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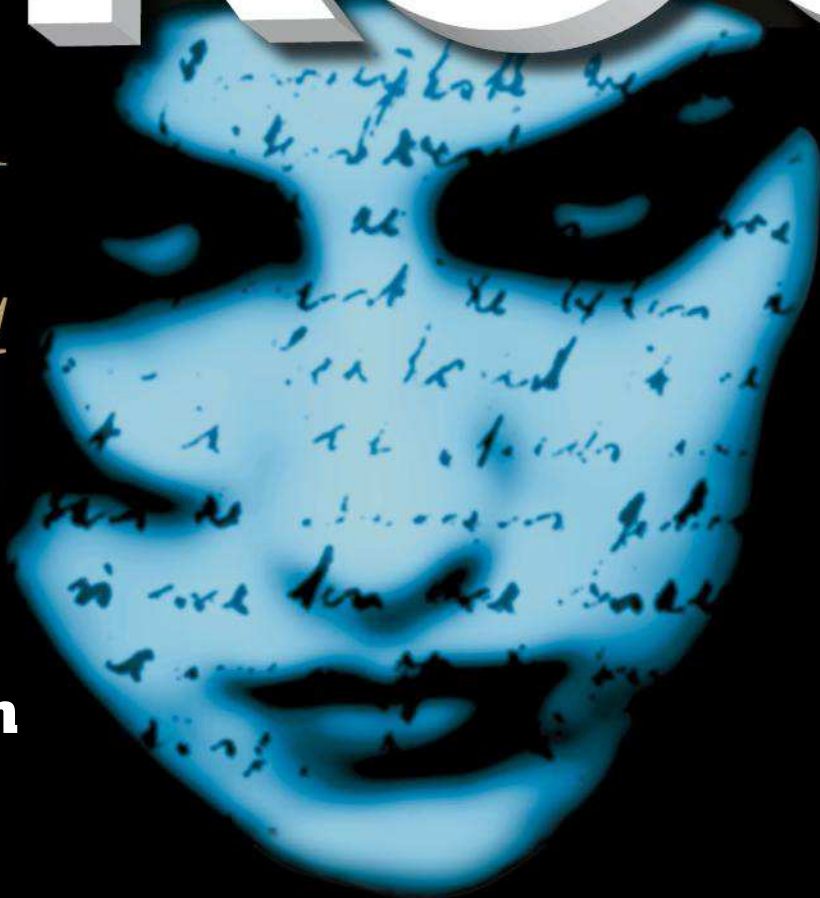


ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC

PROG

MAR ILL ION

The story of
Brave - the
ultimate 90s
concept album



NEW
INTERVIEWS
WITH EVERY
BAND
MEMBER



Nick Mason's
Saucerful
Of Secrets

Wilson/
Wakeman

Gazpacho

The Fierce
And
The Dead

A PERFECT CIRCLE

Art rockers roar back
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in 14 years

SPIRIT

"We were one of the first
progressive bands."

TESSERACT

Conceptual but concise
album number four
from the Brit proggers

JOE PAYNE

"I couldn't face producing
another Enid record."

"It was us putting two
fingers up to the
music business. That
came back to bite us
on the backside, but it
also allowed us to
chart a course of our
own making."



PROG 86

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Marillion p 34

The story of *Brave*: the album that reinvented Marillion...

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Spanish instrumental proggers create beauty from a dark place.

lunatic soul

under the fragmented sky

Mariusz Duda (Riverside), singer and multi-instrumentalist, releases his new studio album, the perfect companion to 2017's *Fractured*.

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Soyuz

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Paul Draper



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LOREENA McKENNITT

lost souls

LOREENA McKENNITT



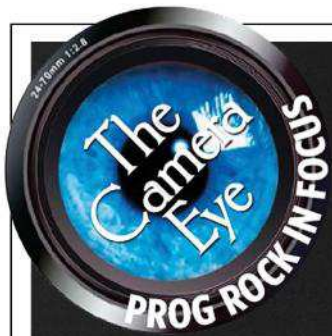
lost souls

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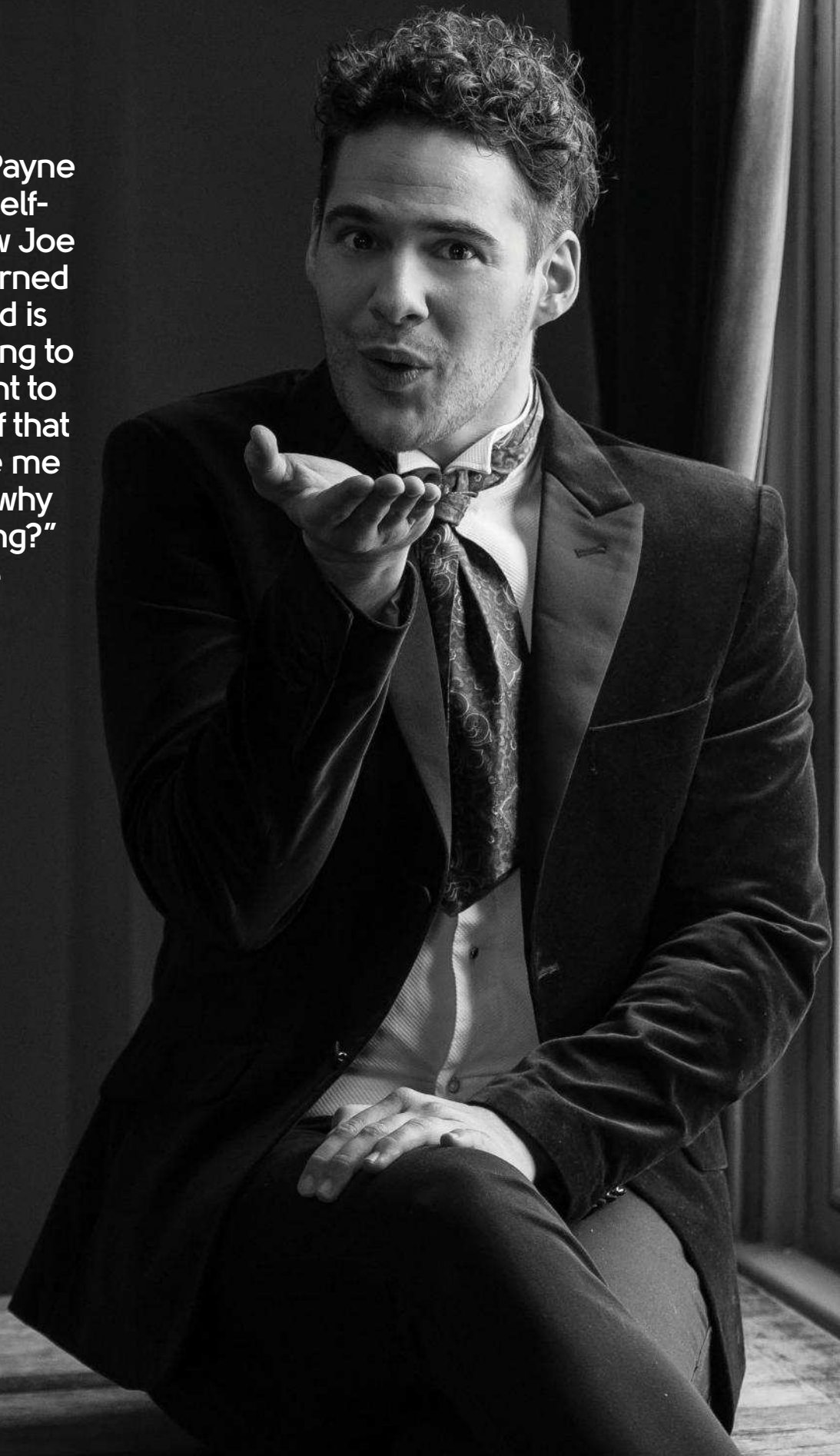
LOREENAMCKENNITT.COM

**CADIZ
MUSIC**



"The old Joe Payne had a lot of self-doubt, the new Joe Payne has learned from that and is going, 'I'm going to do what I want to do.' Because if that doesn't make me happy, then why am I bothering?"

Joe payne





So what were you doing in February 1994 when Marillion released *Brave*? I was Deputy Editor on *Metal Hammer* magazine, which had just been bought by Dennis Publishing (who would eventually sell it on to Future Publishing in 2000). Back in those pre-*Prog* and *Classic Rock* days, *Hammer* was one of the few outlets for coverage of any kind of progressive music, but as metal fragmented ever further in the wake of grunge and the street appeal of nu-metal, space was becoming severely limited for what many considered, even back then, old farts.

News that Marillion were going to release a concept album was met in the office with a mix of bemusement, amusement and plain old indifference. They were old hat to the younger writers and the old 'Fish versus the new boy' argument could still be heard among those that did care. As one of the 'prog-friendly' crew, I was impressed with such a bold move, and I've loved *Brave* ever since. The endurance shown by the likes of Marillion during such fallow years for the genre went a long way to the creation, four years later, of *Classic Rock* magazine, and again with *Prog* magazine a decade after that.

But my, does time skew the memory somewhat. Reading Dave Everley's enlightening story on the making of the album that graces the cover of this issue (page 34), it's amazing to see how *Brave* really shook things up for the band. Sure, offering a concept album to a major record label at the height of Britpop is the kind of thing that's hardly going to be welcomed with open arms, but it's amazing to hear how some of the fans reacted at the time. And equally, the overriding impression is of the 90s being a bit non-prog, yet just check out our list of great 90s concept albums. In all, it's a bit of an eye-opener.

So *Brave*. The album that created the Marillion of today. Thank prog for that, say I. Enjoy...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



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BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST 'BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST'

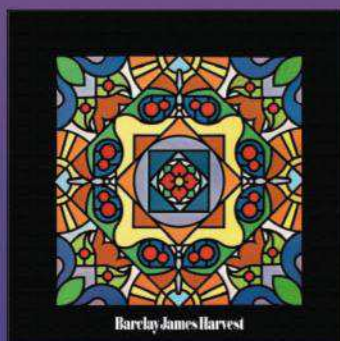


3CD/1DVD LIMITED EDITION DELUXE BOX SET

- Esoteric Recordings is proud to announce the release of a new re-mastered four disc deluxe expanded boxed set limited edition (comprising 3 CDs and a DVD) of the legendary self-titled debut album by Barclay James Harvest.
- Features an additional 33 bonus tracks drawn from new 5.1 surround sound & stereo mixes from the original multi-track master tapes, BBC radio sessions from 1968 and 1971, the singles Early Morning, Brother Thrush & Taking Some Time On, a rare Woolly Wolstenholme solo demo from 1969 of The Sun Will Never Shine, along with the 1968 short film Mr. Sunshine & a 68 page book.

REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION

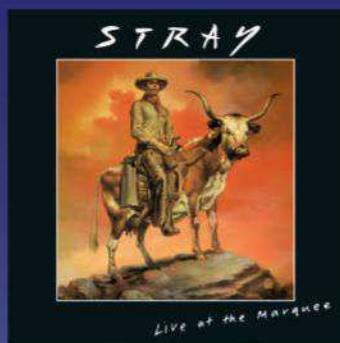
- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered and expanded edition of the legendary self-titled debut album by Barclay James Harvest. This reissue has been ewly remastered from the original master tapes and also includes nine bonus tracks, including the classic Early Morning, Brother Thrush and Taking Some Time On singles and four tracks recorded in August 1968. The lavishly illustrated booklet features previously unseen photographs and an essay by BJH specialists Keith & Monika Domone.



COMUS

'FIRST UTTERANCE' REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered and expanded edition of the legendary album First Utterance by COMUS.
- Includes four bonus tracks taken from the 'Diana' maxi-single, along with the song 'All the Colours of Darkness', recorded during the "First Utterance" sessions. The booklet restores the original album artwork and features an essay by Malcolm Dome and interviews with band members.



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.



CHRIS SQUIRE 'FISH OUT OF WATER' 2CD / 2DVD / 1LP / 2 X 7" SINGLES LIMITED EDITION BOXSET

- 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.

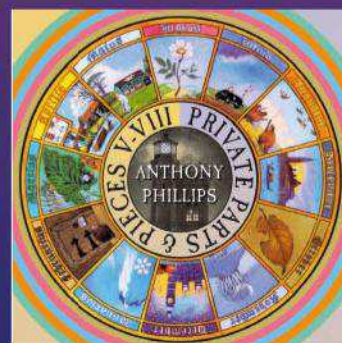
2 DISC EDITION

- 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.



NIRVANA 'BLACK FLOWER'

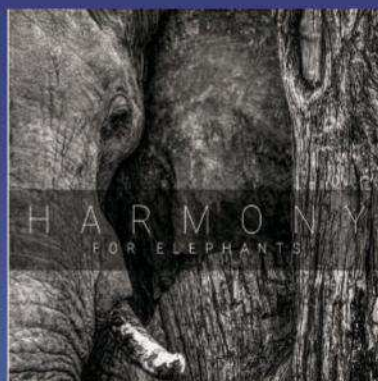
- New remastered & expanded release of the legendary & impossibly rare 1970 album by uk band.
- With five bonus tracks, three previously unreleased.



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.

VARIOUS ARTISTS 'HARMONY FOR ELEPHANTS' CHARITY ALBUM



- Esoteric Antenna is pleased to announce the release of a charity album featuring new tracks by legendary artists from the "progressive" music world; "Harmony For Elephants". The album features new music donated to raise funds and awareness for the charity Elephants for Africa, an organisation dedicated to protecting the endangered African elephant through research and education. Featuring new tracks from Anthony Phillips, Steve Hackett, Nad Sylvan, Nick Magnus and more.

Bloody Well Write

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

SAILORS' TALES

I have just been reading my very first issue of *Prog*, and also listening to the CD that came with it. I was especially thrilled to read about Cruise To The Edge, and so proud I was part of the event that was so brilliantly written about.

That cruise (my first) has made my prog rock interests soar like a rocket into space. I have always liked Yes and bought my first album when I was 16 (more than 40 years ago!) and so I was delighted to see them live on board the ship.

It was great to read about Yes' journey in *Prog* and I was so inspired by them on the trip that I booked a VIP ticket for their Sheffield gig while I was lying on a sunlounger by a pool in Tampa, the day we disembarked. Shortly after that, I subscribed to *Prog* magazine.

I knew my life would never be the same after the trip. I didn't want the euphoric adrenaline rush to ever end! The experience of that cruise was something that's hard to put into words. I now have in excess of 70 new Facebook friends because of the trip, including some of the musicians!

I've also launched a lyric-writing business, because of my love of writing poetry and songs, and I've bought more CDs in the last few months than in my entire life, I think! I bought an acoustic guitar, too, in the hope of learning to play.

I've seen Yes again in Sheffield, and got to meet the band after the show. My next gig will be Marillion soon in Brighton, then Lifesigns in May, Neal Morse in June, Steve Hackett in October and Fish in December.

Incidentally, I would never have got to be a huge fan of Lifesigns if it wasn't for *Prog*. A friend of mine buys it regularly and had a copy with a CD that featured Lifesigns, and he liked them so much he bought a signed vinyl of *Cardington*. Once I heard that, I was hooked and bought my own. They were phenomenal on the cruise! I was sat on the front row of the pool stage. Imagine that: sitting in the Mexican sunshine, at the Costa Maya dock, on a huge cruise ship, in the open air, watching and listening to a fantastic band playing live. The highlight of the trip in my opinion.

Prog 85: Tull, the Moodies and much, much more.



Lifesigns rocking at Cruise To The Edge.



JOEL BARRIOS

I got to see Nad Sylvan and Steve Hackett, among others, performing live. It was surreal, bumping into famous people like Steve at breakfast, sitting next to Billy Sherwood, and saying good morning, hugging Neal Morse. I have too many wonderful memories to share that would take up a double-page spread in your magazine, but I'm pleased to say that *Prog* is now an important part of my prog life.

I look forward to reading about new bands, bands I know, events, and, of course, listening to new music and becoming the 'rock chick' I always wanted to be! At 56, I'm not too old. Prog on!

Sue Lumb

FEMALE FOCUS

I so love your magazine — I've been into *Prog* since the first issue with Pink Floyd on the cover. I have a thought about a cool

future article. I think there's a whole slew of brilliant female artists from the late 60s and early 70s who produced brilliant progressive works: Pentangle's Jacqui McShee, Trees' Celia Humphris, Affinity's Linda Hoyle, Fairport Convention's Judy Dyble and Sandy Denny. All these singers and the groups they worked with played such unique and otherworldly music.

Perhaps in the future, a nice article looking into their works would be very cool. I think a lot of people would really enjoy this music. Seeing how Jane Weaver and other brilliant female artists are making such an impact in the world of progressive music, these bands could use a bit of help!

All the best to you and keep on doing such a wonderful job!

Dave Freshman, Aurora, Colorado, USA

TWEET TALK

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OLIVER WAKEMAN

@OliverWakeman

Just had a tweet from my brother Adam @Wakemanofficial and it reminded me I found a photo of us as kids. I'm probably 6 & Ad's 4. I have a @yesofficial knee patch on my jeans just above the one of Mickey Mouse!



ADRIAN BELEW

@THEadrianbelew

I'm starting a new solo record tomorrow. Got my drum kit locked and loaded.



HEATHER FINDLAY

@HeatherFindlay7

Ohhhh it's getting exciting here in Finsy world! Recording final demo vocals... 14 tracks... 3 weeks to go... yikes!

LETTER

BIG FISH

Marvellous article re: the wonderful *Fish Out Of Water* in *Prog* 86, though writer Sid Smith perhaps goes too far in saying that it “towers above the other solo releases of his [Chris Squire’s] bandmates”. Yes, *Beginnings* exposes Steve Howe’s frailties as a lead singer and has few moments that would grace a 70s Yes album. Alan White’s *Ramshackled* is too unfocused to be loved, but Jon Anderson’s *Olias Of Sunhillow* is superb, with very unusual instrumentation and typically bonkers concept/lyrics. The pick of the bunch might even be Patrick Moraz’s *The Story Of I* (my computer won’t let me



do the glyph that’s the true title), which opened my eyes to various Brazilian instruments, and races headlong, the music beautifully illustrating the story. The sometimes shaky vocals might be the only aspect that keeps the album from being one of prog’s true essential texts.

Which brings us back to Chris Squire, who really does showcase excellent songcraft, the usual idiosyncratic bass playing, clever arrangements and more than adequate singing. Would a Jon Anderson lead vocal improve *Fish Out Of Water*? I don’t think it would. Sid is completely correct in his conclusion though – this is a one-off and that’s what gives the album its power.

Ken Lowe

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

GOOD TO THE BONE

I’ve seen over 980 live bands since my first ever concert – Focus at Manchester Hardrock in 1973. I gave up on prog in the early 90s after seeing Yes for my final time in ’84 and Tull for my 16th time in ’90, having already given up on Genesis without Gabriel and Hackett (I saw *The Lamb...* at Wembley, plus the next two post-Gabriel tours).

Via King Crimson, John McLaughlin and Allan Holdsworth et al, I got more into jazz, plus I loved and saw lots of Britpop bands, such as Oasis, Manic Street Preachers, Radiohead, etc.

Fast forward to 2012 and I bought my first ever *Prog* mag, mainly because of the exclusive release of Rush’s *Clockwork Angels* (Moving Pictures had been my last purchase of theirs, 30 years earlier). I’d never heard of Steven Wilson or Porcupine Tree at that point, but wow, did I soon become a new fan! Ironically, I’ve benefited as a beginner with some

Porcupine Tree box sets and vinyl reissues that original fans would already have, but it’s cost me boatloads to find all his back catalogue since then!

I finally saw Steven Wilson play a superb set at North Sea Jazz in Rotterdam in 2016. Last week I saw a great *To The Bone* show in Cardiff, but on Thursday (March 29) at the Royal Albert Hall, I think I experienced the greatest gig of my life! The guy is a genius, as *Prog* readers already know. There were the bonuses of Richard Barbieri as support act, and live Bollywood dancers, but the icing on the cake was Ninet Tayeb on three songs. I can now die fulfilled.

I’m still ‘coming down’ three days later – thanks, *Prog* mag, for rekindling my enthusiasm for progressive music, and for introducing me to Steven Wilson!

John Ferguson

Issue 85’s look at the career of the brilliant Claire Hamill.

SPECIAL GUEST

Well, that was surprise! I opened the last issue of *Prog* [issue 85] at page 67 and staring out at me was a face I last saw in... er, 1970. It was my birthday, and at a hastily arranged ‘party’, a friend turned up with an angelic young woman who strummed a guitar and did indeed sing like an angel.

On the minus side, her name was Josie, not Claire Hamill, but on the plus side, it was in Darlington, which is pretty damn close to Teesside. I would swear it was her, but I can’t understand why I haven’t put the obvious two and two together during the intervening years. So, I’m left wondering...

Tom Noble, Whitley Bay



CLIVE NOLAN
@operafanatica
Yes - the stand is back - 360 degrees of fun! ;) #tour #arena #progrock #keyboards



LESLIE HUNT
@lesliehunt
My newsfeed is largely populated by people being all “ARE WE THERE YET?” on this road trip we’re on through a midwestern spring. We’ll get there when we get there. Don’t make me turn this car around.

NAD SYLVAN
@SylvanOfficial
So brutally wonderful to wind down at home for a week! Off to Japan tomorrow. Two shows in Kawasaki.

PROG

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Photo: EMI/Marillion Archive/Carl Glover

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Printed by **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary

Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk

Tel: 0203 787 9060

ISSN 2045-2260

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INTRO

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

High Tea: Nick Mason returns to the early days of Pink Floyd's musical career.

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS ARE REVEALED!

Pink Floyd drummer revisits the early years with former Spandau Ballet guitarist.

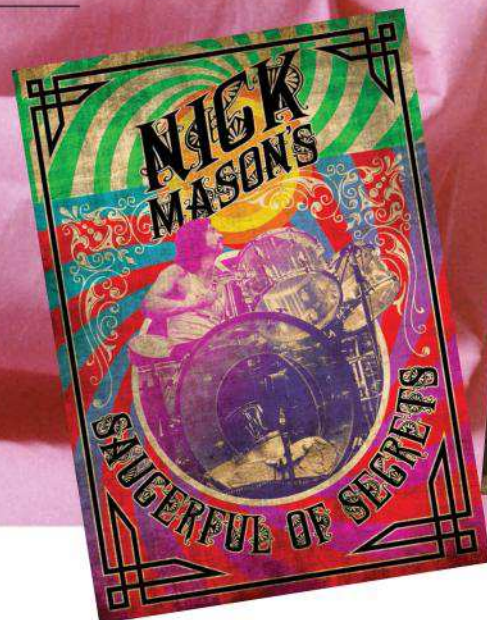
■ **Nick Mason** is returning to the stage with a new project that pays tribute to the seminal years of his former band. Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets includes not only the Pink Floyd drummer but also guitarist Lee Harris (Blockheads), keyboard player Dom Beken (ex-The Orb), Floyd bassist Guy Pratt, and Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp on vocals and guitar.

"I'd been ruminating on playing again rather than just talking about the old days," says Mason. "It seemed like a good idea and it sounded as though we could actually find enough people committed to doing it, so it's sort of crept into the consciousness, I suppose. I think once we actually got some instruments and played together, it was a case of, 'Oh yeah, this is fun and it could work!'"

The five-piece recently announced four intimate London shows – three at the Half Moon in Putney and one at Dingwalls in Camden – that will focus almost exclusively



**"I'm not
doing this on
a crusade...
this is very
much a labour
of love for me."**



on material from the Syd Barrett years, with an emphasis on 1967's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and *A Saucerful Of Secrets* from 1968.

"We'll explore anything from that sort of era, certainly a couple of tracks from the *More* soundtrack album [1969], and maybe even the odd things like demos that we did in 1966. We don't want to slavishly copy every single detail but it's interesting how complex some of Syd's songs are in terms of their structure. One was totally unaware of it 50 years ago and I'm really enjoying [revisiting the old material]. Some of it is, 'I remember this!' and other bits of it are almost an exploration of something that was done but I'd completely forgotten how the music worked. What we won't be doing is later stuff that people can hear from Roger [Waters] or David [Gilmour]. We're not trying to see who can play the best version of *Comfortably Numb*. That would be hard work."

Although the 'Saucers' have no plans to record any material new or old, Mason hints that the sold-out London gigs could be the beginning of something more.

"Let's see how they go, but it would be nice to develop it a bit," he reveals. "If it works we'd look to do something at bigger venues maybe after the summer, but we're not looking at the O2 Arena, I think it would be theatres or that sort of size. You could say the [London shows] are a small toe in a small bucket of water..."

The gigs will be the first time the drummer has played live since he teamed up with Ed Sheeran and Mike Rutherford on *Wish You Were Here* at the 2012 Olympic closing ceremony in London. Mason previously performed with his Pink Floyd bandmates in 2005 at Live 8. So far, rehearsals have been running very smoothly and he's raring to get back on stage.

"I've done masses of interviews recently about the V&A's Pink Floyd exhibition and I'm happy to talk away about ancient history, but it just got to the point where everything I'm talking about happened maybe 40 years ago and actually I'd rather do something a bit more modern," he reveals to *Prog*. "I'm not doing this on a crusade. I'm doing it because I thought, 'That would be fun and I'd like to do it.' There are plenty of people out there [playing the Pink Floyd hits] from Roger, David, The Australian Pink Floyd, Brit Floyd... there are enough tribute bands to cover most of it, but this is very much a labour of love for me."

For the latest updates, visit the official website www.thesaucerfulofsecrets.com. **NRS**

This month, Intro was compiled by

Lin Bensley
Chris Cope
Jerry Ewing
Isere Lloyd-Davis
Martin Kieley
Hannah May Kilroy
Rachel Mann
Rhodri Marsden
Alison Reijman
Natasha Scharf
Rick Wakeman

SANGUINE HUM'S SOLO OUTING

Matt Baber announces his debut classical-inspired electronic album.



Sound And Light:
Matt Baber.

CARL GLOVER

Multi-instrumentalist Matt Baber releases *Suite For Piano And Electronics* via Bad Elephant Music on June 15. Although the Sanguine Hum keyboard player recorded the solo album last summer, it contains ideas he's been working on for the best part of two decades.

"It really came to fruition with a solo gig opportunity and I thought, 'What's going to work on stage?' I started imagining more of an expansive sound with piano and sequenced synthesiser backing," he reveals. "I've been cataloguing synthesiser loops for many years and I wanted to see what happened when I started improvising on the piano with them."

"A lot of my inspiration comes from composers like Steve Reich, Philip Glass and people like that; classical music with a motorik kind of feel. A massive amount also comes from the world of electronica as well, so Warp Records, Boards Of Canada, Aphex Twin... it's the idea of two worlds colliding."

The 10-track album follows on from his 2013 digital release *Outskirts*, and also includes artwork by Steven Wilson collaborator Carl Glover.

In the meantime, Sanguine Hum have been putting the finishing touches to their long-awaited new studio album. They plan to release *Now We Have Power* later this year. Baber will join up with vocalist/guitarist Joff Winks to perform an acoustic Sanguine Hum set at Eppyfest in Cheltenham in July.

For more about Matt Baber's solo work, visit his Bandcamp page at www.mattbaber.bandcamp.com. **NRS**

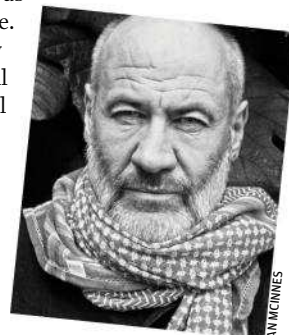
FISH TAKES TO WATER FOR CRUISE TO THE EDGE 2019

All-star line-up announced as Yes' Caribbean cruise returns.

Fish will take the plunge with his first ever cruise as he joins the cast of next year's Cruise To The Edge. The Scottish singer-songwriter has told fans he's "very excited at the opportunity" and has also confirmed he'll play two electric sets and one acoustic session, and will also take part in a Q&A. The annual five-night cruise, which sets sail from Tampa in Florida on February 4, will port at Key West and Cozumel in Mexico before returning to Tampa on February 9.

Twenty-five acts have been announced so far, including Yes, Steve Hackett, Mike Portnoy, PFM, Frost* and Riverside, who'll be making their debut as well. The Moody Blues' bassist John Lodge has also been confirmed as a special guest. He'll perform classic Moodies songs as well as solo material with his 10,000 Light Years Band.

To purchase tickets, visit www.CruiseToTheEdge.com. **NRS**



DAN MCINNES



Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets prepare for their London warm-up shows.

MICHAEL LOCUS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

EVERGREENS DO NOT SUFFER FROM ALZHEIMER'S.

Carol is no longer who she used to be.

She no longer recognises Nancy, her sister, or Jim, her husband. Most of the time it's as though she isn't aware of the things going on around her.

