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PROG
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WIN! FISH OUT OF WATER
Deluxe Box Set
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On being ripped off and why Return To Forever should still be going
KINO
John Mitchell and Pete Trewavas return with new-look band
BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME
Breaking into the mainstream with their new concept album
ROB REED
On his new *Sanctuary* project and reworking kids' TV themes
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Auri
Trinity Live
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ISSUE 86 05.04.18

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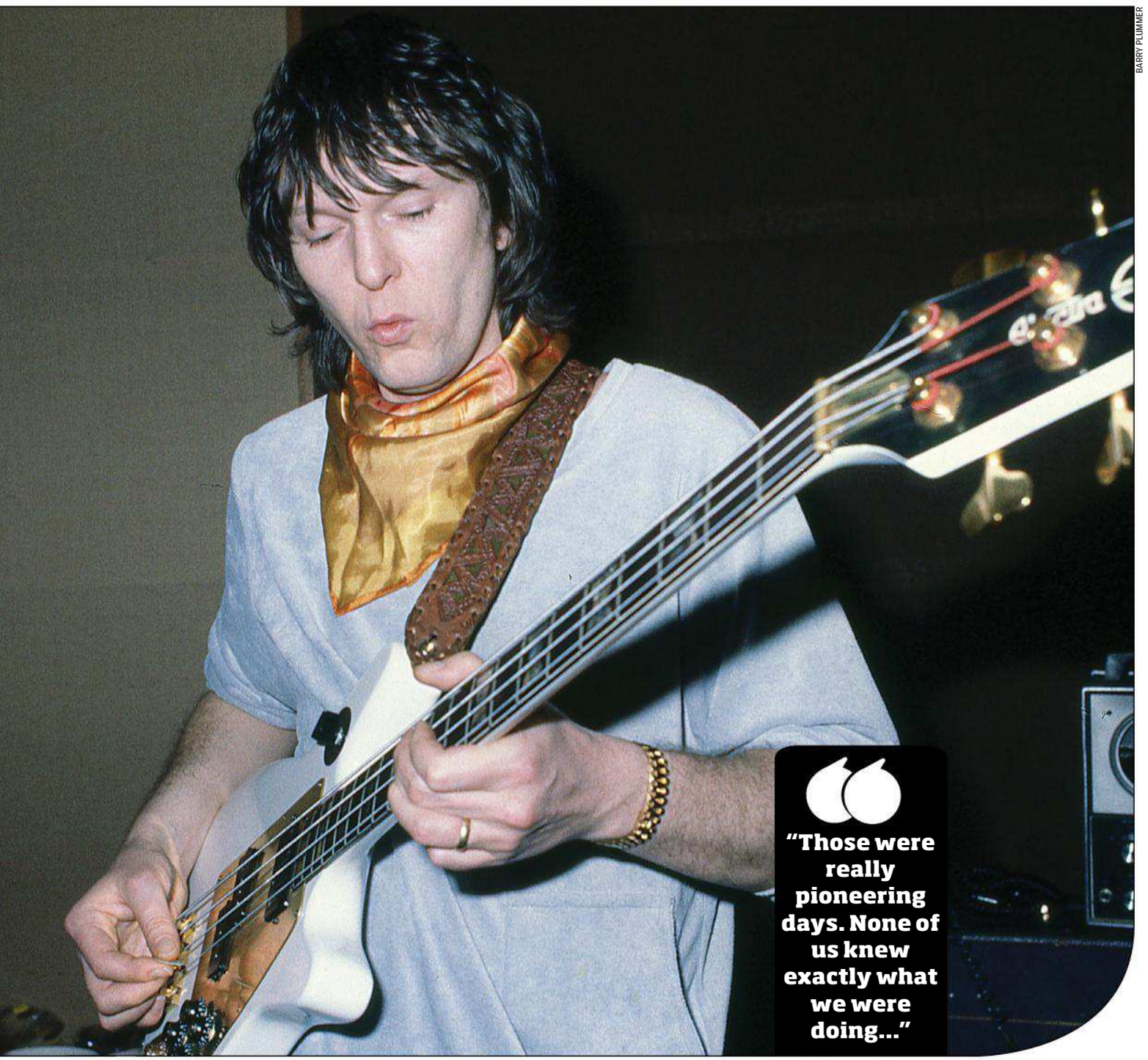

BARRY PLUMMER

"Those were really pioneering days. None of us knew exactly what we were doing..."

Chris Squire p 34

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- Esoteric Recordings are proud to announce the release of an official limited edition deluxe boxed set of Yes founder Chris Squire's legendary 1975 solo album Fish Out Of Water.
- The highlight of this limited edition deluxe boxed set is a stunning new 5.1 Surround Sound mix (exclusive to this set on an NTSC / Region Free DVD), along with a new stereo mix, from the original multi-track master tapes by Jakko Jakszyk and a new re-master of the original 1975 mix by Paschal Byrne.

2 DISC EDITION

- Featuring a new mixes from the multi-track master tapes by Jakko Jakszyk.
- A newly re-mastered original stereo mix with four bonus tracks; "Lucky Seven" (single version), "Silently Falling" (single version) and "Run With The Fox" & "Return Of The Fox" by Chris Squire & Alan White.

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- Also includes a 60cm x 40cm reproduction concert poster from Gary Brooker's archive.
- All orders from the Cherry Red on-line store also receive an additional reproduction concert poster from Procol Harum's 1972 US tour.

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STRAY
'LIVE AT THE MARQUEE'

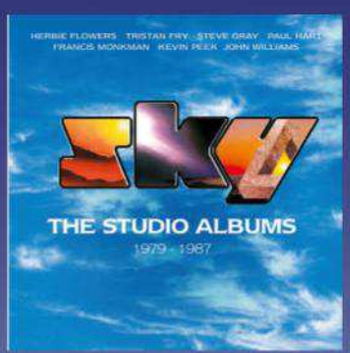
- New re-mastered and expanded edition of the 1984 album Live at the Marquee, by the legendary British rock band Stray.
- The album was the first record release by Stray since their 1977 album Hearts of Fire following which the band went on a hiatus.
- The line-up of Del Bromham (lead guitar), Pete Dyer (vocals), Gary Giles (bass) & Ritchie Cole (drums) reunited in 1983 to play a triumphant concert at The Marquee Club in London, featuring many Stray classics such as All in Your Mind, Suicide, One Night in Texas and Houdini, all captured on this album released the following year.

NIRVANA
'BLACK FLOWER'

- New remastered & expanded release of the legendary & impossibly rare 1970 album by uk band.
- With five bonus tracks, three previously unreleased.

SPIRIT
'THE STUDIO ALBUMS 1979-1987'
(8 DISC CLAMSHELL BOX SET)

- New remastered 5 CD clamshell boxed set featuring every recording released by the legendary Spirit for Ode & Epic records between 1968 - 1972.
- Includes the entire mono mix of the 1968 album Spirit on CD for the first time, along with the soundtrack to the film The Model Shop, the original 1968 stereo mix of The Family That Plays Together, associated out-takes from each album, singles and alternate mixes undertaken in 1991 for the Time Circle compilation.
- Includes an illustrated book with an essay by Malcolm Dome and featuring archive interviews with band members.



SKY
'THE STUDIO ALBUMS 1979-1987'
(8 DISC CLAMSHELL BOX SET)

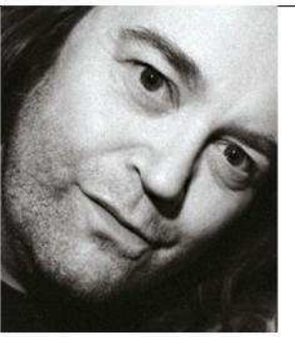
- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of "The Studio Albums 1979 – 1987", a new clamshell boxed set that gathers together all seven studio albums released by the legendary classical rock band SKY over a nine year period. Includes a bonus remastered DVD (NTSC / Region Free) – "Sky – Live in Nottingham 1990" with two previously unreleased & un-broadcast tracks. CDs remastered from the original master tapes.

ANTHONY PHILLIPS
'PRIVATE PARTS AND PIECES VOLUME IX-XI'

- A 4 CD definitive edition clamshell boxed set of the final three seminal "Private Parts & Pieces" albums by Genesis founder member Anthony Phillips.
- With a bonus CD featuring 18 previously unreleased tracks

AGA TOMASZEK

Ed's Letter



We're now in an unprecedented age when major band anniversaries are coming thick and fast. Last month we doffed our cap to Ian Anderson and Jethro Tull. This month we celebrate 50 years of progressive pioneers Yes. A week from writing this I shall be compèring the fan day at London's illustrious Palladium venue, where the band play both Saturday and Sunday. What an honour it will be, as it is to feature various members of Yes talking about some of the major moments of their career, which they also do in this very issue starting on page 40.

You'll see we chose to go with Chris Squire on the cover. With the release of a lovely deluxe edition of his 1975 solo album *Fish Out Of Water*, it seemed like a good time to acknowledge his own music and that of his role in Yes, the band he formed back in 1968. While Yes have carried on, in accordance with Chris' wishes, it's nice to be able to remember what an important figure he remains in the world of progressive music.

There's the usual mix of the old and the new in the rest of the issue. It's good to see Galahad and Kino back with such strong new albums. And there's some really intriguing new music from supergroup Legends Of The Seagullmen and Nightwish offshoot Auri. And how could I forget one of my absolute heroes, guitarist Al Di Meola in this issue's The *Prog* Interview.

We also highlight two up-and-coming events. The Trinity III charity prog concert at Islington Assembly Hall in May, and Space Rocks at Indigo at O2 in April, a new venture involving my old friend and colleague Alexander Milas. We're proud to support both ventures. I do hope we'll see many of you at both.

As I hope we'll see you when we're back with the next issue of *Prog*, on May 10. Until then, prog on...

Jerry Ewing - Editor

NEXT ISSUE MAY 10 ON SALE

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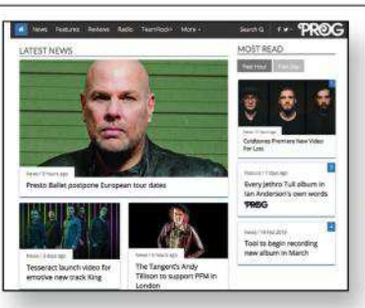

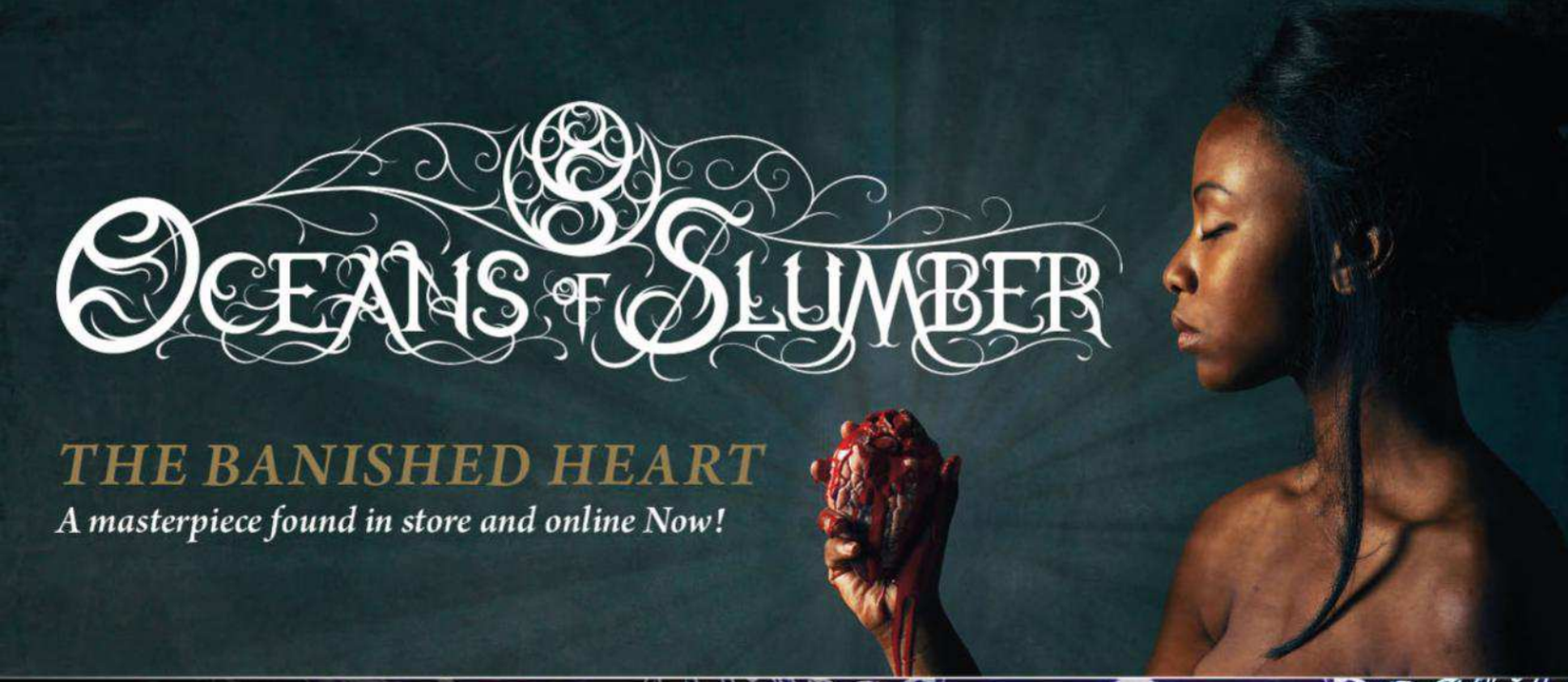

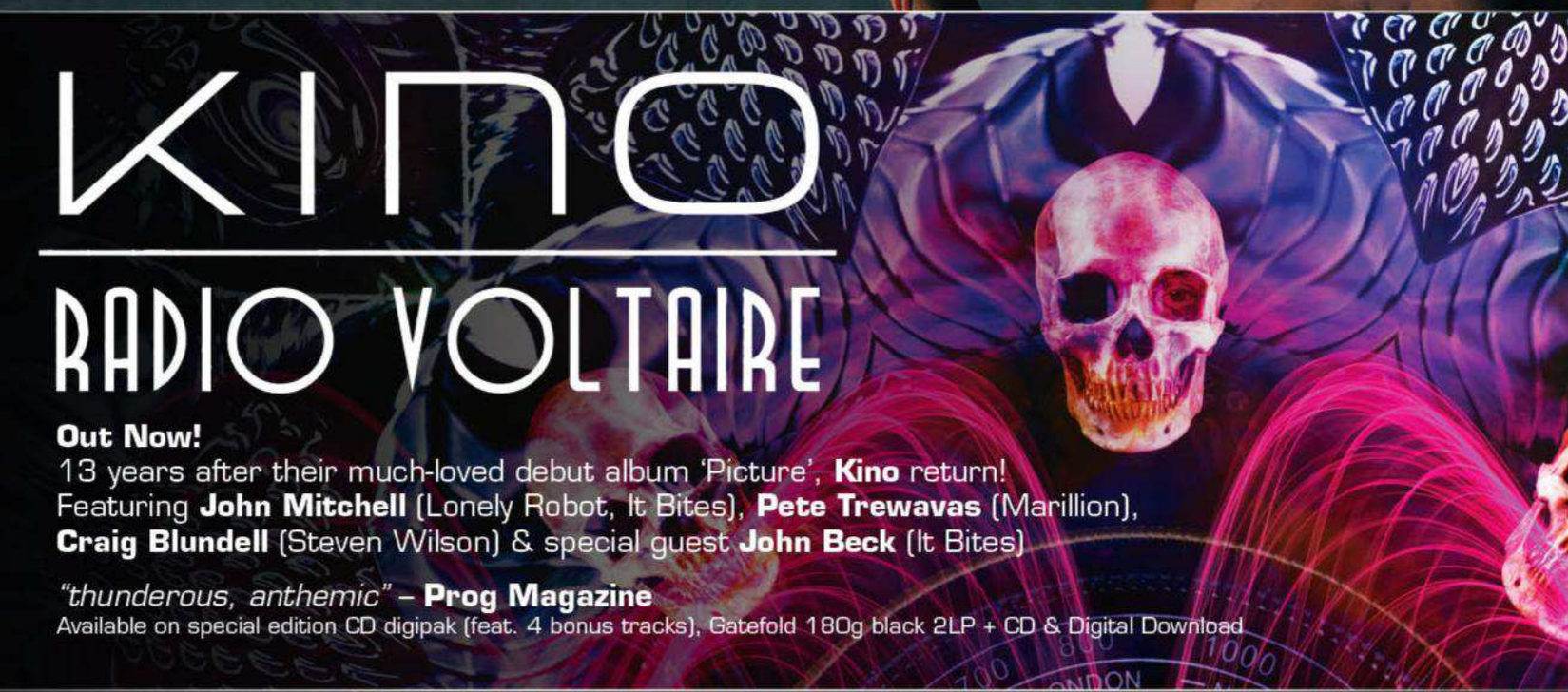

Out Now!
13 years after their much-loved debut album 'Picture', **Kino** return!
Featuring **John Mitchell** (Lonely Robot, It Bites), **Pete Trewavas** (Marillion), **Craig Blundell** (Steven Wilson) & special guest **John Beck** (It Bites)

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AN UNFAIR JUDGEMENT?

I was dismayed at some of Martin Kielty's review of the Opeth show at Glasgow Barrowlands on November 16, 2017. As a Glaswegian who was at the show, I was insulted to read the word 'haters' in his review, and he does the Glasgow audience a great disservice with this kind of careless language.

Firstly, I would like to say that I agree wholeheartedly with his review of the music itself. I have no issues here. My issue is with his negative description of the audience and our interaction with the bands. This made me wonder if we were in fact at the same show.

There was indeed some heckling from the audience, but as an Opeth fan who has seen them on numerous occasions in many different countries, Mikael Åkerfeldt gives as good as he gets and he did so on this occasion, just like every other. Part of Mikael's appeal at a live show is his perfect English and his ability to tune in to the sense of humour of his audience, wherever he happens to be. His comment that we could "take the piss as much as we liked because he couldn't understand our accents anyway" had the audience in stitches laughing.

Glasgow audiences are very discerning and, as far as I could see and hear, no one hated the show. Who would pay upwards of £30 to see a band they don't like? Glasgow audiences heckle. It's a thing we do, and bands from all over the world talk about the welcome they get in Glasgow and the atmosphere the audience create.

As a lifelong fan of Pete Townshend and The Who, I have been to dozens of shows where Pete Townshend insulted the audience. It's an icebreaker and a whole lot of fun. Mikael Åkerfeldt was more than ready for us in November and I felt that there was absolutely no offence taken in either direction.

I was at the Manchester show the previous night too, and a lot of the people around me were younger and there was a bit of crowd surfing. Does this make them a better or more engaging audience? I think not. That was a great show too, apart from some sounds hiccups that thankfully were sorted out by the following night in Glasgow.

***Prog* 83: Gentle Giant feature, harsh Opeth review?**

Giving As Good As He Gets: Mikael Åkerfeldt onstage with Opeth. DAVID WALLA

I know a lot of people who were at the Glasgow show and they all love Opeth and enjoyed the show immensely. As Martin said, they played some surprise songs and it was an absolute joy from start to finish.

Opeth have become a force to be reckoned with in the progressive music world. Their change to prog has been taking place for years, going way back before *Heritage*, *Pale Communion* and *Sorceress*. I personally like to enjoy their music standing, rather than moshing or diving around. I stood at the side of the stage and watched and listened in amazement and enjoyed every minute of the show, as did my friends and everyone else I could see. You don't need to be jumping around and crowd surfing to enjoy a show.

As for the lukewarm reception Enslaved received, I don't agree with that either. Firstly, support bands rarely receive a fanfare of a welcome, but on this occasion I felt that they were very well received – a lot better than some support bands in my experience. And when you consider how long Glasgow waited to see Opeth again, I think our response to Enslaved was both patient and respectful, which of course they deserved.

As a musician who understands what it feels like to be the support band, I'm always acutely aware of this at gigs and show my appreciation for the hard work they do. I personally am not a huge fan of Enslaved, but they deserved respect – and got it, as far as I could see and hear.

Michaela Rodger

Hi Michaela. As a seasoned Barras attendee and a Glaswegian all my life, please believe me when I tell you I meant no insult to the 'Glasgow choir' in my review. But a review is an opinion, and mine was that a notable number of the crowd didn't appear to be fully engaged with the show… and they were entirely free to feel that way if they wanted to. As you say, the heckling (which is indeed a bonus feature of many gigs) was well managed by Mikael, who at no point lost his usual good humour and command of the show. He won every round!

Opeth audiences are as unique as the band themselves, and every night is different (as it should be), but I was disappointed in some of the Glasgow choir that night, and it

TWEET TALK

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MARIUSZ DUDA
@Marivsz_Riv
We've just started recordings for the new, seventh Riverside album @riversidepl

GANDALF'S FIST
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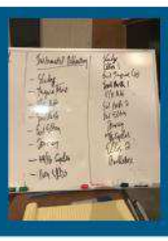
We've started our own record label! Please follow @NKeeperRecords for updates on our global domination!

MIKE PORTNOY
@MikePortnoy
Exactly ONE YEAR AGO TODAY we were secretly in the studio creating @SonsOfApollo1 Psychotic Symphony… on that day it was @MaxPortnoy's 18th birthday and we were writing a crazy instrumental… so we decided to name the song after him! Thus OPUS MAXIMUS was born.



LETTER

Getting hold of your magazine in Malta is always hit and miss. Yes, I know I could get a subscription, but the nature of my job means I can't always ensure money is in my account. However, after today's trip to hospital I managed to get hold of a copy of issue 84, which I am now reading. Once I got home from hospital I found to my joy that the Lifesigns CDs and a DVD had arrived at last. *Prog* mag

and Lifesigns playing: such bliss. A large voddy to help remove the memory of where the probes went and I'm in heaven once more.

Keep up the good work, *Prog* mag. We do have a thriving prog scene here in Malta (check out 'Prog The Islands' on Facebook) and get several great bands playing. Like I say, keep the good work going and I look forward to my next trip to hospital as it's about the only place I can find your magazine — apart from the airport…

David J M Gross

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

would have been wrong of me not to say so. For what it's worth, my companion for the evening, Will, who's a veteran of many more shows than I, agreed with me. But then it's perfectly natural for our night to have been different from your night.

I don't think I'll have done much damage to the reputations of Opeth or Glasgow, and the important thing for everyone is that the music was great — as usual! I respect your opinion, and I hope you'll respect mine.
— Martin Kielty

PROG FOR LIFE

Just read the Paper Late column [*Prog* 85], regarding the CDs to be found in charity shops and I have to say that as a volunteer in my local St Helena Hospice Music Shop, my experience is almost 100 per cent identical to yours. We get a delivery of CDs from our warehouse once a week and it *always*, without fail, includes Coldplay, Starsailor, Toploader, Travis, Kasabian, Keane, Razorlight, etc.

It's incredibly rare to see a prog CD. Almost as rare for us to see any vinyl prog either. I see this as a vindication of 'serious' music, as obviously people are holding on to their prog collection, and good for them.

If you know anyone who wants some 90s music, we can do three CDs for a quid! Great mag by the way.

Keith Cummings, Frinton-on-Sea

TULL IT LIKE IT IS

Having been a prog fan for several decades and a *Prog* reader since its inception, I do enjoy the more in-depth features, especially on some of the bands who've been around almost as long as me.

The last issue's Ian Anderson/Jethro Tull feature was one of them. I've followed Tull since the late 70s and enjoyed reading Ian's musings on their classic rustic period that revolves around the *Heavy Horses* reissue, together with his comments on each album in the catalogue. Lovely little picture spread too from the Anderson archives.

When it comes down to opinion, I can appreciate people are more than entitled to their own views, yet I must get all soapboxy on one point made by Phil Wilding regarding Anderson, a man in his 70s, having "the singing pipes of a man decades younger".

I appreciate that Ian can be quite a daunting interviewee, and with him looking like a cross between Fagin and Peter Grant on page 37, I wouldn't want to cross him. But the singing voice comment is, like Marillion's childhood, sadly misplaced. Evan Ian himself seems surprised, and politely sidesteps with his "I've never been a strong singer" comment and Robert Plant anecdote.

His voice was, to put it politely, shot years ago. The last time I saw him live (the *Homo Erraticus* tour, in 2014 I guess) he'd taken the wise step of adding an extra singer to the band. Now come on *Prog*, by all means continue the lengthy features on our prog heritage bands and beyond, but don't be afraid to be critical.

Mike Ainscoe

Our Jethro Tull feature, starring the "shot-voiced" Ian Anderson.

NICK BEGGS
@NickBeggs
Thank you Amsterdam. Always a joy to play for.

TOMMY ROGERS
@tommybtbam
I like to imagine what my son's friends imagine when he tells them that "my dad is in a band". A lot of imagining going on.

MARJANA SEMKINA
@marjanasemkina
Went to Hever Castle today (home of Anne Boleyn) and was told by a member of staff that I look like Queen Elizabeth I. Quite an exquisite compliment don't you think?

PROG

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INTRO

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

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF FIND UNITY IN *DISSOLUTION*

British proggers collaborate with Porcupine Tree's Gavin Harrison on their 12th studio album, due out on Kscope this summer.

Five heads are better than three! Gavin Harrison (far left) has now officially joined The Pineapple Thief.

Bruce Soord puts the finishing touches to *Dissolution*.

"This time it was very much a collaboration from day one."

The Pineapple Thief, along with recent additions Gavin Harrison (King Crimson, Porcupine Tree) and Darran Charles (Godsticks), are nearing completion on the follow-up to 2016's *Your Wilderness*. It's set to be called *Dissolution* and mainman Bruce Soord says he's delighted with the experience of collaborating with Harrison on the songwriting.

He tells *Prog*, "With *Your Wilderness*, the songs were all ready, so Gavin was pretty much a session guy. Our relationship developed on the two tours we did together, so this time it was very much a collaboration from day one.

"The relationship I have with Gavin creatively has had a huge impact. We jammed the songs from the start, which has given the album an exciting direction. It's almost like *Your Wilderness* was a blueprint."

Harrison says of the process, "Bruce might start something on acoustic guitar and send it over in a very rough fashion. He'd encourage me to chop the arrangement into whatever I thought might be better. I think I've got a pretty good ear for arranging; I might write a different middle or suggest a different section — maybe just drums without anything else on — that I think could work."

Soord recalls, "The worst bit of starting an album is the start, because you know what a long hideous journey it is."

He came up with a "little idea" that became first track *Shed A Light* — "maybe a verse and a chorus with no vocals, and Gavin took it, chopped it around, jammed out some drum sections and it was, 'Wow!' When you have a partnership like that it's almost a chain reaction."

Working songtitles also include *Try As I Might*, *Uncovering Your Tracks*, and *Not Naming Any Names*. Says Soord, "The album is broadly about the breakdown of social fabric, and how the wonderful new things we have in our lives, like Facebook, have done the opposite to what they set out to do. Dissolution is not a solution, and it's a dissolving."

Soord accepts the concept is "pretty negative," and adds, "The things I've witnessed have had such an awful outcome. There's always light; it's never a uniquely negative and dark record, but it doesn't paint a nice picture."

Harrison notes, "It's not so literal in the lyrics; it's got some ambiguity. They're a bit cryptic, as with so many songs that I like. Apart from Earth, Wind And Fire, most people don't write uplifting songs — with Porcupine Tree, the dark, sad songs were the most popular. People like wallowing in strife and trouble!"

Both of them select the 11-minute *White Mist* as the flagship moment. "It's almost three songs in one," Harrison says. "It encapsulates the way we all seem to have clicked together."

TPT's upcoming UK tour, which sees them playing their biggest show at London's O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire on October 6, will showcase the new unity between Soord, Harrison, Charles, bassist Jon Sykes and keyboardist Steve Kitch.

"We were all pulling in the same direction," the drummer says. "We'd do it over WhatsApp, with a thread going for each song, but so far there have been no confrontational disagreements."

Asked whether Harrison and Charles are now full-time members, Soord confirms, "Gavin's completely involved. We work around his schedule with King Crimson and that seems to work. Darran's contributed loads of great guitar work and although it's not something we ever discussed, this is just how it all settled in."

For the full list of The Pineapple Thief's live shows and more, visit their official website at www.pineapplethief.com. **MK**

DIANA SEIFERT/PRESS

This month, Intro was compiled by
Chris Cope
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Jo Kendall
Martin Kielty
Hannah May Kilroy
Alex Lynham
Rhodri Marsden
Kris Needs
Natasha Scharf
Sid Smith
Rick Wakeman

WAY GIVES VIVALDI A PROG MAKEOVER

Curved Air founder creates a brand new sound for *The Four Seasons*.

String Theory: Darryl Way.

Darryl Way has reworked Vivaldi's famous violin concerti on his latest album. *Vivaldi's Four Seasons In Rock* is out on May 4 through Right Honourable Records and is Way's first classical recording since 2013's *Ultra Violins*.

"*The Four Seasons* has been such an important piece of music in my life that I thought it was about time there was a record of my performance of it before I became too old to get my fingers around the notes," says the classically trained musician. "I play all the instruments on this album: solo violin, strings, keyboards and also the guitar, which is something I've got into playing over the last two or three years, and it's enabled me to approach the arrangements from a completely different perspective."

The release coincides with the 50th anniversary of *Vivaldi*, Way's original homage to the Italian composer. Although the basic structure was written during his time with Sisyphus, he only recorded the track with Curved Air. It appeared on their 1970 debut *Airconditioning* and was also released as a single in 1971.

"I loved Vivaldi's music and wanted to introduce it to a rock audience. I was also inspired by bands like Keith Emerson's The Nice. They were adapting classical music into a rock format, and creating excitement by breathing new life into the classics," he says. "The challenge for me [with *Vivaldi's Four Seasons In Rock*] was to maintain Vivaldi's original concept of the piece and tell the same story."

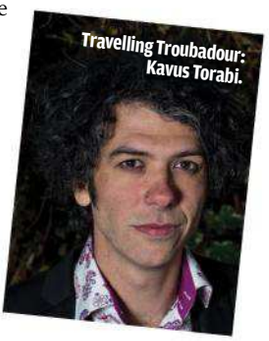
For more info, visit www.darrylway.com. **NRS**

SOLO EP AND TOUR FOR KNIFEWORLD'S KAVUS

Gong frontman announces his new side-project and starts work on the follow-up to Knifeworld's *Bottled out of Eden*.

Kavus Torabi releases a three-track solo EP called *Solar Divination* via Believers Roast this April. It'll coincide with a UK mini-tour.

"When I was doing Gong last year, I had all these songs coming out with nowhere to go so I started writing this solo material," he reveals. "*Solar Divination* has more of a subdued sound [compared to Knifeworld] but the songs are very much about love, death and loss.



Travelling Troubadour: Kavus Torabi.

"The EP was written specifically for harmonium and guitar. It's nice to be able to sing over something gentler and I can do a lot more with my voice."

Torabi has also confirmed that he'll begin working on a new Knifeworld album later this year. "It's going to be a very different approach," he teases. "I'm very excited to see how that's going to work out."

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

SPOCK'S BEARD MAKE SOME MELODIC NOISE

Snow makers welcome drummer Nick D'Virgilio back on their 13th studio album.

The good do last! Spock's Beard.

Spock's Beard release *Noise Floor* via InsideOut on May 25. It was recorded with longtime engineer Rich Mouser and showcases an even more melodic sound than on 2015's conceptual *Oblivion Particle*.

The album also marks the return of drummer Nick D'Virgilio. The Big Big Train sticksman left Spock's in 2011 but has played live with them a handful of times over recent years, including their two-part defrosting of *Snow* with former vocalist Neal Morse.

"We made a very half-hearted effort to find a replacement for Jimmy Keegan [who left in 2016]," says bassist Dave Meros. "It was always going to be extremely hard to find a drummer of that quality who also has high-range vocals. It's like finding a unicorn. So we just decided to see if Nick would be interested in doing the album. He's the best and he's really a great friend so it's been like getting back together with your brother who you haven't seen in a few years. It was very natural."

Although Spock's Beard's will be reining in their live shows to fit around D'Virgilio's busy schedule, the drummer's day job at music superstore Sweetwater Sound made tracking the album a lot easier.

"The way we record these days is, like a lot of bands, very fragmented," says Meros. "But we recorded the drums at Sweetwater and we did a songwriter's workshop there a few weeks later. When I got Rich's rough mixes of the album, I thought it turned out really nice. Rich is very creative and a great musician in his own right. He understands how the songs should sound."

The eight-track also comes with a bonus four-track EP that features ideas hatched more than 20 years ago.

Meros reveals, "There are songs on this record that go way back. *Days We'll Remember* was written primarily by our writing partner John Boegehold. I was in a band with him in the late 80s/early 90s and that song comes from way back then. We prog-ified it and reintroduced it. *Beginnings* is another song that wasn't finished for our last album so it resurfaced for this one."

Of the band's decision to include a bonus disc with their latest long player, Meros says, "We took the tracks off to make the main album a little bit more cohesive, but we're writing constantly so we usually have little bits and pieces that have been written over time." **NRS**

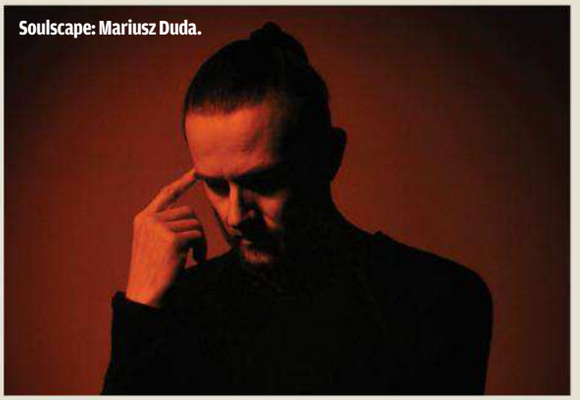
For more, visit www.spocksbeard.com.

> **"To find a drummer of that quality is like finding a unicorn."**

INTRO extras

KING CRIMSON LIVE ALBUM

King Crimson are giving fans the chance to relive their 2016 concert in the Austrian capital. *Live In Vienna, 2016* is out on April 6 via Panegyric, and includes the live recorded debut of *Fracture* by their 2016 line-up in Copenhagen. The three-CD set also includes newly sequenced soundscapes drawn from the improvised introduction music with performances from Robert Fripp, Mel Collins and Tony Levin. King Crimson return to the UK in October.



Soulscape: Mariusz Duda.

LUNATIC SOUL'S ALBUM OF THERAPY

Riverside frontman comes out of mourning with his experimental side-project.

Lunatic Soul release *Under The Fragmented Sky* via Kscope on May 25. Mariusz Duda felt compelled to complete the companion album to last year's *Fractured* before he could start work on the next Riverside release.

The mostly instrumental eight-track continues the theme of "coming back to life after a personal tragedy" and deals in part with the sudden death of Riverside co-founder Piotr Grudziński in 2016.

"The more I tried to dig in, the more coherent the music became," Duda reveals. "With *Fractured*, I decided to use compositions with lyrics and singing, no instrumental tracks. I thought it would be nice to do something instrumental as a companion, but I also had two really nice ideas for songs."

He describes *Under The Fragmented Sky* as "intimate, nostalgic, very cinematic and different than everything you have heard from me so far, but at the same time, very 'lunatic'."

He also points to key lyrics from the track *Untamed*, '*So it's done, won the fight, war is over*,' and adds, "It's something that I wanted to mark. It's done; you should start a new chapter. It was my therapy."

But he didn't want to write about the experiences that immediately followed Grudziński's death just yet. He'll explore these on the follow-up to Riverside's *Eye Of The Soundscape*, which he aims to release later this year.

"Riverside will be darker," he says. "It's funny; it means that within a year I'll have done three albums. Art comes from unhappiness."

For more, visit www.lunaticsoul.com. **MK**

AARON CLIFT AND CO RIGHT A WRONG ON NEW ALBUM

Texans team up with guest guitarists on their punchy third.

The Aaron Clift Experiment release *If All Goes Wrong* independently on May 4. Despite the negative title, vocalist and keyboard player Aaron Clift says it carries a message of perseverance against the odds.

"This album was all about taking risks, learning to live with uncertainty, and ultimately coming out the other side triumphant," he reveals. "It felt like a very dangerous title, [but] the more we thought about it, the more it felt right."

The hook-driven release takes them to even more melodic territories than before.

"I wanted to make an album that didn't pull any punches," says bassist and co-writer Devin North, whose brother Dave (The Cuckoos) is one of several guest guitarists on the album. "The biggest influences were King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, Queen, The Beatles — bands that were really progressing music — and it pays homage to them as well as progressing in its own direction."

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

Experimental Sounds: it's The Aaron Clift Experiment!

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LOUD N NOISE

I Am The Black Wizard: Ihsahn pushes the boundaries of dark prog.

IHSAHN UNVEILS HIS LATEST SOLO ALBUM

Norwegian black metal pioneer embraces his inner pop star on new recordings.

Ihsahn's seventh solo album, *Àmr*, is out on April 6 via Candlelight/Spinefarm, and the former Emperor frontman has elaborated on some of his unexpected influences.

"I've often had a very open-sounding record with big strings but on this one, the energy is more on the sub-bass," he tells *Prog* from his label's London HQ. "It's more like urban 808s and pumping sounds. Some of the influence for the drum sounds would be ABBA – we recorded all the drums on an acrylic drum kit."

If it's a shock to hear him citing the Swedish pop greats as inspiration, you may need to sit down for the next part.

"I've been listening to The Weeknd, Kanye West, James Blake... a lot of the production techniques," he says. But fear not, he hasn't abandoned his dark roots.

"The opening track is pure blast beat black metal, then towards the end there's a song that's like a pop song," he says.

Diversity and experimentation is a common theme in Ihsahn's solo work, and once again, he plays all instruments himself, bar regular collaborator Tobias Ørnes Andersen (The Shining) who returns to drum duties. "The most crucial, and the most invisible person, is of course my colleague and my wife [Heidi Tveitan, aka Ihriel, who runs Mnemosyne Productions alongside Ihsahn. She's also the sister of Leprous' singer Einar Solberg]."

Àmr was mixed at Sweden's Fascination Street Studios by Linus Corneliusson, who Ihsahn credits with "following through my ideas of really punchy, disco-style drums".

For more, visit www.ihsahn.com. **TDG**

INTRO extras

DEBUT FOR MOON DUO SOLO PROJECT

Moon Duo co-founder Sanae Yamada is to release the self-titled debut from her new synth side-project Vive La Void. Out via Sacred Bones on May 4, the seven-track *Vive La Void* was written over a two-year period in-between touring and the creation of Moon Duo's two-part *Occult Architecture* which came out last year.

Yamada will make her live debut as Vive La Void in Texas on April 27. European dates are due to be announced shortly.

The Six Wise Ones: Amorphis with new/old bassist Olli-Pekka Laine (third from left).

AMORPHIS ANNOUNCE CINEMATIC NEW OPUS

Van Giersbergen and members of Soul Enema and Eluveitie join on new release.

Amorphis have teamed up with an orchestra and choir on their latest album *Queen Of Time*, which is out via Nuclear Blast on May 18.

"The idea came from our producer Jens Bogren (Opeth/Orphaned Land) – he's definitely the seventh member of the band," reveals guitarist Esa Holopainen. "The result is pretty bombastic and it definitely sounds much bigger than our previous albums."

On it, the band continue their relationship with Finnish lyricist Pekka Kainulainen, who also penned the words to 2015's *Under The Red Cloud*. This time, he takes the metaphor of a queen bee to express the idea that something small can have a large impact. The winged insect is the central focus on the cover art, which has once again been created by French designer Valnoir. Kainulainen also makes a rare spoken appearance on the track *Daughter Of Hate*.

"We asked Pekka to do the narration because his voice is very deep and has a Shamanic vibe," says Holopainen. "We've never had the Finnish language on any of our albums before so it was really nice."

Queen Of Time features guest appearances from Anneke van Giersbergen, Eluveitie flautist Chrigel Glanzmann, and Noa Gruman from Soul Enema. It also marks the return of Amorphis' original bassist Olli-Pekka 'Oppu' Laine.

The band will tour the album later this year and they've already announced a string of gigs. Further shows, including UK dates, can be expected in the winter.

For more, visit www.amorphis.net. **NRS**

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FAD GADGETS

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

BLIPBLOX

Many of us will have nostalgic memories of the Fisher-Price Activity Centre: the lurid plastic, the whirring and honking, the inexplicable tortoise. The Blipblox is faintly reminiscent of that classic toy, while also introducing innocent children to the beard-stroking world of sound synthesis. Three-year-olds tend not to have much understanding of what a low frequency oscillator is (I'm not sure myself, to be honest) but the important thing is that you can turn the Blipblox's knobs at random to create a wealth of unexpected, squelchy sound. Just like a real synthesiser player.

www.blipblox.com

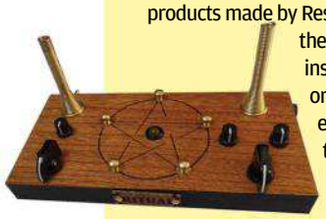
DJENT2018

Here we have an 18-string guitar, partly made of stone, courtesy of Ormsby Guitars of Western Australia. As magnificent an instrument as it is unplayable, it was custom built for Jared Dines, a YouTuber who unwisely straddles the rather broad line between thrash metal and comedy. He recently showed off the instrument at the NAMM music show in California. "In two years," he said, "when I can play this, you'll see a video of it." We wait with impatience.

www.ormsbyguitars.com

RITUAL

This, by contrast, offers a slightly more adult approach to sound generation, as you can tell straight away by the pentagram emblazoned on the top. The Ritual, a five-button, two-spring drone machine, is one of many one-off products made by Resonance Circuits; they build the instrument, put it on eBay, and eager fans bid up the price with gusto. (The Ritual sold for £510 a few weeks back.) Other unique instruments include Tantalus Machine, Optical Dreams and The Covenant, and you can't get much more prog than that.



http://bit.ly/2Resonance_Circuits

RICK WAKEMAN'S CAPED CRUSADES

KNIVES OUT

"I'm grumpy and overweight," says Rick, "but don't need you telling me!"

"Hello, Mr Wakeman," said the middle-aged man as I stepped off the train.

"Hello," I replied, and the conversation took a downturn from there.

"You've put on a lot of weight," he remarked, looking me up and down while the other passengers walked around us.

Inside, I was shaking my head at how someone I'd never met could be so rude, but I took a deep breath, smiled and replied, "I know, I've had a lot on my plate…"

He completely missed the joke and continued with another misguided question.

"Is that why you wear a cape?"

Attack seemed the best form of defence, so I asked him, "When did you go bald?"

He looked shocked and replied, "Pardon?"

"I asked you when you went bald, and may I further add at this juncture that the three little tufts you've left sprouting on your head look really stupid!"

"How *very* rude! You don't even know me and what's more, I can't help going bald."

"Wear a hat then!"

"You are *extremely* rude!" he said huffing.

"Well, you started it," I retorted.

"That's because you're fat!"

"Look, I don't wish to be rude," I said, "and I will admit that I am overweight, but the one advantage I have over you is that I could diet and lose weight, which I understand is painless. You, however, need a hair transplant, and I understand that can be really painful."

> **"People tell me that 70 is the new 50, but it bloody well isn't."**

The man gave a dramatic sigh and stormed off, nearly knocking over a young woman who was mesmerised by something on her phone.

The honest truth is that I *am* overweight, but I'm also seriously trying to address this issue. I don't look after my health as best I should, so I'm making a huge effort there as well, but I don't need a member of the public to tell me.

People tell me that 70 is the new 50, but it bloody well isn't. I felt great when I was 50 and now I have health issues associated with people who are in their 70s. I'm told that if I make more of an effort, especially with dieting, then I'll live longer. I think the diet I'm on just makes it seem longer.

Actually, I'll be happier once some weight has gone and I can stop taking cholesterol-lowering statins. It'll also probably bring my blood pressure down, my type 2 diabetes level down, and as my waist gets narrower, it'll also help my trousers fall down! Maybe in a few months time, I'll get off the train and the same guy will start the conversation with the words, "You've lost a lot of weight. You look really good!"

And I will reply, "I know, you were right; I was overweight… and I see you've shaved those awful tufts off your head. It really suits you!"

"I know, it looked awful, didn't it? Anyway, I've just bought *Piano Portraits* on vinyl, would you mind signing it?"

I'll smile and nod, but will choose not to mention his bad breath…

KEVIN FEBRUARY

DONNA ZED

Singer-songwriter and Steven Wilson tour buddy set for great things.

MOST PEOPLE WOULD be mortified if their dad showed a video of them performing in a school music production to a famous musician. But for Donna Zed, one fleeting moment of embarrassment kickstarted her music career.

"My dad runs a music school, and Steven Wilson came to the meet-and-greet there four years ago," remembers the softly-spoken 20-year-old. "I came by, we met, and then my father gave him a DVD of me performing on stage when I was 12. He actually looked at it!"

She had nothing to be embarrassed about. So impressed was Wilson with her performance that she was his first choice to support him at his Zurich show in February. It was meant to be a one-off, but he ended up asking her to join him on further dates in Hamburg, Essen and Amsterdam.

"My father used to listen to Porcupine Tree, but when I was in my early teens I didn't really like it, it was too intellectual for me," laughs Zed. "But when I started listening to Steven Wilson [his solo work] a bit more, I found his slower songs really touching. I love film music and thought it was a bit like that."

It's no surprise that Porcupine Tree were initially out of Zed's comfort zone. A student of classical music from the age of five until 17, she studied at the Conservatoire in Lausanne as a child, but made the bold decision not to go on to university after high school. Choosing to pursue music as a full-time career put Zed in the minority among her peers. "In Switzerland, studies are very important," she explains. "I was one of those bullied kids, I had a hard time at school — I was almost the only Asian," she says (her mother is from Thailand). "I got bullied for that — kids are cruel. I was the weird one, but now it's part of me and I own it. When I decided not to go to university, it was weird — my whole life I've been doing things around my studies."

She's not lying: last year, she recorded her EP *Morphine* in her spare time around school, and she's also the vocalist for the multi-country prog band Until Rain, whose members are scattered around Europe. She also finds time to pursue photography and to model, but says the release of her EP — which she recorded in the idyllic, swimming pool-equipped Karma Sound Studios in Thailand — was the moment that confirmed she was doing the right thing by making music her full-time job.

"It was as if I'd proven to my parents that going through art was worth it. I wasn't being a spoilt brat, like, 'I want to do music and nothing else.' It was like, 'Imagine what I could do if I didn't have school!'" she laughs.

The rate she's going, it won't be long before we see what she's really capable of. **TDG**

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Donna Zed *(vocals and piano)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Kate Bush exploring her lower register after a Tori Amos binge

CURRENT RELEASE

Morphine is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE

www.donnazed.com

"My dad runs a music school, and he gave Steven Wilson a DVD of me performing."

Silver Machine: Zed is poised for success.

MICHAEL NYEMBO

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

YOUR PROG CHEF:

DAVE 'SQUIDS' KERZNER

On the menu: Tales Of Topographic Gumbo

"I first got into cooking when I moved to New Orleans as a teenager. I loved the Cajun style seafood there so much that I decided to reverse engineer signature dishes like BBQ shrimp and seafood gumbo. Most restaurants outside of New Orleans don't seem to get it right, so let me bring you some authentic N'arlins flavour wherever you are!"

Ingredients (serves two)

180ml (¾ cup) vegetable oil, 125g (1 cup) white flour, 470ml (2 cups) water, 170g (1½ cups) chopped onions, 130g (¾ cup) chopped green peppers, 75g (¾ cup) chopped celery, 150g (1½ cups) chopped okra, 2 bay leaves, 1 tbsp gumbo filé, 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce, 1½ tsp celery salt, 2 tsp Old Bay spice, 450g medium raw shrimp (peeled and deveined), crab meat, shucked oysters and other seafood of your choice, 1-2 tbsp hot sauce, steamed white rice (optional)

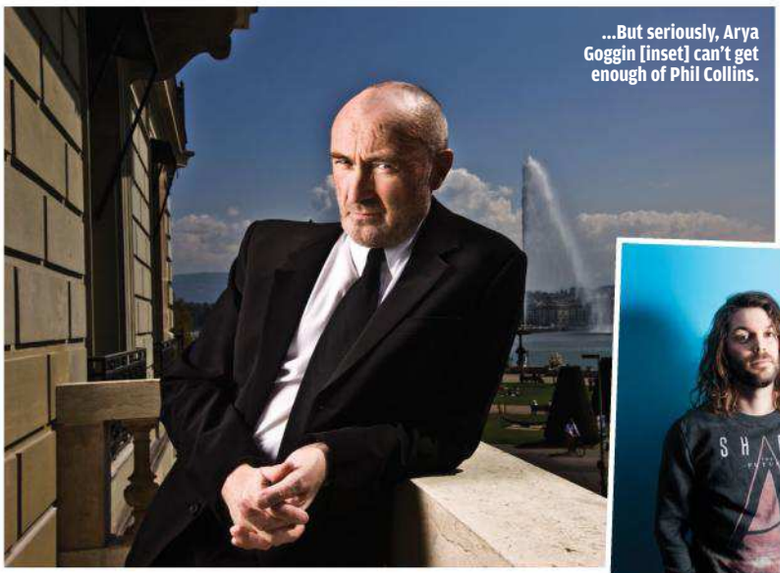
Preparation

"Pour the vegetable oil into a large pan and heat on medium for five minutes. Add in the flour and stir slowly with a wooden spoon on medium-low heat for another 10-15 minutes to make the roux nice and brown. Add onions, peppers and celery, and keep stirring. Slowly add water as you stir for another five minutes, then add okra, bay leaves, gumbo filé, Worcestershire sauce, celery salt, Old Bay spice, hot sauce, raw shrimp and seafood. Cook for 20 minutes, and serve in a bowl like a soup meets a stew! There you have it, right out of the Topographic Ocean! An authentic seafood gumbo from your pal Squids!

"There's a similar kind of creativity for me with cooking food and producing music. As a producer, I look at the ingredients, whether it's the particular players and their style or the sound of their instruments and how it blends with the rest of the song. I cooked for Nick Davis, producer/engineer for Genesis, Marillion and XTC, while he was mixing *Dimensionaut* for Sound Of Contact. I wanted to do something nice for him and all the assistant engineers. I thought I was going to be 'the coolest' for doing that until the assistant engineers told me that Alex Lifeson had just cooked lobster for them a week before!" **JK**

MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



...But seriously, Arya Goggin [inset] can't get enough of Phil Collins.

ARYA GOGGIN

Against all odds, Skindred's drummer gets turned on (again) by **Phil Collins**' masterful strokes.

"Growing up, my music taste was like osmosis from what my parents were listening to, which was Phil Collins' solo stuff. I got used to all the big hits and, for me, the drumming thing came from *In The Air Tonight*, an iconic moment in music that just happens to be on the drums.

I then worked backwards from the pop hits and started listening to Genesis. On *Selling England By The Pound* and *The Lamb Lies Down...* his drumming is incredible, with so many intricacies there. Those records were lauded at the time but unknown to kids like me in the 90s. At school, my friend's godfather was Tony Banks and our era was *We Can't Dance* – I remember him saying he'd seen them play Torquay on that tour. I started to get the Genesis live albums and would drum along to them all the time.

Ninety per cent of drummers are interchangeable, but you definitely know when Phil Collins is playing. He brings a bit of Motown to the sound – he's done it on all his solo records but it's there even in his early recordings with Genesis. There's a pulse going; his playing is danceable when he hits a groove and he's really musical, which is different to the two-and-four drummers, and especially myself! [Laughs] I wish I could be as creative as him.

Then there's his voice. It's incredibly difficult to be a good drummer, it's incredibly difficult to be a phenomenal singer and it's even rarer to put them together. I saw him last year at the Royal Albert Hall and he wasn't terribly well, but his voice was still fantastic.

It's the 'flats-in-Dagenham' stuff that will always get me, though. What makes a great drum solo is something that non-drummers can gravitate to. When you see someone air drumming and they're hitting in the right place, that's the mark of a great solo and Phil's the master! When Benji [Webbe, Skindred frontman] won't shut up on stage, I'll do 'the Phil' to move it along. The audience go wild, 'Phil, yeaaah!', so he's always with us in spirit!" **JK**

> **"You definitely know when Phil Collins is playing. He brings a bit of Motown to the sound."**

Big Tings is out now via Napalm. See www.skindred.net.

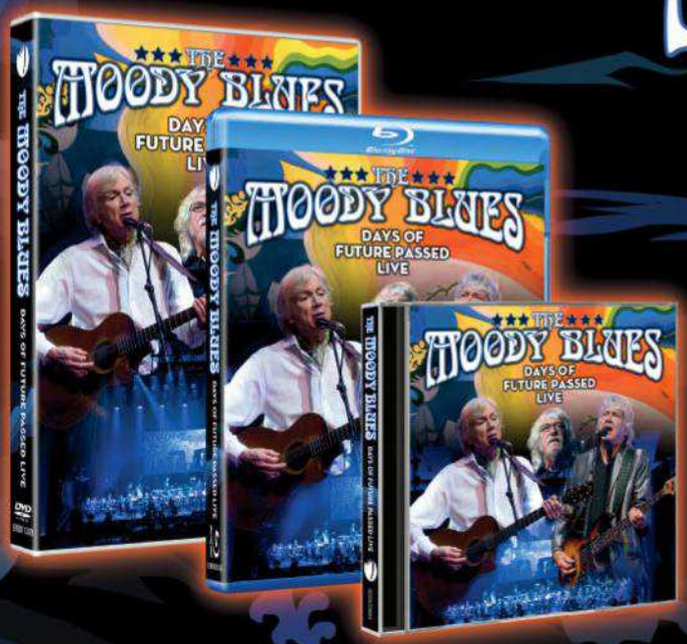
PROG IN BRIEF

Brian Eno's (right) *Music For Installations* is out via UMC on May 4. The six-CD box set – also available across nine LPs – includes some of Eno's previously unreleased sound installations from worldwide exhibitions.

