down at Luxford and at a dance studio on Shepherds Bush Road. Once again Phil surprised us with an unexpected connection. Having attended the Barbara Speake Acting School as

a young boy, subsequently appearing as the Artful Dodger in the 1960 London stage production of *Oliver!* and as an extra in *A Hard Day's Night*, he was able to introduce us to the Una Billings Dance Studio and it was here that *Supper's Ready* began to take shape. At 23 minutes, it took up the whole of the second side of *Foxtrot* — a big concept piece.

Banks has gone on record as saying it's just a bunch of bits that they glued together, and in a way it was, but it's still an amazing piece of music:

"That was an overall Genesis thing. Some of the pieces were made up from bits written by individuals, and the trouble was that we wanted to change the keys to make them fit. A prime example was *Supper's Ready* where *Willow Farm*, which is in A flat major, was meant to lead on to a little flute melody in A minor. So we had to get between the two and we weren't going to change *Willow Farm* and I wasn't going to change the flute melody because I'd written it on the guitar and it was open strings, so we had to travel through these weird chords in between. When it comes out it's a totally natural change, and you've got there without realising it. There's another one at the end of that section, of course, which goes into *Apocalypse in 9/8* which is a diminished chord, but on that occasion it was more like, you've built up this big expectancy and you think it's going to be a major chord but it's another chord, an F sharp minor which you are not expecting, and that's an incredibly exciting chord change."

Tony explains further:

"You think it's going to resolve in a different way and then it goes into an unlikely chord and suddenly it's very aggressive. I did that because I wanted to get to this F sharp minor change. This is quite technical but F sharp minor, a minor 6th was from a piece I learned at school called *Night In May* by Selim Palmgren, and it had a chord change in it and I always thought it was a great sound and we must use that. So I alternated between those chords before going into the solo.

"I'd written the thing and I wanted to try and keep it in that key and it produced quite interesting results, [so] rather than just everything being in the same key I made these adjustments, particularly in something like *Supper's Ready* which is a very episodic piece. This was new. It was something I did in my own songs, so the chorus and the verse were in different keys. Holland Dozier Holland did that all the time on songs like *Baby I Need Your Loving*. It shifts and you think, 'That's great.' The change itself is so good that it makes whatever you do afterwards sound really great. I did a lot of that in my own writing."

Foxtrot was recorded at the Island Records studios in Basing Street and instead of John Anthony, John Burns was brought in to produce it. At last they had made an album where I felt that the production did justice to their sound.

When they'd finished rehearsing *Supper's Ready*, they did the same thing they'd done with *The Musical Box*, inviting me to come and listen. As before, I'd been chasing around picking up wages and buying drumsticks, all the mundane tasks of my job. I then went down to the studio and sat and listened. Twenty-three minutes later my mind was blown; this was the most unbelievable piece of music I'd ever heard them play and happily, John Burns did a good job of capturing it on record.

Macphail And Banks: 'They eat without a sound, digesting carrots by the pound...'

Lover's Leap: Collins, Macphail and roadies Paul and Guy find a diversion in Amsterdam.

The sessions for *Foxtrot* were bracketed by the two Italian tours. None of us really appreciated how well the band was going down in Italy, at least not until we got there and saw it for ourselves. Before leaving I raised my eyebrows a bit when I noticed that the scheduled gigs were going to be those palazzo dello sport places, medium indoor basketball arenas that were bigger than anywhere we'd played in the UK. I guess the Italian promoter knew what he was doing but it was still a surprise.

Bigger gigs meant we needed a bigger PA and that meant a bigger van. Before we went I got back in touch with our friend Reg King and told him we were going to need a three-tonner, which is the largest truck you can drive without a Heavy Goods Vehicle licence. Reg didn't have a three-tonner so he subcontracted one from Godfrey Davis, the truck hire company. I went to Alperton to pick it up and Reg met me there, showing up on cue in his Cadillac. He said, "I haven't told them you're taking it abroad. If anything happens, bury it. Just leave it over there."

Of course I had the carnet and all the rest of it but God knows if I was properly insured, probably not. Reg wasn't one to worry about such details. The truck was easy enough to drive but when

I first climbed into the cab, the one thing I couldn't do was let the handbrake off. I didn't recognise the unusual rod that came out of the dashboard. You had to pull and then turn to release it. I couldn't figure it out. When the guy at Godfrey Davis asked me if I'd ever driven one before, I had brazenly replied, "Of course. No trouble, mate." I managed to get it started but he had to show me how to work the handbrake. "It wasn't like this on the last one I drove," I insisted, never having driven one before. He gave me an odd look, probably not liking the length of my hair and my patent ignorance. I doubt Reg mentioned that the truck was being used by a rock band.

The other trick I had to learn was how to bleed the brakes when you parked up for the night. There was a big cylinder underneath the cab and it would make a loud hissing noise when you bled it. When you then started the engine it pumped up again. In those days I could still park it outside wherever I was living, so there was never an issue with what to do with the truck at night. As far as I'm aware we didn't even have insurance for the gear that was left in the van, unattended of course. We didn't worry about any of those details. It was an anonymous Godfrey Davis rental van, could have been full of anything – office furniture, fruit and veg or building materials. Eventually we bought our own three-tonner, with a cream cab and a brown box, quite a distinctive livery. Nobody would have known it contained Genesis' priceless equipment.

So off we went to Italy, across the Channel, down through France and over the Alps. The band went in a van with actual seats and windows, accompanied by Paul Conroy from Charisma's booking agency. There'd been some changes in the road crew by now. Gerard had gone and another old friend of mine called Paul Davidson, a school friend of one of my Millfield friends, Michael Reed, had taken over. He was at a loose end and became a great roadie mate. It's funny to think that we were still recruiting roadies from the ranks of my school friends rather than professionals. That would come later.

So the conquest of Italy began. I remember driving down the Valle D'Aosta to Turin, Milan and Brescia, with breathtaking mountain scenery all the way. The promoter was called Maurizio Salvatore and he had arranged about 15 gigs for us, a substantial tour. We went down as far as Naples but no further south. The tour finished with a show on the outskirts of Rome. In those days there was a lot of political unrest in Italy that used to focus on rock gigs. This meant the police wouldn't allow performances in the centre of towns, so you were always 20 miles or so outside in some sports arena.

On a typical day we'd get to the gig and it was wonderful for me because the venue would be completely empty and we would be met by a stage with huge loading doors at the back. We'd reverse in, up to the stage and out came the equipment, straight on to the stage, no carrying it along corridors or up the stairs, plus there were all these agreeably willing fans who would help with the gear. It made my job so much easier. The band then used the empty van as a dressing room. We'd get into the venue at around 11am, set up and then do a proper soundcheck, allowing plenty of time to get it right. These places were like cathedrals. You clapped your hands and you'd still hear the sound 12 seconds later, reverberating around the space. In some ways, mixing the sound was a bit academic – it was just swirling around – but it didn't matter as the fans really loved it. After we'd set up and done the soundcheck, it would be about 1 or 1.30 p.m. and Maurizio would say, "OK. Mangiamo." He always knew where the best restaurants were, so off we'd go for a huge lunch. We quickly learned how to eat in the style: first a pasta starter, often a scrumptious plate of incredible homemade spaghetti with a delicious sauce, then a slab of meat, no veg, maybe a bit of salad, and then a dessert like tiramisu. We also discovered fantastic wines to wash it all down with, so by the end of lunch, typically about 4pm, we'd be absolutely stuffed and out of it. We'd go

In Macphail's motel during the first major tour. From left: tour manager Regis Boff (on the floor), US manager Ed Goodgold, Macphail and Gabriel.

Genesis live at the Sport Palace near Turin, 1972. "These places were like cathedrals," says Macphail.

Not Dead Yet: Macphail's dedication on the back of *Genesis Live*, 1973.

back to the hotel, shut the blinds down with proper shutters to create complete darkness, collapse into bed and sleep like the dead for two hours and then get up and do the gig. Life was good. We would return to the sports arena and it would be packed with 5,000 fans, sometimes more, especially on the second tour when we might have up to 10,000 waiting to hear us.

I've often wondered why Genesis appealed to the Italians as much as they did. We met the Italian music writer and photographer, Armando Gallo, on these first tours and he cottoned on to us early and became a big supporter, eventually writing several books about the band. I think Italians appreciated the emotional content of Genesis' music. It was romantic, like opera, and the songs resembled long suites. A fast and furious passage would often bring people to their feet. Being such avid fans the Italians had bought and absorbed all the records; this crowd knew every note and nuance of the songs. It was extraordinary really. We'd never experienced anything like it. There I was at the mixing desk in the middle of the audience and they were all clapping, a wonderful experience to see my boys being so understood and appreciated. The fans loved it all and gave the band standing ovations at the end of every show. It did wonders for their confidence and all five guys, Peter, Mike, Tony, Steve and Phil, have never forgotten the warmth of their early following in Italy, or its importance in their development as a band. I hope we paid our debt of gratitude by playing well for them.

Steve has another theory as to why Genesis were so popular in Italy:

"I think it has something to do with Catholicism. I think it's to do with the theological nature of many of the songs. And it was partly that track *Fountains Of Salmacis* that audiences in the rest of the world didn't understand at the time. That track… they got it immediately. I think they understood it because of the Greco-Roman connection. Catholic countries throughout the world subscribed to early Genesis. They liked the stories. These were very religious countries and it struck a chord deep within them. I have to go on record and say it was theatrical. I know that the others tend to distance themselves from that era but when they look at the early model they can't understand why those albums still sell so well. But I feel that I do understand it."

On the second Italian tour we had a bit of a problem on the way over because we didn't know that in Europe they have a lot of extra bank holidays, religious holidays that were Saints' days. The border was closed to us, not for cars but for trucks with a carnet, and we got stuck somewhere in the French Alps. Of course back then there were no mobile phones, no ATM bank machines, no credit cards, no internet, nothing. We only had enough cash to get us over to Italy, maybe to buy us a couple of meals, but no reserve and there we were stuck in the foothills of the French Alps until the border opened in a couple of days. So we retreated into the hills nearby. By this time there were a couple more roadies, one being Adrian Selby, Gerard's younger brother who had joined us straight from school and eventually ended up taking my place. We slept rough under the truck and the next morning washed in a fountain in the middle of a tiny Alpine village.

All this meant we were about two days late getting to Rimini where the band were all waiting for us. Hearing nothing, they obviously thought the worst — that we'd driven off the edge of a cliff somewhere and had all perished. They were visibly relieved to see us but also a bit pissed off. Margaret Banks gave me a real dressing down. "Don't you dare do that again," she said to me. "You put us through hell."

The other addition to the crew was a professional sound mixer to work our new mixing desk. He showed me how to use it, but by this time I had graduated to becoming Genesis tour manager, the guy with the briefcase who travelled with the band, looked after admin and no longer humped the gear. Until then I was just a general do-everything roadie, so you could say that I'd been promoted, in recognition of my long and devoted service. Not before time, though it soon made me realise that having reached this stage, maybe my horizons were beginning to expand, possibly beyond the world of Genesis.

My Book Of Genesis is available now from Argyll and Bute Publishing. See www.mybookofgenesis.com.

Images And Words

Prog editor Jerry Ewing meets Richard Macphail at the *My Book Of Genesis* launch in London.

Words: Jerry Ewing **Images:** James Sharrock

Most Genesis fans know Richard Macphail from the photos that appear inside 1972's *Foxtrot* album and on the back sleeve of 1973's *Genesis Live*. The latter, bearing the inscription 'Dedicated to Richard Macphail, who left in 1973,' has provided the man with one or two amusing moments in a colourful life.

"To this day I still run into fans who firmly believe that this was a discreet reference to my untimely death," he chuckles.

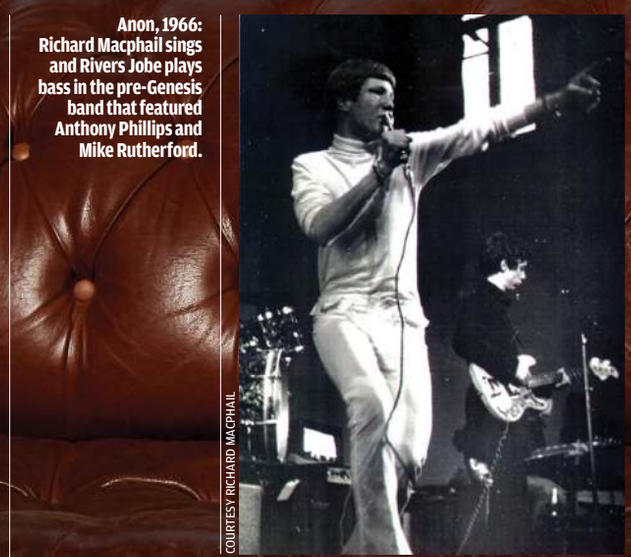
For those who don't know, Macphail was a contemporary of Messrs. Banks, Gabriel, Phillips, Rutherford and Stewart at Charterhouse school. He sang in Anon, which featured Anthony Phillips, and later Mike Rutherford. Those two eventually hooked up with Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks and Chris Stewart of the Garden Wall to form Genesis. Macphail may have quit Anon, but he did not quit on his school mates, and after returning from a kibbutz, he instigated, thanks to his parents, the use of Christmas Cottage near Wotton in Surrey, rent free for Genesis as they developed their sound above and beyond that of their *From Genesis To Revelation* album.

From here, Macphail is largely ingrained in Genesis lore. He became the band's tour manager, later doing the same for Peter Gabriel (who's penned the book's foreword), before heading off for a career in ecological and environmental fields. And yet the ties are still strong: he was at the 2015 Progressive Music Awards when Peter Gabriel handed his Prog God crown on to Tony Banks.

Prog met him the day of the launch of his new book, simply titled *My Book Of Genesis*, before we strolled down to Daunt bookshop in Holland Park for a launch party, which was also attended by Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel, Steve Hackett and Mike Rutherford.

Your first book. A daunting task?

"At first, but I rather quite enjoyed the process. But then it was largely me



COURTESY RICHARD MACPHAIL

Anon, 1966: Richard Macphail sings and Rivers Jobe plays bass in the pre-Genesis band that featured Anthony Phillips and Mike Rutherford.

Words With Friends: Gabriel, Rutherford, Banks and Hackett join Macphail at the launch.

"Genesis all have their unique personalities, but there's still a bond between them all."

recording my thoughts into an iPhone, taking it down to Chris Charlesworth [the former *Melody Maker* journalist turned book publisher] and he would get down to the business of crafting it into something readable. It took some time, partly because the pair of us could go off on tangents. If I mentioned something that he remembered he worked on back in his days as a music writer, off we'd go, chatting about it. We had a great conversation about The Who, for example. But after about two years, we had something approaching a workable manuscript."

Has there been any reaction from the Genesis camp, either when you told them you were going to write the book, or now that it's out?
"Well, Peter's written the foreword and they're all coming down to the party later, so I don't think there's any real problem. We're all still on very good terms. They're my friends."

Mike and Phil have both written books and Armando Gallo's books are essential. But aside from Daryl Easlea's book on Peter, and *Chapter And Verse*, there's a not a huge amount of books on the band. It's strange when you consider the millions of albums they've sold...
"Well, there's mine now! [Laughs] Yes, it is a bit strange, but the ones that are out there are mostly excellent. And they did sell a huge amount of records."

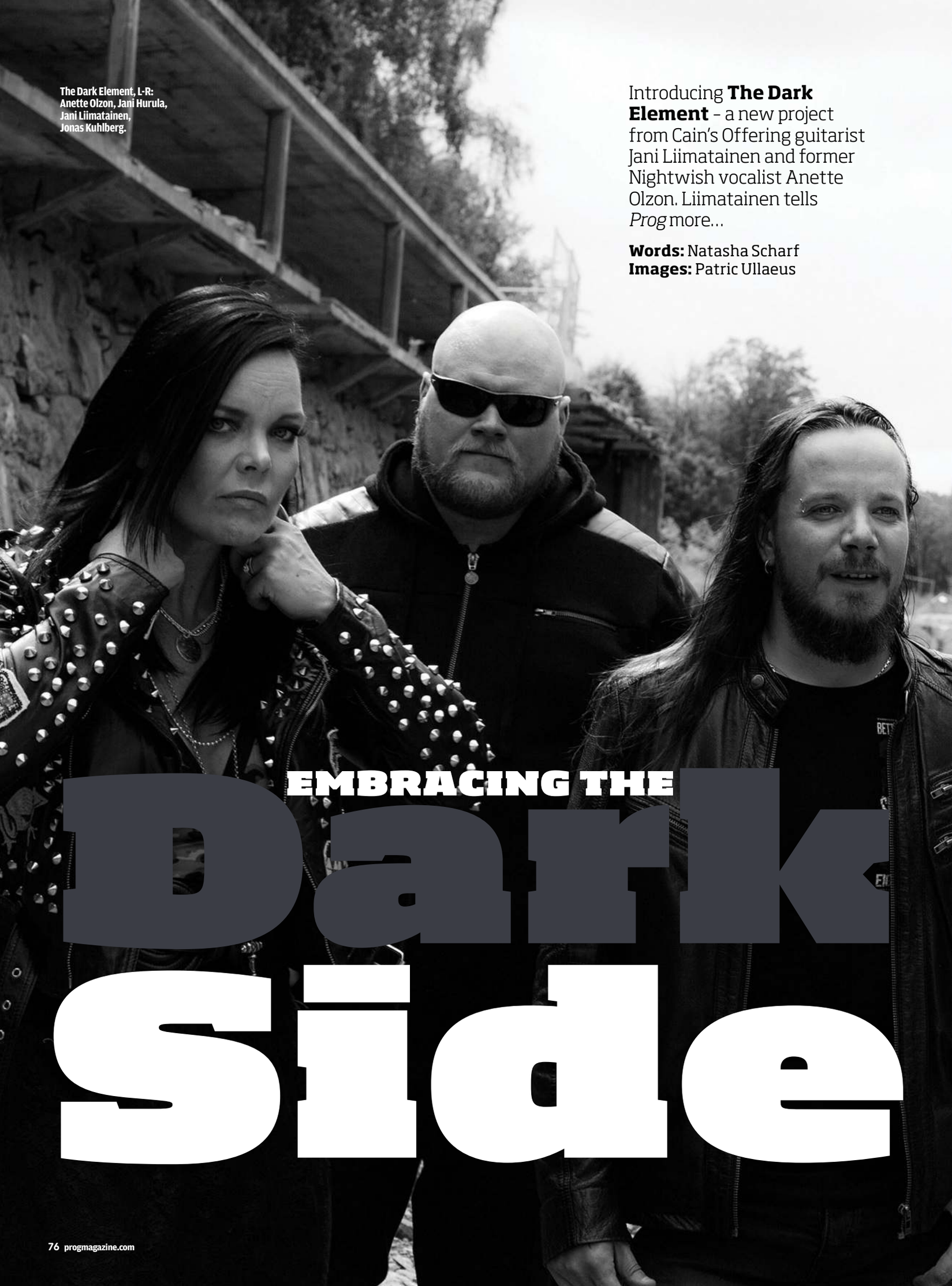
Both Mike and Phil have been honest about the odd latter-day rock'n'roll indiscretion in their own books, but generally the Genesis story isn't one of excess. There's a much more familial feel which really comes across in your book.
"I know what you mean. Peter never took drugs, or Tony for that matter. Everyone liked a drink every now and then. I mean, I used to enjoy a bit of spliff, as I mention in the book, but then I was just an old hippie, really. But yes, there was always a sense of family about the band, especially in the early days when Ant [Phillips] was there. That still exists to this day. They all have their unique personalities, but there's still a bond between them all."

Christmas Cottage looms large in the book, and is integral to your continued connection with the band.
"Well, yes. I suppose you have my parents to thank for that. They let us use the cottage rent free in 1969 for about six months or so. It was good for the guys because I think it allowed them to find their natural sound. The debut album had come out but it wasn't really representative of how they sounded live. It was that time of musicians going to the country to 'get themselves together'. And most of *Trespass* was written at the cottage. They'd be playing gigs and just writing and recording. Peter and I would telephone a lot of record companies and it was during that time that [Genesis manager] Tony Stratton-Smith signed them to Charisma for £10. But it was at the cottage that Genesis really defined their sound."

There's a delightful sense of naïveté to many of the proceedings. Very much learning things as you went along, not just for you and your role with the band, but with the band and management too.
"That's because that's exactly what it was like. A lot of this stuff hadn't been done before, so everyone was kind of learning as they went along."

London copper Sergeant Long, who you had one or two run-ins with in the 70s, not least when he tried to arrest you for having an offensive weapon [a pick axe handle in the back of a van], sounds like a fun guy.
"Yes, very funny. Not least when Strat phoned up the police station and told them they had to let me go as I was the son of an admiral. It was Mike's dad who was the navy man, but it worked. And when it went to court it got thrown out because, as I say in the book, a pick axe handle is not, per se, an offensive weapon. But that was very indicative of the times and people not being able to deal with the shifting culture."

My Book Of Genesis is out now via Argyll and Bute. See www.mybookofgenesis.com for more information.



The Dark Element, L-R: Anette Olzon, Jani Hurula, Jani Liimatainen, Jonas Kuhlberg.

Introducing **The Dark Element** – a new project from Cain's Offering guitarist Jani Liimatainen and former Nightwish vocalist Anette Olzon. Liimatainen tells *Prog* more…

Words: Natasha Scharf
Images: Patric Ullaeus

EMBRACING THE

Dark Side

"I heard a great story about someone from Germany," says Jani Liimatainen, his voice full of amusement. "This guy was listening to The Dark Element album and one of his colleagues came over and said, 'Hey, that new Nightwish album sounds pretty good!'" he laughs.

Liimatainen is taking a break from acoustic rehearsals with Stratovarius vocalist, and Cain's Offering bandmate, Timo Kotipelto to talk to *Prog* about his latest project. He's particularly excited because it's the first time he's worked with a female singer. Despite crossing paths with Nightwish on many occasions during his time with Sonata Arctica, Liimatainen only met Anette Olzon in person a few months ago. The partnership was instigated by Italian label Frontiers, who approached Liimatainen with the idea of a side-project in early 2016.

"I love Anette's voice and I really loved some of the songs she did with Nightwish so I was really happy with the idea," he says. "When I started working on this album, I went back to listen to *Dark Passion Play* and *Imaginaerum* to analyse her vocal range. I thought, there's no fucking point in making a Cain's Offering record with a female vocalist, so I made a conscious decision to keep it more straightforward this time."

His plan suited Olzon perfectly. *The Dark Element* is the Swedish singer's first album since the release of her 2014 solo debut *Shine*, which was met with mixed responses. Save for a few guest vocals here and there, and appearances on the Finnish talent show *Tähdet Tähdet* — a celebrity cross between *X Factor* and *Stars In Their Eyes* — she's been keeping a low profile to concentrate on a degree (see sidebar). Her other commitments meant her only involvement in The Dark Element was recording the vocals remotely, so it was down to Liimatainen to work his magic on what she sent him. The results are insanely catchy.

"Working with Anette, her voice… if you have a metal song with symphonic elements it's going to sound like Nightwish and I don't think that's a bad thing," he says. "They are a great band so I take it as a compliment if someone says we sound like that."

The self-titled debut is very different to Cain's Offering's power metal. Its dramatic sounds are merged with pop melodies, prog metal, electronica and *those* distinctive vocals, creating a much grander feel that's not a million miles away from Olzon's previous band. The personal lyrics are written entirely by Liimatainen, who tapped into his

"Nightwish are a great band so I take it as a compliment if someone says we sound like that."
Jani Liimatainen

feminine side. From the Nightwish-esque lead single *My Sweet Mystery* to the ballad *Someone You Used To Know*, the 11-tracker explores what the guitarist refers to as "the dark elements in our life… It's the same shit that everyone writes about: love and loss, death, hate, regret — the basic metal themes! But those dark elements are not necessarily a bad thing: they can help you grow."

But press him for deeper meanings behind certain songs and he says that listeners should come up with their own interpretations. One thing he is more forthcoming about is influences. He lists Dream Theater, Pain Of Salvation and Soen among his current favourites, but he *really* loves Haken.

"I was introduced to their music a few months ago when I was on tour with Insomnium and [guitarist] Markus Vanhala played me some. I was like, 'Holy shit! This is cool!' When I went home, I bought *Affinity* and I like it a lot. I love all these new progressive bands, but every time I try to write complex material, it sounds like I'm deliberately making it difficult, whereas they make it sound natural. I don't like feeling like I'm trying to show off so I tried to keep this album less complicated."

Given the grandiose nature of The Dark Element's music and all those Nightwish comparisons, it's surprising to learn that Tuomas Holopainen and co weren't among Liimatainen's influences. In fact, creating a symphonic metal album was not his intention. Despite fitting into the genre, the Finnish guitarist seems surprised to find himself in the same musical category as Nightwish, Within Temptation and Epica.

"I don't really listen to that kind of music myself and I don't know that many symphonic bands, except Nightwish," he muses when asked why he thinks the genre is still so popular. "I guess when I was younger, genres were more locked in but nowadays it seems to be more open-minded. Evolution happens, and if you don't get it, open your mind!"

Even though he frequently refers to himself as "a metal guy" in the interview, it's clear that Liimatainen is far more than that. He doesn't have Holopainen's technical training, but he has a shared passion for movie soundtracks.

"I really like the epic, symphonic scores: the stuff that sounds like pop music written for an orchestra is really cool," he enthuses. "I like Hans Zimmer [*The Pirates Of The Caribbean*], Harry Gregson-Williams [*Prometheus*], Howard Shore [*The Lord Of The Rings*], Danny Elfman [*Planet Of The Apes*]… There are shitloads of great composers on that scene so I guess Tuomas and I have a lot of the same influences in our songwriting."

Liimatainen's bandmates from Cain's Offering — bassist Jonas Kuhlberg and drummer Jani Hurula — join him and Olzon on the album, which has been mixed by Jacob Hansen (Avantasia, Epica). The end result is something far bigger than the little studio project that he set out to create.

Since news of the venture broke online, festival and tour offers have been rolling in, even though the Cain's Offering lads only met Olzon during their promotional video and photo shoot. To date, they have yet to play together as a full band, although it's something that all parties seem interested to pursue.

The Dark Element might not have had a conventional beginning, but their evolution proves that fate really does move in mysterious ways.

The Dark Element is out now via Frontiers. For more, visit www.facebook.com/TheDarkElement.

"I really like epic, symphonic scores: the stuff that sounds like pop music written for an orchestra is really cool."
Jani Liimatainen

"I told the label, 'You cannot stress me if I'm going to do this.'"