But when Nancy carefully puts headphones over Carol's ears and plays her most beloved song, her sister's eyes light up. She gently sways to the beat of the song, she even remembers the dance routine. She may nudge Jim's arm. Or tell him what

a fun guy he is. For the duration of that song, she's back again. For 4:35, she's Carol.

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OF MUSIC!**



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HEAD WITH WINGS DIG DEEP ON DEBUT

Connecticut pair tackle kidnappings and school shootings on first full-length.



US duo Head With Wings release their debut album *From Worry To Shame* independently on June 1.

The nine-track recording touches on a number of deep and personal themes, including the Sandy Hook school shooting in 2012, as well as the kidnap and murder of vocalist and guitarist Josh Corum's cousin, Meredith Emerson, four years prior.

"I guess the concept started to become clearer as we were living our lives, and as things happened in the world around us," says the musician.

"The synopsis for the conceptual side of the album is about a man who's pretty much unknowingly destroying his own family before society takes them away from him. There's a bit of me in the protagonist, I guess, but there's also a lot of people that I've been influenced by in my life, for better or for worse.

"There's a good dose of reality, but there's also a bit of fiction to give it a bit more depth."

Head With Wings, who are completed by fellow guitarist Brandon Cousino, channel the musical landscapes of modern-day proggers such as Steven Wilson, Karnivool and Radiohead. *From Worry To Shame* draws together these influences to create a unique new sound that's both dark yet upliftingly melodic too.

"I pretty much started playing guitar because of the music I was hearing from Steven Wilson, Mikael Åkerfeldt and Radiohead," Corum says. "There's definitely a lot of that, but then I went backwards in time and got more into the more classic progressive music. I ended up working my way back to more modern times, and maybe taking a bit of 90s hard rock and fusing that with the fidelity side of the progressive genre. When you have the dirt and the grime of hard rock, and you fuse that with the forward-thinking notions of prog rock you get something that's a bit haunting and unsettling, but in kind of a pristine way."

With a debut full-length record now in their arsenal, it looks like the only way is up for Head With Wings.

"This album took years to make," Corum adds. "It's been five years since our first EP *Living With The Loss*, and I think that's been fuelling the fire to really make sure that this album gets out there." **CC**

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

"I started playing guitar because of Steven Wilson, Mikael Åkerfeldt and Radiohead."

INTRO extras

HAKEN PLOT THEIR DEBUT LIVE DISC

British proggers

Haken release their first live album on June 22 via InsideOut. *L-IVE* will be available

as a four-disc CD/DVD package in celebration of their successful *Affinity* Tour. The DVD will include all the official videos from the album, as well as footage from *ProgPower USA 2016*, with a cameo from Mike Portnoy.

The band are currently writing material for their fifth studio album, which they say "may take a darker path" than their 2016 release.

Voyager: saving up their ghost miles.



VOYAGER REVEAL STRING OF UK SHOWS

Aussies head over to Blighty for five dates, including a London showcase gig.

Voyager are returning to the UK this summer. The five-piece, whose album *Ghost Mile* was released last year, will headline London's Borderline on July 3 as part of a *Prog* showcase, with a second show confirmed at Birmingham's Asylum 2 the following day. The Perth band will also perform at Ramblin' Man Fair in Maidstone (July 1), UK Tech Fest in Newark-on-Trent (6-8) and Bloodstock in Derby (August 10-12).

"We played at the Underworld [in London] last year, which was amazing, so we're really excited to get back to the UK," says bassist Alex Canion. "We're really stoked to get over there and do what we do best, which is play hi-octane, electrifying shows."

"Bloodstock is definitely one of those dream festivals and we're in amazing company, but there's something about London that's really exciting to us. The Borderline gig will be a little bit longer so we'll make it more of a journey. A lot of the big festival shows have shorter sets, so we really like to do balls-to-the-wall banger after banger. But we do enjoy slowing things down for the longer sets, where we can play a little bit more of the brooding ballads! We're going to play a varied set throughout the history of the band. We like to keep it interesting and it's going to be really fun."

Voyager also have two shows booked at Evoken Fest in Japan before they head off to Atlanta for *ProgPower USA* in September. For more, visit www.facebook.com/voyageraustralia. **NRS**

ARGOS ANNOUNCE FIFTH ALBUM

Canterbury-inspired proggers team up Andy Tillison and Damanek's Marek Arnold on latest.

German band Argos have signed to Bad Elephant for the release of *Unidentified Dying Objects*, out on July 20. But despite the title, vocalist and co-founder Robert Gozon says there's more than negativity to be heard on the follow-up to 2015's *A Seasonal Affair*.

"It's in the vein of the albums that we've done before, but it's different because we have the new keyboard player, Thilo Brauss," Gozon tells *Prog*. "We were looking for more of a live sound, and you can hear that."

He name checks opening track *The Hunter's Last Stand* as a good example of the album's wares. "It has the shift in time signature, the long intro, slowly building up to a climax. And it has Andy Tillison from *The Tangent* on it."

Gozon adds that the sci-fi theme was inspired by author Philip K Dick: "The title sounds rather negative but there are positive tracks on the album along with some darker things."

See www.facebook.com/Argos.Band.Germany for more. **MK**



Finding hope in despair: guitarist Yatin Srivastava.



YATIN SRIVASTAVA'S DOUBLE WHAMMY

Indian guitarist teams up with Bruce Soord and Craig Blundell on debut.

Yatin Srivastava Project release *Chaos // Despair* independently on May 25. The collaborative collective, fronted by New Delhi-based musician Yatin Srivastava, came about in 2013 and have already released two EPs and a DVD. The six-track album is their debut and it's split into two distinct progressive styles that tackle heavy themes including war, loss, and mental health.

"The *Chaos* aspect is very much progressive metal and influenced by acts like Periphery, TesseracT and the wave of UK tech metal that came out around 2008. *Despair* is more inspired by Steven Wilson, Porcupine Tree and classic 70s prog like Genesis and Yes," reveals the guitarist.

Srivastava has taken a more song-orientated approach to the album compared to his 2014 debut EP *The Dream Plays In Reverse*, and has also brought in two of his musical heroes to help out.

"I've been a huge The Pineapple Thief fan ever since I heard *Magnolia*, and *Your Wilderness* had quite an impact on my writing," he reveals. "I saw that Bruce Soord was mixing material for other Indian bands so I sent him a message. He sings on *Programme.Obsolete* and he wrote the lyrics too."

Srivastava also asked Steven Wilson drummer Craig Blundell if he would guest on the album. Much to his surprise, he agreed to play on the tracks *Programme.Obsolete* and *The Unknown*.

"It wasn't something I imagined would ever happen and it's still very surreal for me," he admits. "I just put it down to the fact that musicians like Craig and Bruce are more than open to playing with other people."

Yatin Srivastava Project hope to play in Europe later this year. For more, visit www.yatinproject.com. **NRS**

INTRO
extras

DISTRICT 97 ANNOUNCE NEW ALBUM

District 97 will celebrate their 10th anniversary with a new release. The Chicago five-piece already have seven tracks written and will begin recording it later this year. The fourth album explores topics as diverse as autism, social media, identity and ghost stories. In the meantime, they're launching a Kickstarter campaign to help finance the album at the end of May. For more, visit www.district97.net.

This Aching Isolation! Benedict Harris-Hayes goes solo.



OCEANICA UNVEIL THEIR "FUN" DEBUT

Former Enochian Theory frontman makes waves with his latest solo project.

Multi-instrumentalist Benedict Harris-Hayes is to release the first of three EPs as Oceanica this June. The musician is best known as the keyboard player and vocalist with Portsmouth prog metallers Enochian Theory.

"*One Dark* is a continuation of the heavier stuff I did with Enochian Theory and I think a lot of people will hear that in the writing," he tells *Prog*. "The other EPs – *Two Light* and *Three Grey* – will be slightly different and there are a couple of curveballs in there. I'm intrigued to see what people think of them. The third EP is a lot stranger, one friend described it as 'musical oddness!'"

Harris-Hayes set up the project back in 2013, but placed it on hold to concentrate on writing film scores and making electronic sounds with Massive Dynamic. When Enochian Theory went on hiatus earlier this year, he decided to resurrect it and flex his musical muscles, playing not just keys and synths, but also drums, cello, violin and kazoo.

"The EPs are quite silly in places but also quite serious in their own way," he admits, citing Tool, Devin Townsend, Katatonia and Anathema among his more serious influences. "I think you've got to have a bit of fun with these things."

Oceanica will shortly release promo videos for the tracks *Oubliette* and *Overcome*, while the remaining EPs will come out later this year. The musician plans to follow these with a full-length album and some live shows.

"I've written about three-quarters of the first album already," he says. "It's been a challenge, but it's also been fun."

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



FAD GADGETS

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

CYCLOPHONE

It's safe to say that the vacuum cleaner



hasn't played a major part in the history of music. Captain Beefheart sold them door to door, Jon Fishman from

Phish occasionally plays solos on an Electrolux, and... well, that's about it. Dyson, however, have recently redressed this imbalance by collaborating with the Orion Orchestra and composer David Roche. The resulting piece is called *Acoustical Anatomy*; it features the Cyclophone (48 flue pipes from Dyson cleaners), an Amp-sichord (strings mounted in Dyson fans) and a violin made out of bits of a Dyson hand dryer. Ironically, the piece doesn't suck.

www.bit.ly/cyclophone

BACKBEAT

"Play Bass, Feel Bass" runs the slogan for Backbeat, a device which allows bass guitarists who don't think they're loud enough to strap a subwoofer to their back and allow the thud, slap and boom to vibrate through their body, a bit like lying on top of a malfunctioning washing machine. I shouldn't scoff; it's been funded on Kickstarter several times over, and is due to ship to eager customers later this year. I've seen no information about the physiological effects of the Backbeat, but it promises to open up the human spine to a whole new world of sound.

www.getbackbeat.com



OTAMATONE

It's a monophonic synthesiser shaped like a stick, you play it with one finger, it has a Pac-Man-style head at one end and, maybe unsurprisingly, it's made in Japan. The Otamatone has been around for a while, but there's currently a frisson of excitement surrounding a new version modelled on Kirby, a Nintendo character that's essentially a shape-shifting blob that inhales things in order to acquire new skills.

What an extraordinary world we live in.

www.otamatone.com



INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

Rick considers the past, present and future of a musician's life.

It's an unfortunate fact of life that we all get old. One day, after the old respiratory system has packed up, we'll all head off to rock'n' roll heaven or in some cases, rock'n' roll hell, where I believe you're forced to listen to early country and western for all eternity.

A musician's life changes as the years go by and it's interesting to reflect on how people's attitudes towards us alter as we age. I'm sure some of this will resonate with those of you who are still young enough to resonate.

In your teens, you're open to all kinds of music. It's during these formative years that your personal taste starts to develop and move to the forefront of what you play. It's all very exciting. Once you reach your 20s, you tend to focus even more on your preferred musical style and now associate with like-minded musicians. If you're fortunate enough, record companies will clamour for your signature and your fanbase will grow by the day. You may even win a few awards for your craft.

In your 30s, you still play your music of choice but now you think that all other music has little relevance in your life along with the musicians who play it. Your record company is no longer so keen on your sound and you may even be dropped. Your fanbase starts to dwindle and the awards begin to disappear.

Once you hit your 40s, it starts becoming difficult to earn a living playing the music you love, so you find yourself delving into styles you'd previously dismissed. Your record label might re-sign you for a pittance and you'll end up making an album of *their* choice.

There are no more awards and by the time you reach your 50s, you're playing whatever and wherever you can just to pay the mortgage. You also bemoan the death of record stores and proper record companies, but there will still be a hard core of fans to keep your music alive. Just.

By your 60s, many of your peers are no longer alive and you're simply grateful to still be breathing. You play whatever people want to listen to, anywhere

that will have you and you might even win your first lifetime achievement award. But by the time you reach your 70s, every agent around the world wants to book you and every record company wants to sign you. Venues are full again, and CD and vinyl sales rocket. Disillusionment tells you that you're in vogue again, but reality says that's only because the audience now realise how old you are and want to see you before you head off to rock'n' roll heaven or country and western hell.

As for me, I'll keep going for as long as I can because I can't stand country and western.


"By your 60s, many of your peers are no longer alive and you're simply grateful to still be breathing."



MIDAS FALL

Edinburgh electronica duo take you on a bewitching trip.

"I DIDN'T REALISE I could sing until I was about 20."

It's this revelation by Midas Falls' Elizabeth Heaton that perhaps sums up the subtle, beautiful and humble charm of Midas Fall. One of the band's most notable features is her remarkable voice that combines the otherworldly oddness of Bat For Lashes with the purity of Anneke van Giersbergen.

The origins of Midas Fall lie in Edinburgh's eclectic music scene, where Heaton and Rowan Burn met. Now on their fourth album, they combine post-rock melancholy with the icy beauty associated with the electronica of Ólafur Arnalds. It's shattering stuff, suited to the wildness of north west Scotland where the pair are now based.

Perhaps their diverse influences helped to create their unusual sound. When they met, Burn was into Tool, Primus and Pantera, while Heaton listened to a lot of post-rock and folk. To gales of laughter, Burn points out, "You had your big phase of listening only to Frames for about three months. It was becoming quite an agony." Heaton acknowledges with a laugh, "Yeah, I think that annoyed you quite a bit!"

It's this chemistry that seems to drive Midas Fall forward. New album *Evaporate* represents a key development in their musical journey. As Burn says, "The first three albums we worked with other musicians, but the latest has been entirely us. It's been different to do it that way."

Certainly *Evaporate* feels like a huge step forward from their last album, *The Menagerie Inside*, which was shaped by a rock sensibility and basically recorded in a week. This time the soundscape has been more clearly defined by classical sounds and new

technologies, especially the cello and use of the Eventide reverb pedal. The balance gives *Evaporate* a real emotional grip.

A cynic might claim that this reflects the fact that this is music made by women. Burn and Heaton rightly have a lot of push-back to offer in the #MeToo era. When asked how it is being a woman in rock'n'roll, Burn says, "It varies between being fine and a total fucking nightmare," adding, "The condescension you have to put up with is maddening."

Heaton agrees. "Post-rock is still seen as a boys' club," she says, but Midas Fall push stale concepts of genre out of shape and show what talent — whether male or female — looks like.

Neither have formal training, making facility with a wide range of instruments even more impressive. Burn recalls how, as a child, "There was an ad in Tesco's, some old woman was selling an old piano for a tenner and I had 10 quid's worth of pocket money and my mum got it for me. I couldn't play it, I just bashed around. I got lessons, but I think the piano teacher was exasperated by me and gave up. When the band started, all I could play was guitar."

Midas Fall have come a long way since those origins. Laughing, Burn adds, "I think with this album we got to the point where our playing of instruments like the drums or keys was acceptable."

It's as if they've found their *raison d'être*, and it shows. As Heaton reveals about *Evaporate*, "We were more controlled. We're not trying to overcomplicate. It's more soundscape-y and textural."

Characteristically, Burn finishes the sentence: "There's space to breathe." **RM**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Rowan Burn (guitars, keys, tech, percussion),
Elizabeth Heaton (vocals, guitars, keys, tech, percussion)

SOUNDS LIKE

Kiasmos and Kate Bush writing Nordic noir soundtracks

CURRENT RELEASE

Evaporate is out now via Monotreme Records

WEBSITE

www.midasfall.com



"We're not trying to over-complicate."

Midas Fall, L-R:
Elizabeth Heaton,
Rowan Burn.



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

YOUR PROG CHEF:

**AMANDA ALVAREZ,
BEATRIX PLAYERS**

On the menu: Under Pressure Omelette



“The iconic Spanish omelette, or tortilla, is one of my childhood favourites. I follow the recipes I learned at home, tasty homemade food is what makes me happy.

This is a great meal to share with friends and family. It can be served cold or hot, as a tapa or a main dish with a side salad. Unfortunately, we don't get to spend much time cooking meals as a band, but lately the pressure of this column has obliged me take advantage of Amy [Birks, vocals] and Jess [Kennedy, piano] as my guinea pigs, hence the name of this recipe!”

Ingredients (serves four)

6 eggs, 600g potatoes, 1 onion, garlic (optional), olive oil, salt, parsley, chopped green peppers (optional), chorizo (optional).

Preparation

“Peel and dice the onion. Peel the potatoes, and cut into pieces about 1/2cm thick.

Heat the frying pan with about 1cm of oil. Add a chopped garlic clove to flavour the oil if you like. When the garlic starts to simmer, add the potatoes, onion and salt then fry for 25-30 minutes. If you're feeling adventurous you can add chorizo or green peppers to the mix as well.

Remove the cooked potatoes and onion and drain the oil from the pan into a cup. Clean and dry the pan for the next stage.

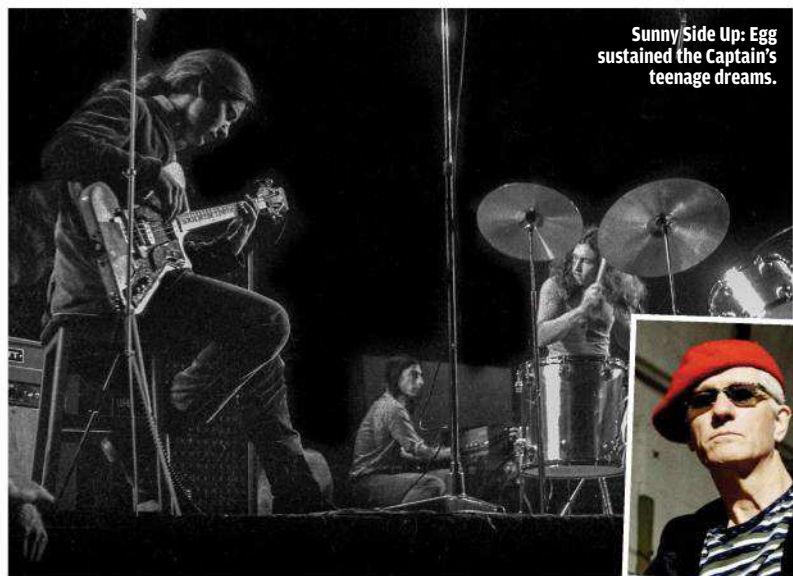
Beat the eggs in a large bowl until fluffy. Add the parsley and the potato mix then combine thoroughly. Put the pan back on the heat and add some of the drained oil. Once the oil is hot, pour the mixture into the pan. Tip the pan from side to side to ensure the mixture sits evenly and doesn't stick.

Using a spatula, separate the omelette from the sides of the pan. Once the sides start to firm up, turn the omelette over to cook the other side for one minute. The easiest way to do this is to place a plate over the pan, tip the omelette onto the plate and then slide it back into the pan. Turning the tortilla around can be a skilful art, but as with music, practice makes perfect!” **NRS**



MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



Sunny Side Up: Egg sustained the Captain's teenage dreams.

CAPTAIN SENSIBLE PRESS/STEVE GULLICK
EGG: KIM FRYSON

CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

The Damned's beret-wearing guitarist reckons **Egg** are far more than they're cracked up to be.

“Back in the 1980s, I participated in a Radio 4 show with Paul Gambaccini where my fellow panellists extolled the virtues of their favourite musical pieces. A smattering of posh jazz and something orchestral later it was Egg's turn to shine, except the back-room idiot cued *A Visit To Newport Hospital* right from the start! They played a one-minute clip of my favourite track so only the mind-bending stoner fuzz intro was aired. After that, enthusing about sumptuous melody and time signature wizardry was always going to fall on deaf ears. On and on I droned about the dreamy ambient passages, the fusing of pop, jazz and rock, the spectacular variety of tones and textures from nothing more than a transistor organ and a couple of effects pedals... I wasn't invited back.

I first experienced the joys of Egg at a school chum's in the early 70s. His parents had one of those new-fangled stereogram affairs, a rare commodity at a time when most records were pressed in mono. When his folks weren't about we'd wrestle the speakers out and position our heads between them for a trip into a psychedelic universe that was

a million miles away from lessons and homework. Analysis of the lyrics indicated that Dave Stewart, Mont Campbell and Clive Brooks were living the alternative lifestyle that we aspired to if only we didn't have to wear these damn school uniforms.

Dave Stewart had a good laugh when I told him all that when we met in a recording studio a decade or so later. He'd had the big hits with Barbara Gaskin by then, mighty pop arrangements showing he'd lost none of his creative skills. I remember trying to persuade him to get the Farfisa and fuzz units out and do some gigs playing that beautiful meandering Egg material again. I'd be first in the queue for tickets if it happens.

Egg's albums — *Egg*, *The Polite Force* and *The Civil Surface* — contain vast symphonic soundscapes that merge effortlessly from Bach to Hendrix in a couple of crochets, despite having been recorded by a trio. Many would

assume the fuzz-drenched keyboard riffs come from a guitar but there are none. He's a clever bloke is that Dave Stewart?” **NRS**

Evil Spirits is out now via Spinefarm. For more, visit www.officialdamned.com.

“He's a clever bloke is that Dave Stewart.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Van der Graaf Generator's (right) *Live At Rockpalast 2005* is out on CD/DVD on May 25. The remastered set contains the full concert and is the only official live DVD to feature the line-up of Peter Hammill, David Jackson, Hugh Banton and Guy Evans.



Esoteric are releasing a four-disc limited edition version of **Barclay James Harvest's** self-titled debut on May 25. The remastered collection contains 33 bonus tracks including BBC Radio sessions, a rare Woolly Wolstenholme solo demo and a DVD.

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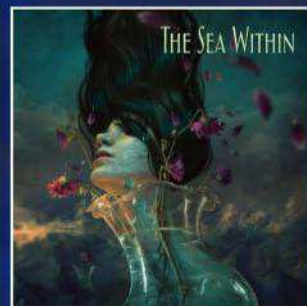
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NEW MUSIK

FROM A TO B

(GTO, 1980)

New Musik's orchestrators of synth-pop blazed several short circuits on their debut album *From A To B*. Its computer-generated components were assembled from the bright sparks and random brainwaves of frontman, songwriter and producer Tony Mansfield, who was as much a sound architect as a music processor. In 1979, two years after the band's creation, Mansfield brought keyboardist Clive Gates into the mainframe. The pair had previously rippled the airwaves as the T. Rex and King Crimson-influenced Reeman Zeegus.

The robotic mannerisms of *Straight Lines* and *Living By Numbers* foreshadow an Orwellian world, and when in the latter song Mansfield asks, "Does it all add up to you?" he may be alluding to life, the universe or a record label balance sheet for all the listener knows. Although *Living By Numbers* sounds like a prophetic strapline for a mobile phone company, it was electronics manufacturer Casio who retained the literal sense of the Top 20 single and used it in a TV advertising campaign for pocket calculators.

While one might hesitate to suggest that climate change or planetary pollution in any way inspired *This World Of Water or Dead Fish (Don't Swim Home)*, they seem remarkably prescient now and could so easily have been the soundtrack to *Blue Planet II*. And if the seesaw shanty *On Islands* lends lyrical comparison to King Crimson's own *Islands*, then *Science* offers the antiseptic alienation of Kraftwerk and the nervous tic of Tubeway Army.

"Turning forever/ I never could tell/ If this was a heaven/ Or this was a hell," laments Mansfield on *Sanctuary*, which was their last charting single. The lyrics spoke volumes about his own gathering fears and insecurities at the time, and these were further echoed on the closing number, *The Safe Side*.

Working at a hit factory soon began to take its toll. One of the album's highlights, *A Map Of You*, hints at Mansfield's growing disorientation in both an emotional and physical sense. His "where in the world am I?" viewpoint suggests it was often better to travel in expectation than arrive at further indecision. This was a trait that constantly dogged the band's advancement and as commercial success began to elude them, Mansfield became more reclusive. New Musik released two more studio albums before disbanding in 1982, leaving the frontman to become a full-time producer.

The shortest distance between two points is the line described by that academic crowd. Archimedes would have realised that the mathematics of New Musik was more than the sum of its parts. After all, *From A To B* is more about art than science anyway.

LIN BENSLEY



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Strange Brew: Croatia's Them Moose Rush.

THEM MOOSE RUSH

Frontman **Nikola Runjavec** welcomes us to the wacky world of the Croatian trio who are doing things their way.

"When we started playing, we were trying to make music which doesn't sound like anything else," says Them Moose Rush guitarist and vocalist Nikola Runjavec. "If there was some riff or any part of the song which sounded familiar, we would simply give up on that idea. This is our premise in making music — we try to make it very creative and unique, because it's also interesting for us."

It's fair to say that Croatian trio Them Moose Rush have done a pretty good job at keeping their sound distinctively individual. Recently released second album *Don't Pick Your Noise* is an exhilarating roller coaster of wacky riffs, unhinged vocals and pulsating rhythms allied with bluesy jam-outs, and it may already be a contender for modern-day proggers' end of year lists.

"We describe it as prog-noise-space-rock, or something like that," Runjavec says, adding that the trio used to listen to acts like Soundgarden and Rage Against The Machine before branching out into more exploratory hues.

Don't Pick Your Noise was recorded over a two to three month period at a studio in Zagreb, but the band's roots and

spiritual home can be found in the smaller Bjelovar, an hour or so away from the capital city.

"There are only a few prog bands here and they're pretty underground," Runjavec says, noting the likes of Seven That Spells. "We're considered freaks over here for creating such music. Croatia has [a population of] four million, and proportional to that you have a certain percentage of people who listen to rock, and an even smaller percentage who are listening to special kinds of rock."

"I think the people who listen to prog are already now 40 or 50 years old, and they're not part of the [active] scene. They don't discover modern prog. Most of the fans we get in Croatia are really into The Mars Volta, for example."

It's clear the engrossing, madcap nature of Them Moose Rush has an appeal far beyond Croatia. The threesome are planning to bring their

live show around Europe in the coming months, and with new songs already written, you get the feeling that the story of Them Moose Rush is only just beginning. CC

For more, visit the website www.themmooserush.com.



"We're considered freaks here for creating such music."

PROG IN BRIEF

Claudio Simonetti's *Goblin* will return to the UK this August for a series of live performances to accompany screenings of *Dawn Of The Dead* and *Suspiria*. Shows in Edinburgh (5 and 6) and London (17 and 18) have been confirmed so far.



Devin Townsend (left) will release the first of four limited edition vinyl box sets via InsideOut on June 8. The seven-LP *Eras* covers the Devin Townsend Project's early material. The remaining sets will be released over the coming months.



VLMV, L-R:
Pete Lambrou,
Ciaran Morahan.

VLMV

Slow-motion pop-playing duo making beautiful, soundtrack-like atmospherics.

LIFE HAS AN infinite capacity to surprise us, though some surprises are more welcome than others. When green-haired Finnish pop queen Alma went big, Pete Lambrou and Ciaran Morahan, aka VLMV, had to act quickly. Until then, *they* had been known as ALMA. Tempting as it might have been to piggyback on Alma's fame, Lambrou achieved a cunning compromise: invert the lettering and keep the original pronunciation. "At every gig, we still get one person who asks us how we pronounce it," he laughs wryly.

One of the pleasures of chatting to Lambrou is his ability to bring humour to this situation. VLMV have emerged from the world of post-rock, and as Lambrou reminds us, "The post-rock rule is always four words for a band name, so I wanted to keep it at four letters. The irony is that it was the one that we had to change."

If Lambrou and Morahan have post-rock heritage – both have been involved with Codes In The Clouds – VLMV is a different beast. Their second album *Stranded, Not Lost* draws as much on ambient and classical minimalism as drone guitar. Indeed, Lambrou says, "I don't think [VLMV] is post-rock at all. We're ambient-ish post-something." He pauses, then says: "I think we're slow-motion pop."

If that's a line calculated to panic some prog fans, never fear. 'Pop', as Everything Everything have shown, can be every bit as prog as a paradiddle, and the likes of Julianna Barwick have demonstrated the power of slow-motion patience. Every moment of *Stranded...* is considered and beautiful, with Lambrou's voice offering a high tenor that slides over strings and keys.

"All of it," he says, "is about being patient, and if you haven't got that patience, you're not going to like what we do."

If VLMV are 'pop', they draw on Morahan and Lambrou's knowledge of progressive alternative rock. Lambrou says, "Prog is all about musicianship and a lot of people might think we just make slow stuff, but there's a lot of thought and precision. We grew up on The Mars Volta and Radiohead."

This understanding of music-making plays out in a variety of ways. "On this album," Lambrou says, "I wanted more orchestra or composer elements. So, there's a lot more piano and much less guitar. Instead of layering with a loop station, I wrote a piano piece and then added some strings."

In short, as Lambrou explains, "I write stuff that is too nice and Morahan comes in and makes it much darker. He likes to play a drum stick on the guitar. He's always doing something dark and droney."

One of the striking effects of VLMV is that every song feels like it's made for a noir-ish film soundtrack. Lambrou admits, "Soundtracks: it's one of the goals," and VLMV certainly deserve their chance. The album is enhanced by some guest work from Tom Hodge, who most recently composed the soundtrack for *McMafia*. It's a testimony to VLMV's quality that they can attract the support of musicians with this profile.