The Moody Blues' **Justin Hayward** will be hosting the very first On The Blue Cruise next year. The five-night event sails from Miami on February 10, 2019 and will include live performances from Steve Hackett, Procol Harum and Alan Parsons.

THE MOODY BLUES

DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED LIVE



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and many others via Believe Digital

THE ONLY ONES

EVEN SERPENTS SHINE

(COLUMBIA, 1979)

There always was an other-worldly feel to The Only Ones. To some extent it emanated from vocalist Peter Perrett, a poet who sounded like he was from the same planet as Peter Hammill. That quality was also emphasised by John Perry's jarringly melodic, psychedelically dank guitar work.

The band will always be known for the influential power pop single *Another Girl, Another Planet*, and for that reason, their self-titled debut album from the previous year gets a lot of attention. But this follow-up is a lot more demanding, experimental and compulsive.

Imagine, if you can, XTC produced by Joe Meek while swimming in a swirl of Van der Graaf Generator's ideas and you're in the right dimension. This is so apparent on the downbeat haze of *Inbetweens*, which sounds like an out-of-body experience in a distended universe. Perrett's vocals are chilling, and in many respects he has much in common with Peter Gabriel – both use their voice to disorientate the listener. The same impression comes from *Out There In The Night* and *You've Got To Pay*; both cleverly play off a smooth tune against a skeletal rhythmic structure.

For this band, it's always a case of brevity serving its purpose; a track like *Curtains For You* says more in just over four minutes than others could manage in twice the length. This is because it has the capacity to load up numerous ideas and visions in a short musical exercise without ever being cluttered. This means each composition has to be played several times to really appreciate what's going on. There's no instantaneous gratification on here; even something as short as *Programme*, just over two minutes in length, can make the listener's head spin with Perrett's expression of multiple personalities through jagged harmonies.

The nearest the band get to a straightforward pop song is *Someone Who Cares*, which could have easily been a hit had it been released as a single. But even on here, the listener knows The Only Ones are leading them into a mental maze in which they have hidden some atonal trips.

Even Serpents Shine is a remarkably articulate album, recorded at a time when the whole idea of progressive music was anathema. But now it can be seen for what it is: a boldly dramatic artistic statement, deserving recognition alongside some of the more left field heroes of prog. After all, the album even ends with the four-minute *Instrumental*, a mostly instrumental piece that could have sat (un) comfortably on Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut*. You have been primed.

MALCOLM DOME

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

Rhy Dongju: the musician with a progressive Seoul.

LIONS'DEN

Say hello to **Rhy Dongju**, the guitarist who's going it alone to bring a touch of prog to South Korea.

It was destiny that Rhy Dongju would eventually become a musician. His mother was a piano teacher and she brought composers like Strauss and Rachmaninoff into the home and into her son's mind too.

The South Korean guitarist and self-proclaimed sound designer's solo project Lions'den takes a pinch of this classical influence but chucks in all sorts — including metal, prog and electronica — to form an intriguing cocktail that's one part Animals As Leaders and another part Skrillex on a Franz Liszt compilation. It all comes to the fore on his debut album *Songbird*, which adds a touch of native Korean and grabs inspiration from novels, movies and games.

"I composed music from age 15, but mostly my compositions were too manic and abstruse, so I didn't think such music could become popular," Dongju says. "So I decided to make some memorable melodies. When I started this project I wanted to make an oriental-flavoured heavy metal album. But while I worked, I entered the army. And after finishing my military service in 2017, I arranged it by adding some electronic elements."

Dongju is an anomaly in a country that is more known for flamboyant pop than experimental adventurism.

"The Korean music market is perhaps known around the world as electronic or dance music," Dongju reveals. "But if there are songs that are memorable enough, it can be very popular. For example, there is Cho Yong-pil who Koreans think is good enough to be considered one of the nation's representative artists. His music is quite experimental."

The musician is already thinking about his next sonic endeavour, which is likely to be an orchestral album. In the meantime, he'll continue to plug into South Korea's musical heritage. "I'm very influenced by traditional Korean music," he says. "Maybe it's because I have experience of playing traditional instruments? Korea is a country with many painful histories. It brings a deep feeling of sadness and humour. I can't express such emotion perfectly yet because I lack experience, but I keep trying and I want to feel deep emotional empathy with my listeners through it." **CC**

"Korea is a country with many painful histories."

For more, visit http://bit.ly/Lionsden.

PROG IN BRIEF

Esoteric are to release **Colosseum II**'s remastered *War Dance* on April 27. The band's final album originally came out in 1977 and features Jon Hiseman, Gary Moore and Don Airey. It's the first time it's been released on CD in the UK.

Hawkwind (left) have added another six UK dates to their sold-out orchestral tour. *In Search Of Utopia – Infinity And Beyond* will now stop at Leeds, Salford, Gateshead, Bath and Birmingham. An extra show has been added at the London Palladium on November 5.

BLANKET

Post-rockers taking inspiration from tragic events.

COMPRISED OF MEMBERS from several underground bands, such as Midas Fall, Goonies Never Say Die and Scouts, Blanket formed at least partly out of frustration, as the members in hindsight saw where former projects had failed.

"We've all been in lots of bands before and we know where we've gone wrong in the past," explains frontman Bobby Pook. "We didn't want to just record it all ourselves and release it on Bandcamp or whatever. We thought it was good enough to put some money into."

After writing for the first EP was underway, Steven Pellatt and Matt Sheldon were brought in on drums and bass respectively to round off the line-up of Pook and his housemate, guitarist Simon Morgan.

Despite signing to Sony's Music For Nations imprint to release their powerful and emotive debut LP, *How To Let Go*, Blanket have not had an easy ride. A dramatic formative influence on the band was Pook and Morgan's house burning down, and all their gear being lost as they didn't have contents insurance.

"We were halfway through writing the EP and I came home from doing gigs at the weekend," says Hook. "I lit a candle in the wrong place, it seemed, and it set fire to something and it all happened very quickly… I was in hospital for a couple of weeks."

This rebuilding of health and hope heavily influenced their debut mini-album, *Our Brief Encounters*, while *How To Let Go* has taken a much darker tack.

Their ethereal tunes were – at least until the fire – heavily influenced by the experience of writing in their conservatory, under the stars. It wasn't just the night sky that influenced them, however: their writing was framed by post-rock bands such as Explosions In The Sky and This Will Destroy You, songwriters such as Bon Iver, and heavier-hitting metallic acts such as Converge. "We try not to be a fully instrumental band," observes Pook. "I kind of think that we might as well use voices as an instrument."

How To Let Go tackles subjects like depression, man's insignificance in the face of the universe, and suicide: the latter chiefly due to the tragic loss of Pook's father as the album was being written. Despite this dark subject matter, Sheldon explains that the record is about liberation: "The name of the album is about letting go of the things that held us back creatively and realising how unimportant boundaries are, and how they're all self-imposed."

With all the band members having come together from previous projects, their persistence in having succeeded with this new project is astonishing. As for what they love about music, "I love how diverse it can be and how many different emotions it can bring out in you," begins Sheldon, before Pook adds: "I guess for music in particular, it's scientifically proven that certain changes in keys and volume and dynamics do affect the way you feel, so you can't really do that as much with visual stuff maybe." **AL**

"The name of the album is about letting go of the things that held us back creatively, and realising how unimportant boundaries are."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Bobby Pook *(guitar, vocals)*, **Simon Morgan** *(guitar, backing vocals)*, **Matthew Sheldon** *(bass)*, **Steven Pellatt** *(drums)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Hard-hitting shoegaze post-rock crossover

CURRENT RELEASE

How To Let Go is out in May via Music For Nations

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/blanketsounds

Blanket: finding light in the darkness.

GETTING YOUR WAY

Prog's News Editor asks if modern prog artists still need recording studios.

Time and time again, bands tell me that their latest album was recorded remotely. "We're spread out all over the place," they say. "It's so much easier!"

Long gone are the hefty advances and bottomless budgets that saw prog bands moving into studios for months, sometimes years, on end. These days, most prog albums are self-financed or crowd funded, so home studios and remote recording make sense both financially and geographically. And there are other advantages too. Remote recording offers the freedom to re-record sections without having to worry about cost or eye-rolling bandmates. In a genre where technical details play such an important role, such an approach provides progressive artists with the keys to perfection and the opportunity for some interesting collaborations.

Take for example Steve Hackett's *The Night Siren*. Getting musicians from Palestine, Israel, USA, Hungary, Iceland, Sweden, Azerbaijan and the UK together in one room at the same time would have been a logistical and financial nightmare, but with technical know-how, the album sounds as though they were.

It's not unusual for current prog artists to never meet their collaborators as their entire musical journey is mapped via broadband and file sharing software. Without modern technology many of our favourite contemporary albums simply couldn't have been created. But does this really mean commercial recording studios are surplus to progressive artists' requirements?

There's little doubt that the remote approach works best when you know your collaborators' strengths and can blend them coherently with your own. However, in the wrong hands, there's a risk that the results can sound fragmented or soulless.

Magenta's Rob Reed made a deliberate decision not to work remotely on his Kiama project in 2015. The four-piece decamped to Rockfield to record their debut and the result was palpable. Residential studios offer bands a different headspace that can provide the ingredients for unexpected magic. Admittedly, there's hard graft involved beforehand but there's something freeing about being in a dedicated space that fuels creativity, not to mention reduces the anxiety of your partner/child/pet walking in at that crucial moment.

Although studios such as The Manor in Oxfordshire and the original Britannia Row in north London are long gone, the likes of Real World and Abbey Road are still very much in demand, and new spaces are popping up all the time. The revival of vintage gear and a return to real instruments has also helped fuel demand; no matter how good modern samples are, nothing really beats the spontaneity or that hands-on feeling.

More and more modern prog bands are now compromising by splitting their time between home and commercial studios, with a final mix often being done in-house. Unless the way music is funded dramatically changes overnight, it's likely to stay that way.

NATASHA SCHARF

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

Southern Comforts: Prog'Sud president Eliane Armansa.

PROG'SUD

Eliane Armansa reveals the inspiration behind running an annual prog festival in the south of France.

The south of France has long been a top holiday destination, and for the last two decades, it's also been home to the region's premier prog festival, Prog'Sud.

"The event brings together a wide variety of fans of all ages who want to enjoy high quality music in a lively atmosphere," says president and coordinator Eliane Armansa, who's been involved since day one. "From the beginning, the aim has been to promote local prog bands, develop cultural exchanges and introduce talent to the public. For some of the bands, it's the first time they've played in France."

Prog'Sud has been held annually at Jas'Rod in Les Pennes-Mirabeau, near Marseille, since 2000, but the idea was hatched the previous year. That was when Armansa, who's a primary school teacher by day, helped local band Eclat organise a joint concert with Japan's Wappa Gapa at the same venue.

"Seeing so many enthusiastic progressive rock musicians in the audience made me want to organise a bigger prog party. So the idea of the festival was born that night and it began with the desire to share this music," reveals the King Crimson fan. With a little help from Eclat's Alain Chiarazzo, and lawyer Catherine Clavin, she's achieved just that.

> **"It made me want to organise a bigger prog party."**

Over the last 18 years, Prog'Sud have welcomed local and international acts to the stage. Performers ranging from Marillion's Steve Hogarth and Soft Machine Legacy, to IO Earth and Weend'ô have all taken part in the now three-day event, with fans travelling from around the globe to watch them.

"It's great that we've been able to help some groups pursue their dreams," says Armansa. "I feel a little like Lazuli's prog godmother. We first invited them to play Prog'Sud in 2005 and it was their first appearance at a progressive rock festival. Today, their success in the prog world is incredible. In 2011, we also gave the Cuba band Anima Mundi their first show in Europe."

This year's event takes place between May 10-12 and includes live performances from Lazuli, Franck Carducci, and Godsticks. But next year is the festival's 20th and Armansa promises it'll be "a big party. We really hope the adventure will carry on and that the public will continue to support the festival." **NRS**

See http://bit.ly/2FGM8IR.

PROG IN BRIEF

TESSERACT: STEVE BROWN/PRESS

TesseracT (right) have announced a European headline tour this November with support from Between The Buried And Me. UK dates are still to come. Meanwhile, they release new album *Sonder* on April 20 via Kscope.

Wire's reissues campaign via Pink Flag begins on Record Store Day (April 21) with the 7-inch box set *Nine Sevens*. Special editions of *Pink Flag*, *Chairs Missing*, and *154* will be out May 18, with vinyl and standard editions following on June 22.

Pendragon celebrate their 40th anniversary with three special extended shows in Europe this November. They'll perform at London's 229 (9), De Boerderij in the Netherlands (10) and at Z7 in Switzerland (11). Surprise guests are to be announced.

Valis Ablaze's debut *Boundless* is out via Long Branch on April 6. It follows on from last year's *Insularity* EP and recent support slots with SikTh and TesseracT. The Bristolian prog metallers will announce European shows soon.

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Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

March 2018

Compiled by Official Charts Company

1	**JETHRO TULL**	Heavy Horses *(RHINO)*
2	**RADIOHEAD**	OK Computer *(XL RECORDINGS)*
3	**TAME IMPALA**	Currents *(FICTION)*
4	**ROXY MUSIC**	Roxy Music *(VIRGIN)*
5	**JONATHAN WILSON**	Rare Birds *(BELLA UNION)*
6	**FIELD MUSIC**	Open Here *(MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES)*
7	**JEFF LYNNE'S ELO**	Wembley Or Bust *(RCA)*
8	**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**	Every Valley *(PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)*
9	**STEVE HACKETT**	Wuthering Nights – Live In Birmingham *(INSIDEOUT)*
10	**PAUL DRAPER**	Live At Scala *(KSCOPE)*
11	**MOGWAI**	Every Country's Sun *(ROCK ACTION)*
12	**DAVID GILMOUR**	Live At Pompeii *(COLUMBIA)*
13	**ROGER WATERS**	Is This The Life We Really Want? *(COLUMBIA)*
14	**MOODY BLUES**	Days Of Future Passed *(DECCA)*
15	**STEVEN WILSON**	To The Bone *(CAROLINE)*
16	**MASTODON**	Emperor Of Sand *(REPRISE)*
17	**RUSH**	A Farewell To Kings *(UMC/VIRGIN)*
18	**MARILLION**	Misplaced Childhood *(PARLOPHONE)*
19	**ORPHANED LAND**	Unsung Prophets And Dead Messiahs *(CENTURY MEDIA)*
20	**JANE WEAVER**	Modern Kosmology *(FIRE)*
21	**TANGERINE DREAM**	Quantum Gate *(KSCOPE)*
22	**NEAL MORSE**	Life And Times *(METAL BLADE)*
23	**JOHN MARTYN**	Head And Heart – The Acoustic *(ISLAND/UMC)*
24	**BJORN RIIS**	Coming Home *(KARISMA)*
25	**MIKE & THE MECHANICS**	Let Me Fly *(BMG)*
26	**OCEANS OF SLUMBER**	The Banished Heart *(CENTURY MEDIA)*
27	**ANATHEMA**	The Optimist *(KSCOPE)*
28	**GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR**	Luciferian Towers *(CONSTELLATION)*
29	**ALAN PARSONS PROJECT**	Eye In The Sky *(ARISTA)*
30	**JETHRO TULL**	Songs From The Wood *(RHINO)*

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

WIN! A CHRIS SQUIRE *FISH OUT OF WATER* BOX SET!

Esoteric Recordings are releasing an official limited edition deluxe box set of Yes founder Chris Squire's legendary 1975 solo debut *Fish Out Of Water* on April 27, and we have one to give away.

The highlight of this set is a stunning new 5.1 surround sound mix (exclusive to this set on an NTSC/region-free DVD). There's also a new stereo mix taken from the original multitrack master tapes by Jakko Jakszyk, and a new remaster of the original 1975 mix by Paschal Byrne. *Fish Out Of Water* also includes four bonus tracks of the single edits of *Lucky Seven* and *Silently Falling*, along with both sides of the 1981 single by Chris Squire and Alan White, *Run With The Fox* and *Return Of The Fox*, which are appearing on CD for the first time.

The box set also includes a replica 180-gram gatefold LP with a poster of *Fish Out Of Water* (mastered and cut from the original tapes at Abbey Road Studios), along with two seven-inch singles of *Lucky Seven/Silently Falling* and *Run With The Fox/Return Of The Fox*, both in picture sleeves. There's a DVD featuring the 1975 *Fish Out Of Water* promotional film featuring the songs *Hold Out Your Hand* and *You By My Side*, along with a 2006 interview with Chris Squire, and a 2006 audio commentary by the bassist. Finally, the set contains a 36-page book with an essay by Sid Smith, featuring exclusive interviews with Bill Bruford, Patrick Moraz, Gregg Jackman and Jakko Jakszyk.

You can read our review of the box set on page 111 of this issue.

For your chance to win, answer the following question:

In what month was *Fish Out Of Water* released?

a) September

b) October

c) November

To enter, please email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject header 'Squire Comp'.

See www.chrissquire.com and www.cherryred.co.uk for more information.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from April 5 to May 10. Postal entries can be sent to: *Prog*, Future Publishing, 1-10 Praed Mews, London W2 1QY. By entering online you agree to our competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing and carefully selected third parties. The winner will be drawn at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition.

Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing

KLAUS SHULZE

Silhouettes
OBLIVION/SPV

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother

THE FIERCE & THE DEAD

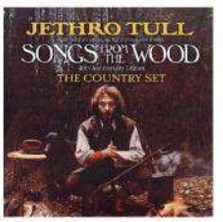
The Euphoric
BAD ELEPHANT

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy

IHSAHN

Àmr
CANDLELIGHT/SPINEFARM

The Musician
Troy Donockley



JETHRO TULL

Songs From The Wood (Remastered)
PARLOPHONE

The Writer
Sophie Maughan

OCEANS OF SLUMBER

The Banished Heart
CENTURY MEDIA

The Reader
Chris Parkin

SOMALI YACHT CLUB

The Sub
ROBUSTFELLOW

The Z's Zoot: helping to make music that challenges convention.

THE Z

Generation Z prog duo unleash widescreen, distant future sci-fi concept.

LONDON AND ROME-BASED duo The Z (pronounced The Zee) are continuing prog's lifelong stance against corporate pop and its love of concept albums concerned with struggling in a distant sci-fi future on their ambitious debut album, *People Of The Mirror World*.

Singer Zoot's force-10 vocals recall the operatic psych of Grace Slick colliding with Nico, and they get Shocking Blue camp and stroke deeper erogenous zones on subterranean forbidden love song *Laser Love*. Meanwhile, Sebastian Wilde's electric music for the mind and body charges *Magic Ship* and *Heaven Is A Melody* with panoramic influences including West Coast psych, early Brit prog, sci-fi elements and even Glitter Band drumming.

Although the reclusive Zoot shuns interviews, Wilde carries the fevered passion of the prog evangelist as he declares: "The Z operate outside conventional space and time, and are bringing mischief and magic to rock'n'roll."

He explains how he clicked with Zoot through the internet, and the pair collaborated by sending files between London and Rome to create this album.

"We see our music as progressive pop," Wilde explains. "Elvis, The Beatles, Hendrix, The Doors… every great group challenges convention and enters the mainstream by stealth. Our debut is a concept album set in 2518: civilisation has lost purpose. The people are enslaved by handheld digital devices and listen to corporate pop fed to them by a cynical establishment. A group of radicals — the People Of The Mirror World — who still believe in rock'n'roll, poetry and art, plot the overthrow of this technological tyranny.

"In the glorious tradition of progressive rock, all the songs are part of the overarching concept," he continues. "It begins with a cry of frustration at the state of the planet in *Save Me*. It's an insane planet where 24-hour news feeds promote, as Zoot sings, *'Rape and war/greed, corruption.'* When Zoot hears about an underground group who meet in secret, she visits their club, The Mirror World. Here, in a candlelit cellar club, people wear 'Z' symbols on black roll-necks, smoke French Gitanes, drink red wine and discuss Byron, Shelley, the beat poets and Charles Bukowski — practically all books were destroyed in public riots following the Global Web Crash of 2330. They listen to The Doors and Jefferson Airplane on ancient vinyl passed down secretly through the generations; a more primal form of sound, unheard for hundreds of years."

People Of The Mirror World was mostly recorded in a home studio close to Aleister Crowley's old haunts in Hastings. Zoot recorded vocals in her Rome studio and the album was mixed by Brian O'Shaughnessy (of Primal Scream's *Loaded* fame) at his Walthamstow studio.

The last word has to go to Wilde: "We make music to make love to. We exist to promote peace, love and positivity. The Z have superpowers. We don't want to change the world. We want to start a new one — The Mirror World! The Z aren't world-famous yet, but we are intergalactically famous!"

What's next?

"Intergalactic domination. Followed by a nice cup of tea." **KN**

"We operate outside conventional space and time, and are bringing mischief and magic to rock'n'roll."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Zoot *(vocals)*, **Sebastian Wilde** *(all instruments)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A mix of Jefferson Airplane and Starship, Blues Pills, United States Of America, Todd Rundgren's Utopia and stadium prog

CURRENT RELEASE

People Of The Mirror World is available now via Detour

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/thezeemusic

Sonar, L-R: David Torn, Manuel Pasquinelli, Bernhard Wagner, Stephan Thelen, Christian Kuntner.

PHOTO: LEAH BROWN

SONAR

Instrumental Swiss quartet embrace change with new honorary member.

"HAD MC ESCHER made music instead of drawing impossible and perplexing perspectives, it would sound like Sonar," is how *Prog* assessed the Swiss-based quartet's 2014 album, *Static Motion*. It remains an apt description for the guitar-based outfit's way of creating hypnotic pieces though gradually building picked notes, plucked harmonics, mesmeric bass and terse rhythms.

While their dogged pointillism produced startling results, guitarist and principal composer Stephan Thelen observes there was a sense that an element was absent in their tightly arranged clusters of sound. After releasing 2015's acclaimed *Black Light*, it was definitely time for a change.

"I think that album pretty much summed up what we could do as a quartet," Thelen says. "People liked what we were doing in concert but sometimes I'd hear a comment that listeners were missing a lead voice or melody playing over what we were doing."

The solution was found when the band asked American guitarist David Torn to produce 2018's *Vortex*. Torn's reputation as a wild-card instrumentalist has seen him work with an impressively wide array of diverse artists that includes David Bowie, Laurie Anderson, Bill Bruford, David Sylvian, Tori Amos, Mick Karn, Madonna, Jeff Beck and Jan Garbarek, among others. In addition to his background in composing for film and TV, Torn's work as a producer prompted Thelen to contact the in-demand ECM label recording artist in his upstate New York base.

> **"Sonar is not only a band that can operate as a quartet, it's also a kind of rhythm section for any number of soloists."**

"David is somebody I have known all my life through his music and really admire his work," Thelen says. "So to get him over to work with us in Switzerland as a producer was really exciting. The others didn't really know his work so had no idea what would happen in the studio with him, but it turned out to be so great. I asked David to bring his guitar over, thinking that he might play on something, but when he played one piece, everyone said he had to play on every track! It went so well and the vibe was so good in the studio for everybody."

Torn's fluid improvisations over Sonar's tight clusters of sound added yet more depth. "David's layers on top of our music are what we didn't have before and what some felt we were missing, completely changing the way we play."

Thelen's horizons have also expanded to writing for other ensembles. Having written arrangements of King Crimson tunes for string quartets as a teenager, he describes being asked to compose for the world-renowned contemporary classical music outfit The Kronos Quartet as an honour and an amazing experience. Sonar, however, remains his main focus, and with live dates with David Torn planned, Thelen says he's already thinking about their next album.

"We've decided we're going to play with other people," he says. "Sonar is not only a band that can operate as a quartet, it's also a kind of rhythm section for any number of soloists. That's a potential we want to explore in the future." **SS**

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Stephan Thelen *(guitar)*, **Bernhard Wagner** *(guitar)*, **Christian Kuntner** *(bass)*, **Manuel Pasquinelli** *(drums)*, **David Torn** *(guitar, live-looping)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Instrumental minimalist pointillism combined with icy ambience, driving zen grooves and precipitous velocity

CURRENT RELEASE

Vortex is out now via RareNoise Records

WEBSITE

www.sonar-band.ch

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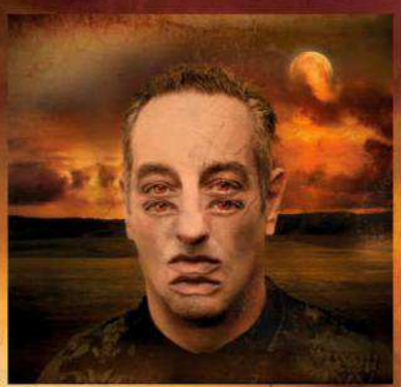

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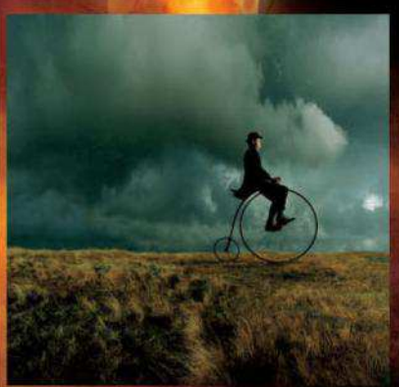

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My Record Collection

STEVE MASCORD

The Australian music writer turned rugby league pundit reveals a search for identity through hard rock and heavy prog.

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

"Music forms a huge part of an identity and that's a lifelong search for me. My biological family came to Australia from the UK and my mother had mental issues so I was taken away from her when I was three months old and given to a family in Wollongong, a steel town south of Sydney. It's one of the better-looking steel towns in the world, and from your front yard you could always see a giant smokestack. I grew up loving metal and it's no wonder — metal was in me. So much so that at school we'd have our blood tested regularly to check for industrial toxins.

My early musical taste was Elvis and The Partridge Family and my first kind of rebellion was Kiss. Then I moved to Van Halen and AC/DC. But the first proggy band for me was **Iron Maiden**. *The Number Of The Beast* was a big record that everyone talked about in school, but for prog, it's got to be *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*. Out of all the metal bands, Maiden are especially proggy as they're about morality tales, allegories and fantasy. Then you have the long compositions, suites and operatic vocals.

This primed me for **Queensrÿche**'s *Operation: Mindcrime*. Conceptual, and written as a modern metal rock opera, I'm so familiar with that record that when I hear the opening chords of *Breaking The Silence*, I subconsciously prepare myself for the emotional roller coaster that follows with *I Don't Believe In Love* and *Eyes Of A Stranger*. In my opinion, that's the best three back-to-back songs in rock, let alone prog. Queensrÿche are prog because of the combination of abstract themes with virtuoso-level playing.

"Kiss' *The Elder* was a pure fantasy world - my friends would argue that I already lived there."

My first **Kiss** album was *Dynasty*, which I got for Christmas in 1979. As a collector — or a nerd — instead of buying *Destroyer* or *Alive!* next, I started at the beginning with the first Kiss album. Then I came to *Music From "The Elder"*, an orchestral fantasy tale about this Messiah-type who is trying to save humanity. For a kid in the suburbs looking for an identity, lyrics to songs such as *I* were very empowering. I liked Kiss anyway, but the weirder and less popular they got, the more I liked them. It was a pure fantasy world. Some of my friends would argue that I already lived there.

King's X came along when I was 18 and writing a music column in Sydney's free paper, *On The Street*. I started to get free records and this was one of them. Even by the title *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska*, you could tell this wasn't a metal record like [Poison's] *Look What The Cat Dragged In*. It was really different and I liked it, like a psychedelic grunge Alice In Chains. I like the guitar tone, the introspection — it creates a vibe that's intellectual. Prog fans might accept *Gretchen...* a little more than *..."The Elder"* but there are more prog moments on *..."The Elder"*, with these long songs and a vibe that's like Homer's *Iliad*. *Gretchen...* is probably more for Rush fans.

My entry point to **W.A.S.P.** had been songs like *Blind In Texas* and *Fuck Like A Beast*. I got *The Crimson Idol* as a CD for review. I like the abrasive quality of W.A.S.P. but Blackie Lawless has this plaintive quality to his singing — it's the way his voice trails off as he's holding a note. That delivery lends itself to a rock opera. *The Crimson Idol*'s concept is like the video for Tom Petty's *Into The Great Wide Open*, where a guy turns up from the sticks and makes it as a rock star. It attempts to highlight the shallowness of that world and how it destroys people. I like the story, and its ambition.

I found **Magnum** through the wonders of the music press. They had no profile at home — look at their covers! Is there a less Australian band? I read about them in *Kerrang!* and then went to Brashs music store in Sydney and in a listening station I put *Wings Of Heaven* on and thought it was fantastic. *On A Storyteller's Night* is their best known prog album, but *Wings...* also has things that you might ascribe to prog music, in sound, content and structure. *Don't Wake The Lion (Too Old To Die Young)* is all about World War I — I get goosebumps listening to it. I saw Magnum about five years ago in Manchester. What struck me was the sense of community around them — it was more like being at a *Star Wars* fan club show than a rock gig.

In The Spirit Of Things by **Kansas** arrived on my desk one day. Looking at the cover I was reminded of *The Wizard Of Oz*, and the theme of it is a little like that story reimagined. The guy's a travelling shyster, ripping people off and leaving before he gets caught. He hits a drought-stricken town and tells the village he can make rain — and does, but then finds he's messing with the supernatural. The prog vibe here is the narrative and the philosophy. You can grasp the character's uncertainty and horror.

One night I went out in London as a new, young writer for *Kerrang!*. I was sitting in the stairwell of the old Marquee and someone came by with a flyer for **Dream Theater**. I remember looking at the artwork and thinking, 'I could never possibly understand this!' It was impenetrable. Then I was sent *Images And Words* and there was everything on it I liked about rock music, embellished in really interesting ways.

Savatage's *Edge Of Thorns* came along around the same time and impressed me for the same reasons: virtuoso playing, but with catchy choruses, and both bands have great imagery. As a primarily hard rock and commercial metal fan, they tick all my boxes and reference points, but give me something new to chew on.

So we've got prog as 70s glam, prog as 80s hair metal, prog as 80s art rock, prog as 90s metal. Now we hit prog as 90s grunge with **Tool** and *Ænima*. This is angst writ large. To me, they're the heaviest band on my list — the songs sound like they were written by someone in solitary confinement. It was challenging to listen to at first for someone like me who liked Poison, and I remember interviewing Maynard James Keenan for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and I was out of my depth. Australian prog now seems to have Tool as a jumping-off point. They were enormously popular, and I remember seeing them play to a packed house in Sydney Entertainment Centre. This is how music works in Australia: if people put their drinks down and stop fighting then you're getting somewhere. Tool did that!

Listening to these choices has redefined the boundaries in my head. The music I was into formed my identity without me knowing it was happening. Now I listen back, I can almost re-categorise my identity. You see yourself as being 'that guy', but all the way along you're a bit of that other guy too..."

Steve's book, Touchstones: Rugby League, Rock'N'Roll, The Road And Me is out now. See www.stevemascord.com for more information.

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Q&A

JOHN PAYNE

The singer takes *Prog* on a journey through his career in music, from Asia to the Orient via Las Vegas, reveals how Jeff Wayne inspired him to create a musical, and why his new show features a full English pub on stage.

Words: Phil Ashcroft **Image:** Alyssa Nance

Starting his recording career as a backing vocalist on Roger Daltrey's 80s albums, Londoner John Payne became better known as the singer and bassist who enabled Geoff Downes to extend the life of Asia throughout the 90s and beyond. When a reunion of the original Asia members brought his tenure to a close, he formed his own touring version of the band, as well as the short-lived GPS for an album and tour. Payne also used his flirtation with musical theatre in Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds* as the inspiration for the successful Las Vegas show *Raiding The Rock Vault*. During a break in rehearsals for his occasional touring show *The Rock Pack*, Payne explains the history of the newly released album by another band he fronts: Dukes Of The Orient.

The Dukes Of The Orient record has been a long time coming, hasn't it?
Yes it has. Erik Norlander [keys] and I have been working on and off for many years — it's the most work I've ever put into a release. Most of the recording was done a few years ago and it was originally meant to be an Asia Featuring John Payne album, but it was taking a long time so Guthrie Govan [guitar] went off to do his own thing. I'd had the idea of doing a show in Vegas and started putting the band together for that and put the album on the back-burner. I'd also been rebuilding my studio and collecting some really cool analogue equipment. I still use Pro Tools for recording and editing, but I run everything through an analogue desk.

"Having musicians that are technically great gives you the opportunity to push the envelope a little bit."

Why release it under a new band name and not Asia Featuring John Payne, or even GPS, seeing as that band's Guthrie Govan and Jay Schellen [drums] are both involved?
John Wetton had died by the time we got around to finishing the album so we agreed with the label to call it something else — we weren't comfortable using the Asia name so soon after his death, especially as the original Asia are on the same label. It was just coincidence that we finished the album around the same time. GPS, on the other hand, recorded for another label, and Erik is a major part of the music now. Plus I don't really think there was any clamour for a new GPS album.

What does Erik Norlander bring to the project?
Erik has a lot of authentic classic keyboards: Moogs and Oberheims and Mellotrons and stuff, so it's his love of British prog and my love of American AOR that gives us our sound. We're both pulling in different ways but towards something that appeals to us both, and his knack of arranging and adding great keyboard parts is vital to how the album came out.

Why does mixing prog with AOR appeal to you so much?
It's something I've always loved. It's great to have these grandiose themes, but without hooks it doesn't really appeal to me as much. The original Asia always had a bit of that. Having musicians that are technically great gives you the opportunity to push the envelope a little bit. Learning all these classic AOR songs for the *Rock Pack* shows has given me a fresh appreciation of the craft of songwriting that guys like Boston, Foreigner and Journey all had. Plus their superb instrumental skills were often overlooked...

Do you think mixing the two very different styles could hold you back?
I suppose a few purists of each style might not like the other, but on the whole, I think genuine music listeners are more broad-minded. The whole prog scene is based on openness to new ideas, and who doesn't love a big chorus? [Laughs]

Do you have any plans for touring, and for more Dukes Of The Orient albums?
Obviously touring will depend on the demand for it. We had a decent following for the Asia Featuring John Payne shows we did and hopefully, here in the States at least, those people will become Dukes Of The Orient fans too. We aim to be playing in the UK and Europe soon, but that'll depend on promoters. We intend to have the next album out sometime next year and have already started working on it.

How did you get involved with *Raiding The Rock Vault*? It's been running for a few years in Vegas now, hasn't it?
I was heavily involved at the start as a co-writer and co-producer. I brought in guys like Howard Leese from Heart, Paul Rodgers, and Doug Aldrich from Whitesnake, and basically I put the whole musical side of the show together. It went down better than anyone expected, but after a couple of years I got bored playing the same classic rock standards every night and wanted to change things around. Unfortunately, other people didn't agree and that was that.

For a while it was cool to be going home every night and it was the Vegas crowd that was on tour and not us. Soundchecks were easy because the equipment wasn't taken down and the mixer settings stayed the same, but it still doesn't come close to playing music that you've written yourself.

Tell us about *The Rock Pack*.
As much as I grew tired of playing the same songs every night in *Raiding The Rock Vault*, I had this idea to bring in singers from popular US rock bands and put a touring theatre show around that. We play the hits and I have an English pub set up on stage where we go for a chat about their careers. It's a fun thing to learn all these great songs and play with people like Robin Zander from Cheap Trick, Mickey Thomas from Starship and Fee Waybill from The Tubes.

This weekend I have Kelly Keagy from Night Ranger, Lou Gramm from Foreigner and Steve Augeri from Journey coming to my house to rehearse. I've never played with Kelly before but I'm really looking forward to playing *Sister Christian* and *Don't Tell Me You Love Me*.

See www.dukesoftheorient.com and www.therockpack.com for more information on John Payne's current projects.

Dukes Of The Orient, L-R: John Payne, Erik Norlander.

"So Sweet... So Beautiful..."

Between 1975 and 1976, the five members of Yes took some time out from the band to focus on solo endeavours. One of the results was the late **Chris Squire**'s remarkable *Fish Out Of Water*. It's being released as part of a deluxe box set later this month, and to celebrate the creation of the original album, we speak to the men who were there.

Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Clive Arrowsmith/Camera Press

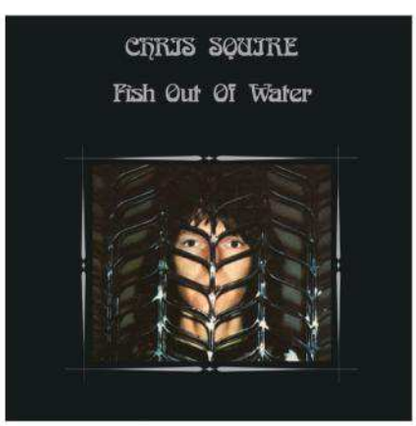
Chris Squire is checking the time and he's smiling. It's long gone midnight, deep within St Paul's Cathedral, where he's watching recording engineer Gregg Jackman and a couple of assistants placing microphones and checking levels.

Advising them as to the best spots within the vast, resonant building is Barry Rose, the newly appointed sub-organist who is about to play the third largest pipe organ in Europe. Joining Rose at the keyboard, Andrew Pryce Jackman, Gregg's brother, goes over the details of the score he's written as Rose adjusts his headphones.

Looking upon this nocturnal activity, Squire recalls when he and the Jackman brothers were choristers at St Andrew's Church in Kingsbury. They had been under the direction of Barry Rose, then their energetic choirmaster, and had even performed in this very building. Now, in the early hours of a summer morning in 1975, here they all are once again, old friends reunited in the making of Chris' first solo album. This feels special.

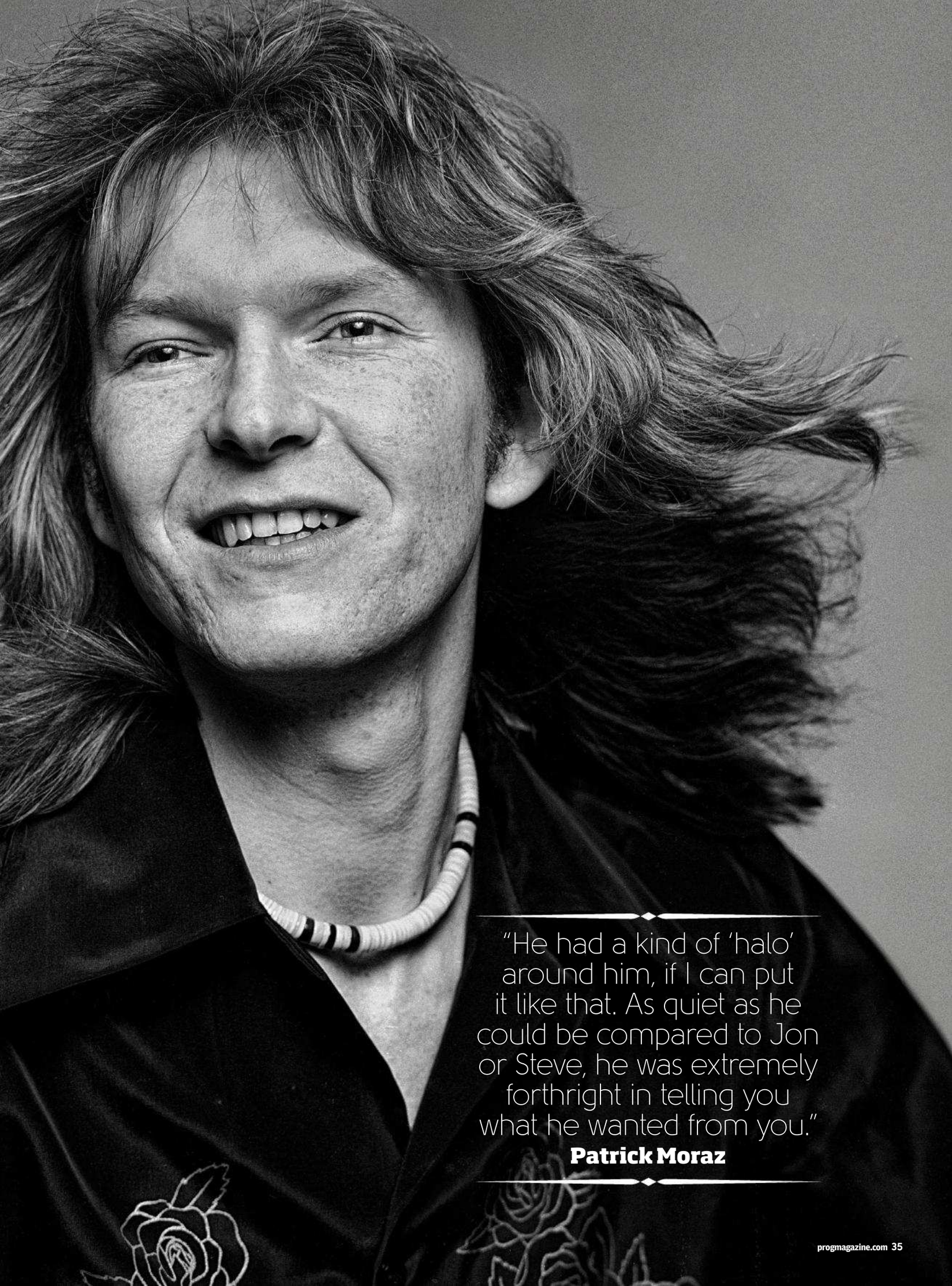
Nervous smiles, a burst of laughter and a last-minute cough. A final tweak on the four-track recorder. Glancing back and forth, nods of the head exchanged. Now, everything goes quiet. There's a count in and the backing track of *Hold Out Your Hand* fills the headphones and Barry Rose begins to play the notes before him. Squire suppresses a deep chuckle of delight as the jubilant ascending chords fill the air of this cavernous, sacred space.

Fishing For Bass: Chris Squire's *Fish Out Of Water*.



It's a spine-tingling moment. In his head, he sings, the lyrics especially apt: *'You can feel it coming/ With the morning light/And you know the feeling's/Gonna make you feel all right.'* As the rhapsodic arpeggios and lines ripple and reverberate out from the pipes around the building, the boy who grew up in Salmon Street, known to his bandmates and millions of fans around the world as The Fish, is in his element and smiling.

It's sometimes easy to forget the velocity at which Yes travelled in the early 1970s. A dizzying schedule of increasingly larger tours with more prestigious venues followed each newly released album. Despite being locked into this apparently never-ending treadmill, the creative bar was incrementally raised between



"He had a kind of 'halo' around him, if I can put it like that. As quiet as he could be compared to Jon or Steve, he was extremely forthright in telling you what he wanted from you."

Patrick Moraz

Tools Of The Trade: Chris Squire with his instruments of mass seduction, 1974.

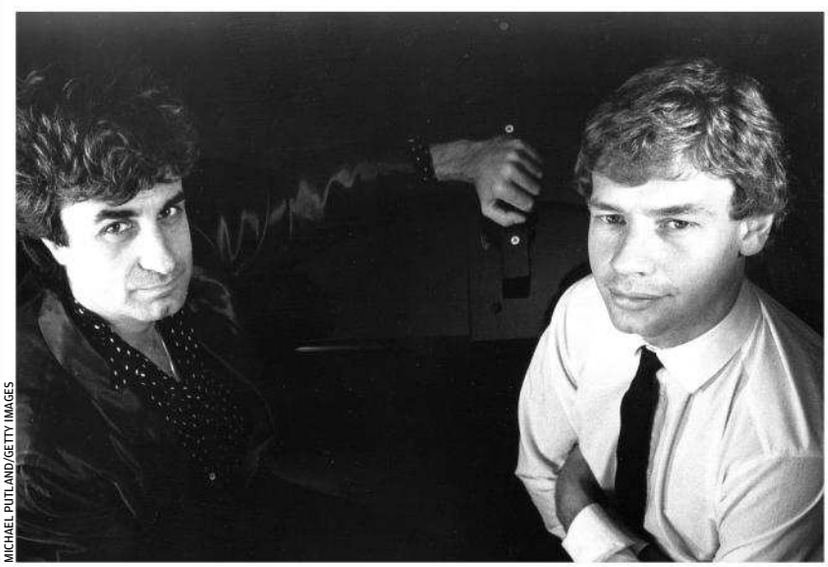
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

1971's *The Yes Album* through to 1974's *Relayer*. Even allowing for the critical backlash and controversy surrounding 1973's *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, Yes maintained their reputation as the most innovative and ambitious band of their generation.

In this context, the novel idea that all five members of the group would take time out to record separate solo albums, which would then be released over the course of a year, could be viewed as either audacious or the hubris of over-inflated ego. Executives at Atlantic Records were underwhelmed, worrying, perhaps understandably given the volatile nature of the line-up, that Yes were in danger of diluting what was a highly successful formula.

For Chris Squire, the trappings of that success provided him with New Pipers in 1972, a sprawling mansion at Virginia Water in Surrey, and later, like any self-respecting member of rock's aristocracy, the installation of a bespoke recording studio in the basement. It was here, between tours with Yes, that *Fish Out Of Water* slowly took shape.

It might have been assumed that any Squire solo album would be an elaborate showcase for his bass playing, using *The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus)* from *Fragile* as a template. Yet the core of the album was composed at the piano, in the company of his old friend and former bandmate in The Syn, Andrew Pryce Jackman.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes Men, L-R: Patrick Moraz, Bill Bruford.

If Yes releasing solo albums represented a kind of safety valve through which the band could let off individual steam, for Squire it was also a means to renew and reconnect the creative bonds in a project that brought out the best in each other. The intention was to build something grand and epic in scope, and Andrew Pryce Jackman's skill as an orchestral arranger meant that whatever Squire conceived, his old friend was the man who could make the vision a reality.

Andrew's brother, Gregg, engineered the sessions between his duties at Morgan Studios and remembers being called to work on the album after Eddy Offord became unavailable.

"I think I was 21 years old and really not experienced enough to be doing this record, but the young have a brave heart, so I gave it my best shot. Andrew and Chris always seemed to have faith in me," he says.

The young engineer also recalls that the sessions weren't held at regular hours. "Chris was the only bloke I ever knew who could be late in his own house. I would turn up with Andrew at maybe midday and we'd find things to do until Chris decided to get into the studio. This might be as late as seven in the evening."

Working on the album was Bill Bruford, who'd quit Yes for King Crimson in 1972. Following Robert Fripp's unilateral decision to disband the group in 1974, he'd been enjoying life as a peripatetic drummer.

Bruford was delighted to be hired by his old bandmate. "Chris was really my first bass player, as it were," he says. "So I didn't really know what bass players did or what they might want to do. I didn't think it weird at all that he seemed to be adopting a rather plectrumy, trebly sound on his bass, and that he wanted it to be as predominant as a guitar part. He became very good at counterpoint so the bass parts had a life of their own. They were something you could sing or hum along to in their own right.

"You're supposed to have this empathetic relationship with the bass player but that's a very old fashioned idea that comes along really with words like 'gig', 'pad', 'charts' and 'rhythm section'. I'm not sure I ever thought I was in a rhythm section much, and I don't think Chris did either."

Bruford's part in the recording began at the end of February 1975, extended through 13 sessions in March and then a final four dates in early April. He recalls that the material at that stage was very malleable. "It was just like a Yes record. There weren't any bits of paper. Chris played me a bit of a song and I said, 'Well, I could do this,' the usual kind of thing. We only knew one way of working together. Andrew was effectively the musical director and he would have been noting bits down because he knew he was going to have to orchestrate it all later. So we did have a real musician present, thank God!"

Another visitor to New Pipers was keyboardist Patrick Moraz, who drove in from the rat-plagued basement

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Squire, 1974: redefining the bass on his solo album.

"Those were really pioneering days – none of us knew exactly what we were doing."

Chris Squire

flat that he still rented in Earl's Court, just as he had done during the making of *Relayer*. Squire had a certain presence, says Moraz.

"He had a kind of 'halo' around him, if I can put it like that. As quiet as he could be compared to Jon or Steve, he was extremely forthright in telling you what he wanted from you. His instructions could be extremely meticulous in terms of the arrangement, the sound, the balance and so on."

Moraz's incendiary Hammond solo on *Silently Falling* was judged by Squire to be "one of the best I've heard", and, like his idea to play Minimoog bass, was ample proof of Moraz's inspired contributions to the process. However, as proud as he is about his work on the record, Moraz has one regret – that the album didn't lead on to a further collaboration. "There was an inspirational empathy between Bill, Chris and myself, you know?"

Although Moraz and Bruford would later work together, touring and producing two albums together in the 80s, it's obvious that Moraz sees a follow-up album as 'the project that got away'. "If only we had been able to do a trio album, just the three of us. Man, it could have been absolutely unbelievable. Unbelievable!"

While on tour, the members of Yes would play each other their individual works in progress. This had a galvanising effect, according to Moraz, who also worked on Steve Howe's *Beginnings*. "What Chris did was create a kind of momentum and set the bar for each of us to come up with a solo album that was as good as his."

From the exuberant St Paul's Cathedral organ lines of *Hold Out Your Hand*, the pastoral interludes within *You By My Side*, the driving rock that merges into a Beatlesesque coda on *Silently Falling*, *Lucky Seven*'s jazzy undertow and the surging romanticism of *Safe (Canon Song)*, with its orchestral splendour and spectral phase-shifted comedown, the range and reach of *Fish Out Of Water* is impressive.

Coming out at a time when extended musicality was an integral part of the progressive rock landscape, it's an album that not only holds its own next to any albums by Yes' contemporaries, but also, whisper it, towers above the other solo releases of his bandmates.

Released a month after Howe's solo album in November 1975, *Fish Out Of Water* found its way into the charts on both sides of the Atlantic. While Squire's virtuosic playing is clearly evident, it's serving the needs of the song rather than placed centre stage.

The stained glass fish from the back sleeve of the album.

"If you listen to what he plays there are so many voicings, so many different styles and sounds and production ideas going on."

Nick Beggs

The *Fish Out Of Water* inlay, a reworking of the album's cover art.

"Those were really pioneering days – none of us knew exactly what we were doing," Squire remarked in 2007.

Hearing the notes leap from the pages of Pryce Jackman's notation and into the air was a revelation for Squire, as he watched his friend conducting the orchestra at Morgan Studios in one three-hour session.

"Being able to write it down on the manuscript and just know what it sounded like by looking at it was amazing," Squire said of Pryce Jackman's work. "Although later I met people who could do this, Trevor Rabin being one of them, Andrew was the guy I grew up with and I thought, 'God, it's amazing he can actually do this!'"

Perhaps not surprisingly given their close working relationship, Squire offered Pryce Jackman co-writing credits for the record, though this was politely declined.

"Andrew never promoted himself and you'd never see articles in the press about him," says Steve Nardelli, vocalist with The Syn. "Andrew was very modest and so he wouldn't have minded about getting credit. He was really pleased with the outcome. I know the sessions were tortuously slow sometimes but that's because they were striving for perfection. But it was worth it. I think it's one of the greatest albums ever made."

Brimming with a confidence that comes from being at the very top of his game, the blending of pop, classical and rock music into one coherent, thematic statement remains a considerable achievement, and one which Squire was immensely proud of. There was talk of a follow-up, though the endless touring cycle and increasingly internecine politics within Yes meant Squire's priorities lay elsewhere.

The death of Andrew Pryce Jackman in 2003 robbed Squire of a dear friend, and the opportunity to create something with similar aspirations. Perhaps the fact that *Fish Out Of Water* is a one-off, something Squire was never able to return to, is the very thing that gives the album its remarkable presence and power.

Chris Squire: Fish Out Of Water limited edition box set is out on April 27 via Esoteric. See www.cherryred.co.uk and www.chrissquire.com for details.

YOU BY MY SIDE

Nick Beggs, bassist with Steven Wilson, talks about the impact Chris Squire had upon his playing and reflects on his love for *Fish Out Of Water* and the man he called his friend.

"I was influenced by many players from the 70s but Chris Squire was the number one geezer as far as I was concerned. He was where I saw my sound and where I wanted to go musically. I was aware of *Fish Out Of Water* when it first came out but I didn't get a chance to hear it until sometime around 2005. I took it around on tour with me, listening to it almost like a piece of homework because I felt like it was one of those things that I had to get into. Hearing it initially, like most really good records, I knew it was going to take a bit of listening because it was quite dense. When I delved into it and got into the orchestration, to the production and the playing, I realised that it was such a rich construction.

"Chris is a symphonic bass player. If you listen to what he plays, there are so many voicings, so many different styles and sounds and production ideas going on. Apart from Chris' full palette of bass sounds, Andrew Pryce Jackman's arrangements and orchestrations make it so sweet and so beautiful.

"From a writing point of view, it fits into the progressive genre. There's a lot of extemporisation, long-form ideas in keeping with the progressive idiom. With my 'pop music' head on, an album should be 10 songs, but that was never the way with progressive musicians. They always extemporised everything and that's what this record has. It takes a few really great ideas and really extrapolates them to something else, which again is why I loved Yes so much.

Nick Beggs: following in Squire's footsteps.

HAJO MUELLER

"All the tracks from *Fish Out Of Water* have something amazing about them but if I had to pick one moment, I think I'd go for the beginning of *Silently Falling*, with Jimmy Hastings' flute. It's almost like drinking a fine Scotch whisky and then adding a little spring water to it: the bouquet completely opens up. You feel that you've got inside the head of the artist. It's one of my favourite records. Absolutely amazing.

"I was very fortunate to get to know Chris and hung out with him a lot. We'd hook up whenever the opportunity arose. I tried to go and see him when he was in the hospital in Phoenix and called his wife, Scottie, a couple of weeks before he died, offering to bring him some grapes and plump up his pillows for him, which I think made him laugh.