Anette Olzon discusses her experience of The Dark Element.

"The idea of The Dark Element excited me," Anette Olzon reveals via phone from her home in southern Sweden. "I like the songs – they are written especially for me – and, of course, I did like the songs I did with Nightwish, so it's fun to do that style again."

The singer, who spent five years as the female voice of the progressive symphonic Finns, is in a chatty mood as she brings *Prog* up to date with her life. There have been highs and lows, from Finnish reality TV to her solo debut *Shine*, and no subject is out of bounds. She freely admits that album didn't do as well as she had hoped.

"I really loved my album and I'm very proud of it," she says, "but maybe it was a bit hard on the fans because it was a completely different genre."

When *Prog* last caught up with her, her focus was on establishing herself as a solo artist, but her priorities have changed, and she's open about her current part-time status as a singer. For the last few years, she's been studying nursing at university in Sweden and hopes to graduate soon. Her studies have taken up a lot of her time and it's clear that she now sees music as an extracurricular activity, rather than the full-time career she previously had.

"When you've been out with Nightwish, playing all the arenas, it's quite hard to work your way up from the very bottom again," she admits. "I thought I would give my studies a go and that meant I had to put my singing to one side. With The Dark Element, the deal from the beginning was that Jani would write all the lyrics and music. I told the label, 'You cannot stress me if I'm going to do this. I need to have time to do the recordings on my own in my own time.' The flexibility was very important to me."

She recorded her vocals in Sweden with Alyson Avenue keyboard player Niclas Olsson and says she's "very happy and positive" with the finished results. The process was a giant leap from the intense production schedule she experienced with Nightwish, but it gave her the space she needed. She admits she's excited by the prospect of playing live again.

"I feel full of energy when I sing these songs: a lot of them are so up-tempo we use them for the spinning class at my gym! I don't know if everyone knows it's me, but there was one guy, who's maybe mid-60s and not into metal, who came up to me and said, 'Is this you singing? I really like *My Sweet Mystery*.' It was *really* good feedback."

Olzon's former band Alyson Avenue recently confirmed they would play their 20th anniversary show in Sweden in May, and the vocalist hints she could start writing more solo material soon. Perhaps The Dark Element is the spark that Olzon needs to reignite her singing career. **NRS**

Burning Bright: Anette Olzon.

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SHE ROCKS

Traditionally viewed as a male-dominated music genre, it seems that right now there are more women in prog than ever. But how are they accepted, who are the key role models and what does it mean in terms of the music? *Prog* finds out.

Words: Hannah May Kilroy

A Farewell To Kings

There's no denying that progressive rock is evolving. It's moved on significantly since the 70s era that was broadly associated with a few key bands, men in capes and elongated guitar solos. Or, for some of the younger generation of music listeners: music that your dad likes.

Now, the scene is being reinvented: progressive music has long incorporated styles such as art rock and folk, but new genres like djent and the intertwining of prog and metal are there to hear in equal measure.

It's no surprise, then, that the audience has widened, too — you only have to look at a festival like Be Prog! My Friend in Barcelona, where a new breed of bands such as Leprous and Ulver share a stage with Jethro Tull and Marillion, and where there is a vast range of ages in the audience, to see that the prog landscape is shifting. And one of the most significant changes in prog in recent years is that more women are emerging onto the scene, and doing their part in helping to reinvent it.

JILL FURMANOVSKY

Below: iamthemorning play Be Prog! My Friend festival in 2016.

"Prog used to have an image of something that just guys were doing," says Kim Seviour, who was the vocalist for UK band Touchstone from 2007-2015 and recently released her first solo album, *Recovery Is Learning*. "I think because there has been a lot of work done to create a more modern image in prog, then maybe more women are being attracted to it, because it doesn't feel like it's something that's just for the boys anymore. It really does feel like there are more women, and that they are speaking more loudly."

"Even though it's progressive music, there was a time where there was not a lot of progression in it," says Anneke van Giersbergen. Frontwoman of Dutch doom metallers turned alt proggers The Gathering from 1994-2007, van Giersbergen has worked with a variety of prog musicians from Arjen Lucassen to Devin Townsend, and is currently focusing on her new metal/prog band VUUR. "It was as though people wanted really to stick to what they were doing, and they didn't want new influences. It's called progressive music: we have to bring in new influences, you know?"

Of course, there are some who will bristle at change, as Marjana Semkina, vocalist for Russian chamber pop duo iamthemorning, noted when her band first emerged and was tagged with the 'prog' label.

"It's interesting how people are getting more open-minded towards the idea of female vocalists or musicians in prog," says Semkina. "When we started, which was like five years ago, I would stumble across a lot of comments online in forums, people saying, 'Women have nothing to do with this genre.' I was like, 'Wow this is harsh!'"

But Marjana wasn't going to let herself be put off.

"I'm a fighter," she laughs. "I keep fighting difficult circumstances: for example, getting out of Russia wasn't easy! So I considered it a challenge."

One of the factors that has brought more women into the prog scene has been the encouragement they've gained from seeing other women involved in the genre. Aside from Kate Bush, Annie Haslam of Renaissance and Curved Air's Sonja Kristina (read our interview with her on page 94), initially there were few women in prog to look up to.

For Heather Findlay — vocalist with Yorkshire-based folky prog rockers Mostly Autumn from 1997-2010 and solo since, alongside collaborations with the likes of Ayreon — feeling like one of the only females on the scene in the early days made her self-conscious.

"It took me ages to even wear a skirt on stage," she admits. "It wasn't until I gathered confidence in myself, and discovered other females in the rock genre, that I thought I could do that. I felt more fragile if I wore a skirt on stage, which is interesting to think back on.

"I remember in the early days people interviewing me and asking me about my influences, and it was hard to find female influences in prog," she says. "I came from a pop/rock background so my influences were more the Stones, Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac."

Van Giersbergen, whose music career began around the same time, agrees: "My inspiration came from things like black music, and also Barbra Streisand: it wasn't metal or prog-related at all! I was interested in good voices — Michael Jackson, Freddie

TINA KORHONEN

"It's called progressive music: we have to bring in new influences, you know?"

Anneke van Giersbergen

Anneke van Giersbergen: prog's leading lady?

Kim Seviour: smashing "genteel" stereotypes.

"Prog doesn't feel like it's something that's just for the boys anymore."
Kim Seviour

Mercury, Mike Patton — so I just picked up how I wanted to be a singer and performer from them."

But as more women became active in the scene, it gave encouragement to others to get involved.

"Anneke is sort of like the modern-day prog Madonna, isn't she?" Lee Douglas, singer for our Liverpudlian cover stars Anathema, laughs. "I suppose she helped to give me a confidence boost: if she can do it, then maybe so can I."

"As the scene gets younger and more influences come in, and as women become more confident in the genre, they start to shine really and that's where the innovation can happen," Findlay says. "That's when the really new-sounding things can really start to come out."

But while women gained confidence to take to the mic in prog, there is still a lack of female instrumentalists. Van Giersbergen reasons this may be because there are simply less women instrumentalists for others to look up to.

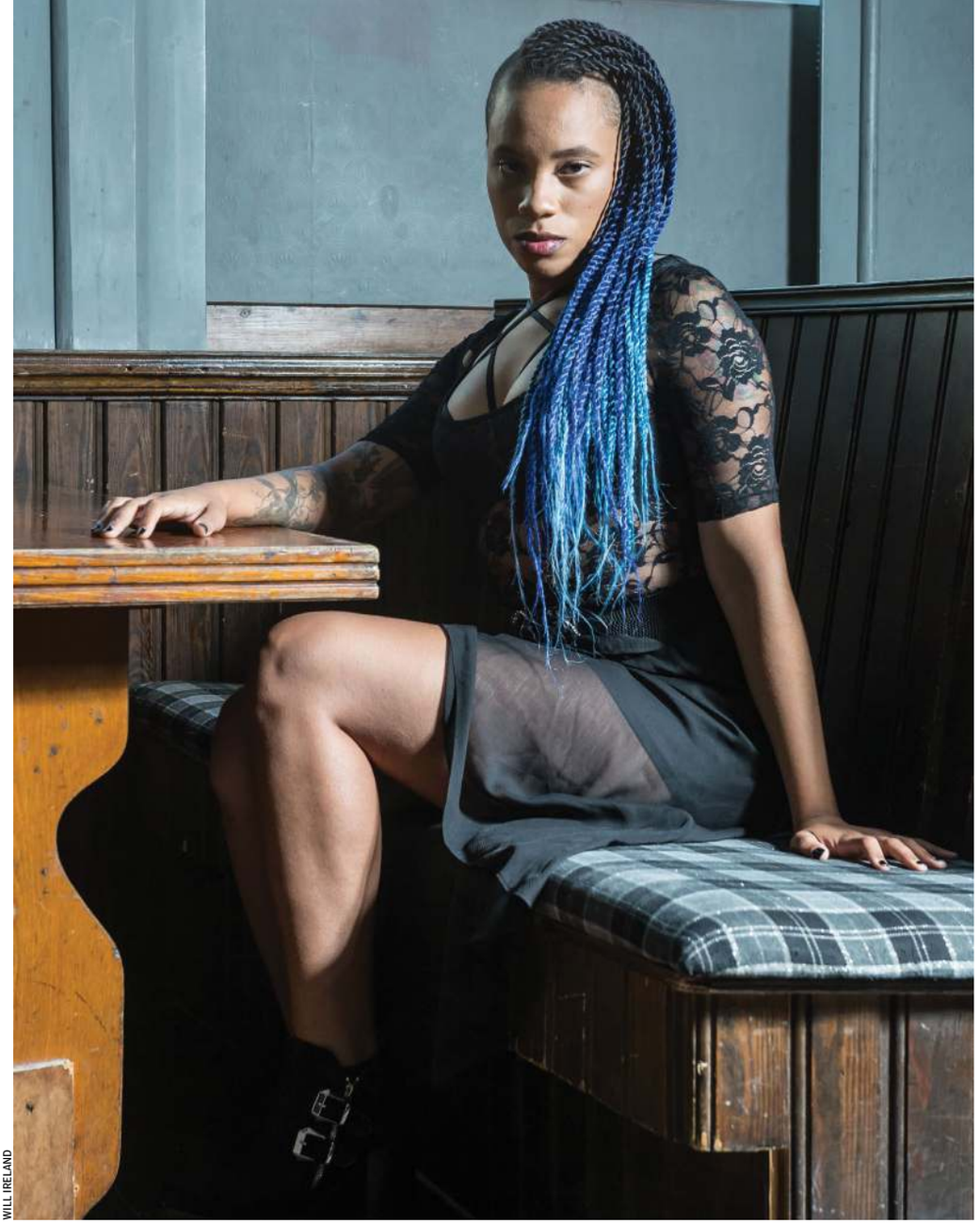
"They need the confidence or the idea," she explains. "It expands my career a lot to be able to play guitar and sing at the same time — it broadens my spectrum. I don't see that happening too much. As with bands such as Epica and Within Temptation, it's like you're either a singer or an instrumentalist. I think that's something that can develop."

Cammie Gilbert of Texas-based blues/prog/doom metal band Oceans Of Slumber, agrees: "I didn't realise there were many female instrumentalists. If I could have felt like I could have been a shredder on the guitar, then maybe I would have taken it up to a greater extent that I have. I always sort of delegated female roles in music towards vocals, and it's refreshing now to see that's not all there is — take Simone Dow [guitarist] from Voyager. She's totally badass."

Unfortunately, but undeniably, stereotypes can generate within music scenes. One that can be attributed to women within the prog scene is the ethereal, 'genteel', floaty and feminine frontwoman.

"I'll never forget that, years ago, I was told off onstage for swearing by an audience member," Seviour remembers. "I said something like, 'You guys are fucking awesome!' And somebody said, 'Language!' I was like, 'Wait a minute, if it was a guy onstage, you would *never* say this.' There certainly was an image of the genteel woman in prog, and I felt like I had to fit that."

But, she reasons, this is changing thanks to the variety of the women getting involved.



WILL IRELAND

"The more women that are attracted to prog and the more individual they think they can be, the less they feel they have to fit any stereotype," she says.

Gilbert is adamant that progressive rock actually allows women to explore the multifaceted aspects of their creativity to a greater extent than other music genres, miles away from that 'genteel' image:

"I feel with prog music that you're encouraged to push the spectrum of whatever it is you are going through," she explains. "You can feel the whole range and wrath of an angry woman, or the full gentleness of a caring woman, and it is all the same woman. With prog, I can be as soft and serene and sweet as I want, or I can break my voice and scream and yell."

Another visual challenge that women in bands face is the pressure to conform to the stereotype of the sexy frontwoman. However, these women are adamant that said pressure is significantly less in the prog world.

"Obviously, dealing with record companies and people in high places, they try to make your being female count even more than it does," says van Giersbergen, "like offering me money to buy sexy clothes. That was in a period when I was totally tomboyish so I said no, and frustrated a lot of people!"

Above: Cammie Gilbert from Oceans Of Slumber.

Below: the "badass" Simone Dow of Voyager.

WILL IRELAND

"Once I read a review of a gig I did," Seviour says, "and my outfit was the first thing that was commented on. So there are still comments that I would see for women that I definitely wouldn't see for guys. But although the clothes comment happened, it stood out to me because it was only one comment. I feel like, in prog, I'm treated more as a person. I think within music in general a lot has changed, and I do think that prog music is spearheading that."

"There was never any pressure within Mostly Autumn to look a certain way," Findlay says. "We [she and Angela Gordon, who was also in Mostly Autumn] always took the lead with that. And, to be honest, the guys were often queuing outside the dressing room, wanting to use our hair straighteners, one by one! [Laughs]"

It's the attitude of the prog listeners that has helped take this pressure off.

"I think that prog people in general are more thinkers," says van Giersbergen. "They don't mind if a woman doesn't wear make-up, they are so much more into the information rather than the looks of it. To be honest, in the prog world, nobody looks really sexy! [Laughs] In the end, all that matters is that you're a good musician."

"Of course, I'm pretty sure that we would have got way more listeners if I was being all sexy and stuff, but this is not me," says Semkina. "I think in prog, it's different. I've found a lovely attitude here: I've never had any kind of negativity because of the way I dress. It might be a stereotype, but I think you have to be intelligent to listen to this music. And with intelligence comes awareness and also respect."

"I have female friends who work in corporate jobs and the Friday afternoon drinks are way worse than what happens in rock and roll!" van Giersbergen laughs. "People who have office jobs seem to have way more power abuse and stuff going on than in this music scene.

"People who listen to prog are brothers, really, sharing this together," she continues. "There's not much sexual innuendo going on. And when there is, I'm not really shocked — some guys are just like that," she shrugs.

Many of the women that *Prog* speaks to for this piece praise the creative spark that the balance between men and women can bring to the music: about accepting differences and working together.

"I like that there are so many woman in prog now — guitar players, technicians, photographers, journalists, more and more women on the scene," says van Giersbergen. "And that makes the balance cool. However, I like being in a man's world. I like the balance: I like the testosterone! [Laughs]

"For my own album with VUUR," she continues, "I had that concept;

that the music should be masculine and tough and heavy and dark, and that the vocals, lyrics and melody lines are beautiful and eclectic with the female touch."

"I've always found brilliant chemistry working with men," Findlay agrees. "They would definitely bring out something with me that would be different to, say, when I work with Angie. And I love that just as much."

"Female voices are basically like a different instrument," says Semkina. "I actually prefer male singing just because technically it can be more universal, things that guys can do that I can't do — I hate when there are things that I can't do! [Laughs]

"I think that women have a different perception of things that are beautiful. I don't like generalisations, but I do think this is something different about women. I don't like talking about our differences, and I'm a very passionate advocate of equality," she continues firmly. "But we are different. It would be silly to not admit that."

One of the ways that women in prog are helping to further shatter stereotypes and gain more of a balance is by getting involved in the nitty gritty of life on the road.

Semkina recently came off a month-long tour with Leprous, Agent Fresco and Alithia, where she was a guest vocalist for the latter, and it was her first time on the road with a big group of guys. It was an experience that she loved, and it taught her the importance of getting involved.

"It became obvious to me how respectful guys in prog are," she remarks. "I was on a tour bus with 26 guys and the tour manager, who was a woman. It was amazing how much understanding and empathy there was. I also began working as a tech for Leprous, as I really wanted to learn as much as I could. Load ins and load outs, setting up the stage… and I was the only girl doing this.

"They would try to stop me from carrying heavy stuff, but I kept doing it anyway. I said, 'This is my way of fighting for equality!' [Laughs] It's not just about being treated equally, it's also our obligation to take on additional responsibilities."

Findlay agrees with this sentiment wholeheartedly:

"I don't just sit around and watch people do all the work, I like to get involved," she affirms. "I have a pet dislike for people who don't do this. It's just what we've always done. It's a team at the end of the day, and there are better results if everybody is all hands on deck."

Semkina muses, "That tour really made me think. I had never really met any kind of sexism among musicians in prog — it made me very optimistic for where the entire genre is going."

Of course, it isn't just on the stage where more women are showing up in progressive rock — it's also behind the scenes, from label owners to journalists to technicians, all working to help to produce the music that you love. Marillion is managed by a woman. The press officer for Ian Anderson, Steve Hackett and Yes is industry veteran Sharon Chevin. And let's not forget the many female contributors to this very magazine, where half of the main editorial team — the News Ed, Reviews Ed and Deputy Ed — are also women.

"As the scene gets younger and more influences come in, and as women become more confident in the genre, they start to shine really and that's where the innovation can happen."
Heather Findlay

Marjana Semkina: a self-confessed "fighter".

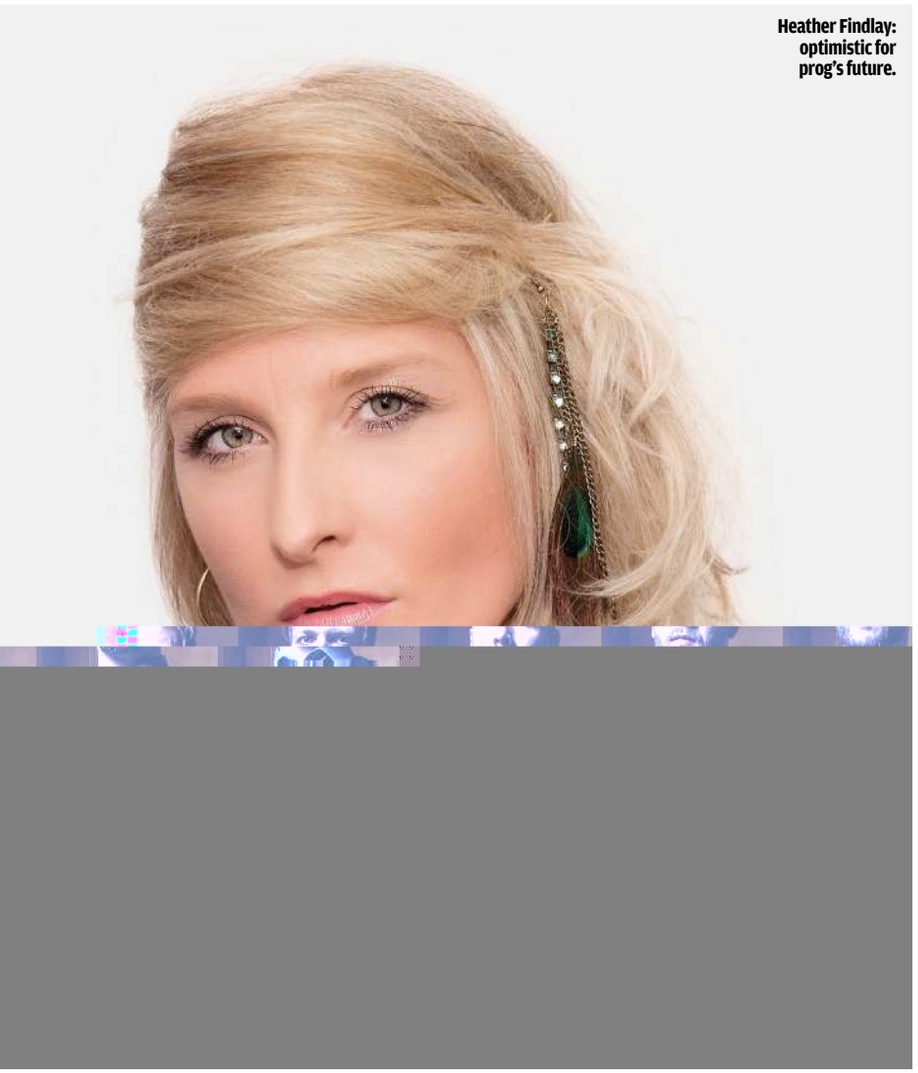
"Nellie [Pitts] from The Merch Desk does a lot for prog," says Seviour. [Pitts topped our Readers' Poll 2017 as the 'Unsung Hero'.] "And also Lulu [Davis] from Incendia, who does my PR. The fact she's a young, passionate woman in rock, seeing that is brilliant. It does sound like there are more woman being attracted to it. More women writing for *Prog* magazine, more women in the industry and organisational side."

"We have a female tour manager," says van Giersbergen. "I think as a tour manager you need to be tough, not afraid to be an asshole sometimes, but you can really use the soft element in a female character to make things happen."

There's also been a significant rise of women attending prog gigs — no longer just wives and girlfriends dragged along for the ride.

"I've definitely seen a rise in women coming to gigs," Gilbert agrees. "I think in Romania, that was the most women I'd ever seen at a concert, there on their own. And at the end, they all came over to talk to me in waves, and I was like, 'This is awesome!' It was so refreshing to see."

"My boyfriend does merchandise for bands like [French metal band] Gojira,"



Heather Findlay: optimistic for prog's future.

says Douglas, "and he says that the audience at Anathema shows are much more mixed. When I see women in the audience, it's lovely — my few fans at the front, I'm like, 'Yes!' It's quite supportive and it boosts your confidence."

"When I performed at Winter's End in 2010, a couple of my guy friends came with me," says Seviour. "When we left the gig one of them came up to me and said, 'It's a sausage fest!' I think they were hoping to meet some women. But at Trinity last year, there were a huge number of women, and not just girlfriends either! A lot more women are prog fans now: it's brilliant to see."

When asked about who in contemporary prog they admire, one name is common: Anneke van Giersbergen, who is an inspiration for many reasons, from her business sense to her vocal range, and the way she has become a role model.

"That's so lovely," van Giersbergen says when informed of this by *Prog*. "I sometimes forget that The Gathering were at the beginning of it all, and so many bands were inspired by us and singers inspired by me, who became way bigger bands than us.

"We were touring with Epica recently, and they have progressed so much," she continues. "I remember Simone [Simons, vocalist] coming up to me, like, 15 years ago and she had all these questions for me, how do you do this and that, and now they are huge! I am so proud of them: that they are from Holland too and have made it so far. And I'm really happy with my career: I'm doing exactly what I love doing."

There is a real sense of camaraderie with these artists: they are incredibly supportive of one another, and admire each other's differences and what they bring to progressive music.

One example is how van Giersbergen praises Gilbert for bringing a fresh approach: "Now *she* really brings something new to the table. She is so different from everybody else, and then combining that with the complicated and technical music. It's the perfect mix of the masculine and feminine coming together to make something wonderful.

"I see the ladies of the scene coming together online," van Giersbergen continues, "following each other on social media and commenting on each other's posts. We always back each other up because we are in the minority of heavy and prog music, so in that there is a sense of sisterhood within the brotherhood."

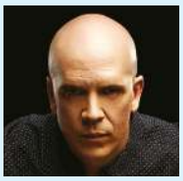
Just as the new generations of prog musicians are helping to reinvent the scene, women have brought both change and balance to this music that we love, and have felt accepted in a positive way that bodes well for the future of the genre.

"It was the same with the theatre," says Semkina. "When it started, it was all men, and men would play the female parts. Prog can be seen as old fashioned, but it's really great to see that the attitude towards women is far from old fashioned. It is in our power to stop it from being a boys' club and I think we are slowly succeeding."

Prog, Classic Rock, Metal Hammer and www.TeamRock.com are combining efforts this February to celebrate the role of women in rock. See www.teamrock.com and the hashtag #SheRocks for more.

DUDES FOR THOUGHT

Some of prog's leading lads discuss their views on women in prog...



Devin Townsend

"I try to work with as many women as I can, because as a man I can represent half of what I want to represent: it's the human thing that I'm interested in. In my role of trying to represent something that is human, if I can get any help from those who know what it means to be on the other side and all the things that come with it, that's how you make it complete."

Rick Wakeman

"Prog now has many genres as it has spread its wings so much in its 50 or so year life. Many of the current artists weren't even born when it first came to be, so they can look at prog from a unique standpoint. It's taken time for women to really be recognised in prog, and it's long overdue. Especially vocally, where they seem to add amazing textures that suit the music so well."

Steve Rothery (Marillion)

"In the early 80s, the only female-fronted new wave prog band I was aware of was Solstice. I formed The Wishing Tree with vocalist Hannah Stobart in 1995 (the same year as Mostly Autumn formed). We had some success with the first album *Carnival Of Souls* but I did feel at that time that not all prog fans were interested in listening to a female vocalist. I think this definitely changed over the years and now there are a lot of great prog bands with women."

Einar Solberg (Leprous)

"I always found it strange to be distinguishing so much between men and women in music. To me, it doesn't make any difference if the band consists of men or women as long as it's good. I don't think equality comes from making a sensation out of it every time there is a woman in a prog band, but rather to just regard it as something normal and obvious." **HMK**

One Show To Rule Them All

Prog visits Sweden to witness the **IB Expo**, a special multi-musician performance that's put together from scratch in just a week by **Isildurs Bane** and various musical guests, this time including Peter Hammill and Tim Bowness.

Words: Sid Smith **IB Expo images:** Patrik Leonardsson

Saturday, November 25, 2017: Fifteen musicians plus sound and lighting crew are huddled into the small kitchen and common room meeting space within the Kulturhuset, a publicly-owned arts centre located in the port town of Halmstad on Sweden's west coast.

In front of the assembly, Isildurs Bane keyboard player and musical director Mats Johansson resembles a friendly schoolmaster cajoling his students into making some decisions. With an ink marker in hand, he points to the suggested songtitles on the A3 sheets on the wall behind him.

Tonight's performance, the IB Expo, is the culmination of the last few days during which Johansson and the other members of Isildurs Bane, along with guests Peter Hammill, Tim Bowness and Koto player and vocalist, Karin Nakagawa, have spent time rehearsing, writing new material and getting to know each other.