The future may well be patient, quiet and beautiful for VLMV. Who knows what surprises lie ahead. But with music of this quality, it will be extraordinary if their audience doesn't grow significantly. **RM**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Pete Lambrou
(keys, vocals, loops),
Ciaran Morahan
(guitars, loops)

SOUNDS LIKE

Jonny Greenwood
meets Julianna
Barwick in deep space

CURRENT RELEASE

*Stranded, Not
Lost* is out now via
Fierce Panda/Too
Many Fireworks

WEBSITE

[www.facebook.com/
vlmband](http://www.facebook.com/vlmband)



**"Prog is
all about
musicianship
and a lot of
people might
think we just
make slow
stuff, but
there's a lot of
thought and
precision."**



A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION

A Prog writer asks fans: "Keep it down at the back, please!"

It's the last night of your favourite band's UK tour at a well-known London basement venue, renowned for its intimacy. You elect to stand nearer the back this time to absorb the wonder of both the performance and the sound. Then annoyingly, your live experience is completely banjaxed by a loud, persistent conversation that seems to follow you wherever you move.

The thorny subject of chatter during gigs is now the pet peeve among my immediate circle of prog-loving friends, along with the infernal mobile phone filming. It's not exactly rocket science: we pay good money, often take time off work and/or travel considerable distances to see the bands we love. So to listen involuntarily to private discussions about nothing in particular in our immediate environs or put up with a constant background drone of chatter isn't part of the package we originally signed up for.

A classic example of misplaced conversation happened during a Fish show a few years ago when a key moment of *Misplaced Childhood* was interrupted by three female attendees having a full-on confab about mascara. Seriously, ladies!

There's nothing wrong with a bit of banter between fellow gig-goers between numbers, hopefully expressing amazement and wonder at the brilliance of the show, and I'm absolutely sure that bands would welcome such positive chat. But I really can't think of anything more disheartening or disrespectful than for acts to observe a section of the audience paying no attention to what they're doing, especially during the quieter, acoustic sections. Thankfully venues like the Robin 2 in Bilton display signs politely asking everyone to keep the noise down while the bands crank up the sound.

In a perfect world, bars and lounges such as those at the Leamington Assembly would be located in a separate break-out area where talking can take place unimpeded. However, most venues have an integrated bar at the side or back of the performance space to which most gig-goers migrate for a drink and a chat, oblivious that the thrum of their conversation can be heard right down the front.

The solution? I've seen examples of carefully targeted messages emblazoned on the back of T-shirts but who wants to wear those when there's so much band merchandise to choose from? A polite word is probably the only way, but there's no telling what the response might be and that could provoke even greater disturbance as a result.

Prog fans have a lot to say for themselves – as numerous online forums will testify. However, there's a time and a place for words. For now, a little less conversation, please.

ALISON REIJMAN

Got an opinion on the matter that you'd like to share? Please email us at: prog@futurenet.com. Opinions expressed in this column aren't necessarily those of the magazine.



HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew



Northern Lights: festival organisers Robin Mortensen (left) and Leif Herland.

CLOSE TO THE RAIN

Robin Mortensen wants to big up prog in the northern hemisphere with a festival inspired by Norway's climate.

Scandinavia's music scene has long been a powerhouse of progressive creativity, but while Sweden has hosted events such as the Sweden Prog Fest and Progressive Circus, Norway has often lagged behind. The team behind Bergen's Close To The Rain want to change that.

"Our aim is really to showcase the best Norwegian prog bands," reveals organiser Robin Mortensen. "We have a very vital and happening scene at the moment, and we tend to put on more Scandinavian-sounding bands rather than the neo-prog and prog metal acts that are common at bigger festivals."

Mortensen, who's also the boss of Apollon Records and co-founded Norway's Karisma Records in 2003, set up Close To The Rain last year with help from stage manager and Sipher bassist Leif Herland. Also on the team is graphic designer Maja Markegård, whose work has graced the sleeves of numerous Karisma acts.

Now in its second year, the three-day festival runs from June 7-9 at Garage in Bergen's city centre. The legendary rock club, which is one of Enslaved's favourite local haunts, is near to public transport and comfortably holds just over 300 music fans.

Close To The Rain 2018's line-up includes performances from Arabs In Aspic; the folk-inspired Tusmørke, who'll also play a free afternoon concert for younger fans; and Anekdoten, whom the co-founder is a big fan of. Although there are now 11 bands in total on the bill, the original idea for the event came about when Mortensen was booking local gigs for Karisma labelmates Magic Pie and Airbag. However, like all good works of prog, his small dream quickly grew to epic proportions and before he knew it, he'd booked a full festival!

Although it's still early days for Close To The Rain – the name mixes Mortensen's favourite Yes album with Norway's unforgiving weather – the response so far has been so good that he hopes it will become an annual event. And he already has ideas to expand it outside Bergen. "We're planning an Oslo edition of the festival around August/September time as well," he reveals.

The line-up and exact details are still to be announced but expect artists from Karisma and Apollon's roster, with a few surprises thrown in! **NRS**

Visit www.facebook.com/closetotherain.no.

"We have a very vital and happening scene in Norway at the moment."

PROG IN BRIEF

A two-in-one illustrated history of **Devo** is published by Rocket 88 Books on July 13. The classic edition and deluxe version of *Devo: The Brand* and *Devo: Unmasked* are now available to pre-order from www.devobook.net.



Pain Of Salvation (left) are heading back to the UK for two shows this September. They'll play at Manchester's Academy Club (12) and London's Islington Assembly Hall (13) as part of the European leg of their *In The Passing Light Of Day* tour.

Peter Gabriel collaborator and Karl-Heinz Stockhausen protégé **Jon Hassell** releases his first album in nine years via his own label Ndeya on June 8. *Listening To Pictures (Pentimento Volume One)* is based on the idea of vertical listening.

Kontinuum release *No Need To Reason* on July 6 via Season Of Mist. The 10-track includes current single *Shivers*. It's the Icelandic ambient rockers' third album and the long-awaited follow-up to 2015's acclaimed *Kyrr*.

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Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

April 2018

Compiled by  Official
Charts Company

- 1 **RADIOHEAD** OK COMPUTER (XL RECORDINGS)
- 2 **TAME IMPALA** CURRENTS (FICTION)
- 3 **STEVEN WILSON** TO THE BONE (CAROLINE)
- 4 **CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER** HORMONE LEMONADE (WARP)
- 5 **AURI** AURI (NUCLEAR BLAST)
- 6 **PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING** EVERY VALLEY (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)
- 7 **FM** ATOMIC GENERATION (FRONTIERS)
- 8 **JONATHAN WILSON** RARE BIRDS (BELLA UNION)
- 9 **MOODY BLUES** DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED - LIVE (EAGLE)
- 10 **MOODY BLUES** DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED (DECCA)
- 11 **AYREON UNIVERSE** BEST OF - LIVE (MUSIC THEORIES)
- 12 **ROXY MUSIC** ROXY MUSIC (VIRGIN)
- 13 **JEFF LYNNE'S ELO** WEMBLEY OR BUST (RCA)
- 14 **DAVID GILMOUR** LIVE AT POMPEII (COLUMBIA)
- 15 **FIELD MUSIC** OPEN HERE (MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES)
- 16 **JETHRO TULL** HEAVY HORSES (RHINO)
- 17 **ROGER WATERS** IS THIS THE LIFE WE REALLY WANT? (COLUMBIA)
- 18 **HAWKWIND** AT THE ROUNDHOUSE (CHERRY RED)
- 19 **MARILLION** BRAVE (RHINO)
- 20 **MARILLION** MISPLACED CHILDHOOD (PARLOPHONE)
- 21 **MOGWAI** EVERY COUNTRY'S SUN (ROCK ACTION)
- 22 **MASTODON** EMPEROR OF SAND (REPRISE)
- 23 **RUSH** A FAREWELL TO KINGS (UMC/VIRGIN)
- 24 **BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME** AUTOMATA I (SUMERIAN)
- 25 **STEVE HACKETT** WUTHERING NIGHTS - LIVE IN BIRMINGHAM (INSIDE OUT)
- 26 **JANE WEAVER** MODERN KOSMOLOGY (FIRE)
- 27 **JETHRO TULL** SONGS FROM THE WOOD (RHINO)
- 28 **TANGERINE DREAM** QUANTUM GATE (KSCOPE)
- 29 **MARILLION** F.E.A.R. (EARMUSIC)
- 30 **JOHN MARTYN** HEAD AND HEART - THE ACOUSTIC JOHN MARTYN (ISLAND/UMC)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! PROCOL HARUM STILL THERE'LL BE MORE BOX SET



Procol Harum's *Still There'll Be More: An Anthology 1967-2017* is a remastered, limited-edition, super-deluxe eight-disc box set celebrating 50 years of the band, and we have one to give away.

This set is being released via Esoteric Recordings and comprises five CDs and three DVDs. The CDs feature 69 tracks from every Procol Harum album, along with two previously unreleased concerts: at the Hollywood Bowl on September 21, 1973 (with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and the Roger Wagner Chorale), and at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens on March 17, 1976.

The three DVDs feature over three-and-a-half hours of previously unreleased film taken from BBC TV and German TV appearances between 1967 and 1977, featuring broadcast footage and the entire Musikladen recording from October 1973.

There's also a deluxe, lavishly illustrated 68-page hardback book featuring essays by Patrick Humphries and a lengthy in-depth commentary on the performances featured in the set by respected Procol Harum authority Roland Clare. The book also includes previously unseen photographs and memorabilia from Gary Brooker's personal archive. Finally, there's a 60cm x 40cm reproduction concert poster from 1976.

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

In which month of 1967 was *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* released?

- A) April
- B) May
- C) June

Email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject 'Procol Comp'. See www.cherryred.co.uk and www.procolharum.co.uk for more information.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from May 10 to June 14. 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



A PERFECT CIRCLE

Eat The Elephant
BMG

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



MORAG TONG

The Last Knell Of Om
SELF-RELEASED

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



ZOLA JESUS

Okovi: Additions
SACRED BONES

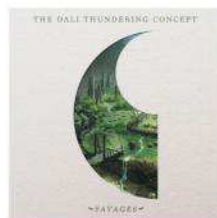
The Musician
Dustie Waring



HAPPY THE MAN

Crafty Hands
ARISTA

The Writer
Rod Whitfield

THE DALI THUNDERING
CONCEPT

Savages
APATHIA

The Reader
Guy Mitchell



GENESIS

Seconds Out
CHARISMA

The Purge: Louise Lemón exorcises her demons on her latest album.

Limelight



LOUISE LEMÓN

Swedish singer finds solace in her death gospel sounds.

“AS A FEMALE MUSICIAN, I often find that people try to step in or think they can make music better than I can. There are a lot of men in my musical genre and I’m very happy that I’ve been able to make my record completely on my own,” says Swedish singer Louise Lemón, whose ambient, self-described ‘death gospel’ is captivating listeners of all musical genres.

The record she’s referencing is her recently released debut LP *Purge*, an eight-track soulful memento of strength and femininity across a cold desert landscape. Lemón’s silky vocals narrate a metaphorical struggle in love and life on the first four tracks, followed by a sense of liberation and contentment in the final four.

“This album is about going through something dark but coming out stronger,” Lemón explains. “When you write about being sad, it becomes something you own and that makes it powerful. This album is a purge for me.”

In the music video for *Appalacherna*, Lemón murders a man with a crystal she wears around her neck, in a desert by the emblematic North American Appalachian Mountains at sunset. These references to crystals, earth and the sun are testament to Lemón’s personal affinity with the elements.

“I am very interested in spirituality and energies,” she says. “I believe that this is how we communicate the most, and my lyrics are about communicating through the heart, which links in with this aspect.”

The album was recorded in an allegedly haunted cabin on a secluded island in northern Sweden. Producer Randall Dunn, who is best known for his collaborations with Sunn O))) and Chelsea Wolfe, was brought in to broaden the spectrum of the songs, and to make them heavier.

“We have a lot of sorrow in Nordic countries because it’s always so dark outside,” Lemón notes. “This has an impact on us and gives us more time to be indoors, reflecting and creating.”

The tracks on *Purge* are deeply personal and beautifully heartfelt, while creating sundry atmospheres throughout. The song *Egyptian Darkness* has a vast, spellbinding, sultry vocal build-up to a release of crashing drums, while *Shipwreck* is an intimate, smoky club duet between Lemón’s powerfully skilled vocals and the hard-hitting piano.

“You have to live to experience things and go through the turbulent times before the calm, which is when I choose to write,” she says.

“It is important to me that what I write is relatable to other people. When you talk to someone and feel a connection, you speak truthfully and have an intense conversation, whether you’ve known this person for an hour or a lifetime. This is what I wanted to achieve with this album.” **ILD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Louise Lemón (vocals), **Anders Ludwigson** (keyboard), **Johan Kvastegård** (guitar), **Petter Nygårdh** (drums), **Don McGreevy** (bass), **Randall Dunne** (bass synth)

SOUNDS LIKE

Atmospheric Scandi-death gospel, like Lana Del Rey meeting Chelsea Wolfe in the southern desert

CURRENT RELEASE

Purge is out now via Icons Creating Evil Art

WEBSITE

www.louiselemonmusic.com



“This album is about going through something dark but coming out stronger.”

SOPHIE WINBERG TYRRELL

AWOOGA

Amplifier-approved, *Red Dwarf*-loving space rockers from Sheffield.

ALWAYS MEET YOUR heroes — that's Awooga's advice. Not only have they toured with one of their favourite bands (twice!), they've also ended up being signed to the frontman's record label.

"We're all big Amplifier fans and [drummer] Taz noticed they were touring, so I messaged Sel [Balamir, Amplifier's frontman] and said, 'Can we come on tour with you?'" reveals singer and bassist Tam Ali. "This was in 2014 when we'd just released a five-track demo, and he messaged back saying, 'I really like your sound — yeah!' We didn't know him but Sel took the time to listen to us, liked what he heard and here we are."

Serendipity is a recurrent theme in Awooga's world. It's been nine years since brothers Tam and Taran 'Taz' Ali teamed up with their childhood friend James Borrowdale to form the band. Their onomatopoeic name is from sci-fi comedy show *Red Dwarf*, and their aim is to boldly go!

"James was originally playing saxophone so it was bass, drums and sax when we started," Tam reveals. "That didn't sound too good so James picked his guitar up, plugged into his pedals and it worked. I know it sounds really cheesy but it just gelled from the first note."

"Taz is really into his jazz prog — that's how he learned to drum — and he's a big Alan White fan. We all like Yes, Rush, Tool, Frank Zappa... We're into that dirty, dark, grungy stuff as well, but with a bombastic overtone — maybe a bit of The Mars Volta to give it some edge."

The results of their shared musical passions come through on the intergalactic post-grunge grooves that grace their 2016 EP *Alpha* — a reworking of material from their early demos — and their debut studio album *Conduit*, which is out via Balamir's Rockosmos label. In keeping with their philosophy, they found producer Iago Lorenzo purely by chance.

"He's an exceptional talent and when Sel heard him, he said, 'I want him to mix my record,' so he worked on Amplifier's *Trippin' With Dr Faustus* as well," reveals

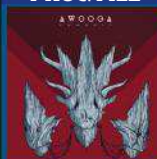
Ali. "We were in Spain for a month recording *Conduit* and most of that was spent with Iago sat over our pedal boards suggesting things about how to open up the sound and make it expansive. He had quite a bit of input. There's even a section in the song *Bandit* where we tortured a guitar and ran it over in the car. It sounds pretty monstrous!"

Although Awooga's wheels are running very smoothly, they have also had their fair share of disasters. The so-called Awooga Curse struck several times during their most recent shows with Amplifier, leading to two dates being rescheduled.

"We've literally had the wheels fall off the bus on the first day of the tour before," admits Ali, "and Amplifier had two buses break down when we last played with them, so obviously we had to get the worst weather possible as soon as we started this tour!"

Prog really hopes the universe restores the balance soon. **NRS**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Tam Ali (vocals/bass),
James Borrowdale
(guitars), **Taran**
Ali (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

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CURRENT RELEASE

Conduit is out now via Rockosmos

WEBSITE

www.awoogaband.com

"I messaged Sel Balamir and said, 'Can we come on tour with you?'"

ROSS MILLER/PRESS

To Boldly Go: Awooga have sky-high plans!



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JOANNE HARRIS

"Ten choices is just unfair, 30 would have been better!" protests the *Chocolat* author as tea, biscuits and a pre-gig prog story time commence.

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

"Music links you back to the past like nothing else; prog takes me to Barnsley in the 80s. At home, my mother was French so there was a great deal of *chansonnier*, Jacques Brel and that kind of thing. My grandfather was a big influence, he was classical through and through. I became a classically trained flautist.

I didn't have a radio or turntable, but I had a cassette player so I found things on my own.

My first boyfriend introduced me to *The Wall*. It was the only interesting thing about him, and I played it for six months. Then I met these two guys at sixth form college who were always in the hall playing the piano: a geeky, plump one [Paul Marshall] who never took his duffel coat off and who clearly wanted to be Rick Wakeman and a geeky, skinny one [Kevin Harris] who was hyperactive and drummed on everything. I married the skinny, hyperactive one, but back then we all formed a band that we're still in today [The #Storytime Band]. At first we were called The Garden Wall, after Genesis, and we got together to do an end-of-term concert. It was astonishingly audacious – trying to do half of *The Wall*, half of *The Six Wives...*, half of *Wind & Wuthering*. The bass player was our rather young and trendy Latin teacher. We were all terribly socially awkward, but we did pretty well. That was my proper induction to the world of prog; the first cassette I had was Grieg's *Peer Gynt* and a lot of prog sounds orchestral and narrative in that way to me. Suddenly I had this influx of prog into my life and I said to Paul and Kevin, 'I like this, what else have you got?'

From Floyd I got into Genesis. *Foxtrot* is the perfect Genesis album to me, every piece is strong, surprising and pure prog.

There's so much drama, musical theatre, humour, subversion and parody. We were listening to these records at the very beginning of the video age, but for a long time personalities like Bowie and Gabriel hadn't been happy being themselves so they'd assume another personality, pushing the narrative somewhere else. I later named a book, *Coastliners*, after a track, and *Supper's Ready* is on it of course. I like to hear their influence in bands such as Mastodon. My daughter inherited a great number of my older tastes and got me into her

new ones. Anoushka wasn't familiar with *The Lamb Lies Down...* so I took her to a tribute show and she said, 'Ah yes, Mastodon!'

In 1985, Kevin and I moved into a house in Barnsley and we were still trying to be a band but needed to earn money and eat. I ended up discovering everybody's record collection and the Kingdom Come album *Journey*. I loved its over-the-top exuberance. Look at Arthur Brown on the sleeve, he's painted gold, got his hair in bunches and is wearing this V-necked leotard thing. He's wonderful. He's got the most magnificent voice and he creates little word palettes like the poet Apollinaire did.

Joe's *Garage* by Frank Zappa is like the other side to Arthur Brown. Paul's friend Melvin got me into this. It's like a space opera subversion of 1984 with this slightly twisted central scrutiniser. Zappa invents language too, and he'll do things like use violin as percussion with no anxiety as to whether people will understand or accept it. It's wonderful, a mad story full of humour and characters. Zappa, Ian Anderson and Arthur Brown are the Goons of prog.

Van der Graaf Generator are extremely dense but *Still Life* is my favourite partly because of *Childlike Faith In Childhood's End*. Sometimes Peter Hammill's lyrics are skirting the edges of my tolerance, but he's a very good writer and a very good lyricist. I used to have a bass teacher who played with them and he said, 'They were really loud, the loudest band I ever played with.' They are extremely raw but there's a really lyrical quality underneath and the use of sax is very interesting, taking the role of the lead guitar, in a raunchy, howling way. His solo stuff is very confessional. Some of his best stuff is on *Over – Autumn* is the most perfectly constructed song with wild violins and a perfect lyric. We'll not mention Marillion and whether they lifted anything from it...

I'm not as drawn to instrumental bands in general but some of Tangerine Dream's *Stratosfear* is strange and evocative and beautiful, with a language of its own. The first thing I heard was *The Big Sleep In Search Of Hades*, that has the spookiest piece of solo Mellotron work. It sounds so old and wrecked and haunted. I used to listen to music with cans on and I could not listen to this at night, it was like something creeping up behind you. Part of my enjoyment of music isn't about prettiness, but pushing you and how it makes you feel.

Back to Floyd, *Animals* is a dry run for *The Wall*. I liked it because there was a simple narrative and a visual element that reminds me of a school trip to London. I was sat next to Paul as we went past Battersea Power Station and he explained what it was. *Animals* is so bleak and pure with a strong literary strand running through it. It's a more manageable concept than *The Wall* but still quite hard to get into. The albums that have stayed with me are the ones I've had to work hardest at getting. It's similar to reading a dense literary novel.

I picked up on *The Kick Inside* from a friend at the all-girls school I went to in Wakefield. Carol was extremely into Kate Bush. People pick up on different things. She liked the vocals, visuals and the sound. Paul likes the chords and the construction. I like all of it. She's very good at storytelling and theatre, and has a fabulous voice that she does strange and interesting things with, just as Ian Anderson does with his flute, beyond the range of normal techniques. I was always a bookworm and wrote lyrics even before being in a band. I like how she uses fairy tales, folklore and classic literature. This is music to be deconstructed.

Al Stewart is a perfect singer-songwriter and a phenomenal lyricist. He fits my theatre narrative and goes beyond the standard three-chord song structure. *Year Of The Cat* is what people remember commercially but it's also a story, a lovely song and worth looking at how clever the writing is. *Broadway Hotel* is my favourite. Everything paints a picture with him and he can write about *anything*, such as the female aviator of *Flying Sorcery*.

Year Of The Cat is still fresh. There's a gentle, folky element to his work that's almost easy listening but it's deceptive, and deceptive things are always worth listening to again. You'll discover how you relate to it at different times of day, and different times in your life, and compare what's happened to you with it as a soundtrack."

New book *The Testament Of Loki* is out now. Find out more at www.joanne-harris.co.uk and on Twitter at @Joannechocolat.



"Zappa, Ian Anderson and Arthur Brown are the Goons of prog."





THE RESIDENTS

Elusive, experimental, eye-associated avant-garde art collective The Residents have long captivated and confounded music fans around the globe. Their spokesperson and manager, Homer Flynn, invites us into their world...

Words: Rob Hughes

When it comes to out-there musical entities, The Residents are hard to beat. The San Francisco-based collective have spent five decades traversing the fringes of avant-pop, experimental rock and performance art, resulting in a stack of albums, film scores and multi-media projects. This conceptual approach extends to the band's image, its members guarding their anonymity by only ever appearing in masks

and costumes, their trademark combo being a giant eyeball with top hat and tails. In the midst of an extensive reissue campaign – and following on from *80 Aching Orphans*, last year's career-spanning box set – *Prog* is granted an audience with Homer Flynn...

Last year's *The Ghost Of Hope*, The Residents' most recent album, was a concept piece about real train wrecks of bygone America. Why tackle that subject?

One of The Residents in particular has always had a great love affair with trains, so there've been a lot of conversations over the years about doing something like that. They loved Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express*, but could never find the entry point into the project. Then one of them found a book, *Death By Train*, which is a collection of newspaper articles. What they loved was the beautiful, elegant language of that era. But then the events being described are so horrific. The juxtaposition of one against the other created a really interesting sense of tension.

The *Ghost...* lends itself to the visual element of The Residents. Going back to the very early 70s, did they originally plan to be filmmakers rather than musicians?

I honestly think it was both. They always felt like the music and the visuals went hand in hand, with equal value. Ultimately, I suppose the failing of The Residents – at least in terms of the filmmaking side of it – is that the technology hadn't advanced as quickly as it had done for music. For the aesthetic that stimulates The Residents, which is obviously not commercial, there was really no way to access the funding and tools necessary for make the films they wanted.



"The Residents have always been an acquired taste, they've never been a threat to the pop charts."

Did The Residents exist to keep the free-minded aesthetics of the late 60s alive?

That was a lot of their impetus and motivation, before they even started to record and do music. The Residents were big fans of the psychedelic era, which was more identifiable because of its eclectic and experimental nature. There were lots of people doing wildly different things. But as soon as someone found their formula for success, that experimentation tended to stop and was locked down. The Residents really missed that and felt like a void had been created. So they were happy to jump in there.

What role did prog music play in the band's development?

They listened to just about everything that was coming along back in the 70s and 80s. I don't think they were ever particularly into Yes or Genesis, but they certainly listened to Emerson, Lake & Palmer. And they were definitely into Peter Gabriel.

What was the central idea behind the anonymous image?

The Residents always felt that creating this blanket identity gave them a lot of freedom to work beneath it. For instance, there were so many people getting credits on album covers that they felt a lot of it was really petty. Whereas their unified identity meant that it could organically filter down in a way that was unspoken, but understood by those who were participating in it.

It also means The Residents could potentially go on forever...

That's been mentioned before and it does indeed allow for that. It just needs some young, energetic Residents to come along to join.

Mr Blue's eyeball was stolen in 2015. What happened?

It was borrowed for a museum show, first in Cincinnati, then travelling to New York, onto Australia and then the Museum Of Pop Culture in Seattle. The eyeball had been out on loan for a couple of years, then it was being shipped back to me at home. Unfortunately, I was out of town. Apparently, FedEx just dumped it on the steps outside my front door. My hope is that at least whoever got it realised what it is and it's sitting on a shelf as a trophy or something. My fear is that somebody opened it up and went, "What the fuck is this?" and threw it in a dumpster.

Was the *Ultimate Box Set's* installation in New York's Museum of Modern Art, in 2012, the pinnacle of The Residents' career?

It's right up there. I was with Don Hardy, who was filming it for the documentary, *Theory Of Obscurity: A Film About The Residents*, when the *UBS* [a refrigerator, eyeball mask, LPs, CDs, singles, EPs, DVDs, CD-ROMs, laserdisc, books, box sets, photographs, boxed toys and USB flash drive] was being placed into the sculpture room. It looked like a scientific lab. There was a huge Picasso painting, about the size of a wall, that was being restored. And lots of other very impressive art pieces, too. The fact that the *UBS* was surrounded by these things was like, "OK, The Residents are in good company."

So what's next for The Residents?

One of the things they've wanted to do for a long time is an album about an albino blues singer. His mother was white and his father was black, he was abandoned at birth and he's the ultimate outsider. The idea is that he created all these songs as demos back in the 60s. Ultimately they were lost, but The Residents found them in a garage sale.

Do you think that *Theory Of Obscurity* helped raise the band's profile somehow?

If nothing else, the feeling I have is a general attitude of acceptance for having hung in there. The Residents have always been an acquired taste, they've never been a threat to the pop charts. But I think a lot of people are appreciating what they've done and *Theory Of Obscurity* did a good job of encapsulating that. Everybody likes to get a pat on the back and The Residents are no different.

See www.residents.com for more information.



THE Great ESCAPE

It's been 24 years since **Marillion** released their unsung masterpiece *Brave*. From its intriguing inspiration to recording in a chateau and the frictions that followed, the entire band look back on their great concept album of the 1990s.

Braveheart: Dave Everley

Steve Hogarth never knew the name of 'The Girl Who Didn't Jump'. He can't even remember when he first heard about her. It was sometime in the mid-80s, back when he was a member of How We Live.

Hogarth heard about her on a radio broadcast: how police had picked up a teenage girl who was wandering, lost and confused, on the Severn Bridge between England and Wales.

The bridge has been a suicide hotspot since it was opened in 1966, a magnet for troubled souls like the nameless girl. She refused to give her name, refused to even talk. Police appealed for information on the radio and TV, which is when Hogarth heard about her. It struck a chord with him.

"I thought, 'That sounds like the first page of a mystery novel,'" he recalls. "I scribbled it down and forgot about it."

"If you liked Marillion, you didn't really own up to it. It was like something terrible had happened to you."

Ian Mosley

But he didn't, not quite. The story of *The Girl Who Didn't Jump* stayed deep in Hogarth's mind, floating just below the waves of his subconsciousness, not surfacing but not sinking either.

It was sometime in 1992 when Hogarth thought about her properly again. By then he was the singer with Marillion, the band he had joined a few years earlier. It was while Marillion were writing songs for a new album that Hogarth told his bandmates the story of *The Girl Who Didn't Jump* – a story that would become the beating heart of the record.

The album they built around it, *Brave*, would turn out to be the most pivotal of their career. It would determine their future – or whether they even had one. It finally brought them together as a band while irrevocably damaging their relationship with their long-time

label, EMI, and pushing away a whole swathe of their fan base. It ultimately set them on a tumultuous, frequently painful path that brought them to where they are today.

But if *Brave* seemed at the time like a huge gamble that backfired massively, today it stands as the great concept album of the 1990s and an unsung masterpiece. In an era when idiots ruled, it was a beacon of intelligence and depth.