"I had a very good measure of what sort of person he was. He was a man who'd had extraordinary success all his professional life. I think if you have that kind of existence, it magnifies everything about you, good and bad. You don't necessarily have the ability to see how you're behaving. I think anyone who has had even a modicum of success in the music industry can attest to the fact that those things are easy to slip into. That never coloured my feelings about Chris. I always told him how grateful I was for what he'd given to me in terms of a vocabulary and a desire at the age of 15 to become a professional musician." **SS**

All Good People: Yes At 50

As legendary band **Yes** get ready to celebrate five decades of mind-expanding, genre-breaking music, *Prog* sits down with the key players to look over the highlights of a career unparalleled in music.

Words: Daryl Easlea **Thanks to:** Sharon Chevin and Chris Dean

Yes. From the joyful, enabling positivity of their name onwards, for 50 years they have been welcoming fans across the globe into their wonderous universe, and by doing so, they remain one of the most loved of all prog groups. Even with the welter of personnel changes there have been across the years, there's always been a tremendous cohesion to the brand, and one that has adapted with the times.

Everything is part of a piece with Yes: the parallel universe they established with their expansive run of albums between 1970-1977; their blues and pop psych Soho roots; their rebirth in the 80s; and their constant presence from then to the present day, regardless of who *exactly* may be in the group. Although he tragically left us in 2015, founder Chris Squire's presence looms over Yes past and present, as he was the only person to have been in every line-up from 1968 until the time of his passing.

Something that strikes you clearly when writing about Yes and their amazing longevity is that it could be said that each successive version of the band has been one of the members' solo projects. Of all the bands in their league – the 'big six' as *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing identifies them – only Jethro Tull have stayed together for so long in some form or other (the longest fallow period Yes have had has been five years out of that 50).

Yes may have travelled millions of miles on their astral plane, but to celebrate their anniversary, their move geographically – from their cradle at the old Marquee Club in Wardour Street in Soho to the London Palladium, where they held their 50th celebration in March this year – is less than half a mile.

Yes are a band full of stories and mini-sagas. As the twists and turns of the group have been well documented elsewhere, *Prog* took this opportunity to celebrate with over half of the members, past and present, through all-new 2018 interviews, looking back at nine glorious episodes from across their 50 years.

'I'm so glad it's today and you're here: formation

Yes were formed in the cauldron of London's Soho, at a period when, musically, the pace of change seemed hourly. It was through the relationships with Jack Barrie – the owner of the Marquee and La Chasse drinking club at the heart of the rock milieu – that the group formed.

Bassist Chris Squire and guitarist Peter Banks had been in The Syn, which they left to join Mabel Greer's Toyshop. Accrington-born Jon Anderson had been in The Warriors. In early 1968, through the association with Jack Barrie, Anderson was recommended for the group. By May of that year, thanks to Banks, they had become Yes. Drummer Bill Bruford – who'd placed an ad in *Melody Maker* – had arrived, as had Leicester-born keyboard player Tony Kaye.

They played their first gig at a youth camp on Essex's oyster heartland of Mersea Island that August. Within a year, the group had supported Cream on their farewell concerts and, through early manager Roy Flynn, got a deal with Atlantic Records.

> "If you're not dreaming, you're asleep at the wheel."
> **Jon Anderson**

JON ANDERSON: "I was driven by this feeling that if we work hard enough, the doors of success will open. I still have that feeling – it comes from my early childhood, working on a local farm to help support the family. And if you're not dreaming, you're asleep at the wheel."

TONY KAYE: "Wardour Street was where we went to see bands, and where we all met. The Ship and La Chasse were the centre of our universe."

ANDERSON: "London in '68/'69 was a blast. Seeing The Who at the Marquee Club, Hendrix, [Rahsaan] Roland Kirk at Ronnie Scott's. There was so much going on, I was in musical heaven."

"They thought I was a bit of a hippie, but then, obviously, I was."

Steve Howe

KAYE: "Chris, Jon and Peter were firmly ensconced at La Chasse. That little bar was where everyone went and where we met. It was a very fast growing up time."

ANDERSON: "The first night I met Chris in La Chasse, we went to his flat and wrote three songs, one of which was *Sweetness*. It was such a trip at that time. He was so tall, with a very dry humour. We both loved Paul Simon and Buffalo Springfield."

KAYE: "In the beginning, we were playing simple songs that Jon had written with David Foster, as well as those sort of epics of other people's numbers. A lot of them weren't that easy to play. We had to get it right. We all realised that playing a lot of gigs was the only way to do it."

ANDERSON: "We rehearsed like madmen: always happy to create a good show, never thinking we would make records, just making some exciting fresh music."

KAYE: "Peter thought of the name – my comment was that you couldn't put 'the' in front of it. All of the bands then had 'the' in front of them. I wasn't entirely on board, but it didn't take long for that name to stand out."

ANDERSON: "We were determined to make a great band, thinking, 'If we can be as famous as Family, we'll make it in London and universities around the UK and that will be enough.' We didn't realise that there was a big world out there. We had a small amount of songs, so there were lots of long solos! But you have to start somewhere. I think we played *In The Midnight Hour* for an hour as an encore!"

KAYE: "I wanted to be this crazy guy smashing the Hammond around, and of course Peter wanted to be Pete Townshend. He was a bit of a handful. One day I just heard that he was gone. I saw Steve playing with Bodast at the Speakeasy – he was an amazing guitar player. I recommended Steve to the band and the rest is history."

STEVE HOWE (joined in the spring of 1970): "The dynamic was amazing. Each guy had so much to give and I could sense that. They had done these dynamic and exciting albums with lots of musical credibility. We felt good together. They thought I was a bit of a hippie, but then, obviously, I was."

Not So Shabby Chicx
Yes looking sharp.

BARRIE WENTZELL PHOTOGRAPHY

He is here: Rick Wakeman arrives

Cheeky Chappie: Wakeman joins the ranks.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Brian Lane began to manage Yes in 1970, and he encouraged the band to take bigger, bolder moves. There was one final tweak before the classic line-up was to coalesce: Tony Kaye departed and in came Strawbs keyboard player and noted session man Rick Wakeman.

KAYE: "There were no real regrets and no animosity at the time. After touring America and listening to music like The Band, I was drifting away from what they were doing. I saw myself as a Hammond player, and having to adapt to Moog synthesisers and Mellotrons was not what I really wanted to do."
HOWE: "Our direction was being multi-textural, and we needed a keyboard player who was ahead of that game. Tony was a really good organ/piano guy, but at that point, he didn't open up that doorway, saying he was going to get all that stuff and start twiddling with it."
RICK WAKEMAN: "I'd seen them play live. The Strawbs had supported them. I thought, 'This band is so right and so wrong.' The so wrong bits made them so right. At that time all bands' guitarists had a quadruple Marshall stack. Steve had two little twin reverbs. Chris had these Sunn amps, which I'd never even heard of. Every bass player was playing a Fender Jazz bass and Chris had a Rickenbacker, which weren't fashionable. Steve was playing a semi-acoustic guitar instead of a Stratocaster. Bill miked the drums and tuned them up like fantastic biscuit tins. At that time, singers were six-foot-four, with long, black, greasy hair and out comes this weird little guy with an alto voice. The only normal one was Tony."

> "I'd seen them play live. The Strawbs had supported them in Hull. I thought, 'This band is so right and so wrong.' The so wrong bits made them so right."
> **Rick Wakeman**

ANDERSON: "We played a gig with Strawbs, and there he was, playing *four* keyboards. Four months later, there he was listening to my wild ideas, and playing them. I would walk home from rehearsals on cloud nine."
WAKEMAN: "I chose Yes over the Spiders From Mars, who at the time would have been much bigger because of David's huge popularity, but I just liked the fact that Yes wanted to go down the orchestral rock route, which is *exactly* what I wanted to do. It was a match made in heaven."
HOWE: "We headed in a different direction when Rick joined. He was a more flashy, techno kind of guy. There's got to be a good balance – having good players who want to fiddle around and add different textures, but also work together. Rick and I exchanged parts well – there was never anything either of us wanted to do that we couldn't share in."
WAKEMAN: "We knew where we wanted to go but there was no ground to follow. There was a supreme element of trial and error that was helped tremendously by Atlantic. They basically said, 'We don't understand what the hell you're doing, but great, get on with it.'"
ANDERSON: "Rick can play anything from jazz to Bach to rock with a symphonic mindset and a joke. Who could ask for more?"
ALAN WHITE (joined in July 1972): "There was nobody like Rick, telling his jokes, being such a total character in the band, but what a well-schooled musician."
ANDERSON: "It opened up so many musical avenues. He was so crazy and wild at times and it came out in his playing. The cape became his standard stage wear; a powerful statement of his world, the wizard of the keyboards."

'Long distance runaround: American superstardom

Although Genesis and Pink Floyd may have become bigger, later, Yes trailblazed into America and seemingly became overnight superstars, building an ardent fanbase that remains to this day. Their first tour in the US was in the summer of 1971, and over the next decade they returned frequently.

This wave of success came to a head on Saturday June 12, 1976, when the band played in front of 130,000 people at Philadelphia's JFK Stadium. Yes had something marketable and extremely transferable across the ocean, and that in large part was due to 1971's *Fragile* album, and radio favourite *Roundabout*, its bite-sized funky chunk.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes recording *Fragile* at Advision Studios in London, 1971. L-R: Bill Bruford, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman.

WAKEMAN: "Yes had already done an American tour, supporting Iron Butterfly. *The Yes Album* hadn't really done anything over there, but a few people were starting to take a little bit of notice."

HOWE: "When we got to *Fragile*, Eddie Offord's expertise was razor sharp and we made a very tight-assed record. It really did define Yes, and we attempted to keep that sound as much as we could."

ANDERSON: "When I listen to *Fragile*, I hear so many magical events; a truly mystical time for me."

WAKEMAN: "Most of the early shows were at places like the Whiskey A Go Go club on the Sunset Strip, where I could only get two keyboards in and they were on a plank over the door as we just couldn't get stuff in. We came back to England and there was a bit of a break before we went back. *Fragile* had really taken off. We realised quite quickly that a lot of the audience were coming to see *us*. During that tour we were shuffled up the bill in some of the slightly smaller venues. The 4,000 to 6,000 ones, we were headlining. It was just unbelievable."

Above: The Roundabout US single.

HOWE: "It was very instantaneous. Opening for Jethro Tull was a terrific spot – we had the best foot forward we could have there. We were getting encores. Opening bands don't get encores. That's not always the way."

WAKEMAN: "We supported Ten Years After, J Geils, Black Sabbath, basically anything that we could get out on."

ANDERSON: "Mahavishnu performed one of their first shows with Yes and The Kinks headlining. Talk about a mind-blowing event. Doing gigs with the great Billy Joel, Sabbath, ELP; seeing jazz greats in Detroit clubs… wild days."

WAKEMAN: "DJ Ed Sharkey in Philadelphia got hold of *Fragile* and he played it to death – it became really popular, so all the other stations in Philadelphia joined in. Then the next towns and cities copped on, and that's how we broke over there – Yes owe a huge debt of gratitude to Ed Sharkey."

HOWE: "Before we knew, we were headlining in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey… they all went pretty crazy for us. We played colleges, we played theatres, we played auditoriums with Tull. We felt like a band that was growing up rapidly."

ANDERSON: "We realised we had fans following us from town to city in the USA. We had a following and it made me more excited to create something very new. Audiences would listen to us in total silence – it made us want to perform the music better than ever. No laziness: we needed to be great every show. I was so excited to know we had a strong relationship with such a big country."

WAKEMAN: "It was very quick. We entered Division One, then missed out the Championship and went straight to the Premiership, straight into the elite. And to some extent we weren't sure how to handle it. Nobody was, because we were treading new ground all the time."

HOWE: "*Melody Maker* were always coming to New York to see us, and too often their front page was me with the 175 guitar [Howe's Gibson ES-175] and I'm standing there: 'Yes Conquer New York'. Obviously, that doesn't do you any harm."

WHITE: "The Eagles opened for Yes on tour. It was three weeks on, two weeks off over three legs. We got to know the band really well. Their set contained most of *Hotel California*. We got pretty friendly with Don Henley and Glenn Frey particularly – we hung out a lot."

TREVOR HORN (joined in May 1980): "The Americans loved them straightaway because the Americans are great if they see something original – they were like nothing you'd ever heard before. A choirboy on top of a great big amazing rhythm section, with Steve Howe, the best rock guitar player in the world."

"The label basically said, 'We don't understand what the hell you're doing, but great, get on with it.'"

Rick Wakeman

The 80s

Yes have always defied expectations, but few predicted that they'd go pop. Even fewer would have guessed that their unique new brand of proggy AOR would see them conquering charts and arenas around the globe…

Words: Daryl Easlea

An answer to Yes? 1980 – The drama of *Drama*

The 1980s for Yes offered two of the most intriguing detours to have ever been experienced by a major band. First, how they seemingly suddenly rid themselves of their two highest-profile members and replaced them with a synthpop duo with whom they shared a manager; and second, how they regrouped and became bigger than ever before as an enormous US AOR/prog band, forged in the contemporary UK pop scene. But before all that, we'll always have Paris.

WAKEMAN: "There was a huge change in music. Punk had come in. Atlantic told us we had to make singles, we had to try to do this, to do that. We were dropping out of fashion."
HOWE: "It's always a disaster when a band says, 'Shall we do one that's a bit like one in the charts?' We were in a bit of a holding pattern."
WAKEMAN: "We were recording in Paris. Jon and I had written some songs; Steve and Chris really didn't want to play them. Because we were being hit on by the record company and under pressure, we had the wrong producer down there. Roy [Thomas Baker] is a *great* producer, but totally wrong for this band. When you have a band like Yes in conflict, you need a Churchill, not a Chamberlain."
WHITE: "It all got outrageous. There were *so* many things to do in Paris, people were living it up to the nines. We all had apartments there. It was the album that was never meant to be. It got very lackadaisical."
WAKEMAN: "Jon and I got absolutely paralytic on Calvados in a little bar, and Jon said, 'This isn't the Yes it's meant to be. I don't want to do this.' Then we got the news that Alan had been ice skating and broken his ankle. We thought, 'That solves it.'"
WHITE: "Chris, Steve and I called each other and we booked a studio in Notting Hill. We said, 'Whoever's here on Monday morning is in Yes.' And that was it: we started writing and came up with the essence of *Drama*."

> "Even though we didn't have Jon and Rick, we hoped they'd come one day and it would all be nice."
> **Steve Howe**

HOWE: "The three of us hammered away, getting music together. Even though we didn't have Jon and Rick, we hoped they'd come one day and it would all be nice."
WHITE: "We were rehearsing next door to Buggles. Trevor came in and Yes were his favourite band. It was ironic, really. The next thing we knew, all of their equipment was in the room. We needed a singer and a keyboard player. Suddenly, we called it Yes."
HORN: "I used to drive to and from Birmingham in the 70s in a Reliant three-wheeler. *Relayer* was my favourite album for the journey. I remember listening to it driving through Spaghetti Junction, the places that always looked like future cities at night. So I was pretty surprised when I ended up in the band in 1980. It was all Chris Squire's fault!"
GEOFF DOWNES (joined in May 1980): "We moved Yes into another decade, literally, and more into the mainstream. They were looking for something else."
HORN: "Chris really liked the production on [The Buggles' 1980 single] *Living In The Plastic Age*. He thought that somehow we could bring some of that to Yes. I was pretty eager to see what Yes were like close up. I'd never been in a rehearsal room with a famous rock band before. I kept saying, 'When's Jon going to come?' And then you get drawn into things…"
HOWE: "It was really a shot in the arm – these guys had the hunger and they really wanted to push this record. We wanted epics. Everybody was contributing things – it was a good vibe."
HORN: "*Drama* is totally prog, but it's got a punky element to it. The band were really playing well. They would just concentrate and it would go up a level. I had never heard anybody play like that. They played the intro of *Machine Messiah* for two days. By that point, I'd given in. I was in the band."
DOWNES: "It didn't feel totally unnatural, not from within. People outside were very curious, if not quite repulsed by it: these two pop interlopers suddenly wandering into their revered, wonderful, cosmic band that they'd been following for so many years."
WAKEMAN: "I loved The Buggles. I remember being asked, 'Do you think it's a great shame that a great band has been destroyed?' My answer was always, 'Well, I'm very upset because I was so looking forward to the next Buggles album.'"

Yes in 1980, L-R: Alan White, Geoff Downes, Chris Squire, Trevor Horn, Steve Howe and some… *interesting* fashion choices.

GETTY

A trip to the cinema: *90125*

The early 80s saw frantic change. By 1981, Yes had all but disbanded. Horn and Downes had repaired to Buggles, Howe went to form Asia, White and Squire hung together. In came Trevor Rabin with a quiver of material. Tony Kaye returned, and although they worked as Cinema for the best part of a year, it was obvious that when Jon Anderson rejoined, the group had to be called Yes. By January 1984, they had a No.1 single in the US.

HOWE: "Alan and Chris thought they were going to play with Jimmy Page, which excited them, but Jimmy wasn't going to do anything. If that hadn't been a distraction, we may have found a way of making another record with the *Drama* line-up. Asia was such a feather in my cap. What Yes did was very secondary to me."
DOWNES: "I'd gone back to working with Trev on the second Buggles album. I'd got on well with Steve – we had a good rapport – and I joined Asia. Yes probably thought, 'Well, if those guys can do it, we can have a go.'"
WHITE: "It was down to me and Chris, then we got a call from Trevor Rabin. We ended up meeting, we went down to Chris' house, and that's when we became Cinema."
TREVOR RABIN (joined in 1982): "I moved to LA and wrote what became *90125*, with the intention of it becoming my album. I ended up with Atlantic coming to me, saying there were two situations they'd like me to consider: one was with Alan White and Chris Squire, and the other one was with Keith Emerson and Jack Bruce. It turns out I met Chris and Alan first. Next thing, we're in London rehearsing as Cinema with those songs. I wasn't that familiar with Yes – I'd heard *Roundabout* and *I've Seen All Good People*."
KAYE: "I met up with Chris in Miami and he said he was thinking about doing something else. He mentioned he had met Trevor Rabin and suggested that we got together. About a year later, Trevor and I flew to London and Cinema were born."
KAYE: "Cinema were never going to be Yes. We had not a clue about what would transpire a year later."
RABIN: "A lot of time was wasted at [rehearsal studio] John Henry's but it was a very important time for the band to get to know each other musically. There was a great pub around the corner and we drank there a lot."
KAYE: "We rehearsed for nine or 10 months, looking at different producers. The band chose Trevor Horn. People ask me how it [*90125*] was created. Apart from the fact that they were amazing Trevor Rabin songs, it was really the scene in London at that time that Trevor Horn represented, with all the bands: Frankie [Goes To Hollywood], and later Pet Shop Boys. We were in the middle of that particular era."

GETTY

All Change! The 1983 line-up, L-R: Alan White, Trevor Rabin, Jon Anderson, Tony Kaye, Chris Squire.

> "I was pretty surprised when I ended up in the band in 1980. It was all Chris Squire's fault."
> **Trevor Horn**

HORN: "I'd just done ABC, Dollar and Malcolm McLaren. The last thing my late wife wanted me to do was work with Yes again, or even Cinema. I then went to see Cinema rehearse. Chris and Alan were on fire. I could see that Trevor Rabin was a hell of a guitarist. I got hooked. Everybody said I was nuts."
RABIN: "I wrote *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* and I kind of had an instinct that it was the strongest song for a single. It was such a pop song and so not an area of Yes, and people weren't that excited about it. I was pleased that Trevor was happy to get involved in it."
HORN: "I went over to see Trevor in Topanga Canyon and he played me demos of songs. *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* came on – it had the jump cut at the start with the big, heavy drum sound. I loved it straight away. I didn't like the verse but I loved the chorus. I said, 'This is a hit single.'"
RABIN: "Chris happened to play Jon Anderson some of the material and Chris mentioned that Jon had really liked it."
WHITE: "Jon got really interested and asked if he could sing on it – there was nothing you could call it apart from Yes."
RABIN: "Once Jon sang on one track, I thought, 'This sounds fantastic!' I said, 'Why are we calling it Yes? It's a new band, it doesn't sound anything like Yes.' But with Jon there, it became a lot more valid. I reluctantly went along, and so it became Yes and not Cinema."
ANDERSON: "It was so great to be in the band again, doing very hip rock. It was very satisfying on so many levels."
HORN: "Jon is a heck of a singer, and very businesslike – he likes to work in the afternoon, from two to six. He doesn't like to be comped, he likes to do it all: drop-ins and whatever. He's got a hell of a voice – it's thick and agile, and has a beautiful quality."
WHITE: "It was an amazing transition as we'd changed our style of music. We'd become more commercial, but still had the Yes dynamics and a modern production. It became kind of amazing."
HORN: "Alan played all the drum fills on a keyboard. That bit in the middle of *Owner Of...*, he came up with it. I gave him a keyboard with a bunch of samples on it and he played that in the middle of the tune and it cracked us up. I could never have done it the way I did had I not been in the band with the guys."
HOWE: "I heard the album on cassette in the car. I knew it was quite different."
WAKEMAN: "*90125* saved the band. Trevor [Rabin] came in and did something incredibly brave. At that time, when prog rock was about as popular as condoms in the Vatican, it was phenomenal."

The 90s

The decade opened with the two **Yes** camps reuniting for *Union* – ironically, an album that still divides fans – and a mammoth world tour, while the band would go on to record one of their most overlooked albums.

Words: Daryl Easlea

Part of the union: on tour 1991-1992

Union may well be one of the most debated albums in the entire Yes canon. Rick Wakeman, of course, humorously called it "onion" as it reduced him to tears. However, the 84-date tour that supported the album ran in three legs over 11 months and offered many people an opportunity to see something they thought impossible: both Yes factions together. It certainly struck a chord as it was this line-up that was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2017.

HOWE: "It was a long tour. We did months and months and months of it."
WAKEMAN: "We all met, the eight of us, and it was really funny. Tony and I got on great. He said, 'You do whatever you want to do and I'll just fiddle around.'"
KAYE: "It was certainly great playing with Rick, who happens to be one of the funniest guys in the world. It was very easy for us to sort out our parts. Same with Alan and Bill."
WHITE: "Bill and myself were pretty good actually. We worked out who should play what. I ended up doing a major amount of the drumming and he did the frills on the top for quite a lot of it. He played *Heart Of The Sunrise* and very iconic things. That suited his style."
WAKEMAN: "There was only one of Chris and Jon. We tried to integrate as much as possible. Certain things worked very well."
KAYE: "I thought, 'Wow, great, this is going to be cool – there's going to be two of everything.' Almost. In most part, everyone got on and did their thing in the band, and it was really successful on a musical level."
ANDERSON: "The tour was extraordinary on so many levels. That was the saving grace around those years."
WAKEMAN: "People found their little cliques and got on with it. It worked; it was an amazing tour. We had the revolving stage, which was great fun, especially when it broke down and we got members of the audience to push it."

The *Union* Tour Line-up At Wembley Arena, June 1, 1991. L-R: Chris Squire, Tony Kaye, Rick Wakeman, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin, Bill Bruford, Steve Howe.

> "The *Union* tour was extraordinary on so many levels – that was the saving grace around those years."
> **Jon Anderson**

HOWE: "The *Union* tour wasn't all bad. Places like Britain brought the discipline into Yes."
WAKEMAN: "I had a riotous time. I bought a van and drove around because I didn't want to wait for Chris at airports, as much as I love him. I just drove the entire time. I had a wonderful time with all of the guys."

Live at the Target Center in Minneapolis, May 7, 1991.

ANDERSON: "*Awaken* being performed by eight musicians was pure magic."
RABIN: "The best thing for me from the *Union* tour was that it led to the *Talk* album, which is my favourite Yes album, and I really enjoyed playing with Rick."
HOWE: "I know people love it. The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame inducted the *Union* tour line-up – that was their decision. It showed that that line-up rang the right tune."

GETTY

Feeling the calling of a miracle? *Talk*

After the prolonged shenanigans of the *Union* tour, the *90125* band reunited and embarked upon the often overlooked *Talk* album and tour, which truly updated the group's sound for the 90s. Working solely in the digital realm, Trevor Rabin crafted an anthemic album that seemed to combine Yes old and new. *The Calling* certainly offered more muscular rock.

The *Talk* tour was the first ever Yes tour not to visit Europe, further cementing their reputation as 'Yes West'. When they returned, Rabin and Kaye left the band, which formed the foundation for the Yes that survives today.

Lending A Hand, L-R: Tony Kaye, Chris Squire, Trevor Rabin, Alan White and Jon Anderson being inducted into the RockWalk Of Fame at the Guitar Center in Hollywood, May 24, 1994.

WHITE: "I think *Talk* is one of our best albums. Musically, it was incredible, as was the production."
RABIN: "I started writing with Roger Hodgson. We formed an incredible friendship that remains to this day."
WHITE: "Trevor and Roger became very friendly, and one time, Chris and myself and Trevor stayed at Roger's place up in northern California. We came up with some pretty good music. We all took off on motorcycles and I thought, 'This is really dangerous, all these musicians going off at high speed!'"
KAYE: "I saw the whole creation of the *Talk* album. The rest of the guys just came in and did their parts and we'd never done that before. This was very different – I think it was a very successful album in large part, and very much a Trevor album."
WHITE: "It was an inventive recording too, different drum sounds and all that kind of stuff. We had a ball doing it."
KAYE: "I thought Alan played brilliantly; Chris played great; the keyboards were very different. Jon and Trevor had spent time alone writing, mainly from Trevor's tracks."
RABIN: "Jon had an absolute ball as there was so much freedom – he could just sing and there was never that thing of, 'Oh, we don't have that right. Can you do that again?' I could really seamlessly correct things. It was the first time I'd done anything like that, which was a good way to get into the technology."
ANDERSON: "We just performed *I Am Waiting* on this last tour. It was beautiful to play and sing it."
BILLY SHERWOOD (joined in 1994): "I wasn't on the album but I was called by Trevor Rabin to come out on tour and be a multi-instrumentalist and sing – I did a double bass thing with Chris on *Endless Dream*. I was the utility guy. When the *Talk* tour ended, I thought, 'That's the end of an era – I just toured with my favourite band on the last tour they're ever going to do.'"
ANDERSON: "I think the *Talk* album still has a musical life. We'll see what happens."

> "I think *Talk* is one of our best albums. Musically it was incredible, as was the production."
> **Alan White**

Trevor Rabin (left) and Chris Squire at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, California, 1994.

GETTY

The 00s To Now

Yes went into the new decade without their iconic frontman but still flying. They tell us why they're revisiting *Fly From Here* in 2018, discuss the pain of losing Chris Squire and look forward to what the future holds for Yes.

Words: Daryl Easlea

'Into a sky that's clearing: the return of *Fly From Here*

Released in June 2011, *Fly From Here* was Yes' 20th studio album. The first without Jon Anderson's vocals (his illness in 2008 had taken him out of the band and he was replaced by Benoît David), musically it was a return to the 'old new Yes', with Trevor Horn returning to produce. As recording progressed, Geoff Downes returned to the fold, replacing Oliver Wakeman on keyboards.

Now, in 2018, David's vocals have been replaced by Horn's, and the new edition of *Fly From Here* has become a fitting tribute to Squire, and the de facto follow-up to *Drama*.

HOWE: "*Fly From Here* was a great time. It was a lot of work, a pull-and-tussle sort of a record. Trevor is a staunch Yes guy. We had [the track] *Fly From Here* recorded but it didn't float to the top – not because it was bad, it was just that there was a focus on other things. We never finished that recording of it. Chris and I said that one day we should look at it."

HORN: "Chris would always come and see me in LA. He said, 'Why don't you just come and do *Fly From Here*?' I thought, 'Why not?' as we should have recorded it. I then told Chris that there not only was a second part to it, which I played to Chris and he really liked, but also a more complicated part three. I wanted Geoffrey back as he did the keyboards."

DOWNES: "It was weird that when it all came round, when they came to produce the album, that's when they invited me back."

The *Fly From Here* line-up, with Benoît David, perhaps fittingly, out of the picture...

HORN: "The guys were playing really well: Chris, Steve and I were getting on, it was a good vibe. I'd done a guide vocal. English wasn't Benoît's native language – it was sometimes tough to get the sense of the song across to him."

WHITE: "Benoît was okay. Eventually his voice broke down on tour."

HORN: "Years later, they phoned and said they were doing *Drama* and would I sing *Tempus Fugit* live. It coincided with me going to the gym again. I hadn't sung that high for years."

WHITE: "Trevor felt that way about the album: it wasn't as good as it could have been."

HORN: "Alan asked me to redo the vocal on *Fly From Here*. Alan doesn't say much, but then he'll come out with something that surprises you. Steve called me up and said the same. I launched myself into it. I had singing lessons, worked on the tunes, rewrote the songs a little."

WHITE: "So, he replaced his vocal, which is quite amazing when you think about it."

HOWE: "It's amazing. Trevor's done a great job on the production. He's really spent a lot of time on it – he reshapes the album and the remixes are improved. It wasn't the last album Chris recorded with the band, but I think it's the best one of the most recent albums. It's a tribute to him as much as anything."

> "*Fly From here* wasn't the last album Chris recorded with the band, but I think it's the best one of the most recent albums. It's a tribute to him as much as anything."
> **Steve Howe**

Fly From Here: The Return Trip is out now via PledgeMusic. See http://yesthedramalineup.pmstores.co for more information.

ROB SHANAHAN/PRESS

Survival: Yes in the 21st century

Today, Yes come complete with all of the essentials required for a 21st-century act: vibrant and active on social media, headlining an annual cruise, and, of course, it being Yes, two versions of the group out and about, with both sides revelling in the glorious music that was written in their first decade. In 2017, the band were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame by Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson of Rush.

21st Century Rocks: Yes featuring Anderson, Rabin, Wakeman.

STEPHANIE CABRAL

DOWNES: "Sadly, we lost Chris, which was a big blow to all of us, particularly Alan, who'd worked with him for so long. He'd been in every version of Yes since 1972. Chris was such a brilliant contributor to Yes' music over the years, not just as an iconic bass player but as a great singer. I had many conversations with Chris where he said Yes' music should continue for as long as it can. It will probably be here long after we've gone."

HOWE: "The people who have come in are no beginners – to stand in for Chris must have been such a strain for Billy, but he took it in his stride. He loves Chris, he loved everything he'd ever done, and now he's playing Chris' parts."

SHERWOOD: "Losing Chris was such an incredible tragedy. None of us expected it and it hit us all very hard. His desire for Yes to continue – he wanted me to take his place – became even more something that I needed to do. For him, and also for the fans to keep it going, for the legend that is Yes to keep moving forward."

HOWE: "We haven't tried to change four people at once – it's been a moulding process. Those transitions, keeping the idea – there's got to be ideas. The album series tours where we played five-and-a-half albums in their entirety, that's the kind of thing we like to do more than anything else. That helps the continuity. Jon Davison has been with us for six years. He's delivered every night."

JON DAVISON (joined in 2012): "Hopefully in some way I'm able to give back to the great institution of Yes with my passion, just as its members have inspired me with their passion throughout the majority of my life. Singing Yes' music is a very natural process for me."

SHERWOOD: "It feels like home. I've been in and out several times. You're not really in Yes until you're in and out of it a few times!"

WHITE: "It was interesting to be together with the two sides of Yes at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. We just got on with it and the music pulled everything together. We played *Roundabout* and *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. I thought, considering what's going on, all of that stuff business-wise, it sounds really good, very tight, and people respected that."

GLENN GOTTLIEB/PRESS

> "You're not really in Yes until you're in and out of it a few times!"
>
> **Billy Sherwood**

KAYE: "The present line-up of Yes are just fantastic. Getting back with Steve, who I haven't seen since *Union*, and I hadn't really spoken to since 1967, that was pretty amazing in itself. He's such a great guy. An honourable, heartfelt individual."

HORN: "I don't think there's anybody else like them. To play that music is a challenging thing, yet it's very melodic. I don't think anybody has done anything like that since."

DAVISON: "The fact that Yes have gone on for 50 years should arouse the utmost respect in the hearts and minds of fans worldwide."

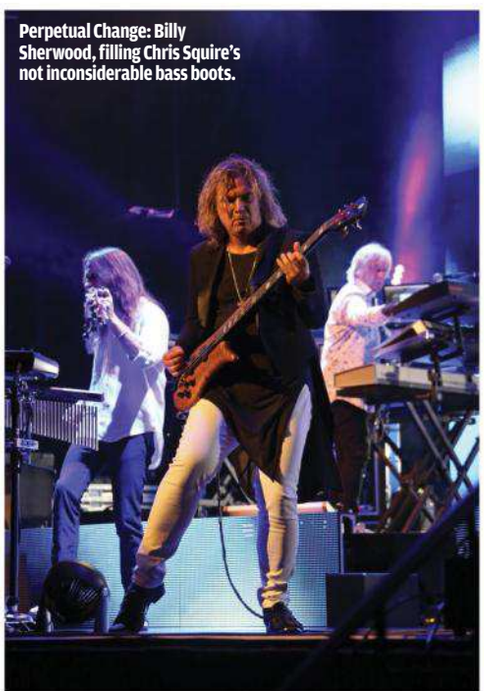
RABIN: "People have a generous mind as far as if something comes along that's a little different to what they're used to. They seem to embrace it."

WAKEMAN: "There have been some interesting times – every single band, there's been highs and lows, and I'm sure there will continue to be."

DAVISON: "There is more of the Yes story to come. I think this coming year we will reach a special place in the musical world... Still dreaming the big dream."

WHITE: "Back in '72, I said, 'I'll give you guys three months to see if I'm happy, and you give me three months to see if it works.' And here I am, the longest-serving [continuous] member in the band, 46 years later!

"We've always striven to do something new and have never been satisfied with what's on the horizon – always trying to see over it; to look at new things."



Perpetual Change: Billy Sherwood, filling Chris Squire's not inconsiderable bass boots.

See www.yesworld.com for more information on Yes, and visit www.yesfeaturingarw.com for more information on Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin, Rick Wakeman.

Topographically Speaking...

As the floating festival **Cruise To The Edge** sets sail once more, *Prog* climbs aboard to see Yes headline a thrilling bill that proves the scene is in shipshape, with a community spirit that's unsinkable.

Words and Photos: Joel Barrios

Going Overboard: Yes provide some *Drama* for their fans.

A perfect illustration of prog's current health is the floating music celebration aptly named Cruise To The Edge. The fifth iteration, put together by Larry Morand and the On The Blue organisation – geographically bound for Belize and Mexico, yet headed for parts known and unknown in a musical sense – is one of the biggest prog rock events of the year. The cruise has sold out for the last two trips, and the organisers have already announced its February 2019 comeback.

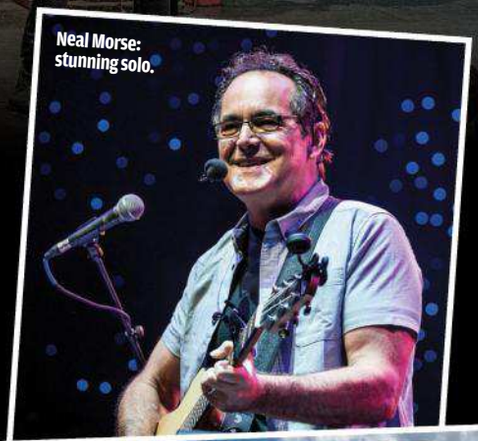
Just like last year, the merriment begins with a pre-cruise send-off at Ferg's Live in Tampa, Florida, which is opened by Tokyo power trio **Baraka** and closed by **Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy**.

If the instrumental Japanese band – occasionally resembling metal, tinged with strong fusion nuances – delight the crowd, and Carl Palmer's band offer enthralling renditions of ELP's anthems, the highlight of the night is the all-star line-up that celebrates the music of Pink Floyd.

The core band of Fernando Perdomo, Andy Robbins, Dave Kerzner and Derek Cintron are joined by a myriad of exceptional guests, including Steve Rothery, Billy Sherwood, John Wesley, Jon Davison, Randy McStine, and Durga and Lorelei McBroom. Impeccably combining their individual talents onstage, this remarkable collective orchestrate a magnificent once-in-a-lifetime gala, filled with timeless Floydian soundscapes.

Extended for the first time to a five-day event, this year's cruise feels less hectic, allowing passengers to better plan around the well-explained schedule handed out during the embarkation process.

Glass Hammer, the symphonic prog quintet led by original members Steve Babb and Fred Schendel, with stunning lead vocalist Susie Bogdanowicz, play the traditional Pool Deck sail-away event. Their melodic songs, which perfectly fuse vintage and modern sounds with an equally on-point balance of subtlety and bombast, make for a great initial set. It's



Neal Morse: stunning solo.

Cruise Control: The prog faithful hit the deck.

Lifesigns: "Modern prog channelling catchy AOR melodies."

Stick Man: the godlike Mike Portnoy with Sons Of Apollo.

No F.E.A.R.: Marillion's Steve Hogarth.

one that becomes even more special with the unexpected appearance of Yes vocalist Jon Davison. He takes over the mic for the two final songs, the first time he's ever sung live with his former band.

And that's only the beginning of many noteworthy collaborations and live sets, all of which are enriched by the communal atmosphere that extends through the mixture of performances, Q&A sessions, photo opportunities, special art exhibits, contests and the Late Night Live Experience. The latter is a daily show running in the second largest indoor venue of the ship from 11.30pm to 3am, and it brings together talented passengers and headliner musicians, all sharing the stage in a fully fledged musical pageant.

Entering their 50th year of existence, Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame inductees **Yes** dazzle their loyal fanbase with a balanced set, spanning songs from their 1969 self-titled album through to 1980's *Drama*. Special guest and original keyboardist Tony Kaye brings the crowd to its feet during a three-song encore featuring *Yours Is No Disgrace*, *Roundabout* and *Starship Trooper*.

"Yes dazzle their loyal fanbase with a balanced set, spanning songs from their 1969 self-titled album through to 1980's *Drama*."

Meanwhile, **Marillion**'s followers relish two shows mainly centring on almost complete performances of their latest album *F.E.A.R.*, topped off with some back-catalogue hits.

Steve Hackett once again draws full-house audiences for his 17-song performances. These are divided into two sections: the first explores his solo career, including a reworked rendition of the GTR classic *When The Heart Rules The Mind*; the second is a lengthy set of pure, unadulterated Genesis bliss, culminating with the much-loved *Dance On A Volcano*.

There are dynamic musical experiences everywhere you look: Canadian rockers **Saga** say farewell to an illustrious 40-year career with two memorable concerts in front of large and admiring audiences, while recently launched supergroup **Sons Of Apollo** debut an uncompromising blend of classic rock and metal, propelled by the undisputed class of the band's five members.

The UK's **Lifesigns** succeed in enamouring the crowd twice, proving that their poetic take on modern prog channelling catchy AOR melodies is a winning formula. **Haken** sagaciously decide to perform two of their most popular albums in full — *Visions* and *The Mountain* — and these sets are the only times when frenzied headbanging can be spotted.

Neal Morse offers enchanting solo singer-songwriter performances, accompanied by his acoustic guitar and a keyboard, and assisted by looping effects and some remarkable guest appearances. **Focus**, **Martin Barre** and **Gong** deliver invigorating flashbacks to their 70s zeniths, and King Crimson lovers enjoy immaculate sets from the **Adrian Belew Power Trio** and **Stick Men**, featuring David Cross.

Event veterans and newcomers alike have their time to shine. **IO Earth** unveil their brand new album *Solitude* with an exclusive main theatre performance. Meanwhile, Argentinians **Bad Dreams** prove to be consistently strong, especially with the inclusion of new singer Dennis Atlas.

Guitarist/songwriter **Eric Gillette** — mostly known for his involvement with the Neal Morse Band and Mike Portnoy's Shattered Fortress — serves out a balls-to-the-wall debut set of his solo music, featuring most of Haken's members as his backing band, and with Mike Portnoy sitting at the drum kit for the two closing Dream Theater renditions.

Further remarkable moments feature prog legends guesting with **Dave Kerzner**'s band: Steve Hackett plays his original solo on *Stranded* and Geoff Downes takes over keyboard duties for *Into The Sun* during the event's concluding performance.

Cruise To The Edge boasts a tasteful menu of nearly 30 bands in a multitude of styles. Its roster spans several generations of musicians, from prog's golden age to newer, equally brilliant successors, and this breadth of talent is sure to satisfy even the most knowledgeable and demanding fans. Long may prog rock sail into the Caribbean waters.

For more information on Cruise To The Edge, see www.cruisetotheedge.com.

The Show Must Go On

It's been 13 years since the release of their last album, but **Kino** are back with a brand new album and a slightly shifted line-up. **Pete Trewavas** and **John Mitchell** discuss why they got the band back together, and what Kino's future holds.

Words: Dave Ling **Images:** Will Ireland

Although time now flies past quicker than ever, it's bewildering to calculate that Kino's debut studio album, *Picture*, was released way back in February 2005 — that's in the year 4BP (Before *Prog* magazine, obviously).

With little in the way of a support system, those were dark times for a neo-prog group like Kino. *Picture* was purchased and enjoyed by fans of Marillion, whose bass player Pete Trewavas was at the heart of Kino's operations, and also by those who retained a soft spot for It Bites, John Beck providing a feast of melodic keyboard playing. The presence of Chris Maitland, who was the drummer of Porcupine Tree and No-Man, rendered Kino more interesting still, though at the time John Mitchell (Arena, The Urbane) was perhaps the least recognisable of the original foursome. This was a situation corrected by the guitarist/vocalist's exploits with Frost* and Lonely Robot.

With Maitland unavailable for live commitments, Beck's former It Bites bandmate Bob Dalton took over the drum stool. But within a year of their formation, following some hit-and-miss gigs in the UK and a short European tour supporting Spock's Beard, followed by the outtakes set *Cutting Room Floor*, Kino quietly dissolved. Mitchell would then don his biggest pair of Size Twelves and assume the Francis Dunnery role with Beck and Dalton in a reconfigured It Bites.

With the best will in the world, nobody really thought that Kino might make a return.

"I certainly didn't!" Trewavas laughs to *Prog*. "I thought that band was over, so this reunion was a bit of a shock and surprise."

Actually, let's qualify the above statement. Two people *did* believe in the possibility of a Kino reunion. One was Thomas Waber, boss of the band's record label InsideOut Music (see boxout, page 55). The other who recognised the potential of Waber's proposal as it came screaming towards him was John Mitchell.

"My original plan was to make a third Lonely Robot album," Mitchell explains. "But Thomas felt it might be too soon after the last one [*The Big Dream*, issued in April '17]. As soon as Mr Waber said, 'We do have a release window coming up, how would you feel about…' I knew exactly what was coming.

"I had spent too long in my studio listening to angry kids screaming and shouting [Mitchell has recorded and mixed for the likes of Enter Shikari, Funeral For A Friend, Architects and more], and there had been so many bad turns of events with It Bites, I really wanted to work with Kino again."

So here we are once more…

When asked to do so, Pete Trewavas struggles to recall when he first met John Mitchell. "Oh blimey," he ponders, scratching his head. "For me, John had been on the fringes of things for quite a while, probably because he was a great player. He would come to Marillion shows and he'd been in Arena with an old drummer of ours [Mick Pointer] so we spoke quite a lot."

The seeds of Kino were sown in 2002 when Neal Morse quit Transatlantic, seemingly for good, after finding God. This prompted a phone conversation between Pete and Thomas Waber, the latter requesting a wishlist list of collaborators for a potential solo album.

"The first person I mentioned was John Beck," Trewavas relates. "We used to play a lot with It Bites and back then they were shockingly, shockingly good. They put Marillion to shame. I used to think, 'Gosh, we should be supporting them.'"

Kino, L-R: John Mitchell, Craig Blundell, Pete Trewavas,

“There are lots of ways of being prog without going down the furry boots and cape route.”
John Mitchell

"We used to play a lot with It Bites and back then they were shockingly, shockingly good. They put Marillion to shame. I used to think, 'Gosh, we should be supporting them.'"
Pete Trewavas

Mitchell remembers Waber asking him a similar question. "I think the thing we had in common was that both of us wanted to work with John Beck," he laughs.

People tend to forget that Ray Wilson, the voice of *...Calling All Stations...*-era Genesis, was to have been Kino's frontman until, in the words of Mitchell back in 2005, "he got cold feet".

"Man, that would have been so great but he had a solo deal and opted to pursue that instead," Trewavas exclaims.

And thus Kino were born. In April '05 they made their live debut at London's Mean Fiddler, a fairly poorly attended show hampered by the fact that Mitchell was sick as a dog.

"I had a cold, I didn't know how to front a band and I couldn't really sing," he admits, looking back. "I've learned all of these things on the job."

"We were fumbling in the dark," Trewavas agrees. "Chris [Maitland] had told us that he was too busy with [Queen's musical] *We Will Rock You*, so we got Bob Dalton instead."

Seven months later, when Kino returned to London to play the Borderline (a significantly smaller venue), they had really found their feet.

"I remember that as a brilliant gig," Trewavas enthuses.

Alas, however, it was too little and too late.

Fast forward 13 years and Mitchell delivered the time-honoured 'Let's get the band back together' speech to Trewavas after the latter had played the Royal Albert Hall with Marillion. The pair had remained in touch post-Kino, Mitchell handling regular mixing work for Trewavas's project Edison's Children.

"I thought it was a great idea," Trewavas enthuses. "I've always liked what Kino stood for — strong songs and nice melodies that people can remember and whistle. The problem was that I had no material, only a couple of leftovers from our last writing sessions. Those were half-formed ideas that didn't get completed until *Picture* was done."

Above: Kino circa 2005. L-R: John Beck, John Mitchell, Bob Dalton, Pete Trewavas.

In total, Trewavas ended up taking three songs — *I Don't Know Why*, *Out Of Time* and *Keep The Faith* — when paying Mitchell a visit for what he describes as "a whirlwind of a writing session". Then he headed off on tour with Marillion.

"When I came back there were drums," says the bassist, failing to hide his excitement. "Craig Blundell had done a great job of putting those down. I'm told he did the entire album in just one day — such a talented chap."

"It was kind of like old times," Mitchell says of slipping back into the Kino vibe. "Like an old sock. There was a lot of fun. Pete's enthusiastic to be around, he's so bubbly."

Hang on, aren't we missing somebody? John Beck does perform on the new album, but in stark contrast to *Picture*, this time around he's simply a 'guest musician' and not a full-time band member.

"One of the reasons for that change is that John was on tour with Fish for a lot of the time that this album was being made," Trewavas responds. "With the first album, one of his main strengths was as an arranger. He tore certain songs to bits and rewrote them. But in making that first album, relatively speaking, we had a lot more time. It was none of that 'musical differences' malarkey, just that John can be a bit difficult to get hold of."

Trewavas chooses those final few words carefully. Is the elephant in the room that, for all of his undoubted musical genius, Beck can also be a bit of a loose cannon?

"I wouldn't use that term because it implies anger, and John is the opposite of that," Mitchell clarifies. "He's the most chilled-out person you'll ever meet."

He was downgraded due to being a bit unreliable, then?

"He can be flaky, yeah. But John really wasn't downgraded, as you put it," replies the guitarist patiently. "I had a window of opportunity to make this record and after my It Bites experience, I knew I might end up waiting around till mid-afternoon for him to show up. When I explained that to John, he said it himself: 'You thought you'd get more done alone to begin with.' He recognised that."

Given Mitchell's close relationship with Craig Blundell in Frost* and Lonely Robot, there was just one person for the position of drummer, though Trewavas believes that Henry Rogers of Touchstone may have made a good alternative. Certainly, there was no question of approaching Chris Maitland, or indeed Bob Dalton, about returning.

"My vision with the first Kino record was that it would be the four of us, all for one and one for all," Mitchell says. "That was naïve. I don't think Chris came through Porcupine Tree with a lot of money so I understood when he wanted to take the king's shilling in West End shows. It disappointed me but I got it. So, in the immortal words of Spinal Tap, I asked, 'Is there somebody within the organisation?'"

Mitchell makes it clear that all of the material featured on *Radio Voltaire* was intended for Kino. None of it, he insists, was reclaimed or reconstituted from that proposed third Lonely Robot record. All the same, it's easy to imagine *Idlewild*, *Warmth Of The Sun*, *Grey Shapes On Concrete Fields* and the title track, with its solar intercom introduction, serving such a purpose. The statement isn't intended as a criticism, more of an observation.

Mitchell laughs. "That might be to do with my voice," he says. "Maybe I should have got Jon Anderson to sing the album instead?"

The point is that Mitchell's writing style is now very well defined: that whole poppy prog thing, overlain with heavy guitars.

Below: Kino's live debut at the Mean Fiddler in London, 2005.

"Kino's potential was never fulfilled..."

Label boss **Thomas Waber** on Kino's reunion.

DEAN FARDELL

"I always found it frustrating that Kino's potential was never fulfilled. So much time had gone by and the first album was a decent seller for InsideOut. Had they made another album, they'd have become a much bigger name. But those guys had a great chemistry. Whether *Picture* sold 20,000 copies or less, that didn't make a difference to me. It was a good album – so fucking get on with it and make another!

"Of course the second album would have been better had John Beck had more time, but getting them back together was about seizing an opportunity. I think of *Radio Voltaire* as a jump cable – sometimes you need something to start the car. If the album makes certain people realise they should be much more involved, that's something I hope will happen with the third album." **DML**

Below: Kino's new album *Radio Voltaire*.

"I wish I could be dark, mysterious and atonal," Mitchell deadpans. "My problem is that I do love a chorus."

"The thing is, John's very good at what he does," Trewavas pipes up. "One thing I regret is not having more time to spend with John. Don't get me wrong, he did a great job. And like you say, he has a very identifiable style. If we do a third album — and I hope that we do — I'd like to write that one in a more traditional manner, with John — and John Beck, if he's interested."

The song *Out Of Time*, originally by Mitchell but featuring a showstopping bass solo from Trewavas, figures among the album's most 'out there' moments.

"That's right," Trewavas agrees. "On that one I had been messing around on the piano but instead started noodling away on the top end of the bass. I had no idea what else to do, but it sounded good."

The million dollar question is whether *Radio Voltaire* is sufficiently proggy for the diehards...

"Um... probably not," Trewavas responds with commendable frankness. "But there's plenty of prog out there, isn't there? What's the point in Kino trying to out-prog them? We've got our niche. Our music isn't simple but it's simple in its formulation." He goes quiet for a moment or two and then giggles. "Apart from anything else, I can't play as fast as some of those other bassists [in prog]. I tried some of that in Transatlantic and all it did was hurt my hand."

Mitchell is unapologetic: "There are lots of ways of being prog without going down the furry boots and cape route."

Following one of the biggest years in Marillion's long history, 2018 is shaping up to be just as busy for the band. Consequently there are no immediate plans for Kino to tour on the back of this album.

"[Marillion] were supposed to take a year to write another album," Trewavas confides, "but there's still life in *F.E.A.R.* and we're on the crest of a wave so why not ride it further?"

There are no plans to reactivate Transatlantic any time soon, Trewavas says, though his interview took place before Marillion headed to the open sea on Cruise To The Edge.

"Mike [Portnoy] will be there [with Sons Of Apollo]," he laughs, "and the subject is bound to come up over a non-alcoholic fruit cocktail. So watch this space."

All the same, Mitchell refuses to rule out the possibility of Kino shows in the future.

"Already people are asking whether we'll be coming to Chile. Calm down! You might think the record is piece of crap," he guffaws. "But should an offer be economically viable then I'll never say never."

Radio Voltaire is out now via InsideOut. For more information, see www.facebook.com/KINObandofficial.

A church bell clangs across a coastal breeze; seagulls flock overheard, squawking a staccato of notes which clash with the dull, heavy ringing of the distant bell. War drums fade in, at first a low rumble, then rising to thunder as it reaches the shoreline. Distorted guitars begin to growl and churn through a frenzied chord progression amid a choral chanting of "We are the seagullmen." And, just like that, this album has you enveloped in its own mad world: one brimming with imagination, colour and evil.

"I mean, the whole thing is pretty ridiculous, you have to laugh at it," smiles Danny Carey, the Tool sticksman who was seduced by the album's premise. "It's really fun to be a part of. I'm just playing with my mates and having a great time with it. I have a different musical conversation with these guys, with all the characters and ideas, and it gives me something to take back to Tool and to my jazz projects and vice versa."

The album was born from the bonkers brain of vocalist David 'The Doctor' Dreyer. He is someone who shrouds himself in anonymity and mystery in a band which boasts not just Danny Carey, but also bassist Pete Griffin (Dethklok, Giraffe Tongue Orchestra, Zappa Plays Zappa) and Mastodon guitarist Brent Hinds. Then there's chief songwriter and guitarist Jimmy Hayward, an animator and film director who's worked on *Toy Story, Monsters, Inc* and *Jonah Hex* – the latter a film scored by Mastodon. And though they are the true musical brains behind this project, it's The Doctor's vision that has propelled them forwards and helped realise such an idea.

"Brent Hinds introduced me to this wild dude called The Doctor about a decade ago and he had this idea for a nautical-themed thing with all this crazy lore and I thought it was a fantastic idea," Hayward reflects. "So I started to write some music for it. And I started jamming those ideas with Danny because we live a couple of blocks from one another and we jam a lot anyway. As the thing took shape, Brent got involved, Pete got involved and it organically took shape over some time. It's not something we just got together and piddled on over a weekend."