As the ebb and flow of two hour-long sets gradually come into focus, it's clear that this process is not just about picking a bunch of songs: it's an expression of triumph and the satisfaction of a job well done. A mere five days ago, nothing on the list, in this form and with these people, existed.

Now, with some well-practiced guidance from Johansson, the concert is finally taking shape. Though fitting everything in, with last minute variations being made, can be a difficult balancing act."We'd like to add a vocal improvisation," suggests Tim Bowness, "just Peter and myself." Hammill

"The atmosphere both behind the scenes and at the concert itself was warm and supportive, actively encouraging the unexpected."
Tim Bowness

The all-star cast at last year's IB Expo.

nods emphatically. "We've no idea what that will consist of yet," says the veteran performer, best known for his pioneering work with Van der Graaf Generator. "But we'll think of something!"

If sorting out the setlist is a tricky affair, it's nothing compared to the task of getting the entire ensemble into position for the soundcheck and performance. The Kulturhuset's ample stage seems almost pinched and small by the time two drum kits, a dedicated array of tuned and orchestral percussion, strings, horns, three keyboard stations, a grand piano stage left and a 25-string Koto at stage right, plus the 15 musicians, are in place. The dense clutter and sheer variety of equipment and people reflect the exotic, expansive nature of the IB Expo ethos. Mixing conservatoire-trained players with musicians grounded in rock, jazz, avant-garde and experimental music enables them to have an impressive reach.

That night the sell-out audience are witness to what Peter Hammill refers to between numbers as music that is unique and very firmly in the "now". After the performance is done and the final cheers have sounded, the singer, who's just released his 35th solo album, makes the following assessment: "It's a very special event in which everyone involved, from grizzled veterans like me to those just starting out on their musical journey, had not only to bring their best game to the table but also to remain open to all that was going on around them. Sometimes that meant being silent rather than making a noise.

"In other words, this is an event which places music at the centre of everything and invites the audience inside the temple of music without the curses of Ego and Show falling upon them. I've known about, even followed, IB Expo for many years, so I knew that when I accepted the invitation to participate this year I should expect the unexpected. I wasn't disappointed!"

Bowness is equally enthusiastic about his involvement with the group. "It was fantastic having access to such a gifted collection of musicians and great fun trying out exotic combinations of instruments and playing with arrangement possibilities. This enabled me to create very different versions of familiar No-Man songs, as well as pieces from my recent solo albums. The atmosphere both behind the scenes and at the concert itself was warm and supportive, actively encouraging the unexpected, and it's something I'd love to do again."

Bowness and Hammill are the latest in a long line of international artists responding to the call to spend a week in Sweden working with Isildurs Bane towards the special one-off concert. Having started in 2005, the annual event has grown from strength to strength. The late Mick Karn, Jerry Marotta, Pat Mastelotto, Valgeir Sigurdsson, Jakko Jakszyk, Mike Keneally, Janne Schaffer, Tony Levin, Phil Manzanera, Trey Gunn, Terry Bozzio, Adrian Belew, Marco Minnemann, Julie Slick, Richard Barbieri, David Torn, David Rhodes, and Steve Hogarth, to name but a few, have all declared themselves to be enthusiastic supporters of the Expo.

For all the celebratory associations underpinning the concept of the annual Expo, it was born out of a difficult period in the band's 40-year history. Founded in 1976, with Johansson joining the following year, the group's 1984 debut album *Sagan Om Den Irländska Älgen* reflects their symphonic rock roots. However, with changes in personnel and Johansson's growing influence, subsequent releases evolved to reflect the dramatic shifts in musical thinking that would take in rock, jazz and traditional folk music forms.

In the 90s, with the addition of orchestral percussion, the instrumental writing took on a sharper edge that embraced an almost Zappaesque complexity and density. Yet the adverse economic conditions for making music and keeping a band the size of IB, as they became known, weighed heavily on Johansson.

"There was a period where I felt that it made no sense to work on a new album," admits Johansson, citing the avalanche of torrent

Steve Hogarth (left) and Samuel Hällkvist.

"This is an event which places music at the centre of everything and invites the audience inside the temple of music without the curses of Ego and Show falling upon them."

Peter Hammill

A Symphony Of Strings!

sites and illegal uploading during the mid-2000s, which undermined the prospects of any releases to break even, never mind make a return on the musician's investment. His solution was to adapt to the changing climate by working as a projects-based unit undertaking unique events, such as workshops and clinics for young musicians, music camps and then, in 2005, the first IB Expo.

While the Expo has certainly helped the group maintain a presence, Johansson was mindful that the last full Isildurs Bane album, *MIND Vol.4 Pass* was released in 2003. Following his appearance at the 2013 Expo with Richard Barbieri, Marillion's Steve Hogarth was approached by Johansson, who hoped he would collaborate with the band.

"I wrote songs specifically with Steve in mind, ending up with around 34 minutes of music. When Steve came aboard he had some great ideas that expanded the album, coming up with great combinations of lyrics, vocal lines and ways to express what he had written that are just exceptional."

Hogarth recalls that the invitation came at an extremely busy time for him, as Marillion toured and finished work on 2016's *F E A R*. Intrigued by Johansson's writing, Hogarth recalls, "These songs came together in hotel rooms. Mats would send me music and I would sit in between getting up in the morning and going to soundcheck and doing shows with Marillion, composing in snatched moments in various parts of the world." The result was a startling return to the international stage for Isildurs Bane with *Colours Not Found In Nature*, released in 2017 and premiered in concert at the 2016 IB Expo which saw the band celebrate 40 years of music making.

"The fact that IB is more of a pseudo-classical set-up than a rock'n'roll band is very exciting to be a part of," says Hogarth. "It's a beautiful thing. I would jump at the chance to do it again."

Off The Radar, their second release of 2017, featuring the current core line-up of founder drummer Kjell Severinsson, Katrine Amsler (keyboards, laptop), Klas Assarsson (marimba, vibraphone, percussion) Luca Calabrese (trumpet), Axel Croné (bass, woodwinds), Samuel Hällkvist (guitar) and Liesbeth Lambrecht (strings) suggests that the band are hitting a creative highpoint.

Katrine Amsler and Mats Johansson.

"Luckily, there are digital platforms that work today, and I feel that it's possible to produce music on CD and vinyl again," says Johansson. The title of the new record reflects the way Isildurs Bane have quietly got on with the business of moving forward without ever having to keep an eye on what might be fashionable. Keeping a low profile for several years has worked for them, he offers. "To be off or under the radar is a good feeling actually. We have kept our integrity."

Off The Radar and Colours Not Found In Nature are out now via Ataraxia Productions. See www.facebook.com/ibexpo for more.

FULL CIRCLE

Five of the best of Isildurs Bane.

The Voyage (1992)

Concept album about outsider Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli, moving between ecstatic soloing, reflective choirs and fiendishly challenging settings for a chamber rock ensemble.

MIND Volume 1 (1997)

An impressive mix of thoughtful orchestration, hard-hitting themes and intense, dramatic performances.

MIND Volume 2 (2001)

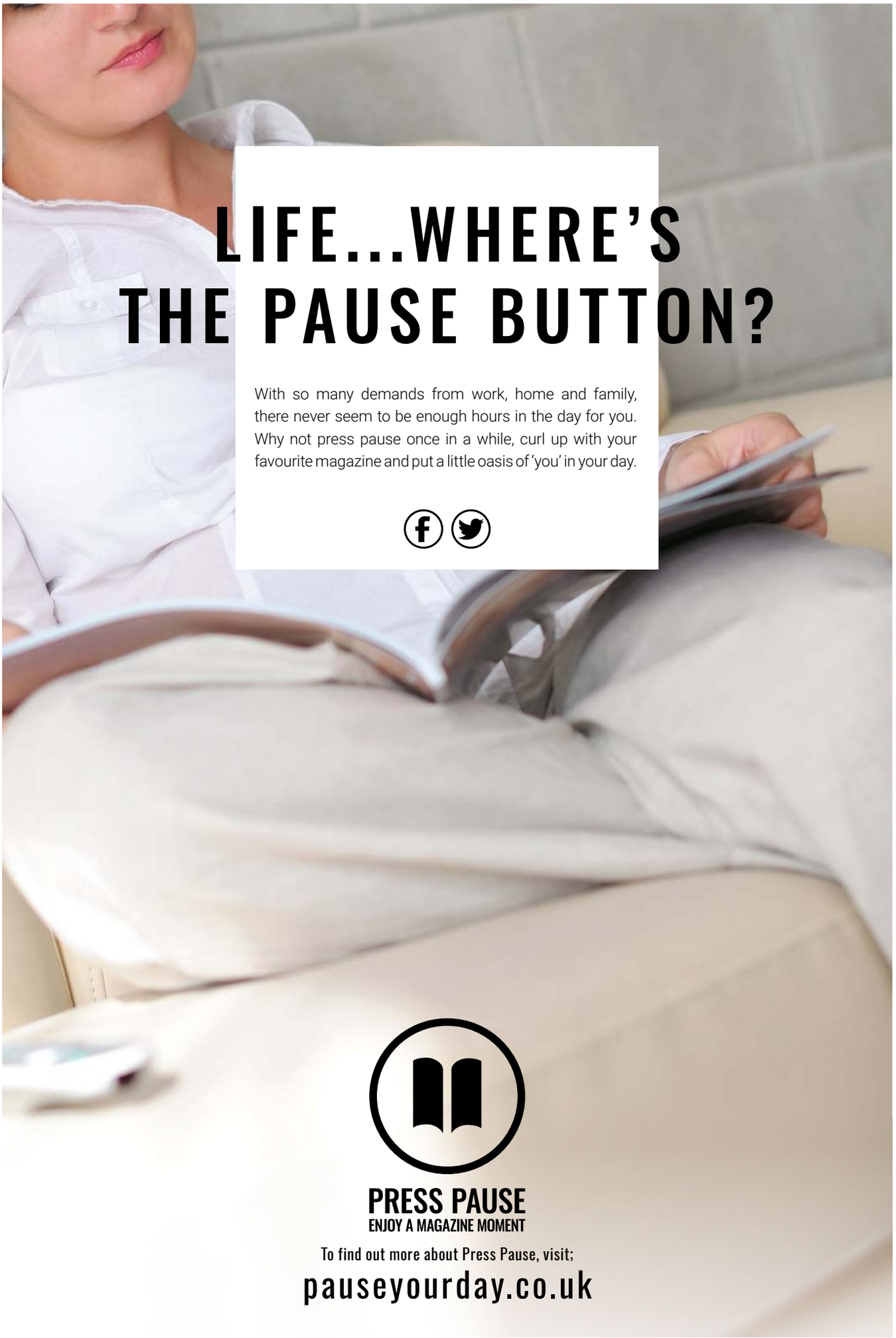
Double live album recorded in Belgium, France, Mexico and other locations across Europe captures something of the extrovert energies the band are capable of generating in concert.

Colours Not Found In Nature (2017)

Fast-moving shifts in tempo, punchy riffs, percolating electronica and Steve Hogarth's cathartic vocals makes this the band's most accessible album to date, without sacrificing any of their ambitious writing.

Off The Radar (2017)

Surging tunes, squalls of brass dominated themes that stretch and unfurl with an almost jazzy elasticity and eerie atmospherics provide an enthralling variety of immersive moods. **SS**



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Coming Outta My Cage

He may be best known as the bass player in indie chart-toppers The Killers, but **Mark Stoermer** is going full-on prog with his new solo album. The bassist talks Armageddon, his love for King Crimson and how he's "weird enough" without drugs…

Words: Paul Lester

What do you do when you've been a member of one of the biggest alternative rock bands of the 21st century? Easy. You make a prog rock LP.

Filthy Apes And Lions, the third solo album by The Killers bassist (and sometime rhythm guitarist) Mark Stoermer, is a "loose concept", with animal leitmotifs and a vague theme of imminent apocalypse. Recorded at his home studio with himself multitasking on bass, guitar and some keyboards, plus a small cast — including local musicians and producer/string arranger David Hopkins — it is both a bold response to these dark times, and an escape from them.

It will delight fans of prog and psych, freak folk and jazz fusion. The title track features a menagerie of chimp squawks and woozy synths. *Beautiful Deformities* is a purple haze of Hendrix thunder and Byrds raga, churchy organ and changing time signatures. It was apparently designed as a three-part mini-rock opera, based on a dialogue between two 12th century monks.

The Perennial Legend Of Dr Mabuse was inspired by the 1922 Fritz Lang film *Dr Mabuse The Gambler*, with a German Expressionist feel ("I was going for something really dissonant and atonal"), a sample of American composer Leonard Bernstein and a sound that brings to mind Greg Lake on the run in the Weimar Republic. It could also be interpreted, Stoermer suggests, as an allegory of a certain goon-ish orange-haired demagogue.

Mica Rae — an anagram of America — is post-*Sgt Pepper* baroque chamber pop that explores, says Stoermer, "the dark side of the American dream". *Nosferatu Blues* is a Doors/Beatles amalgam about vampires and such.

There are two covers. *Dwarfish Trumpet Blues* by Tyrannosaurus Rex, which Stoermer recorded on the anniversary of Marc Bolan's death and only found out after the event, describing the experience as "eerie", and The Kinks' *People Take Pictures Of Each Other*, which might be 50 years old but chimes perfectly with the selfie-obsessed 2010s.

"I love The Killers, and maybe they could have taken more risks, but I understand that if I was running the band maybe no one would know who they were."

Then there's the nine-minute instrumental *Muju's Revenge*, a jazz prog odyssey recorded largely as a jam, one that invokes everyone from Mahavishnu Orchestra to *Live-Evil* Miles Davis, both of whom Stoermer grew up listening to. Not that he claims to be remotely worthy of ascension to that godlike virtuosic realm.

"This is a dumbed-down, almost garage rock version of prog/jazz fusion," he says, talking to *Prog* from his home in Las Vegas. "It was done mostly live with a few overdubs. We had to do tons of editing. I don't claim to be a jazz level musician, but that kind of early jazz fusion and prog rock was something I enjoyed as a kid."

Sectional songwriting — where "a lot happens in two minutes" — and Stoermer's love of rock opera informed *Filthy Apes And Lions*. As did the tumultuous state of the globe.

"The album has a loose feeling of dystopia, Armageddon and impending doom, with the idea that maybe the animals will take over and mankind will reach its end," he says, a tad gloomily, adding just in case you suddenly felt like throwing yourself out the nearest window: "Hopefully not. These are just the themes."

Is he scared?

"Yeah, a little bit. I'm no expert, but I don't feel good about things. Things seem a lot stranger than they've ever been in my lifetime."

Hold on: didn't psychedelia happen against a backdrop of (Vietnam) war and riots in Detroit, while prog was contemporaneous with Watergate?

A Meditative Mind: Mark Stoermer.

Stoermer at the video shoot for *Beautiful Deformities*.

most of their best music then," he decides. "It would be nice to be in a time, or a band, where you could do well and make records, one or two a year, and the tours were short.

"I'm not knocking it," he says, which means he's about to, "but nowadays the business means you've got to stay on the road for two or three years at a time."

Stoermer's multipartite prog and The Killers' anthemic rock: they couldn't be more different.

"We're very different people, with very different musical tastes," he agrees. He's also honest enough to acknowledge: "I love The Killers, and maybe they could have taken more risks, but I understand that if I was running the band maybe no one would know who they were."

Ultimately, Stoermer is delighted to have had a career doing what he loves.

"They're part of my history," he says of The Killers. "Listen," he confides of their past, present and future, "no marriage is perfect — and a band is like a marriage. We'll see where it goes. But I like doing my own music, it's quite different to what we did in The Killers, and whether 100 people or 1,000 people listen to it, that's fine. I'm not trying to set the world on fire."

Then again, he is making music — psych, prog — that has, historically, been commercially huge.

"Yeah, that's true," he allows. "If I was making this music in 1969 or 1971, this wouldn't be marginal at all."

Is there a band that he would have been more comfortable in? Is he more suited to King Crimson?

"That's a tough question, because I wouldn't even presume I'm on that level," he says. "I was lucky enough to have seen a version of King Crimson in LA a couple of years ago, when they had three drummers up front. *In The Court Of The Crimson King* and *Red* are two of my favourite albums of all time. But they're technically on another level to me."

Talking of expert musicians, Stoermer grew up admiring bassists Noel Redding, John Entwistle and Paul McCartney. He has even met the latter a few times: first at Live 8 at the Royal Albert Hall, and again when the Beatle performed *Helter Skelter* with The Killers for a performance at a private New Year's Eve party in St Barts. At Live 8, Stoermer recalls, "[McCartney] was talking with the other guys and he was going, 'Where's your bass player?' And then someone came and grabbed me and said, 'McCartney's looking for you!' When he saw me, he went, 'Ah, so you're the bass player! Us bassists have got to stick together.' He just wanted to say that joke to me."

Does he ever wonder, mid-creation, what his heroes might make of his music? Considering The Killers' 22 million sales and their sheer enormity/ubiquity, Stoermer is surprisingly self-effacing, even dismissive.

"Oh, I don't think they'd think anything of it," he says. "I'd be embarrassed of anyone like that listening to it."

Were any narcotics used in the making of the out-there, psychedelically vivid *Filthy Apes And Lions*?

"Oh no," he replies. "I'm clean living. I meditate and sometimes that gets me in touch with 'the other world'... I'm pretty sure Captain Beefheart was straight — and he's pretty out-there.

"Besides," he adds, "I think I'm weird enough. Some people don't need drugs. Not that I'm startlingly original or anything like that, but I feel that my imagination can go to places..."

Stoermer doesn't reply as such, but he makes the point that, these days, dissenting art and music seem to happen less in the mainstream than on the margins. There are few, if any, loud countercultural voices to match those of The Beatles and their generation.

"There's no movement," he moans, justifiably, "and there should be, because things are worse than ever."

Does he wish the music of The Killers, say, more pointedly reflected these grievous times? Put on the spot a bit, he fudges: "That's different. Brandon [Flowers, frontman] has always written the lyrics, and the band have always leaned towards pop, albeit sometimes smart pop. [Political music] is not appropriate for The Killers necessarily. I'm not against it if it's done right. I just don't think it should be something you're forced to do."

Stoermer released his solo debut, *Another Life*, in 2011, followed by *Dark Arts* in 2016. What do his bandmates make of his work?

"They don't really talk about it," he replies. "I don't really push what I've done on anyone. It can be a bit uncomfortable."

Of The Killers, he reveals that he's "not really seeing those guys" right now, taking a breather from touring while he pursues his own projects. "I don't enjoy touring to the degree that they do," he admits. "I'd rather stay at home and make records." His model for the ideal band remains The Beatles after 1966, when they eschewed touring for the studio. "They made most of their best music then," he decides. "It would be nice to be in a time, or a band, where you could do well and make records, one or two a year, and the tours were short.

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Indeed, Stoermer did "surrealistic-type exercises — things that let my mind go somewhere else".

Meaning?

"Sometimes I blank my mind and use 'automatic writing' - stream of consciousness — delving into the unconscious and writing what comes off the top of my head."

Achieving a psychedelic state without the use of psychedelics?

"Maybe. I've never taken psychedelics. But [my music] kind of 'goes there'. Some of my lyrics are psychedelic, or they achieve what I might with psychedelics. It's automatic free thought."

It sets Stoermer apart, certainly from his stadium indie rock peers. Where does *Filthy Apes And Lions* fit in today?

"I mean, lyrically it's a product of its time, intentionally or otherwise, whether I like it or not," he muses. "But as to where it fits in musically? It doesn't. It's an anomaly, made by a guy in his basement."

A bolt of strangeness from the blue? *Prog* can see him smiling all the way from Vegas.

"Yeah," he says. "I like that."

Below: new album *Filthy Apes And Lions*.

Filthy Apes And Lions is out now via St August. See www.markstoermer.com.

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THE PROG INTERVIEW

SHE ROCKS

SONJA KRISTINA

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 **Sonja Kristina**. Best known for being the vocalist in Curved Air, Kristina is a figurehead of progressive rock: she has influenced a wide range of singers from Siouxsie Sioux to Kate Bush, and in 2014 she received the Guiding Light Award at the Progressive Music Awards. *Prog* speaks to the enigmatic singer to look over her illustrious career.

Words: Malcolm Dome

Born Sonja Christina Shaw, Sonja Kristina has been a crucial figure on the progressive rock scene now for close on five decades.

The granddaughter of acclaimed Swedish actress Gerda Lundequist, she first got noticed when playing the role of Crissy in the original West End production of *Hair* in 1968. Around this time, Kristina was involved in running the famed Troubadour Club in West London, a haven for folk musicians. In 1969, she was brought into the fledgling Curved Air line-up as their vocalist, and over the next few years not only helped to establish the band as one of the most individual and exciting bands on the progressive scene, but she also became a fully-fledged sex symbol.

When Curved Air split up in 1976 after releasing six studio albums, Kristina took various jobs in order to support her young family: she not only returned to *Hair* when a new production opened, but she also became a croupier at the Playboy Club in London.

Thankfully, she came back to the contemporary music scene in 1980 with the release of a self-titled solo album, showing she had lost none of her talent.

Subsequently, not only has the vocalist continued to put out albums, both under her own name and also as part of the multi-media duo MASK with Marvin Ayres, but she has also been a crucial part of the reunited Curved Air. Since the band returned to action in 2008, they have toured regularly, and also put out two new albums, namely *Reborn* in 2008 and *North Star* six years later.

In 2014, Kristina received the Guiding Light accolade at the Progressive Music Awards. Not only did this celebrate her enduring appeal and success, but also underlined her importance as a huge influence on successive generations of talent, including Kate Bush.

1970's Air Conditioning album.

Throughout what is now fast approaching 50 years as a major musical force, Sonja Kristina has never bowed to the vagaries of any trend. She has remained true to her own instincts and spirit, and has evolved into one of the most charismatic performers of the last five decades. And yet, she has also been a constantly enigmatic figure, a fact that has helped to encourage a burning fascination about who she really is, and what drives her. Now is the time to find out a little more about the woman behind the star, to debunk some myths and get to the heart of the facts...

> Being on a show like *Top Of The Pops* was fascinating, because of the way the audience and the bands interacted. It was like watching natural history in action!

When did you first sing in public?
At school. I used to do songs like *My Grandfather's Clock*, accompanying myself on guitar. That was to assembly gatherings. I also did proper concerts at the local boys' school!

Did your parents encourage your artistic pursuits?
Oh yes. When I was trying to learn a tune a day my dad would give me a shilling for every one I succeeded with. That was his idea, not mine. My mum would sit and listen to me reciting poetry and extracts from Shakespeare when I needed to do that for any exams. My mother was talented enough to have gone onstage if she'd wanted. I have tapes of her singing, which were done from very scratchy recordings. And my dad was once an amateur puppeteer.

Do you come from a large family?
I have two brothers, six and eight years older than me. That meant they had moved out from the family home when my dad had a stroke when I was 13. So I had to visit him in hospital on my own, sitting in a dark car park trying to do my homework. Around the same time, my mum was hospitalised with kidney

Sonja picking up the Guiding Light Award at the 2014 Prog Awards, presented to her by Katie Puckrik.

WILL IRELAND

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Sonja Kristina in London, December 30, 1970.

stones. For a while I lived with the family of a friend of my dad's who ran a children's home, because my brothers had moved away.

Would you say you are an extrovert?
Not really. Onstage I do get a rush, which gives me extra confidence. I am nervous before a performance. But once it starts, I am in the zone and focused. But when I am offstage I am not particularly sociable. I tend not to be good at parties when I don't know anyone – unless I have consumed substances! But I am fine in one-to-one situations.

Who were your vocal role models?
I would have to mention Buffy Sainte-Marie, who was the first singer who wowed me. I learned several of her songs and would perform them at folk clubs alongside my own. I also loved Sandy Denny. What both of them have in common was being powerful and passionate, which was different to many other twee female singers back then.

What did being in *Hair* teach you about performing?
Everything. Yes, I did learn a certain amount at drama school. But in *Hair*, we learned to use our energy to fill the space, to trust one another, while relating truthfully as people. We were also encouraged to be spontaneous, and to leave everything of ourselves on that stage.

CENTRAL PRESS/GETTY IMAGES
A 1968 rehearsal of the musical *Hair*, with Sonja front right.

When you were in that production, did you see yourself going in a more theatrical direction, as opposed to being in a band?
Oh, no. I was still into singing at the drop of a hat. Even when I was in *Hair*, I'd go along to restaurants with friends, and would take little encouraging to strum a few songs. I never thought musical theatre was for me. I did a couple of other theatrical productions, like *The French Have A Name For It* (1979) and *Man To Woman* (1982), but that was never where I saw myself going full time.

You were involved with The Troubadour at a young age. Did this teach you about the business side of the music industry?
I was 19 when I ran my own night at the club. But I did it through serendipity and intuition rather than hard business acumen. For instance, one day I ended up chatting to someone on the tube and it turned out he did lights. So I got him along to do the lights at The Troubadour. I'd meet poets and folk musicians, and ask them to come down and perform. That was the way it all happened. I also had good friends like Al Stewart appearing. Overall it was a very successful time, but I was deeply in love with the hippieness of it all, rather than learning about the music business.

1971 release Second Album.

You did one show with Strawbs. Why didn't it go any further?
Dave Cousins was – and still is – a friend of mine. So, when Sandy left the band, he asked me to do a gig with Strawbs. But after that they decided not to get in a vocalist, as it was a lot easier for them. As I was still at college and didn't want to drop out to join a band, that was fine by me.

Were you in any other bands prior to Curved Air?
I did a few shows with Picadilly Line, who went on to change their name to Edwards Hand. We even got to do a gig at The Marquee Club in London – that was a highlight. They had some really nice songs.

What musical instruments do you play?
I play basic chords on the guitar and can also play melodies on piano, which is useful when I give vocal lessons. I wish I could play the guitar better, and would love to find the time to improve.

CURVED AIR PRESS
Early Curved Air, with Sonja second from right.

KEVIN NIXON

When you joined Curved Air, were you at all intimidated by being in a band with Darryl Way and Francis Monkman, who were classically trained?
Not at all. The fact they were so well musically trained made no difference to me. I liked their songs, and also the fact they were keen for me to write lyrics to fit. I love working with words. In general, I am not easily intimidated or overawed by people or situations.

All the members of Curved Air lived in a London flat together for a few years. That must have been chaotic!
No more chaotic than living with a family. Most of the time we were kept busy rehearsing, touring or writing. We all had our own rooms at the flat, although Florian (Pilkington-Miksa, the band's original drummer) had his bed in the living room. It was natural for me to bond with everyone, and so had no problems getting along with everyone.