The story of the girl on the Severn Bridge could be read as a metaphor for Marillion, only in reverse. The girl never jumped, but Marillion did.

"*Brave* was the point where the pieces of the jigsaw came together," says Hogarth. "We became this other band, with me in it. We became the band we are now."

It's 24 years since Marillion released *Brave*, but it remains fresh in their minds. Today, this is mainly because *The Racket Club*, their base/studio/lair on the outskirts of Aylesbury, is bustling with a team of people packing special vinyl editions of the brand new deluxe vinyl reissue of the album into large envelopes, ready to send out. Hogarth, keyboard player Mark Kelly and drummer Ian Mosley take turns to troop



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upstairs to the band's office to look back on the album. Guitarist Steve Rothery and bassist Peter Trewavas reminisce over the phone and Skype respectively – both are out of the country, the former playing a solo gig in Copenhagen, the latter working on a mystery project in Baltimore in the US. “You’ll find out about it in due course,” he says enigmatically.

Fittingly, it's here that *Brave* began to take shape a quarter of a century ago – or at least nearby, in another unit a few doors down, home of the original Racket Club. “I remember me and Steve H would go there when nobody was around and have these little night sessions,” says Kelly. “And the opening part of the album came in one of those night sessions.”

To get to the heart of the album that would change Marillion's career, you have to understand what came before. Hogarth joined in 1989, after the departure of original singer Fish. This new partnership hit the ground running with 1989's *Season's End*, the first album they made with Hogarth. It was partly an act of defiance.

“The record company were very excited about Steve and having a more commercial voice in place. They were thinking of Mike And The Mechanics and hitsville.”

Pete Trewavas

“A lot of people expected us to fail without Fish,” says Kelly. “But we were all very excited to be working together and it was all very quick. But we didn't really stop to take stock and think, ‘What sort of band do we want to be now?’”

If they didn't know themselves, their label, EMI, had a good idea. They figured that Hogarth's background in poppier acts like The Europeans and How We Live would help push this

sometimes complex band towards the musical middle ground. “If you liked Marillion, you didn't really own up to it,” says Ian Mosley, wryly. “It was like something terrible had happened to you.”

For their next album, *Holidays In Eden*, EMI hooked Marillion up with Mike And The Mechanics producer Chris Neil.

“The record company were very excited about Steve and having a more commercial voice in place,” says Pete Trewavas. “They were thinking of Mike And The Mechanics and hitsville.”

Churning out hit singles to order was, of course, easier said than done. As the rush of excitement that had fuelled *Season's End* began to wear off, the gulf between the two constituent parts of Marillion was becoming increasingly evident.

“With *Holidays In Eden*, we started it with a blank slate, then suddenly we were confronted with this problem that H liked to work quickly and wanted to write a song a day, and we were like, ‘You've got to let it mature, leave it



EM/MARILLION ARCHIVE

six months, come back to it, see if you still like it,” says Kelly.

“It was absurd,” laughs Hogarth.

The different *modus operandi* caused friction. At one point, the singer was even sent home from the residential studio while the band worked on the music. “It did create some tension,” says Kelly. “It still felt like us four and him really not quite gelling.”

Holidays In Eden didn’t quite turn Marillion into the new Mike And The Mechanics. The album reached No.7 in the UK charts, though it faded fast. It never reached the crossover audience their label hoped for, while the band’s hardcore fans were suspicious of its glossier approach.

“I suppose you could say it was a bit of a ‘Marillion-lite’ album in some respects,” says Pete Trewavas.

More than a decade into their career, Marillion had learned a valuable lesson. “There was sense that we tried doing it EMI’s way, we tried making a commercial record, and it didn’t really work,” says Steve Rothery. “So let’s just do what we love – it’ll either

sell or it won’t sell, but at least we’ll be artistically satisfied.”

Their next move would be to go in the exact opposite direction. If *Holidays In Eden* was quick, gleaming and ultimately a compromise of sorts, *Brave* was anything but.

Between *Holidays In Eden* and *Brave*, several significant things changed in Marillion’s world. Some of those things were in their control, others weren’t. One key decision they made was to fit out the original Racket Club with new equipment, using their advance for the next album.

Marillion, L-R: Steve Rothery, Ian Mosley, Pete Trewavas, Steve Hogarth, Mark Kelly.

“I was coming unhinged. I was becoming increasingly shiny and Jean Paul Gaultier-clad on the outside, and lost inside.”

Steve Hogarth

“The label were really against it,” says Kelly. “But we said, ‘We can use it for multiple albums,’ which was a really good move. It basically set us up for when we later got dropped by EMI.”

It was there that the band started writing the new album. It felt like a chance for them to properly start working together after the false start of *Holidays In Eden*. “The feeling changed, the surroundings of what we were doing became a little earthier and not so glamorous,” says Hogarth. “That might have rubbed off.”

But something else had changed – something out of their hands. Marillion had been assigned a new A&R man, a young hotshot named Nick Mander. In the band’s telling, Mander wanted them to adopt a different approach to making the album.

Hogarth reveals: “Nick Mander said, ‘I’ve promised the boys upstairs there’s not going to be any of this long, sprawling, big budget, contemplating your navel for six months stuff – we’re going to get a producer in who is much more indie and down with the kids, we’re going to make a fast, rough, raw album.’ I was up for it. But, of course, I’m the one who likes to work quickly. They were all [worriedly]: ‘Ooh...’”

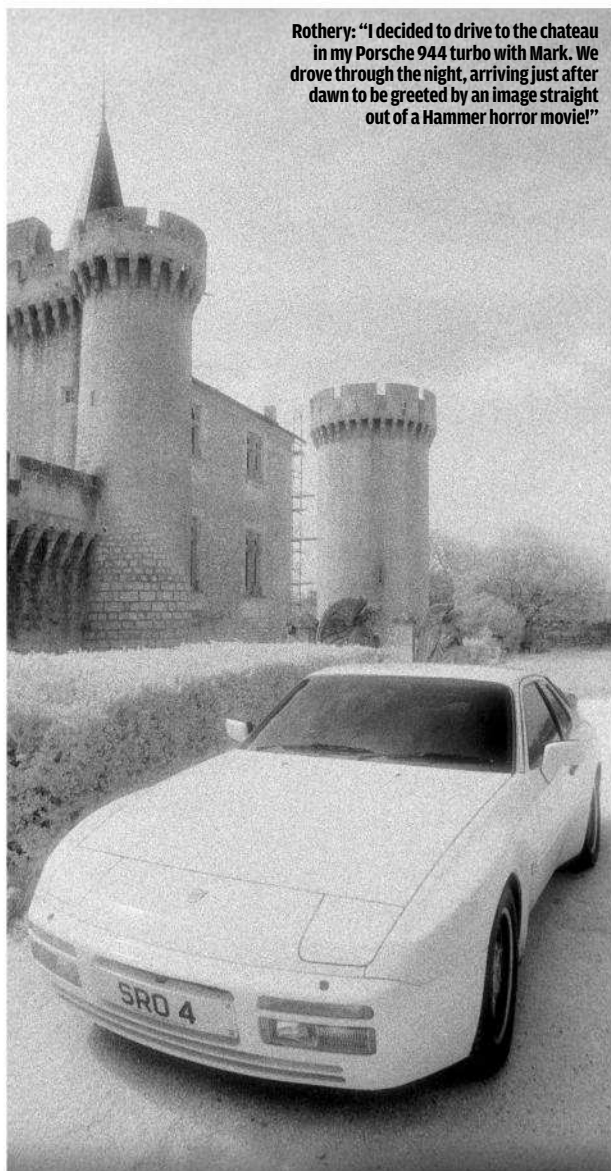
“We thought it was nuts,” says Trewavas. “We thought the poor chap was being hung out to dry. Being told to get Marillion to do something quick and snappy? We’re clearly not capable of that. We thought, ‘He’s having a laugh. Does he realise what we do and how we do it?’”

Mander’s first decision was to introduce the band to Dave Meegan, who had recently worked with fleetingly successful Manchester indie group The Milltown Brothers. He was unaware that Meegan already had a relationship with Marillion – he had been a young tape operator at Sarm East Studios in London, when they recorded *Fugazi* a decade earlier.

“It was a different band and it wasn’t,” says Meegan today. “Obviously, Steve’s a very different person to Fish, but the methodology of the band was the same.”

That methodology chimed with Meegan’s own. He learnt his trade working for Trevor Horn, and the Yes/Buggles producer’s meticulousness had rubbed off.

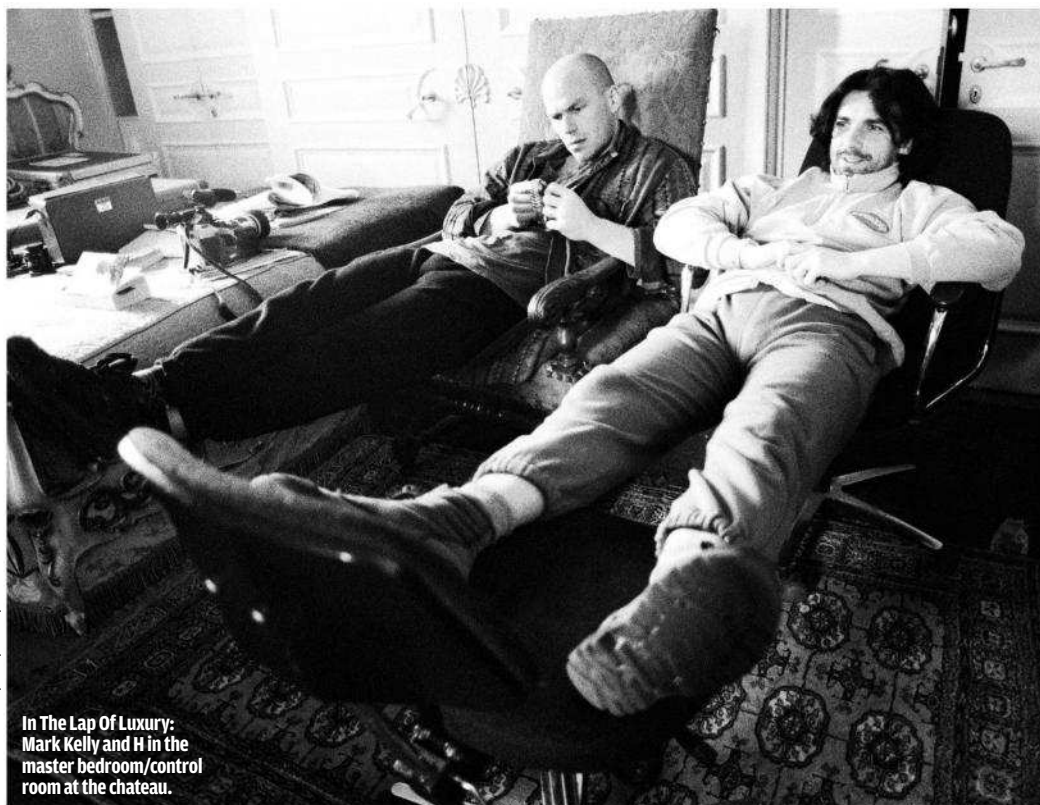
“We like to work slowly and explore all the alternatives and ponder the music and do a lot of chin-scratching and nodding of heads,” says Trewavas. “And Dave was exactly the same: ‘This is interesting, let’s see where it takes us...’ And between us, we just thought, ‘We’ll take as long as we want.’ And we did.”



Rothery: "I decided to drive to the chateau in my Porsche 944 turbo with Mark. We drove through the night, arriving just after dawn to be greeted by an image straight out of a Hammer horror movie!"



The Great Escape: Marillion recording at the chateau.



In The Lap Of Luxury: Mark Kelly and H in the master bedroom/control room at the chateau.

The third thing that happened that changed the course of *Brave*, and by extension Marillion's career, was that they were suddenly presented with the opportunity of recording in an honest-to-God chateau in the south of France. The castle, located in Marouatte in the Dordogne region, belonged to Miles Copeland, head of the band's US label IRS and brother of Police drummer Stewart Copeland.

"We liked that idea," says Hogarth. "'Yeah, let's find a house cos it'll keep the costs down. We'll get something with a vibe and go and work there.' We all thought it would make for an interesting record and an adventure."

And so, in February 1993, Marillion and their equipment found themselves en route to the south of France to start work on their "fast, rough, raw" new album.

"I drove down there with Mark through the night," recalls Rothery. "We got there just after the dawn. You see it up on the hill, and it's a Hammer horror house basically."

Meegan set up the band's equipment in the large, gothic living room, and his



MARILLION ARCHIVE

DOUBLE ENTENDRE

The story of *Brave's* double ending.

Marillion's sixth album remains the darkest of their career, and of the 1990s. But there was one unexpected comedic influence that shaped at least part of it: Monty Python.

The vinyl version of the album features a 'secret' ending. Where the original record pulled itself out of the darkness with the uplifting album closer *Made Again*, a hidden second groove featured an alternative ending with six minutes of lapping water sounds, suggesting the main character had jumped from the bridge.

"That was my idea," says Mark Kelly. "And like all good ideas, it was stolen. I'd had a copy *The Monty Python Matching Tie And Handkerchief* when I was a kid, which had a double groove - you put the needle down and you didn't know which jokes you were going to get."

The band enlisted the talents of George 'Porky' Peckham, the legendary recording engineer who was famous for etching messages into the run-out grooves of the albums he had worked on. Peckham had in fact cut the double ending on the Monty Python album.

"Basically, he had to cut it by hand," says Kelly. "He'd cut one slightly wider groove with one ending, then cut in the alternative ending in the spiral between it."

And which ending does Kelly prefer? "Oh, I do like the original ending, the one where she survives. I like what happens musically with the other ending, but it might be a bit too dark after you've sat through all this doom and gloom." **DEV**

control at the other end of the chateau, in the master bedroom. "The big four-poster bed was still in there," he says, "so I put all my stuff around it."

They weren't going into the sessions cold. They had riffs and chords for the songs that would become *The Great Escape* and *Hard As Love*, worked up back in Aylesbury. Rothery had written the intro to the album's closing track, *Made Again*, for his newborn daughter.

"*Brave* was the first album we'd actually written between the five of us," says Rothery. "It was the first time we had to knuckle down. And because it was a concept album, the rest of us found it easy to get our heads around what we were trying to do with it."

It was Hogarth who came up with the idea of making *Brave* a concept album. "I'd got a song that became *Living With The Big Lie* about what

"Because it was a concept album, the rest of us found it easy to get our heads around what we were trying to do with it."

Steve Rothery

human beings are capable of getting used to. We're hardwired to get used to anything, no matter how obscene - it'll shock us again the second time, then the third time it's just how things are," he says. "That took me back to the girl on the bridge and the radio broadcast."

Hogarth floated the suggestion past his bandmates. "And they all jumped on that as though I'd laid them out a clotted cream tea: 'We'll have some of that!'" he says.

Marillion had been here before. Their last fully fledged concept album, 1985's *Misplaced Childhood*, was their biggest hit and had rescued their career. But if the idea of a concept album had been uncool back then, it seemed positively suicidal now.

"Oh yeah," says Hogarth. "But we didn't give a fuck. We learned ages ago that not caring about those things was the way forward."

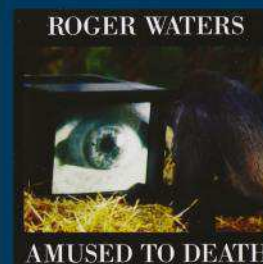
They quickly fell into an efficient work pattern: breakfast, a morning of work, break for lunch, return to work, eat, maybe have a few wines

10 GREAT CONCEPT ALBUMS OF THE 90s

We filter out the Britpop to find the decade's most ambitious prog masterworks.

If you believe the history books, the concept album was deadlier than a dodo in the 1990s. While the great beasts of prog's golden era - *Thick As A Brick*, *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* et al - were a distant memory, there were still contemporary outliers willing to hitch complex, intelligent music to rich narratives or thematic spines.

Marillion's *Brave* stands as the high-water mark of the 90s prog concept album - a key link between Pink Floyd's *The Wall* 15 years earlier and Radiohead's *OK Computer*, released just three years later. But they were far from alone in repurposing this grand musical tradition for the decade of grunge, Britpop and nu-metal, as our pick of the 10 best 1990s concept albums proves.



ROGER WATERS

Amused To Death (1992)

As Pink Floyd's major-domo, Waters was the king of the concept album - even those albums that didn't have a distinct storyline were tied together by very strong themes. But his first three solo albums all had a clearly defined focus, from *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking's* time-stamped fever dream to *Radio K.A.O.S.' 'paraplegic hacker nearly destroys the world'* storyline. *Amused To Death* was Rog's grand comment on our endless appetite for mass television entertainment, spinning it out into his usual topics of ire: war, politicians and religion.



PORCUPINE TREE

Voyage 34 (1992/1993)

Okay, so strictly speaking this is a two-part single, but as it lasts for 30 minutes, it qualifies (it was later spun out to over



and then continue working in the evening. Ian Mosley's drums were the first thing to be recorded.

"We spent quite a while getting the drum sound and experimenting," says Mosley. "Dave really did like experimenting, sometimes to the point where I thought, 'I'm not going to play this one any better.'"

"Dave started editing drums, and just carried on," says Rothery. "For days and days and days and days.

Rothery: "Dave Meegan recording, with Mark on the right, and H and Pete in the background."

We just sat around going, 'What's he doing? Is he losing the plot?'"

The days turned into weeks, and the weeks began to stretch out. By the second month, the band were starting to get antsy. They called a meeting with Meegan in the chateau's dining area.

"We said to Dave, 'Can we have a chat?'" says Hogarth. "We said, 'We're all a bit worried about how long it's taking, Dave.' And he said, 'Well,

the way I see it, we can either make a record or we can make a masterpiece. And I think this could be it. So you tell me what you want me to do.' And we all went, 'Let's make a masterpiece,' and that was the end of it."

As Meegan and the band worked, the songs began to take focus, as did the overarching concept — not so much a straightforward narrative about the girl on the bridge as a series of snapshots that showed how she got there. According to Hogarth, many of the lyrics featured thinly disguised autobiographical elements: *Living With The Big Lie*, *Brave* itself, and especially *The Hollow Man*.

"*The Hollow Man* was a piece of confession about where I was at, personally," says Hogarth. "I was coming unhinged. I was becoming increasingly shiny and Jean Paul Gaultier-clad on the outside, and lost inside. My wife used to find me fetal on the lounge floor sometimes when she came in. It was touring, trying to be the father of two small kids and not being cut out for it, or so I felt; being in love with too many people and too many things. And just trying to balance all that and deliver some kind of amazing piece of work that would revive the band's fortunes."

Not all of the songs fitted the concept. The pulsing hard rock of *Paper Lies*, included at Meegan's insistence to give the album's otherwise moody musical flow a kick, was originally

"IT WASN'T LIKE WE WEREN'T SPENDING MONEY ON THEM."

Nick Mander, Marillion's A&R man while they recorded *Brave*, answers his critics...

Nick Mander is frequently painted as the villain of the *Brave* story, at least from Marillion's point of view. But the man who worked as the band's A&R during that period has his own version of events.

"I'd been in the A&R department at EMI for quite a while, and I'd had some big hit records with bands like EMF," Mander tells *Prog*. "I was asked if I'd A&R a Marillion album. I knew they'd been through the whole trauma of Fish leaving and trying to reposition themselves as a band, but I knew nothing about them beyond that."

As a young kid, Mander had been a fan of Yes and Genesis, and he recognised what Marillion wanted to do. "When they told me they wanted to make this record

about this girl, I thought, 'This is *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, this is fantastic!' I would say they probably would never have made that record with another A&R guy."

It was Mander who brought Dave Meegan into the picture — the producer was married to his PA. "I asked Marillion if they'd be interested in having him on the record, they met him and they liked him," he says.

He laughs when reminded of the fact that he apparently said he wanted to make a cheap, fast album. "If we'd wanted to make a cheap, fast album, we'd have done it in the UK. We sent them to the fucking Dordogne. I don't remember any pressure to deliver, but maybe there was. There was a lot of toing and froing and a lot

of recording — it was a complicated record they wanted to make. We let them record in a French chateau, we let them make a movie — it wasn't like we weren't spending money on them."

Mander remembers having "a brilliant time" making *Brave*, though he concedes that the album probably did damage the band's relationship with the label.

"I think that was the beginning of the end," he says. "I think they weren't a band who suited being on EMI. They were always on the outside of the establishment, which is a great thing. They were coming to breaking point with the label, and maybe it was overdue. Look where they are now — the best thing that happened to them was that they left EMI." **DEV**



Rothery: "Me practising in the master bedroom."

"It was us putting two fingers up to the music business. That came back to bite us on the backside, but it also allowed us to chart a course of our own making."

Steve Rothery

inspired by the death of crooked newspaper tycoon Robert Maxwell and was only retrospectively crowbarred into the existing narrative. In a nod to the song's subject, who died in mysterious circumstances after falling from his yacht, it ends with an enormous splash – something the band recorded by throwing a boulder from a home-made raft inside a cave near the chateau. This level of detail was admirable, but it didn't impress the band's paymasters at EMI. Not that Marillion themselves were concerned.

"We weren't bothered by the fact that Nick Mander was starting to come unhinged by the fact we hadn't done very much," says Kelly. "As long as we didn't get the plug pulled on us, which we didn't think we would."

They spent three months in Marouatte in total – more than enough time to make a record. But Marillion and Meegan were nowhere near finished. In the summer, they decamped to Liverpool's Parr Street Studio to continue recording. Down in London, EMI were getting increasingly frantic about the length of time it was taking to make this 'rough, ready, quick' album.

Relations were becoming increasingly strained. The band say that Nick Mander blew his top when they bought a £30 coffee machine. Another time, Hogarth told the label that he needed a week off.

"I was either going to go on this family holiday or get divorced, which was perfectly reasonable on my wife's part," says Hogarth. "And it was like, 'EMI have gone nuts. They say you can't.' So I got on a train and went to London to see the head of A&R face-to-face and say, 'I know you think we're all just sitting on sun loungers, but we're working very hard and making a great record.'"

Hogarth got his holiday, but EMI refused to ease the pressure. They wanted a Marillion album, and they wanted it as soon as possible.

"Their theory was that it was still going to be finished sooner with pressure than it would have without," says Meegan. "But that sort of album, you should be feeling pressure and tension – that's what's most of it's about."

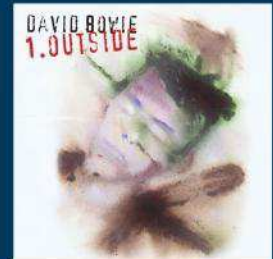
Marillion spent another four months in Parr Street on top of the three months they'd spent in Marouatte. Neither the band nor Meegan say they were concerned about the album ever spinning out of their control, but Mark Kelly admits that the occasional nagging doubt crept in.

"We got to the end of it and I remember thinking, 'What if it's shit? What if no one likes it?'" he says. "When you get that far into it, it's possible that there might come a point where you're just not willing to admit that it's terrible, because of the time you've invested in it."

"We didn't know, even when it was finished, what it was," says Hogarth. "I remember feeling very nervous

an hour with two additional remixes). Long before David Gilmour worked with The Orb, Steven Wilson was imagining what Pink Floyd would sound like with a drifting ambient makeover.

Built around a hilariously sonorous narration from a US anti-drugs LP, it's a journey through the mind of a hapless acid casualty named Brian, who begins the song by eating LSD-saturated sugar cubes and ends it meeting himself 'coming down an up staircase'. Wilson himself might have abstained from psychedelics, but it's safe to say that Brian definitely wasn't having a good trip.

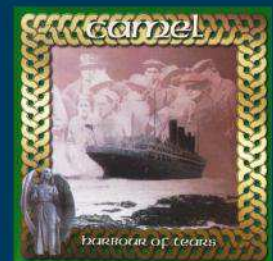


DAVID BOWIE

1. Outside (1995)

The 90s was Bowie's great overlooked period, and *1. Outside* was his great underappreciated album. Not only did the singer reunite with Brian Eno and Tony Visconti, the dream team he had worked with on his fabled late-70s Berlin trilogy, but it found him serving up his first full concept album – or, in Bowie-speak, "non-linear Gothic Drama Hyper-cycle".

Set in a dystopian future where murder has become a literal art form, it centres around enigmatic investigator Nathan Adler as he investigates the death of a baby. Lyrically opaque and deliberately disjointed, discordant and jazzy, the result comes across like an even gloomier, more opiated *Blade Runner* – and it's not a huge leap from this to his final album, *Blackstar*, 19 years later.



CAMEL

Harbour Of Tears (1996)

Camel are such masters of the concept album that they even managed to pull off one, *The Snow Goose*, that didn't have any lyrics. But *Harbour Of Tears* was a different beast entirely. Its *Far And Away*-style concept was inspired by the real-life tale of vocalist/guitarist Andy Latimer's grandmother and her family leaving Ireland. The harbour of the title refers to Cobh Harbour in County Cork, a port from which thousands of émigrés departed during the 1800s and 1900s. It's this personal touch, together with its evocative Celtic flourishes, that lends *Harbour Of Tears* a genuine emotional undercurrent.



listening to the mixes. Being excited but at the same time thinking, "This sort of sounds like *Quadrophonia* or something. I don't know what people are going to make of it."

There were other storm clouds gathering on the horizon. EMI were distinctly unimpressed by the length of time it had taken Marillion to make *Brave*. The "fast, rough, raw" album had come several months late, and certainly not cheaply.

"By the time we got to the end of that seven months, the writing was on the wall regarding our relationship with the label," says Rothery. "We'd made a fantastic record and we had to hope that it was going to be successful enough to justify this huge expense and the damaging of our relationship with the label."

Still, EMI weren't so pissed off that they didn't plan a big release party for the album at the London Planetarium. The idea was to invite assorted journalists and radio executives along without telling them who it was they were listening to.

"That was a big fuck up by EMI," says Kelly. "They basically tried to make people believe it was a new Pink Floyd album, which was a huge mistake — they thought if they did

that then more people would come along to the playback. But of course people came along and went, 'What the fuck's this? This isn't Pink Floyd!'"

For a group who had long been critical whipping boys, *Brave* was surprisingly well received. Q magazine praised the album, calling it "dark and impenetrable". Hogarth beams at the description. "I liked that. That's a compliment."

"Being told to get Marillion to do something quick and snappy? We're clearly not capable of that."

Pete Trewavas

But "dark and impenetrable" doesn't traditionally equate to commercial gold. *Brave* scraped into the UK Top 10 by the skin of its teeth — their lowest-charting album to date. The first single, *The Hollow Man*, reached No.30. The follow-up, the snappy *Alone Again In The Lap Of Luxury*, didn't even make the Top 50.

In fairness, Marillion's timing was lousy. *Brave* was released just as

BRAVE - THE MOVIE

How Marillion as the Cecil B. DeMilles of prog didn't quite work...

If spending several months recording an album in a French chateau wasn't grand enough, Marillion decided to push the boat out even further by making a full-length movie to accompany *Brave*.

"We'd made three videos for the singles from *Holidays In Eden*, all of which cost 30 or 40 grand each," says Mark Kelly. "We thought, 'Why don't we just take that money to make a movie?' We had a story we thought would be good to tell. We'd all seen *The Wall*, so we knew there were examples of good rock movies out there."

Armed with around £120,000 — "Not a lot, really," says Kelly — the band began scouting for potential directors. They sounded out a few, but decided to go with cult filmmaker Richard Stanley.

The South African-born Stanley had made his name directing videos for the likes of Public Image Ltd and flour-encrusted goths Fields Of The Nephilim. But it was his two full-length films, the 1990 sci-fi movie *Hardware* and 1992 horror *Dust Devil*, that impressed Marillion.

"He had a dark streak that suited the subject matter of *Brave*," says Peter Trewavas.

Kelly describes Stanley as "unusual — he used to go around

saying things like 'hot diggity dog'. Actually, he was a bit fucking weird."

The band remained hands-off during the filming process. "He had a plan in his head and we knew bits of it, and other bits we didn't," says Trewavas. "I think he would tell us what we thought



Josie Ayers in Richard Stanley's film based on *Brave*.

we needed to know to get the job done. It was pretty similar to how we were treating the record company at the time, actually," he adds with a laugh.

The film starred actress Josie Ayers as the girl on the bridge.

Following the broad arc of the album, it told her stories as a series of flashbacks, related as part of a psychiatry session. Marillion appeared as themselves in the film. But the band's plan to use the movie as a lavish promotional tool for the album was scuppered when it got held up by the censors at the British Board Of Film Classification.

"There was a lot of stuff about children being influenced by films at the time, and because it was a music video, they were particularly strict," says Kelly. "They weren't even going to give it a certificate to start with — they were just going to shitcan the whole thing and not allow us to release it. In the end, they removed quite a few scenes."

The band have mixed feelings about it today. "A lot of it works really well, and there's some very interesting and disturbing imagery," says Steve Rothery. "But ultimately it was never going to have the full cinematic appeal for that budget."