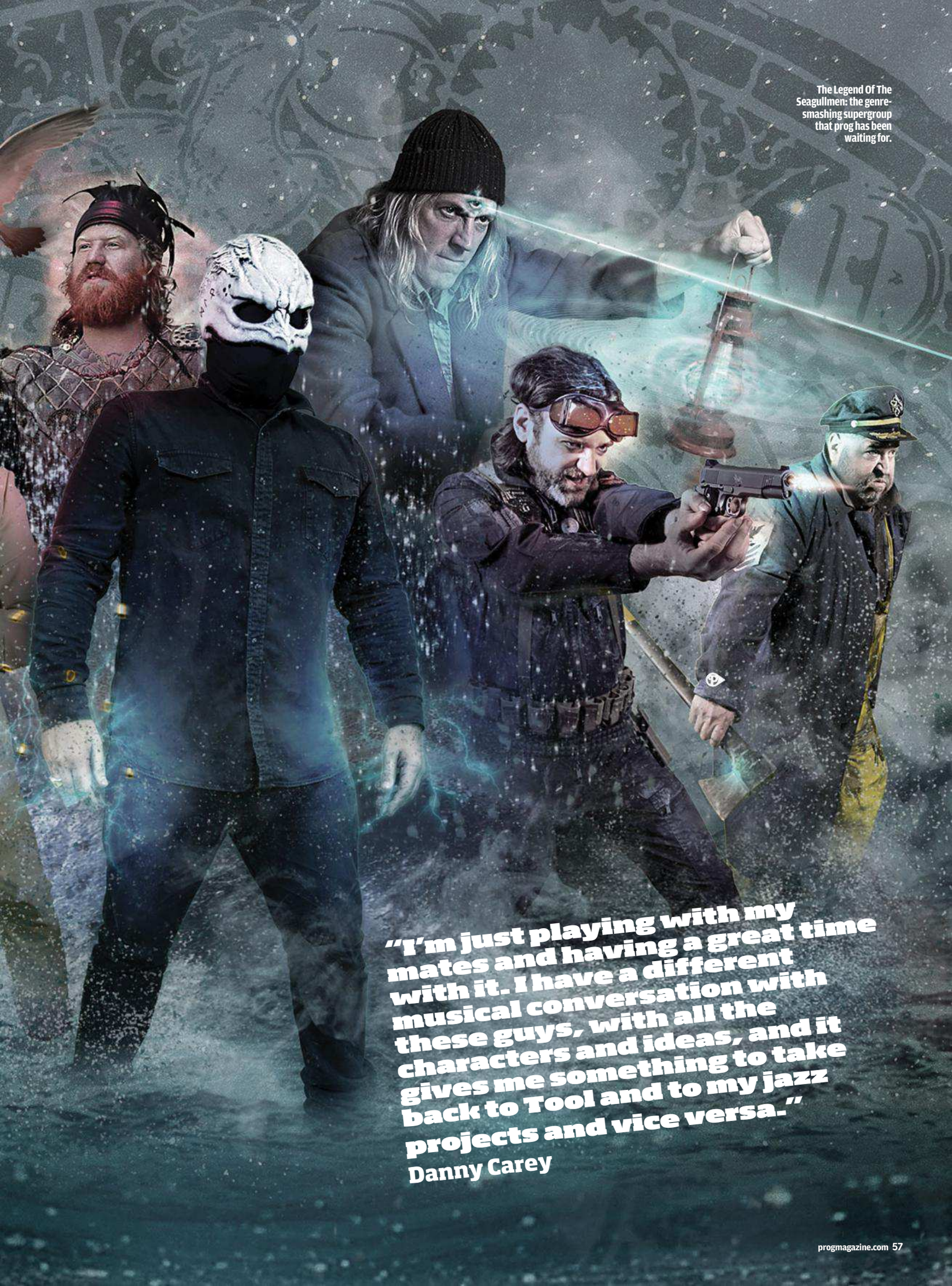
Across our conversation, Hayward is eager to accentuate the relaxed nature of this band. Talk of a project featuring Danny Carey and Brent Hinds was first reported over three years ago, and so from the outside looking in it's easy to wonder what took them so long. The truth however, is that the album has been a long-term, collaborative project they've been in no rush to finish. The album was something for everyone to enjoy together in their downtime, there was never a deadline. The songs have been allowed to evolve; they've been nurtured, they've developed.

The result is something that flows naturally, despite the numerous styles they flirt with: from dark, artful prog rock (*Curse Of The Red Tide*) to Ramones-style sunshine punk (*Legend Of The Seagullmen*) and *Kill 'Em All*-style thrash, only slower and far more menacing (*Rise Of The Giant*). Nothing is forced.

A mad idea for a nautical spaghetti western brought to life by members of Tool, Mastodon and film director/animator Jimmy Hayward could well have produced one of 2018's most brilliantly bizarre records. **Legend Of The Seagullmen** invite us into their crazy new world...

Stranger Tides

Words: Phil Weller



The Legend Of The Seagullmen: the genre-smashing supergroup that prog has been waiting for.

"I'm just playing with my mates and having a great time with it. I have a different musical conversation with these guys, with all the characters and ideas, and it gives me something to take back to Tool and to my jazz projects and vice versa."
Danny Carey

"That's one of the greatest things, you know?" Carey beams. "It's the same with Tool. Everyone's getting older, we've all got kids and there are all these other things going on. It gives you time to think, to look at the songs and rip them apart, do drugs and listen to them again, whatever it takes. You get to hear it through a few different pairs of ears and [in the end] you get something that has a lot more weight to it. It's a good thing, you know? With this, it really has just been friends jamming, so there's been no pressure or deadlines."

"Danny and I loved where the idea was at thematically and as we all started writing these tunes together, it became a really interesting evolutionary thing," Hayward continues, his voice always vibrant with enthusiasm for the band.

"It's great to have a solid concept behind it with the lore that The Doctor's created and the whole vibe, it's awesome to have that direction to go in. But it's still ever evolving," Carey adds. He seems in a more relaxed mood after their rehearsal, which our conversation now follows, but even still there is pride in his voice. "We're all very open to whatever happens whenever we go into the room. You almost let it take its own course, you don't wanna grip onto it too tightly or you'll stifle it. So you just let it take you where it may."

The world that they have created in which to house their nautical epic, which plays out at times like the best film never made, became almost too fertile a place for ideas, however.

Says Hayward: "When the The Doctor first brought the idea to me it was very far-ranging. We like to make jokes about how many characters he had when he first came in because it was so many, there were about 400. So we had to isolate it down to a more core thing and make it more focussed. We do have control of it now, but it's a battle of constant containment with The Doctor."

However, as Hayward reveals, the tidal surge of ideas that spewed from their captain and indeed from himself too, was down to their mutual oceanic heritage.

"The Doctor's from Cocoa Beach, Florida, he's lived by the ocean all his life. I've been called Admiral since I was a kid because I've always loved my sailing. Both of us grew up around surfing and boats and whales and all this sort of stuff so we're exploring things that are already close to our hearts."

Such exploration dives into inspired depths on the dramatic and psychotic *Curse Of The Red Tide*. It sees red tide, an algal bloom which can cause the sea to turn red, personified and turned into the record's perfect supervillain.

"One thing The Doctor and I have both experienced is the red tide," Hayward explains. "And when it happens you can't have shellfish and everything dies and it's this horrible, disgusting thing which is terrible for anybody who lives and works off the ocean. So The Doctor had this notion that if there was gonna be a villain to the story that was taking over and diseasing things to his own end it would be the red tide. He's made a really cool T-shirt, too!"

Closing the album, *Ballad Of The Deep Sea Diver* is a shadowy and demented, heavily King Crimson-inspired track which explodes into a glorious symphonic crescendo for its finale. Orchestrated with Dom Lewis — who scored the TV adaptation of *The Man In The High Castle* — at Hans Zimmer's secret lair, it gives the album a dramatic and suitably cinematic final flourish. Here, we go full spaghetti western: it's grandiose, bombastic and a hell of a lot of fun.

"When I started writing *Ballad*... I wanted to have this huge orchestral outro so Dom was the first guy I went to for that," says Hayward. "We have a combined love for many of the Italian composers of the 60s so the cool thing for us was tipping our hat to that era."

As the emphatic, bold strings parade away and the album dies back down to that eerie sound of a coastal breeze, it's clear that Jimmy Hayward's intrinsically cinematic mind has delighted in bringing The Doctor's ideas to life.

"One of the things I love when making movies is that I believe that the music is half of it. Go watch the first *Star Wars* with the sound off. It's just guys in tin hats, but when you listen to music there's this big cinematic interpretation.

"That's the joy of listening to music; you create your own film. I remember being a kid listening to *Number Of The Beast* and *Johnny The Fox* over and over and playing those images from the album covers in my head and just being swept away. It's important to have that storytelling element in your music. If you look at Tool or Mastodon, both those bands have a real cinematic quality to what they do and I think that's something that people really dig."

The record is one which lives up to the billing and hype that its personnel have generated, while forging its very own distinct and dastardly personality. For Danny Carey and the rest of the band, this is simply a fun project to do. They don't care what the world makes of it. "Take it or leave it, but this album's not gonna make or break any of us," he concludes. "That gives us a real confidence. We're just making something we love. I mean, we've gotta do something out here!"

Legend Of The Seagullmen is out now via Dine Alone. See www.theseagullmen.com for more information.

"It's important to have that storytelling element in your music. If you look at Tool or Mastodon, both those bands have a real cinematic quality to what they do and I think that's something that people really dig."
Jimmy Hayward

Left: "The Admiral" aka Jimmy Hayward. Top right: Danny Carey.

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Auri, L-R: Troy Donockley, Johanna Kurkela, Tuomas Holopainen.

"We wanted to create the music that's missing from this world."

Tuomas Holopainen

The Name Of The Wind

Light, love and laughter. Nightwish's **Tuomas Holopainen** embarks on a cosmic journey down the bumpy path of non-commercialism with **Troy Donockley** and **Johanna Kurkela** for new project **Auri**.

Words: Natasha Scharf **Images:** Tim Martindale

For centuries, the Cornish coastline has inspired creativity, from the legends of King Arthur and Merlin to the paintings of Anne Sudworth and Peter Pracownik, whose artwork has decorated Oliver Wakeman and Hawkwind album covers respectively. And now Auri have fallen under its misty spell.

"The photo shoot was so inspirational for the composing process," reveals Tuomas Holopainen, his voice full of awe. "Just being in Cornwall, in those surroundings and seeing some actual photos being taken of us really helped to get the whole process moving."

"We do recommend that to other bands: do the promo shoot first!" Troy Donockley adds.

It's a grey and wet Monday afternoon when *Prog* catches up with keyboardist Holopainen, multi-instrumentalist Donockley and vocalist Johanna Kurkela, not in Cornwall, but in a London bar. As the trio settle on vintage sofas, the chemistry between them becomes apparent. There are no arguments during the interview and they're so excited about their new album that they frequently finish each other's sentences. As Holopainen maintains several times, Auri are a real band, not a side-project and their insistence on being interviewed as a three-piece reinforces this.

Auri's seeds were sown in 2011 when Kurkela and Donockley wrote *Aphrodite Rising* with a view to working together on a full album. The stars didn't quite align and the collaboration remained on hold until Nightwish's hiatus last year. With time on their side, the pair dusted down their demos and invited Holopainen, who is Kurkela's husband, to join them. So what was it that transformed Auri from a pipe dream to reality?

Without hesitating, Donockley points at Holopainen. "It was him!"

The keyboard player looks genuinely surprised and asks, "What did I do?"

Donockley explains, "All three of us wanted to do something and it just so happened that the thing that Johanna and I worked on was a springboard for development. *Aphrodite Rising* had certain templates — the melding together of atmospheric, wordless ideas with melodic, catchy lyrics — that caused Auri to be born. When Tuomas came in as well, it became more of a viable and committed direction for all three of us to take."

"Auri was like turning a blank page and discovering a world that was completely new and boundary-less," offers Kurkela. "It's the soundscape of our friendship."

Holopainen adds, "We wanted to create the music that's missing from this world."

Their name symbolises light and optimism. Auri comes from the word 'aura'; it's also part of Kurkela's middle name and the name of a character in Patrick Rothfuss' fantasy series, *Kingkiller Chronicles*. Holopainen dismisses the idea of *Auri* being a concept album, but it's clear the author's work has had a profound effect on both him and his wife. Not only are there references to the series throughout, but he has also namechecked the *Chronicles*' travelling entertainers the Edema Ruh on Nightwish's *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*.

"The way Patrick Rothfuss writes is like poetry," swoons Kurkela. "The way he describes the landscapes, and the worlds he creates, just drew me in. The main character is a musician and the way he describes music and playing... I think he's come very close to describing the mystery of music."

Auri's brand of cosmic rock is just as mysterious. It fuses Donockley's unique instrumentation and Holopainen's cinematic grandeur with Kurkela's delicate viola and melodic vocals — she also sang on her husband's solo album *Music Inspired By The Life And Times Of Scrooge*. Her broad range and distinctive lilt add an otherworldly feel to the music. Like Nightwish's folkier interludes, Auri's sound often has a very intimate feel, none more so than on the album's unexpected closer *Them Thar Chanterelles*.

"That was her walking out into the forest, picking mushrooms," says Donockley,

Winds Of Change: Auri explore the "wild and wonderful" ways of music.

"It's the soundscape of our friendship."
Johanna Kurkela

nodding towards Kurkela. "We knew that would be the perfect coda for the album; it's like a joyous afterthought in the journey."

Holopainen offers a glimpse into his private life: "We were just picking chanterelle mushrooms and she started humming…"

The trio hum the song's melody in perfect harmony and Donockley continues, "Tuomas put some sublime harmonisations on it and it naturally seemed to fall into a celebratory festival of auld dance-style music. Johanna improvised over it in such a wild and wonderful way that it really complemented the spirit of a woman alone in the forest, and she's joined by the whole forest. Everybody's singing and dancing, the leaves themselves are the harmony vocals, and the stars too."

He leans forward and adds with a wink, "There's a secret dance tune in there as well but that's only for the cognoscente. We're hoping that someone somewhere will say, 'Wow, I don't believe it!'"

It's a world apart from Floor Jansen's Amazonian battle cries in Nightwish, but light and optimism are what Auri are about. It's fitting that the album should be mixed at Peter Gabriel's magical Real World Studios.

"Johanna was saying there's a symbolism to the place," says Donockley. "You have to walk over a bridge to enter the studio and it's like passing from one world to another."

That's a metaphor that could equally be made of Holopainen and Donockley's current lives. When *Auri* came out, the pair were midway through the US leg of Nightwish's *Decades* tour, which does raise the question of why the album has been released now.

"It was the record company's decision," says Donockley with a shrug. "I wish that *Auri* could have been released when we were at home, but we trust Nuclear Blast. We really wanna tour the album though."

Holopainen and Kurkela make noises of agreement, but it seems an Auri tour is still a few years away. The plan is to release a second album after the next Nightwish cycle, and then they'll have enough material to head out to play at…

"Tintagel Castle [in Cornwall]," says the keyboard player without any hesitation. "It's going to happen for sure at some point."

"Or maybe somewhere like Castlerigg Stone Circle in Cumbria. Imagine doing that!" adds Donockley.

"That would be something," says Holopainen, and Kurkela nods.

As *Prog* leaves the band dreaming of their Arthurian quest and heads back out into the busy city, the grey clouds part and the faintest of rainbows spreads across the sky.

Auri is out now via Nuclear Blast. See bit.ly/auri_band for more information.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR NIGHTWISH?

Tuomas Holopainen on the creative feast and famine of Finland's biggest music export.

WILL IRELAND

"After we finished *Endless Forms Most Beautiful*, I felt bland – I just didn't feel like doing anything for Nightwish," confides Tuomas Holopainen.

It seems unbelievable, but after two decades of riding on the crest of a creative wave, the composer hit a dry patch. So it's a relief to learn that after a two-year barren period, the ideas have come flooding back.

"It's a really funny thing and I can't explain what happened, but to the day that Auri finished [the album], all the floodgates opened and I felt really enthusiastic about starting the next Nightwish album," he reveals. "Since late September/early October, I've just been immersed in the new Nightwish album. I have the basic ideas for six songs at the moment and a whole bunch of ideas for songtitles and lyrical themes. I'm feeling very excited about it for the first time in three years and it's brilliant."

Holopainen has already reserved the band's rehearsal space in the Finnish countryside for next summer. If all goes to plan, the new studio album should drop in early 2020. But before all that, there's a tour to complete.

Decades celebrates the band's career so far and is centred around the recent 'best of' compilation of the same name. Just as the double album tracks the band's career in reverse chronology from *Endless Forms…* to their first demo, the setlist chronicles 22 years' worth of material, with live visuals from long-standing cover artist Janne 'ToxicAngel' Pitkänen.

"It was surprisingly easy choosing the tracks for the album," says Holopainen. "I spent a day listening through all the songs. It was the first time I'd ever done that and it was a lot of fun listening to the first albums. It was like, 'I remember that kid!' In a way, I miss that kid but I'm happy that we've evolved to what we are."

Nightwish head to Europe in May. They headline Bloodstock in August, with more UK shows expected.

"It's reassuring but a bit scary when you know what you're going to be doing with your life for the next eight years," says Holopainen. "But I kind of like the fact that I know what's going to happen." **NRS**

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They Might Be Giants

These avant-garde alt rockers from America's East Coast are known for their comical stage props, darkly humorous lyrics and a certain sitcom theme tune. They've just released their 20th album, so now we have to ask: **how prog are They Might Be Giants?** **Words:** Jo Kendall

Purple Toupee, *Fun Assassin*, *Hypnotist Of Ladies*, *Let Me Tell You About My Operation*. All bands that played Bognor Psych Fest last year, yes? No! You're reading the *teensiest* sample of 35 years of songtitles written by two men in one magic, manic act. The men are both Johns — Linnell on vocals, keyboards, accordion and woodwinds; and 'Flans' Flansburgh on vocals, guitars and 'etcetera' — and the act is They Might Be Giants.

Unless you lived under a rock in 1990 (or weren't alive at all), you'll need just the merest hint of their effervescent smash *Birdhouse In Your Soul* to be floored by its art pop stomp earworm. Ten years later they'd deliver another stuck-song anthem thanks to a popular TV sitcom, but let's address why they're appearing here first, before *that* strikes.

"Do *I* think we're prog?" repeats Linnell when asked the question. "Well, I can only supply the data — you can do with it what you will," he laughs as he recalls the duo's early years. "It's only when I look back that I see we lived in a bubble where creative work was a noble calling. It was a very nurturing scene to grow up in."

Born a year apart to families with interests in psychiatry, history and architecture, Linnell and Flans grew up in Lincoln, the historic city within the liberal state of Massachusetts, and met as teens in the mid-70s while working for their high school newspaper, *The Promethean*. "We wouldn't have hung out together otherwise," says Flans. "The office became a magnet for a certain group of kids, and we were all pretty like-minded."

> **"In Boston there was a record store that had a very limited selection, but it did have Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart records. Those records were influential because they were available."**
> ***John Flansburgh***

New album *I Like Fun*, the band's 20th.

Linnell and Flansburgh in New York City, August 25, 1988.

"We mostly wrote about whatever interested us," adds Linnell. "Music reviews, cultural information… We were very self-involved, typical teenagers. There was a suggestion that we should change the name to *Vanity Fair* because we were basically just writing for ourselves."

Out of everything, music loomed largest over the two men's lives. "We grew up with this very vital rock culture," says Flans. "People's eyes were burning up liner notes, figuring out who did what, where and when. It started with The Beatles, these cultural astronauts who introduced all these experimental ideas to the mainstream. Then in Boston there was a record store that had a very limited selection, but it did have Zappa and Beefheart records. Those records were influential because they were available."

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS

Inspired by the new wave movement of '77 and free-form college radio station WBCN, Linnell and Flans became interested in making music. "By the end of high school, Flans had picked up guitar and was experimenting with it," says Linnell. "I'd been playing piano informally. I was in the high school concert band and taught myself bass clarinet, but I never thought about making it my career."

While Linnell studied the summer program at Berklee College Of Music ("A friend suggested it — it was things like playing and learning how to be an arranger"), Flans was prog-deep with a four-track recorder, a mic, his guitar and an Electro Harmonix effects pedal.

"I'd make home recordings, soundscapes, like Brian Eno environments," he says. "It was very cacophonous, amorphous, feedback-driven things. But then, as the idea of the short, powerful song was reintroduced by the Sex Pistols, Talking Heads or Elvis Costello, I'd want to do that too."

College beckoned for both, but Linnell dropped out to play sax and keys in Rhode Island new wavers The Mundanes ("We were the only band there, so we played with everyone from Talking Heads to Ramones"), and by 1981, the two Johns were flatmates

SHERVIN LAINEZ

They Might Be Giants in 2017, L-R: John Linnell, John Flansburgh.

in Brooklyn, taking day jobs in graphics companies and supermarkets, while working on songs at night.

As a duo with a "very hyperactive show style", they hit the avant-garde club scene of Greenwich Village, initially making noises behind a friend's ventriloquism act that centred around political humour and nuclear disarmament. They settled on the name They Might Be Giants from a running list they kept – a George C Scott film title, and, says Linnell "something that sounded mysterious, like the other band names we saw on the posters for CBGBs and went, 'What's that all about?'"

They soon became a prop-laden draw (with giant fezzes and oversized cardboard heads) in performance art spots such as The Pyramid Club, ABC, The Limbo Lounge and Darinka. "It was a scene very much of its time," says Flans. "They were very droll audiences, transgressive and fucked up. They embraced performance art and spectacle in a way that was fearless."

The band's breakneck, theatrical style mixed with darkly humorous lyrics quickly gained a cult following.

"I have diaries from those years and we played every weekend, often twice," says Flans. "It was where we figured out who we were as performers. We started out very screamy and experiential and over a couple of years got tighter and tighter. Initially we were the performance rock thing in the art club and by the end we were the rock thing in the performance art club."

A trio of quirky avant-pop albums, from top: *They Might Be Giants*, *Lincoln*, *Flood*.

BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Big-heads: They Might Be Giants at the 1988 New York Music Awards.

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Reel Thing: John Flansburgh with his tape recording kit.

In 1983 and '84, as a trio completed by Flans' home-made drum machine, the band produced two demo cassettes, influenced by Pere Ubu, the Residents and powerful post-punk pop. Songs such as *Youth Culture Killed My Dog* and a theme, *They Might Be Giants*, would re-emerge on future releases.

"Very early on we stopped soliciting companies with demo tapes," says Flans. "Playing in these clubs was worth pursuing. We weren't chasing the dream, we were already living it."

And because of their popularity, Dial-A-Song was hatched. "Flans decided to put our songs on his own answerphone and turn it into a service where people could call up and hear them," Linnell explains. "We advertised in the back of the *Village Voice*, and put the number on stickers around town. That got its own momentum going – people would call in and the song changed every day. It made no money but it was fun."

Next, they self-funded a 7-inch flexidisc, *Wiggle Diskette*. Limited to 1,000 copies, it sold for $2 apiece, but they also stapled free ones to street signs and telephone poles around Manhattan. For further exposure, they made a video for the song *Put Your Hand Inside The Puppet Head* with a friend from the Darinka club, Adam Bernstein (who'd direct videos for The B-52s and others, before going on to major TV work with *Scrubs*, *30 Rock* and *Breaking Bad*).

The whole thing was a blueprint: the duo are seen goofing about on Williamsburg waterfront, the song featuring Flans in 'character voice' over a catchy, satirical, slightly surreal pop tune. It was the early days of MTV and it caught the attention of a new Hoboken-based label, Bar/None – and a whole new audience who snapped up their 1986 self-titled debut.

They Might Be Giants were now on the alternative rock fans' map. Next album *Lincoln* incorporated jazz, sea shanties and their first US Rock Chart hit, *Ana Ng* (inspired by Flans finding a vast listing of Ngs in the New York phone directory).

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Here Comes The *Flood*: Flansburgh and Linnell live on stage in 1989.

In 1989, they signed to Elektra, and under former Teardrop Explodes, Madness and — much to TMBG's delight — Elvis Costello producer Clive Langer, the album *Flood* was recorded. Previously rebuffed by the label, but now under the wing of Sue Drew, *Flood* was a welcome eruption of synthesiser-shiny, offbeat joy, typified by Top 10 single *Birdhouse In Your Soul*.

TMBG were officially A Big Deal in the US and around the world, but still somehow maintained some anonymity. Linnell says, "There was a very brief interval in 1990 after we appeared on *Top Of The Pops* when we got recognised on the streets of remote parts of the UK, but we quickly faded back into semi-obscurity."

> **"While it's a reflection of our natural personalities, humour is nitroglycerin in music. We had to balance it for our songs to withstand repeat listens."**
> ***John Flansburgh***

Avant-garde nods remained with a follow-up single, the Residents-referencing *Istanbul (Not Constantinople)* and the naming of a song *Sapphire Bullets Of Pure Love*, after the 1973 Mahavishnu Orchestra track. To some, such as *Spin* magazine, TMBG inhabited the same terrain as Zappa and the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band; or, as *Stereo Review* claimed, The Beach Boys at their complex peak. To others, they veered close to novelty.

"People don't know how careful we are about humour," says Flans. "While it's a reflection of our natural personalities, humour is nitroglycerin in music. We had to balance it for our songs to withstand repeat listens."

From *Flood*, the duo branched out into space for *Apollo 18*, featuring the 21-microtrack, created-for-CD-shuffle *Fingertips*. Next came full band recruitment — including *real* drummer Jonathan Feinberg (for touring), and Pere Ubu bassist Tony Maimone — for 1994's *John Henry* (deemed their 'straight' album, but really a man versus machine fable, with arty references to beat poet Allen Ginsberg and Belgian surrealist James Ensor).

Electronica returned for 1996's *Factory Showroom*. Then, after parting company with Elektra in 1999, *Long Tall Weekend* became the first MP3-only album released by a major label band, featuring songs from their continuing Dial-A-Song setup. Early adopters of all things internet, TMBG created one of the first artist-owned webstores in 2004, migrated Dial-A-Song online and have produced free monthly podcasts since 2005.

Thirty five years and 20 albums down the line, the band haven't run out of energy, wit or imagination. Whether supplying themes for TV, such as the Grammy-winning *Boss Of Me* for *Malcolm In The Middle*, writing rock operas (Flans' off-Broadway project *People Are Wrong!*, composed with his wife, Robin Goldwasser), or being ahead of the curve with new technology, their output is unflagging.

Bright, bold new album *I Like Fun* was recorded at Reservoir Studios, revisiting where monster breakthrough *Flood* was put together. Black humour and silliness skip hand in hand under wry, playful titles such as *Let's Get This Over With* and *An Insult To The Fact Checkers*. They tempted fate with their name, but the audience weren't duped. These men *are* giants in their field.

So, the data's in, and it looks like there's a case for the band being in these pages. Linnell's had a think too.

"If by prog you mean dedicated to high-quality musical ideas in a crowd-pleasing package? Then yes, we are."

Now it's time for you to decide.

Below: 1994's *John Henry*, featuring Tony Maimone.

I Like Fun is out now via Lojinx. See www.theymightbegiants.com for details.

YOUR SHOUT!

Well, They Might Be Giants, but it does leave the big question hanging: just how prog are they?

"For sure. *Floor* is a prog masterpiece."
Sean Hollenhors

"Never saw them as prog. More avant-garde pop with aspirations to the genre."
Marc Hughes

"Lifelong fan, but would say intelligent, quirky pop/alternative more than prog."
Jimmy Fawcett

"Of course they're prog: they condensed the music of Yes into a brilliant one-minute song - *Dallas* (*Trees*). Okay, probably prog-in-reverse."
Mychael Gertsenberger

"I've never really listened to them but I am listening to their song *XTC Vs. Adam Ant* now. It's prog based on the subject alone."
Lawrence Chamberlain

"Great band, prog in the sense that they are completely unafraid to experiment with musical styles... but not prog as we know it."
Kevin Gover

"Prog like the Flaming Lips, which means very prog."
Brad Whitcomb

"Delightfully eccentric."
Josephine Elliott

"I agree with Josephine above - they are delightfully eccentric in the same way 10cc were, or even the Bonzos. It's on the fringes of prog, because they are daring to create their own unique genre that cherry-picks elements of everything."
Stacy Doller

"They somehow manage to be prog in three-minute songs, often much shorter. No fear of odd time signatures, mixing and swapping styles, or lyrics about science, art, history - art history in fact - and questions about the very nature of existence (where *do* they make balloons?). And like Porcupine Tree, they got better after they got off their PCs and brought in a real band."
John Myhill

"The only They Might Be Giants song I know is *Birdhouse In Your Soul*. Great song! A band I have not yet explored. Think I'll delve into their discography on my Premium Spotify account later."
Brain Wilson

"I discovered them via Mike Rutherford's recommendation on TV back in the 80s. Often quirky time signatures. But prog? I think not."
Phil Morris

"*Birdhouse In Your Soul* is really good, but the joke wears thin after a while."
Jason Bartlett

"Proggy, proglier, and progliest! Honestly, been waiting for this feature for a long time, and thought about writing one myself. The *only* 'classic' prog feature they're missing is long compositions - they've got narrative, storytelling, thematically unified songs; odd time signatures and time signature changes within compositions; rock music played with unusual-for-rock instrumentation; a total-album-experience approach to album art; and restless inventiveness. Pithy prog, clearly."
Radio Eclectic

Oceans Of Slumber's third album was born out of heartbreak and grief, but its creators managed to find catharsis with the help of one another. The band's founder **Dobber Beverly** discusses the journey that he and the band took to get here.

Words: Sophie Maughan **Images**: Daniel Colvin

"We had been touring with bands like Enslaved, the band were doing really well, the relationships in the band were good. But then I had the dissolving of a 20-year long relationship with my then-wife. And one of the catalysts was the realisation — and this is when you *know* you're getting older — that I was finding out more and more about what I wanted from life, and about the things that she wanted. And just how much they differed."

The mood is one of personal reflection as *Prog* catches up with Oceans Of Slumber founder, drummer and pianist Dobber Beverly. Speaking from his hometown in Texas, Beverly is humble and softly spoken, and his stoicism is remarkable as he proceeds to ruminate on the turbulence and internal struggles that plagued the heavy, soulful proggers over the past 18 months following the breakdown of his marriage. But as it happened, there was someone trying to reach out to Beverly amid the interminable chaos — and that individual would eventually provide refuge and solace for a fellow creative soul locked in turmoil.

"Cammie [Gilbert, Oceans Of Slumber's vocalist] was in a long-term relationship with somebody who was in a similar way," Beverly explains. "The more time that she and I spent together, the better it felt. She's incredible — we're a pretty good match in a lot of ways. It was nice but obviously it came at a cost to other people — which is something that I don't care for. To feel the fallout of something like that — it created a lot of powerful *and* negative

HEARTS OF DARK

> “We’re essentially a very heavy band who also loved Pink Floyd and The Moody Blues. We have a lot of 70s progressive stuff because we grew up listening to that.”

feelings. Which brings us to the new record: absolutely everything about it is about this, our personal lives and the application of it to many other people who felt the same thing.”

The new record in question is the recently released *The Banished Heart*, Oceans Of Slumber’s third full-length and the long-awaited follow-up to 2015’s critically acclaimed *Winter*. Whereas the latter was more a personal evolution in grand romanticism and the deconstruction of being, album number three is a darker and more elaborate beast than its predecessor. And despite Beverly’s self-appointed role as the band talisman (“I’m like the final filter — I run through everything, then edit everything, rearrange or toss out”) it was Gilbert who had the significant hand in creating that mood this time around, taking full control of the lyrics.

Oceans Of Slumber, L-R: Anthony Contreras, Dobber Beverly, Cammie Gilbert, Sean Gary, Keegan Kelly.

“It’s the first time we’ve made a record where it’s been a personal injection of dismay,” Beverly explains. “Even with *Winter* it was a story about someone else, whereas with this record the story is about *us*. Cammie had the freedom and responsibility for the lyrical content, and I think that with her ability to summon what she has seen and gone through — and how she feels about me and us and the things around us — she absolutely elevated the record to the next level.”

Grandiose yet raw in its emotional volatility, and underpinned by an overwhelming sense of intimacy, *The Banished Heart* represents Oceans’ proverbial urge to purge — to channel past and previous struggles into an honest yet refined musical vision as they take the long hard road to perdition. The tender progressive nuances of their previous works remain intact, but there’s a pronounced sense of sonic evolution.

As an ensemble, visceral riffs and thundering drum licks are caressed by tranquil piano-driven interludes and searing melancholia. There’s also a devastating yet spellbinding duet (*No Color, No Light*) featuring Gilbert and Evergrey’s Tom S Englund. It’s as bewildering as it is beautiful, but given the overwhelming reaction to singles *The Decay Of Disregard* and *The Banished Heart*, the fans are relishing the diversity as much as the band are.

“The new music is obviously ramped up and more mature,” adds Beverly. “Sean [Gary, guitar] and I were just talking about it and I was like, we have the ability to summon these Type O Negative to Paradise Lost and Insomnium types of songs — we’re essentially a very heavy band who also loved Pink Floyd and The Moody Blues. We have a lot of 70s progressive stuff because we grew up listening to that.”

Shooting the videos for both singles in his hometown also allowed the movie-obsessed Beverly to indulge in his passion for all things cinematic, and to build even further upon the band’s adoration for anything atmospheric. With a compelling emphasis on symbology and the occult, the visual aesthetic for *The Decay Of Disregard* is especially striking — the bones, the blood, the burning pianos. Was that Gilbert embracing her inner voodoo priestess?

“No, she’s not an active goth or pagan or anything!” he exclaims, chuckling at the implication. “Cammie is just heavily into bones and taxidermy — all these dark

NESS

Blurred Vision: Oceans Of Slumber have made art from unsettled times.

things — so we were trying to give it a witchy feel. And with this band and scene, she's able to express that love more."

Like *Winter*, the theme of love and loss permeates *The Banished Heart*, which is vividly illustrated with lyrics such as: '*This dark winding road/A long path ahead/A sound in the distance of light escaping/Through the haze a silhouette/A glimpse of reality/Only leading to nothing, where no light dwells.*' The title track is the heart of darkness which the entire record revolves around. *Prog* notes that the album is something of an immersive journey. Would Beverly agree?'

"It was absolutely intended that way. During the writing of *Winter*, my niece was killed in an accident. Watching my sister go through those things…" Beverly trails off, his voice wavering with emotion. "You can offer words, you can hug, but you can't make sense of any of it. We need to have a place to take these thoughts and ideas — and with Gilbert's father dying seven years ago. You don't just write about it once then it goes away. It stays. You find new ways to process it. When you combine it all — the fading of my love and life over the years. We have to find places to put these things — and then we can make that journey home."

After realising that he needed to have complete control of the record from inception to birth, Beverly made the decision to produce *The Banished Heart* himself with "good buddy" Craig Douglas in a Texas recording studio. It was a process fraught with hardship (the state was devastated by flooding in 2017), but it provided further inspiration for the album. As did the many different artists and bands that played along in the background as the band jammed.

"There's absolutely nothing but music playing where we record — everything from Emma Ruth Rundle to Chelsea Wolfe and of course droves of old things like Type O and Incantation," he divulges. "It's funnelling down to us in what we write — it's diverse but all fitting at the same time."

With a string of UK shows alongside Epica and Myrkur this month, Oceans Of Slumber are certainly striving to be the best they can be in 2018. As for personal ambitions, Beverly is a man on a mission — he's determined to banish what he believes to be the skewed perception of the band's music in the US.

"We're trying to set our sights on how to expand ourselves in our own country," he says. "America tends to either focus on technical bands or angsty bands: we're not like either, so we are socially and musically unacceptable in the US. We are the ones choosing to make this music that's proving to be extremely hard to market and get in front of people; we're hoping this record is gonna change that.

"People can be like, here's an American band that's from Texas — somewhere they completely wouldn't expect this kind of music to come from — and think that it's actually worth their time, effort and money to support this band, buy a record or go to a show."

"It's the first time we've made a record where it's been a personal injection of dismay."

The Banished Heart is out now via Century Media. See www.oceansofslumber.com for more.

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It's All Full of Stars

The final frontier of outer space and the limitless experimental scope of progressive rock: it's a match made in the cosmos, and the **Space Rocks** event this month is bringing them together beautifully.

Words: Malcolm Dome

On April 22, the exploration of the cosmos and the prog world will come together at London's Indigo at the O2. Under the Space Rocks banner, it's a day of workshops, talks, music and more – the result of a partnership between the European Space Agency (ESA) and Twin V Ltd.

The day will feature three sessions. Session One is dubbed Space Academy and runs from 12.30pm-2.30pm. It will feature demonstrations and discussions, including an appearance from astronaut Major Tim Peake, and is particularly perfect for children of all ages. Session Two, Science Fiction Vs Space Fact, takes place from 3.30pm-6pm and explores popular portrayals of space and space exploration and how they stack up to the facts. Finally, Session Three, Space Rocks Live, features performances from Charlotte Hatherley and Lonely Robot.

"When the Rosetta project happened, we did a lot of outreach," says ESA Senior Science Advisor Professor Mark McCaughrean, a huge prog fan who presented the Band Of The Year award to Big Big Train at the 2016 *Progressive Music Awards*.

"The mission began in 2004 and carried on until we landed the spacecraft on comet 67P in 2014," he continues. "And we did end up doing a lot of work around this with musicians. Vangelis got involved very early on, which was great for me, because I got into prog through Yes, and of course Jon Anderson has worked a lot with him.

"Vangelis wrote a musical piece for Rosetta off his own back and allowed us to use it for free. A lot of others were also inspired to compose music based on the project, and this crossed into a lot of different genres. Then I met Alexander Milas of Twin V, who has a huge interest in space and we began to develop the idea for what has become *Space Rocks*."

"There's an unquestionable, inexorable link between the great beyond and culture, and it's been this way since the dawn of humanity," explains Alexander Milas. "We've been looking up and wondering what's out there and trying to make sense of it all through art, literature, music. Space Rocks is a celebration of that, and it came about in quite an interesting way.

"I was editor-in-chief at *Metal Hammer* magazine for about 10 years and invited Dr Matt Taylor, Project Scientist on the European Space Agency's magnificent Rosetta mission, to our annual award show. He's not just one of the world's foremost rocket scientists, but also a huge music fan. Matt and I got talking, some beers were consumed, and the next thing you know I'm talking with Mark McCaughrean, a humongous prog fan, as am I, and that's when things started moving.

Star Attraction: Lonely Robot's John Mitchell, one of the out-of-this-world guests at Space Rocks.

BACKGROUND: THANANIT/GETTY IMAGES

"One thing led to another, and over a year later, here we are."

Prog in particular has a strong musical connection to *Space Rocks*, as Milas outlines.

"We've spent a lot of time talking about why most of the music you normally associate with the cosmos is, in fact, progressive. This type of music has always been one step beyond the mundane and the immediate. That's where space exploration resides. It makes sense that the two have created beautiful things together."

McCaughrean believes Space Rocks is the perfect medium for cementing the relationship between prog and space, and also fulfilling the important task of informing people about the mechanics of exploring the galaxy.

"So many bands have been inspired by what goes on in the cosmos. This has been happening for decades. Of course, there's Hawkwind, who created space rock. But looking at the cover for something like the *Fragile* album makes you appreciate how strong the relationship is. That album sleeve piqued my own interest in prog rock, as did hearing Vangelis' music being used in Carl Sagan's TV series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*.

"What we also want to do with Space Rocks is tell people the truth about space travel. We have to strip away fact from fiction and inform everyone of the realism about the economics and basic science involved in going 'out there'. We're encouraging an open-minded attitude. The aim is partly to humanise scientists and what we do."

The musical artists who'll play at this event were carefully chosen.

"We wanted to avoid musicians for who this would be just another gig," insists McCaughrean. "It's great to have Charlotte Hatherley and Lonely Robot because they're both genuinely excited by the idea of space exploration. What we've also done is to ensure there are no clashes between the music and the panels. I've been to another event which tries to unify science and music, and unfortunately they have seminars at the same time as bands are playing — that's distracting."

Certainly Hatherley intends to be fully engaged in everything happening at Space Rocks.

Alexander Milas (top) and Mark McCaughrean, the brains behind this innovative event.

Space Rocks: promising a unique blend of science and sounds.

"This type of music has always been one step beyond the mundane and the immediate. That's where space exploration resides."
Alexander Milas

"I will be sitting in the front row for the two panels with those scientists — I'll be like a big kid," she says. "This will also be my first ever solo show, so to have it happening here is special. Playing this event is a no-brainer for me, given that my current album, *True Love*, has a sci-fi theme."

John Mitchell of Lonely Robot is equally thrilled to be able to indulge his passions for the cosmos and music.

"I'm delighted for Lonely Robot to be involved in Space Rocks. Since childhood I have been fascinated by all things to do with 'space'. So, to be asked to contribute musically to this inaugural event is a real honour."

And the London presentation is just the start, says McCaughrean.

"There are plans for more Space Rocks events," he explains. "We have ambitions to take it further afield, not only to other parts of Britain, but also to all 22 countries which are part of the ESA. However, nothing else is yet confirmed.

"We believe the balance here between science and music will be fine," McCaughrean continues, "but we'll only know if that's true afterwards. Everyone should leave with a greater understanding of what goes into making the exploration of space happen on a practical level, but also to realise how much creativity occurs because of what we witness in the cosmos. And prog is the perfect artistic medium to emphasise this."

Space Rocks take place at London's Indigo at the 02 on April 22. See www.spacerocksofficial.com for more information.

The Traveller: Charlotte Hatherley indulging her love of science fiction.

FUTURE WORLDS

Between The Buried And Me are releasing the first part of a double concept album that barrels headfirst into a dystopian nightmare, examining social media, issues of privacy and suicide. Guitarist **Paul Waggoner** tells *Prog* more...

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Randy Edwards

You don't have to subscribe to any particular ideology to acknowledge that the modern world has gone a bit peculiar. Whether you blame unscrupulous politicians or the unstoppable rise of social media, human beings aren't being very nice to each other at this point in time.

The upside to the whole enervating spectacle is that progressive music has been blessed and/or cursed with a whole new array of societal ills to write about. Never a band to shy away from conceptual conceits or narrative depth, Between The Buried And Me have channelled their post-millennial anxieties in the most fruitful way possible, conjuring a gargantuan, two-part new album that takes listeners into a very timely take on the classic dystopian nightmare.

"The definition of an automata is a mechanical construction made in the likeness of a human being," BTBAM's lead guitarist Paul Waggoner explains to *Prog*. "The overriding theme of the record is that in this society we have a tendency to take ownership of people. Whether it's actors, musicians or anyone in the public eye, with the use of social media and how accessible everyone is to each other, people become a commodity for society to be entertained by or taken advantage of, and that can sometimes have a really devastating effect on the actual person."

"WE'VE JUST TRIED TO KEEP PUSHING OURSELVES TO OUR LIMITS AND TO BE AUTHENTIC, TO MAKE MUSIC THAT WE LIKE. IT JUST PROGRESSED TO A POINT WHERE YOU COULD LISTEN TO US AND SAY 'OH, RIGHT! THIS IS A PROG BAND!'"

The new album's core narrative tells of a futuristic world, where one celebrity's dreams and innermost thoughts are broadcast live to an audience of millions. *Automata* explores the consequences and repercussions of this extreme invasion of privacy, but while the album is more cautionary tale than contemporary commentary, the parallels with the increasing ubiquity of social media and the narcissism and disorientation that it seems to encourage are obvious.

"We've seen it recently with suicides in the music industry, with Chris Cornell or Chester Bennington," Waggoner notes. "Some of these people seemingly had it all, but they're dealing with these internal demons, and we as a society have a tendency to exacerbate that to a degree. It's only going to get worse because technology has made the whole world so much smaller.

"People don't have privacy," he continues. "So from that we got this futuristic story where this professional entertainer has been commodified to such a degree that even his dreams are tapped into and publicised for our entertainment. We thought that was a unique way to make the statement we wanted to make."

Impressively, BTBAM have had the same line-up since 2005. As Waggoner relates the intricate but seemingly relaxed process of piecing a new album together, it's very obvious that he and his four bandmates have achieved a rare state of creative harmony. With all five men contributing ideas, it's hardly surprising that *Automata* brims with wild dynamics and perverse detours, but as the guitarist points out, most of the music they make together seems to just *happen*...

Seeing The Light: BTBAM examine the damaging effects of social media.

"That's absolutely true. It all happens very organically. Sometimes it's like magic, man. It's like we just blink a couple of times and the next thing you know, we've got an hour's worth of music. We build songs and figure out ways to make one song bleed into another song, and then suddenly you have a full album.

"At some point we try to come up with a firm plan of how we want it to start and where to go dynamically, and then we need a good way to bring the album to a conclusion," he explains. So I guess we definitely do all of that somewhat consciously, but it also just happens, you know? Sometimes I'll listen back to an album and think, 'Man, how did we do *that*? I don't even remember doing it!' It's just a unique synergy that we've been able to build over time."

Automata I's most obvious curveball, the simply melodic and succinct *Millions*, speaks of a band that are entirely comfortable with embracing less schizophrenic musical ideas and simply pursuing whatever feels right in the surreal confines of the studio. The album features plenty of the extravagant and intermittently extreme prog that the band are known for, of course, but it's these more unexpected moments of subtlety and respite that present the real challenge to longtime fans.

"We did surprise ourselves a little bit with that song," Waggoner nods. "Dustie [Waring, rhythm guitarist] wrote the whole first half of that song and he presented it as a single idea that could be one small part of a bigger song. But the more we listened to it, the more we thought, 'This is so cool!' It was just a complete song, basically, and we felt that the parts he wrote were really strong and that they'd probably get lost if they became incorporated into a more elaborate song structure. Currently it's my favourite song on the album. I love the way it starts and builds, the way it ends. It's so different for us — an actual song, as opposed to some grandiose soundscape!"

Given the way the band's sound has progressed over the last decade, could the BTBAM of 2007 have conjured something as straightforward as *Millions* or would they have instinctively messed it up with a blast beat and some screaming?

"Probably the latter!" Waggoner laughs. "It may not even have made the cut for not being weird enough! It's interesting how your brain works when you get a little older and you're more likely to appreciate simpler ideas.

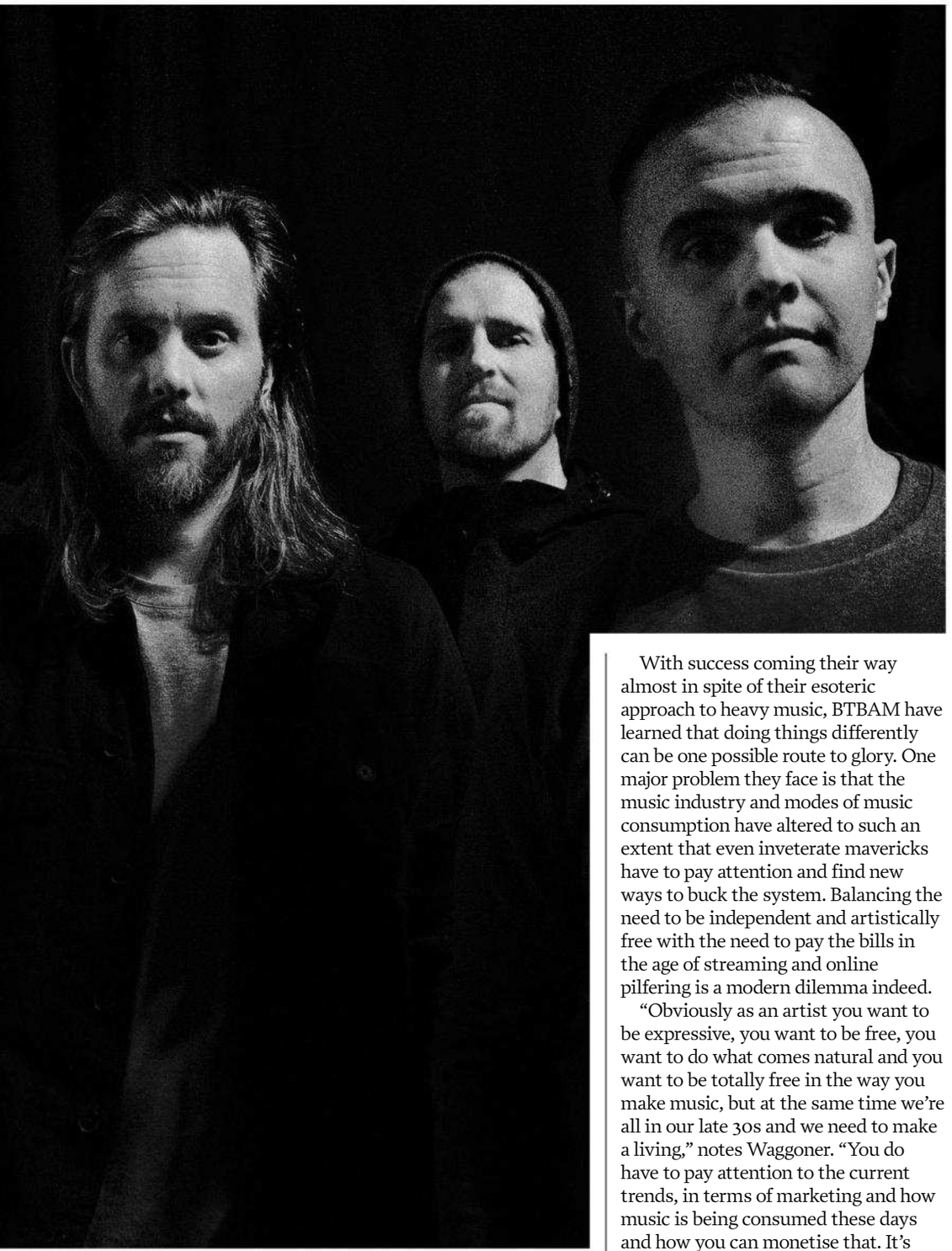
"When I was younger, I was in constant competition with myself, nothing was ever good enough or cool enough. But as you get older you realise that you were probably wrong and those simple ideas are actually really cool. It's a great song and somehow it still sounds like us."

BTBAM, L-R: Dustie Waring, Paul Waggoner, Tommy Rogers, Blake Richardson, Dan Briggs.

"WE REALISE WE'RE LIVING IN A SHORT ATTENTION SPAN SOCIETY, SO WE FIGURED WE'D GIVE PEOPLE TWO DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES TO ABSORB THE MATERIAL, INSTEAD OF HITTING THEM SUDDENLY OVER THE HEAD WITH A TON OF MUSIC AND A TON OF CONTENT."

Although they first emerged as ostensible members of the so-called math metal movement that was kicked off by the likes of Candiria and The Dillinger Escape Plan in the late 90s, BTBAM were exhibiting a strong affiliation with progressive rock as far back as their classic third album *Colors* in 2007. At this point the band have been fully assimilated into the prog world, with only those remaining extreme metal tropes providing any kind of barrier to reaching that broader prog audience. If 2015's *Coma Ecliptic* was the breakthrough the band needed, *Automata I* feels like the right next evolutionary step: an album full of both accessible and jarring moments, it might still blow a few Yes fans' wigs off, but this band's sincere passion for prog is undeniable.

"I guess it's been a kind of progression that we started with *Colors*," Waggoner says. "Not that we were ever trying to depart from our usual sound, but we found a more *mature* sound, one that maybe incorporated some more of our classic prog influences. We never really stuck to the true metal or hardcore formula in our songwriting and it was always



important to keep pushing ourselves. I don't think we made a conscious effort to say, 'Okay, we want to be a prog band'. We've just tried to keep pushing ourselves to our limits and to be authentic, to make music that we like. It just progressed to a point where you could listen to us and say 'Oh, right! This is a prog band!'

"So many bands are subject to trends," he continues. "What's hot one minute can turn into something with absolutely no market a minute later. The fact that we've been able to keep doing this and remain true to ourselves and still have a career, well, we've just been very lucky."

With success coming their way almost in spite of their esoteric approach to heavy music, BTBAM have learned that doing things differently can be one possible route to glory. One major problem they face is that the music industry and modes of music consumption have altered to such an extent that even inveterate mavericks have to pay attention and find new ways to buck the system. Balancing the need to be independent and artistically free with the need to pay the bills in the age of streaming and online pilfering is a modern dilemma indeed.

"Obviously as an artist you want to be expressive, you want to be free, you want to do what comes natural and you want to be totally free in the way you make music, but at the same time we're all in our late 30s and we need to make a living," notes Waggoner. "You do have to pay attention to the current trends, in terms of marketing and how music is being consumed these days and how you can monetise that. It's very difficult and I think we're always at odds with that.

"That's where we have most of our disagreements as a band," he says. "It's not about the music or the creation of the art itself, it's more about how we're going to present the art and tour. What bands are we gonna tour with? What kind of venues? All of that. That's where most disagreements come, on the business side. But it *is* a business. At the end of the day we're an indie prog metal band on an indie label and we have to be smart in the way we do things or it could all come crashing down. It's an interesting dynamic."

Where there's a will, there's a way. Even though they are as susceptible to the whims of a rapidly changing technological age as anyone, Waggoner and his comrades always seem to be able to find their own, subtly different angle. *Automata*'s two-part unveiling is both a neat way to engage people in the unfolding of the album's story *and* a shrewd attempt to side-step one of the great problems that nearly every musician faces in the 21st century.

"We realise we're living in a short attention span society, so we figured we'd give people two different opportunities to absorb the material instead of hitting them suddenly over the head with a ton of music and a ton of content," Waggoner explains. "As an album, it's very dense. There are a lot of layers, which is why we thought it would be better to divide it into two parts. We didn't want to overwhelm people with too much. But I still see it as one album. If I listen to it in my car, I listen to both parts. Hopefully when the second part comes out, people will have fully digested the first part and they'll just add the second part to it and see it as one piece."

It's understandable that Waggoner is focused on promoting the first part of *Automata*, not least because it's a substantial enough piece of work on its own. But he also seems to be enjoying the chance to tantalise fans with a few intriguing details about what to expect from part two.

"The songs on the second part are a little more involved, but at that point we're creating a crescendo toward the end of the album so it necessarily gets a little bit more intense. I think there's one song that will surprise people a little, stylistically speaking. I don't want to give too much away, but I think it might catch people off guard. I think they'll like it, but they'll be like, 'Woah, what the hell's going on here?'"

After their current tour of the US with Leprous ends, BTBAM will start preparing for a potential US festival onslaught this summer, with European and UK dates to follow later in 2018, presumably once everyone has had time to digest *Automata*'s miraculous sprawl. Even as they continue to battle against the limits and rigors of the music biz machine, Paul Waggoner and his long-time associates are having more fun than ever. The dream lives.