When *Backstreet Luv* became a big hit, did you feel like a pop star?
I suppose in a way I did. We did *Top Of The Pops*, and had a car sent for us. But I was used to this, because I made TV appearances before on a folk music show, so was used to that sort of treatment. Being on a show like *Top Of The Pops* was fascinating, because of the way the audience and the bands interacted. It was like watching natural history in action!

Above: 1972's *Phantasmagoria*.

> In general, I am not easily intimidated or overawed by people or situations.

Left: Sonja at the Prog Awards, 2017.

How did you deal with being a sex symbol?
I suppose it was intriguing. It was certainly strange to have all these young boys adoring me. I was 20/21 at the time, and the lads at the front of the stage were 15/16, and they were gazing at me almost in worship. But part of performing is to relate to the audience, to reach out and touch them. I was never afraid or worried about doing that. It wasn't me trying to be sexy, but just being myself.

Did you have any pre-gig rituals you'd go through?
This might sound odd, but I had a skipping rope that I'd use before going onstage. I would use it to get the my energy levels right up, and that was a great way of preparing. Simple, but effective.

How did you feel about being the only woman in the band?
That never bothered me — or them for that matter. We had no inhibitions. I was very comfortable getting undressed in front of them. It wasn't that I was one of the boys, but more that we accepted each other, and could therefore be fully open.

You were in a relationship with Stewart Copeland when you were both in Curved Air. Did that cause friction with the other band members?
No, it did not. I think the guys in the band had already gotten used to me being involved with someone from a touring party. Before we released our debut album, *Air Conditioning*, Curved Air toured with Black Sabbath, and I had a relationship with their manager, Malcolm Ross. Everyone was very cool about that, and there was never a sign of friction, so when Stewart and I got together, I never expected any problems. And there were none. Besides, the boys were busy hanging out with girls, so they had their own situations to deal with.

You have always come across as assertive and confident. Is

Golden Girl: Sonja Kristina.

KEVIN NIXON

that the real Sonja Kristina?
Do you think I am assertive and confident? I don't know if everyone would agree with that description. I have been told by some people that I can come across as being very cold. As I said earlier, I am very comfortable when dealing on a one-to-one basis with people. That's when I am a my best, which probably accounts for the way I can come over during interviews. However, put me into a crowd of people and I am very unsure of myself. At parties, I would lie down and actually pretend to be asleep to avoid having to talk to strangers. How people feel about me can depend on the circumstances, but I also have to admit that I never worry about what others think of me. I am very insular and in my own zone.

You were the only constant during Curved Air's initial tenure from 1970 to '76. Were there any times when you felt like quitting?
Yes, there were. When we did the albums *Midnight Wire* (1975) and *Airborne* ('76), I wasn't at all happy with the musical direction the band were going in. Sure, we were getting a very strong reaction from the fans, who were going wild for us. But I was totally unmoved. I was dissatisfied with what we were doing. The original line-up had been technically superb, but also very exciting. But in that era Darryl was taking us into a much more blues rock and pop oriented approach, and that didn't appeal to me. Sure, the musicians we had at the time were very gifted, and you cannot argue with what they brought to Curved Air. But I felt removed from it all. I was going through the motions, and did think about leaving to start my own band. The way Curved Air was heading wasn't for me.

You taught performing arts students at Middlesex University in the 90s. What was that like?
Oh, I loved it. Because what I was doing was teaching on a one-to-one level. If you put me in front of a class and asked me to teach, then I would be totally lost. If you have a big group, then they'd all be at different levels, and inevitably some of the students would be disruptive, and they would all have differing tastes. That was never for me, which is

why I could not work in that situation with a choir. But I am a natural when dealing with one pupil at a time, as happened at Middlesex University. I had my own music room and it was bliss. I even got to find out a lot about jazz from being there, a type of music I knew little about beforehand. I still teach, although not there.

You are seen as being a big inspiration to the likes of Kate Bush. Do you see your influence in the way she performs?
I do, yes. I look at what she used to wear and I know a lot of the style came from me. But there are a lot of surprising people who have claimed Curved Air inspired them.

Such as?
There's Phil Oakey of The Human League, for example. I know he's gone on record citing us as an important band in their development. And there's also Rat Scabies of The Damned, who is a big fan, and also you can tell that Siouxsie Sioux has taken a lot from me...

You got to know a lot of punk musicians in 1976, didn't you? Were they polite to you, given your prog background?
The strange thing is that there was no real problem. The media built up this mutual hatred between prog and punk, but really I don't think it existed to the extent that was claimed. I used to go to a lot of clubs and saw a lot of the punk bands, and they were always complimentary about Curved Air. That might have been because they didn't want to insult me, but I don't think that was the case. I got the feeling a lot of the punks were fans of ours, and other prog bands. But it suited the media to build up this animosity. Mind you, there were some hilarious moments when I'd play a punk record to certain progressive musicians and all they would say is: "What is this noise?!"

What would you say is the most left-field thing you've done professionally?
That's a hard one to answer. Most of the time, if anyone asks me to do something that is so off the wall that it would make me feel weird, then I'd refuse to do it, and immediately put it out of my mind. So I have rarely agreed to do anything like that. But Darryl did once suggest we should all wear pink cardigans onstage, including me. Did we do it? Certainly not!

CURVED AIR PRESS

Curved Air with Stewart Copeland, centre.

Outside of Curved Air, do you have any musical plans in the immediate future?

> The media built up this mutual hatred between prog and punk, but really I don't think it existed to the extent that was claimed.

I am going to be doing an album with the Norman Beaker Band, who are very respected in British blues circles. It will give me the chance to do some songs which would not fit into Curved Air. For instance, I am looking forward to tackling *Baby, Please Don't Go*, which I have always wanted to record. The album should be a mixture of blues and other styles of music, and will stretch me in a different way to what happens in Curved Air.

Above: 1973's Air Cut.

Can you see yourself writing an autobiography?
I am not sure that I would like to write this myself. But I would really like someone to do it with me. Perhaps a ghost written book might be the answer. Actually, I did work on a synopsis for a book like this once, and that part is finished.

Any book like this would have to be truthful, but that can cause problems, because the last thing I want is to upset anyone by telling things the way they happened, rather than avoiding subjects. Too many autobiographies I've read have ended up as being very boring, because the writers try to get around any controversies by avoiding the subjects. These become just a litany of dates and bare facts – to me, that is so dull. One way round this might be for the book to be written as it it's a novel, and then you can talk about anything without upsetting anyone. What I'd also want an autobiography to do it is to conjure up what it was like to live through the 1960s, which was an amazing time.

Another book which might be even more interesting would be based around 87 Redington Road in Hampstead, where Curved Air lived together for a few years. A lot of other bands also stayed there over the decades – it was a house which seemed to attract artistic types, and I feel a book of anecdotes from those who lived there would be fascinating.

See www.sonjakristina.com.

Edited by Jo Kendall
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New spins...

ORPHANED LAND

It's an angry new dawn for the Israeli international peace award winners – with a little help from Steve Hackett, Hansi Kürsch and Tomas Lindberg. The prog metal protest movement stands up to be counted.

Words: Dom Lawson **Illustration:** Danny Allison

Purveyors of rambling concept albums since the mid 90s, Orphaned Land's progressive credentials have never really been in doubt. But while early albums may have been too deeply entrenched in extreme metal to forge a firm connection with the prog world, from the fiendishly inventive, sand-blasted sprawl of 2010's *The Never Ending Way Of ORwarriOR* onwards, the Israelis' music has been purposefully progressive in both notable senses of the word.

Not many bands — in fact, just this one — have been given several prestigious international peace awards for their services to humanity, but then when you are making music at the heart of the Middle East's most troubled enclave while purposefully and passionately advocating peace, truth and unity, the stakes are necessarily higher than they would be for a band in, let's say, Bournemouth.

As a result, every last note of *Unsung Prophets And Dead Messiahs* resounds with a sense of significance, even before one encounters the album's overriding concept: the notion that throughout history, mankind has killed or silenced every righteous or enlightened prophet or writer that has offered us a path to peace, from Socrates and Jesus to Gandhi, Guevara and Martin Luther King. So strong and evocative is the theme that the whole album feels like a collective act of grabbing humanity by the shoulders and giving it a vigorous, re-orientating shake.

A breathless eight minutes of joyously overblown metallic rock opera, opener *The Cave* reveals a more loose-limbed and spacious band than the one that made *All Is One* in 2014. Still firmly rooted in the Israelis' trademark 'oriental metal', it simply feels as if Orphaned Land have learned some essential lessons from previous albums and are able to express those core ideas with more clarity and grace. Even something as succinct and traditionally structured as *We Do Not Resist* feels more

Unsung Prophets And Dead Messiahs

CENTURY MEDIA

> **Grabs humanity by the shoulders and gives it a vigorous, re-orientating shake.**

substantial and emotionally focused than before, which in turn suggests that Kobi Farhi and his comrades' resolve has grown in tandem with their songwriting skills. When that blissful chemistry erupts within a grand epic, the results are nothing short of spectacular: *In Propaganda/All Knowing Eye* is a thrillingly grandiose slab of intricate prog metal protest, while *Chains Fall To Gravity*'s stately riffs and pinpoint dynamics generate a mounting sense of foreboding and fury.

While managing to avoid overwrought earnestness or pious sermonising — and just think how tricky *that* must be when even relatively conventional political thought seems to have gone wonky of late — Farhi's ability to sound simultaneously exasperated and hopeful, both through his increasingly soulful and sonorous singing voice *and* his trademark growls, has never been more effective.

Elsewhere, it's an unwavering combination of broad brushstrokes and subtle details that makes this such a rewarding musical journey. Even ignoring the ongoing narrative, there's a fluidity to the way Farhi's tales are spun, his band's masterful and often distinctly catchy bombast never overwhelming the songs' structural elegance nor the message. During the pulsing, Zep-tinged march-towards-hope of *Take My Hand*, glimmering strings swoop and dive across riffs that build and spiral towards an almost psychedelic crescendo of exultant sound. Quite how Farhi and his bandmates conjure such uplifting and triumphant sounding music while the path to peace becomes steeper by the year is anyone's guess, but even the darkest, most aggressive moments on *Unsung Prophets* exude a sense of urgency, momentum and unyielding resilience.

Drawing to a dramatic close with *Only The Dead Have Seen The End Of War* — a thunderous groove, bursts of choral euphoria and swathes of jabbing violins — and the Floydian pomp and misty-eyed melancholy of *The Manifest*, Orphaned Land's sixth album is their most cohesive, absorbing and accessible. Almost creaking under the weight of the band's ideas, it arrives as their homeland is yet again the focus of freshly-stoked tensions: a very welcome and admirable plea for sanity from artists whose ethics are fundamental to everything they do. The belief that music really could change the world was once taken more seriously than it is in these cynical, turbulent times. But having embraced that chance to make a difference, OL have no intention to abandon their cherished mission nor to allow hope of a better world to die. For that alone they deserve applause, but the fact that the music is also frequently extraordinary makes this profoundly humanitarian work of art even more irresistible.

ORPHANED LAND
UNSUNG PROPHETS & DEAD MESSIAHS

TONY BANKS

Five BMG

Banks takes giant classical step in prog's ongoing evolution.

It's nearly 48 years since this writer sat in rapt awe while Genesis entranced his school's annual Christmas party performing songs from the just-released *Trespass*. A quiet presence in a sensible sweater behind his keyboard set-up, Tony Banks might have indulged the Leslie tricks favoured by fellow prog rock Hammond warriors, but his melodies were noticeably imbued with unusually sensitive, classical subtleties.

> **Cascades that could elevate an imaginary Genesis classic.**

Banks was classically schooled, deploying that training to give Genesis their melodic depth beneath the flights and fantasies. Embracing synthesisers, he released the requisite solo albums through the 80s but, unlike other Genesis members, they sold few, including Bankstatement's excursion into Mike And The Mechanics MTV pop. After finding greater aptitude composing film soundtracks, Banks, who cites Sibelius, Mahler and Ralph Vaughan Williams as eternal favourites, started revisiting his classical roots with 2004's *Seven: A Suite For Orchestra*, played by the London Symphony Orchestra, followed by 2012's *Six Pieces For Orchestra*, performed by the City of Prague Philharmonic (as represented on 2015's *A Chord Too Far* boxset).

Somehow those feel like a warm-up for the soundscapes and complex nuances that place *Five* alongside similar excursions by Lord, Wakeman and Emerson. It started when Banks composed 15-minute opener *Prelude To A Million Years* for 2014's Cheltenham Music Festival. Gripped by the multi-hued panoramas of fellow Charterhouse school alumnus Vaughan Williams, the album's glittering cascades often manifest into melodies that could elevate an imaginary Genesis classic, coaxing visions of Gabriel emoting fragile surrealism beneath batwing headgear before the climax.

Ebb And Flow has a killer chorus tucked in the swirling strings of the Czech National Orchestra that enrich the album, while *Renaissance* reinvents an unused Genesis composition as a beautiful violin showcase. That said, it's the cloud-busting sweep of Vaughan Williams that shines brightest throughout, Banks embracing a brave new musical future by reaching back to the past.

Fifty years ago Tony Banks started bringing pastoral English eccentricity to nascent progressive rock with Genesis. Now he's taking this most dignified (but difficult) next giant step for any classically-grounded prog pioneer by bringing up to date and thus keeping alive the music that first inspired him. Obviously, the question will be how many prog fans are ready to take the plunge and go the whole hogweed with him, but the effort is undoubtedly worth it.

KRIS NEEDS

POPPY ACKROYD

Resolve ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Self-produced third album from one-woman post-classical orchestra.

Poppy Ackroyd has been described as a contemporary classical pianist and composer, but that doesn't adequately reflect the alchemy of modern and traditional that she achieves on *Resolve*. By using digital sampling and editing to manipulate and rearrange her piano playing, she has more in common with the early pioneers of electronica than the conservatoire. Many of her songs share the same feeling of perpetual motion, with melodies, motifs and percussive effects looping against each other, yet the sounds here are generated from acoustic instruments rather than synth patches. On tracks such as *Paper* and *Time*, Ackroyd revels in the idea of her music as an assemblage, a consensual illusion, the winding of its internal mechanism plainly audible. But there's real heart here too – the dramatic arpeggios and strings of *Light* recall Michael Nyman's music for *The Piano*. Finally, the end credits of *Trains* releases the pent-up emotions that dominate this album with an expression of simple joy. While acknowledging the chaotic, artificial logic of human existence, *Resolve* is also rather magical, as fragile yet unyielding as nature itself. **JB**

CHET DOXAS

Rich In Symbols ROPEADOPE

New York jazzer's rock odyssey.

Having worked with luminaries such as Steve Swallow, Carla Bley, Maria Schneider and John Abercrombie, when Brooklyn-based sax player Chet Doxas isn't carving himself a reputation in New York's jazz scene, he can be found visiting the city's art galleries. Gazing upon the work of artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, Keith Haring and others with his manuscript in hand, Doxas notates the music that comes to him in response to what he sees. The result is an accessible album delivered alongside a super-tight guitar, bass and drums outfit with Doxas on woodwinds and synths. Despite his jazz credentials, the album sounds and feels more like an instrumental rock album rather than your usual fusion fodder. Expansive, stirring themes are laid on top of surging drums that ramp up the emotional impact of the writing. Reminiscent at times of the kind of joyous, repetitious build in some of Michael Rother's work, there's an 80s retro vibe arising from the deployment of spiralling synth tones. Amid the exuberant interactions between guitar and sax, all kinds of surprises are tucked away on an album that celebrates invention, uplifting grooves and yearning melodicism. **SS**

CHEW

A Fine Accoutrement STOLEN BODY

Something to get your teeth into.

Atlanta, Georgia spacewave trio Chew follow 2016's *3D* EP with a mini-album of barrier-trampling psych whoopee that marks their first UK release. With six tracks forged during their three-year US tour, guitarist/electronics man Brandon Pittman, bassist Brett Reagan and drummer Sarah 'Snare-uh' Wilson pile in on their array of guitars, percussion, vintage analogue keyboards and samplers to invoke space age visions prone to explosions of electronic starburst mutiny that could have been made 50 years ago in an acid manufacturer's garage. The set's bookended by two tracks riding similar spaceways to Sun Ra's early 60s mysterioso nightclub organ vamps, *Crunch* upping the shimmer with synthesised squawks and gravity-defying wooziness injected by Reagan's heaving bass. The title track evokes the Magic Band's surrealistic bump and grind with block organ guitar riffs lashed by lysergic sparks, *Golden* manages to mate early 60s space-instro and stately prog organ themes with Sendelica-style axe cataclysm. All show psychedelia's original no-holds-barred spirit alive and in very rude health. **KN**

DANDELION CHARM

Riding The Flood EP SELF-RELEASED

Psych folk duo make soaring anthems.

Psychedelic folk is a loaded phrase. It conjures images of flowers, joss sticks, the endless summers of forgotten youth and, well, the whiff of something 'medicinal'. With a name like 'Dandelion Charm' it would be easy to write off this Newhaven-based duo as 60s throwbacks. Oh, how wrong you would be. If this follow-up to debut *Tiny Drop* begins with a drowsy, nostalgic slab of acoustica, it only gains momentum as it unfolds. Its opener *September* is beautiful and anthemic – exquisite harmonies and guitar patterns à la Crosby, Stills And Nash – but it's only an aperitif. The heartbeat of *Riding The Flood* is the title track and *The Spark* which combine prog-era Opeth melancholy, the exquisite pop sensibilities of Fleetwood Mac and hints of Gilmour-Floyd. However, it's the interaction between the voices that root this record. When Clare Fowler's voice soars on *The Great Believer*, her husband John has the sense to hold the ground. Yet, his voice is a rich, warm instrument itself. It shows real discipline that neither needs to show off. These are songs of loss and quiet desperation: the brilliance of Dandelion Charm lies in making fist-pumping anthems in a minor-key. **RM**

DEATH AND VANILLA

The Tenant FIRE

Polanski Marmite re-scored by Malmo minimalists.

Described by Roger Ebert as "not merely bad, but an embarrassment", Polanski's 1976 psychological horror film *The Tenant* saw the controversial director himself as a Kafkaesque paranoid, in drag, hallucinating that his neighbours were playing football with a human head. Its soundtrack, by Philippe Sarde, was never likely to compete with *Mary Poppins* in the sunlit jollity stakes. It's a heroic choice of cover version or "reimagining" for Malmo-based trio Death And Vanilla, then. Emboldened by their 2013 reading of *Vampyr*, they recorded this live at a Spanish festival screening. Inevitably the results are haunted and haunting. But not just as in "a bit forlorn". As in so creepy you'll keep glancing nervously over your shoulder. With minimal fuss, and sounding anything but vanilla, the unit, using unsettling vintage instruments (is that a Mellotron we hear before us? A Moog behind us?), murmur up a quiet unease somewhere between Angelo Badalamenti and Krautrock with the "rock" part replaced by "stuff which is generally intended to put the willies up you". Spooky kicks, though you wouldn't want to live here. **CR**

FIELD MUSIC

Open Here MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Prince-endorsed prog poppers open out.

Cocooned in their Sunderland studio with an eviction notice on the mantelpiece, the Brewis brothers bid farewell to their preferred location with a sparkling work which subtly opens up new roads for them to explore. Yes, it's dominated by their major calling card of 80s-influenced art pop, as the funky guitar rhythms echo not just XTC and Tears For Fears but also less canon-approved names like Nik Kershaw and Howard Jones. Yet by its journey's end it's spun into a colour wheel of strings, flutes and flugelhorns which feels more Canterbury than Mackem. If 2016's *Commontime* was slightly repetitive, Field Music here prove they're a multiple trick string of ponies with Prince-like motifs and Sparks-like curls of dark comedy. Throughout the lyrics there's a reaction to current political mayhem, the concerns of parenthood merging with the inevitable melancholy that intelligence brings. By the time the vast finale *Find A Way To Keep Me* arrives, almost a cousin of Big Big Train, we've travelled the spectrum from subversive dance to bucolic prog, the arrangements increasingly bold and voracious. Wherever they go next, they're taking us with them. **CR**

GLEB KOLYADIN

Gleb Kolyadin KSCOPE

iamthemorning virtuoso revels in solo brilliance.

Prog has produced a raft of gifted keyboard players, many of whom have received high level training. Rick Wakeman went to the Royal College Of Music and Geoff Downes to the acclaimed Leeds College Of Music. Gleb Kolyadin, ivory maestro in iamthemorning, is also conservatoire-trained, and does it show. Anathema's Dan Cavanagh claims Kolyadin is "the single greatest pianist I've met", and this solo debut showcases his dazzling talents.

> **This music comes from deep within his soul...**

The inevitable question is, "Does Kolyadin's album sound like iamthemorning sans the magnificent Marjana?" Answer? Nay, nay, and thrice, nay. Certainly, there are characteristic Kolyadin motifs. *White Dawn* showcases his effortless grasp of modern and classical technique, combining flowing repetitions with the formality of Bach. In that mode, Kolyadin is unfettered by the demands of song-based prog.

If this debut stopped there, it would be enough. However, the heart-pounding centre of the album is two-fold. It showcases Kolyadin's gift for progressive yet accessible jazz and it contains some collaborations with prog royalty.

Insight and *Kaleidoscope* are mighty parcels of keys-driven jazz. *Insight* opens with a piano riff that has the pool-like clarity of Lyle Mays. Like Mays, Kolyadin balances virtuosity with melody. *Kaleidoscope* is an even wilder beast, in which Kolyadin's waspish keys make a dangerous dance with Tatiana Dobovaya's wordless vox and Theo Travis' flute.

This is music to test the sharpest musician, and Kolyadin's backing band, which includes Nick Beggs and Vlad Avy, is a wonder to behold. It's the collaborations, however, that amaze. The mighty Steve Hogarth brings an icy power to *Confluence*, H's spoken words creating a slow, moving vortex of sound. It's beautiful and intense. On album closer, *The Best Of Days*, H sings, *'We forget the storm beyond the bubble'*, yet still offers hope. The collaboration with Jordan Rudess has him throwing searing metallic keys all over Kolyadin's jazzy arrangements. Yet it's *Astral Architecture*, the collaboration with Mick Moss, that's the real surprise. It's dark and sparse, and Moss' vulnerable voice reminds us that Kolyadin may be a virtuoso, but he's unafraid to be an accompanist.

Solo albums are seen as, understandably, side-projects. However, Kolyadin's debut is a revelation. Any sensible prog fan will want more from iamthemorning, but this effort sets an exceptional standard. The album cover shows Kolyadin, blindfolded, surrounded by notation. It suggests that this music comes from deep within his soul. What treasure lies there.

RACHEL MANN

LEGEND OF THE SEAGULLMEN

Legend Of The Seagullmen DINE ALONE

Prog and movie mavens collide for the psych of it.

Another Mastodon side-project, you say? A lesser musician than Mastodon's Brent Hinds would have spread his talent too thin by this point, but *Legend Of The Seagullmen* is so entertaining that it serves more to confirm that the bearded one's ability to reinvent himself is neverending. With Tool's Danny Carey on drums, bassist Pete Griffin (Zappa Plays Zappa) and movie director Jimmy Hayward on guitar, they are psych rock missionaries, forging

> **Ultimately, this is a mad-eyed psychedelic knees-up.**

a course through endearingly bonkers lysergic seascapes full of marauding giant squid and Boschian shipwrecks.

Kicking off with their own gleefully manic theme song, *We Are The Seagullmen*, which starts like an out-of-synch *One Of These Days* before scorching off into rumbling Sabbath territory, the ensemble are having an obscene amount of fun. One might question whether there is any huge aesthetic difference between this and some of Mastodon's more outré efforts, but that band's recent ponderousness is conspicuously absent and Carey's drumming — every bit as distinctive as Brann Dailor's — has a looseness and restraint that underpins everything with immense character and punch.

Ultimately, this is a mad-eyed psychedelic knees-up. But even as the Seagullmen revel in a world of drug-fuelled surrealism, their ideas are sharp and effective. The creaking bows and Kraken rumble of *The Fogger* nod towards the boisterous end of the folk metal spectrum, albeit with a lyrical mischievousness that recalls Primus at their wonky best and a guitar solo straight out of the Mick Box handbook. Disintegrating into chaos midway through before regaining momentum and heading towards a suitably apocalyptic conclusion, it's audacious and impossible to resist.

The demented moments keep coming. They crank up the goofy melodrama on languorous sailor's tale *Curse Of The Red Tide*, hammer away like Hawkwind on a tequila binge on the title track and, at several, seemingly random points, scorch off on a joyously cacophonous and hallucinatory Blue-Öyster-psych punk tangent. Underpinning all of this mayhem are some genuinely catchy songs, rendered in crackly sonic sepia and delivered with a red-eyed smirk. *Shipswreck* is atypically direct, a Sabbathian sea shanty with riffs to spare; *Rise Of The Giant* is all mutant blues riffs, thumped acoustics and Moog-augmented aquatic whimsy; the closing *Ballad Of The Deep Sea Diver* sounds like Nick Cave collaborating with Ennio Morricone after one too many Mescal shots.

Too many side-projects *could* spoil the Masto-broth, but much like Brann Dailor's Arcadea, this has huge potential. It's also brilliantly, stupidly entertaining.

DOM LAWSON

FIRE!

The Hands RUNE GRAMMOFON

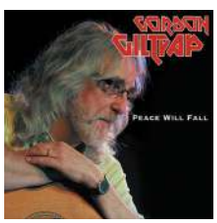
You need *Hands*...