"It wasn't a very good film to be honest," says Kelly. "I'm not blaming Richard Stanley, because the budget he had to work with was minuscule. It could have worked really well with him making that movie. It just didn't." **DEV**



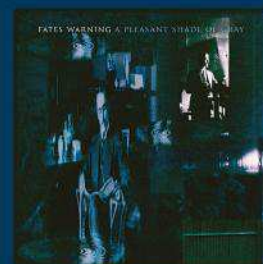
RADIOHEAD OK Computer (1997)

The big daddy of 90s concept albums, at least sales wise, Radiohead's third record was a landmark treatise on modern culture and technological alienation that showed them as heirs to the great conceptualists of the 1970s. The grandiose *Paranoid Android* was easily the proggiest No.1 single of the decade, if not ever, and it formed part of a twisting, floating, fractured work of art that summed up the pressure and pain of life on the edge of the 21st century. Of course, Radiohead have never cited Marillion's *Brave* as a direct influence, though the two bands shared record label offices when the latter came out. We're just saying...



MANSUN Attack Of The Grey Lantern (1997)

Chester's Mansun were the missing link between Syd Barrett and Pulp, a pop band with maverick ambition. Their debut album was actually only half a concept album — mainman Paul Draper had started writing a story based around a fake superhero called The Grey Lantern before getting bored and abandoning the idea. But we'll still take half an album of gloriously batty, brilliantly pretentious prog-pop any day of the week.



FATES WARNING A Pleasant Shade Of Grey (1997)

Although they predated Dream Theater by a good few years, Connecticut's Fates Warning have never received their dues for forging the prog metal sound. Guitarist and mastermind Jim Matheos ploughed on regardless, and in 1997 served up this conceptual classic. Dark and intense, *APSOG* is one 54-minute song, broken up into 12 untitled parts. And while the concept — broadly, of a man drifting in and out of sleep, subconsciously looking back over parts of his life — is enigmatic and oblique, it perfectly suits the music that frames it.

the nascent Britpop movement began to take shape. A 70-minute concept album about a suicidal girl was always going to struggle next to Blur or Oasis. But it was more than just the nation's pop kids that Marillion failed to entice. The album left sections of their own fan base cold.

"We knew it wasn't immediate," says Trewavas. "We just hoped that people would give it the time of day and allow it to grow on them."

If *Brave* started to separate out the fair-weather fans from the diehards, then the tour finished the job. The band elected to play the album from start to finish, with Hogarth acting out characters from the songs in time-honoured Peter Gabriel fashion.

— or even retain it. *Brave* sold around 300,000 copies — good numbers today, but less than half of what *Seasons End* had sold five years earlier. "It was certainly a step down from where we'd been before, sales-wise," says Kelly.

Brave's protracted gestation, coupled with its apparent lack of success, was noticed at the top at their label. EMI's European boss, Jean-François Cecillon, called a meeting with the band.

"He said, 'I need you to give me a single on your next album or that's it,'" says Kelly. "His exact words: 'I want *Cry Me A River*.' We came up with *Beautiful*, which was the closest thing to a single we had. But I'm not sure we were the right band at that time to be having hit singles."

"The atmosphere in the concert halls was like, 'Fucking hell, what's all this?'"

Ian Mosley

At one point, this involved tying his hair into pigtails and putting on lipstick to play the girl herself. It was a deliberate challenge: are you with us on this journey?

"The atmosphere in the concert halls was, like, 'Fucking hell, what's all this?'" says Mosley. "When we came on and did the encore and played songs that weren't from *Brave*, it was a completely different show. You could physically see people sigh with relief."

Neither the tour nor the album did much to build Marillion's audience

They may not have been able to write hits to order, but Marillion conceded that they should at least think about working faster on their next album. That record, *Afraid Of Sunlight*, came out just over a year after *Brave*. But it was too little, too late. As they suspected, the writing was already on the wall. The label dropped them soon after.

"We just went back to being the band the media hated," says Kelly. "As far as the mainstream music press was concerned, we didn't deserve to live. It was business as usual."



GEORGE CHIN/CONTRIX

1994's 'challenging' stage show divided Marillion's fans.

What happened next to Marillion is a story in itself: how a disastrous deal with independent label Castle saw their stock plummet to rock bottom, how they hit on the idea of crowdfunding a US tour and the subsequent *Anoraknophobia* album, how they created a brand new business model that didn't just secure their survival but sustains them — and so many other bands — to this day.

But *Brave* has its own story too. This "dark and impenetrable" record proved a tough sell at the time, but it has taken on an afterlife of its own. They have revisited it twice during the past 20 years, playing it in full in 2003 and again in 2011.

"We lost a lot of fans on *Brave*," says Hogarth. "It wasn't well received. Everybody now looks back and goes, 'What a great album.' But nobody was saying that the day it came out."

"I think it needed at least a year or two after its release before people saw it for what it was," says Rothery. "It's definitely us going, 'This is what we do, this is who we are — we hope you like it, but this is the course we're committed to.'"

One of the reasons for its longevity is musical: its careful pacing, its shifting moods, the attention to detail that saw them recording the sound of rocks splashing into water in caves in the south of France. But it also represents something else: this was the ultimate underdog record by the ultimate underdog band.

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

Carl Glover lets us in on a few secrets about the *Brave* album cover...

The identity of the silent girl found on the Severn Bridge who inspired *Brave* isn't the only mystery surrounding the album. Its cover features an equally enigmatic portrait of a woman whom neither the band nor the man who designed it know.

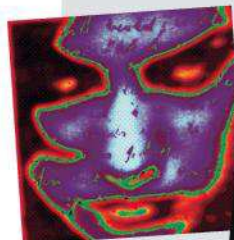
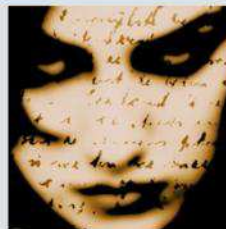
Carl Glover was the designer who created *Brave's* striking artwork. He was working for design studio BSS at the time, and had been collaborating with Marillion since *Seasons End*, the first album they made with Steve Hogarth. "Obviously [original sleeve artist] Mark Wilkinson had gone with Fish, and we'd moved away from the previous look, which was very strong," Glover tells *Prog*. "Using photography was the big thing."

The band gave Glover an outline of the story, and he remembers meeting up with Steve Hogarth "for a few shandies, so I knew the visual space it inhabited pretty well — alienation is a recurring theme in music".

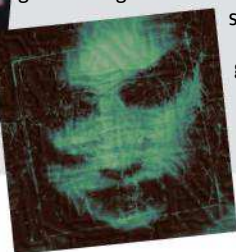
The photograph itself came from an unlikely source. "In those days, photographers used to send us what were effectively postcards as a showcase for their work," he says. "This one just stood out. My boss liked it, and he came up with this idea of having that with a load of writing on it across the face. I can't remember how we came across the writing but it turned out to be from *The Diary Of Anne Frank*, which was a pure accident."

Glover remembers the name of the photographer — Michael Johnson — but has no idea what happened to him. "He seems to have disappeared without trace. I've got a feeling that he was trying out a new career and decided to do something different instead."

And did he ever find out the identity of the girl in the photo? "No, I never knew at all. There's someone out there on a Marillion cover and doesn't even know it. But that happens more than you think." **DEV**



A *Brave* Face: three of the album cover outtakes.



CARL GLOVER



Glam Rock: Steve Hogarth gets into character in 1994.

"People that listened to us are willing to invest the time," says Mark Kelly. "They're willing to go, 'Oh, I didn't really get that, I'm going to give it another listen,' rather than 'I didn't really get that, I'm going to move onto the next thing.'"

If *Brave*'s impact seemed negligible at the time, today it feels like a landmark. It proved that there was still space for intelligent, intricate conceptual music in the charts. You can trace a line from it to Radiohead's *OK Computer* (released just three years later) and on to Anathema's masterful *The Optimist*, which unconsciously echoes *Brave*'s psychogeographical journey to Marillion's own *F.E.A.R.*, an album which shares so many characteristics with *Brave*.

"We aren't here to play nice shiny music that you can hear anywhere," says Pete Trewavas. "We're here to do something different and shake a few trees and make people think. Hopefully we did and hopefully we still do."

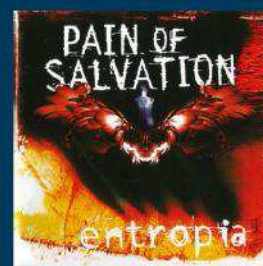
And what about the girl on the bridge who inspired the album, The Girl Who Didn't Jump? Steve Hogarth remembers reading that her parents

came and collected her and took her back to the West Country. "I think they all lived reasonably happily ever after," he says, but he doesn't know anything beyond that. He suspects they might know about the album, though they've never been in touch. Why would they? *Brave* was a heavily fictionalised version of a turbulent event, and not the sort of thing they'd want to stir memories of.

But Marillion did jump, and it would eventually be the remaking of them. Their dark masterpiece started off a chain of events – some of them painful, some of them not – that culminated in their eventual rebirth.

"It was us putting two fingers up to the music business," says Steve Rothery. "That came back to bite us on the backside, but it also allowed us to chart a course of our own making. It was responsible for our subsequent path and the whole crowdfunding thing and the reinvention of how a band can work. And that's why we're still here." 🙄

The Brave deluxe reissue is available now on Rhino Records. See www.marillion.com for more information.



PAIN OF SALVATION

Entropia (1997)

The Swedish prog metal band came out of the gate flying with this debut, a concept album based around the tale of a war-torn family in the fictional world of Entropia (a hybrid of 'entropy' and 'utopia'), taking in such intense themes as parental responsibility, governmental conspiracy and how humans react in extreme situations. The band's Daniel Gildenlöw admitted that it took serious concentration to follow: "It's a very complex concept that's pretty hard to grasp," he said. Still, hats off for ambition.



DREAM THEATER

Metropolis Pt. 2:

Scenes From A Memory (1999)

The most remarkable thing about Dream Theater's fifth record is that it took them so long to make a concept album. But when they finally did, they immersed themselves in it completely. Conceived as an elongated sequel to their 1992 track *Metropolis - Part 1: The Miracle And The Sleeper*, this follow-up charted the journey of the main protagonist, a man named Nicholas, as he underwent regression therapy. What followed was a cycle of murder, addiction, obsession and memory. If any album was a 90s version of *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* in terms of scope, then *Metropolis Pt. 2* was it.



OPETH

Still Life (1999)

Mikael Åkerfeldt had dabbled in concept albums before *Still Life*, when Opeth were still widely perceived as 'only' a metal band, albeit one given to long, intricate musical passages. But the Swedes' fourth album found him taking on more than just the musical trappings of prog – it was an anti-Christian tract that told the story of the main character's return to his hometown after being banished for his lack of faith, taking in love, murder and revenge. Spoiler alert: it doesn't end happily.



Inside The PRO



As **A Perfect Circle** make their unexpected return with *Eat The Elephant*, **Maynard James Keenan** and **Billy Howerdel** talk to *Prog* about the creative importance of rearranging closets, proficiency versus creativity, and always looking forward.

Words: David West

Things no one was expecting in 2018: that the President of the USA had a fling with a porn star and society acts like that's normal; that Facebook gave everyone's data to a dodgy lobbying group; that A Perfect Circle have made a new album.

The last time Billy Howerdel and Maynard James Keenan's band released new music was in 2004, but after a 14-year gap, they've leapt back into the fray with their long-awaited fourth album *Eat The Elephant*. Can it be a coincidence that after eight years of Barack Obama in the White House, now that there's the human Cheeto in charge, suddenly APC have released new music?

"Friction is where the art happens really, in anything," says Keenan. "The violin is the perfect metaphor for that friction. It's wood bent in impossible angles and directions and the strings are tied tight and it's the friction of the bow on the strings – everything about it is friction. The resonance that comes off it is the release and the art, but there is a lot of tension there. So yeah. I've been making music even with a Democrat in office, but about different things I guess. Nothing like a good Nazi to get you going."

Howerdel's explanation for the emergence of the album is a little more

"I just think we do what we do and I guess we try to categorise it after. I think if you try to duplicate your steps to maintain what you were then you're stuck with what you were."

Maynard James Keenan

prosaic. "It comes down to Maynard's schedule, with him being busy with so many other things," says the guitarist. "The first thought was to do a record, but then, hey, let's go on tour and exercise the old songs, remember how to play and get in that place."

"I'm really glad we did that because we started making the record before we went on tour and I felt... stuck isn't the right word, but I didn't have that

energy of being on the road. The last time we toured was 2013, we did South America and Australia, and we played just two shows for Maynard's birthday the following year, so it's good to remember the energy of being on stage to translate that into the record."

Eat The Elephant sees the band spreading their musical wings, from quiet, melancholic piano passages in *Disillusioned* to the barbed vitriol of *The Doomed*, and the Devo-style art rock of *Hourglass*. For much of the album's creation, Howerdel and Keenan worked and wrote separately, sending files and ideas back and forth between them. One creative burst saw them write three songs in the space of two days.

"There's definitely a mindset you have to get into where you've opened up all the channels," says Keenan. "Nothing is ever going to be perfect, but you definitely have to be in the mindset for those things to happen. When you're on that roll, it's best to

keep on that roll. For me, there are a lot of moments of downtime where I've rearranged easily seven closets and a garage because you're on that roll but you have to walk away from it, turn your brain off, get some distance."

For Howerdel, the creative spark is something that can catch light at any time, regardless of whether or not it's convenient. "I hope it doesn't go away," he says about the unpredictability of inspiration, "but I'd like it if I didn't get my best ideas when I'm not late to be somewhere, because it's always the way it happens."

He singles out the song *Judith*, from the band's debut album *Mer De Noms* in 2000, as an example.

"I got out of the shower in a towel, sat down at the computer because I heard the melody in my head. I put it down on a keyboard and then just got deeper and deeper. That was at six o'clock at night. The next thing you know, it's three in the morning,

**A Perfect Circle,
L-R: Matt McJunkins,
Jeff Friedl, Maynard
James Keenan, Billy
Howerdel, James Iha.**

I missed the birthday party I was going to but the song was done. I felt really bad because I missed my friend's birthday but that's just the way it goes. I need some kind of pressure I guess."

Howerdel grew up idolising Ozzy Osbourne's guitarist Randy Rhoads, yet *Eat The Elephant* sees the group dialling down their metal influences and widening their canvas. For Keenan, there's more room in the music now.

"Billy tends to fill in gaps, he fills in conversations where there are no words and he does the same with music," says Keenan. "So this time I was very conscious of, 'Let's turn that off, let's leave some space here.' We forget that there's a closure that happens with riffs. You don't have to play the riff through the whole song. You can play it here and then not play it here, but your ear still hears it in that space and that's hard for guitar players to wrap their heads around."

"Maybe a little less metal — there's probably less riffage going on," says Howerdel, who says he's never knowingly heard anything by King Crimson but admired The Cure and Echo And The Bunnymen as a young musician. "I feel like there's more density in parts on this record, but I don't know. I'd have to sit and listen."

In a departure from previous APC albums, this time Howerdel did most of his writing on the piano. While he says he's not a very accomplished pianist, he believes his limited knowledge of the formalities of the instrument to be a benefit, rather than a hindrance.

"It's nice to fumble in the dark a little bit," he says. "I'm not a very good piano player, but I don't want to be. I took like six lessons three years ago and it was with our old bass player Paz's [Lenchantin] mother — she's an amazing pianist. I just bought a piano from her father. I told her, 'I don't want to learn how to read music, I don't want to learn about chords and structure, but I really want to get better. What can you do?'"

"It was so out of her element, so she just gave me some exercises for coordination and it really helped get me to be a solid B-minus player now. I can play but I have to really struggle at it, and I think that's what songwriting and creation is. The people I know who are super proficient aren't the most creative."

As time was of the essence, with the band setting themselves deadlines in order to keep on schedule, Keenan worked on vocals with Mat Mitchell, his bandmate



from Puscifer, either in their North Hollywood studio or at Keenan's home in Arizona, while Howerdel and producer Dave Sardy recorded the music in studios around LA.

"Initially it was just me going, 'Okay, I hear this thing you've got going on, but there's so much going on. Turn a bunch of shit off. Give me the piano part or the guitar part and the drums. Strip it down,'" says Keenan about their writing process. "Then I'll start to hear things in a better way. 'Okay, follow that path. Come up with something with Dave, I'll put something on it and you'll hear where

"I worked for Bowie in '96. He was reading a book, he puts it down and says, 'I believe in the future, our records will just be advertisements for our live show.' And then went back to it."

Billy Howerdel

I'm going with it.' Rather than talk about it sitting in a room, waiting for him to do his thing, then he's waiting for me to do my thing, having those two studios going at the same time was great because we were able to be like, 'Do your thing,' 'I'm inspired,' 'Hey, thanks, that was awesome,' and then he hears what I did. We played tag team on tracks."

Despite the prevalence of streaming, Howerdel still believes in the value of creating an album's worth of music. "I'm just a dinosaur," he says, "so I like the form of an album, and for whatever superstitious reason, that's 12 songs. The hope is that people will take it in as a body of work and give it that time. It's like being mindful of what you're eating. If you slow down, chew slowly, it'll taste better. If you're like, 'I've got to eat and get out the door,' then you might miss the point of what delicious food is. Music is the same way."

The guitarist remembers an incident where David Bowie displayed an almost eerie prescience with regards to the future of the music business.

"I worked for Bowie in '96," says Howerdel. "One day he turns to us, Reeves [Gabrels], Coco [Schwab] and I, he was reading a book, he puts it down and says, 'I believe in the future, our records will just be advertisements for our live



The Elephant Man:
Maynard James
Keenan on stage.

show.' And then went back to it. This was '96, so there's barely an internet, MP3 wasn't a thing yet, and it was so spooky how true that has become. It's your calling card for your live show, but more so, it sells people the culture of your product. At the end of the day, you're selling something so you can keep doing what you're doing."

The Doomed is one of the album's most provocative songs as Keenan sings, 'Fuck the doomed, you're on your own,' in a very pointed critique of the state of American society.

"It seems like that's everyone's attitude, isn't it?" says Keenan. "Growing up in a Baptist indoctrination in Ohio, I was pretty sure that guy nailed to that stick up at the front of the room had a lot of better things to say about what's going on in the world than 'Fuck 'em'. I don't really think that was his message, but that seems to be the prevailing attitude."

With any music, but perhaps particularly with heavy, intense music, there's no guarantee that an artist's message will be interpreted in the manner it was intended. Once a piece of music or art has been sent out into the world, the creator surrenders their control of it. The singer says he's experienced that sense of discovering a band, only to lose the feeling of ownership as they became popular.

"In Grand Rapids, going to art school, I was a big fan of REM back in the day, the first EP and the first couple of albums," he says. "Then out of nowhere in Grand Rapids, at one of the arenas, all of a sudden there are all these frat kids all doing this weird dance, all in lines, at the back watching REM. What the fuck happened? These guys are shoegazer weirdos like Camper Van Beethoven, then there's all these IZOD sweater-wearing white people. Get the fuck out of here, you're ruining my band. Then it was gone, it was no longer ours."

The only response is to become weirder, to keep out what Keenan dubs the knuckleheads. "Then you start Puscifer, outrun them," says the singer. "Throw wrestlers at them. 'What the fuck is he doing?' Exactly, get out."

Asked if he feels like part of the progressive rock scene with A Perfect Circle, Keenan replies, "I just think we do what we do and I guess we try to categorise it after. I think if you try to duplicate your steps to maintain what you were then you're stuck with what you were. Being where you are and looking forward is better, but there are nods back to what you did just because you were doing it. I suppose that's relevant. I try to look forward as much as possible." 🐘

Eat The Elephant is out now on BMG.
See www.aperfectcircle.com for details.

Tuck In: A Perfect
Circle's new album,
Eat The Elephant.



A full-page photograph of Adam Wakeman, a man with long, wavy brown hair and a beard, smiling and posing in a stone archway. He is wearing a dark brown leather motorcycle jacket over a red and black plaid shirt, dark jeans, and black sneakers with white laces. His hands are resting on the stone arch, and his legs are spread apart in a dynamic pose. The background is a light-colored wall with a stone archway.

The Prog Couple, L-R:
Adam Wakeman and
Damian Wilson.

As **Damian Wilson** and **Adam Wakeman** finish up a tour to promote their new album *The Sun Will Dance In Its Twilight Hour*, the pair meet *Prog* to discuss their long-standing friendship, balancing work commitments and just what's going on with Headspace.

The Likely Lads

Prog's Derek Batey: Dave Ling
Images: Will Ireland

Adam Wakeman and Damian Wilson greet *Prog* warmly at the doorway to this afternoon's interview location and, later on, the scene of a concert.

"Come on in," Wakeman invites us, "and take a pew."

"Yeah, quite literally — take a pew," Wilson adds with a laugh.

Though better known as bandmates in Headspace, the pair have been out on the road promoting their second collaborative release, *The Sun Will Dance In Its Twilight Hour*, with a lengthy run of dates in venues of all shapes, sizes and types, including arts centres, town halls and small theatres. Today they're at St Pancras Old Church, a tiny but beautiful religious space mentioned by Dickens in his 1859 novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Some claim that this place of worship dates back to the year AD 314. It's no usual venue for a rock show, but then again, this is no usual rock show.

At the tour's stop in Milton Keynes this fair

organ hailed its heady mix of music, banter and audience participation as "the most fun you can have with your clothes on". More of the same is offered here in London, in spite of the setting.

"I've never had a brassiere thrown at me during a concert in a church," Wilson marvels at one point, before roars of encouragement to don said garment from the congregation — and also from Wakeman — are rewarded.

Having first met during the early 1990s, Wakeman and Wilson became such fast friends that the concept of a travelling two-man show was developed so they might spend more time in each other's company.

"That's how it started, but nowadays we don't get on at all well,"

Wilson deadpans.

"Both of us grit our teeth to make it through a tour."

He's not fooling anybody. In fact, having already trialled the arrangement

so successfully for their shared 2016 album *Weir Keeper's Tale*, this time the arc was spread to include new towns and cities.

"Even the ones in places like Washington [in the north-east], which we did mainly because they were on the way to Scotland, were a handful of people away from selling out," Wakeman enthuses.

"Those gigs summon such a sense of community — pretty much the entire town comes along," Wilson agrees. "And they seem to enjoy it more than those that know what to expect."

The whole joy of these shows is that *nobody* really has an inkling of what might happen. This evening's setlist is based largely upon Wilson's solo repertoire and some Wilson-Wakeman originals, plus Wakeman's version of *Tapestries* (the title cut of an album recorded with his dad Rick). There's also a jazz rock piano take on Black Sabbath's *Iron Man* (Wakeman was that band's live keyboardist). The setlist bears little correlation to the one at the start of the tour.

"Early on somebody requested *Bring Him Home*, a song I used to sing in *Les Misérables*, which has stuck around, just like our version of *The Trooper* by Iron Maiden," Wilson explains. "There aren't too many concerts that feature show tunes alongside metal classics. It just doesn't happen anywhere else."

"We mix things up so much that some nights we come offstage and realise that we've played more of other people's songs than our own," Wakeman grins, "but that doesn't bother us."

Without wishing to sound cheesy, Wilson and Wakeman are all about spirit ("And there's plenty of spirit in this place," Wilson grins). The pair write about love, honour, integrity, friendship and forgiveness — the important things in life.

Channelled through Wilson's spectacular voice and the music's stripped-down instrumentation, the experience feels very special. "It really isn't

**"ADAM'S WIFE
COTTONED ON THAT
WE WOULD WORK FOR
MAYBE 20 MINUTES
AND THEN CLIMB
OVER THE WALL TO
GO TO THE PUB."**

Damian Wilson

a contrived thing," Wilson claims. "On one of the first days we got together for *Weir Keeper's Tale*, we wrote maybe four song ideas in an afternoon. And then we went to the pub."

The pair's productivity levels were hardly aided by the fact that Wakeman resided in a house with a studio at the end of its garden.

"Until Adam's wife cottoned on that we would work there for maybe 20 minutes and then climb over the wall to go to the pub," Wilson guffaws.

"It all went wrong when we bought the pub with my mother-in-law, who became its landlady," relates Wakeman. "Often she would grass us up."

We're sensing a bit of a theme here, so let's get serious: this is all well and good, but why not simply get on with making a new *Headspace* album?

"Because there would be other people involved," Wilson fires back.

"That's not to say it won't happen, but it requires much more planning," Wakeman elaborates anxiously. "At

"THAT THIRD HEADSPACE ALBUM IS PART OF A TRILOGY, SO IT'S DEFINITELY COMING."

Damian Wilson

the time we made our album, the other guys weren't available. It's as simple as that. It's also important that we don't just bash something out; it must be done properly because it's important."

"That third *Headspace* album is part of a trilogy, so it's definitely coming," Wilson stresses.

Okay, given the pair's long list of commitments — Wakeman will be appearing on Ozzy's solo tour and although Wilson is no longer with Threshold and has "stepped back for a while" from Maiden uniteD, he still enjoys a thriving solo career — would it not make better sense to focus upon a single, meaningful project?

"The problem with that is that due to my personal circumstances I'd have to choose the one that makes the most money," Wakeman admits candidly. "I have a young family. But if I was 20 years old, I'd be in the back of a van with Damo and the rest of the *Headspace* guys tomorrow."

"I live a much more simple life, and I don't have those overheads," says Wilson, who turns 50 in a few years. "Also, as a singer, I'm very aware that my voice will only last so long. Because of that, I only want to use it on things

that please me and that I consider genuine and great."

And finally, *The Sun Will Dance...* might be thought-provoking and slightly unusual, but can what Wilson & Wakeman do really be considered prog? "Oh, it's prog through and through!" Wilson responds delightedly. "In our hearts we are very, very prog."

"By its very nature, prog rock is all about trying to push the boundaries of what is and isn't acceptable," Wakeman concludes. "And the last thing that we are is acceptable." 🎧

The Sun Will Dance In Its Twilight Hour is out now on Blacklake. See www.damian-wilson.net and www.adamwakeman.co.uk.

WAKEMAN & WILSON - MR & MR

Prog rock's happy couple put their relationship to the test...



Kindred Spirits: Wilson and Wakeman at St Pancras Old Church.

Adam Wakeman and Damian

Wilson insist that throughout their decades of friendship, they have never had a single argument. "It probably sounds inappropriate but we've become a bit like a weird married couple," Wakeman admits.

So with that thought in mind, there's only one thing to do: let's put their relationship to the ultimate test...

WHO IS THE MOST CREATIVE?

Wakeman: "To ask a question like that is inciting violence."

Wilson: "The truth is that we have very different kinds of creativity, and they complement one another. That's why this thing works so well."

WHO IS THE MOST HUMBLE?

Wilson: "That would have to be Adam."

Wakeman: "But by saying that, you're implying that it's you."

Wilson: "Then you must be right."

WHO IS THE BRAINIEST?

Wakeman: "I'd say it's Damian."

Wilson: "No, I'm an idiot."

Wakeman: "Actually, he's very well read. His brain is better than mine."

WHO IS THE BIGGEST PISSHEAD?

Wakeman: "There's no competition there."

Wilson: "That would have to be me. No, I'm kidding. I only drink on my days off."

Wakeman: "And for Damian, every day's a day off."

WHO IS THE LAZIEST?

Wilson: "He'll say it's me, and that's untrue."

Wakeman: "On this current tour, Damian slept overnight for 12 hours and then did so again during the five-hour drive to Kinross [in Scotland]. When we arrived he said he was going for a lie down."

Wilson: "I'm like a small child. When I don't get enough sleep, I become a brat."

WHO IS THE MOST PHYSICALLY FIT?

[Cue hysterical laughter]

Wilson: "Since I was a very young boy I've always been a runner. This guy here used to be fat."

Wakeman: "Until I had a heart attack..."

Wilson: "And now he can outrun me. He's like the Bionic Man. His pacemaker keeps him going."

WHO HAS THE BEST RECORD COLLECTION?

Wilson: "Mine got destroyed in a fire. It was my fault because I burned my parents' house down."

Wakeman: "I've got a great collection but it's all boxed up. Everything is on my computer."

WHO HAS HAD THE MOST SUCCESS WITH WOMEN?

[Much laughter ensues]

Wakeman: "I've had the most success with one woman in particular. We've been married for 18 years."

Wilson: "And, frankly, that's all you need."

WHO IS THE BEST LIAR?

Wakeman: "Damian is always very, very honest."

Wilson: "I suspect that Adam can probably lie better than me."

WHO IS THE MOST LIKELY TO BUY THE FIRST ROUND?

Wakeman: "Both of us. But if Damian has got five quid in his pocket, he'll buy you a drink."