"A lot of this is like Groundhog Day, man. You write an album and then you do the tour circuit for a couple of years, but we *always* try to keep it fresh," he concludes. "We like to keep the fans on their toes, and we like to keep ourselves on our toes too. Hopefully we'll be performing this stuff live to a somewhat captive audience!"

Automata I is out March 9 via Sumerian. See www.betweentheburiedandme.com for more information.

THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME

Robert Reed has never been one to shy away from juggling multiple musical projects, or from a bloody good rant. *Prog* finds out what he's been up to...

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Aga Tomaszek

Rob Reed likes a rant. You know one is coming because he usually announces it. "I'm about to rant," he'll say. Or, "This is one of my rants."

There are quite a few things that Reed likes to rant about. Things like Spotify. "It's the final nail in the coffin. As a musician, you don't get anything from it. You're basically giving away your music for free. It's the Devil's work."

Or modern prog. "I'm not a big fan of it. It's all a load of widdling. Yes, we know you can play your instrument, but where's the tune? I'll probably get burned at the stake for saying that."

And then there's social media. "You see so many bands on Facebook, going, 'Oh my record's the best thing in the world, I've just written the best song ever.' And you're thinking, 'Oh please, that's embarrassing.' If all those bands had to reveal what they were doing business wise, that would put an end to the bullshit."

> "I want to make the best record possible, which is a lot more grief and pain and money and sacrifice."

Don't get the wrong impression. The driving force behind Welsh prog band Magenta, the *Sanctuary* series of albums, all-star quasi-classical blowout Kompendium and other projects and collaborations too numerous to mention is perfectly good company. He's funny and self-deprecating, and a lot less stern than he looks in photos. But when something is bugging him, he can't help but let it out like a Victor Meldrew of The Valleys.

We're sitting in Reed's studio, surrounded by a clutter of keyboards and computer screens. The studio is located at the top of the tower of a converted pop factory near Pontypridd, South Wales (that's 'pop' as in soft drink, rather than music). Reed grew up nearby, and still lives just down the road. A few years ago, the building was home to a TV company. Reed worked here, writing music for Welsh-language programmes (despite his undiluted Rhondda accent, he says he doesn't speak a word of Welsh).

This eyrie is the centre of Reed's universe. It's from here that he writes and records his music, and masterminds his label, Tigermoth. He has used virtually every corner of the building to film the impressively entertaining videos that accompany many of his songs. He frequently spends nine or 10 hours a day holed up here. It's the perfect habitat for a man like Rob Reed — a one-man music industry, and an outsider even in a scene made up of outsiders.

"I don't like the bullshit schmoozing involved in the music business in London," he says, with the firmness of someone who has been on the receiving end of it one too many times. "All the falseness. I can't do it. It's probably to my detriment, not playing the game."

Maybe, though it seems to be working out fine for him. Reed has spent a lot of time in the studio recently, juggling two imminent projects. The first is his reworking of the theme to iconic science fiction TV show *Doctor Who*. It came about after a friend who works in the CGI industry asked if he could "do something in the style of Mike Oldfield". "Why not?" thought Reed. He recorded what he describes as "a straightforward version", then passed it on to frequent collaborator (and former Oldfield producer) Tom Newman, who sprinkled his magic dust over it.

"He put all this crazy dialogue and stuff on it," explains Reed. "Just took it up to another level."

It's a sly piece of iconoclasm. Reed isn't the world's biggest *Doctor Who* fan. Nor is he a particular aficionado of Delia Derbyshire, the visionary composer who arranged the original theme, which is odd because he seems to be cut from the same lone-maverick cloth. This lack of reverence gave him free rein to mess about with things.

"Because I haven't got a connection, I didn't think twice about it," he says. "It wasn't untouchable. It'll probably piss *Doctor Who* fans off, but I don't really care. There's other bits of music that I wouldn't go near."

Such as?

"Well, I wouldn't touch *Tubular Bells*. Even though some people say I already have."

He laughs at this. He's talking about the other thing that's due to land in the next few weeks. Reed spent much of last year working on the third *Sanctuary* album, a continuation of the solo passion project that he began in 2014.

Robert Reed: an outsider in a scene of outsiders.

The first *Sanctuary* record was an unabashed tribute to Mike Oldfield, Reed's big hero. It consciously evoked Oldfield's landmark trilogy of albums — *Tubular Bells*, *Hergest Ridge*, *Ommadawn* — in sound, structure and spirit.

Reed admits that the original *Sanctuary* album was "close to the bone in places", though it came from a place of respect and a desire to do what no one else has done: namely, build on what Oldfield had created and then abandoned. Still, he managed to piss off the more passionate sections of Oldfield's fanbase, who accused him of everything from piggybacking on a greater talent to outright theft.

"Oh, I knew I was going to upset some people," he says. "And it's always the ones on Facebook that are the most mouthy."

He draws breath. There's another rant coming. "I'll get slated for this, but if the *Sanctuary* albums were released with Mike Oldfield's name on them, they would be hailed as the second coming of Christ by all the Oldfield fans. Cos it's exactly what they want in style. But cos my name's on it, they go, 'Oh, it's not the real thing.'"

The haters have missed the bigger point. If *Sanctuary* was Reed's sole focus then their claims of using Oldfield as a leg-up might have some validity. But it isn't. *Sanctuary* came 30 years into a career that has taken in prog, rock, electronic music and 90s pop. "Oh, I've been around the houses," Reed says.

It was pop that made Reed the man he is today. In the 90s, he was one half of dance pop outfit Trippa with future Magenta singer Christina Booth. Trippa was his big shot at stardom. "I wanted to be a pop star," he says. "I wanted to be on *Top Of The Pops*. I put the prog stuff on the back-burner. But then I'd sneak it into my music anyway."

Reed never did get on *Top Of The Pops*. Trippa came crashing to the ground in the early 00s, after several years of being fed through the music industry mincer with little to show for it. The final straw came when he had to restrain Booth from leaping over a desk to physically attack a record label executive. "I thought, 'Fuck, I can't be doing pop any more,'" he says. "I was fuming at how it turned out. All the effort we put into it." He looks pained. "It scarred us."

That's when Reed decided to go for broke and form Magenta. It wasn't quite the prodigal son returning home. Rather, Magenta was more like his prog coming-out ball. Their debut album, 2000's *Revolutions*, was a grand 'fuck you' to the mainstream music business, and a repudiation of Reed's own thwarted pop ambitions.

"I thought, 'I'm going to make the most prog album in the world,'" he says. "It's going to be a double album, it's going to be a concept album, it's going to have four songs on it and a big booklet. Fuck everyone."

It was a bold move. Magenta arrived at a time when prog's stock market value was only just beginning to pull itself off the ocean floor, where it had been bumping along for the last decade with an anchor tied around its feet. In Reed's view, the bands who were operating in that sphere at the time were busy denying that they were prog. Cue another mini-rant.

"When we started doing Magenta, prog was a swear word," he says. "Bands were scared to carry the flag. You had all the big bands who are now gracing the cover of your magazine going, 'No, we're not a prog band.'"

Like who?

"Ah no," he says, grinning. "I'm not getting in trouble."

Prog has done well for Reed ever since. He quit working in TV a few years ago. These days he sustains himself with his own music, funnelling what he earns back into his various musical enterprises.

"It's on a knife edge, constantly," he says. "The problem today that every band hits is just the massive amount of stuff that's out there. There's only so much disposable income, only so many fans, and there's way too many records being released to fill that."

It's not just quantity that's the issue, he says. It's quality too.

"I see certain people making records and not really giving it the love and respect it deserves for the fans: 'I'll do it in the house, I won't really put drums on it, I don't give a fuck about the singer being out of time — I'll just knock it out cos I want to be onstage.'"

Presumably that's not what you do?

"No, I want to make the best record possible, which is a lot more grief and pain and money and sacrifice," he says. "Magenta opened the floodgates for the female fronted band thing, and everyone looked at it and went, 'The majority of the audience are male, so if we stick a girl upfront, not wearing much…' But you've got to have good tunes. You can put a pretty girl upfront, you can throw money at it, you can have all the bullshit, but the hard bit is sitting at the piano, writing the tune. [Laughs] That's the bit that kills me."

Do you have the tunes?

"Yes, I think so. I'm self-critical enough to know that everything I put out is the best I can possibly do. Nothing leaves this room that I'm not confident I've spent blood, sweat and tears over. I wouldn't put it out if it wasn't good."

Where does the need to be in charge of everything you do come from? Do you have a big ego?

"Well, what's ego and what is self-belief?"

Ego is when you think you think every decision you make is better than everybody else's.

"[Pause] No. Because I value everyone's opinion. But in the end, it's my money and my balls on the line. If I'm spending 20 grand making a record, then I've got to have the final say."

There's no arguing with what has emerged from that final say. But neither is there any arguing with the fact that Magenta and especially *Sanctuary* are hardly pushing things forward. Both exist in a happy bubble, content to stand on the shoulders of giants. Hand on heart, is he bringing anything new to the party?

"Bloody hell, that's a question. Is there an original bone in my body?" He pauses. "I'd have to be honest and say no. I can't think of anything, especially in the prog stuff, where I've gone, 'Oh, that's different.' For me, it's about doing great songs within a certain style. What I bring is some great new chords and melody. But the way it's packaged up? No. There's nothing new to be found in the prog style."

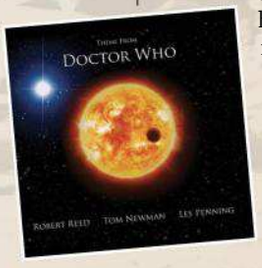
This isn't being entirely fair on him. Magenta's last album, 2017's *We Are Legend*, added a shot of modern electronic rock to the mix. Another musical venture, Chimpan A, found Reed letting his maverick flag fly free. "That was prog rock in the truest sense," he says of the latter's sole album, released in 2006. "It mixed Björk, James Bond, electronic music. I thought, 'Let's chuck everything in the mix.' If I had to say what is groundbreaking musically, it's that."

A second Chimpan A album could appear later this year. The music is done, but he has a mad idea to make a film to accompany each of its six tracks. He's also considering a new Magenta album at some point. "Because that last album was so modern, I'm tempted to go the other way. I'd like to make it like an antique, an old bit of furniture."

That's Reed's approach in a nutshell: a little bit of the old and a little bit of the new, something of the past meets something of the future. His portfolio is a perfect balancing act, something that has enabled him to keep his head above water where others have struggled. Suddenly, the Victor Meldrew of prog is back in the room.

"I've been doing this long enough to know the bullshit that's involved, whether that's bullshit on Facebook or record company bullshit. I run the labels, so I know the harsh reality of what's being sold. Everything I earn from my music all goes back into it. I don't want a gold house with a Ferrari outside."

He pauses. "Well, I wouldn't mind, but that's not going to happen."



Theme From Doctor Who is out now via Tigermoth. See www.facebook.com/RobReedOfficial for details.

"I'll get slated for this, but if the *Sanctuary* albums were released with Mike Oldfield's name on them, they would be hailed as the second coming of Christ by all the Oldfield fans. Because it's exactly what they want in style. But cos my name's on it, they go, 'Oh, it's not the real thing.'"

EERIE

The Osiris Club have unmasked themselves – literally – for album number two. The London group talk "quaint creepiness", their love of 70s prog and just why they appeal so much to Scandinavians.

Words: Thea de Gallier
Images: Rich Thrift

The last time *Prog* met The Osiris Club, the London-based band were shrouded in mystery, hiding their identities behind white masks. Their Lovecraftian and sci-fi inspired songs (their name is a nod to the secret society featured in the *Hellboy* comics) took centre stage as their faces were obscured by masks, but for the second album *The Wine-Dark Sea*, the humans behind the masks have revealed themselves.

"It became a gimmick that we never wanted it to be," says vocalist Sean Cooper, who joined the band as a permanent member in 2015. "We wanted anonymity because we just wanted people to listen to the music. We had to get rid of the masks after because there was too much comparison [to other bands]."

"My take on it is that we were influenced by The Residents, a classic avant-garde 70s band," says drummer and main songwriter Andrew Prestidge. "Their whole thing was being completely hidden, you never knew who they were. That was the interest in doing it really, the theatrical side of the band. But with us it was always more about the music. We never really had anonymity because we always had our names out there."

Prestidge says that, unlike some other costumed or mask-wearing outfits, The Osiris Club never intended it to become the focal point of the band. The idea was to not detract from the songs they were performing, but when the time came to plan and write the second album, he realised the mysterious entity the band had unwittingly ended up being was something of a rod for their own back. The masks became a talking point and a distraction.

In 2015, the black metal outfit Ghost Bath came under fire for hiding their identities and failing to correct press who'd reported that they were from China, citing a similar desire to let the music speak for itself and not let their identities become a topic of interest. But it was viewed by some as a pretentious PR stunt, and The Osiris Club were wary of being written off in the same manner.

"We can make something up!" laughs Prestidge, when pressed on whether they ever planned to use the mystery surrounding them as bait for the music press.

"Most of last year I've been playing with a band called Warning," he says. "Big metal band playing a few festivals. No one in the band dresses up, it's just a bunch of older geezers and all the reviews were like, 'They lose metal cred points for wearing flip-flops on stage.' It is sad though that nowadays it can't just be about music. There has to be like a package put on everything."

"It's like Seasick Steve and his backstory, everyone believed that," adds Cooper. "When apparently he was just a session musician from the States."

Frustrations with modern music marketing aside, the story around the new album is one worth discussing. The first record, *Blazing World*, made use of several vocalists, again

The Osiris Club, L-R: Raf Reutt, Andrew Prestidge, Sean Cooper, Marc Tondeur, Chris Fullard.

TALES

building on the idea that the music, rather than who was making it, was the main focus, but for album two, Prestidge wanted to cultivate a more solid line-up.

"There were a few vocalists on the last album and they needed something a bit more solid for this new one," says Cooper.

Ulver's Kristoffer Rygg also took on some vocal duties on the first record, and it was through him that the band got their sound for the second.

"We went over to Norway to record the new album in August 2016 and the guys from Ulver were really great in connecting us with the right producer," says Cooper.

That producer is Ulver and Myrkur collaborator Anders Møller, and tracking and mixing took place at Subsonic Society studios in Oslo. "Ulver lent us backline so we were able to use the really beautiful instruments they were able to give us," Cooper continues. "We were holed up in the studio for two weeks. It was above a synagogue and it was like a loft space that looked like it came from the 1950s, with Steinway pianos and grand organs."

> "It's more mid-70s prog rock stuff that I'm into. I wanted to make something that I'd like or be into."
> **Andrew Prestidge**

Once again, Rygg makes a guest appearance, this time on the whimsical *Island Of Stone*, a slice of retro-sounding fantasy rock, which, with its rising and falling scales and psychedelic organs, allows the band to explore more fully their 70s sensibilities (King Crimson and Genesis are cited as influences) and produce a sound that has enough accessible throwbacks to draw new listeners in, but not so many that it becomes a pastiche.

Honing in on these sounds is largely Prestidge's handiwork. "Andy's a bit of a synth boss. I don't know anything about them," laughs Cooper.

> “We wanted anonymity because we just wanted people to listen to the music. We had to get rid of the masks after because there was too much comparison to other bands.”
> **Sean Cooper**

“It’s more mid-70s prog rock stuff that I’m into,” Prestidge affirms. “I wanted to make something that I’d like or be into.”

As well as bringing sonic influences more sharply to the fore, horror and fantasy are, once again, big sources of inspiration. “Some songs are based on the writings of Robert Aickman,” says Prestidge. “He’s classed as a horror writer who makes short, strange stories. You get to the end of the stories and there’s no resolve, and you think, ‘What was that all about?’”

Rather than delving too far into the supernatural, Prestidge’s creative muse was the distinct creepiness that can be found, usually after twilight, in backwater England. Cooper shares his vision, going off on tangents about abandoned train stations, seaside towns after dark and *The League Of Gentlemen*, and the pair jokingly sum up the vibe of the album as *The Famous Five* on LSD.

“There’s a country feel to it,” says Prestidge. “We were talking earlier about the Englishness of it all.”

“I guess another influence is someone like Syd Barrett,” interjects Cooper. “The way he would use really antiquated phrases about the washing on the line, and very English terms that it’s hard for anyone to relate to if you haven’t grown up here. But we didn’t want to make an album that’s so single-minded to people being brought up here — we try and write a bit more broadly.”

Opening song *Wormwood Grange* is a perfect example of quaint creepiness meeting broader horror tropes. “It’s all based around childhood dreams and insecurities,” explains Cooper. “A girl is travelling through France with her family and she comes across a creepy, decrepit doll’s house in a shop. One thing leads to another but it turns into a waking dream, and she’s trapped in the doll’s house. It’s creepy and horrible, and is full of terrifying paintings that you’d never hang in your house. It’s not really ghostly or scary but otherworldly.”

Such distinct lyrical imagery meant that ideas for the album’s visuals were plentiful: indeed, the doll’s house itself can be seen on the front cover. Cooper — who works as a designer when he isn’t on vocal duties — has been location hunting for an upcoming music video, which involved him scouting South London’s shabbiest train stations. He also creates the visuals that accompany the band’s live shows, while Prestidge took charge of the album artwork for *The Wine-Dark Sea*, in collaboration with artist Julia Harris, whose intricately detailed illustrations bring the album’s unsettling themes to life. Harris is also a collaborator with London prog outfit Suns Of The Tundra, of which Prestidge and original Osiris Club vocalist Simon Oakes are members.

The antiquated horror themes at the heart of the band have also earned them a captive audience in Scandinavia. “I think certain countries respond to the image more,” says Cooper. “We’ve played in Norway quite a few times and had this massive reaction there and had amazing reviews. There’s always that danger that you’re looking slightly elitist like making this kind of music — or being accused of it — because you feel like you’re excluding certain people. It’s what we know and what we’re influenced by and if we do it honestly and with passion, you can’t go wrong with it.”

In terms of creative control, Cooper says their label Indie Recordings largely let them get on with it, without trying to steer their image in a certain direction. “Having control is really nice too because nothing gets diluted then,” says Cooper. “We’re lucky we’ve got a good outlet.”

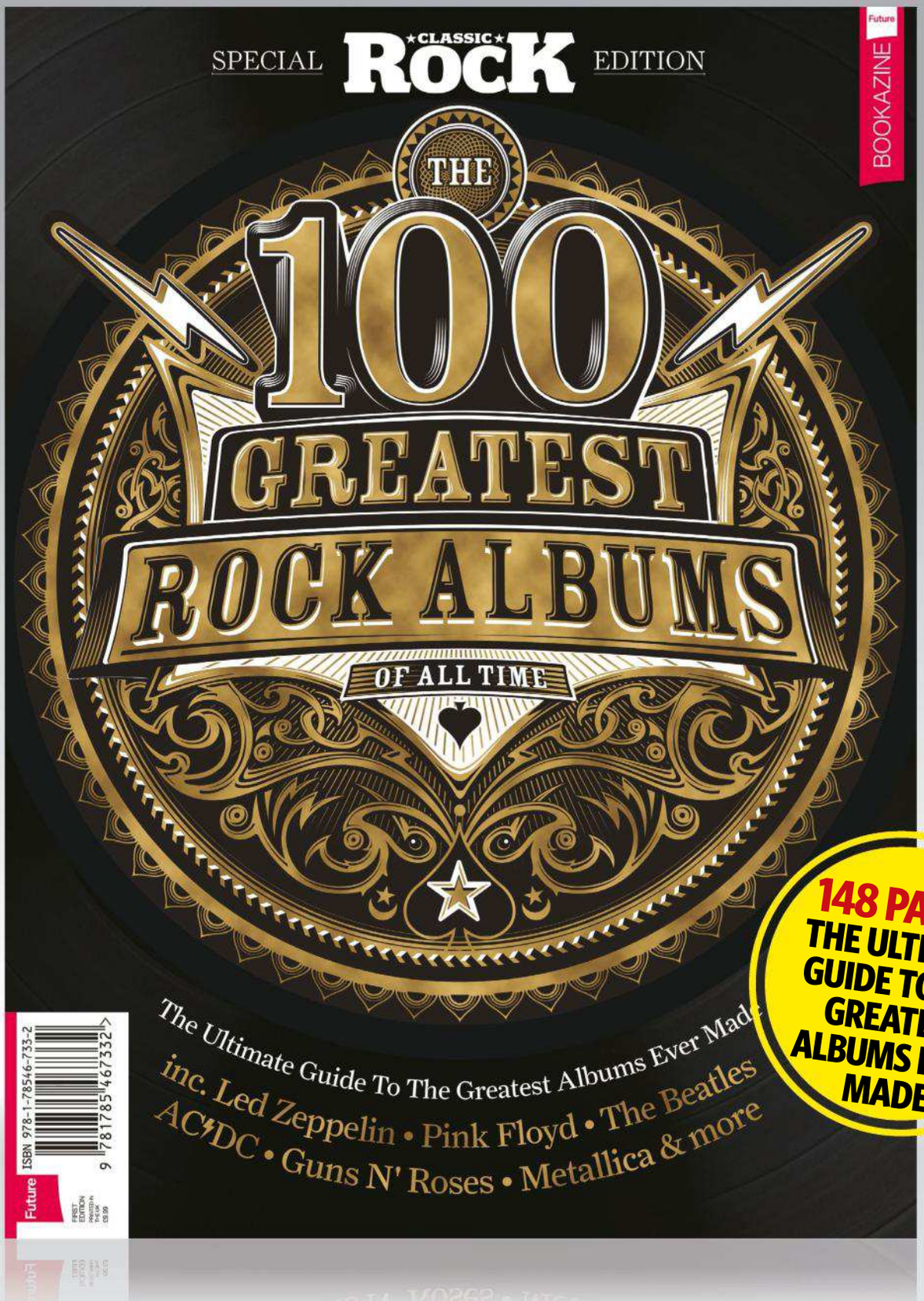
Signing with a label like Indie seemed like the obvious choice for a band who didn’t want to relinquish any of their ideas for the sake of marketing, and it’s clear from seeing how animated Prestidge and Cooper become when talking about the ideas behind the songs, that making the music they want to make, rather than chasing a linear path to fame, is really what matters to them.

“I think that for a lot of people the best compliment you can have is, ‘You sound like *this band*,’ which I think is pretty weird. Hopefully we’re free of all that,” says Cooper.

That would be an understatement; The Osiris Club are in their very own quaint and unsettling world.

The Wine-Dark Sea is out now via Indie. See www.facebook.com/OsirisClub for more info.

Mystery Sells? The Osiris Club ditch the masks.



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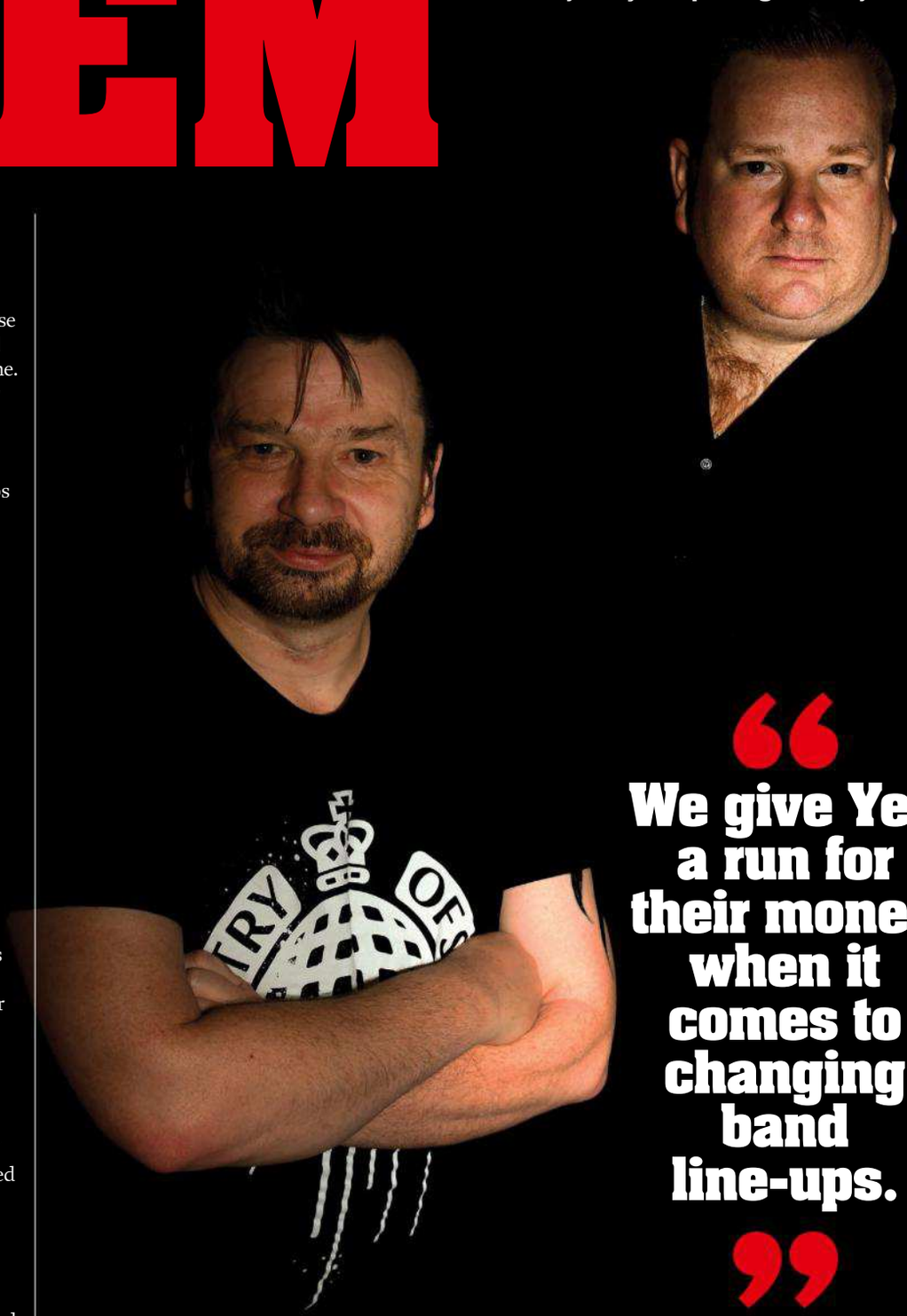
CARPE DIEM

Their line-up rotations may be mind-boggling, but 10 albums in and **Galahad** aren't slowing down just yet. The band's sole constant member **Stuart Nicholson** talks band politics, Brexit and finding their audience.

Words: Johnny Sharp **Images:** Ross Jennings



If someone ever gets round to drawing Galahad's family tree, they may well find it doesn't resemble a tree at all — more of a tangled bush, many of whose branches sprout, blossom, wither and die, then re-emerge further up the vine.

"We give Yes a run for their money when it comes to changing band line-ups," admits frontman and sole remaining founder member Stuart Nicholson, grinning ruefully as he sips a lunchtime beer in a central London pub. As we speak, they're about to have updated band photos taken in the light of the latest departure from their ranks, which has been confirmed since the publicity shots were taken for their 10th studio album, *Seas Of Change*.

It turns out Tim Ashton, who was first part of Galahad for three years around the turn of the 90s and who then returned to the role in 2014, has jumped ship for a second time.

It's a familiar problem round these parts. Pursuing a less commercially lucrative style such as prog in 2018 is often a case of arranging gigging, rehearsing, recording and promotion around day (or in one case, night) jobs and domestic commitments.

Nicholson himself manages to steer the ship either side of working in that most rock'n'roll of professions, accountancy, and has today travelled up to London from his Dorset base partly to meet with a work client. But the band still come first. Some of Galahad, over the years, have struggled to make the same commitment.

"Tim likes travelling," Nicholson says of Ashton, "which is why he left the band in the first place [in 1992]. Then he ended up in the Philippines, and he was still going back and forward there for a while, even after he rejoined us. So we said, 'Look, Tim you can't keep flitting back and forth and expect to still be in the band. Then last year he had a few personal and financial issues and he decided to go

> **"We give Yes a run for their money when it comes to changing band line-ups."**

Galahad, L-R: Mark Baker, Lee Abraham, Spencer Luckman, Stuart Nicholson, Mark Spencer.

back to the Philippines. He seemed to think there was no other option for him. So we parted company again just before Christmas and now we've got [erstwhile Twelfth Night and LaHost multi-instrumentalist and singer] Mark Spencer on bass — who, ironically, was the man that Tim originally replaced back in 2014."

Such is the tangled web that Galahad weave. But few of their personnel changes have been as strange as the departure of founding guitarist Roy Keyworth, confirmed before the release of last autumn's collection of shorter compositions, *Quiet Storms*. In the world of internet dating, there's a phenomenon known as 'ghosting', where a correspondent suddenly stops responding to any sort of communication and basically appears to be hiding behind a virtual sofa until the knocks on their door subside and their suitor goes away.

This scenario isn't often associated with bands, but that's basically what happened here — Keyworth simply went AWOL. And although he formed Galahad with Nicholson back in 1985, this wasn't the first time he'd done a bunk.

"He first left in 1998," Nicholson explains, "straight after we finished recording *Following Ghosts*, which was bizarre because we had gigs lined up. But he's not very good at seeing other people's point of view. For instance, he works nights, and when he first told me about that, I said, 'How are we going to do the band?' and he hadn't really considered it. So eventually we could only do things on Sundays, which is hardly ideal."

Still, there was little warning of what came next.

"We'd just got back from a gig in Holland in November 2015 and he was walking up the drive with his girlfriend, and he said, 'Let me know if anything else comes up.' But then suddenly he wouldn't return calls, ignored us on social media, emails, messenger... We sent him demos of 20-odd tracks including *Seas Of Change* and he just didn't respond. We sent him a vinyl copy of [2007 album] *Empires Never Last* when it was reissued, and he loves his vinyl. Didn't respond. I asked him to play guitar on *Quiet Storms*. Didn't respond.

"So he never actually said he'd left the band. Eventually we asked Andrew Wild, who wrote our biography, to see if he could get a response and he told him, 'Andy, I'm no longer in the band and I'm selling all my gear.' It is quite sad, but we have to move on."

While the demise of such a long-standing working relationship and friendship is always going to be a source of dismay, it also meant that Galahad needed a new guitarist.

“It’s not supposed to be a political album as such, just someone saying, ‘What’s going on here?’ It doesn’t make sense: screwing our society, making people argue with each other. There’s been so much vehemence and antipathy, and it was very divisive. It actually got a bit scary at times.”

And just in time to record the more ambitious material we find on the 43-minute suite that comprises new album *Seas Of Change*, Lee Abraham has stepped in, having previously played bass in Galahad from 2005-2009.

No fewer than 21 people have been members of Galahad over the years (and two of them have sadly passed away). However, the trio of Nicholson, co-songwriter and keyboard maestro Dean Baker, and drummer of 30 years Spencer Luckman keep the band’s heart pumping powerfully. And *Seas Of Change* serves notice that Galahad’s music remains as vital and relevant in 2018 as it has ever been.

This one-track album takes as its lyrical subject matter the turbulent times currently facing this country of ours, as Brexit and its fallout tear at the social fabric of this sceptred isle. The blissful classical piano, flute, sweeping strings and ethereal female vocals of its opening passages are punctuated by a vintage spoken word sample warning us *‘the logic of power was moving towards its conclusion’*. Then we hear a crowd hush and a toastmaster propose a toast to *‘total confusion, served up with a healthy smattering of understated incredulity, topped off with a heady dose of utter bemusement’*. Hints of black humour notwithstanding, it’s the introduction to thunderous flashes of symphonic prog over which Nicholson sings, *‘Batten down the hatches, boys and girls, in readiness for the storm ahead.’*

So, ‘confusion, incredulity, bemusement’… we take it Galahad’s lyricist wasn’t expecting the referendum result we woke up to on June 24, 2016?

“It does broadly describe my feelings,” he says. “It’s not supposed to be a political album as such, just someone saying, ‘What’s going on here?’ It doesn’t make sense: screwing our society, making people argue with each other… There’s been so much vehemence and antipathy, and it was very divisive. It actually got a bit scary at times.”

Getting The Band Back Together: Galahad welcome Lee Abraham (centre) back to the fold.

Above: Galahad’s new album *Seas Of Change*.

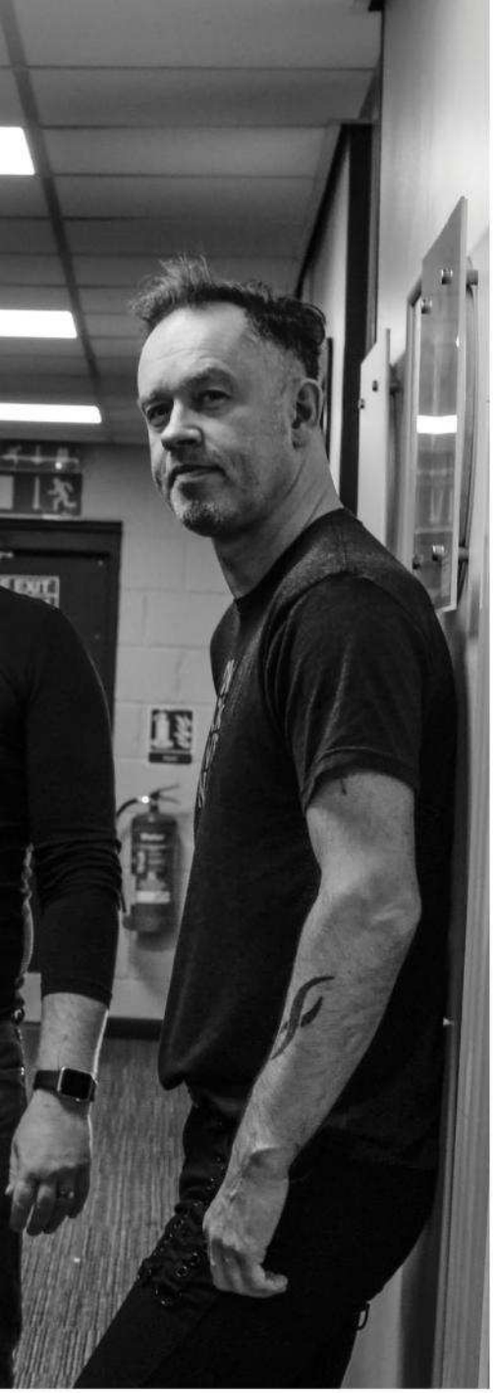
Elsewhere, the lyrics hint at the possibility of social unrest in the wake of all this.

“Yeah, I thought that because of what was being said, it might all kick off — the last time that happened was the poll tax riots, but there have been times recently when it looked like things could get out of hand.”

But for all the drama of the picture Galahad paint, there are also playful moments. *‘A sense of revolution is forming in the air,’* Nicholson sings at the start of side two, accompanied by an arresting synth riff, *‘and the wall of death is lowered in Parliament Square.’*

An alarming, dystopian image… or a cheeky nod to the lyric of Genesis’ *Fly On A Windshield*? You decide.

Nicholson smiles at the mention of it. “It’s a bit of fun, really. I always try to get something in to acknowledge where we’ve come from — sometimes it’s subtle, sometimes it’s not.”



It's a reflection of a band that still take inspiration from the golden age of prog but also sound in tune with 21st-century progressive music. The swathes of synth rock and the use of vintage radio samples might remind you of Public Service Broadcasting, but then Lee Abraham's breathtaking guitar breaks channel Dave Gilmour, and Nicholson's quivering alto vocals have always sounded redolent of Fish, much as our interviewee might tire of the Marillion comparisons.

That's perhaps to be expected, given that Galahad formed around the peak of neo-prog in the mid-80s… then found that the bandwagon had already moved on. Or, more likely, they didn't know there was a bandwagon.

"We didn't actually know about bands like IQ and Twelfth Night or Pendragon when we started — it was great to find out there were bands playing that kind of music, but we just happened to be influenced by the same bands as them.

"But our timing was actually crap!" Nicholson laughs. "By the time we made our first album *Nothing Is Written* in 1991, most of the bands that followed Marillion had faded and labels were no longer interested in prog."

One route to further exposure for Galahad that Nicholson briefly explored was an unconventional one — towards the end of 1988, he auditioned to be Marillion's singer.

"Yeah, that's 30 years ago this year. Christ!" he says. "After Fish left, I naïvely thought I could keep Galahad going and still join Marillion. But I didn't even expect to get an audition — my demos were terrible. To make my tape, I sat by my music centre with a microphone, and had Marillion records on the left hand side and my vocals on the right hand side — because that was all I had! I sang to *Kayleigh* or something and sent it off.

"Amazingly, they asked me to come up to London to audition. But that was also surreal because it was the day of the Clapham rail crash, and I'd chosen to drive up to London and not get the train that day. I was sat there waiting to audition with all this carnage on the TV, and I'm going white, thinking, 'That could have been me!'

"Anyway, the guys were all really friendly, and we tried out a few songs — *Forgotten Sons*, *Blue Angel*, *Bitter Suite*. Of course, nothing came of it, but it actually ended up being good publicity for Galahad and it resulted in us getting our first gigs in London at the Royal Standard in Walthamstow."

Nonetheless, Galahad still faced an uphill struggle to find an audience.

"There was no internet so you needed press coverage," Nicholson explains. "But the music papers wouldn't touch us, and we weren't rock enough for magazines like *Kerrang!* and *Metal Hammer*."

Youthful self-belief is a powerful force, however, and after the internet made it easier for progressive artists to find their market directly, Galahad found a new lease of life, doubtless helped by promotion in magazines like this one.

For all his fears for British society surrounding Brexit, Nicholson sees positive signs for Galahad and British prog in the years ahead.

"We've had our best ever feedback via social media, and we've had strong pre-orders for this album — with over 50 per cent on vinyl! We're doing black, turquoise and a picture disc and some people are ordering all of them…

"People are a lot more broad in their tastes than they used to be when we started," he adds, "and more prepared to listen. That said, I still like the idea of belonging to a bit of a tribe, and the prog scene is a bit like that — in a positive way, I think.

"The music is spreading and I take my hat off to someone like Steven Wilson — I never thought a band of this generation would be popular enough to fill the Albert Hall. Things like that give me hope for the future."

And even if Galahad's line-up continues to resemble a game of musical chairs, you suspect that with such a determined driving force behind them, they won't be disappearing off the radar any time soon.

Seas Of Change is out now via Avalon. See www.galahadonline.com for more.

OTHERWORLDLY PLEASURE

Five of **Galahad**'s finest moments.

Richelieu's Prayer (1991/2012)

The eight-minute climax of the band's 1991 debut album *Nothing Is Written* is a piano-led ballad that recalls late Fish-era Marillion, replete with the slightly dated guitar and keyboard sound, but the power of the songwriting is already shining through. The band re-recorded the track for 2012's *Beyond The Realms Of Euphoria*, but there's an affecting fragility to the original vocal, even if Nicholson had technically improved as a singer by the time it was revisited.

Sleepers (1995)

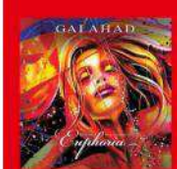
This is Galahad at their most atmospheric and unpredictable. One minute they channel powerful metal accompanied by sweeping strings, the next they sample Edith Piaf in a disorientating synth rock wilderness. They then build back up to an anthemic, optimistic arena rock crescendo, punctuated by Roy Keyworth's riveting fret shredding.

Empires Never Last (2007)

A fine example of Galahad's co-opting of techno and industrial tropes as an electronic voice and a positively funky bassline help a stuttering beat propel us into scattergun bursts of machine gun metal riffing. Later on, bold symphonic strokes and Nicholson's powerful vocal remind us of Dio-era Rainbow and Led Zep's *Kashmir*.

I Could Be God (2007)

Stuart Nicholson's finest hour as a frontman, as he ramps up the melodrama on this climactic track from *Empires Never Last*. His vocal channels tenderness, emotional transparency, malevolence, cynicism and rage at turns, as industrial, metal grey storm clouds swirl overhead. And after a delicately ethereal mid-section underpinned by Martin Luther King samples, it explodes back into dramatic life. It's one of several peaks on an album whose theme of power, corruption and lies still strikes a chord 11 years on.



Guardian Angel (2012/2017)

This track started life as a powerfully blustering 10-minute prog odyssey on *Beyond The Realms Of Euphoria*, shot through with jagged edged guitar, hyperactive synth runs and thrillingly spiky tempo stutters. And then last year's *Quiet Storms* was opened by a stripped down, piano-accompanied reading of the same song, which reveals just what a beautifully resonant, immediate ballad was always wrapped within the prog dressing. **JS**

Trinity Live III

Trinity Live returns with an all-star line-up and some progtastic memorabilia to raise funds for Cancer Research UK, Teenage Cancer Trust and Macmillan Cancer Support. *Prog* talks to the bands involved as this year's concert travels to London for the first time.

Words: Natasha Scharf

STEVE ROTHERY BAND

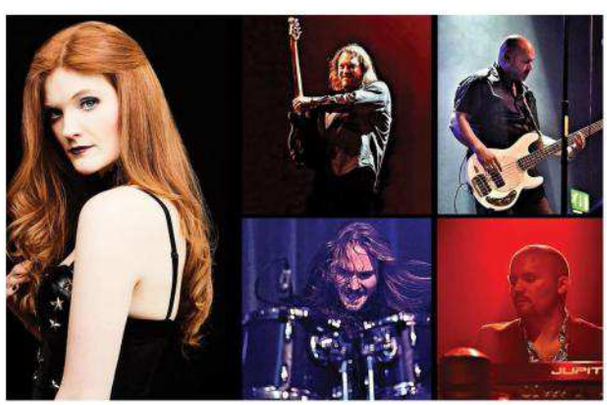
Steve Rothery: "I played at the Islington Assembly Hall on my last UK tour with my solo band and it's got a great atmosphere so I'm very much looking forward to Trinity. We'll do a few songs from *The Ghosts Of Pripyat*, and some of the older Marillion classics that we don't really play these days, so tracks from *Fugazi*, and probably sections of *Misplaced Childhood* and *Clutching At Straws*. We'll maybe do a couple of the more recent songs as well. I want it to be a bit of a party and a celebration. I have a unique chemistry with my guys in the solo band and there's a great sense of joy when we play together so it should be a really special evening."

KNIFEWORLD

Kavus Torabi: "We're really looking forward to playing. I had to put the band on hold for most of last year because I was so busy with Gong, and now we're not only back to full power but I think the band sound better than we've ever done. We'll be performing music from our entire back catalogue and I'm really excited about playing to a whole bunch of people who've probably never heard us before. Just three years ago, I lost two musician friends to cancer — Nick Marsh from Flesh For Lulu and Daevid Allen from Gong — and the older I get, the more the spectre of cancer haunts, so I couldn't wait to play something like this."

TOUCHSTONE

Adam Hodgson: "Aggie [Figurska] left at the end of last year so we've been without a singer, but Hayley Griffiths [ex-Karnataka] has agreed to help us out on vocals for this show. She's got an incredible voice, she's very creative and we're looking forward to having her perform with us. It'll just be the four of us boys and Hayley for this gig and she'll be the star of the show. We've already worked out our setlist and we're going to be doing a couple of songs that we haven't done for a long time, and there may be a couple of non-Touchstone surprises as well. We're really excited to have Hayley joining us."



“I want it to be a bit of a party and a celebration.”
Steve Rothery

KEVIN NIXON

THE ESSENTIAL INFO
Everything you need to know about this year’s event…

SATURDAY MAY 12
Trinity takes place at London’s Islington Assembly Hall. Doors open at midday. Curfew is at 11pm.

Last Flight To Pluto
Ghost Community
Tin Spirits
Touchstone
Knifeworld
Steve Rothery Band

A charity raffle and auction will also take place on the day.

TICKETS: Seated and standing tickets are available from £30 (plus booking fee) from www.seetickets.com/tour/trinity-live.

LOCATION: This year’s Trinity Live takes place at the Islington Assembly Hall, Upper Street, London. The closest underground stations are Highbury And Islington (Victoria and Overground lines) and Angel (Northern line), both of which also run the Night Tube. Local buses 4, 19, 30 and 43 stop right outside the venue at the ‘Islington Town Hall’ bus stop. There’s no parking but drop-off is allowed at Islington Town Hall forecourt.

DISABLED ACCESS: There’s step-free access to the main auditorium and you can pre-book wheelchair-accessible spaces by contacting the venue directly.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: A break in the middle of the event will give you the chance to grab a bite to eat at one of the nearby cafes or restaurants without missing any of the live acts. After the bands have finished, you can party into the night at the free aftershow event. It runs from 11pm until 1am in the basement of the nearby Hope & Anchor on Upper Street. Make sure you get there early, though, as space is very limited!

ACCOMMODATION: There are several hotels within walking distance of the venue, including Premier Inn London Angel Islington and Hilton London Angel Islington. Or try the serviced apartments at Highbury & Islington Hub.

DON’T FORGET TO PACK: Your official Trinity Live T-shirt (get yours from www.themerchdesk.com), ear protectors and some spending money for the prog auction and raffle.

All details are correct at time of press. Visit www.trinitylive.co.uk for the latest updates and auction news.

GHOST COMMUNITY
Matt Cohen: “We played last year so we’re going to have a short, sharp, punchy set this time, with a possibility of sticking a new tune in there as well. It’s our first London gig since last May and it’ll be our second gig with our new drummer Scott Higham, who used to be in Pendragon, and our new keyboard player Martin Howells, so we’ll be introducing them too. I’m a fan of all the bands on this bill and I’m looking forward to having a beer after we’ve played and seeing it all come together. It’s just a celebration and it’s all for the right reasons. That’s what makes it so enjoyable.”

TIN SPIRITS
Mark Kilminster: “This is going to be our only show until our next album is finished because we don’t want to keep peddling the old stuff. Our last album *Scorch* came out in 2014 so when we were asked to play Trinity Live, it gave us a bit of a kick up the arse to get writing! We haven’t played live for a long time — our last gig was in Tokyo in 2016 — and this was a good opportunity to get involved with three really important charities as well. The plan is to do some fan favourites and a couple of new ones that are a bit edgier. We’re really looking forward to getting out there and seeing how people react to the new songs.”

LAST FLIGHT TO PLUTO
Alice Freya: “We’re looking forward to playing because we’ve never done Trinity before and it’s all for three great causes. Cancer has affected everyone in some way or another so the more we donate and the more awareness we raise, the more likely it is that one day we’ll be able to find a cure for the illness. We’re hoping our new album will be out in time for the gig as we’ll be playing material from that as well as our first one, *See You At The End*. It’ll be nice to play on the same bill as Ghost Community again as we had a little tour with them last May and they’re a great bunch of guys.”

SEE WWW.TRINITYLIVE.CO.UK FOR MORE INFORMATION.

THE PROG INTERVIEW

AL DI MEOLA

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 guitar genius **Al Di Meola**, whose blistering speed lit a fire under Return To Forever in the early days of fusion. Five decades into his career, Di Meola says he's finally happy making music.

Words: David West **Portraits:** Ben Wolf

Al Di Meola was still a student at Berklee College of Music when he was invited to join Chick Corea's seminal fusion group Return To Forever, alongside Stanley Clarke and Lenny White. The three albums the band recorded featuring Di Meola's prodigious guitar playing – *Where Have I Known You Before*, *No Mystery* and *Romantic Warrior* – broke into the charts and made the players stars.

In his early 20s, Di Meola launched his solo career with 1976's *Land Of The Midnight Sun*. Over the decades since, the guitarist has demonstrated his versatility and intimidating virtuosity, whatever style he's been playing. There's the energetic fusion of 1977's gold-certified *Elegant Gypsy*; in 1980 he swapped lightning-fast flamenco licks with John McLaughlin and Paco De Lucia; and the new millennium has seen him exploring the music of Argentinian tango composer Astor Piazzolla. In 2013 he celebrated his childhood heroes on *All Your Life (A Tribute To The Beatles)*, recorded at Abbey Road. "I truly felt like this five-year-old kid going to Disney World for the first time," he says.

His latest album, *Opus*, proves that whether he's holding an electric guitar or an acoustic, he remains one of the instrument's most dazzling and inventive masters.

Happy songs for happy people: Al Di Meola's new album, *Opus*.

You've said that *Opus* was the first album you've made while happy. Is that true?

There are a lot of life conflicts and there's always chaos and things of that nature. For a very long time, music was a retreat from all these other parts of life that are not as enjoyable as music. But this time, my personal life was really great thanks to my recent marriage to a German girl, and we had a baby together. It's a whole different experience completely than what I had experienced before.

I never thought I could write music in the company of my family. I always thought I had to be isolated and almost miserable in order to create. There are a lot of comedians that come from misery and hardship and that's why they're so great, but in my field it was just a turnaround of events that led me to this very peaceful time in my life.

For some reason, the end result of the record made it sound different to me. I love my other records, but I think this one has a special quality, and it might be due to the fact that things are better in life.

> "We were bringing rock together with elements of jazz and classical and that's exactly what fusion meant at the time. Prior to us, there was really no such thing as a solid term like fusion because everything was either rock, pop or jazz."

Return To Forever, live in 1976, L-R: Lenny White, Stanley Clarke, Al Di Meola, Chick Corea.

DICK BARNATT/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

You embraced the stereotype of the tortured artist?

In some ways yes. I hated being tortured, I didn't like feeling tortured, but after a while I started to think, "Well, I guess this is the only way you can make records or even perform shows." It's the way it is – you're just living in a depressive state and it's just the norm. I did think that maybe I wouldn't be able, now that I'm happier, to produce on the same level or get to that inspiring place. But it's not true.

How did you record *Opus*?

It was really a solo record: I did all the parts. There are a few

Al Di Meola: one of the pioneers of fusion.

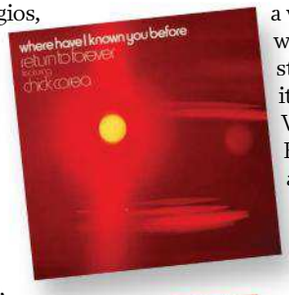
pieces where I have guests here and there but primarily, on 90 per cent of the record, I play all the parts: the bass, all the percussion, and all the overdubbed sounds.

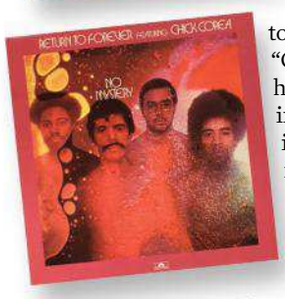
I think that the hardest parts are the written arpeggios, which is the middle stave when I'm writing out music, and playing those parts is usually very difficult for somebody to get just right as an accompanist. The time to find someone, pay someone and then to teach them is enormous, so I eliminated the enormous and I did it myself because I can do it the best and I wouldn't have the hassle of having to take the time.

When you're doing it this way, you might get things closer to perfect; when you're playing with other musicians, on the other hand, it might not be perfect, but if they're playing on a certain level, amazing things could happen. They could bring something to the table, some magic that spins off what you've written, which is what happens when we play live.

I'd love to have a live version of some of these songs after we've toured it for a while, but I really wasn't in a position at that point in time when I made *Opus* to go on the road with all this new music and then go in the studio.

I really had that block of time to write and record, which is different than the record I did years ago, *Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody* [2011]. We toured *Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody* for a whole year, then we went into the studio, and that has its advantages too. When you hear [The Beatles'] *Sgt. Pepper's* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, they never went on the road to play those songs, but when you listen to it, you don't think, "Oh man, this would have been way better if they had toured it first." It sounds freaking great. That's the bottom line: how does it sound?





Di Meola's three albums with Return To Forever, from top: 1974's Where Have I Known You Before, 1975's No Mystery and 1976's Romantic Warrior.

Is it a challenge to find musicians at your level for touring?

Yes, it's a real challenge. The problem sometimes is you might find a great, great musician but they can't improvise or they can't feel the syncopation of the rhythm at all. Zero. They can read whatever is there, but they can't go outside of the music that's written because they don't have that in their training or in their feel. To find somebody that has great technique, great execution, great feel and then is able to adapt to never losing the time when you syncopate the rhythm, that's everything. That's what I look for, somebody who has both abilities of reading the music, having the schooling, but also having the street sensibility.

> Jaco [Pastorius] was a friend of mine because he had played on my first solo record prior to him joining Weather Report. I got to hang out with him every night and sit at a bar with Joe Zawinul and hear all these amazing stories while he was drinking. It was really cool.

Where does your sense of syncopation spring from?

It's almost as if I come from Cuba: I have a natural instinct for Latin rhythm. It's not something you can learn – you've either got it from birth or not, and that's an absolute fact.

There are people who are not from Cuba who have it, like Steve Gadd, Chick Corea, Herbie [Hancock], the ability to play around the time without the time moving. You can dance around the rhythm and very rarely play a downbeat. I hung out in Latin clubs when I was a kid in New York and it connected with me.

I realised a bit later that I had that gift, let's say, to be able to do that stuff, because no matter what you do, no matter how hard you train, it's not something that's teachable. You either have it in you or you don't have it at all.

My first yearning was rock and pop music but somewhere in between all of those rock shows that I went to, I ventured out to this club called The Corso in New York City. I would go in there by myself where all these people were dressed in suits and the women were all dressed up to go dancing to the salsa music. I would watch the big bands and I would totally relate to the vibe.

There were bands in the rock world, like Santana, that were scratching the surface. They had percussion sections that exhibited the Latin thing, but the way Carlos played had nothing to do with Latin guitar. He just played rock guitar over a Latin rhythm. That's different to what I'm talking about.

Did your Latin influences find their fullest expression with John McLaughlin and Paco De Lucia?

Oh yeah. The inspiration that we got off one another in the guitar trio with Paco was magnificent. His growing up learning flamenco and taking it to places it had never been before, of course we were influenced by this guy who was doing something very, very different. I think I benefited the most because I had the most relation with or understanding of the syncopation thing. We understood one another rhythmically so well that John was very lucky when it was his turn to solo because we were providing a rhythm that was just killer.

When you've got three players like that, can it become a duel?