Since coming together in 2008, Sweden's Fire! have gleefully rebooted the power trio format to mate raging free jazz skronk with the monolithic power of Sabbath's first album. Like a modern day Cream, each player gets an equal shout between super prolific sax titan Mats Gustafsson's coruscating Ayler-like roars, Johan Berthling's earth-shuddering basslines and Andreas Werliin's drum hoodoo. Now on their sixth album since 2009's *You Liked Me Five Minutes Ago* (not counting their behemoth Fire! Orchestra spinoff), the trio follow 2016's *She Sleeps She Sleeps* with seven sensitively brutal missives from the dark side, building on the title track's template of Berthling's colossal gouge, Werliin's umbilical percussion and the full-throated elemental roar that's taken Gustaffson to play with giants like Peter Brotzman. The three reach maximum thrust in the churning cauldron of the gloriously-titled *Washing Your Heart In Filth* or *Up. And Down.* sounding like early Van der Graaf on a daytrip to Hades, although they're equally effective going dirt-slow funereal on *To Shave The Leaves. In Red. In Black* or spatial closer *I Guard Her To Rest. Declaring Silence.*, Berthling swooning on double bass. **KN**

GORDON GILTRAP

Peace Will Fall ANGEL AIR

***Not* a new album from guitar maestro.**



Despite being billed by the record label as a new album, *Peace Will Fall* is, in fact, no such thing. Rather it's a repackaged version of Giltrap's 2012 offering *Echoes Of Heaven*. That in itself was a somewhat unique offering as it pitched the often instrumental Giltrap with female singer Carol Lee Sampson on material penned by Giltrap's friend The Rev. Martin Green. Although not overtly religious himself, Giltrap states that he believes that "all music that touches us is of a spiritual nature", and there are strong religious overtones on display here. While not as cloying as some of Neal Morse's messages, this may be enough to deter some. That said, this writer is someone who doesn't enjoy being preached to in music, but largely found much pleasant listening on offer here. This is largely due to Giltrap's ever wonderful guitar tone, a lush sound that weaves its magic from folk to prog across the material. Interestingly the religious aspect of the original cover has been dispensed with in favour of the more obvious Giltrap logo, but the spoken Biblical passages on the like of *The Lord's Seat* still grate. But not enough to distract from the overall enjoyment. **JE**

GOGO PENGUIN

A Humdrum Star BLUE NOTE

A not-so-humdrum fourth from the former Mercury Music Prize nominees.

Though sonically they have little in common, it's hard not to compare Manchester trio GoGo Penguin to Three Trapped Tigers, another jazz group whose intelligent and visceral use of elements from electronic music transported them into another genre, and nigh on a new musical plane. Where TTT's intense riffs and powerhouse drumming pushed them into a math rock milieu, GoGo Penguin have opted for a less intense tack. Nevertheless, it would be easy to see fans of math crossover groups such as Gallops or 65daysofstatic enjoying *A Humdrum Star*. The most exciting tracks are those where the band display a masterful control of tempo and musical momentum; the elastic timings and percussion of *Strid*, for example, the slowly unfolding patterns of *Reactor* or the fantastic main drum motif in *Return To Text*. The piano work of *Bardo* meanwhile has something of the kinetic sensibility of avant-garde genius Lubomyr Melnyk about it, even as it leaves breathing space in between its dense piano riffs. GoGo Penguin's strength has been the ability to bring non-jazz heads into the fold. On *A Humdrum Star* they better their own winning formula. **AL**

GOOD TIGER

We Will All Be Gone METAL BLADE

Brilliant second from high pedigree eclectic London proggers.

With both guitarists being alumni from prog metallers The Safety Fire, it came as no surprise that Good Tiger's debut, *A Head Full of Moonlight* bore a strong instrumental resemblance to TSF. *We Will All Be Gone* is a much cleaner break, with a very different instrumental attitude on display. While there's still metallic elements, like the riffs from *Float On* or *Nineteen Grams*, for the most part the band have instrumentally taken a step back to support the stunning vocal of Eliot Coleman rather than trying to vie for attention with it. As a result Good Tiger now more naturally sit along with recent US tour mates Hail The Sun, or other math-rock influenced heavy but melodic bands such as A Lot Like Birds or Sianvar, with catchy singles *Blueshift* and *Grip Shoes* an example of this. There's also a number of experimental, looser passages that show a more relaxed, organic approach to instrumentals compared to their clinically-precise first. There will be those for whom this record is too straight-up alternative rock, but the members of Good Tiger have been around the block enough times that surely nobody can doubt that this music comes from the heart. **AL**

HOLY

All These Worlds Are Yours PNKSLM RECORDINGS

Swede dreams up a work of genius.

It's rare that a new album genuinely sends you reeling within seconds, but Stockholm's Hannes Ferm has conjured up an epiphany of sound which makes you giddy with its shimmering loveliness. He may be labelled as "ambient wave", but there are thrilling oceanic quakes within this wash of euphoric elegance. You'll recall the first time you heard side two of *Abbey Road*, peak-era Spiritualized, Mercury Rev and Flaming Lips and perhaps that time you heard Cocteau Twins after a funny cigarette. At times you can only stand back and admire; at others Ferm's commitment and falsetto innocence insists on full emotional engagement. It's a concept album about alienation in the city, so much so that its maker barely left his underground studio or saw daylight. HOLY's previous, *Stabs*, only hinted at these heights. And while it's inspired by arty, glammy, theatrical music of the past, he's created something that sounds like the shiny, part-seductive part-sinister future. From the exultant hairpin turns of *Premonition/It Shines Through* to the nine minutes of guitars, pianos and voices which form the serene shriek of the title track, this is a world of ice, fire and discovery. **CR**

GORAN KAJFEŠ SUBTROPIC ARKESTRA

The Reason Why Vol 3 HEADSPIN

Sublime space jazz odysseys from Swedish trumpeter and chums.

Composer/producer Goran Kajfeš is something of a legend in his native Sweden, having been involved with the likes of Fire! Orchestra, Oddjob, Nacka Forum and the Magic Spirits Quartet. He also runs his own Headspin label, a repository for the genre-flitting music he makes as leader of the Subtropic Arkestra. The third and final volume of Kajfeš' *The Reason Why* series follows the format of its predecessors, consisting of radical reinterpretations of semi-obscure gems from across the globe. *I'm On My Way/ Patch Of Blue*, originally by US '69, is transformed into a mood-swinging epic that's roomy enough for ambient tranquility, funk soul and squawky dissonance. The Arkestra's gift for balancing Afrobeat and ethno-jazz is illustrated by the Orchestre Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou's *Ne Rien Voir, Dire, Entendre*, an improvisation around a theme that finds its horn section in full freakout mode. *Trance Dance* blows West Coast cool into the lungs of Christer Bothén's 1984 fusion piece. Panda Bear's *You Can Count On Me* becomes a rich experimental piece, anchored by mournful trumpet, while Caribou's *Sandy* is a model of elegant restraint. Dizzyingly good. **RH**

ART ROCK

Chris Roberts samples the new releases on the prog/rock boundary.

Off-kilter production, simplistic but seductive bass, sloppy drums, bursts of strings: it can only be **Serge Gainsbourg and Jean-Claude Vannier**. A "lost" 1969 soundtrack from the duo whose influence on breathy French music is incalculable, *Les Chemins de Katmandou* (Finders Keepers) is released for the first time. Found in the suitcase of a deceased friend, these master tapes had attained Holy Grail status. The film they scored is a forgotten "smacksploitation" Jane Birkin vehicle, but the Vannier-Gainsbourg crew play with that deceptive laziness which makes everything sound bigger than life. From Eastern classical to porny funk, even if Serge doesn't actually do much, it's a treat for those of us who are hysterical about *L'Histoire de Melody Nelson*.

Meanwhile Serge's daughter **Charlotte Gainsbourg** has her own new album out, and shot the video for *Lying With You* in his old house. *Rest* (Because) attracts starry guests, from Paul McCartney to members of Daft Punk and Arcade Fire, yet it's primarily a hazy, post-coital wash of colours. Long established as a bold artist in her own right, she's never averse to experimentation, on screen or on record, and this — touching on alcoholism and her father's death — showcases her rich reveries.

Joan As Police Woman alchemises reveries to revelations, and her cathartic sixth album *Damned Devotion* (Play It Again Sam) may be her best yet. It's as if she's found a spiritual link between Memphis soul and US indie which nobody else discerned, her voice lovelorn but flecked with golden light as she sings of Jean Genet and warning bells. After her, Emily Parker's vocals on husband Owen's album as **Parker's Band**, *Our Hands Are Tied* (Green Nova), are oppositely understated. Owen's worked with everyone from Peter Gabriel to Simple Minds to Girls Aloud, and is a crafty songwriter, but this loses pace after the exciting guitar solos on opener *If I Had A Therapist*.

More spark is shown by **John Moore** on the hell-raising *Knickerbocker Glory* (Germ). The former Mary Chain/Black Box Recorder guitarist delivers a scorching solo album which finds a way for 70s glam pop, rockabilly, sleaze and wide-eyed innocence to cohabit with witty, ironic lyrics. Philosophy, art and stonking riffs join in and the naughty-but-nice net result is impishly invigorating. You'll need a wash afterwards: thankfully the classiest of class acts **Cousteaux** (nee Cousteau) return from a decade's silence with an X added on their name. *Cousteaux* (Silent X) again proves that nobody's better at tilting the Walker Brothers' lush ballads blueprint, and Davey Ray Moor's songs and Liam McKahey's voice coax beauty up from the deep.

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KAUKOLAMPI

1 SVART

Widescreen space symphony from Finland's finest.

Remove the 4/4 beat and there's never been much to separate deep space techno from dark prog and Krautrock. The first solo album from Finland's Timo Kaukolampi after over 10 years leading the fearsome K-X-P is an atmospheric blend of cinematic ambience, occasionally joined by pulsing kick drum. At those points the music conjures techno but transcends any rave connections through its panoramas of dystopian soundscapes, that unfold through one 41-minute piece divided into five sections. After the sweeping *Bladerunner* themes of *The Prodigal Son Of Magnesia*, the electronic beat kicks up the radioactive glower of *The Three Legged Giant Centipede*, then drops away for *Epiphyte (Requiem For Mika)*: Kaukolampi's eulogy to friend and film composer Mika Vainio, who died last year. *The Bottomless Well Of Forgotten Secrets* ignites low-slung techno shadows, giving way to the closing *Public Execution Of The Sleeping Lotus Eater*: a sonorous tone-float through the far-flung galaxy. Ladies and gentlemen, we are floating in space, but deeper passions rooted in earthly emotions are what elevate this vividly imaginative masterwork. **KN**

LA FÉLINE

Triomphe KWAIDAN

Haunting prog pop with a Gallic twist.

France's extraordinary Agnes Gayraud took her band's name from the movie that would inspire David Bowie in the *Cat People* remake that surfaced in 1982, 40 years after the original. Both dealt with the idea of transformation and change, and showed off Bowie and Georgio Moroder's pop sheen in the film's theme tune. Gayraud and La Féline also play with the idea of form, substantive change and pushing pop's glossy boundaries. Gayraud – journalist, lecturer, associate of philosophy and chanteuse – makes the kind of experimental pop that touched the world in those early Roxy Music albums (the sax here, as there, is an occasional and surprising punctuation mark) and then traversed the years in the work of artists like Kate Bush and Peter Gabriel, even in the last few Feist albums. It's magical and multi-faceted: the lilting pop (with its haunting, almost world-weary vocal line) of *Séparés (Si Nous Étions Jamais)* sparkles dully, bereft and beautiful. Then there's the wonderfully discordant rise and fall that threatens to upend the gently tumbling *La Royamue*: both speak volumes for an artist without borders making music without walls. **PW**

MABEL GREER'S TOYSHOP

The Secret HBM

Pre-Yes vets keep the fires burning.

The death of guitarist Peter Banks in March 2013 was the catalyst for Clive Bayley and Bob Hagger to reform Mabel Greer's Toyshop, some 45 years after the psych prog outfit morphed into Yes. Since then, with a line-up fleshed out by Max Hunt and Hugo Barré, the band have issued a new album and an EP of remastered numbers from 1967-68. *The Secret* once again plunders the past for inspiration, most poignantly on its title track, which Bayley has constructed around guitar parts bequeathed by Banks. Dedicated to Banks and Chris Squire, the song is a fitting testament to both mens' legacies, shifting through atmospheric passages of depth, weight and daring. The other standout is *Big Brother, Little Brother*, a savage critique of the systematic destruction of Native American culture, Hagger laying down a crisp drum sound over which Hunt creates a heady swirl of keyboards and Bayley offers well-paced, erudite guitar lines. Elsewhere, Bayley draws from the classical realm (Tchaikovsky on *Swan*; Beethoven on *Turning To The Light* and *Angel Sent*) for a collection of seeker's songs that tap into Sufi mysticism and the works of William Blake for their stately power. **RH**

LONG DISTANCE CALLING

Boundless INSIDEOUT

German post-rockers return to instrumental roots.

When Münster's Long Distance Calling abandoned their instrumental post-rock roots in favour of adding vocals, the results were stellar (as were the guests, Peter Dolving, Jonas Renske and John Bush). 2013's *The Flood Inside* – featuring Vincent Cavanagh – won critical praise without alienating fans, while the boldness of the move opened up a new audience. On *Boundless*, LDC have rolled the dice and decided to go instrumental once more.

> **Even their post-rock template songs are powerful and fresh.**

Luckily for them, it seems that they've not forgotten the core of what made them a great instrumental group in the first place. Right off the bat, on *Out There* we're treated to muscular riffs and soaring melodies, with a chaotic slide-guitar motif that's as good as anything they've yet written. The band have said of this release that it represents them embracing their metal roots more than ever, and there's certainly a lot of evidence of a darker, heavier approach.

On *In The Clouds* there are menacing metallic riffs that recall *In Absentia*-era Porcupine Tree or *Someone Here Is Missing*-era Pineapple Thief, while the climax of *Weightless* shows a different side: slow, powerful and percussive. Possibly most interesting are the Muse-like kinetic riffs in *The Far Side*, which segue into a middle-eight that's nearly straight-up prog metal. The closer *Skydivers* is a post-metal track through-and-through, with nods to greats like Russian Circles while still being identifiably Long Distance Calling.

Even the tracks that adhere to a more familiar post-rock template are unexpectedly powerful and fresh, perhaps as a result of the entry of newer ideas. Chief among these is *On The Verge*, which builds layer after layer of guitar and piano motifs before finally letting loose at the midpoint of the track with a bombastic climax and then dying away. From there, it picks back up with a set of angular, call-and-response metal riffs and a cyclical piano figure that guide the track to a groove-driven breakdown section and then, just when a final crescendo seems in sight, an abrupt end. It's the most dramatic example, but by no means the only time that expectations are radically subverted on *Boundless*. Nevertheless, the highlight of the album is probably *Weightless*, which parses as a simplified Oceansize, with a bit more Pink Floyd in the mix. There's not a bad riff in there, and the track sways with the arrogance of a band that know they've penned something killer.

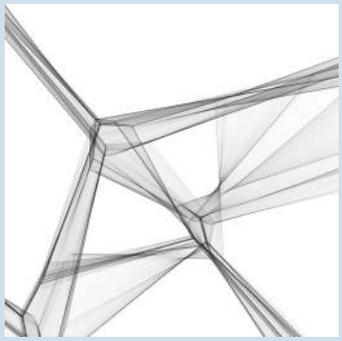
Radically reinventing yourself as a band is usually a once-in-a-career trick, but somehow Long Distance Calling have managed to pull it off for a second time. Hopefully their fanbase will come with them on this latest chapter.

ALEX LYNHAM

PERFECT BEINGS

Vier INSIDEOUT

LA proggers' four-track third album in reduced circumstances.



The difficult second album is a cliché, but you suspect this Californian quartet's third outing made their two previous, widely appreciated long players seem like a stroll in the park in comparison to the departure of both their original drummer and bassist in early 2016. But the creative core of singer Ryan Hurtgen and producer/guitarist Johannes Luley have overcome that setback with a new line-up to make their most adventurous record to date.

> **Melodic strands fuse together and you really enjoy the ride.**

The sleeve's 3D graph image, and the Germanic, Krautrock-ish title immediately suggest we're in for some serious math prog schooling. That's not Perfect Beings' style at all, but they dabble in a pretty heaped handful of other genres over four (hence the title) 16-18 minute suites.

They're not afraid of traditional musical tropes, though. Such as vocal harmonies, a chattering, multi-part variety of which open the record on *A New Pyramid*. Once joined by obtuse woodwind notes and a rhythm resembling a drum kit falling down a flight of stairs, there's the hint of jazz explorations being kept tightly on a leash. But then that passage ends with a snatch of the album's linchpin chorus from *Enter The Center,* and the mention of *'freedom when you call me'* heralds a more inviting musical landscape.

Things then become notably more ethereal for a while. *The Persimmon Tree*'s sweetly mournful descending piano loop, skittering flute accompaniment and rattling timpani sound like the introduction to a ballet, before more jarring, anxious notes chime in to darken the mood and thrust us into a chapter from a psychological thriller. No single mood lasts for long here, though, and *Patience* throws the shutters open on sunny keyboards and an invitation, paraphrasing Leonard Cohen, to *'Dance to me your beauty with a burning violin.'*

Later, a whole diaspora of influences is at play: the austere futurescapes of Berlin-era Bowie; Philip Glass's elegant avant-classical flourishes; then there are echoes of Air on *The System And Beyond* and touches of Nick Drake on *Everything's Falling Apart*. But in-between times we're regularly hit with perfectly progtastic storms of scattershot percussion, stabby riffs and fizzy, furious keyboard scribbles on tracks such as *Lord Wind*. It's only after four or five listens that melodic strands start to fuse together, familiarise with each other, and you begin to really enjoy the ride.

Lyrically, it's an even more impenetrable affair — indeed, when they rhyme *'tangerine dancers'* with *'mysteries not answers'*, that seems to say it all — they'd rather beguile than be boring or trite, and it suits this continuously shape-shifting, wrong-footing style of music perfectly.

JOHNNY SHARP

MAJOR PARKINSON

Blackbox KARISMA

Bergen septet overcome the odds in style.

Losing half of your band would usually spell the catastrophic end for most groups, but not Major Parkinson. Instead of crumbling away after three members left in 2014, the Norwegians have only gone and released a career-best record. *Blackbox*, the band's fourth studio record, is a truly enthralling concoction of theatrical prog rock. Interwoven with conscious – or subconscious – aural nods to the likes of Beardfish, Steven Wilson, Pain Of Salvation, Tom Waits and, erm, Abba, each of the nine tracks offer something unique, even if some motifs are cleverly reworked throughout. *Isabel: A Report To An Academy* is a trip through haunting strings and twists and turns that wobble you off balance with the whip of an unexpected gust of wind, while album highlight *Baseball* is 10 minutes of pure joy, roller-coasting through a series of bouncing melodic chops not dissimilar to Knifeworld or Cardiacs. *'Carry the weight of the world in your hand, what a feeling,'* sings throaty singer Jon Ivar Kollbotn at the start of the song, but what a feeling listening to *Blackbox* is, with its avant-garde atmosphere and drama mixed with melody and experimentation to exhilarating effect. **CC**

MIRACLE

The Strife Of Love In A Dream RELAPSE

Duo mixing up Sunn O))) and Depeche Mode's heroin years.

Full disclosure: this writer would normally take an album called *The Strife Of Love In A Dream*, place it in a locker, row that locker out to the middle of a lake, tie a rock to it and throw it over the side. Then laugh manically like a Bond villain, pet my Persian cat and go back to living under my volcano. More fool me. This latest album from Steve Moore (Zombi) and Daniel O'Sullivan, who appears to play everything and has played with everyone, is a ruddy journey through electro pop and the kind of bad dreams that haunt you for days. Imagine if Type O Negative had shared a rehearsal space with Heaven 17 and you're close. Which is not to undermine their worth: a song like *Dreamours* is worth a hundred times the title they've given it. It's elegiac, downbeat and yet somehow blissful too: you could call it intoxicating and be forgiven for the superlative. Their press release, too, sounds all the wrong notes. It's so pretentious and baffling, it makes the beautiful sound impenetrable: it's almost like the 80s never ended. That said, the final track, the ringing *Angelix* (which manages to conjure up both Lamb and Brian Eno) is a spiralling rocket ride into effervescent glory. **PW**

MOONER

Tabiat OUTER BATTERY

Probably the best Indonesian stoner psych you'll hear this month.

Unless you're fluent in Indonesian languages, you won't be singing along to Mooner. You may however be nodding with happy familiarity at their music. A vigorous fusion of heavy psychedelic riffs and intriguingly fresh raga and Middle Eastern touches, it's stoner rock with a lick of the spiritual. They don't mess about getting down and dirty, but you feel there's a desire for elevation at the core. That might seem a pretentious comment when you first hear it, because at times the guitars have no loftier ambition than to match the oft-overlooked oeuvre of 70s Brit outfit Blackfoot Sue. In phases, there's a curving upwards to the more tricksy emissions of Argent or Nektar. Yet Mooner use the roots of psych as their basic platform, then blow the cobwebs away with a contemporary hunger. They're both taking glee in the medium and recharging it as they enjoy the ride. Hard for us to grasp, perhaps, is how big they are at home: a supergroup of sorts, the quartet includes members of The Slave, Sigmun, The Sigit and Sarasvati, all of whom draw big crowds there. Mastered by US guitarist/producer James Plotkin (Khanate/OLD), this will draw big pictures in your head. **CR**

MOONPARTICLE

Hurricane Esmeralda MOONPARTICLE MUSIC

One-time Lifesigns man spreads his musical wings.

Best known for his work with UK proggers Lifesigns and a fleeting association with mid-period solo Steven Wilson, Bulgarian guitarist Niko Tsonev has always been a talent to watch out for. Moonparticle is described as a 'collective', drawing in Wilson-approved sidemen Theo Travis, Craig Blundell and Adam Holzman to form the basis of the band, while *Hurricane Esmeralda* is the result of a successful Pledge campaign. Given the cast list, you'd expect the album to be briming with virtuoso performances, and on that level, that's certainly what you get. There's some great stuff here, not least the lazy jazzy swing of *Michelangelo Don't Stop*, and the more progressively minded *Winter Mountain* and *White Light*, all proving Tsonev can construct some spledidly complex yet catchy fare. The whole thing gets off to a shaky start, however, the title track a distracting and discordant affair not helped by Die So Fluid vocalist Grog Lisee's idiosyncratic style. However, as things progress, Moonparticle find their feet in a style that most *Prog* readers will find pleasing, the final track *Leon's Experiment* ably demonstrating the band, and Tsonev, at their best. **JE**

NEAL MORSE

Life And Times RADIANT RECORDS

Solo Morse in easy listening mood.

You wouldn't guess from The Neal Morse Band's most recent output that their leader was mellowing into soft middle age. 2016's *The Similitude Of A Dream* and 2015's *The Grand Experiment* may have featured his now customary eulogies to the almighty, but they were still multi-faceted prog records. But as anyone who's seen Morse play solo live over the last few years knows, he can do the straightforward stuff well. This collection of easy-going soft rock numbers might prove too bland to connoisseurs of musical sophistication, but they are well-crafted. *Livin' Lightly* and *Good Love Is On The Way* employ irresistible strokes of Eagles-y peaceful easy feelings, the latter a five-minute romance in which *'She's the beauty barista, he's the corny cashier.'* But while most of these songs are blissed-out tales of the good life, as the slightly saccharine taste starts to cloy, the mood darkens with the tale of a traumatised veteran in *He Died At Home*. Later, the pedal steel-streaked, violin-laced flavourings of *Old Alabama*, and some sublime guest vocals from Julie Davidson, show Morse's songs sound even better dressed in the battered denims of Americana. **JJS**

ALVA NOTO & RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

Glass NOTON

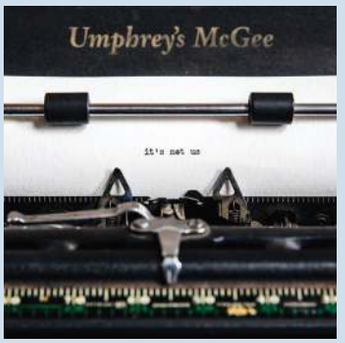
Acclaimed artists choose not to throw stones.

Few musical constructions signal "highbrow" more than a live improvised collaboration between Oscar-winning electronica pioneer Ryuichi Sakamoto and Berlin artist Carsten Nicolai's pseudonym for sonic work Alva Noto. Now place them doing this for 45 minutes in Philip Johnson's 1949 Glass House and allow them to use the walls as an instrument just after a rain storm. With gong mallets dragged down the glass' surface and various mixers and keyboards, it's an unconventional approach to capturing a moment, but Sakamoto reckons the dramatic landscape and red sunset they watched made for the ideal interface of art and nature. Oddly, it's less abstract than you might imagine. Its simmers and squeaks develop an atmospheric beauty, and there may even be a wink to Philip Glass in the theme and name. Some love the sound of it breaking, but this pair's muse prefers to touch it delicately, coaxing answers to questions which only their refined aesthetic can articulate. Being there would have offered extra dimensions, but the attentive listener will find this tonal, spatial, intuitive recording both enigmatic and, gradually, enjoyable. **CR**

UMPHREY'S MCGEE

it's not us NOTHING TOO FANCY

Diverse musical menu on US jam band's eleventh studio album.



Since forming around 20 years ago at university in Indiana, Umphrey's McGee have built up an enviable and enthralling back catalogue. From the excellent 2004 release *Anchor Drops* to the mash-up madness of *Zonkey*, and the many, many, many live releases, the proggy jam band have just about covered all bases. Their trademark sound pivots on a foundation of free-flowing, unrestrained creativity that's topped off with an unfaltering stream of ear-pleasing melody,

> **Doesn't break new ground, but is worthy of attention.**

and the US rockers' latest effort comes in the form of *it's not us*, their eleventh studio album.

Its PR blurb promises an adventure through a diverse array of styles and it just about gets the job done, with prog, rock, metal, pop, funk and jazz all referenced at some point over the 11 tracks. It gets off to a rather inconspicuous start, however, with opener *The Silent Type* a less-than-four-minute pop rock number which won't tick too many boxes for fervent prog-heads. Thankfully the rest of *it's not us* isn't quite so limp, with *Whistle Kids* a groove-laden, hazy kick-back and *Maybe Someday* juggling nods to the likes of Rush and Soundgarden.

The record's centrepiece is the seven-minute *Remind Me*, which opens with some funk and disco-flavoured merriment before dissolving into an instrumental attack featuring a bludgeoning Dream Theater-esque riff with haunting keyboards slathered over the top. It's impressive and compelling stuff, and it's hard to believe it's coming from the same band that devised the album opener, or the following *You & You Alone*, a cosy acoustic love song serenade. Elsewhere, there truly is a bit of everything to chew on; *Speak Up* showcases some slithering jazz licks and saxophone courtesy of Joshua Redman, *Forks* is an 80s romp and the brooding *Dark Brush* wouldn't sound too out of place on a latter-day Porcupine Tree record.

A big part of Umphrey's McGee's magic is their love of going off on tangents with gusto — check out some of the track times of their live releases for an indication of their hell-bent adventurism — and on the whole *it's not us* feels almost a little too concise and considered, but at least that should help to ensnare any new listeners who have yet to step into the Umphrey world. And what about the seasoned listener? The album isn't breaking any new ground, nor is it likely to be considered their best, but it's most certainly deserving of attention and it provides another glimpse into what makes Umphrey's McGee such an intriguing and special entity — even after two decades. A deluxe version contains a book, double vinyl, bonus 7-inch and Augmented Reality element. **CHRIS COPE**

STEVEN WILSON

Last Day Of June: Original Soundtrack CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

Wilson's specially edited compilation plays the (PS4) game.