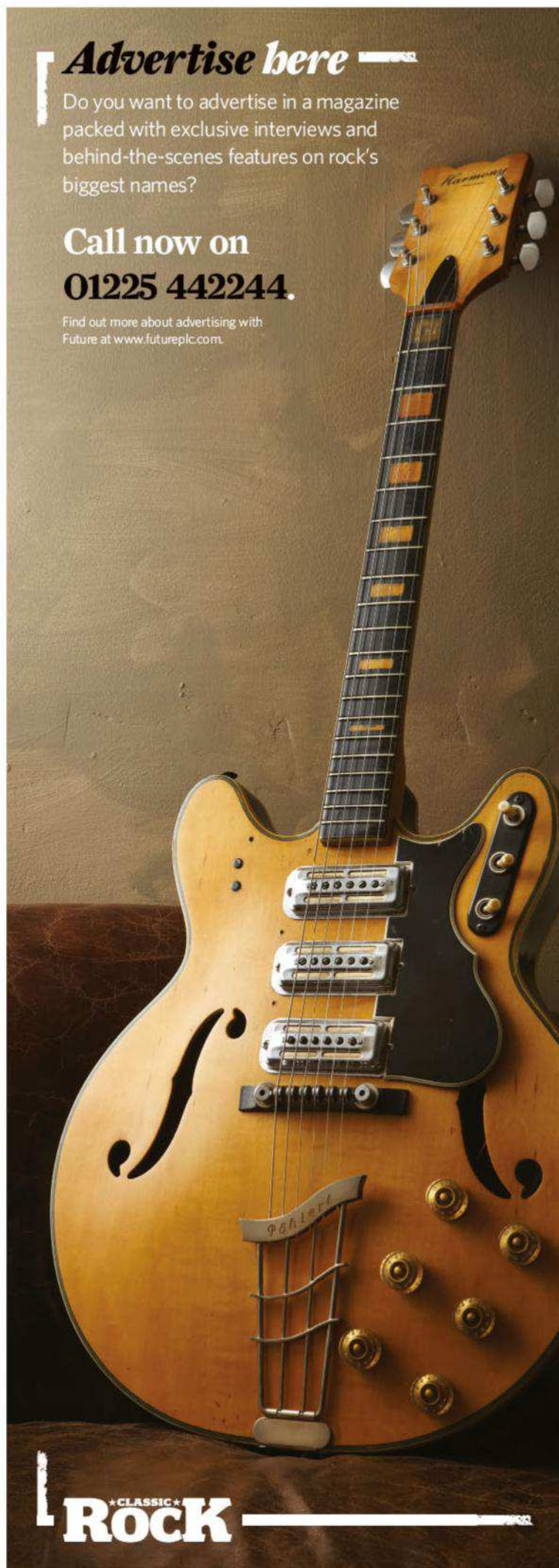
Wilson: "My ideology in life is that I don't need more than a few quid. And if I've got it, I'll share until it's gone." **DML**

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That Ineffable Emotion:
Tesseract are back with
a concept album based
on an obscure sorrow.



Altered

States

British prog metallers and progenitors of djent **Tesseract** have found stability in their 'old' new line-up, and their latest concept album may be their most accessible yet. From taking inspiration from visual cues to getting the fans involved, they reveal all about new album *Sonder*'s creation.

Words: Alex Lynham **Images:** Steve Brown



The pivotal moment of Tesseract's brilliant 2015 live DVD *Odyssey/Scala* comes about halfway through, when vocalist Dan Tompkins takes a second to address the audience. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for welcoming me back into Tesseract." Having left the band, Tompkins had returned after an album recorded in his absence, and Tesseract were having to recalibrate and realign.

With Tompkins back in the fold, they returned to the line-up that had recorded their debut album *One*, for which this magazine awarded them the New Blood award at the 2012 Prog Awards. Described as a "milestone" for the band by Tompkins on that aforementioned DVD, that set and tour drew a line under a complicated period for Tesseract and ushered in both a new sense of purpose and a radical change in their sound.

"I think it's taken that period of touring together to really get us to feeling as strong as we're feeling now."

James Monteith

Shortly after Tompkins' return, the leaner and punchier studio album *Polaris* showcased a new side to the band, at the cost of dispensing with some of the more narrative or conceptual features of their earlier records. In hindsight, *Polaris* is probably seen as

a stepping stone, allowing the band to settle back into their identity and begin to chart a course forward.

Their upcoming LP *Sonder* is unequivocally the most ambitious statement the band have made yet. A sprawling monolith of huge riffs and vast, cinematic spaces, it sounds like the soundtrack to interstellar travel, even though conceptually and lyrically it's firmly rooted in concerns at the granularity of the individual. It's also a clear sign that the band are able to unite high-concept prog with easier-to-digest riffs, choruses and lyrics, suggesting that a long bet on Tesseract being a future festival headliner in the metal world isn't too far-fetched.

Uniting the heady conceptual metal of 2013's *Altered State* – their second album, which was recorded with replacement vocalist Ashe O'Hara – with the accessibility and snap of *Polaris* has resulted in a record that is

somehow almost unbelievably massive, and yet clocks in at a mere 37 minutes. It's just one of many seeming contradictions about *Sonder* that somehow just work.

"I don't think it's a conscious decision but maybe it's gone back to *Altered State* in a way — it could have pushed us to write something a bit more proggy, so to speak," says Acle Kahney, the band's guitarist and principal songwriter.

It's to the band's credit that they've been able to pull off something that's as ambitious as this so soon after finishing a lengthy and exhausting touring cycle.

"A few things happened on tour, I guess, writing-wise," guitarist James Monteith explains. "There were lots of sort of demos being emailed around and Aiden [O'Brien], who is our front-of-house man and co-writer, and does some production work here [at Acle's 4D Sounds studio], he was developing some ideas in his bunk."

"When I came across the word 'sonder', that was the first time that somebody had actually stepped outside the box and thought about creating a word for something, an emotion, that was ineffable."

Daniel Tompkins

I guess we've become more stable, more solid than ever before," says Monteith. "I think we're feeling really ready to make a go of this album and see where it takes us. I think it's taken that period of touring together to really get us to feeling as strong as we're feeling now."

the first album, there was very much a sense of dream-state kind of writing. I'd fall asleep listening to the instrumentals and I'd often get inspired by dream thoughts. A lot of the emotions I was feeling at that time were ineffable. That word has cropped up and been very relatable to me for the past seven years.



Dan Tompkins, vocals.



Acle Kahney, guitar.



That at least some of the record was written on tour should come as no surprise — Tesseract have been on the road touring *Polaris* for nearly three years, along the way playing shows with the likes of Gojira, Megadeth and Meshuggah, increasing in swagger and status with every run of dates.

So much of this new-found confidence comes from the fact that the band's line-up has now stabilised. When Tompkins originally left after the *One* album cycle, the band spent several years trying to find a replacement, with mixed success.

Though there are plenty of fans willing to argue the point one way or another online, the simple fact remains that the band have gone from strength to strength since Tompkins rejoined, reaping the reward in terms of an increase in profile and reputation.

Sonder is important in this regard, as it marks the first time that two consecutive Tesseract albums have featured the same vocalist. "In general, since Dan rejoined,

Like *Altered State*, *Sonder* is explicitly a concept album. Not only that, but it's an album that was engineered from the start as such. "The lyricists in the band have been left to their own devices," muses Tompkins. "I wanted to take that opportunity to sit down with the guys and say, 'For once can we all just get behind not just the music, but the concepts and the lyrics.'"

"So for every single demo that we had, we began to throw ideas on the table in terms of what we might want to talk about, what kind of images we had in our heads when we listen to the music."

From this, a theme rapidly emerged. The concept is built around the word 'sonder', after which the album takes its name. As Tompkins explains, it's a neologism coined by the writer and poet John Koenig in his *The Dictionary Of Obscure Sorrows*.

"We started to develop a really nice concept which we stemmed around the idea of 'sonder'. When I wrote the lyrics for *One*,

I've not been able to describe certain emotions or express how I'm feeling.

"When I came across the word 'sonder', that was the first time somebody had actually stepped outside the box and thought about creating a word for something, an emotion, that was ineffable — 'Sonder' being that kind of feeling of walking down a street and you suddenly realise you're surrounded by people that are living their own lives, their own complex and vivid lives, and you are very separate to that. You only live your one, tunnel-visioned life, and you don't step back and think, 'Actually, there's billions of people living incredibly complex lives just like your own,' and I've always struggled to put that into words."

How this concept plays out is what ties the music, concepts and artwork together into their grand vision. To support the concept, the band solicited field recordings from their fans, and the audio snippets they received were then worked into tracks or used as

sonic building blocks as part of the narrative conversation of the album.

“Basically we did a call-out to fans to record any samples or sounds or anything, and we got about 80 submissions,” says Monteith. “I think Aiden used about 40 of those to add textures and layers and basically make loads of sounds that you couldn’t have imagined would have existed, and he managed to create them from a lot of sounds he didn’t know existed until he got them.”

When listening to the album, at many points textures and sounds fleetingly appear and evoke the idea of other lives weaved in among the music, yet somehow they’re still never fully clear to the listener. The richness these subtle touches add can’t be underestimated. Even without knowing the provenance of these sounds, the album would still be set apart by their presence.

Though the record as a whole is highly conceptual, the tracks are some of the most

more by comparison. Although there’s double tracking, supporting vocal harmonies and the odd scream, there’s never an obfuscation of the core vocal, and the character and power of Tompkins’ singing is really pronounced.

In between the heavier cuts, there’s breathing space in segues like *Orbital*, allowing the experimental, ambient tendencies in the record to cleanly meet the narrative driven by the lyrics. In terms of the melodies employed, cuts like *Juno* clearly bear vocal traits that Tompkins has developed on his side projects White Moth Black Butterfly and Zeta, and they’re used to devastating effect.

King, meanwhile, is an example of the more collaborative style of songwriting that’s emerged on *Sonder*. On previous records, the workflow the band found most productive was Kahney taking charge, with vocals and additional takes being added much later in the process. This wasn’t the case on *Sonder*, though. Not only was O’Brien involved on

of the riff in the first section and made this really cool little texture that wouldn’t have existed if he hadn’t written that, so it ended up being a really organic song. Organic for TesseractT, anyway.”

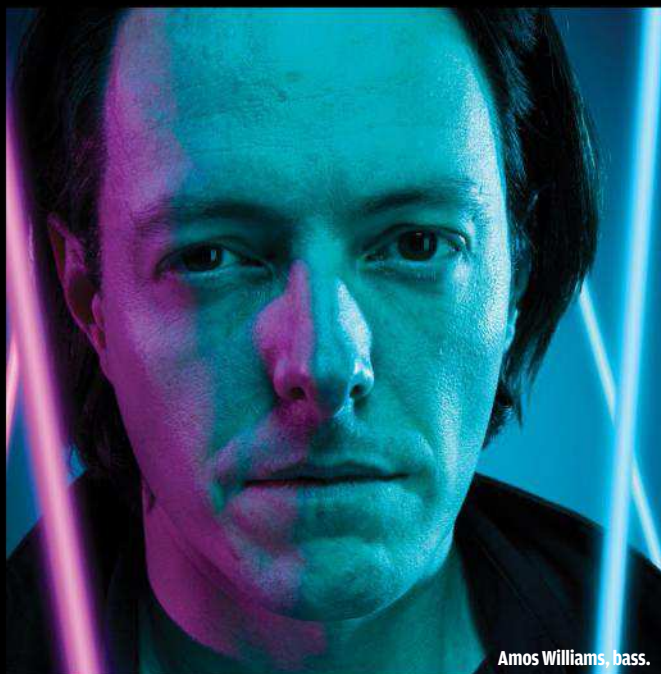
Kahney concludes by musing on a direction that might be open to the band for future releases: “If we’d had more time, that [writing process] would have happened a bit more. I’m still happy with everything but if we’d had more time, we could have experimented more.”

That’s not the only experimental tack they’ve taken with their writing on *Sonder*, though. One new thing they’ve tried is writing to visual cues. One of the tracks on the album, *Beneath My Skin*, originated as a spin-off for a piece of re-soundtracking that Kahney was playing around with, using the film *Under The Skin* as inspiration.

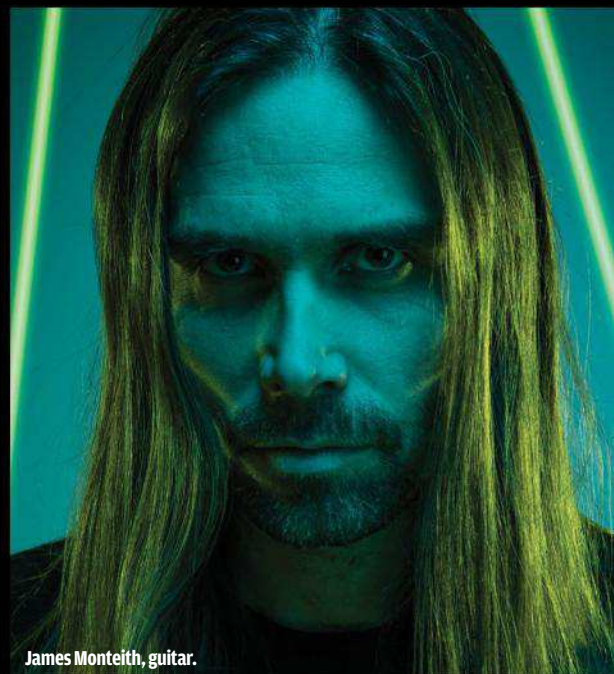
“I wrote some music to [that],” begins Kahney. “It’s a really weird film. I wrote the



Jay Postones, drums.



Amos Williams, bass.



James Monteith, guitar.

immediate, concise and accessible the band have yet penned. Take, for instance, the album opener and lead single proper, *Luminary*. Not only does the track reach its epic chorus comfortably within a minute, but the song as a whole only just trips over the three-minute mark, a testament to the band not setting any hard and fast rules down about how they wanted ideas to develop.

“*Luminary* wasn’t meant to be a three-minute song – that’s just how it happened, and it finished at that moment and it didn’t have anywhere else to go,” explains Monteith.

This accessibility is a natural development from the direction the band had been moving in on *Polaris*, where heavier and screamed vocals made way for more nuanced clean vocals and instrumentals that bring the vocals more to the fore.

When this trend first began on *Altered State* with stopgap vocalist Ashe O’Hara, the effect was achieved with extensive vocal layering. Tompkins’ approach is very much less-is-

a more fundamental level, contributing writing ideas, textures and electronics, but within the band the roles and writing process changed as well.

As Monteith explains, “Aiden was more involved in this record than before, and I think he brought a lot of ideas, a lot of the other sounds on the record. He also did the field recordings, which added a really interesting extra element.”

Monteith’s own role changed slightly too. “*King*, that started from a riff I was messing with, which was basically the intro riff, and Aiden took it and basically added the mellow section afterward, then the chorus at the end. And Aclé took all of that and wrote the bits in between and basically refined everything.”

Kahney adds, “I think *King* is my favourite track on there, actually. It’s probably had the most input from everyone.”

Monteith picks up, “Again, that’s a song where once the bare bones had been recorded, Dan wrote a melody, which then changed part

kind of intro, the clean ‘ding’ to one of the scenes in the movie, and that kind of started that song off.”

When TesseractT are asked what they love about music, they’re quick to reply. “I think music is not only an incredible thing to enjoy and to take part in,” says Monteith, “but it’s also very therapeutic and it’s something I don’t know how anyone could live without.” Kahney replies simply, “What he said.”

Tompkins adds: “I love that it can change your attitude, so just in the way that when the brain releases endorphins when you sing, which are your body’s feel-good chemicals, you get the same reaction from music, so it can change the way you feel in an instant. I love the fact that you can turn to music in any situation in life: whether you’re having a great time, whether you’re having a low time, music is there to make things better.”

Sonder is out now via Kscope. For more information, see www.tesseractband.co.uk.

COGFEST: A LOOK AT THE HISTORY, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN PROGRESSIVE MUSIC



Prog charts the history of **Aussie prog rock**, from its 1970s beginnings to its development in the 1980s and 90s, through to the currently thriving wave of new and exciting bands who are making waves Down Under and beyond.

Words: Rod Whitfield

In the beginning, there was rock'n'roll. It was raw, it was wild, it was primitive, it spoke to the viscera and the grinding crotch rather than the cerebral cortex. It stripped away much of the esoteric excess of jazz and took what the blues was doing and made it ballsy and fun. And it subsequently ruled the world for the better part of half a century: any rabid rock fan worth his or her salt knows its history.

However, within a relatively brief period of time in the span of rock music's storied entire history, a highly imaginative and creative subset of rock musicians, who were hungering for newer and more complex sounds, instrumentation and arrangements, emerged from the rehearsal rooms and venues of the world.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the phenomenon known as 'progressive rock' or 'art rock' was in full swing, led by the scene's shining stars in Yes, King Crimson, Genesis and Pink Floyd, with the likes of Gentle Giant, Curved Air and Goblin following hungrily in their wake. On the other side of the Atlantic, the scene was simultaneously being spearheaded by Rush, Kansas and Utopia. These musicians and their output resonated

"It was absolutely grass-roots and organic. The people just found us, and that was partly due to the fact that we all just toured like maniacs."

**Clint Boge,
The Butterfly Effect**



with fans' cerebrums as well as their hearts, souls and nether regions.

Anyone who calls themselves a prog fan knows this history well. What many progressive music fans north of the equator may not know is that while all this was happening, another similar and highly creative scene was operating in relative obscurity on the other side of the planet.

Until the early 80s, Australia was broadly considered to be a large, exotic and inaccessible country down there at the very arse-end of the world. With Men At Work releasing *Down Under* and the nation winning the America's Cup sailing event, and then especially with the release of the movie



Sydney/Adelaide band Fraternity in the 70s, with Bon Scott far right.



On The Right Tracks: Melbourne pioneers Spectrum in the 70s.

Crocodile Dundee in 1986, the nation rose in the rest of the world's consciousness.

During the 1970s, however, a very strong undercurrent of progressive rock music was being created in the shadow of the scene's illustrious international luminaries. This was arguably spearheaded by Melbourne band Spectrum, who were formed by the legend of Kiwi and Australian prog Mike Rudd. Spectrum only lasted for around five years but were extremely prolific during

this period (and they also reformed in the late 90s).

Then there were fellow Melburnians Madder Lake, who were known as San Sebastian in an earlier incarnation; Ariel, another Mike Rudd creation; Ayers Rock, who featured legendary Aussie drummer Mark Kennedy; Perth band Bakery; and Sydney/Adelaide act Fraternity. The latter were notable in that they featured no fewer than three legendary Aussie rock frontmen: Bon Scott, Cold Chisel's Jimmy Barnes and his brother John Swan.

Speaking of legendary singers, Sydney band Sebastian Hardie (later known as Windchase), who became known as



Masters Apprentices backstage at the Sydney Entertainment Centre on September 15, 2002.

‘Australia’s first symphonic rock band’, featured a frontman by the name of Jon English, who went on to become a major star of stage and the small screen in Australia. The band released several studio albums, attained some international recognition and supported Yes on their 2003 Australian tour.

Sitting in a grey area between pop and prog were Melbourne’s ultra-quirky Skyhooks and Adelaide band The Masters Apprentices, both of whom attained considerable commercial success in their home country and fleetingly flirted with international stardom. Opeth’s Mikael Åkerfeldt calls himself a fan of the latter and even named a track from his band’s 2002 album *Deliverance* after them.

Special mention must be given to seminal Sydney band Tully, who were not only prodigiously influential in terms of their music, but also their dazzling approach to the lighting and visuals of their live show. They also became the house band in many of Australia’s adaptations of international musicals, such as *Hair*.

The 80s and 90s found many of prog’s international heavy hitters honing their respective sounds and going from strength to commercial strength. That period in Australia was a little quieter, although it did see the formation of Adelaide band Unitopia, a formidable outfit that combined traditional 70s-influenced prog rock with jazz and world music elements, with political and environmental themes. They released four seminal records before disbanding in 2012, giving rise to new bands United Progressive Fraternity and Southern Empire.

Other Aussie art-rock, prog and proggy metal acts to ply their trade through this period were Alchemist, Alarum, Vanishing Point (who, while more in the power metal realm, certainly utilised some progressive elements), Perth’s Heavy Weight Champ, Teramaze, legendary Tasmanian tech metal outfit Psycroptic, The Grand Silent System and Pre-Shrunk. These bands kept the Aussie progressive flame alive during this lull before the true renaissance arrived.

Another profound event for the Aussie prog rock scene occurred during the 90s – the



Red Symons of Skyhooks, live at the Anzac Day Concert at Festival Hall, Melbourne, April 25, 1983.



“At the time, when you’re in it, you have no idea you’re creating anything, creating a scene. I thought I was just developing my career.”

Forrester Savell, Producer

formation and rise to prominence of American juggernaut Tool, whose enormous shadow still lies across the Australian prog sound today.

Their influence on the Aussie sound cannot be overstated, despite the non-prolific nature of their own output.

The origins of many of the leading lights of modern Australian progressive music can be traced back to the late 1990s, but the true spark was lit in 2001. While they may stretch the definition of ‘prog’

just a touch, blazing a trail out of Brisbane were The Butterfly Effect, releasing their self-titled EP that year to universal acclaim, and following it up two years later with the iconic debut long-player *Begins Here*. Mining unique sonic and songwriting territory that was so dark and atmospheric it veritably sent shivers down your spine but was somehow soaring and uplifting at the same time, a whole new sound and a whole new scene

was born on the back of those two recordings and the band’s breathtaking live show. It was the modern Australian alternative and progressive rock sound.

The Butterfly Effect’s frontman Clint Boge has vivid and heady memories of that period: “It always felt like an underground scene,” Boge recalls, “even when [Australian nationwide youth radio station] Triple J shone a light on it and we had that purple patch during the early to mid-2000s, where it was like Butters, Karnivool, Shihad and Cog, just a lot of great rock bands.

“It just felt great to be part of an underground scene that was actually getting some love from radio, and the fans just loved it. It was absolutely grass-roots and organic – the people just found us, and that was partly due to the fact that we all just toured like maniacs. That was the defining factor that put Aussie progressive and heavy rock and metal on the map.”

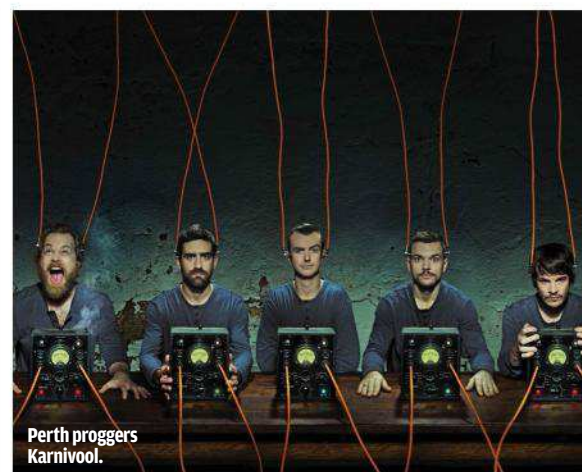
While The Butterfly Effect set things in motion in a major way, the true watershed



Adelaide's Unitopia
before their 2012 split.



Seminal Sydney
trio Cog.



Perth proggers
Karnivool.



The Butterfly Effect:
redefining Aussie prog
in the new millennium.

moment came in 2005. Early that year, Perth band Karnivool released their exalted first album *Themata*, and a few months later Bondi (Sydney) trio Cog unleashed their own illustrious debut long-player, *The New Normal*, and the face of Aussie progressive rock changed forever. Rock music fans across the nation stopped what they were doing, pricked up their ears and took notice, and even aficionados across the rest of the globe started to cast a sneaky ear in Australia's direction.

Both bands channelled Tool, although both certainly put their own individual slant on the sound. *Themata* is an intoxicating affair, its kaleidoscopic grooves drawing you in while its soaring melodies have you crooning in delight. Its power is subtle but indisputable. *The New Normal* takes a slightly more raw, more direct approach, although it's still dark and intelligent, as well as immensely impactful. Its political and social message is understated but undeniable.

And as with Tool, the baton was passed, the influence spread like an Aussie bush fire in high winds, and a slew of bands directly influenced by the sounds, songwriting and vibe of these two titans followed in their path. Arguably the most notable were Brisbane's

Dead Letter Circus, whose phenomenal eponymous 2007 debut EP set them on a course towards national stardom and a rather respectable international following.

One individual was almost single-handedly responsible for creating that distinctive Aussie progressive sound, in a sonic and production sense. Forrester Savell produced Karnivool's iconic first two records, almost everything Dead Letter Circus have released, The Butterfly Effect's third and final album *Final Conversation Of Kings*, and has also worked with such local and international luminaries as Twelve Foot Ninja, Skyharbor, Good Tiger, Sikh, Birds Of Tokyo and many others.

It's purely in hindsight that Savell realises just how resonant the sounds he was creating were, and just how profoundly those records have influenced and contributed to an entire subgenre and a niche national musical identity. "At the time, when you're in it, you have no idea you're creating anything, creating a scene," he says. "I thought I was just developing my career."

"It all comes from growing up in Perth and just being involved in such a healthy and encouraging scene, and bands like Karnivool, Full Scale, Heavy Weight Champ. I knew all the members of the bands personally, we all

went out together socially, and we built the scene on the back of that camaraderie."

From Perth, Savell was heavily involved in the spreading of the scene and that camaraderie across the rest of the nation. "We all sort of pushed eastward at some point," he remembers. "I moved to Melbourne with Full Scale and we encouraged all those bands to come over and do tours and introduced them to the east coast bands like The Butterfly Effect and Cog and getting them all on tour together. We just continued on that same kind of attitude, creating a scene."

On the back of such enthusiasm and momentum, many new bands sprang up and took their place on the circuit. There were Melburnians Jericco, who took what Karnivool were doing and infused it with an exhilarating Middle Eastern flavour. Twelve Foot Ninja are similarly eclectic, although their beef is a head-spinning and seamless amalgam of jazz, funk, ska and pop, juxtaposed with their pounding but groove-laden rock and metal. Mammal were an absolute tour de force in a live sense, and were being touted as Australia's Rage Against The Machine before personal differences tore them asunder in 2009.

One of the most underrated pieces of work to come out of that bountiful late-2000s era was the debut album from Melbourne band Sleep Parade, *Things Can Always Change*. Similar to *Themata*, its captivating and powerful melodies, atmospheres and soundscapes take the listener to another musical plane. So much so that the band caught the ear of Porcupine Tree's Steven Wilson, who hand-selected the band to be the support act on Porcupine Tree's two Aussie tours in the early 2010s.

Other bands to rise to prominence during that late-2000s, early-2010s period were Brisbane's unique and mesmerising Caligula's Horse, 70s-influenced Melburnians Closure In Moscow, Sydney-based percussive-driven powerhouse Breaking Orbit, Toehider (whose main man Mike Mills was hand-picked by Arjen Lucassen to sing and play on multiple Ayreon albums), Sydney post-rock instrumental legends sleepmakeswaves, world music-influenced chaos merchants Alithia, Byron Bay's Engine Three Seven and more. Heavier progressive sounds were



Caligula's Horse:
the biggest thing to
come out of Australia
since *Neighbours*...

being provided by the likes of Circles, Voyager, Ne Obliviscaris, Hemina, Northlane, The Eternal, The Amenta, Sydonia, Helm, Chaos Divine, Bushido and many others.

This period also saw a strong undercurrent of more experimental sounds emerge from the underbelly of Australia's music scene. Following on from and inspired by what The Grand Silent System were doing in the late 90s and early 2000s, instrumental and vocally orientated acts such as Xenograft, Ennis Tola, Anim8, Geamala, Glasfrosch, Mushroom Giant, Meniscus, Head Filled Attraction, Colditz Glider and A Lonely Crowd threw convention to the wind, did whatever the hell they wanted and created some astounding sounds and amazing music in the process. Active or otherwise, all of these bands have music online that is well worth tracking down.

Now, a second renaissance period has begun. Several of the bands that had previously announced splits, or at least hiatuses, have returned to the fold. The Butterfly Effect, Cog, Mammal, Superheist and others have all come back after having patched up former differences and found that there's still massive demand for their sounds and their live shows across the nation. Boge could not be more excited about this development.

"The community vibe is amazing and that's what gives me massive hope for the Aussie prog scene."

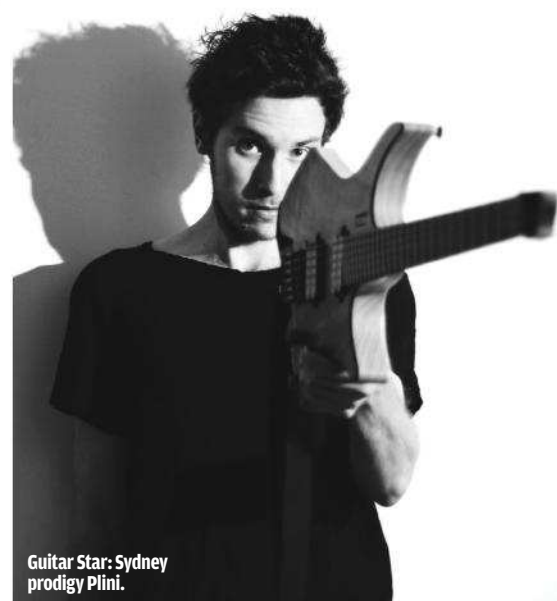
Eli Chamravi, Promoter/Label Owner

"Now with the re-emergence of all these bands, it has definitely put a spotlight back on our genre," Boge says. "And also, the fans are still there, they still want this music and they're still frothing to see these bands come back around, which is amazing."