It started out as a healthy, happy duel and then the last tour we did together, it became, "I will kill you on the solo!" It was almost like handing us guns. "Oh yeah? You think you can do that? Watch this, mother!"

The audience got to see us really reaching much further as it went on. John, in particular, wanted to dominate. He was the oldest guy, so he always had this superiority complex thing that was very uncomfortable for Paco and I. But when it came to the playing, sometimes we kicked his ass and he didn't like it! [Laughs] And sometimes he came up with stuff that was really great, so it was reciprocally an amazing and historic thing that we did.

Returning To Return To Forever in 2008, L-R: Al Di Meola, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Lenny White.

GARY MILLER/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES

Power Trio, L-R: Al Di Meola, Paco de Lucia, John McLaughlin.

JON SIEVERT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Was there competition between the pioneering fusion bands?
It was mostly, "We're going to kick their ass tonight," but we loved what they were doing. I was a big fan of Weather Report. I was a fan of the first band, but the second or third configuration, not so much. The last configuration with Jaco, everyone on the planet loved that, and that's when they were touring with us.

In fact, Jaco's first tour with Weather Report, when *Heavy Weather* came out, was the same exact week that *Elegant Gypsy* came out, so Columbia Records put us together on a huge tour. We were on a co-bill for maybe 50 shows and Jaco was a friend of mine because he had played on my first solo record prior to him joining Weather Report. I got to hang out with him every night and sit at a bar with Joe Zawinul and hear all these amazing stories while he was drinking. It was really cool.

Elegant Gypsy, Di Meola's second solo album, released in 1977.

Did you consider yourselves fusion musicians or jazz men?
Fusion all the way. We were bringing rock together with elements of jazz and classical and that's exactly what fusion meant at the time. Prior to us, years before Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, there was really no such thing as a solid term like fusion because everything was either rock, pop or jazz. When *Bitches Brew* came out, it was this giant jam session of all those fusion guys and we never heard anything like that.

When you bought a Miles Davis record you expected something along the lines of what we thought of as jazz, but he was so influenced by rock music. He dressed like a rock musician and he just preferred to never do jazz like the jazz of yesteryear, so he brought in all the very good jazz guys that were young enough and open-minded enough to expand their instruments and play over grooves. In fact, there was very little composition, in my opinion – it was mostly jamming forever.

In those days, we thought those long jams were very cool, but then the guys in those bands like McLaughlin and Chick and Herbie and Keith, they all did their own thing. Keith Jarrett decided to go acoustic solo or acoustic jazz trio. Herbie did the funk fusion band. Chick became the best composer of them all.

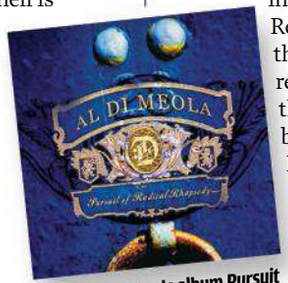
Before the electric Return To Forever, John had the first Mahavishnu, which was the most blistering in terms of loud rock meets elements of jazz with killer musicians like Billy Cobham and Jan Hammer, and that really got the attention of all of us. That's when Chick said, "I've got to do my own electric band." Great things happened. It was a very exciting time.

Were you disappointed when Return To Forever split?
I was really scared about it. I was very disappointed. I knew that Chick was very erratic. You have to compartmentalise the genius musician Chick but then recognise that he's influenced to a not-good degree with the Scientology crap. He made a lot of very bad decisions based on his belief in Scientology. You always use the philosophy of L Ron Hubbard to make a decision and he was so caught up and brainwashed with this stuff.

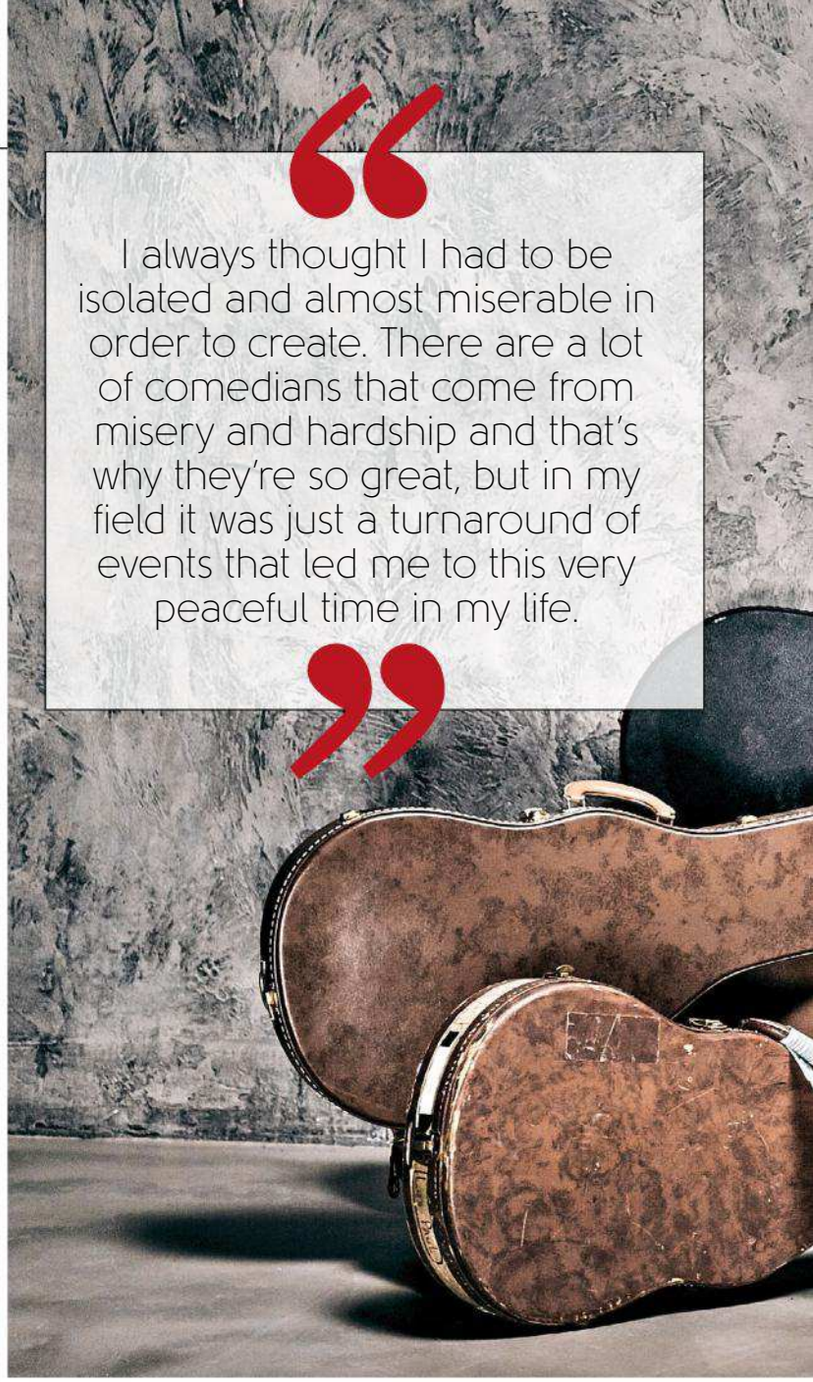
Here's a band that should have had at least 10 to 15 more *Romantic Warriors* out there in the marketplace, not one. It should have been 10 to 15 and that would be getting together every three or four years.

Originally when we signed with Columbia, we had an amazing contract. After the first record [for Columbia], he disbanded the band. Then he puts it back together with a big band with Gayle Moran, his wife, singing, and this big brass section and everybody was just wondering what the hell is wrong with Chick. It was the most disturbing thing on the planet.

There were two reunion tours that lasted one month each since then. In 45 years we've done maybe two months together, the last one being in 2008. We got back together with a fresh start, maybe going to do another record and tour a lot and then he broke that up as well.



Di Meola's 2011 solo album Pursuit Of Radical Rhapsody.



> I always thought I had to be isolated and almost miserable in order to create. There are a lot of comedians that come from misery and hardship and that's why they're so great, but in my field it was just a turnaround of events that led me to this very peaceful time in my life.

He's very conflicted and flippant in his enthusiasm about anything. It could be a diet. One day he's fat and then he just decides he wants to be bone-thin skinny. Then he'll be fat again. He just goes to extremes.

What's the saddest thing in the chronicles of Return To Forever is that we never really reached that place that we should have been hailed at. The Eagles, The Allman Brothers, the Rolling Stones, they all had internal personal conflicts where they could have said, "F this, I'm not playing with this guy any more, I've got enough money, I don't need this crap." Well, they all did that, but when reality sets in: "Wait a minute, what are we going to do? The brand is so huge and the fans love us so much, it's not worth not fulfilling our potential and making a lot of people happy."

We could have continued with our solo careers exactly the way they've been and gotten together every now and then, but you have, unfortunately, a cult religion that has adversely influenced somebody as brilliant as Chick and his management. You look at it now, I want to cry for Lenny and Stanley, who are struggling.

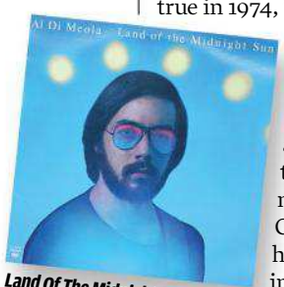
You sued Chick after the last reunion, didn't you?
The man became extremely greedy and he failed to realise this was The Beatles of fusion getting back together. Not to mention I had a lot to do with bringing him back together with

Hard Case: Al Di Meola, ready to take the guitar where it's never been before.

Stanley — they had a falling out for 20-some years due to the fact that Stanley left Scientology so they weren't talking.

After we did this very successful reunion tour, he was secretly planning a jazz trio with Stanley and Lenny, which parlayed the success of the Return To Forever tour into some lesser jazz trio tour. They kept it really quiet and then I found out that what was supposed to be a week or two turned into four months. I was perplexed: why would anybody do such a stupid thing when we've got this momentum going again? Then Stanley told me, "You know what Chick's doing to us? He's keeping all the money from the DVD and the live CD," which was a substantial amount of money.

That's when I had to bring a lawyer in because it was absolutely criminal, treating the band members like they were just sideman. That may have been true in 1974, '75, '76, of course it was, but not after I've sold six million records, I've got gold records and have a following around the world. I've sold more records than Chick Corea and he had to be reminded in a legal way.



Land Of The Midnight Sun, Al Di Meola's 1976 debut solo album.

It never went to court. Come on, if it had gone to court I probably would have gotten 10 times the amount of money. I was very happy to settle for what was just mine, what was supposed to be my cut. I wanted to be fair.

Going solo with *Land Of The Midnight Sun* [1976], were you ever nervous about writing your own music?

I have to compartmentalise again, because there's so much good and there's some very weird experiences, all of which will someday be documented in a book, but one of the positive experiences was Chick's idea for all of us to grow and do our own solo records. I was the one that was like, "Really? Why do you want to do that?"

I wasn't really thinking in terms of writing or being a composer, but everybody else was very enthusiastic about doing their own record. Then I got an offer from Columbia Records. The same day Return To Forever signed a multimillion-dollar deal, I signed a deal as a solo artist.

Still living with my parents, I went home and said, "Dad, look at these cheques! I just signed two times to Columbia!"

I was a 20-year-old kid. The first record I wrote music and I wasn't quite sure of myself, but it became the bestselling debut record for CBS that year. Then the second record is when I started to feel like, "Okay, now I think I've got something." I could see who I am with *Elegant Gypsy* and that became my biggest record to date.

It's still my most popular work, but that was 40-something years ago and as a composer, I've needed to and wanted to evolve. As I grew, hopefully my writing was growing along with it.

Opus is out now via EarMusic. See www.aldimeola.com for more details.

Edited by Jo Kendall
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New spins...

TesseracT

The Brit quintet take an obscure sorrow and turn it into a progressive joy. Is this the best, most accessible album yet for the progenitors of djent?

Words: Chris Cope **Illustration:** Chris Keegan

There's no Oxford English Dictionary definition for the word 'sonder', the curious title of TesseracT's fourth studio album. Instead, you've got to flick through graphic maven John Koenig's wonderfully titled *Dictionary Of Obscure Sorrows* to discover its meaning, which says the invented term is the "realisation that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own". There are "elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed", it adds, "in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk".

The loaded word appears to be a neat springboard for a cerebral prog concept, and one used by British prog metallers TesseracT as the basis for their latest aural excursion. The quintet have been building their sonic signature since 2011's debut release *One*, and on this, their fourth album, their imposing – and original – ideals are now rock-solid.

Sonder has a lot to live up to, though. Released in 2013, the shape-shifting *Altered State* is perhaps TesseracT's most glimmering jewel in their increasingly regal crown, while its follow-up *Polaris* cut back on the mad-eyed, runaway djent attacks in favour of further gleaming melodies.

So where are TesseracT in 2018? The running time is a bit of giveaway, with *Sonder* extending to a modest 37 minutes. It feels like a statement of intent, but don't let the compact duration put you off. *Sonder*'s eight tracks combine to produce the band's most complete and enveloping record yet.

Lead single *Luminary* opens, toying with an apocalyptic, barbed riff that dissolves into a dreamy verse/chorus charge. *'Are you alone, locked inside that prison in your head?'* asks singer Daniel Tompkins in what may refer to the aching solitude some feel, despite living in a world of over seven billion others.

Sonder

KSCOPE

> **As TesseracT continue their heady ascent upwards, their experimental roots are not forgotten.**

'You walk through the crowd, lost in the sound, invisible to every passing eye.'

Despite its pendulum riffs and infectious melody, it's a restrained prelude compared to what's to come. The following *King*, at over twice its length, is more of a downtuned, exploratory journey, with a disjointed verse underpinning Tompkins' vocals to create a wonderfully uneasy aura. Soon, guitarists James Monteith and Acle Kahney drop in a churning, slimy riff that would rumble the foundations of your unsuspecting downstairs neighbour's place.

That hefty highlight is in stark contrast to *Orbital*, a two-minute astral musing, but *Juno* welcomes back the noise, with pointed chord bludgeon giving way to bassist Amos Williams and drummer Jay Postones double-teaming on deep-seated grooves.

The lyrical themes in *Sonder* are often weighty and introspective, with the excellent, soaring *Beneath My Skin* "acknowledging the fact that we have no control over our fate yet discovering the freedom and peace that can be found within". It's an apt fit for the erudite music, which, for all its rousing, overt melodic lines, still manages to sidestep being clichéd or trite. It's a fine balancing act, performed well, although the more subtle *Mirror Image* threatens to veer into that dangerous territory. *'I'm half crazy longing for the love of you,'* Tompkins sings, *'begging on my knees to you, weeping for the honest truth.'*

Smile, meanwhile, is a crystallisation of how *Sonder* encapsulates TesseracT's many sprawling musical tentacles: intricate tech riffs, melody, abrasion, and Tompkins' sensitive switch from throaty roar to heavenly croon. There's outward-thinking exploration and tight songwriting that never jars.

But the best is yet to come as *Sonder* concludes with the reflective, meditative *The Arrow*, post-rock doom-mongering married to ethereal soundscapes as the band ruminate on a unfulfilled life. *'You wasted so much damned time on it,'* rues Tompkins. *'You wasted half your damn life.'*

TesseracT's ambition is to be one of the new breed of bands ready to replace Metallica and Iron Maiden in the clutch of big-name headliners when those titans eventually retire. That might be a little pie-in-the-sky just now, but there's no doubt that TesseracT are one of the UK's most prized heavy music exports, their future looking rosier with each release.

Most encouragingly for the prog community, with enough twists and turns peppered throughout *Sonder* (and a binaural CD edition to give a 3D listening experience through headphones), as they continue their heady ascent upwards, it's clear that their experimental roots will not be forgotten.

A PERFECT CIRCLE

Eat The Elephant BMG

Comeback album shows the enigmatic Tool offshoot are up to the tusk.

Fourteen years is a long time. You could fit three-and-a-half Donald Trump presidencies into that time, or half a Rick Wakeman keyboard solo. Fourteen years is how long it's taken A Perfect Circle to produce their fourth studio album. The band — featuring enigmatic Tool frontman Maynard James Keenan and guitarist/backroom wizard Billy Howerdel — have always worked to their own internal clock, one which apparently stopped in 2004. Nearly a decade and a half after their last record, A Perfect Circle have finally emerged from the studio, blinking in the light of a strange and chaotic world. And it's been worth the wait.

> **Tool wrestle you to the floor, APC are more seductive.**

Eat The Elephant is one of the most impressive albums you'll hear this year. It's certainly one of the most unique, in that it sounds like absolutely no one other than A Perfect Circle. At times it doesn't even sound like A Perfect Circle, such is its stubborn dedication to confounding expectations.

It's a measure of the latter that APC don't come galumphing in like the titular pachyderm at the start of *Eat The Elephant*, like you'd expect a band who have been away for the best part of a decade and a half to do. Instead, the album opens with the stark piano chords and gently shifting drums of the title track. It's a song that burns slowly rather than suddenly explodes in a rush of energy.

This sense of moodiness — sometimes hypnotic, more often menacing — percolates throughout *Eat The Elephant*. Where Tool are intent on wrestling you to the floor with physical and mental muscle, APC are more seductive. *Disillusioned* and *The Contrarian* sway and undulate, their uneasy layers and textures carefully built by Howerdel (Keenan might be the marquee name, but this is just as much about the guitarist).

The greatest thing about *Eat The Elephant* is that just when you think you've got a handle on it, it goes and confounds you. The muscular crescendo of *The Doomed* — the closest they get to Keenan's other band — is followed immediately by the poppy Douglas Adams-referencing *So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish*, a song whose uplifting breeziness masks lyrics that take a very Adams-esque dim view of humanity. Even Keenan's own vocals are protean and mutable, shifting from feminine whisper to scabrous snarl from song to song (neither of which explain his consciously oblique lyrics).

But then APC have always left the idea of doing what's expected of them to others. *Eat The Elephant* does exactly what it wants, when it wants, how it wants, and it's your choice if you want to come along for the ride. If you don't, you're missing out on something special.

DAVE EVERLEY

AWOOGA

Conduit ROCKOSMOS

Promising debut from Yorkshire three-piece.

What's in a name? Awooga, we think, derives from a running gag on TV sci-fi comedy *Red Dwarf*, in reference to the noise made by the ship's emergency siren. Such an onomatopoeic title seems well suited to this Sheffield trio, who offer a barrage of sludge metal and heavy prog on *Conduit*, an album that yelps from the speakers like a vicious alarm call. The hard-edged doom of *Temporal* and *Tabula Rasa* feel like petulant cousins of songs by Witch or Shining, as does the widescreen bombast of *Blue Rose*. Yet that's only half the story. The credo of bassist/singer Tam Ali, who states that Awooga exist somewhere between brutality and tranquility, is fully realised on *Otherside*, which mellows out into a more becalmed groove. This is where the band work best, navigating a channel that leads from one realm to another. *Bandit* serves a similar function, casting off the muddy riffs for an intense journey into weirdo prog before dissolving into ambience. Awooga have clearly made good on the promise of 2016's debut EP *Alpha*, and *Conduit* is a decent flag-waver for Sel Balamir's new Rockosmos label. Let's hope they choose to develop their more outré tendencies. **RH**

RICHARD BARBIERI

Variants: 1 And 2 ORANGE ASYLUM/RICHARDBARBIERI.BANDCAMP.COM

Former Porcupine Tree and Japan man finds the variables.

After releasing his first solo album in nine years, the both pretty and prickly *Planets + Persona*, electronica pioneer Barbieri seems to have a refreshed appetite. These two albums open a series that gives an outing to disparate pieces of music, past and present, which might not dovetail with ongoing full album plans. The intention is that later this year, the series will be gathered in a five-disc collector's box. Thus brand new pieces coexist with live recordings from last year, and intense improvisations nestle next to a 2009 reworking of Japan's 1980 B-side *The Experience Of Swimming*. With Lisen Rylander Löve's saxophone often bringing the sauce to the ambient dishes, there's some gorgeous and guileful sonic play here. *Spacing Of Strands* mesmerises, while *Frozen Hearts Of Hollywood*, inspired by film noir, aims to capture "the desolation behind the eye of Faye Dunaway". The coda of *Rime* is equal parts chilling and comforting, and live piece *Antioch* haunts and hugs. And perhaps because of those live elements, much here feels more hot-blooded than the ice-veined studio album. Forty years on from Japan's debut, Barbieri is making music that's as motivated, melancholy and mercurial as ever. **CR**

IVAR BJØRNSON AND EINAR SELVIK

Hugsjá BY NORSE

Songs inspired by traditions and tales from along the Norwegian coast.

If you're new to this duo, Selvik is a vocalist in Wardruna, a group who mine historical Norwegian themes, while Bjørnson does something similar – although in a less lyrical manner – as the guitarist in Enslaved. And in this, their second, largely acoustic collaboration, they create a dramatic fusion of old and new. On the album cover, the duo stare defiantly from a longship, but even those with no knowledge of Norwegian language or culture can enjoy its panoramic sweep. The title track, with its Eastern chords and medieval drones, sounds remarkably like Brendan Perry of Dead Can Dance singing over something Popul Vuh might have come up with circa *Brüder Des Schattens – Söhne Des Lichts*. There's a rough-hewn grandeur here, with sparse, insistent drumming, chilly keyboards and electronic currents, and four vocalists in the small ensemble. Field recordings of flowing water run through *Ni Døtre Av Hav*, while shaman-like incantations pivot around a two-chord pattern. And although it can get rather furrow-browed, they're joined on occasion by a choir, and proceedings close on a high with the soaring melodies of *Um Hellage Fjell*. **MB**

BOSS KELOID

Melted On The Inch HOLY ROAR

Wigan's prog doom wild men raise the bar.

Those familiar with the wonky end of the UK's doom and stoner scene will already know Boss Keloid, but *Melted On The Inch* is such an extraordinary piece of work, it seems probable that the entire prog world will soon be simpering at the Wigan quintet's feet too. Opening track *Chronosiam* should be enough to convince most people: a melodic but bruising maze of inspired riffs, perverse time signatures and soulful vocals, it's both psychedelic *and* instantly accessible. The remaining five tracks are equally dazzling, each one a kaleidoscopic celebration of what happens when imaginations run riot.

Vocalist Alex Hurst is the electrified glue that holds the whole bewildering thing together, his dirt-brown, bruiser's baritone soaring majestically across *Lokannok*'s warped wall of riffs and infusing fidgety closer *Griffonbrass* with lashings of gruff grit and cracked-mirror charisma. But it's his bandmates' arsenal of inspired arrangements and skewed subtleties that lift this into the realms of genius. If you miss the days when Tool could be bothered, Mastodon albums were full of surprises and Mr Bungle were still a thing, Boss Keloid are probably your new favourite band already. **DL**

COLDBONES

Where It All Began CROOKED NOISE

UK post-rockers flutter to deceive.

Even here at *Prog*, we must admit that finding a riff-heavy post-rock group penning a concept album about the lifecycle of a butterfly caught us somewhat off guard. This musical dissection of a life lived in microburst is strangely affecting, though, and at 32 minutes, appropriately succinct. Yes, the usual generic tropes are on display – the jaunting delays, 'soaring' leads and the temptation to turn every other tune into a mountainous heap of reverberation – but there's a character unique to Coldbones. Opener *Caspaces* jolts with its abrupt left turn into a power chord punk melee, *Decay* has an intriguing post-hardcore swing to it and *New Heights*' ode to its hero's first flight ably alternates between hair-raising power and jittering fragility. At times it feels like the concept warrants more nuance. Awe-inspiring doesn't have to mean colossal, particularly if you're writing about insects, and the album's best moments come within that juxtaposition of scale: the gut-punching closer *To Whatever End*, for example, which gave *Prog* cause to mourn the passing of our miniature hero. Either way, it'll make you think twice about the caterpillars on your cabbages. **MP**

DRINKS

Hippo Lite DRAG CITY

Second album of experimental indie from Cate and her mate.

Drinks is an ongoing collaboration between Welsh singer-songwriter Cate Le Bon and Tim Presley, who's played with The Fall and Ty Segall. The overriding vibe of *Hippo Lite* – recorded in the French village of St Hippolyte, if you were wondering – is of two musicians who've completely cast themselves adrift from modern musical mores and produced what sounds and even looks like some forgotten avant-indie record from 1981. The delicate, twinkling guitar and found sounds on tracks such as *Blue From The Dark* and *In The Night Kitchen* conjure mysterious pastoral reveries from the other side of dawn. In contrast, *Real Outside* and *Corner Shops* are all skeletal riffs and faux naïf vocals, sounding not unlike feminist post-punks The Raincoats, while the nervy violin and organ arpeggios of *You Could Be Better* are sweetened by woozy, off-kilter harmonies. It's an album that gives in to the subconscious and follows a dream logic of its own. As such, it sits in a wonky lineage with the likes of early Eno, Robert Wyatt, This Heat and the Cardiacs, where the progressive impulse has turned into something stranger and more perverse, but also more personal. **JB**

IHSAHN

Àmr CANDLELIGHT/SPINEFARM

A seventh portal to invention from the former black metal master.

First impressions are curious things. Take Ihsahn, for example. Approach his music with one eye on his murky, black metal past as bandleader with the pioneering Emperor and you'd be mistaken for thinking that he had hooves, a tail and spent his downtime lunching on virginal flesh. Take his latest album cover too — a darkened room with a solitary chair that suggests Satan's been sitting there and has only just popped to put out to put some hideous kettle on and plant his pitchfork in some poor soul. This, you'd think, weighing up the album in your hands, is what Beelzebub must work out to.

> **Bible-black notes and devilish, all-encompassing melodies.**

Don't get me wrong, Emperor's reunions shows at Bloodstock Festival a few years ago were genuinely unsettling (and magnificent), but the solo Ihsahn is a different beast altogether. This, his seventh album under the Ihsahn name, is another glorious mesh of bible-black notes, devilish invention and deep, all-encompassing melodies. You'd be forgiven for listening to the raucous opener *Lend Me The Eyes Of Millenia* and running screaming from the room, fearing for your life, but stay with it and you'll fall through a portal into invention, deft string work and strong, insistent vocals.

Admittedly, Ihsahn still looks like a supply teacher who once did wet work as a gun for hire for the Norwegian government (who knows what goes on behind those dark glasses?), and he seems to only have outfits that come in black, but the sheer breadth of thinking and deed here are staggering. He paints epically. Whereas some musicians mistake epic for length, Ihsahn somehow manages to take an intricate, dazzling series of musical passages and set pieces and reduce them down to a flinty, hard-edged five minutes.

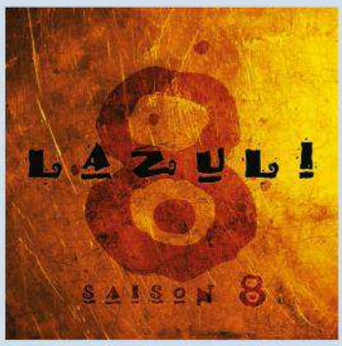
Flitting easily between dense heavy metal and beautiful, arcing melody, it happens so quickly, it feels like a speeding car has just gone by mere inches from your elbow. Case in point, the blistering *Arcana Imperii*, which features Opeth's Fredrik Åkesson on guitar, and which wouldn't have sounded out of place on either of that band's last two records.

Ihsahn doesn't simply ape other ideas though. *Arcana Imperii* begins like a motorway pile-up, soars into the heavens and then ends with a descent into hell, in about four minutes plus. *Sámr*, conversely, is an escalating, melancholic cry to the stars, beautiful and mournful in equal measure. It feels like it'll never stop climbing ever upwards. Possibly better still is the marching *Twin Black Angels* — powerful, driven, impossibly memorable, bleak, bloody and forever beautiful. **PHILIP WILDING**

LAZULI

Saison 8 L'ABEILLE RÔDE

A fertile season for the French masters.



Back in the Middle Ages, lazuli stone provided artists with the rarest and most precious pigment. Its ultramarine blue was reserved for only the most exalted and beautiful cloth. If modern-day French proggers Lazuli have cut a slightly different sartorial look to their medieval forebears — one that's more dreadlocky, at the very least — over the past 20 years, you could say that they've consistently produced rare and precious tones.

> **Lazuli display all the chops we've come to expect from them.**

The title of their eighth album, *Saison 8*, might equally refer to a parallel marking of seasons of the year or the latest series of a long-running TV show. This complexity is borne out in the music. Opener *J'attends Un Printemps* is full of expectation for spring. It's a slow-burner that combines elements of French chanson, Romain Thorel's exquisite keys, flashes of Claude Leonetti's unique leode work and Dominique Leonetti's remarkable tenor voice. For most of its five-minute runtime, it resists resolution, then explodes into an absolute wall-of-sound. It's all rather marvellous, especially through headphones.

If *Saison 8* begins with spring verve, appropriately it closes with *Les 4 Morte Saisons*, a dark ballad that meditates on the death of the year and the need for fallow times. Whether this is a signal that Lazuli intend to take a recording hiatus is yet to be seen. It's a mark of the confidence of this band, however, that they dare to end the record in a minor key. It brings the arc of this album to a quietly satisfying end.

Between this musical spring and winter, Lazuli display all the chops we've come to expect from them. On *Mes Amis, Mes Freres*, there's even a nod to classic hard rock ballads, as Gédéric Byar's guitar soars off into a wild wig-out. The lyrics are full of melancholy, reflecting on brotherhood both past and present. It's the nearest to 'bro-rock' that this band are likely to get.

Lazuli have a number of rare gifts. Firstly, they're confident enough to know that length is not the same as quality. *Saison 8* doesn't tarry over the points it wants to make. *Chronique Canine* (a spooky thriller) and *Les Côtes* (a standout, full of shimmery piano, menace and odd chord progressions) might have been spun out in the hands of lesser musicians. Lazuli make their statement and leave.

It will take time to see how *Saison 8* sits in their wider oeuvre, but their French world prog agenda continues to resist easy categorisation.

Lazuli, as many prog fans will know, are an extraordinary live force — primal, kinetic and joyous. It'll be fascinating to hear how this new instalment sounds out on the road.

RACHEL MANN

DUKES OF THE ORIENT

Dukes Of The Orient FRONTIERS MUSIC

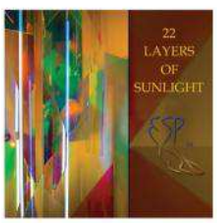
Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

After a decade of touring under the name Asia Featuring John Payne, vocalist and bassist John Payne finally lays the Asia name to rest with the launch of Dukes Of The Orient. He's joined by Erik Norlander on keyboards and they're backed by a collection of their former bandmates, including drummer Jay Schellen and guitarists Guthrie Govan, Jeff Kollman, Bruce Bouillet and Moni Scaria. Unsurprisingly, the new band sounds an awful lot like the old one, leaning much more towards the AOR side of Asia's career than the group's limited nods towards prog. This means synthesisers on everything, a lot of steady mid-tempo tracks and Payne's frequently over-the-top vocals. The singer has an admirable knack for infusing even the most pedestrian lyrics with the utmost sincerity. *'And you feel you can't go on!'* he declares in the fantasy-themed *A Sorrow's Crown*, while the melodramatic *Amor Vincit Omnia* exemplifies his bombastic delivery. The production faithfully recreates the sound of the 80s. Asia's *Aqua* and *Aria* albums are superior examples of this style, with stronger songs and greater range, but the spirit of AOR still lives on. **DW**

ESP 2.0

22 Layers Of Sunlight SUNN CREATIVE

The sun rises again on symphonic prog project.

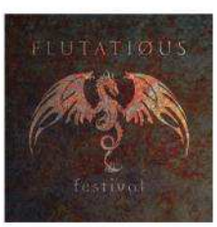


ESP's debut *Invisible Din* saw producer Tony Lowe and drummer Mark Brzezicki (Big Country) team up for an acclaimed symphonic prog passion play. That project was littered with an embarrassment of guest talent, including Crimson, Hackett and Van der Graaf collaborators. In contrast, ESP 2.0 appears considerably more streamlined, settled and built to last, keeping the group's central pairing and adding a permanent addition in former Lotus Eaters vocalist Peter Coyle. The result is *22 Layers Of Sunlight*, an album that eschews the necessarily eclectic approach of *Invisible Din* for a more mature, measured record. The calmer pace and Coyle's cycling lyrical rhythms place us nearer the Pink Floyd territory first hinted at on their debut. *Sensual Earth* is impressive in its arrangement, vaulting time changes and cascading scale, particularly as the symphonic section gives way to a wild guitar solo. There are modern mannerisms throughout. However, balance is the keyword here: between classic and contemporary, digital and analogue, musicality and 'the grid'. *22 Layers...* well constructed, then. **MP**

FLUTATIOUS

Festival MAGIC EYE

Flutes, violins and glorious psychedelic grooves.



After a long, grim winter, there are few things as welcome as music that makes you want to get down with the freaks in a sun-drenched field, circa 1973. Three cheers, then, for Flutatious. The band have been around for a while, but having bagged Lonely Robot's John Mitchell on production duties, they're finally ready to gather the audience their mix of psychedelic space rock and Celtic groove deserves. Primarily an instrumental outfit, their strongest work centres on the interplay between flautist Michelle Devonshire and violinist Stella Ferguson. Opener *Festival* – which is constructed around the trippy riffing of guitarist Andy Faulkner and keyboardist Gerald Williams – tells us to *'move our feet at the festival'* and it's pretty darn irresistible. The trippy *Acid Rain* and space groover *Tha I Ban* are also outstanding tracks that suggest Flutatious have achieved a tightness that's been shaped by tireless live work. Arguably, there's a little padding on this album. Tracks such *Lazy Summer Daze* and *Rendezvous In Marrakesh* are fun, and must be a hoot to play, but they tend to come over as 'wah-wah' psych rock by numbers. **RM**

FORKTAIL

Forktail MENKI

Macabre cinematic soundscapes redefine uneasy listening.

Contrived by *2000AD* comic artists Boo Cook and Simon Davis, both of whom have served formative apprenticeships in the *Dredd* trenches, Forktail is a musical project that describes itself as folk: folk horror, folk rock, but there's no hey-nonny here. The F word's deployment is symptomatic of the term being widely repurposed to describe anything with an innate darkness that would rather not be publicly tarred with the goth brush. *Forktail*, meanwhile, is more accurately filed under 'ambient/sound collage with odd splashes of spoken word and instrumental rock'. There's a nagging bassline here, an almost perceptible soliloquy there, mantric motifs drifting between corvine cawing and morbid, morphine dream atmospherics. Any 'folk' here is the shared memory of ancient tradition, dating back to an Avalon of witches, tolling bells and russet skies. It's evocative stuff, and an efficacious hallucinogen, with its mesmeric echoes of Hawkwind's eponymous debut. Hearing *Forktail* is like glimpsing vivid slashes of colour or an unfocused tableau of unspeakable horror while battling the effects of Rohypnol. And who wouldn't want that? **IF**

GOD IS AN ASTRONAUT

Epitaph NAPALM

The Kinsella brothers' post-rock elegy.

God Is An Astronaut's intense wall of sound live has always manifested itself very differently when put down on tape. However, with this, their eighth studio album, they find themselves as vital as ever, capturing in the crunchy yet sleek collaborative production with Xenon Field a distilled dose of the magic that's usually only found at their shows. Thematically, it's an album that's dense and offers little by way of respite. Fixated almost to a fault on the subject of death, it maintains an almost Krautrock sense of drive and purpose. Openers *Epitaph* and *Mortal Coil* offer a double-barrelled assault of attack and release, before the slow build of *Winter Dusk/Awakening* begins the process of shifting the tone from one of aggression to one of wistful melancholy. The crescendo of *Seance Room* is the high point, although the emotional peak comes later, on closing track *Oisín*, which was written about the tragic passing of the seven-year-old cousin of County Wicklow brothers Torsten (guitar/keys) and Niels (bass) Kinsella. God Is An Astronaut have a tight handle on what they do, and they rarely disappoint, particularly when they have such powerful inspiration. **AL**

GUM

The Underdog SPINNING TOP

Hugely impressive fourth from Australian whizz kid.

When he's not drumming for Tame Impala or bringing his multi-instrumental finery to Pond, Jay Watson finds time to make solo records. This latest effort under his GUM moniker is bursting with bright ideas, Watson sounding like a post-millennial version of Roxy Music on songs that flit between prog pop and art rock. *The Underdog* shares the same thirst for adventure as last year's majestic Pond opus, *The Weather* (mostly co-written by Watson and Nick Allbrook), while also sounding as free-ranging as Unknown Mortal Orchestra. In keeping with its title, Watson explains that the album's themes evoke "that sensation of triumph and that weird parallel universe feeling you get when the person that's not supposed to win, does". The title track is a terrific splash of pop art, complete with a neat guitar solo. Other songs, particularly *After All (From The Sun)* and *The Blue Marble*, are equally infectious. And anyone who's ever shaken a hip to Cabaret Voltaire will find much to admire in the jittery, synthetic rhythm that pumps the heart of *The Fear*. Watson may be in danger of spreading himself too thinly, but you'd never know it on this evidence. **RH**

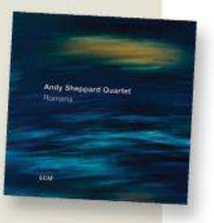
JAZZ PROG

Sid Smith rounds up the best releases from prog's jazzier reaches.

Bobby Previte's *Rhapsody* (Rarenoise) has the feel of an epic undertaking about it. A concept album about the experience of travel, it features elegant songs exquisitely voiced by Jen Shyu, rippling with intricate harp, rolling piano and chiming guitar (Zeena Parkins, John Medeski and Nels Cline respectively). Previte's vision encompasses jazzy swing, meditative improv, surging Glass-like arpeggios and the astringent quasi-classicism of RIO settings.

Keyboardist **Dominique Vantomme**'s *Vegir* (Moonjune) was recorded in 2016 but the long wait is most definitely worth it. Benefitting from King Crimson's Tony Levin trademark bass, squalling guitar from Michel Delville and explosive grooving from drummer Maxime Lenssens, what is in truth a one-off session has all the force and power you'd expect from a long-established outfit with a supernatural empathy. Exuding a relaxed confidence that's backed up by fat Fender Rhodes piano, memorable themes and an unerring capacity to deploy the right amount of light and shade, this is a world-class collaboration.

There's a fleeting glimpse of early-period Weather Report in *Romaria* (ECM) by the **Andy Sheppard Quartet**. It's not so much in the music but the feel as Sheppard's piercing sax is held aloft on sizzling ride cymbals and coloured by the ebb and flow of Eivind Aarset's FX-enhanced guitar washes. However fervid their interplay may be, it comes in an immersive late night atmosphere that's sustained throughout the entire album. Gorgeous.



Hailing from Leeds' phenomenally fertile jazz and improvised music scene, it's been a while since **Shatner's Bassoon** released an album. Happily, *Disco Erosion* (Wasp Millionaire) shows that their ability to rearrange musical atoms into strange and provocative shapes remains undiminished. With solos emerging from fragmented motifs, everything appears to teeter on the edge of chaos. But it's their last-minute swerves into the certainty of bold unison themes which produces an adrenaline-pumping exhilaration that's rather addictive.

Kit Downes' *Obsidian* (ECM) explores the tonal range and acoustic characteristics of three different church organs. Musicians working in sacred spaces often adopt a contemplative approach and while there's a calming presence in places, the deep stone-rumbling drones, radiating themes and billowing textures deployed in these variegated improvisations combine to form a surprisingly diverse set. The occasional addition of sax player Tom Challenger adds weight to what is a significant release.

The Swiss-based guitar-led power trio **Schnellertollermeier** present *Rights* (Cuneiform), which is an energetic, propulsive reworking of jazz and rock. Pointillistic, lapel-grabbing compositions and subsequent math rock excursions have a spiralling, racing urgency. That unrelenting, breathless pace can sometimes be challenging, yet their combination of tightly controlled minimalist discipline and superb dynamic control makes this a winner.

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ADAM HOLZMAN

Truth Decay BIG FUN PRODUCTIONS

Steven Wilson sideman steps into the spotlight.

Steven Wilson has a knack for choosing seriously good musicians to work with. A stalwart of his band since 2011, keyboardist Adam Holzman isn't just an ace player, though. The son of Elektra Records founder Jac Holzman, his youth was spent immersed in the milieu of an innovative label and its artists. A prodigious talent on the 80s jazz rock scene, Miles Davis recruited him as his musical director. The first band-orientated solo release since joining Wilson's group displays Holzman's skills as a composer of nimble tunes blessed with a piquant bite. Nick Beggs' lyrics on the title track skewer the creep of political corruption and there's a righteous fire in Holzman's impassioned and expressive outings across the record. A trippy cover of Elektra act Love's 60s classic *A House Is Not A Motel* is resplendent in its dazzling clavinet makeover, while the instrumental *Phobia* pays homage to Miles Davis' *Tutu* and includes a scorching guitar cameo from Wilson. Combining some skilled jazz writing and soloing with proggy settings suggests Holzman's quip about the guiding vision for *Truth Decay* being "*Dark Magus* meets *Close To The Edge*" was on the mark. **SS**

KARIBOW

The Unchosen ROCKWERK

A happy anniversary for the German proggers.

Germany's Karibow – aka Oliver Rüsing – celebrate 20 years of making music this year. *The Unchosen* offers a host of reasons why the prog world should join in. A studio project for much of that time, Karibow's latest release arguably reflects the benefits of Rüsing's return to live work in 2014. This is a suite of new, revised and remixed songs written between 2010 and 2017 that create rich aural landscapes, but will absolutely fly in a live context. Like Saga and later Marillion, Karibow have a gift for melody and bold arrangements, and tracks such as *Addicted* generate unalloyed joy. *Stratosphere* begins with Floydian repetitive menace before breaking out into satisfying power pop riffing and doubled vocals. If there's something very 80s about this unapologetic use of classic rock tropes, that's no bad thing. There's real tenderness too as in the acoustic version of *Holophinium*'s *Plutonian* and a fine orchestral take on their classic *Inorganic Talk*. This album travels backwards and forwards through the Karibow story with poise and beauty, and makes a fitting tribute to what they have been and what they are becoming. **RM**

LOUISE LEMÓN

Purge ICEA

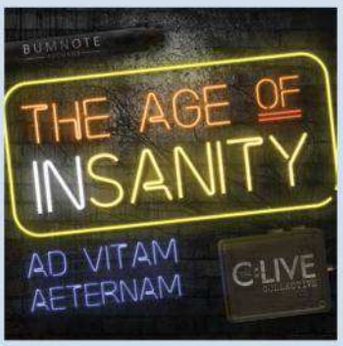
Southern gothic in the north.

Purge, Lemón's debut album of "death gospel", was recorded in a reportedly haunted cabin in the north of her native Sweden. *Prog* ain't afraid of no ghosts, but if the supernatural has a home anywhere, we suspect it's in the eerie silence of the Scandinavian woods in winter. There's something of that spacious, monotone landscape in this doomy, southern gothic collection. Lemón's touch across this introspective collection is, for the most part, feather-light, though it often seems like a finger on the scales is enough to tip things into tumult. On *Thirst*, the wind seems to snake dustings of snow in the verse's trebly guitar, before the howling refrain *'Oh Lord, make him love me'* whips up with a natural violence. Patience is required but rewarded, with the most emotive moments in the final two tracks, *Malex* and *178*. The velvet vocal and chiming chords of the former recalls Lana Del Rey, while the quivering tremolo synth backing carries it at a creeping pace into the sort of enveloping, claustrophobic warmth of Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *Power Of Love*. *Let Me In*'s kick-driven stomp feels clumsy by comparison, but there's much to like here, in the pines... **MP**

THE C:LIVE COLLECTIVE

The Age Of Insanity: Ad Vitam Aeternam BUMNOTE

Twelfth Night man thrills with his nightmare visions.



These are anxious times. Social media generates wonder, bile and confusion in equal measure. We're told we live in a 'post-truth' age full of 'alternative facts'. The C:Live Collective – led and curated by ex-Twelfth Night maestro Clive Mitten – reckon it's time for a counter-

> **A nightmare vision that's both beautiful and disturbing.**

blast. *The Age Of Insanity* is a prog state-of-the-nation address: a call to distinguish fact from fiction.

Mitten's first new music for over 30 years is welcome and bracing, drawing directly on Twelfth Night's classic *Fact And Fiction*. On that album, he and the late Geoff Mann practically predicted the troubled age we now live in. On *The Age Of Insanity*, he unfolds a nightmare vision in a series of movements that, like the internet itself, is simultaneously beautiful and disturbing.

Twelfth Night fans will cotton on quickly to what Mitten and co are up to, as the C:Live Collective take 1982's *Fact And Fiction* as a leaping-off point for a new vision. This includes riffing on *...Fiction's We Are Sane* on the album's opening track, *The Fifth Estate Part One (The Dictator Speaks)*. Mann's lyrics are placed in the voice of a disembodied Big Brother figure and sung with dark urgency by Mark Spencer.

Thankfully, there's much more to Mitten's reworking of this classic material than nostalgia or slick production values. The C:Live Collective's version of *We Are Sane* takes Twelfth Night's intoxicating mix of new wave attitude and prog complexity and ramps it up to 11. Equally, the album closer, *This City Is London*, presents a bitter, witty take on *Fact And Fiction*'s *This City*. Mitten adds new layers by introducing a mournful take on the English 'anthem' *Jerusalem*, while vocals from Geoff Mann's son, James, are crisp and sharp.

But this is much more than an album of retreads. There are three new and massive instrumentals. Frankly, they might easily suffer next to the classic material, but they're rich and jolting. Brimming with cinematic potential – think Vangelis on steroids – *Part Three* in particular is strange and disconcerting, as well as groovy and ravishing. In 17 minutes, it covers more ground than many albums. After a significant furlough from music, it's most refreshing to hear a musician of Mitten's quality playing with such gusto again.

In one respect, *The Age Of Insanity* is a mere aperitif: The C:Live Collective are due to issue a double-album, full-lyric version in the autumn. However, *Age Of Insanity* stands alone. In the absence of lyrics, it gives the listener space to fill up the sounds with his or her own nightmare visions.

RACHEL MANN

TOUNDRA

Vortex INSIDEOUT

Spanish instrumental quartet's fifth tells a good tale without words.

Not every band wants to join a party that would have them as a member. Vocal-free Madrid four-piece Toundra evidently see themselves ploughing a similarly impressionistic furrow to Mogwai's quiet-loud noisescapes and Explosions In The Sky's post-rock ethereal sounds, but their sprawling, free-form song structures, juddering rhythms and taste for epic sonic vistas and meandering musical journeys suggest there's a sizeable dollop of prog on their artistic palette. They may still be determined to Let Their Music Speak For Itself, clad in black jeans and

> **A riot of power chords, machine gun drums and howls of guitar.**

T-shirts and with no vocals or visual focal point, but after four albums (eponymous debut, *II*, *III* and *IV*), this time they have at least waxed lyrical by their own standards and given their new outing a title.

Yet while the last album was said to have as its theme the 'story' of two foxes escaping a forest fire (and we were helped to visualise this by cover art featuring two anxious-looking foxes and, erm, a fire), *Vortex*'s cover features an Athena-like sleeve illustration of a man in a desert with some sort of huge lunar eclipse looming over him.

Toundra certainly like to make the kind of elegantly apocalyptic sounds that the sleeve art suggests, particularly when *Cobra*'s riot of power chords, machine gun drums and howls of guitar hurls itself, panic-stricken, into your ears. But there's no shortage of light and shade, or ebb and flow to the eight pieces here.

In *Tuareg*, as the drums, bass and rhythm guitar pummel our senses, the lead guitar sings the top melody line like a bird trying to fly free from all this madness, before the riff roars back in as if to brutally yank such flimsy beauty back into the maelstrom. Then the whole rhythm section strut off, as if performing some sort of muscle-flexing mating dance.

The album peaks with the 11-minute *Mojave*, as sun-dappled guitar, backed up with strangely lo-fi rhythms, build slowly into something more substantial, solidifying around a relentless juggernaut of a riff that accelerates and flies off a cliff in a flaming fireball of stoner metal and a crescendo of guitar noise.

At times, when it all gets a little too breathless for comfort, it resembles the musical components of a band waging their own civil war with each other. But at regular intervals, the yearning melodies and quasi-orchestral swell of tracks like *Cruce Oeste* show that ultimately, they're not just out to jam with or against each other, but to make deceptively traditional, expansive, emotive music, appealing to our hearts as much as our heads.

JOHNNY SHARP

MIDAS FALL

Evaporate MONOTREME

Edinburgh electronica duo go fourth.

The sound Midas Fall make is that moment when you first wake up and push out of the blackness into consciousness, trying to remember the song that was playing somewhere in the wild skies of your dreams. Ethereal, haunting, bewitching – it's easy to bandy adjectives about while trying to reach for the right descriptive tone for the music they make. There are notes of This Mortal Coil, nods to a Celtic past (they're a Scottish duo, after all) and the sublime electronica that echoes a very early Chemical Brothers. There's even a hint of Kate Bush's *This Woman's Work* in the beguiling *Evaporate*. Truth be told, though, they work on another plane. Their music makes you feel like you're tethered to a thousand balloons and are being pulled, happily, into the endless blue above. There are strings that mourn, there's regret, there's the sun rising into a new day. This music is forlorn yet full of hope, and it encapsulates a yearning like no other record of recent times. It eddies, rises and falls, crashing up like the sea against the rocks at your feet and then flying away on an endless rise, its magical sound a softly returning, ever distancing echo. **PH**

MOTHERTONGUE

Where The Moonlight Snows BAD ELEPHANT

Northern troupe offer wildly eclectic prog pop.

Mothertongue sell themselves short by defining their music as a big heap of noisy and quiet. The Manchester sextet are way more involved than that. This intoxicating follow-up to *Unsongs*, their 2016 debut, moves seamlessly through a whole bunch of styles. The compositions of singer/guitarist Louis Smith recall the stately beauty of Sweet Billy Pilgrim, sharing the same gift for spinning complex ideas into melodious gold. *Blue Wicked Heart*, for instance, feels both daring and familiar, coloured by a faintly Latino-sounding trumpet, courtesy of Andy Malbon. *The Creature Tree* starts off as straight-ish pop, before snaking off into the long grass of prog. Smith's imagery is striking too, often reaching for nautical allegories as pegs from which to hang themes of dislocation and disquiet. There are whistling tarantulas and kissing cobras on the aptly named *It's Getting Weird*, whose beguiling flute solo posits the band towards the pastoral side of Traffic. And there are echoes of 10cc in the soft harmonies of *The Isle Of Not Quite Right*, which otherwise tacks along to a kosmische groove. Repeated plays only uncover more hidden treasures. **RH**

PLENTY

It Could Be Home KARISMA

Bowness and friends record their pre-No-Man sketchbook.

Immaculate yet baggy suits, moody expressions in monochrome undermined by oversized hair: it can only be the mid-80s. That's when Plenty first existed, with a pre-No-Man Tim Bowness learning his trade, vocalising songs authored with bandmates Brian Hulse and David K Jones. The trio were openly inspired by the era's leading artful brooders like The Blue Nile and David Sylvian, and it's safe to say that Bowness took some of that slow-motion awe with him upon joining forces with Steven Wilson. All these years on, the trio have reconvened to record their little-known catalogue with A-team assistance from producer Jacob Holm-Lupo (White Willow) and frequent Bowness collaborators Michael Bearpark, Peter Chilvers and Steve Bingham. It's a labour of love for old diaries and half-remembered heartbreaks. Bowness' lyrics are candid and vulnerable. The dry-eyed cover of *As Tears Go By*, with swirling synths and electronic drums, could have sat on *Top Of The Pops 1986*, while the title track is a tender, unscreened pilot episode for *No-Man: The Series*. One of those rare occasions when someone else's old photo album is fascinating. **CR**

POLY-MATH

House Of Wisdom | We Are The Devil LONELY VOYAGE

Brighton trio deliver a high-concept, math prog masterwork.

Brighton proggers Poly-Math have never been short on ambition, and with this double LP package, the band have taken things to the next level. Following mini-albums *Reptiles* and *Melencolia*, the band now challenge themselves and their audience by tackling a project of enormous scale. With grand concepts – the destruction of Baghdad's legendary 13th-century library, the House Of Wisdom, and the eventual fall of golden-age Islam – come grand musical themes, and from opener *1258* onwards, a new-found and more vocal approach to lead melodies. *Alchemy* and *Philosophy* are armed with their usual powerful riffs, but the pairing of *1258* and closer *Science* might be the grandest statement the band have yet made. Crowdfunded by fans, there are even snippets of spoken-word contributions from these supporters within the joyously angular mix. With sonic and stylistic debts to King Crimson and Rush – as well as modern groups like The Mars Volta – in a fair world, *House of Wisdom* would find a larger audience beyond their current math/post-rock and prog listeners. Its quality certainly marks it out as an early contender for album of the year. **AL**

COSMO SHELDRAKE

The Much Much How How And I TRANSGRESSIVE

Debut album of theatrical orch-pop from young musical polymath.

On the gnomically titled *The Much Much How How And I* (cut-up poetry apparently), Cosmo Sheldrake has pulled off the considerate feat of producing a debut album with both an utterly distinct sound palette and a highly individual approach to songwriting. Woodwind and brass are the dominant colours – both live and processed – along with Sheldrake's darkly rich (if slightly nasal) voice, giving many of the songs a peculiar, carnivalesque feel. It's like a steampunk version of prog, where Victoriana and the music hall have taken precedence over jazz and classical. Opening track *Linger Longer* sets the tone, a tremulous introduction giving way to the jerky swing of a freak show processional, while *Wriggle*'s oboes, bassoons and clarinets parp and chirp. *Solar Waltz* is exactly that, a sun-dappled celebration of the seasons, yet with a brooding undercurrent. The mystery of nature is a recurrent theme, though by *Beetroot Kvass*, the bucolic has become militant, conjuring images of new age tribes rising up to turn us all vegan. Melodically bold and inventive, Sheldrake isn't a man to hide his light under a bushel. At the very least, future cult hero status beckons. **JB**

DAMO SUZUKI & JELLY PLANET

Damo Suzuki & Jelly Planet PURPLE PYRAMID

Kosmische improvisers Deutsch sprechen... Best bring cushions.