This is a Steven Wilson project, but not as you know it. The game for which it was written is the brainchild of director Massimo Guarini, who was inspired by Wilson's searingly moving 'story-in-a-song' *Drive Home* (from 2013's *The Raven That Refused To Sing (And Other Stories)*). Stemming from characters created by German illustrator Hajo Müller (and brought to life in Jess Cope's richly compelling animated video) it takes the player through the story of Carl and June — the latter dies in a car accident which leaves the former in a wheelchair. Ultimately it poses the question 'What would you do to save the one you love, if you could change the course of events?' It's an emotionally immersive experience, taking in themes of love, loss, regret and moving on in the process. *Grand Theft Auto* this is not.

> **An emotionally immersive experience.**

And, musically, nor is it a simple compilation of Steven's songs. Specially edited and sequenced together by Wilson, this atmospheric instrumental soundtrack sounds as though it was designed for this project, not assembled from four solo albums plus cuts from (ambient/drone project) Bass Communion, as it actually was. Wilson has long said that progressive music should take you on a journey, and the music used here perhaps embodies that idea the most — filled, as it is, with a sense of narrative emotion. Opener *Some Things Cannot Be Changed* (based on *Grace For Drowning*'s *Belle De Jour*) has a haunting, almost *Tubular Bells*-like quality with its sparse acoustic lines. The title track is essentially an instrumental *Routine* (from *Hand. Cannot. Erase.*), with only the chorister's other-worldly notes floating above gorgeous guitar lines. And *Driving Home* takes the beautifully sad strings and piano progression of *The Raven That Refused To Sing* to spine-tingling new levels.

It's not all melancholia. *I'm Still Here...* conjures an ominous sense of *Raider II* from *Grace For Drowning* (reminding us that this is a guy who loves the creepy industrialism of Throbbing Gristle), while snippets like *Suspended In Me* capture more of an ambient quality. Elsewhere *The Boy Who Lost His Friends* morphs into the final passage of *Deform To Form A Star*, and *Time For A New Start* grows from the piano-led title track from 2008's *Insurgentes* to cathartic effect.

For Wilson fans, it's impossible to not think of the original versions (most of which had vocals, which have virtually all been stripped away here), and observe how your attention falls on instrumentals, breathing space and subtler touches instead of sung climaxes. And yet *Last Day Of June* works as a listening experience in its own right; as a compellingly melancholy fusion of Wilson's most poetic solo moments. **POLLY GLASS**

MARK PETERS

Innerland SONIC CATHEDRAL

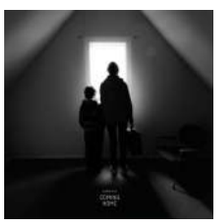
Engineers man goes on short, sweet instrumental excursion.

After making two albums of ambient electronica with Engineers bandmate Ulrich Schnauss, this Lancastrian has ventured out alone on this solo debut, and if you can judge an album by its cover, he's onto a winner. The artwork is themed around an imaginary ordnance survey Landranger map, taking in such evocative-sounding spots as *Shaley Brow* and *Twenty Bridges*. As ever with this kind of impressionistic, ambient fare, the rest is in the imagination of the beholder, as the latter track's pearly notes of guitar meander like a man wandering half asleep across windswept moors as dotted clouds of foreboding puff forth from the moody bassline. *Windy Arbour* has a throbbing techno pulse underpinning its tip-toeing keyboards and rainy streaks of guitar, and if he sounds like he's sniffing up snot back up his nostrils from time to time, so would you if you were stuck outdoors braving the elements. Sometimes you half long for the breathy vocals and atmospheric melodies that made Engineers, or a unifying musical figure or two, to give a greater sense of cohesion. But as a soundtrack to wandering alone in the wilderness, with no particular place to go, it's an invigorating journey. **JJS**

BJØRN RIIS

Coming Home KARISMA

Stripped down mini-album from Airbag guitarist.



Bjørn Riis is the co-founder and guitarist of Norwegian prog kings Airbag, but since 2014, he's also been carving out a niche for himself as a solo artist. But if the music of Airbag tends towards the lush and panoramic, an aerial view of the fjords by the light of the Aurora Borealis, the songs on *Coming Home* evoke the hardships of a lonely traveller in a harsh landscape, battling the elements as he nears his destination. With its churchy organ drone, tremoloed guitar and lonely electric piano, instrumental opener *Daybreak* is in the gloriously chilly tradition of *Wish You Were Here*. *'I've been out there floating among the stars,'* Riis intones tenderly on the title track, his voice and strummed acoustic guitar as beautifully gloomy as a Nordic winter, before a squalling, Gilmour-esque solo kicks up a storm. Everything here is stripped down like a slowcore version of prog, an impression reinforced by the Low-like *Drowning*, which features a luminous duet with Norwegian singer Sichelle. It ends with a new recording of *Lullabies In A Car Crash*, its elegant, dancing guitar a guttering flame in the dark. A sombre but necessary tonic for the winter months. **JB**

SUSANNA

Go Dig My Grave SUSANNSONATTA

Folk, skiffle... and Joy Division, reworked by the Norwegian jazz doyenne.

Over the years, Norwegian vocalist Susanna Wallumrød has perfected the art of achieving a lot while seemingly doing very little. Using the sparsest of instrumental settings, the searing purity of her voice, usually recorded without any significant post-production, creates an emotional space that's rich in drama. Paring away any harmonic excess, her ability to find the poignant core of a song and bring to it new insights and narrative detail has the effect of rendering the old and familiar, striking and new. Thus, in this collection, traditional folk tunes such as *Rye Whiskey*, *Go Dig My Grave*, the chirpy skiffle-era hit *Freight Train* and even Joy Division's *Wilderness* fit neatly together like a melancholic jigsaw, each piece underscored with a captivating, haunting stillness. The hesitant steps of Henry Purcell's *Cold Song* are a reminder of Susanna and Swiss baroque harp player Giovanna Pessi's breathtaking 2011 ECM release If *Grief Could Wait*, which contains a similarly eclectic tracklisting. Pessi's delicate plucking weaves an intense web of notes against which Susanna's plaintive tones resonate. Slow music it may be, but it's never less than beautiful. **SS**

THE INFINITE THREE

Innocence ACTUAL SIZE MUSIC

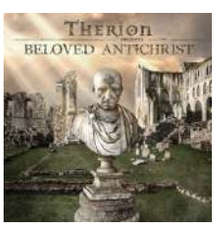
Unordinary tunes from British noisemakers.

The Infinite Three have been making strange sounds for nearly 10 years, but *Innocence* – the first of two new EPs – showcases a more experimental and ambitious edge compared to the post punk/noise rock vibes of their 2016 album *Lucky Beast*. Born from an improvised recording session, this four-track sees the trio dabble in twisted rhythms, off-kilter beats and meandering melodies with bursts of distortion. They may be prog scene outsiders – they formed from the ashes of gothic art rockers Leisur Hive – but this recording would sit comfortably alongside Godsticks and The Pineapple Thief. The opening title track bursts to life with Swans-esque distortion before mutating into a Godsticks-like anthem. Elsewhere, the creeping *Hot Strings* brings a modern spin on their dark roots with a Bauhausian creep and haunt, and occasional whispers of The Cure's proggier moments. *Like A Dog* is evocative of Nick Cave at his most experimental, with a burst of harmonica, a pinch of dub and a tinkling piano, while *These Animal Eyes* combines elements of drone with nuances of Massive Attack and early Björk. A short but bold introduction. **NRS**

THERION

Beloved Antichrist NUCLEAR BLAST

A Night At The Rock Opera.

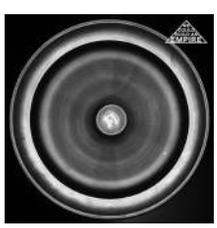


For anyone who has ever listened to Wagner's *The Ring Cycle* and thought, 'This is great, but it could be longer and more dramatic', here's Therion to set you right. This is a rock opera that doesn't hold back on the latter part of that equation. Spanning three and a half hours, *Beloved Antichrist* features 15 different vocalists, each playing at least one character in Christofer Johnsson's musical adaptation of Vladimir Soloviev's *A Short Tale Of The Antichrist*, published in 1900. Symphonic metal singers such as Epica's Simone Simons bring a classical approach, but everyone has that particular operatic style that is heavy on technique to hit each note perfectly, occasionally sounding stiff and formal. Johnsson might have done well to release this in three separate volumes as consumed all at once it becomes exhausting, and despite the legion of singers, there's little variation in tone. Johnsson's arrangements keep everything grand, though. *Hail Caesar!* drips with pomp and ceremony, while *Shoot Them Down* is an energised rocker. There's a strong single album underneath the excess here, but clearly excess is what Johnsson thrives on. **DW**

WE COULD BUILD AN EMPIRE

In This Place MIGHTY MUSIC

Gloom and grunge from Swedes expanding their kingdom.



This second album from Swedish alternative/prog trio We Could Build An Empire has been a long time coming. They released their debut in 2011 although their sound has stayed consistent over the years, still touching upon influences that include King's X, QOTSA, At The Drive In and a dash of the gloomy musings of Alice In Chains. Drummer Michael Ohlsson likes to be busy, battering his way through *On The Run* and the manic race to the finish of *Red III. The Worry Of The Heart* packs a heavy wallop with Marcus Pehrsson's bassline pulsing beneath Pontus Wallin's grungy riff. The guitarist brings a spacey, psychedelic feel to *On The Run* while the trio prove their prog credentials exploring odd time signatures in the album's title track. The production and mixing, shared between Zed Smon and Jens Bogren, aren't particularly warm and the guitar tone is often lean and slightly abrasive, not unlike Josh Homme's sound. *The Rise And The Fall* offers a proggier take on the 90s Seattle vibe with its sombre mood and stumbling, rolling groove. With *In This Place*, the Swedish power trio have crafted an album of dark textures, post-hardcore angst and turbulent energy. **DW**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

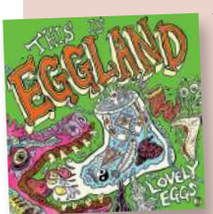
Bristol-based James McKeown was in the *Prog*-endorsed Hi Fiction Science, and now he's making music solo under the name **Hawksmoor** (self-released). The album is billed as "a hauntological imaginary soundtrack [exploring] the mysterious cartographic connections between the six Hawksmoor churches in London". Lofty and arcane, this subject matter's brought to electronic life with Moogs, tape loops, sparse choral vox and guitar, making for an atmospheric sprawl of ideas utterly evocative of its theme.

The Omnific are a young trio from Melbourne making a pleasing math rock/djenty din. They are drummer Jerome Lematua and — count 'em — two bassists, Matthew Fackrell and Tobey Peterson-Stewart. New EP *Kismet* is funky, melodic and virtuosic, with keys and effects adding depth, but as is often the case in this genre there's a sense that the compositions are dictated by the players' technique rather than the other, more artistic, way round.

Mew, Nik Kershaw and Scritti Politti all crossed my mind when listening to **Hello Moth**'s convincing, self-released three-track EP, *Nebula Songs*. This one-man band from Calgary, Alberta has had success in Canada, and the sumptuous synth harmonies here show off his assured producer nous. It's sweet, catchy and just unsettlingly inventive enough to make it into our arena. But we'll deduct a few points for Mr Moth not revealing his real name. That's just silly...

Formed 13 years ago, Russian band **Kauan** are based in Ukraine and sing in Finnish. The lyrics on their tender, dramatic release *Kaiho* (kauanmusik) were written by Finnish folk singer Marja Mattlar and are delivered gently and meaningfully by founder Anton Belov. The band's icy atmospherics — reverberating synths, echoing pianos, ethereal female voice and guitars — cool the parts that Anathema also reach, and if *Kaiho* is a softer addition to the band's canon, it's a worthy gateway to their soundworld.

It's easy to see what once led Super Furry Animals' Gruff Rhys to produce Lancaster duo **The Lovely Eggs**. They're edgy and leftfield, and dial up the space and punk rock on their current LP, *This Is Eggland* (Egg Records). Produced by Dave Fridmann (Mercury Rev, The Flaming Lips), it's a hard and invigorating celebration of being an outsider. (That's all of us, isn't it?)



But my pick of the crop this month is *Not A Drawing*, the third, self-released offering from New York's pop psychonaut **Daniel Carlson**. *Cloudy People* is the wonderful lysergic opener, lolloping slowly on like Jeff Lynne on diazepam. Those solid shapes just beyond the dreamy, acidic haze could be Ben Folds or Grandaddy, even World Party, but the circa- '67 psych is enhanced by some luscious, proggy chord voicings and changes (*I See You There, Just Like Nothing*). Famed producer Michael Leonhart suggested Carlson make it "less Paul McCartney, more Pink Floyd". He sort of achieves both on this lovely, listenable album.

COVER ART BASED ON PHOTOGRAPH " HEIC0702A " BY NASA , ESA AND THE HUBBLE HERITAGE TEAM (STSCI / AURA) - ESA / HUBBLE COLLABORATION. MODIFICATIONS BY HELLO MOTH.

THE FLOWER KINGS

A Kingdom Of Colours: The Complete Collection From 1995 To 2002 INSIDEOUT

Vast, 10-disc retrospective from purveyors of true flower power.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." In the annals of prog, it might be argued that during the mid-90s Dickens' old adage didn't apply. It was a tough time to make progressive music. Yet listening to this frankly overwhelming boxset is a reminder that even back then, if you knew where to look, it was no prog desert.

> **Inside Roine Stolt's strange brain - florid, lurid and creative.**

Kingdom Of Colours — comprising the Kings' first seven albums — is as comprehensive an introduction to Roine Stolt's emergence as prog royalty as one could hope. Indeed, laying these albums side-by-side, it's hard not to marvel at the fecundity of his imagination. The liner notes are based on Dom Lawson's recent interview with Stolt. They're smart reading and provide the compass to find a way through an intimidating offering. Most of all, they remind us that in listening to early Flower Kings we will enter Stolt's strange brain — florid, sometimes lurid, always wild and creative.

It has been suggested that the Kings have found a sound and stuck with it. There's truth in this. In the liner notes, Stolt says, "You don't want to make the same album again, but you're stuck with whatever you write." This box set, however, reveals how the Kings' sound progressed over time. *Back In The World Of Adventures* (1995) and *Retropolis* (1996) are both clever and considered, but it is on *Stardust We Are* (1997), especially the title track, that the Kings hit their stride. Massive, magnificent and endlessly evolving, it is a benchmark of 90s prog.

Equally, lest anyone say the Kings' get too stuck in a major key, album six, 2001's *The Rainmaker,* signalled Stolt heading into darker territory. It is a necessary, challenging album, that like its much-feted predecessor, *Space Revolver* (2000) set out the territory for the Flower Kings' 21st century evolution.

Fascinatingly, it's only the final album in the set, 2002's *Unfold The Future*, which receives a Stolt-remaster. The effect is intriguing. The sound is louder and brasher and the individual instruments are more defined. It allows the listener to get up close and personal with Reingold's liquid bass and Stolt's virtuoso guitar. Opening classic *The Truth Will Set You Free* sounds even vaster and *Devil's Playground* is a refined beast. It offers a glimpse into what the box set might have sounded like if remasters had been possible across the board.

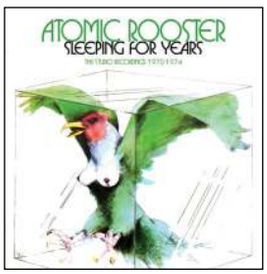
This lavish set — in a limited edition of 3,000 — is a gift not only for completists, but for the acolyte wanting to go deeper. A feast for the ears that will keep the hi-fi happy for weeks.

RACHEL MANN

ATOMIC ROOSTER

Sleeping For Years - The Studio Recordings 1970-1974 ESOTERIC

Newly remastered box set of first five albums plus rarities from early prog stars.



As the title of this comprehensive boxset of their 1970s recordings makes plain, Atomic Rooster are one of the sleeping giants of the early progressive era. For many, they're the band that Carl Palmer left to form ELP, but that view does a grave disservice to the pioneering and exciting music they produced, particularly across their first three albums. Driven by the often demonically furious organ and piano playing of band leader Vincent Crane, Atomic Rooster combined the swagger of R&B, the muscle of hard rock and the drama of prog, and came up with a sound that was both ambitious and accessible. They even crossed over into the pop charts, having hits with the singles *Devil's Answer* and *Tomorrow Night*. They could have been contenders, and certainly should be better remembered than they are. But as with many bands before and since, they were undone by an unsettled line-up and by trying to break America, abandoning their progressive roots and going in a heavy soul direction that ultimately pleased no one.

There was perhaps another reason too. Crane was an inventive songwriter and brilliant musician, but he was beset by mental health issues, with his songs often doubling as desperate cries for help. *Friday The 13th* from their debut album is a terrific slice of pumping prog pop, but its refrain of *'Everyone's lonely when they die'* is genuinely chilling. From the same album, the abject *Banstead* refers to the psychiatric hospital where Crane had been a patient, while *Winter* is a beautiful but haunted lament to seasonal depression. But it's on their second album *Death Walks Behind You* where they go for broke and produce their classic record. The arrival of guitarist John Cann really beefs up their sound, with the fabulous title track in particular as gloomy yet golden as anything by Black Sabbath.

This is a treat for fans, but for the curious, it's an essential introduction to one of the unsung greats of the prog underground. **JB**

COSMOGRAF

When Age Has Done Its Duty BURNING SHED

Re-recorded overhaul gives 2011 album a subtle lick of paint.

It can be a risky gambit re-recording your old albums. To those of us who love the original, it's more likely to resemble the work of a highly competent tribute act than a new, improved version. In the case of Robin Armstrong's Hampshire-based project Cosmograf, though, his 2011 release *When Age Has Done Its Duty* never got as much attention as it should have done, and any chance to shine a new spotlight on it is to be taken with both hands. He also does (or rather, doesn't) something very important with this minor refurbishment: he resists the temptation to throw the baby out with the bathwater. He may have redone several of the bass and backing vocal parts as well as a couple of production tweaks. But he hasn't tinkered any further, with the result that the songs remain very much in place - and it's the quality of those that still stand out.

Characterised by superbly atmospheric piano-based passages and use of sound effects (chattering voices in the background, ticking clocks, brass bands), it marries a powerful command of emotionally wrought melodies with a real clarity of storytelling. Armstrong's concepts are not the baffling sci-fi fantasia of some prog contemporaries, but very human themes - in this case, the subject of ageing and mortality.

On this new version Armstrong has also performed a trick you rarely hear in the modern age - he's made the sound less compressed. It's now standard practice to make the loud bits very loud and the quiet bits, well, just a little bit less loud, but one of the great things about old school mastering is that the fortissimo and pianissimo have real contrast between them, and radio programmers be damned.

The result is that tracks such as *In Which We Stand* and *White Light Awaits* benefit from that extra dramatic edge. But if you're coming to Cosmograf's music for the first time, never mind all that. You don't need a remaster or a remake to realise this is an outstanding piece of 21st century prog. Just open your ears. **JSS**

CURVED AIR

Air Conditioning/Air Cut ESOTERIC

Another breath of fresh Air.

Fronted by the exotic gypsy princess figure of Sonja Kristina and bolstered by classically-trained electric violinist Darryl Way and keyboardist Francis Monkman, Curved Air took classically-slanted prog to new heights while giving teenage male prog fans their first female focus. Taking their name from US experimentalist Terry Riley's *A Rainbow In Curved Air*, the band formed when Sonja, then singing in *Hair*, joined Way (Royal College of Music) and Monkman (Royal Academy) along with the pair's fellow Sisyphus band members in January 1970, recording their first album before signing to Warner Bros.

As one such young devotee, this writer remembers racing home with the just-released *Air Conditioning* in November 1970. As the UK's first picture disc it looked better than it sounded as the pressing quality was inevitably muffled. Now remastered by Monkman (expanded by outtakes and Radio One sessions), it's possible to fully appreciate the tightly-hewn classically-charged arrangements, electronic intricacies influenced by Riley and Sonja's evocatively mystical vocals on *It Happened Today*, *Stretch* and the deep forest twinkle of *Situations*, while Way to gets to stretch his hotwired violin on *Vivaldi*.

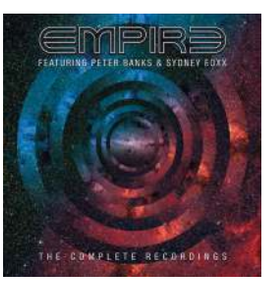
After two more albums, canyon-like divisions had opened between Way and Monkman. Sonja formed a new Curved Air, including 18-year-old prodigy Eddie Jobson on violin and keyboards, that recorded 1974's *Air Cut*. Wrongly dismissed as rocky, the remastering reveals a gamut of highlights, including 10-minute pagan incantation *Metamorphosis* predating Kate Bush with its overdubbed choral strangeness, while *The Purple Speed Queen* and *U.H.F.* beef up the band's traditional classical rock template before *Easy* closes with the Kristina-Jobson partnership at its potent best.

Happily, the irrepressible Sonja still leads a Curved Air with other original members prone to getting up onstage. As these two sets show, they really were quite special. **KN**

EMPIRE (FEATURING PETER BANKS AND SIDNEY FOXX)

The Complete Recordings THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RECORDING COMPANY LTD

Peter Banks' pioneering prog sound celebrated – the Empire strikes back.



In the words of prog-loving broadcaster Danny Baker, Peter Banks was "the architect of progressive music". If that's moot, it's undisputed that Banks was a prime mover for early Yes and one of prog's pioneering über-virtuoso guitarists. This reissue of Banks' Empire years, which signalled his fruitful collaboration with vocalist (and then-wife) Sidney Foxx, is welcome for many reasons. Nearly five years on from Banks' untimely death, it provides a chance to reappraise a point in his career marked by great creativity, if little commercial success. It also gives a Banks newbie the chance to set his mid-to-late 70s oeuvre in a wide lens. Most intriguingly, in its extensive and excellent liner notes, it offers the Banks completist a vision of the Empire story shaped through the eyes of key personnel. Some of the smartest insights come from Sidney Foxx, who writes appreciatively about Banks' search for perfection and the challenges of being female in prog rock.

One note of caution, however. This triple CD requires a little orientation. The liner notes present Empire's work chronologically. The CDs however arrange the music on the principle of 'Best Of', 'The Rest' and (the outtakes) 'Mars Recordings'. It is mildly discombobulating. That aside, it's a splendid tribute and a remaster has been applied across the set. It's particularly welcome on the *Empire 1* offerings which, to this writer's ears, suffered from a muddy production. Certainly, these recordings have been made available before, but it's valuable to have them in one place. *The Mars Recordings* – named after LA's Mars Studios – are fascinating. Simultaneously rough and sophisticated – the take on the Yes version of *West Side Story*'s *Something's Coming* is joyous – these recordings reveal Banks looking both back and forth for inspiration. They signal what Empire might have become if only they'd found the support. **RM**

ROY HARPER

Come Out Fighting Ghenghis Smith/HQ/ Bullinamingvase SCIENCE FRICTION

Vinyl reissues from the archives of brilliance.

In his new unflinchingly candid liner notes accompanying this superb vinyl reissue of 1968's *Come Out Fighting Ghenghis Smith*, Roy Harper describes the album as "the skeleton in my closet". Confessing to cringing with embarrassment upon hearing the finished record, his discomfort was not caused by the breezy strings or fashionable sprinklings of harpsichord producer Shel Talmy had added for extra pop appeal. It was his own spoken-voice sections of *Circle* and the title track. The ponderous, theatrical declamations have Harper acting out the dividing tensions between father and son, and expectation versus reality.

Although awkward and obstructive to the songs' narrative flow, such youthful missteps also provide a first glimpse of experimental inclinations with long-form, multi-mood excursions which he would refine later. It's clear even at this stage that Harper was never going to be a tame folkie in a Dylan cap surfing the late-60s singer-songwriter wave.

> **Harper was never going to be a tame folkie in a Dylan cap.**

While resistant to being shoehorned into light pop, Harper later had developed a hankering for rocking out and indulged it where he could. 1975's *HQ*, featuring his Bill Bruford-powered band Trigger, is perhaps his most successful electric-edged detour. Hearing Harper's fiery, echo-drenched vocals rolling with the jabbing, one-two punches throughout *The Game* is hair-raising stuff. While the elegiac chimes of *When An Old Cricketer Leaves The Crease* has seeped far beyond hardcore fans and into the wider public consciousness, as special as it is, it's not even the best track on what is arguably his most consistent album since 1971's *Stormcock*.

1977's *Bullinamingvase* veers from the throwaway *Watford Gap* to the sublime *One Of Those Days In England*. Far removed from 1968's dramatic affectations, the line of continuity running through Harper's use of the extended song cycle is strikingly evident. Honed to perfection, with keyboard and arrangements from Greenslade's Dave Lawson, it explores the artist's ongoing concerns with society, identity and Englishness. That he does so without recourse to any dewy-eyed nostalgia has always been one of Harper's enduring qualities. A committed outsider, when it comes to mapping the boundaries of Albion, he is as distinctively unsentimental and as impassioned as William Blake or Ralph Vaughan Williams were in their own time and space.

Beautifully presented in gatefold sleeves, these new editions remind us that although decades have passed since their original release, Harper's perspectives on society's interactions with the churn of history remain incisive and relevant.

SID SMITH

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FISH

Songs From The Mirror CHOCOLATE FROG

Fish performs his own collection of pin-ups.

Even Fish concedes that this 1993 collection of cover songs – and his third solo album – is sometimes viewed through the telescope of history as some sort of aberration, or a project designed to fulfil his contractual obligation to his Polydor label and their two-album deal. Which, considering that Fish was keen for Polydor to renew their contract with his band, seems at odds with the idea that this was to be his final kiss-off to working for a major label.

Surmise all you like (Fish's always-rich liner notes admit to needing the cash – a familiar trope for Fish, it seems – and the desire to keep his supremely able band in work and on the road), but the singer's take on the songs he performed to his own reflection as a budding performer between 1970 and 1976 are not without their charms, but this particular writer can remember scratching his own head in bemusement when this was announced as the follow-up to 1991's much admired *Internal Exile*.