"And you know what? I don't think there are too many other genres of music that have fans so loyal and devoted like this, so credit to them, credit to the bands who've come back and credit to the bands that have stuck around and kept the scene going."

There's also a ridiculously strong current crop of bands plying their trade across the nation. Acolyte are a Melbourne-based progressive group who draw influence from such diverse sources as Pink Floyd, Europe and Karnivool, and channel it into compositions that are long, complex and memorable.

Melbourne's Figures are heavier and more direct in their proggy alternative approach, although no less catchy. Transience pack a hell of a wallop as they slam out their enthralling, heavy, modern progressive rock songs. Orsome Welles are both quirky and bone-crunchingly heavy, and vocally unique. Kettlespider combine old school prog rock with more modern elements to create a compelling, live-wire vocal-free sound. To name but a few.



Guitar Star: Sydney
prodigy Plini.

Running in parallel to the mainstream of progressive music in Australia is an exuberant tech guitar instrumental scene, led by Sydney wunderkind Plini. The young guitar slinger has dazzled the world in recent years with his soaring and intricate instrumental guitar compositions, and his 2016 album *Handmade Cities* was described by none other than Steve Vai as: "One of the finest, forward thinking, melodic, rhythmically and harmonically deep, evolution of rock/metal instrumental guitar records I have ever heard."

Powering along in his wake are Sydney shredders The Helix Nebula, with whom Plini's band share a number of members; Melbourne whizz-kid Rohan Stevenson,



Perth's Voyager: still exploring prog's outer limits.

who goes under the moniker I Built the Sky; Melbourne prodigy James Norbert Ivanyi; and bands like Scoredata and The Omnific, whose line-up consists of two bassists and a drummer, and who delve quite deeply into jazz and fusion-esque sonic territory.

There's a veritable smorgasbord of stunning sounds accessible to the rabid Aussie prog fan right now, with the message slowly but surely reaching out across the globe as well, and it all bodes well for the future. One man at the epicentre of Australian progressive music, a man who will play a major part in pushing the sound forward in 2018 and beyond, is aficionado and entrepreneur Eli Chamravi. Already having run his booking and management agency Wild Thing Presents for almost six years (the agency responsible for running Australia's most prestigious progressive music festival Progfest), Chamravi recently announced the launch of his own record label, Wild Thing Records. The label have already signed Melbourne djenty progressive metallers Circles, a band with several international credits to their name, and this is just the beginning.

"We anticipate having a number of records out by the end of the year," Chamravi says. "We'll be signing both local and international acts. The label will give more weight behind building acts in Australia and also bring up-and-coming acts from overseas to tour – tours that may not otherwise have been financially possible."

The creation of the label reveals much positivity about the future of Australian progressive music, and a strong determination to push it to its rightful place of prominence across the nation and around the world. "I think it can help this Aussie prog scene become much stronger, healthier and more united," Chamravi says.

"We're extremely optimistic. It's not the biggest scene or genre in the world, but the people that are involved in it – the punters, promoters, crews, media personnel, photographers and reviewers – are extremely

passionate about it. It's an extremely welcoming scene. The thing I like about it the most is that we have people of all ages, all ethnicities, genders and so on: everyone comes, everyone has a good time and we always get repeat fans at all the shows.

The community vibe is amazing and that's what gives me massive hope for the Aussie prog scene."

Of course, there are still many struggles facing Aussie bands of any ilk wanting to spread their notoriety across the country and the world. Australia is a massive island continent with a low population base, relative to many other nations across the planet, and so it's extremely expensive to tour, with enormous distances to cover between cities. Then there's the nation's extreme isolation from the rest of the world. Bands taking on the enormous task of transporting themselves, their gear and their crews to Europe, the US or elsewhere often return to Australia many thousands of dollars in the red.

Several bands have taken the controversial step of undertaking Patreon campaigns to keep themselves afloat and working. These campaigns take the concept of regular crowdfunding a step further, having the band's loyal fans fund their activities in a more ongoing fashion, in the form of monthly contributions. Most notable of these bands has been extreme progressive metallers Ne Obliviscaris.

The well-documented woes of the music industry as a whole certainly don't help either. However, the passion for the music and the desire to create a career in the industry drives these determined bands to write better songs, release more epic albums, put on more impressive live shows and take their music and message to the world.

From its early, humble but hopeful beginnings, right through to a scene today that is growing relentlessly in profile, prominence and confidence, Aussie progressive rock and metal is a small but extremely vibrant movement that's well worth your attention. ☺

Five Essential New Aussie Prog Listens

Prog's guide to the best new music from Down Under.



SLEEPMAKESWAVES – THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING

If you're looking for a definitive slice of progressive post-rock instrumental epicness,

this is it. It's a powerful, atmospheric 10-minute-plus journey through Antarctic wastelands, although the track is anything but frigid and bleak. In fact, it veritably makes your hair stand to attention. Stunning, essential listening.

www.sleepmakeswaves.bandcamp.com/track/the-edge-of-everything



PLINI – HANDMADE CITIES

One listen to the title track from Plini's *Handmade Cities* album and it becomes clear why this

young Sydney guitar prodigy has been likened to the likes of Vai and Satriani. For Plini, composing tunes that are emotionally resonant and soar to the very heavens comes before the need to shred, and this is why he is rapidly attaining notoriety around the globe.

bit.ly/plini-handmade



CALIGULA'S HORSE – GRAVES

A truly riveting epic from one of Brisbane and Australia's finest progressive music exports

of the last decade. *Graves* takes the listener across a dizzying array of mood, vibe and tempo changes over its 15-minute-plus length, right through to its charging and triumphant climax.

bit.ly/caligula-graves



NE OBLIVISCARIS – INTRA VENUS

One of the premier extreme progressive metal acts on the planet right now, Melbourne's Ne Obliviscaris

released their third album *Urn* in late 2017, and this was the track taken from it. A typically dynamic maelstrom of hyper-formulated chaos, *Intra Venus* is modern prog metal at its finest.

bit.ly/intravenus



VOYAGER – ASCENSION

Perth's Voyager have been a true mainstay of the Aussie progressive music scene for almost two decades. However, they've

recently brought their sound well and truly into the 21st century, finding a whole new worldwide audience in the process. This new, rich and modern approach to melodic progressive rock/metal can be heard to marvellous effect on *Ascension*, taken from their last album *Ghost Mile*.

bit.ly/voyager-ascension

ROD WHITFIELD

Don't be put off by **Ihsahn**'s black metal beginnings – the Norwegian musician has now certified himself as one of modern progressive music's most intriguing forerunners. He speaks to *Prog* about dividing opinions, escaping his comfort zone and how his reputation can be a hindrance...

Words: Thea de Gallier **Portraits:** Bjorn Tore Moen

He might be a member of one of black metal's most influential bands, but Ihsahn is not here to be categorised. Sitting in a side room at his label's London offices, he looks smart and groomed in skinny jeans, Chelsea boots and trendy glasses, a world away from his early days in Emperor when the three-piece wore full corpsepaint. His dedicated fans know he hasn't been that person for many a year, but even now, with his solo material becoming ever more accessible and eclectic, he finds himself drawing the ire of black metal fans who feel he's strayed too far from his roots.

"With every kind of underground movement or expression that gets any kind of commercial success, it always starts out like that," Ihsahn says. He's warm, intelligent and softly-spoken, and it's clear this is something he's given some thought to. "Somebody discovers something they haven't heard before and they take it to an extreme, and suddenly there are people who say, 'This is the blueprint, let's not change it.'"

Listening to Ihsahn's solo work from the past five years, it's clear he's relished twisting and developing that black metal blueprint. From the 2013 album *Das Seelenbrechen*, through to 2016's polar region-inspired *Arktis*, and on to latest record *Åmr*, bombastic riffs, 80s pomp and progressive melodies have become ever more present, united under the guidance of Ihsahn's purposeful, gravelly bark. The darkness and grit of his black metal roots are still there on *Åmr*, but it could be his most accessible recording yet.

"I still define my music as black metal because it's the same uncompromising starting point," he says when quizzed about where he sees himself on the genre spectrum. "It's such a paradox – I've seen it all through the years. Part of the black metal scene is very judgemental. People say, 'You're not allowed to do that,' within black metal. Whereas if any genre was self-centred and do-what-I-will, it's black metal. Do you really want a true black metal album made to people's expectations? It defeats the whole purpose. I remember on

my first album I had a song title with the word 'love' in it and people were enraged. The song is called *Will You Love Me Now*, and it asks, 'If I present this as what it is, will you still be able to relate to it for the music and expression of what it is, or will you be biased because it doesn't fit with what you want it to be?' The reaction proved my point."

The reaction to *Åmr* is likely to be just as divided. The first single, *Arcana Imperii*, boasts an 80s riff, while *Såmr* is a slice of stripped-back, avant-garde pop with 808s and sustained vocal notes that has more in common with Opeth than Emperor. *Where You Are Lost And I Belong* and *In Rites Of Passage* mix the dry, stunted guitars of black metal with classic riffs and psychedelic synths, while *Twin Black Angels* boasts thick double tracking, whimsical harmonies and a frankly karaoke-worthy chorus. *Wake* isn't dissimilar to what newer prog-affiliated acts like Black Peaks produce, but with a few more blastbeats.

"I grew up in the 80s," laughs Ihsahn, when drawn on his penchant for flamboyant riffs. "In a similar way to *Arktis*, *Åmr* is very verse-bridge-chorus. I wanted to focus on this album on more traditional song structures. It sounds strange within this type of music, but I wanted a good hook.

"Creating melody lines that stick is a challenge with extreme metal – you can have 15 or 20 different riffs. Writing within that format is a more difficult task – you have to use your craftsmanship to keep it from repeating and being boring."

My Heart Is Of The North



“I’ve been
listening to
a lot of ABBA,
and I’m a big
fan of Scott
Walker.”

Hooks In You: Ihsahn
has added pop melodies
to his metal melting pot.

To bring himself out of his comfort zone, Ihsahn looked in some surprising places. “The Weeknd, Kanye West, James Blake... a lot of the production techniques. Obviously with The Weeknd, it’s very hard for me to relate to that drug-induced, decadent lifestyle of Los Angeles. But I dig the sincerity and that eerie vibe. I’ve seen some of his music videos and they’re really trippy. Those deep 80s have a sincerity and fuck-off attitude that’s missing from current metal. It’s very politically correct. I think some hip hop and urban music has more danger than metal. At the same time, I’ve been listening to a lot of ABBA, and I’m a big fan of Scott Walker.”

It may not be prog in the traditional sense, but *Åmr* is certainly progressive in its genre-hopping. The expectation of what Ihsahn represents to those who aren’t as familiar with him, though, leads him to be overlooked sometimes by prog stalwarts.

“I’m working with a booking agency who have been pushing my stuff to more progressive music festivals, and they’ve got the response that it’s probably too extreme for their festival,” he says. “The perception was ‘This is Emperor, black metal’, and as a solo artist I was doing similar stuff. Then they heard the album and got the feedback that it was perfect for their festival. Many people think I get the advantage of being a known name, but just as often it can work against you and people will limit you to that form.”

The barometer Ihsahn finds himself set against led him to think more deeply about people’s ingrained beliefs. “People are very afraid of liking something,” he muses. “Maybe they think because it’s black metal they might be condoning values or bad stuff they can’t stand by. Which is typical – people are very afraid of different opinions. Often in this business you get to meet people with very extreme attitudes, which for many of us is very interesting. How do they come to that conclusion?”

“I meet a lot of people who feel threatened by someone having a different opinion. I find it very strange that they’d rather settle for a set of values and avoid questioning their own values and defending that, and setting those parameters.”

It seems his intellectual approach of why people gravitate to certain things allows him

to be comfortable with creating solo work in his own way, while still periodically appearing with Emperor. Despite not having released an album since 2001, Emperor haven’t broken up, but Ihsahn says that nostalgia is the driving force that keeps them together, rather than any possibilities of making music again.

“On the 20th anniversary of our second album, we were more at a level where we wanted to do a few shows,” he says, explaining that he’d previously felt some reluctance to perform with Emperor because he didn’t want it to get “mixed up” with his solo career. “Those first two Emperor albums were such an important starting point. We were playing

some of the biggest stages you could imagine for this style of music, we played back-to-back with some of our favourite heroes from the 80s, almost running into Ian Gillan on the way off stage. What’s not to like? But for every seven shows we do, we might turn down 100.”

Ihsahn says that he and fellow Emperor member Samoth have moved on too far to be able to recreate the songwriting bond they had in the early days.

“When people ask for another album, the craving is really just to relive a certain experience of discovering something that was exciting, fresh and new. No new Emperor album could satisfy that craving,” he insists. “With my solo work I’m totally creatively free: this is how I write metal. I get to do all these experiments without having to worry about any other band members telling me

not to. I doubt we can do Emperor albums with eight-string guitars and saxophone. From my perspective, doing an Emperor album in that natural creative flow would be a compromise.

“When we wrote material for the first Emperor album I was 16 – how much experience do you have?” he continues.

“It was made on gut feeling; more on youthful energy than experience.

Samoth and I put in just as much time but over the years I took over more and more of the music side. By the second album I was writing all the lyrics and I’ve always had responsibility for all the arrangements and keyboards and playing bass.”

The obvious choice, then, was to focus all his efforts on his solo work, which he composes single-handedly in his home studio, with creative input from his wife Heidi. “She’s the most crucial, and the most invisible person,” he says. “The cover of the album, the title of the album... her ideas.”

His regular collaborator Tobias Ørnes Andersen came back on board for *Åmr*, and the pop elements were brought to life by Linus Corneliussen at Fascination Street Studios. The small, close-knit team Ihsahn has assembled around him help him realise his visions of creating music that can’t be easily pinned down, and operate under his main guiding principle of sonic freedom. 🎧

Åmr is out now via Candlelight/Spinefarm. See www.ihsahn.com for more information.

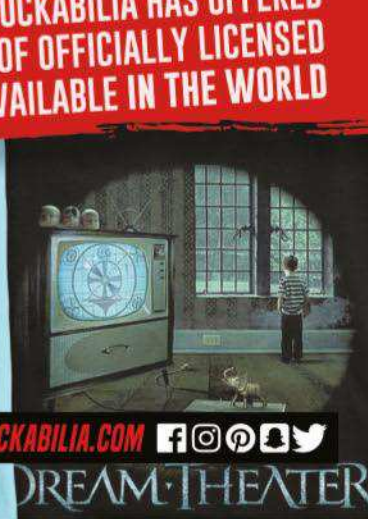


Man In Black: Ihsahn has moved on from his black metal roots to explore prog’s darkest corners.

“I remember on my first album I had a songtitle with the word ‘love’ in it and people were enraged.”

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MONOTREME RECORDS



Spirit

They're the West Coast psychedelic jazz rockers for whom weirdness abounded. They describe themselves as "one of the first progressive bands", but we'll be the judge of that as we ask the question: **how prog were Spirit?** Words: Chris Roberts

Asked if Spirit were a progressive rock band, their peak-era bass player Mark Andes has no hesitation. "In retrospect I see us as being one of the first progressive bands," he says. "By including jazz as well as psychedelics in our style, among the various languages we used through the songs to communicate, we were definitely progressive. We didn't call ourselves that, back in the day, and it took a while to have that perspective. But yes, I'm sure we were."

Even in an era when many West Coast bands were pushing the envelope, Spirit subverted the formula. There wasn't a master plan.

"We just blindly fell into our distinctive sound because of the diversity of influences and our willingness to fearlessly launch ourselves anywhere," Andes says. "I mean, I listen to some of the stuff we did and I can hear my young self trying to sound like a jazz musician, not quite understanding the depth required! Then I hear other sections and I think: 'Okay, this is where I got it.' I can feel myself inhabiting the improvisations that John Locke [keyboardist] brought to the band, the jazzier side."

"Randy California [guitar/vocals] was a virtuoso, a prodigy, and Cass [Ed Cassidy, drums] was pretty fluent in that side of things. So it remains one of my proudest times, perhaps the ultimate."

The friendly, laid-back son of actor Keith Andes (who appeared in films opposite Marilyn Monroe and Barbara Stanwyck), Mark grew up in LA. He's happy to see the release of a Spirit box set, *It Shall Be: The Ode & Epic Recordings 1968-1972*, a five-CD collection gathering their early albums and other pieces. There's plenty to admire in it, the music more often than

“Not that we were the most drugged-out band I’ve been in, to be honest. But we... weren’t afraid to indulge. We were just regular pot-smoking, psychedelics-taking, coke-snorting guys!”
Mark Andes



Spirit's proggy peak, 1970's *Twelve Dreams Of Doctor Sardonicus*.

not matching the ill-fated band's intriguing mythology. Undoubtedly the pinnacle is the 1970 album *Twelve Dreams Of Doctor Sardonicus*, which strides boldly across genre barriers to create a dizzying kaleidoscope of beautiful noise. Featuring Spirit's best-known song, *Nature's Way*, it addresses big themes like humanity, mortality and environmentalism — and uses a Moog to boot.

"Yeah, that one is special," agrees Andes. "It's not only the most successful and iconic of the Spirit albums, it's also Randy's masterwork, his most wonderful statement."

Randy California died in 1997, and Andes and Jay Ferguson [vocals/percussion] are now the only surviving

members of the original Spirit. Ferguson was unavailable for interview as his home was caught up in the Santa Barbara mud slides. He's now a soundtrack composer, his successes including the theme to *The Office: An American Workplace* and *NCIS: Los Angeles*. His 1977 solo hit *Thunder Island* enjoyed a revival in *Anchorman 2*.

Pondering the loss of the rest of his old bandmates, Andes mutters, "Yeah, they're gone..." After a pause, lost in reflection, he says, "Wow."

Everything about the Spirit story is worthy of a wow. They're the very definition of a legendary cult band scuppered by drug abuse and volatile personalities, but even outside that, they ran into a headwind of bad luck.

From the off, weirdness abounded. The teenage Randy Wolfe, who must have thought he had the ideal, watertight name to be a flamboyant rock star, played in Jimmy James And The Blue Flames with Jimi Hendrix — only for Hendrix to insist he took the stage name of Randy California (based on where he came from).

When Hendrix left for London, he wanted California to come along, but Randy's parents insisted he finish school. Still only 16, he joined Spirit, whose drummer was his stepfather, Ed 'Cass' Cassidy. Andes, Ferguson and John Locke made up the quintet, who were signed by Lou Adler in 1967.

Cassidy, already in his 40s and an authentic beatnik, had played with everyone from Art Pepper and Cannonball Adderley to Roland Kirk. Earlier in the 60s, he'd formed Rising Sons with Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal. Locke's mother was an opera singer, his father a classical violinist. Andes had been a teenage member of Canned Heat, before that band was signed. It's safe to say that Spirit brought together a mercurial multiplicity of influences and aims.

Dream Team: Mark Andes and Randy California, 1970.



JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Spirit, L-R: John Locke,
Mark Andes, Randy
California, Ed Cassidy,
Jay Ferguson.



THE OUTER LIMITS



"It was a special time and we were right in the arc of that moment," recalls Andes today. "Spirit started spontaneously — we were one of the more 'real' bands. And Randy was the reason we existed, the keystone. He was just a kid, a prodigy, and we were blown away when Jay's brother found he wanted us to play with him."

"It started in this funky little bohemian house in Santa Monica, where Cass and Randy's mother Bernice and his sisters lived. Cass was an honest-to-God old hipster, back when Venice was beatniks and poets and musicians. We'd come in from the San Fernando Valley and rehearse and discuss things. I was 'the surfer dude'!"

"It was a magical time, very cool. Randy's uncle owned one of the venerable folk/blues venues, The Ash Grove on Melrose. Rising Sons had been a big band in LA, and we had contemporaries like The Byrds, Kaleidoscope with David Lindley..."

Things began well enough, with albums like *The Family That Plays Together* and *Clear*, and the soundtrack to Jacques Demy's film *Model Shop* mildly warping the West Coast sound. But by the time they reached their glorious out-there pomp on *Twelve Dreams Of Dr Sardonicus*, trauma and tension were rife. The band weren't getting the big shows they felt they deserved, and the lack of commercial success was niggling, with Randy's behaviour and mood swings becoming erratic.

"It broke Randy's heart, really," says Andes. "The sad thing was he had the responsibility of being the family's provider. Then after Jay and I left because of his idiosyncratic behaviour, he got a head injury while we were making ... *Dr Sardonicus*."

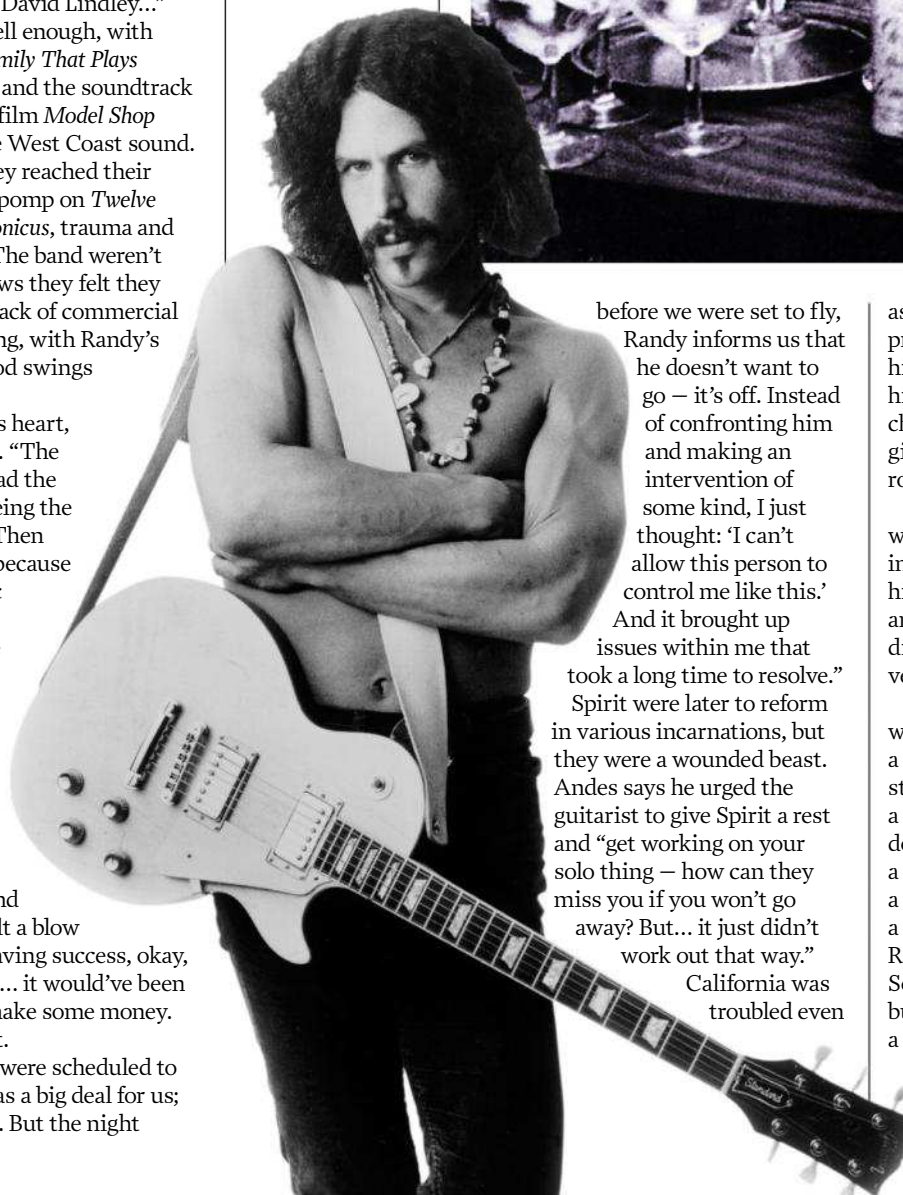
"Looking back, I wish we'd had the skills to help Randy through that period, rather than just running away from it. Jay and I leaving really dealt a blow to the band. Not having success, okay, but for Randy, well... it would've been so much nicer to make some money. We were all in debt."

"I remember we were scheduled to tour Japan. This was a big deal for us; we were so excited. But the night



Spirit Guide: The Family That Plays Together (top) and Clear (above).

Randy California: the heart and soul of Spirit.



before we were set to fly, Randy informs us that he doesn't want to go — it's off. Instead of confronting him and making an intervention of some kind, I just thought: 'I can't allow this person to control me like this.' And it brought up issues within me that took a long time to resolve." Spirit were later to reform in various incarnations, but they were a wounded beast. Andes says he urged the guitarist to give Spirit a rest and "get working on your solo thing — how can they miss you if you won't go away? But... it just didn't work out that way."

California was troubled even

as ...*Dr Sardonicus* brought its prescriptions. David Briggs, famed for his work with Neil Young, had been hired as producer. He was a forceful character, and his affair with Andes' girlfriend while the band were on the road didn't help the mood music.

"Randy blossomed as the main writer, but Jay and I felt disenfranchised in the process, like the project got hijacked away from us. Randy and John and David were going off in their own direction. You could see cracks in the veneer starting to appear."

"What really made things dramatic was Randy's accident. He fell off a horse, which he was riding on a paved street. Fell and fractured his skull, got a concussion. Anyway, he didn't follow doctor's orders, and we were all doing a lot of drugs and psychedelics. And a lot of coke back then. A lot. So it was a highly charged time, and I'm not sure Randy's wiring came back altogether. So not only was there all this drama, but we happened to be making a fucking brilliant record! One of those peak energy things, I guess..."

So did the drugs help or hinder the creativity?



GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The Song Remains The Same: Robert Plant visits Heart after their set in Milton Keynes in the 80s. From left: Ann Wilson, Robert Plant, Nancy Wilson, Mark Andes, Denny Carmassi, Howard Leese.

Spirit drinking spirits. In a spirited fashion.

“I listen to some of the stuff we did, and I can hear my young self trying to sound like a jazz musician, not quite understanding the depth required!”
Mark Andes

“When it came to recording, we... I was going to say we were a little more responsible, but no, we weren’t [laughs]. It was just an ongoing deal, the drugs. Not that we were the most drugged-out band I’ve been in, to be honest. But we... weren’t afraid to indulge. We were just regular pot-smoking, psychedelics-taking, coke-snorting guys! It worked on the record, but it might have broken the band up, is my sad insight.

“Jay and I put the band Jo Jo Gunne together, had a hit with *Run Run Run*, and then I got fired from that during the first tour. From my own band! Because they didn’t like my girlfriend! Talk about a Spinal Tap episode...”



EPIC/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The residual Spirit split in 1973, but California, Cassidy and others revived the name later in the 70s. This fell to pieces after John Locke invited Neil Young to play guitar on an encore, and California, sensing his turf threatened, shoved Young offstage in full view of the audience, infuriating Locke.

California stumbled on, both solo and as Spirit, but drowned in a surfing accident off Hawaii aged 45. His name was in the news recently as the Spirit estate took out a court injunction against Led Zeppelin, claiming *Stairway To Heaven* ripped off California’s track *Taurus* from their debut album. Zeppelin had supported Spirit in ’68.

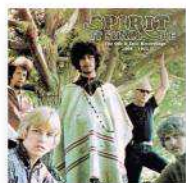
Page and Plant won the case but an appeal is imminent. Andes says it was “crazy being in the courtroom with Robert and Jimmy. Oh yeah, we used to hang out. But they didn’t remember. It’s cool, I’m a fan.”

Andes has had a successful career, spending a decade with Heart and playing with Colorado band Freefall too. He’s been asked to put together an all-star Spirit tribute for some festivals, and is mulling it over with friends from Eagles and Doobie Brothers.

“Maybe if we can do it justice,” he says. “I’m honoured to have had the Spirit experience. We cared so much about the music that we’d have these confrontational group therapy sessions and really get into each other’s spaces, but in a holistic way. There were a lot of emotions. And then the switch went off. But it was always good when we got back together.

“I’m excited if this box set spreads the word and exposes more people to Spirit’s music. It opened up my mind early on in my life, set things in motion, and I embraced it. I feel Spirit really did accomplish something.” ☺

The new collection, Spirit: It Shall Be, The Ode & Epic Recordings 1968-1972.



Spirit: It Shall Be, The Ode & Epic Recordings 1968-1972 is out now via Esoteric. See www.cherryred.co.uk/tag/spirit for more information.



YOUR SHOUT!

Bass player Mark Andes reckons they were “one of the first progressive bands”. So come on, how prog were Spirit really?