What we have here are two improvised pieces, one (*Wildschweinbraten*) that lasts for 28 minutes, the other (*Venushügel*) for almost 35. Not the most tempting prospect, but hey, it's ex-Can vocalist Damo Suzuki doing what only he can, as Dortmund's Jelly Planet alternate from noodling furiously to droning languorously at his back. Obviously, improvised music's a hit-and-miss affair. At least DS&JP conduct their uncharted experimentations in a studio rather than 'in the field', so every nuance of their every foible's captured in unflinching clarity. But can you groove to it? Well, it's no *Tago Mago*, and as the improvisations unfurl, you can't help feeling that whichever path Suzuki was destined to point music down with Can was taken four decades back. But he still keeps pointing. *Wildschweinbraten* kicks off promisingly but Jelly Planet's clipped motorik gradually ceases its loose proactivity, resorting instead to taut, reactive responses to Suzuki's baffling ejaculations. By the time Suzuki apparently channels Louis Armstrong in the darkest depths of *Venushügel*, it seems everyone involved would rather just go home. **IF**

PSYCHEDELIC PROG

Take a trip with **Rob Hughes** as he seeks out the latest mind-expanding music.

The weird and the wonderful are in no short supply this month. Weirdest of all are Bristol-based quartet **The Evil Usses**, who follow up 2016's *Amateur Pro Wrestling* with mini-LP *Muck* (Stolen Body). Displaying all the fidgety restlessness of Cardiacs or Schnauser, they switch from wild instrumentals (*Grouse*) and off-centre jazztronica (*American Cocker*) to squidgy avant-psych with an almost total disregard for conventional song structures (*Wellard J. Fowler*).

Equally striking is *Hardly Strangers*, the second studio effort from **Psychic Markers** (Bella Union). The London five-piece cook up a dizzying array of musical ideas, held together by loose lyrical abstractions. The electronic throb of *Pyramids* eases into a coasting motorik rhythm; *The Moon Sits In Lonely Places* is trippier, with spoken-word passages sliding across distorted ambience.

A Place To Bury Strangers show that they're as uncompromising as ever, as they bring the full weight of their searing avant-rock to *Pinned* (Dead Oceans), their first album in three years. The New York trio ramp up the volume on the psychedelic blitz that constitutes *Never Coming Back*, while the building intensity of *Execution* borders on industrial noise. The nightmarish vision of *I Know I've Done Bad Things* sounds like Suicide jamming at a Ken Kesey Acid Test.

At the dreamier end of the spectrum, Austin quintet **Holy Wave** leap into a psychedelic burrow on third album *Adult Fear* (The Reverberation Appreciation Society). Syd Barrett's influence hangs over the faux-naïve *Nation In Regress*, followed by the similarly blissful *How Was I Supposed To Know*. And if the call and response of *Habibi* appears to originate from some deep slumber, then *Crys* sounds like a dispatch from utopia.

Preston's **The Common Cold**, whose Ajay Saggar and Mark Wareing used to play in Dandelion Adventure back in the late 80s, deliver harder-edged missives on *Shut Up! Yo Liberals!* (Action Records). The Fall loom large, albeit with vast prog flourishes, on the mighty *Napoleon's Index Finger*. And *Stop The Traffic*, all swooshing wah-wah and up-close beats, is a sinister floor-filler for alternative clubland. The album's lyrics are both biting and playful, not least when cramming Ringo Starr, Stalin and Laura Ashley into the same line.

Danse Dans Les Ailleurs (Sony France/Arista) is the latest solo outing from Tame Impala drummer **Julien Barbagallo**. Singing in his mother tongue, Barbagallo creates mellow psych-pop dripping with melodies. Acoustic guitars ripple and synths gleam, though the standout is *Je Me Tais*, which combines bold electronica with a well-measured guitar solo.

Last up, Chicago's **Jessica Risker** essays nimble psychedelic folk on *I See You Among The Stars* (Western Vinyl). Mostly reliant on just her lilting voice and acoustic guitar, it's the kind of intimate soul-seeking more associated with the golden heyday of Laurel Canyon. A consummate example of less being more.

YES

Fly From Here - The Return Trip PLEDGEMUSIC

Trevor Horn's vocals replace Benoît David's in a curious act of revisionism.

In 2011, Yes released their first studio album in a decade, with Steve Howe, Chris Squire and Alan White produced by Trevor Horn for the first time since 1987. Horn insisted on his Buggles buddy Geoff Downes being brought back to replace Oliver Wakeman, while Benoît David, plucked from a Canadian Yes tribute band in 2008 when Jon Anderson fell ill, handled lead vocals. The material was chiefly based on old demos from the *Drama* era, which had since appeared in part on a 2005 live Yes album and on a 2010 Buggles reissue. Got that? The history of Yes is a complex, confusing subject. We'll be testing you later.

> **It'd be fair to ask what the purpose of this album is...**

And now it gets more complicated. Because to coincide with their 50th-anniversary celebrations, Yes have revamped that seven-year-old album with new lead vocals by Horn himself. So it's effectively the *Drama* line-up reincarnated, with poor old Benoît David photoshopped out of the picture.

It'd be fair to ask what the purpose of this is. It's not as if the likeable, professional David did anything wrong. He took flak for not being Anderson, of course, as has his successor Jon Davison, but he always performed with humble dignity and undeniable vocal class.

This certainly isn't a case of removing Kevin Spacey from a movie so it's still marketable, and Horn's voice, while serviceable, was never the inspired producer's strongest suit. So, for all the talk of "a fresh dimension" and "a labour of love", we have to assume it's basically a bit of fun. And given that, it might have made a nice giveaway gesture, rather than pitching it as "a genuine sequel". It's the same album, guys! Just with Trevor singing marginally less well than Benoît!

In fairness, Horn has remixed sections of the album, and the band have added scattered overdubs, so it's interesting for completists. There's also the fact that *Fly From Here* remains a genuinely strong album, probably the best they've made since the 80s. The titular 25-minute, six-part suite that constitutes the first half is full of elevation and catharsis, with Howe hitting the heights. The denouement of *Bumpy Ride* and *Reprise* even offers a blink-and-you'll-miss-it nod to Genesis' *Supper's Ready*.

The songs in the second half are less in love with classic prog and lean towards a generic, vanilla AOR, but even then, Horn's studio artistry and the players' instincts complement each other with moments of dash and dazzle.

While this "brand new mix" undoubtedly sees a touch of cheeky repurposing going on, *Fly From Here* still leaves the runway and reaches *Cloud Nine*.

CHRIS ROBERTS

TEMPLES ON MARS

Temples On Mars PRIMORDIAL

Reinvigoration for the artists formerly known as Agent.

Temples on Mars are the newly rebranded cult prog metal band Agent, back with a name that's now possible to successfully Google, and tunes to rip through a mosh pit. Specifically, in the pre-chorus of *Gods & Kings*, there's a hint of prog heroes Amplifier, while the choruses of that track and others bear a more bombastic debt to groups like The Butterfly Effect. With more downtuned guitars than you can shake a stick at, there are obvious comparisons to the current crop of genre-leading bands, such as Periphery, but also more than a hint of sludgy alt-rock in the mix as well. At their best they have the crossover prog metal punch of The Contortionist's most recent album – for example, on *So In Love With Your Own Drug* – at least until a final-chorus key change bursts the bubble. *How Far Will You Go* is something of a different beast, with ballad-like elements morphing into a groovy chorus with a nice vocal edge, and screams that at least partially recall first-album TesseracT. While there's nothing unexpected or boundary-pushing on this record, there's a lot to enjoy, and there's no denying that Temples On Mars do what they do exceptionally well. **AL**

KAVUS TORABI

Solar Divination BELIEVERS ROAST

Debut solo EP from Knifeworld kingpin.

Since initially emerging from his Plymouth bedroom with the primitive thrashings of Die Laughing, Anglo-Iranian math rock literate psychedelian Torabi has variously enchanted us as vocalist/guitarist with The Monsoon Bassoon, Knifeworld, post-Jon Poole Cardiacs and a multitude of others, more recently fulfilling a most convincing frontman role in today's Daevid Allen-bereft Gong. Now striking out solo with a three-track EP, Torabi endeavours to distil his (very) particular artistic skill set down to its essence. Lead track *Radio To The World* combines a relaxed atmospheric ambience with ever so slightly clanging mid-Eastern elements. There's a hook, but flung far from pop fundamentals. Torabi's voice is an instrument on equal footing with all other elements of each finished piece. *The Faceless Undead* broods, its haunting introspection echoing some of the darker, more meditative aspects of Steven Wilson's *Insurgentes*, and represents the fullest, most concentration-demanding four minutes you'll spend this year. Epic closer *Slow Movements* takes you on a journey that melds Frippertronic drones with the kind of circular-breathing vocal one might expect of Shangri-La itself. **IF**

VALIS ABLAZE

Boundless LONG BRANCH

Bristol prog metallers impress despite failing to break new ground.

Having snagged support slots with stalwarts like TesseracT and SikTh as well as playing the UK Tech Fest, you can tell where Valis Ablaze's roots lie. The Bristol outfit juggle whirlwind djent-leaning riffery with clean vocals to admirable effect, and debut album *Boundless* sees the quintet fine-tune the formula over 11 often gripping tracks. Tech metal is in danger of becoming a tired genre, with a conveyor belt of clones in recent years mining the same influences, but Valis Ablaze's knack for doing it right gives them a slight edge. When they reach boiling point, it's potent stuff, with the frisky *Hex* enjoying some groove-laden riffing, and *The Static Between Us* breaking down into some machine gun drum blasts, while the production is crisp and crunchy. Proggers should get their kicks from the breathless fretboard flurries – the aptly titled *Faster Than Light* showcases some serious chops – as well as the jagged, unexpected time signatures. And while it's certainly not overflowing with fresh innovation, the slick *Boundless* is a fine first full-length foray for a group who appear to have all the right traits to make a big splash on the tech metal scene in the years ahead. **CC**

VLMV

Stranded, Not Lost FIERCE PANDA

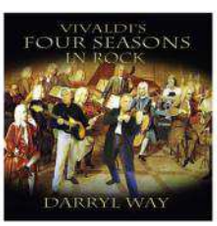
Intimate second from South London ambient duo.

VLMV is pronounced "uhl-muh", for the band are the reincarnated post-rock duo ALMA, back with their second full-length. After numerous accolades for their sprawling debut and tours with the likes of Nordic Giants, this album sees them taking a more introverted tack, turning inwards with their usual array of guitar effects, voices, piano and strings. *Among My Quietest Fears* is representative of much of the tone of the album: dark, yearning and melancholic. Opener *All These Ghosts* and *If Only I* offer a different perspective, however, with sparse, intimate vocals combined with the already gorgeous instrumentals. These tracks with vocals are so heart-achingly beautiful that they eclipse the rest of the album. Written as a single of body of work rather than as a collection of songs, *Stranded, Not Lost* benefits from a more cohesive songwriting process and pays dividends in the immersive results. At the intersection where post-rock truly meets ambient, with no consistent percussion on the record, this might prove difficult to get into for those that aren't already converts to the genre, but those willing to flex will find much to like. **AL**

DARRYL WAY

Vivaldi's Four Seasons In Rock RIGHT HONOURABLE

Curved Air maestro takes Vivaldi to the max.



Any child of the 80s will remember 'baroque'n'roll', that strange mash-up of rock and classical music made famous by the likes of Yngwie Malmsteen and co. Others will appreciate Max Richter's experiments that push classical music into post-rock territory. Before them all were pioneers like Curved Air's Darryl Way. Back in 1970, *Vivaldi*, his take on *The Four Seasons*, was arguably the height of prog cool. Things turn full circle with Way's new release, a full-blown setting of Vivaldi's most famous and enduring work. If nothing else, it reminds us that Way is one hell of a fiddle player. On *Four Seasons* he goes back to his classical training, playing it straight. This is surely wise given the way in which classical musicians like Nigel Kennedy have caught up with rock attitude. There's a reason Vivaldi's work has endured for three centuries, and there's no need for Way to get flash with it. Outstanding among the movements are a taut *Winter: Allegro non Molto* and a sprightly *Summer: Presto*. Admittedly, there are moments when the light drum beats feel a little unnecessary, indeed distracting. However, this is a fine addition to Way's classical canon. **RM**

RICHARD WILEMAN

Veil BELIEVERS ROAST

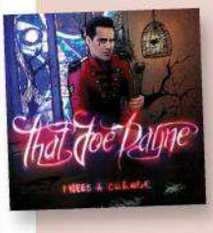
Lifting the veil on Karda Estra's eclectic composer.

It's 20 years since composer Richard Wileman began releasing albums as Karda Estra. The quality of his orchestral-tinged writing has resulted in quirky yet exquisitely constructed pieces that form a substantial and impressive body of work. Coalescing into an extended soundtrack for the imagination, an elusive, ambiguous quality is very much part of their appeal. Though Wileman is centre stage as the vocalist, Karda Estra's methodology of meticulous arrangements and intriguing melodies remains in place. Against a cleverly detailed backdrop of brass, woodwind, mallet instruments, acoustic guitar and keyboards, his voice weaves through songs that are richly pastoral in nature. There's an undertow of unease, which means it feels entirely natural that a knowing cover of *The Tinker Of Rye* from *The Wicker Man* turns up. While 'cinematic' would easily describe much of *Veil*'s content, there's one bracing but welcome jump cut in mood as the introspective *Ghost* pivots into the breezy bossa nova of *Last Grains*. After two decades as a best-kept, cultish secret, Wileman's work is just too good to be kept to the select few. **SS**

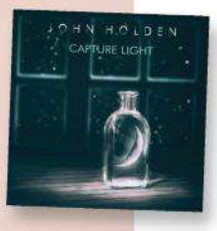
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

During his five-year tenure with The Enid, **Joe Payne** helped breathe fresh life into their illustrious career. He's solo now, and his first single *I Need A Change* (www.thatjoepayne.com) is dramatic, symphonic and almost classical-crossover in parts. Set to reverberating choirs and strings, his clear, powerful voice soars through the keys with ease as he articulates his recent battle with depression and anxiety. It's not the most immediate piece, but it becomes all the more engrossing with the required repeat listens. This bodes very well for the album that's currently in the works.



Payne is just one of the talents on the debut album from multi-instrumentalist **John Holden**. *Capture Light* (www.johnholdenmusic.com) also features Tiger Moth Tales' Pete Jones and Mystery's Jean Pageau, plus Billy Sherwood and Oliver Wakeman. With a guiding hand from Cosmograf's Robin Armstrong, Holden has produced a very impressive selection of thematically strong, neo-influenced songs. We'll be hearing more from him.



Alistair Murphy, also known as **The Curator**, is back with *Where The Stars Will Give Way To The Morning*, his self-released follow-up to 2012's *Inside The Whale (And Other Stories)*. He's a largely unsung and under-heard maverick, but a compelling one — whip-smart, brilliantly melodic but off the wall too, and with a nice shot of menace. Even if the production values don't quite match the musical ambition of tracks like *It Crackles And It Splits*, this is mature, dense and catchy stuff, evoking Genesis here, The Blue Nile there.

Niche London trio **Reformat** dial straight into that *Stranger Things* retro analogue synth thing, blending the joy of chiptune (80s-style computer music) with the crunch of math and post-rock. *The Singularity* (Bad Elephant) is a hell of a calling card, like John Carpenter leading The Fierce And The Dead from behind a Commodore 64, and the band's Ceefax-era aesthetic is irresistible to those of us of a certain vintage.

Former Mansun frontman **Paul Draper** strikes back with *EP Three* (Kscope), featuring four re-versions of tunes from his excellent 2017 album *Spooky Action*. The highlight here is Public Service Broadcasting's sweeping remix of *Friends Make The Worst Enemies*, and Draper's voice remains thrilling, haunting, unmistakable.

And finally, all credit to Mark Constantine. The founder of soap shop empire Lush is a big music fan, and is ready to put his money where his ears are. His record label ECC is a broad church, and their latest release, *The Self Preservation Society*, brings together Constantine's own selection of specially recorded covers of psych, prog and pop classics from the late 60s and early 70s. Thirty-four tracks come over three discs (vinyl only, of course), and among the proggier moments are Beagle & Amalthea's take on *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*, Man Diamond's *Hocus Pocus* and Teddy 'son of Richard' Thompson reviving *She's Not There*. Three years in the making, it's a welcome curio and good clean fun.

MARILLION

Brave - Deluxe Edition PARLOPHONE

Spine-tingling remastering finesse further enhances a work of beauty.

Let's face it, ever since Steven Wilson started remixing classic albums from the full-on prog and broader rock canons, most Marillion fans have been eagerly anticipating this particular meeting of minds. As lavish as you would hope and bolstered with one of the finest examples of the band's live prowess you'll ever hear, this deluxe return to one of Marillion's undisputed career peaks feels special before you even hit play on Wilson's meticulous redux. Not

> **The recording of *Live At La Cigale* borders on magical.**

that there was much wrong with Dave Meegan's original mix, of course. As the Brits flexed their conceptual muscles and collectively embraced unashamed progginess all over again, Meegan's reverb-heavy soundscapes and gently hazy rendering of these extraordinary songs was fundamental to *Brave*'s instant and enduring popularity.

Wilson's take, as we have come to expect, combines great respect and elegance with an almost mischievous sharpening of the album's focus. Genuinely brain-popping in audiophile-friendly 5.1 but very nearly as effective in simple, Wilson-ised stereo, the likes of *Hard As Love* and *Alone Again In The Lap Of Luxury* have never punched this hard before, as fine details that previously shimmered now leap from the speakers. Pleasingly, both versions of *Brave* have their own charms: there's plenty of fun to be had playing 'compare and contrast', but Wilson's knack for spine-tingling finesse and clarity just about edges it here. *Made Again*, in particular, has never sounded more beautifully fragile.

Oddly, the real revelation in this five-disc jamboree is the newly remixed version of *Live At La Cigale*, the majority of which first appeared on live album *Made Again* in 1996. Performing *Brave* in its entirety in Paris in April 1994, several years before such things became obligatory, and then serving up a ridiculously exuberant selection of revered gems, they were plainly on the form of their lives. Just listen to Mark Kelly channelling his inner Jon Lord on several euphoric occasions, or marvel at Steve Rothery's ability to send the entire crowd into batshit raptures with just one resonating note... Yes, of course, we know that Marillion are a great live band, but this recording borders on magical and Michael Hunter's remix is a triumph for ruthless subtlety.

The concluding Blu-ray boasts an intriguing and hilarious documentary, *It All Began With The Bright Light — Recollections Of Brave*. Given that this is very obviously a fans-only purchase, it's hard to imagine anyone not immersing themselves in every aspect of *Brave*, and so three additional promo videos, a bonus remix of *The Great Escape* and that doc all ensure that this is exemplary bang for your prog buck.

DOM LAWSON

ARENA

The Visitor VERGLAS

Nolan and Pointer's 1998 classic revisited, with extras.

Back in the 90s, Arena emerged as one of the prog acts ready to carry the torch for a commercially struggling, critically decried genre. Considering they were co-formed by Mick Pointer, Marillion comparisons were inevitable. But that's also because the band he built with Clive Nolan, John Mitchell et al shared – and still share – positive traits with the drummer's old band: transcendent guitar solos, theatrical vocals, beautifully melancholic melodies and atmospheric arrangements.

1998's *The Visitor* caught the band on something of a creative roll – this was their third long-player in four years, in contrast to their less-than-prolific 21st-century output.

Conceptually, too, this album hangs together on one of their strongest narratives. The hypnotic riff of *A Crack In The Ice* introduces a tale of someone helplessly falling through the titular schism. The tension rises and rises as a mysterious figure taunts the story's protagonist, *'I defy you to stand on the crack in the ice.'*

Double Vision sees the mystery man vow, *'I will always find you,'* Paul Wrightson's talent for melodramatic vocal delivery at the fore.

But there are so many emotional high-water marks – the yearning vulnerability of *The Hanging Tree*, the waving-not-drowning defiance of *A State Of Grace* – and the piano-led elegy of *Tears In The Rain* arguably stands out above them all due to its blissfully sad emotive power.

The six extra tracks (three live) on a bonus disc don't bring a huge amount to the party, but they still have merit: *Tears In The Rain*'s inherent fragility is, if anything, accentuated by the lo-fi treatment, while an acoustic reading of *A State Of Grace* shows how the song was built around the charismatic vocal. Unfortunately the live recordings suffer from the kind of poor sound desk mix that was common 20 years ago.

Despite that, the remastering gives the 14 original tracks a subtle but effective sonic overhaul, and helps ensure that *The Visitor* shows no signs of overstaying its welcome. **JS**

COLOSSEUM II

War Dance CHERRY RED

More hits than misses from Hiseman's fusion supergroup.

The third and final album from Jon Hiseman's Colosseum II comes to CD in the UK for the first time in a brand-new mastering from the original tapes. It was one of two albums the band released in 1977 featuring Hiseman behind the drum kit, alongside Don Airey on keys, bassist John Mole and Gary Moore on guitar. It's Moore who really shines here and his fluency in this very ferocious form of jazz rock fusion may surprise those who only know him from Thin Lizzy or his blues records.

War Dance is certainly a product of its time, when fusion was all the rage, allowing musicians to express their virtuosity without worries about being accused of self-indulgence. The opening title track sees Moore tearing it up, matched by Hiseman's endless rolls around his massive drum set, while the funky groove of *Major Keys* suggests the influence of Billy Cobham on tracks like *Red Baron* and *A Funky Thide Of Sings*. The hard-driving shuffle of *Fighting Talk* features a bristling exchange between Airey and Moore as they fire salvos back and forth, with the guitarist reaching higher and higher into the stratosphere, and the quartet fairly charge through the uptempo *Put It That Way*.

There's only one vocal performance, courtesy of Moore, and it comes on *Castles*, a soulful ballad among the least interesting and ambitious tracks of the set, despite his impassioned delivery. The Spanish tinge of the frantically paced *The Inquisition* suggests the band had been listening to Al Di Meola's *Elegant Gypsy*, released seven months earlier.

The last two tracks never reach the same intensity as the rest of the record. The three-part space rock of *Star Maiden/Mysterioso/Quasar* sees the players noodling around in search of a memorable melody, while *Last Exit* feels like an exercise in shredding from Moore. But overall this is a very strong outing from a band that never achieved the same recognition as Return To Forever or Mahavishnu Orchestra despite the often brilliant musicianship on display. **DW**

PERE UBU

Les Haricots Sont Pas Salés FIRE

Three-LP set from 1988-'92 plus a 'lost album' of outtakes and rarities.

Pere Ubu formed in 1975 and when they initially split in 1982, they were still defined by their early albums such as *The Modern Dance* and *Dub Housing*, dark and powerful missives from America's industrial heartland.

When they remerged in 1988, they did what few groups who have built an uncompromising artistic vision have managed: they made the transition onto a poppier path without a drop in quality.

The Tenement Year showed a lighter touch, but it teems with activity from Allen Ravenstine's scribbled synth lines and second drummer Chris Cutler's rim shots ricocheting off Scott Krauss' more regular rhythms. It's also full of bold tunes, with John Kirkpatrick's joyous melodeon lines colouring the sea shanty melody of *Busman's Honeymoon*, while *George Had A Hat* careers around in a state of barely controlled chaos, with vocalist David Thomas harrumphing away on tenor horn.

Cloudland, their 1989 debut for Fontana, is a smoother ride, with the single *Waiting For Mary* getting coverage on MTV and making No.6 in the Modern Rocks *Billboard* chart. *Nevada!* takes The Beach Boys' *Sloop John B* into a landscape of dinosaur fossil beds and dried up ocean floors, with Ravenstine's synths occasionally breaking through the surface sheen, like sonic exclamation or question marks.

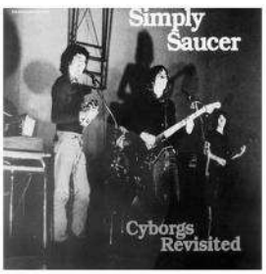
Produced by Gill Norton, Pere Ubu's second Fontana album *Worlds In Collision* (1991) is sleeker still. Again we're spoiled by the number of top-quality tunes, particularly the singles, *I Hear They Smoke The Barbecue* and *Oh Catherine*. As always they feel like potential hits, but realistically only in a slightly skewed parallel world.

The fourth LP features seven tracks that couldn't fit onto the original vinyl of *Cloudland* and four demos for the album that was going to follow it. Highlights of this equally strong set are *Wine Dark Sparks*, a paean to Van Dyke Parks set to a beautifully creaky calypso, and *Like A Rolling Stone* – not that one – with its complex, agitated changes of metre. **MB**

SIMPLY SAUCER

Cyborgs Revisited IN THE RED

Deluxe reissue of Canadian sci-fi garage punk classic.



Simply Saucer were the crashed UFO in the industrial heartland of Ontario that nobody bothered to investigate at the time, so out of step were they with the mid-70s Canadian music scene. But following the retrospective release of *Cyborgs Revisited* in 1989, the rest of the planet gradually caught up with what these purveyors of "heavy metalloid music" had been up to all those years ago... and that was basically creating the perfect fusion of the avant/garage psych of The Velvet Underground and the Stooges with the raw space rock of Hawkwind and Syd-era Pink Floyd.

Essentially a six-track demo (recorded in the basement of future U2 producer and Brian Eno collaborator Daniel Lanois) plus three live tracks, *Cyborgs Revisited* literally fizzes with the curled-lip sneer of disaffected youth, but rather than smash the state, these guys were intent on gatecrashing inner space. Singer, guitarist and band leader Edgar Breau whipped up a murky vortex of sci-fi noise to complement his strange, dystopian lyrics, with the atonal electronics of John LaPlante also an essential part of the mix.

Instant Pleasure is exactly that: a two-minute hit of slashing riffs and the manic churn of a band heading straight for oblivion, Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers transformed into wild-eyed androids. *Electro Rock* and *Here Come The Cyborgs Pts 1 & 2* are full of testifying urban energy, the ever-present howls and drones of whatever LaPlante is playing – modular synth, audio generator or theremin, it's unclear – breaking the surface like alien glossolalia. *Bullet Proof Nothing* is an almost sweet ballad, an unselfconscious VU homage – while the nightmarish circular riff of instrumental *Mole Machine* is Krautrock on cheap speed.

Released as a remastered "deluxe" edition by In The Red, this reissue comes with an additional album of live tracks that will delight existing fans, songs such as *I Can Change My Mind* and *Rock & Roll Brain Cells* offering an even more primitive take on the Simply Saucer template. **JB**

CHRIS SQUIRE

Fish Out Of Water ESOTERIC

Repackaged Yes-man classic, which redefined the role of bass players.

When Yes decided, after touring 1974's *Relayer*, to take nine months out to record solo albums, the results were largely fruitful: the astral whimsy of Jon Anderson's *Olias Of Sunhillow*, the Brazilian rhythms and Moog squawks of Patrick Moraz's *The Story Of I*, the guitar dexterity of Steve Howe's *Beginnings* and, er, Alan White's ropey *Ramshackled*. Arguably, Squire's release was the best of the lot. It was already established that he was more than just "the bass player", but the ambition of this record and its alchemy in turning bombast to beauty proved how vital he was to the Yes sound, his influence extending far beyond four strings. It confirmed that his voice, usually layered just below Anderson's, was crucial to that magic. In Andrew Pryce Jackman, he found the perfect collaborator.

> **Magisterial, with sweet refrains and a truly epic sweep.**

Jackman had been in Squire's 60s band The Syn, and the pair relished making almost impossible musical visions become reality. The songs have a magisterial blend of sweet refrains and structural switchbacks anyway, but Jackman's arrangements give them a truly epic sweep (Squire offered him some co-writing credits; he modestly demurred). Recorded in exotic Leatherhead and Willesden, *Fish Out Of Water* is Squire in clover. From the opening organ passage played at St Paul's Cathedral, through the washes of brass, strings, horns and woodwind that adorn these tracks, the album traverses a rhapsodic landscape.

Hold Out Your Hand seeks to catch the essence of Yesmusic in a catchy four-minute song, and its harmonies, feints and elisions do that. At 11 minutes, *Silently Falling* is the first track to go Full Prog, and its changes of pace portray snow descending, first in gentle flakes, then in mad flurries of excitement. It's where Bill Bruford and Patrick Moraz let loose, and their contributions to the album are rich with energy and enthusiasm. Mel Collins' saxophones get heated too. Yet it's probably *Safe (Canon Song)*, the closing quarter-hour, which best articulates Squire and Jackman's desire to go limitlessly large. With a brief nod to *Close To The Edge* and Squire's bassline evoking passages of *Tubular Bells*, it's as none-more-florid as *MacArthur Park*: symph prog at its finest.

Squire's now departed this plane, of course, so this deluxe box set serves to remind us of his prime, offering a remaster and new 5.1 surround sound mixes by Jakko Jakszyk (wait, Steven Wilson took a day off?). There are also bonus tracks — including seven-inches of *Run With The Fox* and *Lucky Seven* — Squire's extracurricular sessions with Alan White, a DVD of 1975 promo footage, a booklet, interviews and Squire's 2006 commentary. Dive in again.

CHRIS ROBERTS

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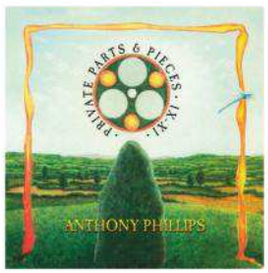
ANTHONY PHILLIPS

Private Parts & Pieces ESOTERIC

Final four-CD reissue instalment of the ex-Genesis guitarist's archive solo series.



Anthony Phillips has enjoyed a long career composing and recording library, soundtrack and other commissioned music, and his solo releases include the *Private Parts & Pieces* compilations. For these, Phillips drew on a considerable reservoir of material, including experiments and improvisations that he would then edit, reconfigure and re-record, mainly in his home studio in London.

Volume IX, *Dragonfly Dreams*, was released in 1996 and shows a mix of approaches, including the chiming, minimal electric piano figures on *Lostwithiel*, pastoral acoustic guitar impressionism on *Hills Of Languedoc* – co-written with and featuring Quique Berrio Garcia on classical guitar – and *Chinese Walls*, an ambitious, 17-minute solo guitar excursion that he had originally sketched out a decade earlier.

From 1999, Volume X, aka *Soirée*, is a solo piano set and while it's lyrical and melodic, it remains pithy: even the delicate, musical box-like *Sad Ballerina* has a sprinkling of salt mixed in with the sweetness. *Creation*, with its rippling arpeggios, is the oldest composition here, dating back to 1968, while Phillips' playing becomes particularly expansive on *The Oregon Trail*.

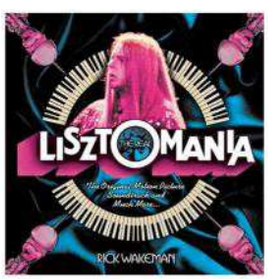
Volume XI, *City Of Dreams* was released in 2012 and sees Phillips dealing more with synthetics and electronics, which range in style from the ominous string synth chords of *King Of The Mountains* to more abstract sketches like *The Deep*, to the motorik sequencers of *Night Train To Novrogod*. This a particularly compelling and multifaceted set with many of the 31 tracks being sonic snapshots of a minute or so.

The fourth disc is basically a bonus CD that comprises 18 pieces that had been previously overlooked, but are of a similar quality. *High Roller* is a lively, chiming electric 12-string piece, while other highlights include two appropriately titled *Piano Drama* movements and *Pablo Dries Out*, an exquisite guitar duet with Garcia. **MB**

RICK WAKEMAN

The Real Lisztomania RRAW

Soundtrack to cult movie restored to its original glory.



Even by Ken Russell's standards, *Lisztomania*, the maverick director's 1975 'reimagining' of the life of German pianist and composer Franz Liszt is, on the face of it, completely nuts.

Starring Roger Daltrey in the lead role, it's like a cross between a 70s sex comedy, a Nazi-themed horror movie, and an episode of *The Mighty Boosh*, with Liszt depicted as a priapic 19th century rock star mobbed by hordes of screaming female fans. Yet 'Lisztomania' was a very real phenomenon, with audiences mesmerised by his stage presence and virtuoso performances.

Who better then to deliver a soundtrack of modern-day interpretations of Liszt's greatest hits than Rick Wakeman? Walter Carlos got there first with his Moog-enhanced versions of the classics for *A Clockwork Orange*, but Wakeman rejects a formal approach to his source material, using it mainly as a jumping off point. However, A&M Records, his label at the time, turned down his original concept for the soundtrack album, and instead released a bowdlerised version that Wakeman hated.

The Real Lisztomania, packaged as a box set which includes a DVD of the film plus promo materials, is the soundtrack restored to how Wakeman intended it, complete with fruity narration from Paul Nicholas (who plays a vampiric Richard Wagner in the film).

Highlights are plentiful: *Free Song* is an engorged confection of strutting bass and high synth; *Orpheus Song* is a gauzy fantasia for Mellotron and piano interrupted by Daltrey's hairy-chested tonsils; *The Ride Of Thor* (who Wakeman plays in the film as a drunken Frankenstein's monster) takes Wagner's *Ride Of The Valkyries* and turns it into jazz prog; *Excelsior Song* could be from *Springtime For Hitler*, a lilting ballad to the master race that nods mischievously towards David Bowie; and then there's the evil Moog, thunderous timpani and operatic intensity of *Hell...* Google, if you dare, 'Lisztomania Giant Cock Scene' to fully appreciate the context of this song! **JB**

LOVE

Forever Changes: 50th Anniversary Edition RHINO

The eighth wonder of the world is among us once again.

To mark its half century, *Forever Changes*, the most mysterious but dazzling jewel in prog's early history, manifests in its most expansive incarnation yet. Over multiple formats, it now has five versions, including original producer Bruce Botnick's latest remastering, largely familiar out takes and attendant singles; all in hardcover book.

As shown by the original mono version (on CD for the first time), Love's third album was already a work of untouchable beauty when released in 1967. A week later, the Moody Blues' *Days Of Future Passed* arrived as a more obvious example of psych pop and classical orchestration. Even that landmark often sounds like lavishly presented amateur dramatics next to the luminous strangeness and dark lyricism of *Forever Changes*, which marked the first time orchestral arrangements were composed with the original music.

> **A farewell death letter to hippie culture.**

Forever Changes followed the baroque psych of Love's second album *Da Capo*, released seven months before the band entered Sunset Sound studio in June 1967. After finding them stoned and unrehearsed, Botnick enlisted crack LA session squad the Wrecking Crew as a wake-up call. They knew every nuance when they returned two months later.

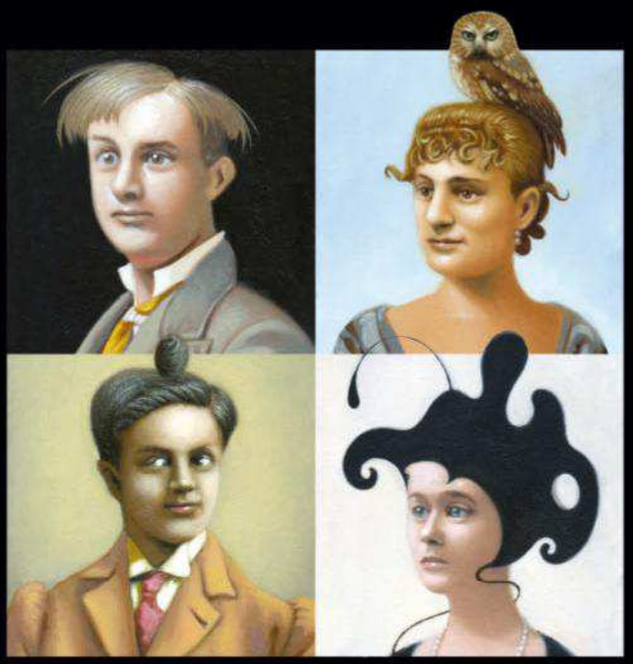
Believing he was not long for this earth in that time of escalating Vietnam carnage and civil rights oppression, Arthur Lee, Love's enigmatic main singer and songwriter, conceived this mercilessly beautiful supernova as his farewell death letter to the hippie culture he'd always questioned and the LA hip scene he'd ruled until Jim Morrison came along. Following Lee's directive not to sound like normal rock band overdubs, arranger David Angel wrote orchestral scores from parts hummed by Arthur, leading LA Philharmonic horns and strings as an organic element of the music. Lee transformed himself into Johnny Mathis so his obliquely pin-sharp lyrics held their own over this lustrous orchestration and Love's subtly-hued psychedelic tapestries.

There's not one duff track, highlights including guitarist Bryan MacClean's still-stunning opening portal *Alone Again Or* hot-wired by Mariachi horns; racism-blasting *Live And Let Live*; harrowing anti-war *A House Is Not A Motel*; desperately perplexing *The Red Telephone*; clamouring Strip-hustle *Maybe The People Would Be The Times Or Between Clark And Hilldale*; and episodic grand finale *You Set The Scene* going out with a barely congruous but spine-chilling prog fanfare.

On release, *Forever Changes* was loved in the UK but ignored in America. Now it's routinely hailed one of the greatest albums of all time, sounding uncannily prescient again in these precarious modern times.

KRIS NEEDS

KING CRIMSON



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IAN MOSLEY – MARILLION'S HEARTBEAT

Mark Pardy SELF-RELEASED

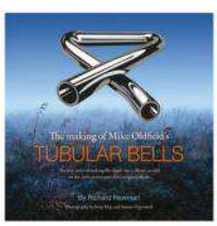
A band is only as good as their drummer.

In what appears to be a re-promotion of his 2015 book, fan and fellow drummer Mark Pardy analyses Ian Mosley's approach to the noble art of tub-thumping using examples from 24 songs drawn from Marillion's catalogue. Pardy favours their 80s and 90s albums, choosing just three selections from their post-2000 output, the most recent being *Gaza* from 2012's *Sounds That Can't Be Made*. Aimed at players, the book contains notation of selected passages from each song that highlight some aspect of Mosley's style, from odd time signatures to his use of triplet accents in fills, or building grooves with grace notes (technically they're ghost notes in the examples chosen). The lengthiest of the notations is the marvellous 5/8 midsection of *Easter* and Pardy favours the most unusual passages – anywhere there's an odd measure, for instance, rather than the simpler grooves. The charts are interspersed with photographs mainly of Mosley's kit – more shots of the man himself would be welcome. However artfully composed and lit it might be, a photo of a snare drum stand seems more at home in a hardware catalogue. With his accessible approach, Pardy makes a convincing case for Mosley's place in the pantheon of prog drumming greats. **DW**

MIKE OLDFIELD

The Making Of Mike Oldfield's Tubular Bells RICHARD NEWMAN

The bells toll once more...

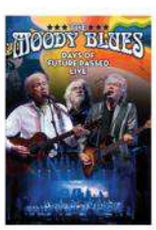


This writer recalls seeing this book when it was first published back in 1993 to celebrate the album's 20th anniversary, and thinking it was a bit lightweight for an album that not only sold more than 15 million copies, but also made a reluctant superstar of its creator. But this new edition packs a hefty visual punch. The interviews with Oldfield and producers and engineers Tom Newman and Simon Heyworth don't appear to have been updated. But author Richard Newman, onetime host of Capital Radio's *Night Flight* programme in the 70s, has engaged with photographer and artist Fran May, whose quite stunning photography, all with evident sympathy to the subject matter, helps to expand the original into a coffee table tome with some gravitas. And that's certainly something *Tubular Bells* deserves: it remains an album as unique as its creator. Here what's evident is the contemporaneous bond that existed between Oldfield, Newman and Heyworth as they slowly wove the masterwork together, seemingly against all the odds, and as Oldfield himself teetered on the verge of some kind of breakdown. History shows those struggles were ultimately worth it. **JE**

THE MOODY BLUES

Days Of Future Passed Live EAGLE ROCK ENTERTAINMENT

Half a century on, the future passed is still bright.

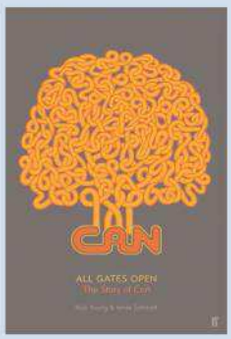


In 2017, The Moody Blues celebrated the 50th anniversary of their groundbreaking *Days Of Future Passed* by playing the whole record accompanied by the Toronto World Festival Orchestra. But before they get to *DOFP*, their opening set features the band's current incarnation, centred around John Lodge, Justin Hayward and Graeme Edge, sans orchestra. Edge shares drumming duties with Billy Ashbaugh and while the younger man handles most of the heavy lifting, the veteran clearly loves every minute. Meanwhile, in addition to possessing one of rock's most distinctive voices, Hayward is no slouch on the guitar. The Moody Blues have performed with orchestras before – as captured on their 1993 and 2010 live albums – but the appeal here is the front-to-back performance of what Lodge calls "an album that changed our lives forever". Those lush arrangements, first recorded by the London Festival Orchestra back in 1967, still sound fantastic. *Tuesday Afternoon* and *Nights In White Satin* are masterpieces of symphonic rock, and for the icing on the cake, they encore with *Question* and the rollicking *Ride My See-Saw*. In addition to the DVD/Blu-ray/CD, there's a vinyl release for the full old school experience. **DW**

ALL GATES OPEN: THE STORY OF CAN/CAN KIOSK

Rob Young & Irmin Schmidt FABER & FABER

First definitive biography of Germany's most magic band – with a twist.



Since witnessing Can at full stratospheric throttle in February 1973, nothing has come close to that mind-blowing display of spontaneous combustion as they gatecrashed dimensions rarely glimpsed in rock. Nobody seemed able to describe it either, until this first proper biography that not only reveals the band's whole astonishing story, but manages to pinpoint their supernatural essence.

Driven by extreme personalities colliding on a mutual mission to explore the unknown, Can were formed by classical composer-conductor and keyboardist Irmin Schmidt

> **Every page flaunts eyebrow-raising facts or trivia.**

and electronics boffin bassist Holger Czukay, who recruited behemoth drummer Jaki Liebezeit, guitarist Michael Karoli and singers Malcolm Mooney and, later, Damo Suzuki.

Rising from the rubble of post-war Germany in 1968 to reflect their harsh environment while reaching for the stars, Can started as "a collective that grew up in destruction", before taking progressive rock to the furthest outer limits. Peak landmarks *Monster Movie*, *Tago Mago*, *Ege Bamyasi* and *Future Days* were constructed from hours of improvisations that carried into incandescent live shows until line-up changes and patchier albums diluted their focus and meteor-like impact. Or as Czukay puts it, "I thought [Can] was like a living organism. It had a beginning, it had a youth, it had a time getting old and a time to die... We were products of our time. And so was Can."

This impossibly colourful story could only be done justice using the deepest research and a deeper understanding of Can's music. Despite discovering the band in the late 80s, Young manages both with eloquence and passion, dissecting sonic morsels, old film snippets or obscure recordings with the forensic glee of a true fan. While every page flaunts eyebrow-raising facts or trivia, he sculpts lines like, "Can appeared like a comet or unknown planet, sighted once in a blue moon," or considers 1974's shape-shifting *Bel Air* an ultimate embodiment of the band's "refined artistic magic, their telepathic integration as a unit and the total mastery of their still primitive recording facilities" (before revealing the mid-track break was prompted by a leaking gas pipe).

Can fans have waited years for this book, then two turn up at once. Schmidt's *Can Kiosk* is an entertaining wind-down after the main event, an extended appendix most worthwhile for his intriguing notes and reflections, though interspersed with conversations with celebrity fans and contemporaries.

As Nick Kent says at one point, "With Can's music, still nobody has caught up." This tome finally explains why.
KRIS NEEDS

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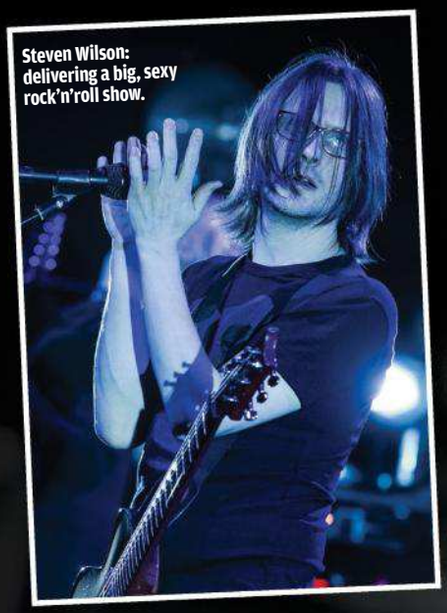
Take a bow

STEVEN WILSON

VENUE	WARWICK ARTS CENTRE, COVENTRY
DATE	15/03/2018


Steven Wilson: delivering a big, sexy rock'n'roll show.

"What we do up here is a big, sexy rock'n'roll show," says Steven Wilson. "But it's like we're the only people dancing at a party. We could hear our own footsteps as we walked on stage."

Wilson is faced with an audience well settled in comfortable seats, and he clearly wishes they weren't. He wants people on their feet, and it'll happen eventually, but more of that later.

To be fair to the crowd, it doesn't start like a party. The evening opens with a rather stern voice introducing a short film that plays on a gauze curtain strung up in front of the stage. A series of apparently unconnected images flash up. There are pictures of football violence and newborn babes, cowering families and CCTV cameras, ISIS fighters and Richard Nixon. To add to the air of confusion, words are flashed up over the images: SCIENCE. SECURITY. FAKE. EGO. THREAT. GRIEF. HAPPINESS. It feels perilous. Russ Abbott this is not.

> **"It's all very loud, surprisingly heavy and has an aggressive, occasionally violent sheen."**

What it is, is spectacular. *Nowhere Now* glides by in a rush of Who power chords with a spiralling Floyd chorus. A dreamlike *Pariah* features a digital duet with Ninet Tayeb, her face projected 20-feet high onto the gauze. *Home Invasion* stutters and grinds with menace, Nick Beggs swapping bass for Chapman Stick and back again, keyboardist Adam Holzman delivering a wildly oscillating solo. *Ancestral* starts with a skittering, Radiohead-style noodle-along, but by its finish the band are literally on their knees, pumping out a wild, virulent noise as the song climaxes.

Song Of I is a dramatic, widescreen wonder, making the point in a complicated Venn diagram where Ulver, Depeche Mode and Portishead collide. It's all very loud, it's surprisingly heavy, and any meekness in the original recordings is banished by the introduction of an aggressive, occasionally violent sheen. And it's all done without losing any of the elegant, uplifting beauty of the compositions.

There's also a tasty sprinkling of Porcupine Tree songs scattered throughout the set. *The Creator Has A Masterpiece* slowly builds before disintegrating in a wall of fierce noise, *Arriving Somewhere But Not Here* develops slowly, the band members gradually raising the tension with egg shakers, before reaching a howling peak as cars speed by on the backdrop. And *Sleep Together* provides a spectacular finish, with Eastern string arrangements giving everything a monstrous, *Kashmir*-meets-metal momentum.

Wilson's in avuncular form, joking about the age of the audience ("Is anyone here under the age of 40?") and bouncing around the stage with relaxed abandon. He introduces the musicians — an entertaining, drawn-out business that involves the band members waving at each other from opposite sides of the stage — and he even introduces his new guitar, a battered 1963 Telecaster in dire need of a paint job. He says it's the first time he's really bonded with such an instrument.

He demonstrates the visceral rock sound it makes, and as his elbow levers furiously during the slashing chords that backbone *People Who Eat Darkness*, we could almost be watching Dave Grohl.

Despite the undeniably epic nature of much of what's on show, the highlight of the set is *Permanating*, the three-minute wonder that's a controversial cat amongst the prog pigeons. Wilson introduces it with a long preamble about the "wonderful tradition" of pop music: ABBA and The Beatles (hooray!) in one corner, Justin Bieber and Miley Cyrus (boooo!) in the other. He talks about the magnificence of melody and harmony, and about not paying attention to genres.

"I've never said what kind of music I make," he says. "Other people have always done that. I don't give a shit about musical boundaries."

He talks about the odd thrill of watching men in Opeth T-shirts attempting to dance to the song, and about not believing anyone who says they don't like pop. It's a shame he has to say any of this, but it's a win-win situation for Wilson. His more open-minded followers get to stand — finally — and experience a few moments of effervescent pop glee (*Permanating* sounds like ELO playing the world's best roller disco) and Wilson gets to troll any stodgy old bores terrified by songs you can whistle while you work.

As a look of joy slowly crosses Nick Beggs' face while his tackles the backing vocals, and as Wilson peers up at the balcony to check out people's moves, one can only hope there's more of this sort of thing to come. A whole album, perhaps.

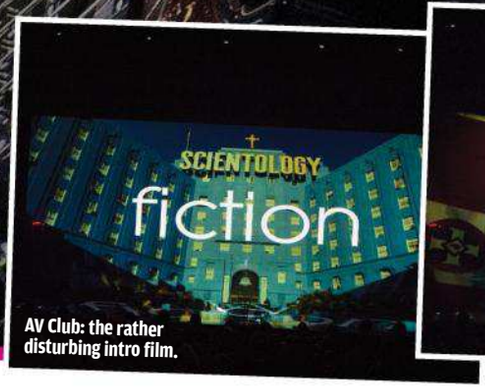
FRASER LEWRY

Bums On Seats: Wilson waits to get the party started.

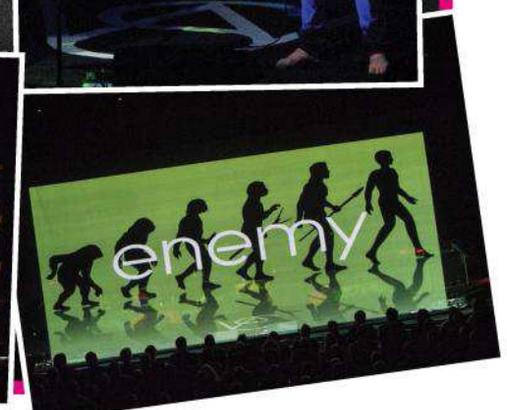
KATJA OGRIN

Ace Of Bass: Wilson gives Nick Beggs a run for his money.

Digital Duet: Wilson with a virtual, giant Ninet Tayeb.



AV Club: the rather disturbing intro film.



HMS PROG

VENUE	SPIRIT OF ROTTERDAM/THE WATERHOLE, AMSTERDAM
DATE	02-04/03/2018

"The North Sea in March? Are you mad?" is what everyone said to your correspondent whenever they discovered this writer is attending the UK's inaugural floating progfest. Throw The Beast From The East and Storm Emma into the mix, and one has to express surprise that The Spirit Of Rotterdam ("It's a ship, not a boat," we're stiffly corrected on embarkation) even managed to set sail.

Yet there are blue skies in Hull (surely a first) when we arrive, and things remain relatively pleasant, if cold, for the duration of the weekend. There are some casualties, though. Comedy Of Errors can't get down from Scotland, and a mix of the bad weather and the UK's dire transport network curtails a few fans too.

True, not everything goes to plan. We sail late, which means only two live sets on the first night. And the second cinema's equipment is broken, something the ship owners do nothing to fix. But those quibbles aside, the vibe is fantastic and a damn fine time is had by all.

With Cairo unfortunately bumped on the Friday, it's **Martin Turner** and his band who get things going with a performance of Wishbone Ash's 1972 classic *Argus*. This writer has never been a fan of the Ash, but has to say that the performance is enjoyable, and gets the crowd up and dancing. The next night's set of *There's The Rub* in full is less enjoyable to these ears, but once again it goes down a storm with the crowd.

Caravan's Pye Hastings did make it all the way down from the north of Scotland, but Geoffrey Richardson had other duties, so Soft Machine guitarist John Etheridge fills in. And my, what a stonking show from the Canterbury outfit. It's full of expected evergreens such as *Love To Love You, Golf Girl* and *Memory Lain, Hugh/Headloss,* but performed with youthful vigour, panache and added grit from an excellent Etheridge. A band reborn.

Yes keyboard player **Geoff Downes** hosts an informal prog-e-oke and Q&A session on an upper deck on both nights, which is a great way of ending both evenings. Downes' enjoyable, laconic style is engaging, especially when chatting about the late John Wetton.

Saturday sees us bussed to Amsterdam, where everyone — bands and fans — group together and make our way to The Waterhole for a wonderfully informal acoustic show from **Pendragon**'s Nick Barrett and Clive Nolan (Pete Gee doesn't travel well, we're told). Effusive and self-effacing, it's the perfect afternoon entertainment, which is washed down with some delightful Dutch beer.