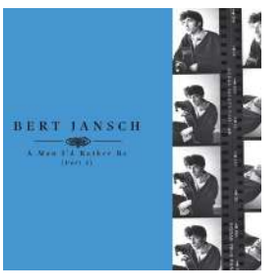
As with all Chocolate Frog reissues – lovingly repurposed to the maker's satisfaction – *Songs From The Mirror* is a detailed snapshot of a moment in time. The original disc – especially good in the growling *Boston Tea Party* (Fish could do a neat sideline in an Alex Harvey tribute band should the mood take him), and his jubilant reading of Argent's *Hold Your Head Up*, are accompanied by a disc of demos and a selection of live takes including *Faithhealer* from 2008 and an acoustic tear-through of *Roadhouse Blues*.

The DVD that makes up disc three is a cinematic look back at the whys and wherefores (no one does self-reflection and analysis quite like Fish) of the material and the mindset that led the singer to attempt to ape his hero David Bowie and pin his own icons to the wall. As he admits, he needed to go back to those songs and moments to remind himself why he'd started down this musical road so long ago, so he might learn to conjure up his own magic all over again. **PW**

BERT JANSCH

A Man I'd Rather Be (Part 1) EARTH

Bert's overdue turn for a boxset still dazzles and moves.



From Jimmy Page on down, ask any guitarist who came up in the mid-60s about their early inspiration and chances are they'll reply Bert Jansch. After coming to London from his native Scotland in 1963, Jansch brought folk out of the clubs and made it cool with his quicksilver guitar virtuosity and epoch-making mixing of the traditional with the topical. Always embracing new influences such as Indian music, Jansch's guitar style flowed like its own translucent entity and, though his voice wasn't strong, he was quietly expressive as he revisited folk club standards and wrote his own comments on those turbulent times.

Suiting the unadorned music, this first of two volumes documenting Jansch's 60s output simply presents his first three Transatlantic albums, along with 1966's collaboration with kindred spirit John Renbourn. Recorded when he was 21 years old in producer Bill Leader's Camden bedroom, 1965's self-titled debut shows Jansch's dazzling virtuosity fully-formed on instrumentals *Alice's Wonderland* and *Finches*, while protest outing *Do You Hear Me Now?* (covered by Donovan) displays a social conscience that peaked on *Needle Of Death*, still the most heartbreaking British anti-heroin song. The same year's *It Don't Bother Me* loosened up, balancing protest (notably *Anti Apartheid*) with love songs and unveiled raga explorations with Renbourn on *Lucky Thirteen*.

1966's *Jack Orion* comprised all traditional songs, including 10-minute child ballad *Jack Orion*, future Pentangle staple *Nottamun Town* and *Blackwaterside* (as later heisted by Led Zep). *Bert And John* is a masterclass in intertwining guitar telepathy: two virtuosos setting each other on fire and sewing seeds for Pentangle on their cover of Charles Mingus' *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* (while honouring Jansch's mentor Anne Briggs on her *The Time Has Come*). Two years later, Jansch and Renbourn would continue their barrier-demolishing mission in Pentangle, but the quiet revolution started here. **KN**

ROXY MUSIC

Roxy Music - Super Deluxe edition UMG

Roxy debut re-made and re-modelled.

To describe this set as 'long-awaited' is something of an understatement. Rumours of a celebratory box have abounded over the years and Steven Wilson turned in his adventurous stereo and surround sound remixes back in 2012. Given that the three-CD and one DVD, plus book, comes with a hefty price tag (£130) that would make your glam rock mascara run, has it been worth the wait? Yes and no is perhaps the predictable answer. The Ferry-curated book is fascinating and frequently delightful with its vintage press clippings, small ad ephemera, typewritten lyrics, cover photo-shoot outtakes and snaps of the boys in the studio and on stage. With his customary precision, journalist Richard Williams, one of the band's earliest champions in print, chronicles the giddy excitement of their first year.

> **The outtakes drop deep into cloistered minutiae.**

Choosing to leave Steven Wilson's stereo mix on the shelf in favour of the 1999 album remaster — which most fans will already have — presents a missed opportunity. Things improve considerably with disc two's early 1971 demos and studio outtakes. The sense of 'otherness' Roxy Music exemplified is particularly amplified in the demos. With oboe and primitive electronics, the effect is not unlike hearing a kind of post-apocalyptic pop cobbled together from a word-of-mouth account of what rock music was once rumoured to be like. The outtakes drop deep into the cloistered minutiae of the 1972 recording session at Command Studios. Though not to everyone's taste, this kind of access opens up an alternative reality, a glimpse of how the album *could* have been, had different choices been exercised. The early radio sessions are useful additions, confirming the true extent to which David O'List shaped some key moments in their repertoire.

Best of all in the box is Steven Wilson's perceptive surround sound mix. The depth and details exposed by the medium are stunning. The added muscularity to Graham Simpson's supple, melodic bass work is especially satisfying, while the bristling, white noise dogfights during *The Bob*, squalls of frenzied distorted guitar carried on *Sea Breezes*, the gently cascading echoing saxes of *2HB* and the 50s retro sci-fi planetscapes of *Ladytron* have quite simply never sounded better. The fact this mix is not available in the two-disc version is a serious omission and inevitably hints at gouging the fans. It's to be hoped UMC will issue the set in a more generally affordable format at some point. That said, there's no denying the opulent presentation of the big box mirrors the head-turning impact and defiant glamour this record had upon its release 45 years ago. *'Fade away, never'* indeed.
SID SMITH

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STEVE HACKETT

Wuthering Nights: Live In Birmingham INSIDEOUT

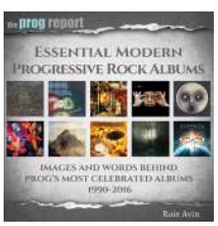
One foot in the past, one in the future.

Given the size of some egos in rock, it's impressive to see Steve Hackett so at ease with his musical past while embracing his future. This double live DVD is split between an opening set of Hackett's solo material and a second act celebrating the 40th anniversary of *Wind And Wuthering*, the last album the guitarist made with Genesis in 1977. Hackett has a superb band accompanying him – Gary O'Toole flies around that drum set and drives *Shadow Of The Hierophant* with huge energy, while Rob Townsend's work on sax, flute and anything else he picks up is a regular highlight, particularly during *In The Skeleton Gallery*. They're joined by Nad Sylvan for the latter half, who successfully tackles Peter Gabriel's role, minus the wacky costumes. It's a shame the band can't agree on an image – O'Toole looks razor sharp in a suit, while bassist Nick Beggs sports the classic jeans, T-shirt, tattoos rocker aesthetic. Beggs and Hackett tend to fixate on their fretboards rather than look at the audience, but these are the most trifling of quibbles. The audience love every minute of it, the music is bursting with vibrancy, and Hackett's Les Paul sings all night long. **DW**

THE PROG REPORT: ESSENTIAL MODERN PROGRESSIVE ROCK ALBUMS

Roie Avin ROYAL AVENUE MEDIA

US book puts modern day prog under the microscope.



When Dream Theater's *Images And Words* was released in 1992, it brought a new focus to the prog scene. Slathering metal flourishes over the traditional prog rock foundations, it showed there was life in the old dog yet. The seminal record forms the launchpad for website The Prog Report's new book *Essential Modern Progressive Rock Albums*, which takes a look at the genre's most celebrated records released between 1990 and 2016. Written by the website's editor Roie Avin and peppered with pictures, it's an extensive guide which includes the usual suspects – Steven Wilson, Opeth, Spock's Beard, Marillion et al – as well as nods to some of the more lesser-known contemporary acts, such as Thank You Scientist and The Dear Hunter. And with the musician interviews, it's a rare chance to truly go under the bonnet of modern day prog, although true aficionados may not learn much. Inevitably, you're left pondering which acts were unfairly overlooked – Umphrey's McGee, Cardiacs, The Dillinger Escape Plan? – but it's fair to say this has done a pretty good job. **CC**

RENAISSANCE

Live At The BBC REPERTOIRE

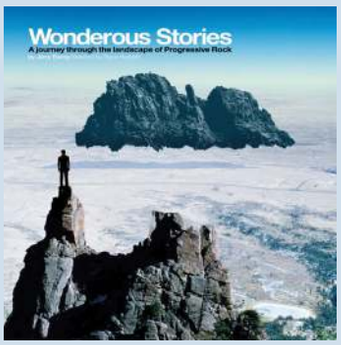
Progressive folk pioneers enjoy box set glory.

Formed in 1969 by ex-Yardbirds Keith Relf and Jim McCarty, the original Renaissance proved ahead of its time with its ethereal classical rock. After they split, 1972 saw another Renaissance, led by Annie Haslam's five-octave voice, keyboardist John Tout and bassist Jon Camp. Under manager Miles Copeland, they released 1972's *Prologue* and joined "second wave" prog outfits like Camel on the UK gig circuit. While their symphonic folk went largely ignored here until 1978 hit *Northern Lights*, Renaissance found audiences in the US for 1973's *Ashes Are Burning* and 1974's *Turn Of The Cards*, becoming the first British band to sell out Carnegie Hall for three nights. They were about to release 1977's *Novella* when, clad in shiny period fashions, they took to the stage of Golders Green Hippodrome that January, to launch the BBC's *Sight & Sound* series. The set mostly comprises pristine renditions of earlier faves bereft of any improvisational danger, including *Mother Russia*, *Carpet Of The Sun* and *Ocean Gypsy*. The "classic line-up" of these overlooked prog evangelists split in 1987, leaving this DVD and three *Sight & Sound*-recorded discs their attractively time-locked monument. **KN**

JERRY EWING

Wonderous Stories – A Journey Through The Landscape Of Progressive Rock FLOOD GALLERY

Everything you ever wanted to know about prog but were afraid to ask.



How many prog rock fans does it take to change a lightbulb? Answer: that's not a real lightbulb. It takes a brave soul to tackle a history of prog, given the strength of opinion that the topic provokes among its acolytes as to what does and does not constitute prog rock in the first place, never mind who should be considered pivotal artists. But as the man who launched this very magazine in the face of scepticism, Jerry Ewing ventures where others fear to tread.

> **A beautifully designed archive of our favourite genre.**

Published in a generously illustrated coffee table format (the better to club people with when they say, "Prog? Is that still a thing?"), *Wonderous Stories* travels in roughly chronological order from the genre's birth in the hazy aftermath of psychedelia right up to the present day. Along the way, Ewing casts his eye over the cornerstone albums that built the genre, as well as those more recent releases that have provided extensions and renovations. Plus, there are scenic detours via Krautrock, art rock, fusion, the Canterbury scene, and progressive metal along the way.

Any selection of progressive rock's defining recordings is sure to leave someone's feathers ruffled, but it's hard to argue convincingly against the importance of 'The Big Six' as they are dubbed herein — Pink Floyd, Genesis, Yes, Jethro Tull, King Crimson and Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Volumes upon volumes have been written about the likes of Pink Floyd, so what you'll find here is essentially an introduction to these bands and their output, rather than a blow-by-blow recounting of their entire careers. However, the upside to this approach is that it allows Ewing to cast a wide net, pulling in lesser-known groups from across the progressive spectrum.

The section on European prog may help introduce readers to the varied delights of Riverside, Magma and Focus, while the chapter on neo-progressive highlights the hardy spirits who flew the prog flag in the 1980s, such as IQ, Pallas, and Pendragon. Ewing's selection of 'The Albums That Define Prog' concludes with Opeth's *Blackwater Park* from 2001, proving that the genre is both active and still evolving in the new millennium. And yes, death metal growling can be scary if you've never heard it before.

There is some repetition — the solo careers of former members of Yes and Genesis are covered both in their respective band sections and the chapter titled 'Away From The Day Job' — but *Wonderous Stories* is a beautifully designed archive and an impeccably cogent defence of our favourite genre by one of its most dedicated advocates.

DAVID WEST

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Take a bow

Bass Communion: Steve Vantsis.

FISH

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	15/12/2017

"This is actually the stool from my kitchen," says Fish, as he eases his frame into said piece of furniture, situated in front of John Beck's keyboard stand on the Islington Assembly Hall stage. "My back's still fucked," he continues, referring to the ailment and surgery that sidelined him after his last tour. True, he does sit down occasionally, but the Fish we see on stage tonight seems in fine fettle.

There's a bout of dad dancing as he and band ease into opener *The Voyeur (I Like To Watch)*, and his voice, a worry on occasion over the past few years, is as robust and tuneful as this reviewer has heard in many a year.

It's interesting to note that as Marillion seem to have found a new lease of life and are reaping rich commercial rewards, Fish is winding down his musical exploits. We have just one studio album to come, the much talked about *Weltschmerz* – of which, tonight at least, he professes to having written "Fuck all" – and, one assumes, a tour to back it up. And then, who knows? However, tonight he is on fine form.

The first of three nights at this venue, the place is packed to the rafters, the crowd boisterously expectant and clearly invested in festive spirit. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that, because support act Lazuli have had to pull out of the tour, with frontman Dominique Leonetti having been taken ill, there has been little to do pre-Fish but hit the bar.

The venue throbs with the hum of loud conversation throughout – not one for those prog fans who demand utter silence for their live performances, and to be honest, we're amazed that social media wasn't awash with complaints.

Emperor's Song and *Circle Line* precede the prescient *State Of Mind*, but in all honesty, they seem to fall just a little flat, serving more as a chance to get the sound levels right for the main event which we all await with baited breath. And then, with some words advising the purists that he's changed the running order – "It's not the same as on my cassette" he jibes, pointedly but with humour – the warm, lush opening chords of *Hotel Hobbies* ring out and the cheer that emanates almost takes the roof off the venue.

Time has treated the music of Marillion's 1987 album well. *Misplaced Childhood* might have got to the No 1 slot and spawned those big hit singles, but the dark mystique of *Clutching At Straws* and the resultant mayhem that unfolded in its wake seem to have cemented its reputation among fans as a seminal work. Is that because, all these years down the line, more fans can associate with Fish's moribund ruminations?

Unlike *Misplaced Childhood*, *Clutching At Straws* offered no sense of redemption, a factor that played out in real life in its wake.

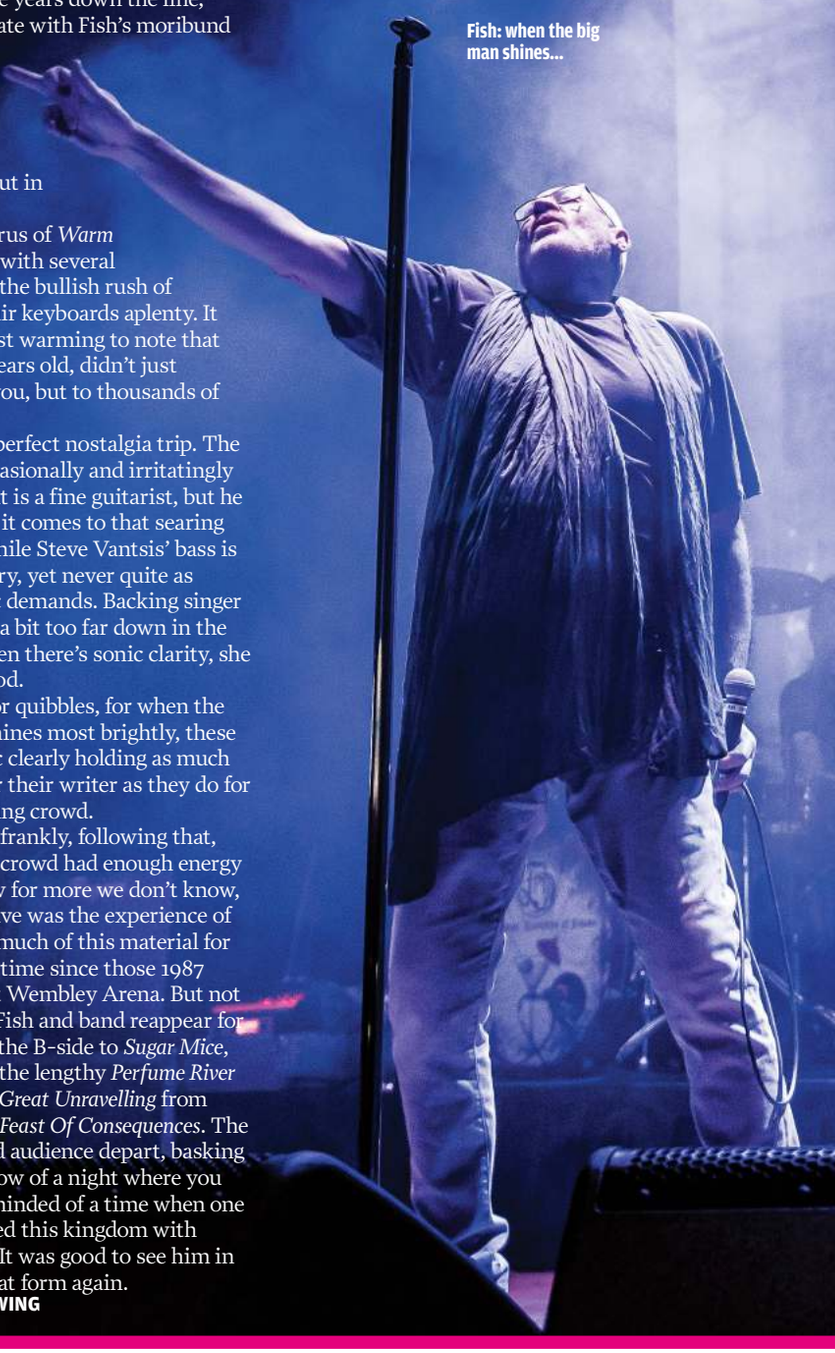
Whatever, the chorus of *Warm Wet Circles* resounds with several thousand voices and the bullish rush of *Incommunicado* sees air keyboards aplenty. It is, in some ways, most warming to note that this music, now 30 years old, didn't just mean something to you, but to thousands of others as well.

True, it's not all a perfect nostalgia trip. The sound at times is occasionally and irritatingly muddied. Robin Boult is a fine guitarist, but he falls well short when it comes to that searing solo in *Sugar Mice*, while Steve Vantsis' bass is more than perfunctory, yet never quite as buoyant as the music demands. Backing singer Doris Brendel is also a bit too far down in the mix at times, but when there's sonic clarity, she is jaw-droppingly good.

But these are minor quibbles, for when the big man shines, he shines most brightly, these words and this music clearly holding as much intent for their writer as they do for his adoring crowd.

Quite frankly, following that, how the crowd had enough energy to bellow for more we don't know, so emotive was the experience of hearing much of this material for the first time since those 1987 shows at Wembley Arena. But not only do Fish and band reappear for *Tux On*, the B-side to *Sugar Mice*, but also the lengthy *Perfume River* and *The Great Unravelling* from 2013's *A Feast Of Consequences*. The band and audience depart, basking in the glow of a night where you were reminded of a time when one man ruled this kingdom with aplomb. It was good to see him in such great form again.

JERRY EWING


Fish: when the big man shines...

"It's interesting to note that as Marillion seem to have found a new lease of life and are reaping rich commercial rewards, Fish is winding down his musical exploits."

WILL IRELAND

An emotional airing of songs not heard for 32 years. We'd need a sit-down too.

Of Mice And Sidemen: Robin Boult.

If there's a straw to clutch, here's yer fella.

IQ

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	09/12/2017

IQ's first ever headline show at London's Marquee, on September 15, 1983, was supposed to be the launch party for the release of the band's self-financed debut *Tales From The Lush Attic*. However, come the night of the gig, while the band had the vinyl, they didn't have the sleeves, with the artwork delayed somewhere down the line.

Over 30 years later, the same technical gremlins are still lurking. The free CDs that all attendees of this year's Christmas shows are supposed to be given are stuck somewhere in the Czech Republic. "Some things never change," singer Peter Nicholls sighs good-naturedly.

Your correspondent was at that 1983 show, as were more than likely a fair few of tonight's impressively large turnout: demand for the show has meant that IQ upgraded from the concrete box of Islington's O2 Academy to the more salubrious and prog-friendly Assembly Hall.

Four of the five band members on stage were also at that show, though guitarist Mike Holmes is the sole constant member, with keyboard player Neil Durant joining in 2010. But it does say something for both the staying power and consistency of IQ (not to mention progressive music as a whole) that this is the state of play in 2017.

Of course, the IQ Christmas shows are a thing of legend. Partly, it must be said, because it's actually one of the few times that the UK get to see the band perform live during the year, but equally because of the seasonal aspect. The fact that this year, band and audience are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Christmas shows, is again testament to their enduring appeal.

"This year we have the added bonus of the band airing two songs from their work-in-progress new album."

These days the Christmas shows are less about tongue-in-cheek cover versions, and this year we have the added bonus of the band airing two songs from their work-in-progress new album, due to hit stores at some point in 2018. Of these, one might be titled *It's Only Forever*, and the other potentially *The Flent*, and while it's difficult to make too much of works in progress, both sound suitably intricate, although nowhere near as heavy as anything from 2014's *The Road Of Bones*.

By the time *It's Only Forever* appears, the crowd have already been treated to both *The Darkest Hour* and *Breathtaker*, allowing IQ to find their feet sound-wise. They follow with *From The Outside In* and the title track of the aforementioned *The Road Of Bones*, both packing a resounding punch.

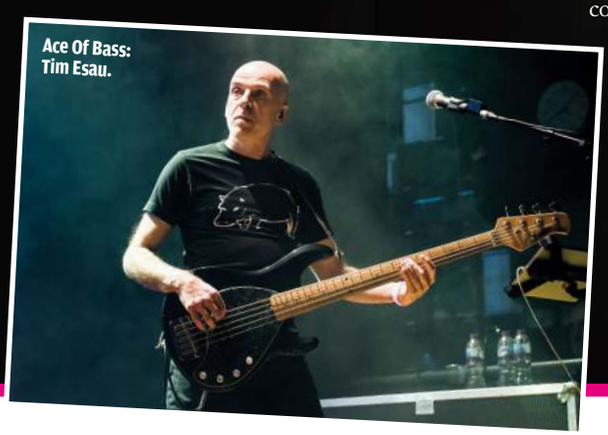
Nicholls is in fine voice, strong and imbued with the kind of character his 58 years brings, while Holmes' fretwork continues to dazzle, even if he remains, visually at least, one of prog's most understated guitarists. Behind them, Tim Esau and Paul Cook hold down a rhythmic beat, and Durant fills out the sound with colour.

The highlight of a quite wonderful show is the epic *Harvest Of Souls* from 2004's *Dark Matter*, one of this writer's favourites. It sums up everything there is to like about IQ: a darkly complex tale that weaves its way around you, sucking you into its heart until it spits you out, almost half an hour later, breathless from the ride...

After *Until The End* and *Failsafe* bring the set to a close, Holmes re-appears, angel's wings bigger than ever, leading the band through a rousing *Merry Christmas Everybody*, before *The Wake's Headlong* rounds things off with a classy flourish. Another triumph for the band's perseverance and dedication.

JERRY EWING

Specs Appeal: Michael Holmes lost in the moment.



Ace Of Bass: Tim Esau.

JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

VENUE	VIC THEATRE, CHICAGO
DATE	18/11/2017

John McLaughlin is a legend: a man Jeff Beck calls the best guitarist ever, a man who gave Jimmy Page guitar lessons as a teenager, a man who played with Miles Davis. At 75, he is now doing his last tour in the United States, and playing music from his Mahavishnu Orchestra days, making this a special event.

The night starts with the groovin' track *Miles Beyond*, and it's clear he can still fly up and down the neck of his guitar. Not much talking is done after a cordial introduction: it's all about the music.

The maestro is accompanied by very special guests. Guitarist Jimmy Herring (Widespread Panic) plays some rhythm and also delivers worthy leads. Gary Husband (Allan Holdsworth Band) is known as a drummer, but here he channels his inner Jan Hammer and goes to town on keyboards.

Tonight every emotion under the sun is displayed by McLaughlin. From joy to slight fatigue to seriousness, McLaughlin is an open book for the audience: vulnerable yet technically astounding. When he brings out his famous double neck guitar, the crowd hoot and holler, and become even more rowdy once he has a shred session on said guitar.

The packed venue gives the great man multiple standing ovations during his set. The Mahavishnu music is its own entity,

Peter Nicholls takes the lead.

Mr Tambourine Man: Peter Nicholls.

The IQ Experience: "A darkly complex tale that weaves its way around you."

WILL IRELAND

and makes one go, "What the hell is this!?" (In a good way.) McLaughlin once said his guitar is part of his body, and after viewing him play the cryptic jam *Meeting Of The Spirits*, everyone understands what he means. The notes he plays come straight from his soul, allowing the audience to feel what he's feeling. "How does he do it?" we keep asking ourselves. Not only because of his age, but because of how hard playing this music is: only a remarkable talent can accomplish some of the hard licks played during *The Dance Of The Maya* and *Be Happy*.

The show lasts over two hours, giving the audience a big fill and a huge thrill. Yet the crowd are clearly desperate for a lot more of McLaughlin: no one wants to leave at the end.

This concert will forever be ingrained in the memory. A man who holds rock royalty status and could have easily retired years ago is giving younger generations a final chance to see him in the flesh, and it's astonishing.

TREVOR WOODS

AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR

VENUE	ACADEMY 2, MANCHESTER
DATE	24/11/2017
SUPPORT	GALLOPS

Despite going on hiatus shortly after their 2012 debut *Yours Sincerely, Dr. Hardcore*, Gallops have had success since they returned last year. Off the back of their excellent comeback album *Bronze Mystic*, they've honed their tight, electronic-inspired math grooves to a nearly weaponised degree, and the number of punters here to see them tonight is nearly equal to those down to see the headliners. It has to be said that the larger stage and venue suits their somewhat *maximalist* sound, and perhaps gives a taste of the ambitions the band might have.

Blasting out of the gate with the relentless *Search:Party:Animal* and groove-driven riffage of *S Is For Salamader*, And So I Watch You From Afar are not messing around.

With their new album *The Endless Shimmering* representing something of a return to form after a hit-and-miss last LP, their set finds newer songs sitting better than ever with their back catalogue. The hypnotically cyclical *Terrors Of Pleasure* and powerfully heavy *Dying Giants* are right at home with percussive earlier cuts like *BEAUTIFUL UNIVERSE MASTER CHAMPION* and *Like A Mouse*, and make tracks like *Wasps* from *Heirs* seem somewhat flat by comparison.

In terms of sheer intensity, the track from the new album that really strips the paint from the venue walls is *A Slow Unfolding Of Wings*, with its hurricane-like intro seguing into a disorienting, eye of the storm verse section and back again. Guitarists Rory Friers and Niall Kennedy are enjoyably energetic to watch as they flail around and bounce riffs off one another, but it's the monolithic rhythm section of Johnny Adger on bass and Chris Wee on drums that really ties the performance together, with huge half-time feel grooves driven by punk aggression.