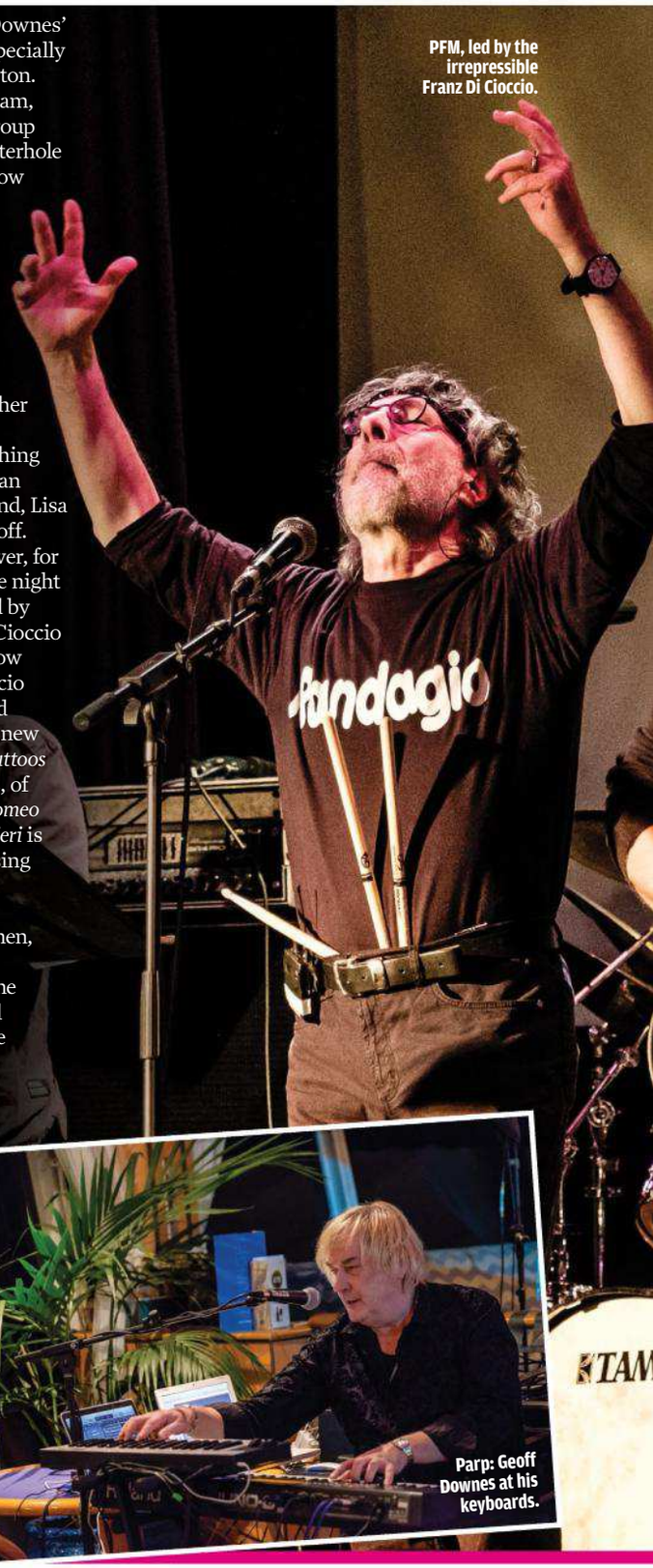
Back on board, **Cairo**, who also performed a short set in Amsterdam, don't quite match the heights of the other bands. They come across as a work in progress rather than anything approaching the finished article. Rob Cottingham can pen a catchy tune, but alas, this weekend, Lisa Driscoll isn't the singer to carry them off.

> **"Playing a set full of expected evergreens with youthful vigour, panache and added grit from John Etheridge, tonight Caravan are a band reborn."**

No such problems, however, for **PFM**, who like Caravan the night before, play a blinder. Fired by the irrepressible Franz Di Cioccio and Patrick Djivas, they wow a delighted crowd. Di Cioccio flits between frontman and drummer as the band mix new material from *Emotional Tattoos* with well-received classics, of which their rendition of *Romeo e Giulietta: Danza dei Cavalieri* is a highlight, drawing a rousing emotional response and lengthy applause.

HMS Prog is a success then, albeit against an unlikely backdrop. But judging by the smiles as everyone disembarks, there'll be plenty coming back for year two. See you on board...

JERRY EWING



PFM, led by the irrepressible Franz Di Cioccio.

Parp: Geoff Downes at his keyboards.

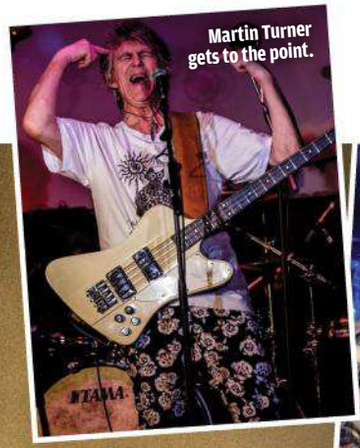
GALAHAD

VENUE	TALKING HEADS, SOUTHAMPTON
DATE	11/03/2018
SUPPORT	TIGER MOTH TALES

For neo-prog veterans Galahad, tonight is a night of many, many firsts. It's their first live show in two-and-a-half years. It's their first time in Southampton in over a quarter of a century. It's their first performance with new guitarist Lee Abraham and returning bassist Mark Spencer. And, most importantly, it's their first concert to promote their brand new record *Seas Of Change*.

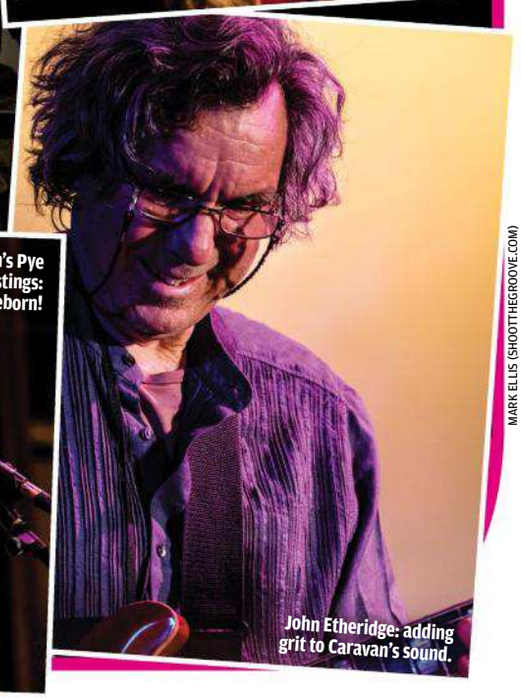
However, before the quintet can storm the Talking Heads and mount their massive onstage comeback, the dulcet acoustic tunes of Tiger Moth Tales' Peter Jones begin proceedings. Armed only with a keyboard and guitar laid out in front, and a foot drum beneath him, Jones lays out a stripped-back yet charming 45-minute set. The performance is one dominated by sorrowful ballads taken from Tiger Moth Tales' latest album *The Depths Of Winter*. The emotive keys, soft vocals and intimacy combine with the sight of an audience entirely sat and perched around tables to create a scene that feels as if it were lifted directly from Rick's Café in *Casablanca*.

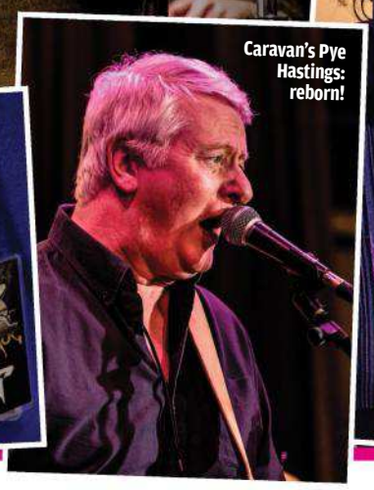
The downtrodden melancholia begins to dissipate towards the end of Jones' performance with the upbeat jive of traditionally inclined suites like *The Merry Vicar*. While the transition may not


Martin Turner gets to the point.

Pendragon: effusive and self-effacing.

Roger Dean and his iconic artwork.


John Etheridge: adding grit to Caravan's sound.


Caravan's Pye Hastings: reborn!

Passes ahoy!

MARK ELLIS (SHOOTTHEGROOVE.COM)

enthuse the crowd as much as planned, the tempo shift does make for a fitting warm-up for tonight's headliners.

Galahad begin their near two-hour showcase with an energy and eagerness that belies their age. Their epic *Seas Of Change* is performed in its entirety, with the mammoth suite bisected and used to bookend this performance.

The quintet's penchant for lengthy and tonally diverse tracks isn't hidden during the main body of their set either, with highlights including *Empires Never Last*, *Guardian Angel* and *Room 801*.

Galahad shine with a natural charisma and confidence. Frontman Stuart Nicholson has as much fun rocking out to his band's music as his audience does. The interactions between Spencer and Abraham are similarly joyous, providing the evening with a sense of spontaneity.

With equal emphasis being given to both the new and the old, this feels like the quintessential Galahad show: the result of 30 years of experimentation.

MATT MILLS

ALAN REED AND THE DAUGHTERS OF EXPEDIENCY

VENUE	THE TALKING HEADS, SOUTHAMPTON
DATE	28/02/2018
SUPPORT	WEEND'Ô

Snowmaggedon has thankfully made a detour around the south coast, where prog's pocket dynamo Alan Reed and his Daughters Of Expediency are powering up for the start of a three-date mini-tour.

Supporting him are Reed's French chums, Weend'ô, who usually inhabit the metal end of the prog spectrum. Playing here in acoustic mode, they're hypnotising. Laetitia Chaudemanche casts magical musical spells through her exquisitely haunting voice and nuanced movements, joined by husband Térence Nguyen Van on guitars, and stand-in bassist Bruno Consolo.

Reed's in a bullish showman mood, donning a star-spangled jacket and shades as he hits the stage and whips up some audience participation for opener *Begin Again*.

Buoyed by the release of a new live album, he and the band appear to be hot-wired into the National Grid, such is the infectious energy they generate. They blast through a canon of Reed's recent solo material, interspersed with a smattering of classics from his time in Pallas.

The towering guitarists Mark Spencer and Daren Callow flank the diminutive Reed. Plenty of playful antics between the trio ensue while the back line of keyboard stalwart Tudor Davies, bassist Jennifer Clark and drummer Henry Rogers enjoy the silliness. Here are musicians who enjoy playing together, and it shows.

Reed hollers, he bellows, he sings with that terrifically distinctive timbre in his voice – and he's loving every moment of it. A glimpse of the future – and it's not a happy one – comes with the world premiere of new song *Into The Void* from Reed's next album, release date to be decided but already titled *Grey Sky Thinking*. This, he says, is because "the world has turned shit" – not a description to be applied to this moody, thoughtful number.

He also attacks Pallas' *The Executioner* at full throttle, adding that it was a song he was never expecting to play again. His vinegar wit also extends to *Cross My Palm*, a barbed song about late celebrity PR guru Max Clifford; and the jagged *Razor*, both from his last album, *Honey On The Razor's Edge*. Weend'ô later return for the encore, the folkish, singalong, Dougie MacLean song *Turning Away*.

The warmth and enthusiasm of this show chase away the bone-chilling coldness of the night. Reed and his cohorts are currently at the height of their powers – just listen to the live album to discover why.

ALISON REIJMAN

STEVE HACKETT

VENUE	SCOTTISH RITE AUDITORIUM, NEW JERSEY
DATE	16/02/2018

Few progressive rock pioneers endure like Steve Hackett, whose newer works often match both his outstanding first solo recordings and his stunning work in the 1970s with Genesis. Naturally, his recent concerts serve as great testaments to this longevity, and his recent stint at the regal yet hospitable Scottish Rite Auditorium is no exception.

Offering selections from last year's *The Night Siren*, as well as plenty of remarkably reproduced older classics, Hackett and his band delight devotees with nostalgic gems that further cement his place as one of the genre's true masters.

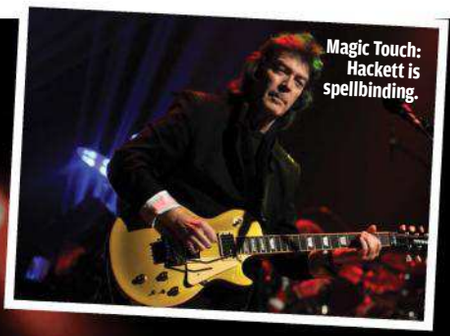
The first hour of the show consists almost entirely of solo material, including three tracks from *The Night Siren — Behind The Smoke*, *El Niño* and *In The Skeleton Gallery* — all of which literally shake the room with fascinating dynamics, Hackett's leads echoed by keyboardist Roger King and/or flautist Rob Townsend. In addition, the band replicate several mid-70s standouts, such as *Every Day*, *Please Don't Touch* and *Icarus Ascending*.

Surprisingly, Hackett also pulls out GTR's *When The Heart Rules The Mind*, which, while a tad too commercial, is still enjoyable due to its complex and colourful arrangement. This sequence demonstrates how skilful Hackett remains at balancing quality songwriting and intricate instrumentation.

Following a brief intermission, the second set commences with an array of gorgeous Genesis compositions. In fact, Hackett acknowledges every album he was on, aside from 1974's *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, and although long-time vocalist Nad Sylvan appeared earlier in the evening, he really shines during this latter half.

> **"His humility and bond with the audience make the show celebratory."**

Dancing With The Moonlit Knight kicks things off, really getting the crowd excited. From there, the quintet nail fan favourites like *The Fountain Of Salmacis*, *The Musical Box*, *One For The Vine* and *Firth Of Fifth* with jaw-dropping precision. Of course, their complete playthrough of *Supper's Ready* is the high point of the concert — with Flower Kings bassist Jonas Reingold on second guitar and drummer Gary O'Toole providing Phil Collins-esque backing falsettos at several points — while *Inside And Out* (from 1977's *Spot The Pigeon* EP) is its biggest surprise.



Magic Touch: Hackett is spellbinding.

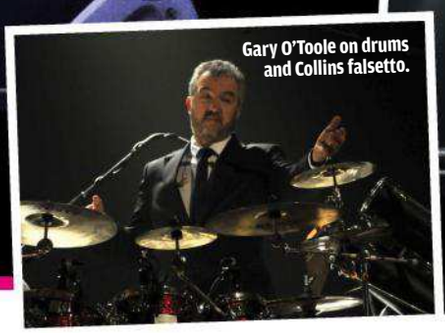
FRANK WHITE

As always, Steve Hackett gives a spellbinding performance. Sure, the music itself is just about faultless, but it's his humility and bond with the audience that truly makes the show wonderfully celebratory. He frequently blows kisses to his fans, thanking them, as well as saying: "I do this because I love it." That sort of personal touch, coupled with the professional mastery he and his band provide, make it truly treasurable.

Just as his studio work has always been unparalleled, his live performances continue to be in a class all of their own.

JORDAN BLUM

Hackett serves up *Supper's Ready* as part of a feast of solo and Genesis classics.



Gary O'Toole on drums and Collins falsetto.

Nad Sylvan (left) with birthday boy Hackett.

THE GIFT

VENUE	OSLO, LONDON
DATE	03/03/2018
SUPPORT	WHEN MARY, THE TWO OF US

Disappointingly for artists and promoter alike, snow and Arctic temperatures have taken their toll on the show night, with a regrettably small turnout. But bravely throwing an impromptu set together, scratch duo The Two Of Us entertain with a collection of stripped-back Peter Gabriel covers – it's not often you're going to hear the likes of *Humdrum*, *Secret World* and *Biko* performed live in a small Hackney club!

Given the weather, it's slightly ironic that When Mary have made it all the way here from Norway. Now down to the core of singer Trude Eidtang and guitarist Christian Paulsen, liberal use of looping, triggered samples, heavy effects and backing tracks help to produce an enthralling sound that veers from the haunting and ethereal to rolling bombast.

Drawing on their *7summers7winters* and more recent *Tainted* albums, as well as performing curious yet effective covers of *Annie's Song* and *Wish You Were Here*, it's all slightly mesmerising. Eidtang especially impresses – nigh-on pitch perfect and equally effective at the level of a breathy whisper and when belting it out during the climax of both *Are You Really Sleeping?* and closer *Wings Of Wax*. This band have been immediately added to the 'check out further' list.

The Gift have been flying the British symphonic/neo-prog flag doggedly for the last few years, and they go in big with openers *Quickening Pulse*, with its synth-drenched instrumental Sturm und Drang, and the darkly punchy *Sweeper Of Dreams* from 2016's *Why The Sea Is Salt*. The small yet enthusiastic audience responds well to frontman Mike Morton's exhortation to dance to the bouncy *Too Many Hands*, and equipment geeks are undoubtedly excited by the appearance of Leroy James' double-neck guitar, as well as keyboard player Gabriele Baldocci's keytar during his own composition, *Tuesday's Child*.

It may be a minor function of the circumstances, but during some of the set's instrumental/soloing sections, the band become a little stodgy and directionless, which contrasts markedly with the more effective forthright arrangements during the likes of the aforementioned openers, *Too Many Hands* and the terrific nasty riffing of *Feeding Time*.

As has become almost obligatory for The Gift's live sets, they wrap up with the last part of their 2006 multi-part epic debut *Awake And Dreaming*, which sees Morton at his most theatrical and animated, with the whole band in very convincing hard-hitting mode.

Tonight can't have been an easy show for the artists, but The Gift have a number of further gigs booked for this year which will hopefully see them playing in front of expanded audiences.

GARY MACKENZIE

AMPLIFIER

VENUE	ISLINGTON O2 ACADEMY 2, LONDON
DATE	03/03/2018
SUPPORT	AWOOGA

"Loads of you voted for your favourite songs... so we'd like to play you *Enter Sandman*!"

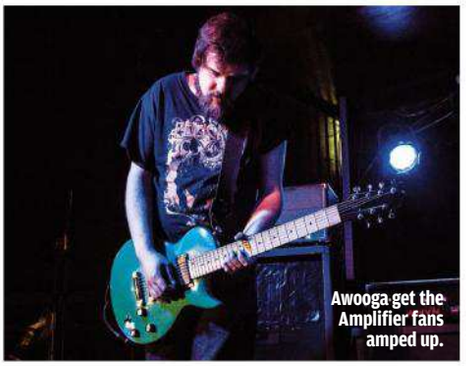
Amplifier's Sel Balamir is on top form tonight as he flips from crowd teaser to crowd pleaser in the blink of an eye.

It's the second night of the travelling showcase for his Rockosmos label and Amplifier's first London gig in three years. It's also satisfyingly sold out, despite the bad weather that has already resulted in the band postponing their Glasgow date.

Balamir has clearly nailed a winning formula as the compact venue is almost at capacity by the time Awooga launch into their grungy riffs and fat soundscapes. A short but impressive opening set sees the Sheffield newcomers preview tracks from their melodic debut *Conduit*, including the moody *Blue Rose*, which takes the audience on a series of mystical sonic adventures. There's also a nod to 2016's *Alpha* EP in the form of *Thief*.

Although Awooga leave the crowd mesmerised, the biggest applause is naturally for Amplifier. Outside the Academy 2, the Beast From The East is on the prowl, but inside things are very cosy. Awooga frontman Tam Ali returns to the stage for bass duties with the headliners, who look resplendent in their matching shirts and ties. Tonight they're playing a mystery set that's been voted for by the fans, and there's much discussion about what might be included. The result is that every song is preceded by a guessing game that's swiftly followed by whoops and cheers as each magical note unfolds.

A long-haired and unshaven Balamir looks slightly anxious at the beginning of the night, but soon relaxes into things, eyeballing and grinning at the audience, who sing along to every word. Although the set flows differently to usual, Amplifier still captivate and there's cheekiness, cheers and enough cheerful banter to make everyone forget the freezing temperatures outside.



Awooga get the Amplifier fans amped up.

WILL IRELAND

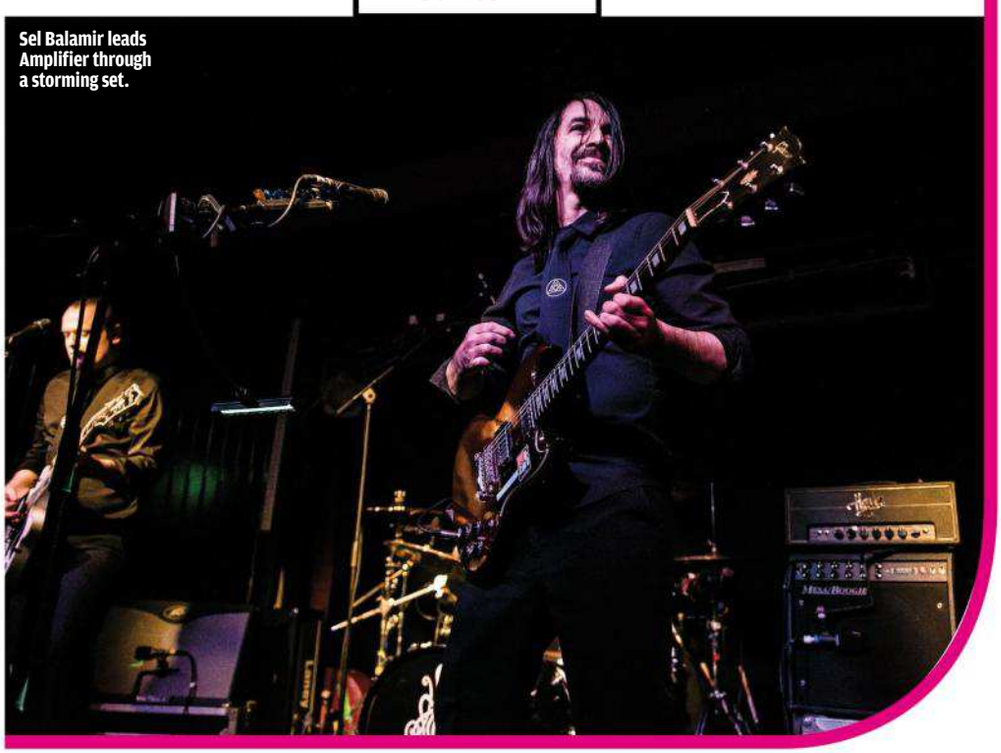
Live favourites *Motorhead* and *The Wave* sit alongside a hat-trick from last year's *Trippin' With Dr Faustus*, including a magical performance of the hypnotic *Kosmos*, which sends the front row into quite a frenzy! Clocking in at just under two hours, the set spans five of the band's six studio albums (*Mystoria* is skipped over). Each track flaunts the different sonic elements of their almost 20-year career and is enhanced by Balamir's mighty rack of guitars.

The climax is the rapturous *Airborne*, which the frontman introduces as their "number one request". But it's not over yet — after a brief pause, Amplifier sneak back out for a harmonious encore of *UFOs*.

Last time they played the capital was at Camden's more expansive Jazz Café as part of Desertfest, but tonight's slick performance demonstrates that they're ready to return to a larger venue.

NATASHA SCHARF

> **"Amplifier captivate with cheekiness, cheers and cheerful banter."**



Sel Balamir leads Amplifier through a storming set.

SONS OF APOLLO

VENUE	THE MUSIC FACTORY, BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN
DATE	17/02/2018

It isn't often a supergroup perform at a bar in the middle of nowhere, but that's precisely what happens on a cold, snowy night in Michigan when the newly formed prog metal band Sons Of Apollo take to the stage in Battle Creek, delivering songs from their debut album *Psychotic Symphony*.

The band are as talented as they come, with a seriously impressive line-up consisting of drum legend Mike Portnoy (Dream Theater), guitarist Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal (Guns N' Roses), keyboardist Derek Sherinian (Dream Theater, Black Country Communion), bassist Billy Sheehan (David Lee Roth, Winery Dogs) and singer Jeff Scott Soto (Yngwie Malmsteen, Journey).

The show begins with *God Of The Sun*, where the chops of all the members are immediately on display. Bumblefoot utilises a double-neck guitar and his style ranges from Slash to Eddie Van Halen and Allan Holdsworth – he can play anything effortlessly. Portnoy's drumming is solid and machine-like: he looks like he isn't even breaking into a sweat, despite pounding the hell out of his kit.

Soto is a superb showman, and he brings toughness and theatrics to each song. He's a chameleon of sorts, who has a vast vocal range. His voice shines during *Divine Addiction*, which features Deep Purple-esque riffs and organ, coupled with Kansas-style vocals, which makes for a great song.

> **"Jeff Scott Soto is a superb showman, and he brings toughness and theatrics to each song."**

Billy Sheehan doesn't go unnoticed during the performance as he and Bumblefoot trade licks on bass and guitar, and Sheehan delivers a long solo that showcases his phenomenal finger-tapping and picking techniques.

A major issue of the concert is the volume of Sherinian's keyboards: they aren't loud enough. For most of the night his magnificent showmanship can be seen but not heard. This gives the performance a less proggy feel and a different sound to the album. However, Sherinian does get a solo towards the end of the show where the spotlight is fully on him, as are all the eyes in the audience. He rips and roars all over his keys and into a rendition of the Van Halen song *Spanish Fly*, which he plays note for note. By the end of this solo, he triumphantly raises his hands, making fists. The crowd go into a frenzy, giving him the biggest ovation of the night.

The most memorable song in the set is *Opus Maximus*, a 10-minute instrumental that has peaks, valleys, mind-melting leads and majestic sounds.

As the show ends, looking around the audience, it's clear the masses are satisfied. Sons Of Apollo may have something special going on. Their talent collectively is of epic proportions, and they perform a live show that's well worth seeing.

TREVOR WOODS

JOEL BARRIOS

Dream Team: Jeff Scott Soto leads the prog supergroup.

Double Whammy: Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal.

Seen but not heard? Keys man Derek Sherinian.

GIZMODROME

VENUE	THE SCALA, LONDON
DATE	07/03/2018

When Gizmodrome take to the stage, it's their first London appearance and only the third live performance in the band's short history, but they're greeted like returning heroes. It must help that the supergroup is composed of players with illustrious careers. Whether on guitar or drums, Stewart Copeland is the engine driving the band. He's an intensely animated frontman, acting out the lyrics as he sings them.

They're still getting comfortable with the material. Guitarist Adrian Belew watches Copeland for cues, but the band blast through any hiccups. Luckily, they've got a superb rhythm section with Mark King on bass, Pete Ray Biggin splitting the drumming with Copeland, and Vittorio Cosma on keys. They open with *Zombies In The Mall* and the catchy *Man In The Mountain*. On *Stay Ready*, Copeland first leaves his drum kit to strap on his guitar, and Belew says, "Here he is, Jimi Hendrix."

"You paid good money to see this shit!" Copeland laughs.

Thereafter, he switches between guitar and drums, often jumping onto his kit for the coda of a song, freeing Biggin up to play percussion and creating the kind of densely layered grooves that are Santana's stock-in-trade.

"I would like to apologise to Sting," says Belew before they play The Police's *Miss Gradenko*.

They visit Copeland's pre-Gizmodrome works throughout the evening, tackling *Darkness* and *Does Everyone Stare*, with King taking lead vocal, plus *Excesses* from Copeland's *Klark Kent* album.

Belew's guitar work is consistently mind-boggling as he coaxes a world of strange and wonderful sounds from his instrument, and the band throw in two King Crimson songs, *Elephant Talk* and *Thela Hun Ginjeet*, plus *Young Lions* from Belew's 1990 album of the same name.

It's clear the musicians are having a blast, and this translates to the audience, who respond to every song with raucous approval. When the band conclude with The Police's *Bombs Away*, the crowd sends them off to thunderous applause.

Belew remarks that they've got a second album due out at the same time as the next Tool record. Hopefully he's kidding and Gizmodrome will return for more genre-defying musical mischief sooner rather than later.

DAVID WEST

ARCANE ROOTS

VENUE	HEAVEN, LONDON
DATE	01/03/2018

With London encased in snow and ice, anyone hoping to find sanctuary from winter's frigid grasp inside Heaven tonight finds only disappointment – it's scarcely warmer within the venue than without. Even if most of the crowd opt to keep their heavy coats on, Arcane Roots get everyone moving, which helps fight off the chill.

Half the set comes from their latest album, *Melancholia Hymns*, and the changing nature of their sound is borne out by the greater use of electronics and keyboards. Musically, there are progressive moments alongside post-hardcore and plenty of alternative influences – the loud/quiet/loud formula so beloved by the Pixies is almost ubiquitous in their arrangements.

They open with *Off The Floor*, a slow burn that gradually works up to full boil, only to break up into swirling ambient eddies. Drummer Jack Wrench switches between his thumpingly heavy drum kit and a set of electronic pads that produce sounds more commonly found in electronic dance music on tracks like *Before Me* and *Arp*. The ambient moments add variety to the set, but many seem like half-formed ideas where there's more texture than melody.

They're not a particularly visual group, with all three members dressed head to toe in black against a black backdrop, but the impressive light show adds colour and movement to the experience.

Frontman Andrew Groves hits some startlingly high notes in new song *Landslide*, although his screams are abrasive. There must be a better way to communicate intensity while maintaining the intelligibility of the lyrics, however much angst Groves hopes to deliver.

Solemn smacks the listener upside the head with low, bludgeoning bursts from Groves' guitar, and although he stumbles over the frantic riff at the start of *Triptych*, prompting a reset, the trio (completed by bassist Adam Burton) quickly recover their composure and momentum. *Indigo* is another tune built around keys and electronics, with none of the surging energy of the group's heavier output, but the crowd love it and sing along.

The band are certainly keen on a half-time drum beat, as evidenced in *Slow Dance*, the only track where Groves lets rip with a bona fide guitar solo. *If Nothing Breaks, Nothing Moves* is one of the night's most energising tracks, with its catchy, reggae-style drum groove in the chorus. "Do us a favour, sing loud," requests Groves before the closing *Half The World*, and Heaven duly obliges.

Arcane Roots are expanding their musical palette and it will be intriguing to see just how far they travel down the rabbit hole away from their guitar rock roots. Who knows what lies ahead?

DAVID WEST

THAT JOE PAYNE

VENUE	THE PICTUREDROME, NORTHAMPTON
DATE	02/03/2018

Pressure? What pressure? This might be the show that sees the re-emergence of the one-time Enid vocalist, but the man himself is showing none of the edginess and concern you might have expected. Still, it does help that Payne has chosen his home town in which to stage this landmark occasion. It's clear he has a lot of old friends in the crowd, keen to encourage him.

However, Payne never displays any signs of being in a comfort zone. After more than a year away from the spotlight, he's determined to prove he can make an impact in his own right, without relying on past connections.

There has always been a theatrical nuance to Payne's stage presence. But whereas previously he had to sublimate this to the needs of The Enid, now that he's fully in charge, the vocalist can give full rein to his personality, and he delivers an impressive balance of showmanship and vocal inflections.

As you might expect, there's a smattering of songs from The Enid period of Payne's career, with *One And The Many* and *Who Created Me* opening up the set in style. The vocalist gives these songs his own interpretation, rather than merely rehashing what we all know. And the main part of the performance ends with another Enid masterclass, through *Trophy* and the epically scaled *Someone Shall Rise*, the latter especially proving that Payne has few peers in the prog world right now when it comes to impassioned singing.

The proggiest photo of the year? We think so...

KATJA OGRIN

It also helps that he's put together an exacting, high-quality band. Oliver Day adds some prolific touches on guitar, Moray Macdonald is a keyboard player who tempers deft touches with the occasional outburst of virtuosity, and bassist Dan Battison and drummer Josh Judd are a tightly fermenting rhythm section. Payne's even joined at one point by guitarist Max Read, his one-time Enid bandmate, which is a nice nod to halcyon days. However, tonight is really all about Payne, who also does three tracks from Methexis' *Suiciety* album, with *Origin Of Blame* a moment of brilliance.

This gig has been staged to mark the release of debut single *I Need A Change* from That Joe Payne, and having already charmed fans with *Moonlit Love*, the B-side, he begins the encore with the lead song itself, and in doing so holds everyone in awe — this will be one of the most auspicious songs of 2018. And just to bring everything to a suitably climactic conclusion, Payne revisits *Who Created Me*, only this time he's solo, with taped musical accompaniment. It's astonishingly atmospheric, and an appropriate way to leave the crowd in his thrall.

MALCOLM DOME

> **"Payne has few peers in the prog world right now when it comes to impassioned singing."**

That Joe Payne: the former Enid man turns on the theatrics.

ORPHANED LAND

VENUE	THE UNDERWORLD, LONDON
DATE	26/02/2018

In this era of 'post-truth' and fake news, conviction is the most precious of commodities. From politicians to musicians, there's a public backlash building against those who play fast and loose with sincerity.

The heavier side of the music industry is especially guilty of leveraging the darker side of humanity to create their art. That's why Orphaned Land, a prog metal outfit from Israel, feel like a breath of fresh air, despite having been around in one form or another for the last 17 years.

In the hands of less accomplished musicians, their politically charged subject matter could seem overwrought. Tonight at The Underworld, they strike a balance between delivering their message of Middle Eastern unity and snapping riffs tinged with the folk music of their homeland.

But as vocalist Kobi Farhi is keen to make clear, Orphaned Land aren't just about "hugging everyone". Farhi's turn on *We Do Not Resist* from new album *Unsung Prophets & Dead Messiahs* is a masterclass of savagery, while *Let The Truce Be Known*'s bombast belies its theme of gossamer-fine ceasefires and bloodshed. *The Kiss Of Babylon (The Sins)* from 2004's *Mabool* is full of squirming, roiling guitar lines and pinch harmonics, which see the crowd punching the air in between staccato riffs.

Orphaned Land's subject matter is invariably laden with the politics of their troubled region. On previous tours, they have brought musicians from across the Middle East with them – their music is dotted with collaborations with, among others, Palestinian artists. The message of their iconic 2013 release, *All Is One*, is about this unity, and the fact they've towed this line for six standout releases is a testament to their inherent belief in it.

Then again, this is a band in full flight so there's still space for theatrics. Farhi might have ditched his Jesus outfit, but that doesn't stop him asking the crowd to sing sections and chant. They don't even miss Yossi Sassi, the band's pivotal guitarist and co-founder who left in 2014, because Chen Balbus and Idan Amsalem are more than capable replacements. The pair lap up the audience's applause as they nail solo after solo and chugging verse lines.

It shows just how far the band have come that they aren't reliant on one person to get the crowd going, although you'd be hard-pushed to find other bands playing ancient Yemeni folk songs to a majority English-speaking audience and still absolutely killing it.

Orphaned Land's 17 years of delivering interesting, different heavy music, without compromising on their key principles, makes them a practically unique proposition in 2018. Tonight truly cements that fact.

DAVID KEEVILL

> **"Orphaned Land are a practically unique proposition in 2018."**

KEVIN NIXON

...Land Of Hope And Glory: Kobi Farhi's prog preachers rock out.

Unsung Prophets: Kobi Farhi (left) with Idan Amsalem.

PAUL DRAPER

VENUE	ELECTRIC BRIXTON, LONDON
DATE	08/03/2018

Since signing to Kscope in 2016, the former Mansun frontman has enjoyed a late-career resurgence. A tour in support of *Spooky Action*, his solo debut, received glowing praise. Tonight is the last night of his current tour, featuring a set of new material followed by the Mansun classic *Attack Of The Grey Lantern* in full.

Many here have waited 20 years to see the man perform live again and they greet each new track like a long-lost friend. This is no nostalgia tour – it's the return to duty of a much-loved British musician.

Can-inspired funk underpins *Grey House*'s spiky new-wave guitar, and all manner of synth weirdness elevates these melodic rock songs to anthemic technicolour psychedelia. Fittingly for this Liverpudlian artist, it's The Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows* that springs to mind as a touchstone, although the driving, propulsive band Draper has assembled is more Eno and Manzanera's 801 than Fab Four.

The string intro to *The Chad Who Loved Me* announces *Attack Of The Grey Lantern*. It's easy to forget how big this band were in 1997, scoring a UK No.1 with this loose and louche concept album concerning a comic book superhero's suburban misadventures.

Draper's voice has changed in the interim. Although he can still hit those falsetto notes, it has grown richer and more sonorous. He sounds at the top of his game. That's when the crowd give him a chance to be heard, anyway. *Taxloss* and *Wide Open Space* are collective singalongs – fans drape their arms over one another in camaraderie and sheer joy at being able to see these songs performed again.

Stripper Vicar is still as riotously camp and English as a Dick Emery sketch, while *Dark Mavis* brings us back to The Beatles – it's Mansun's *Hey Jude*. Its 'na-na' chorus builds to a huge finish that's part Marillion and part The Who.

After the rock opera of *Attack Of The Grey Lantern*, the B-side, *An Open Letter To The Lyrical Trainspotter*, is a reality check to end on: "The lyrics aren't supposed to mean that much."

Draper leaves us with a promise to return next year to play Mansun's *Six*, alongside new solo work. Janus-like, he's looking to the past and the future.

CHRIS MCGAREL

STEVE JOLLIFE

VENUE	THE LOUNGE, LONDON
DATE	09/03/2018

Arguably Tangerine Dream's most divisive album, *Cyclone* both alienated fans and was also one of the band's better-selling albums. A line-up change in 1977 saw Klaus Krüger brought in on drums and Steve Jolliffe re-join after being in an early incarnation of the band. The latter added a variety of wind instruments and, controversially, also added vocals.

The resulting album was probably the group's most obviously progressive release and showed distinct influences from the likes of Pink Floyd and Hawkwind. Edgar Froese said of it: "We only had one record which was more or less unsuccessful... I haven't listened to that record any more, and I never will."

Jolliffe has a lot more invested in the album, and 2018 sees him release a re-recording, for which tonight is the launch show.

We've been warmed up by Mark Jenkins playing a selection of authentic-sounding Dream-influenced material, some from his Froese tribute album, but Jolliffe instantly surprises by opening with his own *A Beautiful Mystery*, starting with a lengthy electric piano section.

As it progresses, subtle electronics get introduced and we're on more familiar ground. Synths start to throb and the man is playing what might be described as something resembling a robotic oboe that emits both traditional acoustic sounds, but also a bewildering variety of electronics. Choirs, vocoder vocals, Theremin... all seem to appear from this instrument.

The piece drops into an industrial drone decorated with clicks and whirrs, at which point Jolliffe moves to flute, adding a pastoral melody over the sinister backing. Synth work, resembling that of the album to come, flares up before things end with something resembling a guitar solo, again from the 'oboe', and a choral coda.

The *Cyclone* set sees him joined by Jenkins on synths and guitar, John Haithwaite on drums and a butterfly-wing-clad Athena Fairchild providing interpretive dance. The number most closely resembling the 1978 original is *Bent Cold Sidewalk*, but the effects on the vocals are toned down and the current day sheen emphasises the John Carpenter-esque qualities over the previously mentioned influences.

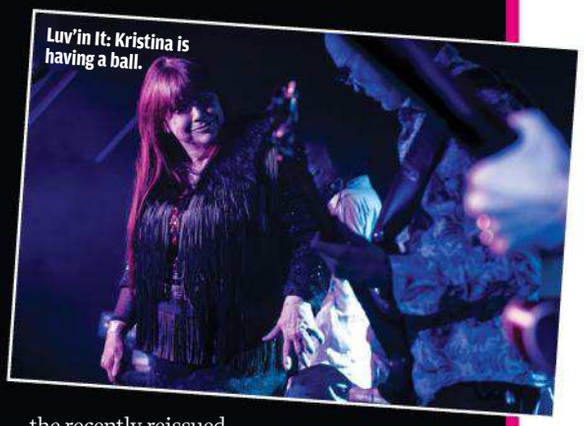
Rising Runner Missed By Endless Sender is extended to over twice the original length, with an additional intro and improvisation around the main theme. Perhaps showing some personal bias, *Madrigal Meridian* is halved in duration, keeping the core parts, but in reduced form. The night ends with a reprise of *Rising Runner Missed By Endless Sender*.

An album remake can be a tricky proposition, but Jolliffe has both kept the qualities of the original while successfully adding to them.

GAVIN HOBSON

CURVED AIR

VENUE	BORDERLINE, LONDON
DATE	16/02/2018



Luv'in It: Kristina is having a ball.

WILL IRELAND

Let's face it, back in the 1970s, few of us really thought we'd still be seeing our favourite bands out there on the circuit, and 50 years later, it can be a bit of a lottery. Voices fade, line-ups disintegrate and the music stagnates.

Curved Air can be accused of just one of the above faults, and that sole quibble could be disputed. Sonja Kristina is the final remaining member of her band's original line-up, which means not only are violinist Darryl Way and keysman Francis Monkman absent, but also drummer and fellow co-founder Florian Pilkington-Miksa, who departed last year. However, save for new skinsman Andy Tween, the remainder of the line-up can hardly been considered freshmen, having backed Kristina for a decade or thereabouts.

Better still, Curved Air continue to make new music, 2014's *North Star* consisting largely of post-reunion material. Sure enough, *Spider*, a great scene-setting instrumental from that album, is complemented early on by *Stay Human*. Later on, *Images & Signs* grapples with the concept of internet dating.

Previewing another of *North Star*'s selections, *Interplay*, Kristina beckons the audience to take the hand of our nearest neighbour. This crowd, comprised primarily of grey foxes nursing pints, appears reluctant to oblige, but boy, what a guitar solo from Kit Morgan.

The bloke stood a few feet away from *Prog* who continues to roar out for *Situations* doesn't get his wish, but it's great to hear so many other tunes from the recently reissued albums *Airconditioning* and *Air Cut*, including *It Happened Today, Easy, Screw, Propositions, The Purple Speed Queen, Metamorphosis* and *Vivaldi (With Cannons)*.

Kristina is now in her 60s, and because six long years have flown by since this writer's last sighting of her band, which took place on this very same basement stage, we will own up to having been cautious. Such worries are ill-founded. There are occasional moments when the singer is engulfed in Curved Air's sheer instrumental force — Morgan, tumbleweed-haired violin player Paul Sax and keyboard maestro Robert Norton mix nimble proficiency with dynamic flair, their theatrical gusto sufficient to power several wind turbines — but, overwhelmingly, she can still deliver.

"The band mix nimble proficiency with dynamic flair, their theatrical gusto sufficient to power several wind turbines."

Despite the recent admission to *Prog* that she becomes nervous in the company of strangers [The *Prog* Interview, issue 84], tonight Kristina is obviously having a ball, introducing *Back Street Luv* as "our singular appearance on *Top Of The Pops*", causing much joy and frugging around in the process.

The only slight disappointment is a somewhat meagre turnout at The Borderline. On a Friday night here in central London, the band deserve far, far better. However, on this showing, Curved Air are unlikely to let it bother them.

DAVE LING

Curved Air pair Paul Sax and Sonja Kristina.

• OWNER OF A LONELY HEART • ROUNDABOUT • RHYTHM OF LOVE •

• LONG DISTANCE RUNAROUND • CINEMA • PERPETUAL CHANGE • HOLD ON • CHANGES •

• I'VE SEEN ALL GOOD PEOPLE • LIFT ME UP • AWAKEN • HEART OF THE SUNRISE •

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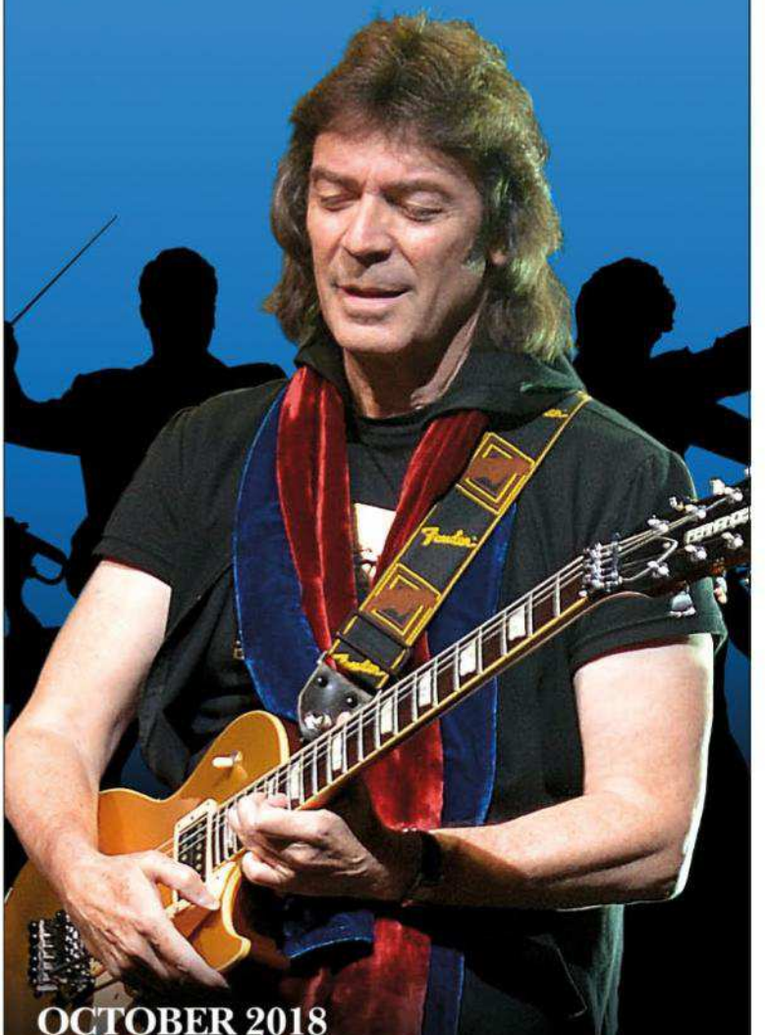
Steve Hackett
Genesis Revisited
~ Band with Orchestra ~



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03 MANCHESTER Bridgewater Hall
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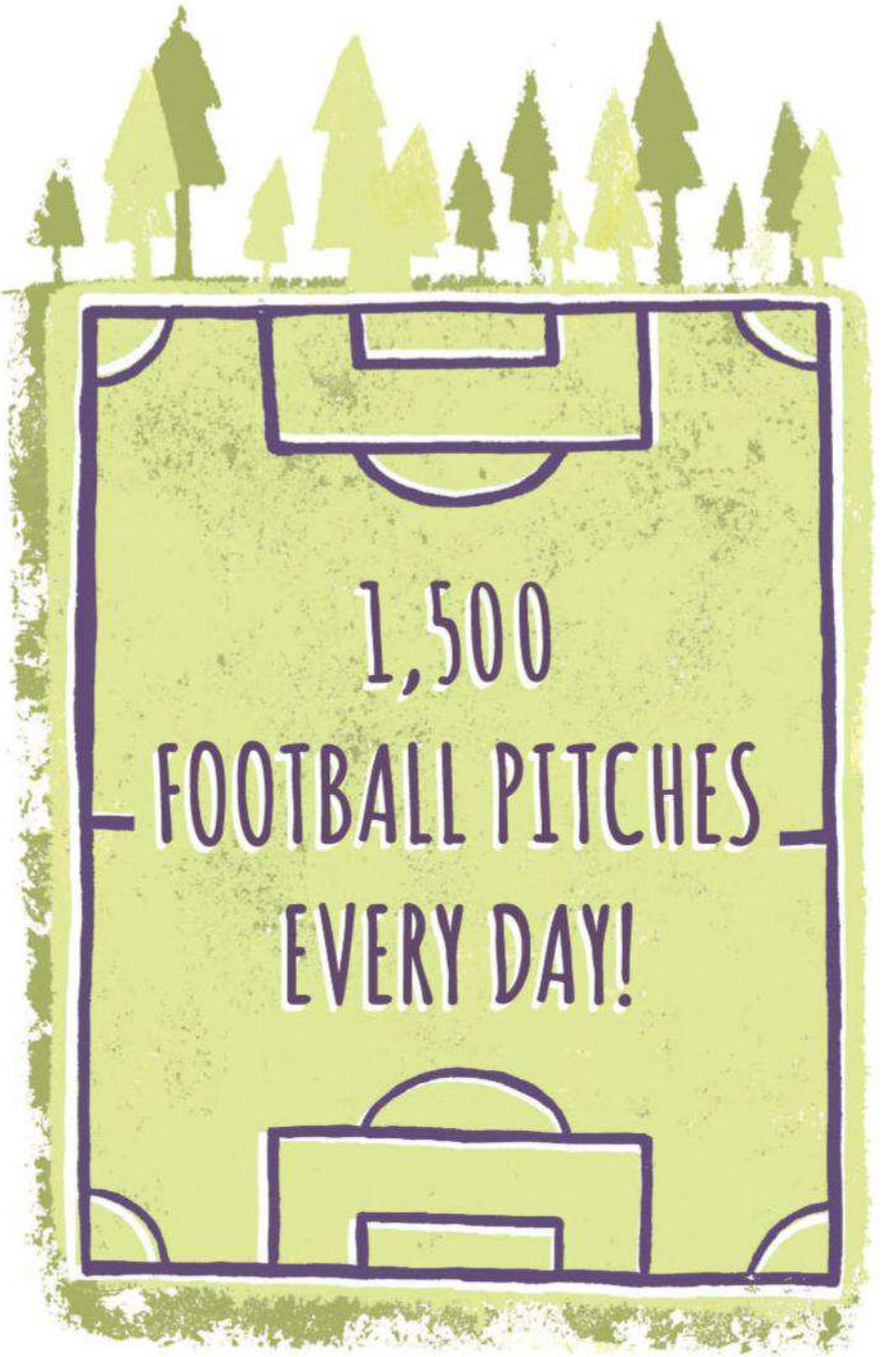
A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO



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UNFAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005-2015

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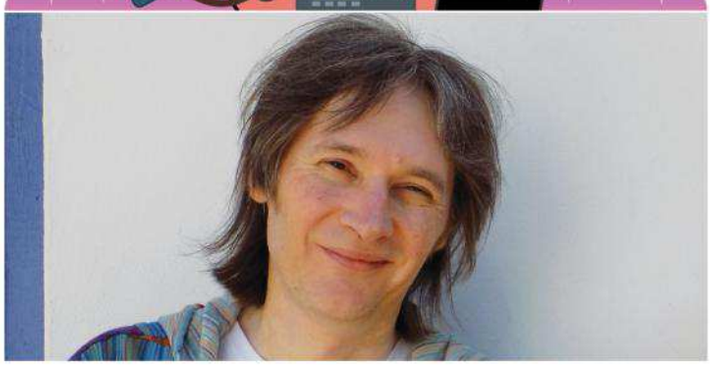
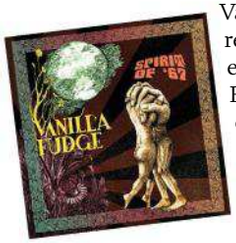


Dave Bainbridge

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

Where's home?
Lincolnshire, just south of the Humber Bridge. We've been here 17 years.

Earliest prog memory?
Listening to my older sister's Vanilla Fudge records when I was eight. Mark Stein's Hammond organ on songs like *You Keep Me Hangin' On* got me hooked.



First prog record bought?
Fragile by Yes, around 1972, from a record shop called Williams in Darlington. I just loved that album — hearing Rick Wakeman's keyboard parts was a real turning point for me. It made me realise this was what I wanted to do.

First prog gig attended?
My sister was the singer and keyboardist in a band called Nimrod Fisk they used to do a lot of Jethro Tull covers. I saw them play, and win, a battle of the bands contest in Darlington in '73, when I was 11. Two years later I saw Hawkwind in Newcastle: it was the loudest thing I'd ever heard.

Favourite gadget?
I don't use a mobile, but I do rely on my MacBook Pro: it's got all my studio and keyboard sounds for gigs. It means I can work on the road, and that's been brilliant.

Any guilty pleasures in your record collection?
One of my favourite singers in the 80s was [smooth jazz artist] Al Jarreau. He did a great album called *High Crime*. It was really synthy with lots of sequencers, and it was quite ahead of its time. Oh, and the 1970 England World Cup Squad record, *Back Home*, which my sister bought me for some reason...

Your specialist subject on *Mastermind*?
At the moment it'd be The Strawbs or Lifesigns, but otherwise maybe Gentle Giant, the mid-to-late period.

Your greatest prog extravagance?
I've spent loads on keyboards, my Korg Kronos cost a fortune. The last few months I've been on the Moodies Cruise and Cruise To The Edge, which I could've never afforded if I hadn't been playing. It was brilliant being out in the Caribbean.

Your favourite venue?
To play, it's the Boerderij in Zoetermeer, in the Netherlands. It's run by volunteers who love the music, there's a waiting list of people who want to work there. They really do take care of you, and they have a great lighting rig and sound system. I do like to see bands at smaller venues, like the Wesley Centre in Maltby.

Outside of music, what are you into?
I jog as often as I can, and I like going to art galleries. I nearly went to art college instead of music college. I particularly like the Post-Impressionists and the Pre-Raphaelites, who were quite proggy in a way — their pictures tell stories, they're concept paintings...

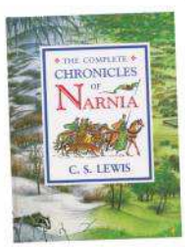
Your prog hero?
David Sancious. He played keyboards for Peter Gabriel but in the 70s he released some brilliant albums with his band, Tone. He's an unsung hero in prog.

Are you a collector?
Not really, though I do have every edition of [music tech magazine] *Sound On Sound* since 1986. But that's more because I don't like throwing things away...

The last proggy album you bought?
I get a lot of freebies, but I paid for Lazuli's *Tant que l'herbe est Grasse*. It's a really good album.

The last prog gig you attended?
Cruise To The Edge, it was brilliant. I got to see Yes, Focus, Adrian Belew, Gong, Haken. Steve Hackett was phenomenal.

Ever been on a prog-related date?
No, but I did get my first girlfriend after my first gig with my first band, Exodus, when I was 14. We did Yes and Deep Purple covers, so there must have been something in the music that did the trick!



> "Hearing Rick Wakeman's keyboard parts on *Fragile* was a real turning point for me."

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?
Recently I've really enjoyed hanging out with John Young and the Lifesigns boys. Where they rehearse there's a fantastic pub, and we always go down there after we finish.

The most important prog song to you personally?
Close To The Edge, probably the whole of that album really. It just blew me away as a kid, showed me what you could do beyond a three-minute song, how you could develop thematic ideas and textures with keyboard.

The prog muso you'd most like to work with?
I've already worked with him — Troy Donockley. I'd love to work with him again.

Which prog album gets you in a good mood?
Vanilla Fudge's *Spirit Of '67*. I often have that on coming back from a gig, it's just great, uplifting music.

The best prog artist you've ever seen live?
If I had to choose one, Gentle Giant. I saw them on the '76 tour that made up their live album, *Playing The Fool*.

Recommend us a good read?
I like Bill Bryson's books, and I'm just re-reading CS Lewis' *The Last Battle*, the last of his Narnia novels. He was a real visionary.

Your favourite album cover?
Tales Of Topographic Oceans. I remember buying my girfriend at the time a big poster of it. She put in her bedroom.

And what are you up to at the moment, Dave?
I'm gigging with Lifesigns, at Winter's End and elsewhere, working on a new Celestial Fire album and plugging the live DVD [*Live In The UK*], and I've got several duo gigs coming up with Sally Minnear, daughter of Gentle Giant's Kerry. I'm also working on a collaboration with somebody very well-known in the prog world. If it works out it'll be something very special...

See www.facebook.com/DaveBainbridgeMusic for more.

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