As has often been the case, the band hold back a couple of their most intense tracks for last. Fan favourite first album stormer *Set Guitars To Kill* is used to announce their encore, while *Big Thinks Do Remarkable* ends the night by kicking over the table once and for all: there's a huge mosh pit and a few crowdsurfers as the audience blow the last of their energy along to its facemelting crescendo.

It would have been good to have also heard the title track from *Gangs*, as its frenetic, upbeat main riff and extended, atmospheric middle eight work exceptionally well live. But that's a minor complaint about a set that was otherwise pitch-perfect in terms of keeping new fans happy while throwing older fans a bone.

ALEX LYNHAM

MASTODON

VENUE	BRIXTON ACADEMY, LONDON	DATE	10/12/2017
SUPPORT	RUSSIAN CIRCLES		

Brent Hinds: the face of man straddling two genres. At the end of a tour. On a snowy Sunday.

FALK HAGEN BERNSHAUSEN

Russian Circles' intense, monolithic walls of instrumental post-rock — Mastodon drummer Brann Dailor sums them up pretty well later on tonight: "Russian Circles are a scary band. I think they're haunted" — isn't exactly getting the party started, but against a backdrop of dazzling lights, their music is certainly mesmerising.

This is the third time that Mastodon have headlined Brixton Academy and despite having reached a plateau, the fact that they can sell out on a snowy Sunday is testament to their solid staying power.

Their latest album *Emperor Of Sand* is certainly one of their proggier offerings, yet also topped the Critics' Choice Album Of The Year list over at our sister magazine *Metal Hammer*. The Atlantean four-piece are one of the few bands to genuinely straddle that sweet spot between both genres, with their riff-loaded rock as crushingly heavy as their namesake, yet also gloriously and dizzyingly technical.

"The fact that they can sell out on a snowy Sunday is testament to their solid staying power."

Tonight Mastodon play surrounded by columns of lights that burst and pop with imagery, varying from festive flashings of snow-like light drops to the bright, garish imagery that adorned their 2014 album *Once More 'Round The Sun*. There's little audience interaction, aside from bassist Troy Sanders telling us that we are witnessing the last night of the tour, and that he thinks they saved the best for last. In fact, one niggle with Mastodon live is that they can seem like they are just going through the motions — but tonight they're more engaged: Bill Kelliher swings his guitar over his shoulders for a solo, while Sanders is unexpectedly in rock star mode: throwing his head back, running across the stage and heaving his bass into the air.

The 17-song setlist plunges straight into the prog, opening with the 13-minute *The Last Baron* from *Crack The Skye*. It's a bold move, but one that goes down well, and shows that Mastodon will never pander to the expected.

Mastodon's sound is vastly varied, sweeping from the singalong melodic chorus of *Ember City* to the hefty crush of the closing *Blood And Thunder*, yet it's also instantly recognisable — new songs like the bouncing melody of *Show Yourself* and the chugging groove of *Andromeda* slot in perfectly.

As is usually the case with Mastodon, there's no encore, but Dailor comes out from behind his kit to deliver a closing speech and a final thank you to the road crew, and to the fans for making it here on this chilly December night. Mastodon may unapologetically do things their way, but they're still full of gratitude to the fans who've got them here.

HANNAH MAY KILROY

Troy Sanders: in rock star mode.

SIMON PHILLIPS PROTOCOL

VENUE	RONNIE SCOTT'S, LONDON
DATE	21/11/2017

The last time drumming ace Simon Phillips brought his progressive fusion group to Ronnie Scott's – in May 2016 – he was accompanied by guitarist Andy Timmons, Steve Weingart on keys and Ernest Tibbs on bass. Now back to promote his fourth album under the Protocol banner, only Tibbs and Phillips himself remain from that incarnation.

Joined by guitarist Greg Howe and Otmaro Ruiz on keys, Phillips and co play the new album *Protocol 4* front to back. Perhaps the decision to focus so squarely on the latest release reflects the changed roster, and where Weingart seemed content to provide colour and texture, Ruiz more than holds his own, duking it out against Phillips and Howe in the solo department.

Nimbus, the opening track, sees Phillips uncork thundering runs around his colossal drum kit to set the room buzzing. *Pentangle* is built around a funky lick from Howe, with solos from both the guitarist and Ruiz that sail away from the melody before navigating their way back home, while Phillips plays a technically demanding drum break as he manipulates subdivisions, grinning all the while. *Passage To Agra* eases back the intensity just a little as the band bring some Indian flavours to the proceedings. *Solitaire* sees Howe venture into some weird funk, with Ruiz channelling a twisted Stevie Wonder groove. Phillips plays on and against the accents while the imperturbable Tibbs keeps the pulse beneath the fireworks.

They end the first set with *Interlude/Celtic Run*, which Phillips introduces as "Something mysterious, strange and wonderful." Starting with a sparse piano melody, it grows into a monster that finishes with Phillips unleashing a ferocious double kick drum shuffle.

After the requisite jazz club intermission, Protocol resume with *All Things Considered*, built around a fat, funky groove and Howe's slinky, fluid lines. *Phantom Voyage* conjures the spirit of Jeff Beck in fusion mode, with slow, smoky runs from Howe and jazzy piano from Ruiz. This flows into an open drum solo from Phillips, expanding from an ostinato played with mallets around the tom-toms until he's flying around the kit in full, uninhibited flow.

The second set closes with everyone going hell for leather in *Azorez*, before the band encore with the only track not from the new album – *Catalyst* from *Protocol III*.

"We're going to finish off with something daunting," jokes the drummer, and they don't hold anything back. Howe is pure fire, but Ruiz matches him every step of the way, and Phillips drips with sweat before they're done.

It's a blazing conclusion to a thrilling display of virtuosity.

DAVID WEST

THRESHOLD

VENUE	ISLINGTON O2 ACADEMY, LONDON	DATE	10/12/2017

When Threshold took to Facebook in April to announce the departure (for the third time) of frontman Damien Wilson — and the return of Glynn Morgan, who sang on the band's second album *Psychedelicatessen* back in 1994 — people responded with the kind of predictable certainty that social media encourages. Depending on your point of view, it was either a decision that would hasten the inevitable demise of a now-doomed band, or a choice that heralded the long-awaited return of a prodigal son after 20 years in the rock wilderness.

Adding fuel to the fire was the fact that just a week earlier, the band had announced a European tour. The result? Thousands of fans suddenly have tickets to see a band fronted by a singer other than the one who may have prompted those purchases.

Cut to next scene: it's early December, London is blanketed by snow, and it appears that Glynn Morgan no longer has anything to prove. The reaction to the band's *Legends Of The Shires* album has been almost universally positive, and as the bucolic sounds of *The Shire* tinkle from the PA and the musicians arrive onstage to launch into a pounding version of *Slipstream*, it immediately feels like business as usual.

There's one problem: Morgan is suffering from a cold, and spends the set either hoarsely reaching for the highest notes or backing away from them altogether. This is unfortunate, and it does take the shine off what's an otherwise pristine show, but guitarist Karl Groom has a remarkable ability to provide a lift every time there's a lull or a lag, whether it's by ferociously finger-tapping or whammy-barring his way through a solo, or — in the case of a lovely version of *The Man Who Saw Through Time* — by invoking the spirit of David Gilmour with some sweetly melodic, gently uplifting fretwork. Drummer Johanne James is the other standout performer, rock solid yet a whirling dervish of spinning sticks and showmanship.

Hoarses For Courses: Glynn doesn't give in.

WILL IRELAND

The band don't play anything from their four Damien Wilson albums. Instead the set is based largely around *Legend Of The Shires*, with a trio of tracks from 2007's Andrew 'Mac' McDermott-fronted *Dead Reckoning* and a couple from *Psychedelicatessen* providing the ballast.

Stars And Satellites is a highlight, with another beautiful solo from Groom and an impromptu crowd singalong. Alongside the closing romps through *Lost In Translation* and *Small Dark Lines*, it's a good indication of where Threshold are at the moment: hugely ambitious, willing to throw everything at a song, but take away the monstrous riffs and the time signature manoeuvres and you'd be left with tunes Bryan Adams would probably be happy to play on an acoustic guitar. These are *proper songs*.

FRASER LEWRY

A Groom With A View: Karl looks out for lags.

DAVID SINCLAIR

> **"Guitarist Karl Groom has a remarkable ability to provide a lift every time there's a lull or a lag."**

VUUR

VENUE	THE DOME, LONDON	DATE	09/12/2017

Even for an artist as prolific and musically adventurous as Anneke van Giersbergen, launching a new project to shift your already successful career into a new, heavier direction can be a risky business. Fortunately, The Dome is comfortably full tonight for VUUR on their first headline tour.

Where the production on their progressive metal debut, *In This Moment We Are Free – Cities*, was so polished that it could feel clinical at times, on stage the songs really blossom into life. They open with *Time – Rotterdam* and with van Giersbergen adding a third guitar alongside riff Jord Otto and Ferry Duijsens, the sound is rich and powerful.

> **"Anneke van Giersbergen exudes positivity and it's refreshing to see a band playing heavy, intense music while having fun."**

While there are backing tracks providing keyboards and the occasional string arrangement throughout the set, this is not an attempt to slavishly recreate the studio recordings. The breakdown in *Time – Rotterdam* hits much harder live, with the band pushing the limits of their dynamic range when they punch in and out of the riff. As the frontwoman, van Giersbergen exudes positivity and it's refreshing to see a band playing heavy, intense music while having fun. There's no angst, macho posturing or gurning anywhere in sight, instead everyone is smiling and laughing. *My Champion – Berlin* throws djent into the mix with those deep drop-tuned licks from Otto and Duijsens' seven-string guitars, while van Giersbergen nails the high notes with power and clarity.

They dip into the singer's recent back catalogue for *The Storm*, from *The Gentle Storm*, while the audience sing along to *The Martyr And The Saint – Beirut* much to van Giersbergen's delight. "You already know the words, this is super!" she says, beaming. While the track has a tough, pummelling beat courtesy of Ed Warby's creative groove-laden drumming, van Giersbergen allows herself plenty of room to sing with long notes that glide over the heaviness beneath them. She absolutely belts out *Days Go By – London*, taking a moment to pull out her phone and film the crowd, and that's followed by *Fallout* from Devin Townsend's *Z2* record, played with more meat on the bones than the studio version.

The main set wraps with *Your Glorious Light Will Shine – Helsinki* as bassist Johan van Stratum bounds about the stage. "You make me so happy," says van Giersbergen, returning for the encore. "I will cry after the show otherwise I'll look like Alice Cooper!" *Reunite! – Paris* sees the singer reaching notes so vertiginously high she could do opera, before the grand finale of The Gathering's *Strange Machines* from 1995. It's a fitting conclusion as The Gathering were the band that launched van Giersbergen's career but it's clear from the vibrancy and passion shown tonight that both her heart and future are with VUUR.

DAVID WEST

Happiness is not crying during a show 'cos of your eye make-up.

TINA KORHONEN

Anneke: super trouper.

EMMA RUTH RUNDLE

VENUE	SOUP KITCHEN, MANCHESTER
DATE	15/12/2017
SUPPORT	JAYE JAYLE, FVNERALS

Making her name with post-metallers Red Sparowes has left Emma Ruth Rundle with a strange fan base. This is reflected in the supports, as well as the number of black T-shirts in the audience.

Opening are atmospheric Glaswegians Fvnerals, who deliver a set of alternately spectral and pummelling tunes. The songs prove extra-visceral, given the size of venue and proximity of the audience.

Having released the split record *The Time Between Us* with Rundle this year, Evan Patterson was an obvious choice for touring partner. Tonight he's playing as Jaye Jayle, his side-project alter ego. While initially his music seems to stem from Americana or American gothic, his use of drone notes and mastery of reverb quickly reaffirm shoegazing credentials. As a result of this blend of genres, there's an element of Slowdive or Mojave 3 about his sound, though to free up space for his vocal to take centre stage, Jaye Jayle tend towards monotones over complex chord progressions. The set is an unexpected pleasure, and it passes all too quickly.

With a full band, Emma Ruth Rundle sometimes struggles to cut through vocally, but the extra instruments flesh out the album tunes more fully.

Most of the songs played are taken from 2016's brilliant *Marked For Death* album, but there's also a couple of older tracks including fan favourite *Haunted Houses* from *Some Heavy Ocean*. The tracks that elicit the strongest reaction are the more recent ones, with even *Distance* from her split with Jaye Jayle – for which she is joined on stage by Patterson – getting a warm response.

Rundle's gauzy blend of singer-songwriter tropes with post-rock and shoegazing atmospherics works well on record, but in this packed basement tonight, the extra indistinctness caused by reflections off the walls makes the songs even more ethereal and noisy. While *Hand Of God* and *Heaven* are highlights of the set, and *Marked For Death* is predictably brilliant, *Protection* is little short of elemental, with her vocal climbing to precarious heights before breaking off.

It might have been nice to have heard *Medusa* from the last album, as well a few more songs played by Rundle solo, but overall, it's an excellent set.

ALEX LYNHAM

CAIRO

VENUE	BOSTON MUSIC ROOMS, LONDON
DATE	15/12/2017

Organising a gig in the run-up to Christmas can be a hit-and-miss affair for bands on the touring circuit. Even well-seasoned acts struggle to sell tickets during London's boisterous Christmas party season, and tonight's event seems to have been particularly hit by this phenomenon. Some of this has to be attributed to the sky-high door price, which may have put off passing trade who could have been coaxed in for some progressive festivities – but it also can't have helped that Southampton mainstays Kepler Ten dropped out of the line-up just days before, and that there are several other bigger prog gigs on in the capital the same night.

However, the sparse attendence does little to throw Cairo off. The band is the latest venture of ex-Touchstone helmsman Rob Cottingham, and tonight they launch into their new, debut album *Say* with gusto. Unsurprisingly, Touchstone's influence runs through Cairo's synth-led fare – from the artfully-blended interplay of male and female vocals through to Cottingham's swooping electronica and an underlying ongoing narrative.

Considering the pedigree of the sum of their parts, the band start out a little tentatively. Jostling for elbow space around Cottingham's chunky synth set-up, the sound desk initially miscalculates the volume and everything gets lost beneath a fat wall of electronics and chunky guitar lines.

Thankfully this is quickly sorted, and the band launch into the slick *Shadow's Return* and *Wiped Out*, the narrative successors to the *Shadow* storyline that Cottingham started a decade ago on *Discordant Dreams*.

After those initial hiccups, Cairo don't miss a beat. Cottingham's vocal interplay with Lisa Driscoll manages to sound even tighter than the male/female interaction in his former guise.

The band are at their best, though, when opting for heavier fare. Cairo resurrect *Shadow* – and it's particularly glorious, with the synth-boosted guitar lick sounding like it's lifted straight from Faith No More's visceral *From Out of Nowhere*. Then there's something of *Awake*-era Dream Theater in the galloping chorus of the unabashedly large *Nothing To Prove*.

Driscoll's vocals might work nicely as a counterpoint to these heavier segments, but the same can't be said on the softer songs – while the vocal delivery is impeccable, there's something laboured about the likes of *Back From The Wilderness* and the overblown homage to Hurricane Katrina's victims, *Katrina*.

Perhaps fittingly, Cairo close with the one-two punch of the album's title track and Greg Lake's homage to the festive season, *I Believe In Father Christmas*.

For a band whose progressive lineage is writ so largely across their music, it seems fitting that they close with a tip of the hat to another much-missed prog master.

DAVID KEEVILL

SIKTH

VENUE	KOKO, LONDON	DATE	08/12/2017

Sikth's return to the fore is wonderful to witness. Back in the early noughties, the Watford lads laid the ground for a new wave of progressive metal and helped to birth djent, but sadly split before the rest of the music scene caught up, and they never really reaped the rewards of pioneering a genre. The buzz around their reunion in 2013 was electric, and the fact that they can fill out London's Koko proves that their heralded return was more than just a passing fad.

Tonight Sikth are playing their second album *Death Of A Dead Day* in full, but before they take us back to 2006 they open with the chugging breakdowns of *Philistine Philosophies* and the melodic bounce of *The Aura* from their new album *The Future In Whose Eyes?*. The new songs may not be the main event tonight, but the audience's fervent reaction to them proves their worth.

Vocalist Mikee Goodman couldn't look more noughties with his messy dreads and flared jeans, and he's visibly ecstatic to be playing here tonight. He bounds across the stage like a kid on Christmas morning, hops onto the speakers and shows disbelief at how far Sikth have come: "We've never played this many songs before!" he laughs with a shake of his head.

Sikth's return could have been scuppered when second vocalist Justin Hill left the ranks in 2016, but Joe Rosser, who joined for *The Future In Whose Eyes?*, is a solid replacement – ably taking the lead for the rousing, melodic strains of *In This Light*, and frantically moshing when Mikee is at the fore. There's clear chemistry between the two vocalists, their vocals complement each other well and they make a good team – bouncing in unison and grinning at each other.

Chemistry: vocalists Mikee Goodman and Joe Rosser.

Tonight is a reminder of Sikth's pioneering status, and also a sign that the future is bright. Their old and new songs effortlessly balance technical flourishes and melodic chops, and take the songs to unknown and unexpected places without spiralling into shameless pomposity, while Goodman's eccentric variety of vocal styles including spoken word give their songs an unusual edge. He flings himself into the audience at the end of the set and invites opening bands Press To Meco and Devil Sold His Soul onstage for a big group photo before saying in disbelief, "It really means a lot when you come back and see everyone." Goodman's excitement and disbelief is just as heartwarming as the fact that Sikth are finally back where they belong.

HANNAH MAY KILROY

"Tonight is a reminder of Sikth's pioneering status, and also a sign that the future is bright."

Vs For Victory: Sikth quite rightly celebrate a triumphant return.

DAVID SINCLAIR

WILL IRELAND

FIRST OUR WORLD WAS A DISC. THEN, A SPHERE. TURNS OUT, IT'S TWO DISCS!
THE POWER OF MUSIC!

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MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

THOR BROEDRESKIFT

Enslaved's Ivar Bjørnson

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

Where's home?
Bergen. It used to be the capital of Norway, and *should* be the capital of Norway!

Your earliest prog memory?
Being seven years old, going through my dad's vinyl collection and putting on his early Pink Floyd records, like *Meddle*. The music was weird, but soothing and wonderful.

First prog record you bought?
Änglagård's *Hybris*. I bought it in Helvete, this amazing record shop in Oslo owned by [late Mayhem guitarist] Euronymous.

First prog gig?
I was very late with the live prog experience — it was King Crimson, at the Grieg Memorial Hall in Bergen in 2003.

Favourite gadget?
My Roland SH-1 synthesiser. I bought from my music teacher in the seventh grade and I love it. It's heavily used on our current album [*E*].

Guilty pleasures?
The thing is, metal and prog are all about freeing you from the shackles of guilt! I do like some of Bruce Springsteen's later albums, like *Magic*.

What would be your specialist subject on *Mastermind*?
The roots of Norwegian black metal in the early 90s. But I think I'd be good at the general knowledge round too.

Biggest prog extravagance?
My Moog Mother-32 synth/sequencer. I originally bought it just so I could learn how to play [Floyd's] *On The Run*, but I've had much more use out of it since.

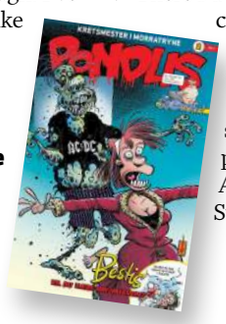
Favourite prog venue?
It's 013 in Tilburg, the Netherlands — a perfect rock'n'roll venue that's been really well thought through. I've seen great bands there like Focus and Magma, and have played many sets there with Enslaved.

Outside of prog, what are you into?
I try to be a good dad to my two young kids, and read some books if there's time. I'm not into golfing or fishing or anything like that!

Who is your prog hero?
Robert Fripp. He's had such an influence on the role of the rock musician, then there's literally *Heroes*, his song with David Bowie: that was a real influence on me.

Last prog album you bought?
From Silence To Somewhere by Wobbler, a great new Norwegian prog band released through my friends at Karisma. At times dangerously close to 'regressive' in its 70s golden era worship, but still on the right side of 'great'!

What do you collect?
There's a comic strip in Norway called *Pondus*, I have them all from since it started. Also books on mystical stuff and quantum physics, anything from Aleister Crowley to Stephen Hawking.



Last prog gig that you went to?
Steven Wilson in Bergen, at a venue called Ole Bull Scene. It was pretty awesome, with video screens and all.

Ever had a prog date?
No, but I did get my wife into Genesis. She was already a big fan of Peter Gabriel, but wasn't familiar with them. Then she got me into wacky classical music that makes metal sound tame — symphonies for airplane engines and stuff.

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?
If it so happens that we're in Sweden, we'd go to Stockholm for a few beers with [Opeth guitarist] Fredrik [Åkesson] and JB [Christoffersson] from Grand Magus.

> Guilty pleasures? Metal and prog are all about freeing you from the shackles of guilt!

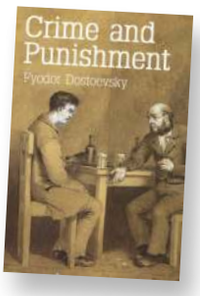
Most important prog song?
21st Century Schizoid Man is the most-used gateway from metal into prog. It's such a good party trick: the knowledgeable old prog guy says, 'Oh, so you think *you're* heavy? Listen to this song from 1969…'

Which prog musician would you like to work with?
Tool's Danny Carey. He's a very exotic drummer and encapsulates what I love about classic prog drummers, but in a modern way. Now Neil Peart's out of the business, Danny's in the chair.

Which prog album gets you in a good mood?
Studio Tan by Frank Zappa. It's impossible to stay down after listening to *Greggery Peccary*. The way Zappa juxtaposes high art and childish, low-brow stuff is exhilarating.

The best prog gig you ever saw?
The Residents at Bergenfest in 2010 supporting their album *The Lonely Teenager*. The show took place inside a cabin, with all these horribly scary figures and projections. Like the best horror, you wanted to look away but couldn't. It was such an experience.

Pick us a good read.
Crime And Punishment by Dostoevsky. For me it's like the best of prog — seemingly overworked and heavy, but once you get into it it's complex, beautiful and layered. Every time you go back to it is like the first time.



Your favourite prog album cover?
The Dark Side Of The Moon. My favourite cover, my favourite album.

What are you up to?
I'm touring most of the world in 2018, starting with the US, then most of the other continents, except Africa. I released four albums last year so that'll be hard to top — but I will certainly try!

E is out now via Nuclear Blast. See www.enslaved.no.

don airey

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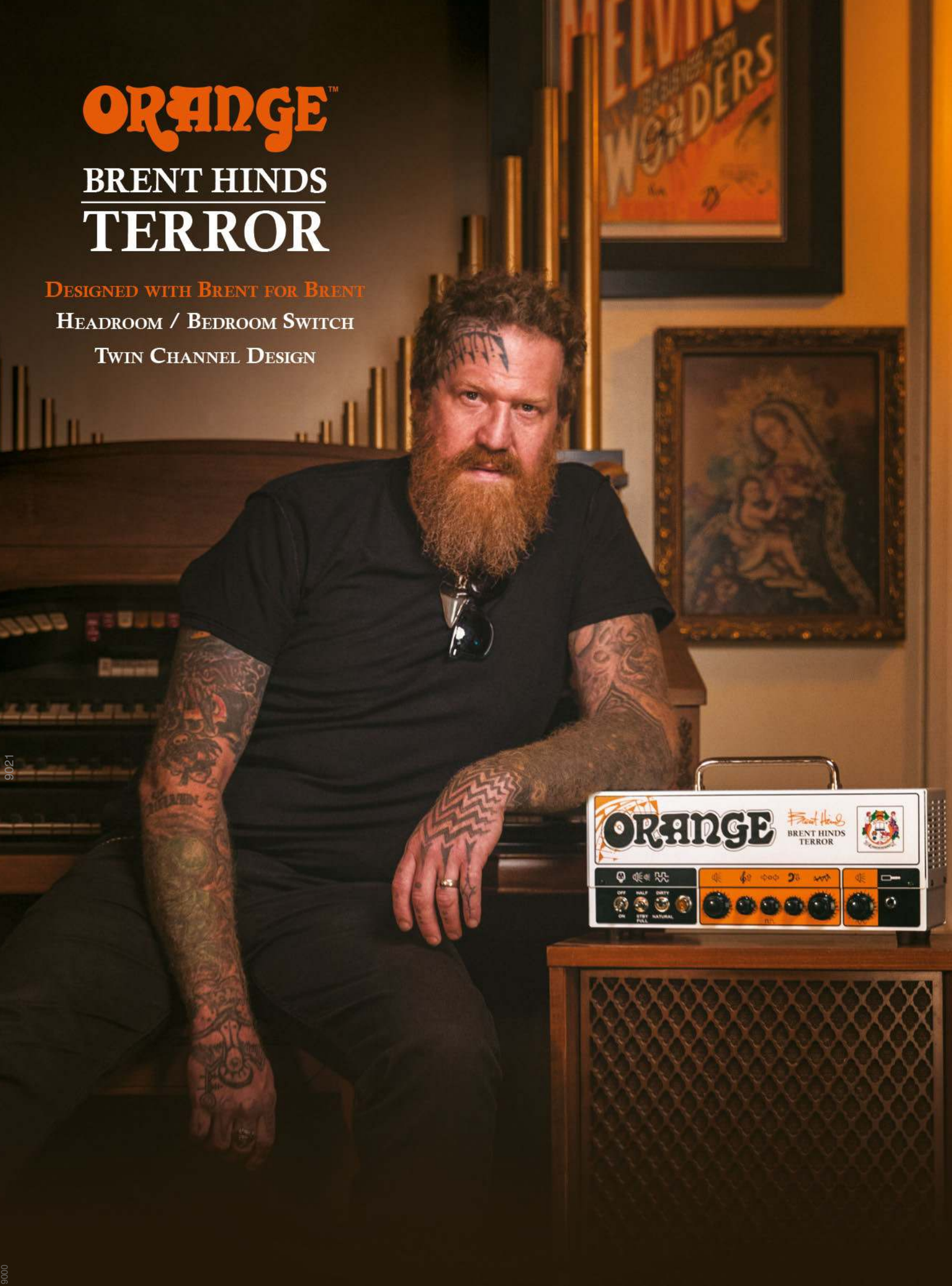
LOUD N NOISE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TWIN CHANNEL DESIGN
ORANGE
BRENT HINDS
TERROR