“If *Future Games* isn’t groundbreaking enough to be prog – one long piece with found sounds, TV and film dialogue, samples, sci-fi images, try *Spirit Of ’76*. I rest my case.”

Tony Malone

“Ed Cassidy played with Cannonball Adderley and Thelonious Monk prior to Spirit. ‘Mr Skin’ was 45 when their first LP came out. That’s pretty prog!”

Wedgepiece

“Superb band – *Twelve Dreams...* is an essential part of any self-respecting music fan’s collection as is *...Potato Land*. Proggy, jazzy, quirky – what’s not to love?”

Titus Jennings

“To me a hard call, spacey yes, avant-garde yes, prog sometimes maybe but I wouldn’t call them a prog band.”

Yserbius Gandalf

“To me, if I’m being picky, Spirit were more psychedelic rock than prog rock. But the *Twelve Dreams Of Doctor Sardonicus* in particular is great music whatever label you stick on it. And a concept album recorded in 1970 with 12 strong and varied tracks that meld into each other? That’s prog enough for me!”

Dave Loweth

“Randy California was a gifted songwriter, and Spirit’s music evolved just as any other group. *Twelve Dreams...*, their fourth release, was excellent and had prog written all over it. To some it may be labelled pop, but the themes and song structures were proggy, at least to me.”

Steve Foy

“Their album *...Potato Land* is even weirder than both *Tales From Topographic Oceans* and *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*.”

Ian Pope

“I’d say they’re more psychedelic, but they did get sorta proggy on tracks like *Space Child*, which starts really spacey, then veers into jazz-rock.”

Sean Rovaldi

“Isn’t there some kind of ‘grandfather clause’ that means most psychedelic rock is considered ‘proto-prog’ by default? Because there should be.”

Ben L Connor

“No.”

Steve Harrison

“They definitely helped build the genre, like all early psych/prog bands of the era.”

Charles Moss

“*Future Games* was certainly progressive having tracks that flowed into each other forming a whole piece.”

David Jeffrey

“Their first LP was an important part of my soundtrack while growing up in SoCal in the late 60s. Though a few years before what we now think of as prog emerged, I still think their blending of rock, jazz, and some classical motifs was quite progressive at the time. Still love the record. Shame they floundered so badly later on.”

Jesse Fisher

“Thank you, you good folks at the Prog office! For once a sensible suggestion. Well okay, they are best labelled as psychedelic, but close enough. A great band.”

Kari Hautokoski

The Fierce foursome
feel the fun on new
album *The Euphoric*.



"Live shows should be joyous, inclusive – fun, happy and up, and RoSFest was one of the best we've ever done."

Kevin Feazey



The Joy of Sets

A string of major live shows has strengthened their instrumental chops, and now Northampton's finest **The Fierce And The Dead** offer up *The Euphoric*, an album that'll take you back as it moves them forward. **Matt Stevens** and **Kev Feazey** show us their happy faces.

Joybringer: Grant Moon **Images:** Kevin Nixon

Last May, The Fierce And The Dead played RoSFest, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The visa application progress was long and arduous, and to prove their identity they actually scanned in and sent off every feature they'd ever had in *Prog*. Initially they were denied, but after a second attempt and a stressful interview at the American embassy, they were finally rubber-stamped. That's a lot of trouble and a long way to go for one show, even one of the premier neo/symphonic events. TFATD were something of a wild card on a bill headlined by Neal Morse. Even as they went onstage, at 11am before a room of nearly 800 people, the four Northampton boys had no clue how their odd, fluid blend of post-, math- and prog rock would go down.

Two tunes into their set, guitarist Matt Stevens broke a string. Rather than reach for his back-up axe, he pulled a new string out of his back pocket and restrung his Telecaster, right there and then. Kev Feazey, the band's bassist and producer-in-chief, sounds proud as he recalls it. "Me and Steve [Cleaton, their other guitarist] just had a little chat with the audience while Matt did it. I think they wondered what we were doing, because they're used to these big, professional prog bands and here are these four English blokes saying, 'Hello! How are you?' But this is what we do, it puts everybody at ease and we went down surprisingly well. Live shows should be joyous, inclusive – fun, happy and up, and RoSFest was one of the best we've ever done."

And eight years into their career, they've done a few. Looking back at their CV, the breadth of the shows they've done is unusual: slots at HRH Prog, ArcTanGent, Summer's End and, just this April, Hawkwind's Easter event, Hawkeaster. Then there's their diverse catalogue of support dates: PFM, Slayer's Dave Lombardo, The Aristocrats, Frost*. The night before we meet them, they supported Stick Men at The Robin 2 in Bilton. Pat Mastelotto offered to help TFATD drummer Stuart Marshall set up, and tuned his snare for him. Later, Tony Levin complimented Stevens on their sound, and he still can't quite believe it happened. "It was just nuts! King Crimson were my heroes when I was a teenager, and Tony Levin's just told me my band's got a good sound. They were nice guys, no ego, just there for the music. When I get a bit older, I want to be as cool as they are."

Among the Stick Men's crowd was a comforting contingent of TFATD T-shirts, as there was at Ramblin' Man back in 2016, when they opened the whole festival, almost by mistake. "On the main stage it was bands like Whitesnake, Black Stone Cherry and Europe," says Stevens, "but our stage was the first one to open and we were the first act on. All of a sudden everyone came over to watch us — there were people right over the horizon. We'd had a really long soundcheck so we sounded good, and we went down weirdly well with this more traditional classic rock audience."

As a solo artist, Stevens was renowned as an early adopter of social media as a promotional tool. Similarly, this band's following has built organically online over recent years. "It always amazes me to turn up somewhere you've never been before and there's a bloke in your T-shirt," he says. "Our fanbase is this really cool, culty thing. They're all connected, everybody knows each other. It's grown to the point that they're there for us whether we're playing with Frost* or at a space rock festival like Sonic Rock Solstice."

As we speak, pre-orders for their joyful new album *The Euphoric* are healthy, and they're on course to cover production costs. And damn right too: their third long-player is not just TFATD's strongest record to date, but something of a high-water mark for modern, thinky, instrumental prog. While it's not noodly, it's packed with sublime musicianship, richly detailed compositions and textured arrangements, all with a retro, 80s aesthetic. *The Euphoric* captures the big personality of the band, their geeky cultural fetishes and musical influences past and present, from Crimson to Faith No More to St Vincent.

Many of their gigs were earned off the back of the 2015 EP *Magnet*, and as a result, they had less time to focus on writing the follow-up. *The Euphoric* was assembled sporadically throughout 2016, recorded over 2017 and finished this February. This time, they spent a few quid on studios, at the insistence of Kev Feazey, who's a sound engineer by trade.

"I know what a good studio can do for you psychologically as a musician," he tells us, "and I wanted this band to have that experience, to live in that space, with a choice of five snare drums, different cymbals, where you're just there to be creative and all the phones are off. It's more expensive and it's a gamble, because we're not Fleetwood Mac! You can get by on goodwill and energetic live shows, but in the end it's important to create good art. Without that as a foundation, everything else is pointless. We decided to remove all the time limits and get it right."

"We've never focused on the details as much as we have on this one," adds Stevens. "We pared the sound down on the other records rather than chucking lots into it, but this time we've experimented a lot more. We tried to get interesting guitar sounds, worked more on the effects, the reverbs, and we changed the way we tuned, all to get us to think in a different way. And for the first time synths are central to some of the tracks. We were trying lots of new things."

Opening the album is the concussive one-two hit of *Truck* and 1991, both crystallisations of everything TFATD are about — chugging riffs, melodic interludes, rocky guitar earworms. Muscly and smart, now with added keys. "You can tell from *Truck* that we're big fans of Can," says Feazey. "I love playing that live. That big riff bounces along, we let it boil and then there's a big punch at the end. It's really satisfying — you can feel the energy come up in the room. I think we really nailed that, and 1991."

Named after their teenage Year Zero, the latter tune was inspired by the four's 'psychedelic' adolescence, growing up together as friends in Rushden, Northampton, listening to Ozric Tentacles, Soundgarden, Nirvana et al, doing what boys do. Their considerable musical chemistry is down to this communal heritage.

"Take *Dug Town*," says Stevens. "That's led by a Mopho, a cut-down version of the [classic 80s synth] Prophet 5, a very 80s sound. We'd never done a synth-led track before, and there's an indie rock ending to it, like Pavement but heavier. Because we've been friends so long, we can say, 'Can you do that Pavement bit but with more of a Radiohead guitar tone? Stu, can you make the toms a bit more Jane's Addiction?'"

"Or," Feazey chips in, "I've got this chord sequence — I was thinking of it like the Melvins. Let's go!" Matt came in with this John Carpenter-style keyboard sequence for the title track. We'd all been listening to Pond and Jesu. So somebody looks at it from a different point of view and you end up with something different."

As well as Carpenter, there's a hint of ambient pioneers Boards Of Canada in that title piece. Its eerie synth line edges in and out of tune creepily, woozily, then the headbanging kicks in and we get nearer Faith No More territory. Not all that euphoric on the surface, but then the album title wasn't meant that way. "*The Euphoric* is all about making people happy and bringing them joy through music," says Stevens, "especially with the world the way it is at the moment. Even if I go to see Slayer or something, there's still that joyous, euphoric feeling you get from the experience. And if you don't make it enjoyable, then what have you got? Music should be inclusive, should bring everybody in."

With its Atari-esque vector graphics, the nostalgic video to *Truck* will certainly bring joy to 40-something listeners who haunted their local arcade as a kid. Mark Buckingham's retro-futurist artwork lends to the vibe, and 48k — a cosmic/metallic mash-up featuring a spoken-word cameo from labelmate Rob Ramsay — takes its name from

"You can get by on goodwill and energetic live shows, but in the end it's important to create good art. Without that as a foundation, everything else is pointless."

Kevin Feazey



TFATD, L-R: Steve Cleaton, Matt Stevens, Kev Feazey, Stuart Marshall.

the RAM capacity of that era-defining personal computer, the ZX Spectrum. “We’re into all that nerdy stuff,” says Stevens. “Computer games like *Chuckie Egg*, old horror films, box sets like *Stranger Things*. All the stuff we grew up with as kids. When you’re in difficult times, one of the things you do is go back to childhood, to those comforting things. I think that’s why all this is so popular.”

But far from regressing musically, the band seem more honed and refined. Plangent arpeggio lines intertwine at the start of *Dancing Robots*, leading into funk rock, Rage Against The Machine-style fire and — the clincher — some whopping Melvins-esque guitar notes that drone, but, refreshingly, don’t outstay their welcome. The brief, motorik *Cadet Opal* has a fiendish time signature and the tight, gated guitar hooks of *Verbose* evoke one of the band’s current shared favourites, St Vincent. There’s a whiff of Floyd to the beautifully ornate midsection of closer *Parts 7 And 8*.

“That’s Steve,” says Stevens. “He’s our secret weapon. Steve has a far better ear for detail than I have. He does things I’d never have thought of, like on that tune. He does this specific run that varies and grows, and it’s so subtle. I don’t do subtle.”

“We’ve really tried to make each song its own thing,” offers Feazey, “to have its own sound, and the fact it’s us playing it is what gives it continuity. And because we’ve really worked on the material, we don’t have to overplay. I can say to myself, ‘This riff is great, all I have to do is play it and this room will go.’”

Again, it’s a broad section of rooms that have been going, be they full of math-rockers, space-rockers or neo-phytes. At one point their lack of a singer might have been seen as a limiting factor. Au contraire, says Stevens.

“With no vocals, you get away with more, people can’t pigeonhole you as much. I mean, not many bands have done Summer’s

End, ArcTanGent and have also supported Hawkwind! If

we had a guy grunting or singing melodically, either one would stop us getting other types of gigs, unless they’re a Mike Patton type who can do everything.

“And there was no grand plan to it. It’s just when we started the band, none of our friends could sing! But all these big gigs have been really good for us. They’ve forced us to up our game. Big crowds don’t freak us out any more. We just love playing and making people happy.”

Along with the album, there’s a DVD on the way of that RoSFest set, they’re braving the visa process again with a view to going back to the States, and doors are opening for them in Europe. Not bad for four mates from Rushden who started playing for fun. “Our expectations were always low!” says Stevens. “We do this for the joy of it. It’s snowballed in a way we never could’ve expected. Steve said recently that if it all stopped now, we’ve already achieved more than we ever could’ve imagined.”

And, maybe most joyous of all, Feazey reckons their flush of success has made their friendship stronger. “When we were over for RoSFest we were driving through Gettysburg one evening and it all hit me. For me to have this experience with three guys I’ve known since we were 15... it was such a bonding experience.

Our music brought us here. It’s amazing.” ☺

The Euphoric is out on May 18 via Bad Elephant. See www.fierceandthedead.com.



Back To The Future

Amorphis, L-R: Santeri Kallio, Jan Rechberger, Olli-Pekka Laine, Tomi Joutsen, Tomi Koivusaari, Esa Holopainen.



Reuniting with producer Jens Bogren for their 13th album, **Amorphis'** new release may be their most grandiose and cinematic yet, while also harking back to their roots. As guitarist **Esa Holopainen** and vocalist **Tomi Joutsen** tell *Prog*, even they are surprised by just how formidable *Queen Of Time* sounds.

Words: Phil Weller



When Finnish progressive metallers Amorphis began to record their last album *Under A Red Cloud* with renowned producer Jens Bogren, they were well aware of his reputation. Bogren, who has helmed recording sessions for everyone from Opeth and Katatonia to Haken, Pain Of Salvation and Leprous, rules proceedings with an iron fist. Soon, the band found themselves working long, hard days in the studio. "Working with Jens is a masochistic way of recording an album," guitarist Esa Holopainen reflects.

But though their 10-hour working days were tiring, the results were undeniable. Released in 2015, the record was lauded by press and fans alike as something of a return to form. With their extreme metal heritage lurking between triumphant folk sounds and soaring melodies, they wrapped up a powerful package of songs with as much musical muscle as intelligence.

For their 13th album, *Queen Of Time*, the band were keen to reunite with Bogren. As Holopainen explains, Bogren's impact this time around was even greater than before.

"We learnt how to scratch the surface with *Under A Red Cloud*," he says. "This time we

lively but never contrived folk twists that broaden their musical palette. But there is one huge difference to *Queen Of Time*. Bogren has peppered the record with orchestras and choirs which thrust the tracks towards more gigantic and grandiose plains.

"When I first heard the album on some big speakers, I closed my eyes and was so proud of how huge some of the songs sounded. It gave me chills," beams vocalist Tomi Joutsen, his voice louder and stronger than Holopainen's gentle Finnish timbre. "The orchestra makes it sound so much bigger but also more interesting, too: when I was listening to the album, it felt like watching a movie."

Indeed, the vividness of the album, bolstered by Bogren's touch, is its biggest surprise. The producer's impact on *Queen Of Time* extends far beyond just his sprinklings of silver screen scores, though. As Joutsen explains, many of the subtleties in Bogren's production approach have helped galvanise the songs in ways that are still eye-opening for the band, even after nearly 30 years together. It's no wonder that Amorphis were so eager to once again go into the studio with a producer who has worked on over 100 albums since Katatonia's *Viva Emptiness* in 2003.

"The orchestra makes it sound so much bigger: when I was listening to the album, it felt like watching a movie."

Tomi Joutsen

knew each other's working methods a lot better so we knew what to expect. Jens also had a lot more ideas regarding his vision for this album and I think that's obvious when you listen to it. You can hear how much bigger it sounds with Jens producing."

There are hints about 'negative' experiences while locked in the studio together, but that's a natural consequence of the task at hand – when spending strenuous days in a confined space together, stress can easily breed.

"Working in the studio isn't always fun," Holopainen openly admits, "but you have to be professional and focus on doing your best."

And it's clear that Bogren's tough love was something they felt was worth any occasional trouble and strain.

"Jens is extremely picky with everything when it comes to recording," the guitarist continues. "There were days where we'd end up recording nothing because something wasn't perfect. His way of producing is not for every band, but for us it worked really well."

The arsenal of this album is stacked with much of the usual Amorphis weaponry. There's typically brutal and driving drumming and plenty of guitar workouts, as well as

Joutsen says: "Sometimes it's very hard to find the right flow for a song, especially when we have a lot of different rhythmic structures. But Jens is really detailed with the tempos – he wanted to change the tempo inside songs. When he came to Finland for pre-production, the biggest thing was finding the right flow for each track. It's a small detail but we can really feel the difference. It's not something a lot of people think too much about."

While this is one of the most direct albums the band have released in years, the sweeping string sections and the dramatic, virtuous vibes that the choral embellishments drive into each song's personality give them a classier, epic edge. What's important, however, is that the orchestra, while adding power and grace, isn't the centrepiece.

"The guitars are still a really important part of the band; you can still hear them high in the mix," says Holopainen. "Sometimes when you hear a band are working with an orchestra, you fear everything will be hidden underneath it, but for us this is more for a musical flavour. It's not the main thing on the album."

Orchestras aside, the record also marks the return of a familiar face. Former bassist

Olli-Pekka Laine, who served a decade in the band from their inception until 2000, appearing on four albums, is now back in the fold. His return is sure to delight long-time Amorphis fans. For the band themselves, it was a move that made perfect sense.

Holopainen says, "It's definitely a great feeling having Olli-Pekka back. It gave us flashbacks to the times we had together 20 years ago when he was first in the band. It was sad that Niclas [Etelävuori] left, but that's life and there are no hard feelings between us. So Olli-Pekka was the only choice we had in our minds [to fill the position] and we were really happy that he wanted to come back. He definitely put his character into the

"With this album you can really hear the roots of the band," he states. "You can still hear a lot of the band's early death metal style on *Queen Of Time*."

"There's definitely a lot of typical Amorphis in the air of the album," Holopainen adds. "We always wanted our songs to have a musical storyline as well as a lyrical one, so there are a lot of songs that include heavier and more emotional parts too."

And for the guitarist, there's still great excitement to be found in the band challenging themselves. Their progressive ambitions shine through the album's atypical ebb and flow. "It's a nice thing when you start to rehearse a new song and you realise it isn't

"We always feel some kind of pressure before writing albums and going on tours," Joutsen confesses. "But in the end we're just six guys who want to play heavy metal. We're trying not to overthink things – this isn't rocket science. Every guy in the band can compose music so we always have lots of ideas and everyone is open-minded to new ideas."

"If you're trying to top something, it's impossible. Everything in art should come naturally: if you try to push it too hard, it can be a total disaster. With Jens in our team, we just took it day by day and trusted that we were doing the right thing."

For Holopainen, that collaborative spirit is essential. "It's the best part of the band," he

"We always wanted our songs to have a musical storyline as well as a lyrical one, so there are a lot of songs that include heavier and more emotional parts too."

Esa Holopainen

album, which is great. His bass playing brings another fresh flavour to *Queen Of Time*."

Some might assume that the added bite in the album's approach came in part with the bassist's return. In a way, his presence must have been a tangible reminder of the band's history, of their death metal lineage that years of musical experimentation has dampened a little. Joutsen, on the contrary, feels it all happened naturally, that no conscious decision to return to the beaten path of their early days was made. Either way, the vocalist is aware that a little bit of 90s-era Amorphis resurfaces across *Queen Of Time*'s 10 tempestuous tracks.

very obvious to play," Holopainen says. "That the song structures are unpredictable and you challenge yourself to listen to what's really going on. We want to keep the interest up in the songs so there's always drama within our music."

And dramatic it is. Even without the orchestrations and choirs, it's an album that balances the sum of its parts perfectly. With *Under A Red Cloud*, the band achieved something special. Though they felt the pressure of maintaining the momentum and acclaim with its follow-up, they relished rolling their sleeves up and simply writing some more great songs.

says. "We all have a good chemistry and we're able to talk to each other about music and understand the ideas we're trying to convey. We try to do everything very democratically – there isn't one leader who has the final say and I think that's why we've stayed together all these years. I think if you need a boss, you should take some other job instead."

With the Finnish act dishing out albums as good as this, they won't need to be donning suits any time soon. The stage is their office and an extensive run of tour dates awaits. ☺

Queen Of Time is out on May 18 via Nuclear Blast. See www.amorphis.net for details.



Time Traveller: the returning Olli-Pekka Laine (second from left) gives *Queen Of Time* added bite.



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THE RESURRECTION OF Joe Payne

It's been two years since **Joe Payne** left The Enid, and it's been a turbulent ride. Now reborn under the name **That Joe Payne**, he's releasing solo work that's heavily influenced by his experiences with mental health. Payne meets *Prog* to discuss the intra-band issues within The Enid, his love for musical theatre and how he brought himself back from the brink.

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Kevin Nixon

Joe Payne can pinpoint the day he knew he needed to get out of The Enid. It was April 3, 2016, 24 hours after the band had finished the UK tour for their last album, *Dust*. Payne remembers because he was in bed at the time, having a full-blown nervous breakdown.

"I was so weak I couldn't move, couldn't pick up my instruments," he says. "It felt like I had the flu, except I didn't have a temperature. That's the thing about depression. The symptoms are quite similar."

He knows now what was wrong, but at the time he had no clue. Since joining The Enid five years earlier, he had been pushing himself to his limits and he was exhausted. He had always been prone to anxiety, but that anxiety had graduated into constant panic attacks and worse. "I was freaking out," he says.

There were many issues at the root of his problems. The mental and physical pressure of writing and performing was one. So was the fact that he'd been unofficially anointed to help reinvent this most stately of bands as a modern 21st-century proposition in the face of resistance from sections of their fanbase. There was also the intra-band politics, largely centred around the imperious, imposing figure of Robert John Godfrey, the band's leader since the 1970s. But the biggest problem Joe Payne had was that he was in The Enid.

"I couldn't face producing another record with The Enid," he says. "I had no vision for the future, no vision of what we were going to do next." He pauses.

"I kind of felt that I would rather die than carry on."

There's no drama in his voice when he says this. He insists that things got so bad that he considered suicide. It's all laid out in his debut single, the swelling, eight-minute Queen-esque *I Need A Change*, released under the name That Joe Payne. '*Dear life, I'm leaving you,*' he sings on the opening lines, '*'cos I have no reason to stay.*'

"It's about anxiety, it's about depression, it's about the guilt you feel," he says. "You feel like you're a burden. You feel like people would be better off with you out of the picture."

We're sitting in the upstairs bar of The Lamplighter pub in Payne's adopted hometown of Northampton. He worked here in the pub for a year after his breakdown, to help get his head back together.

The Lamplighter is a 10-minute walk from The Lodge, his former band's studio-cum-commune. To outsiders, The Enid's set-up is unique and not a little strange. Anyone who joins is expected to move in for the good of the band. For Payne, the novelty of that situation wore off long before he left the group. "That environment, for me, was quite poisonous," he says. "I couldn't avoid the people I needed to avoid."

Payne was a surprising choice to become The Enid's first dedicated frontman. He's young, good-looking and lively, a world away from the band's studied, neoclassical image. But that's exactly what Robert John Godfrey wanted.

Payne grew up listening to pop music and musical theatre. He knew of The Enid from his dad's record collection, but he'd never listened to them before he was invited to watch them play in his hometown

of Chesham. He was spellbound by it. "I felt like I'd finally found a band who matched the kind of music I had in my head," he says.

He and guitarist Max Read were seeing each other before he joined the band, but it was Godfrey himself who asked him to come onboard. "I don't want it to sound like I shagged my way into the band," he says, laughing, "cos I didn't."

Godfrey told Payne that he needed to move in with the rest of the band. The singer had studied business management at university, so it was a win-win situation for both parties. "I was being promised a career in music,

a home and the chance to spend more time with Max," he says. "So I moved up to Northampton and started a whole new life."

While many fans loved what Payne brought to The Enid, others really didn't. He received hate mail from some diehards. "I think they were a bit threatened by me bringing something new to it," he says. "Maybe I threatened the masculinity of the band by being too flamboyant. Or maybe they didn't like my voice because it was too poppy."

Payne makes no bones about being a pop fan. He grew up listening to rock's great theatrical performers — Freddie Mercury, Peter Dinklage, Kate Bush, David Bowie — but he has a deep love of mainstream music too.

"I couldn't face producing another record with The Enid. I had no vision for the future, no vision of what we were going to do next. I kind of felt that I would rather die than carry on."

The Future's Bright: Joe
Payne has found his way
out of the darkness.



The Greatest Showman:
Payne takes cues from
Queen for his solo sound.



“I was so weak I couldn’t move, couldn’t pick up my instruments. It felt like I had the flu. That’s the thing about depression: the symptoms are quite similar.”

“I felt like it wasn’t appropriate to talk about the other people that I liked because it might have been sort of embarrassing — not so much for me, but for the other people that I worked with.” He laughs. “They wouldn’t have wanted people to know that I mostly listen to Britney Spears, Celine Dion and Whitney Houston. But I do.”

Payne was a whirlwind of charisma onstage. At one early gig, he whipped off his shirt to reveal a vest that said, ‘I’ve Been Naughty.’ It was deliberately provocative, though fully in keeping with The Enid’s iconoclastic spirit.

“It’s not really in my nature to do that, but we were always encouraged by Robert to be provocative,” he says. “And if we weren’t going to do it, he was going to do it anyway.”

Payne has a complex relationship with Godfrey. While he acknowledges that it was the older man who gave him his break, there were evidently strains between them — strains which began to take their toll on the singer’s mental health.

He won’t divulge exact details of what went wrong, but the fact he felt like he was being kept on a short leash, creatively, played a part. “There were a lot of things I wanted to do as an artist that they weren’t happy to do and tried to censor out of me. Fair enough, you’re maintaining an audience you’ve carried for 40 years and you don’t want to take the piss. But it’s not like I was trying to do anything completely different. I wasn’t going to start doing Mariah Carey runs.”

Payne says he wanted to start a parallel solo career when he was in the band. “But I began to realise I wasn’t going to be given the space to do that stuff without being interfered with.”

Still, it seemed from the outside that he was being handed the keys to the kingdom — even more so when Godfrey stepped back from the band after being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s.

“Yeah, I was being displayed to people as the new leader of the future,” he says. “But I knew deep down that I was never actually going to be allowed to lead. Robert is a very strong character. You have to ask yourself, did he really want everything he claimed for me, or did he just want to be seen to be saying, ‘These guys are moving forward with my legacy, and it’s all thanks to me that they’re doing it.’”

It is his band, though. Surely he’s entitled to do that.

“That’s fair enough,” Payne concedes. “To be honest, he should probably have just stayed in the band and carried on.”

Surely his health means he couldn’t.

“Well, he’s come back and done the odd show here and there. What he’s capable of, I don’t know. I don’t see him any more.”

How did you break the news to him that you were going to leave?

“I didn’t. I wasn’t prepared to talk to him about it.”

How did he find out, then?

“He obviously found out by default that I wasn’t willing to carry on any more. I spoke to him through Max.”

Payne made the decision to leave The Enid in July 2016, three months after his breakdown started. His departure was tough on Max Read. The pair’s relationship complicated matters further. When Payne left, Read was still a member of the band. “Max was caught in the middle,” he says. “It felt like I was losing everything, but I thought I was going to lose Max as well.”

In the end, Read left The Enid two months after Payne, along with drummer Dave Storey. The singer slowly began to piece his life — and

his mind — back together. Moving out of The Lodge helped. When things got overwhelming, he would sit himself down in front of the TV in his new house and binge-watch Netflix shows. He’d had a little bit of counselling, but working at The Lamplighter gave him a focus. “It gave me a social environment, gave me my confidence back and allowed me to be okay with who I am and not what I was expected to be,” he says.

He’s feeling much better today, though he still has his wobbles. Working on new music was part of the healing process. He’d had *I Need A Change* in his head for a year before he recorded it. He originally planned for it to be a straightforward four-minute number in the vein of Madonna’s gothic pop song *Frozen*. “I didn’t realise it was going to be quite so long,” he says.

He released the song under the name That Joe Payne, a monicker he came up with for the solo-project-that-never-was while he was still a member of The Enid. “From my point of view, people were pointing at me and going, ‘It’s *that* Joe Payne that’s ruined my favourite band,’ ‘Did you hear what *that* Joe Payne has done now.’ And I felt very self-conscious. It was just me blowing up the negativity to something that was bigger than it actually was because of the anxiety.”

Now he’s in a better place, the phrase has become an expression of defiance. “It’s now more about me expressing that I’m *that* Joe Payne that is going to have success, *that* Joe Payne who you’re going to be forced to notice.”

He’s still working on his debut solo album, which he aims to release early next year. He says it’s going to be quite a long record, “cos there’s a lot going on”. The songs are all about his own experiences of mental health problems. “Since I left The Enid, almost everything I’ve written has been inspired by that.”

Payne is pleased that The Enid have carried on without him, though guitarist Jason Ducker and keyboard player Zack Bullock are the only official frontline members. He knows that the fans of The Enid who hated what they think the band became during Payne’s tenure won’t be along for the ride. “I don’t want my fans and The Enid fans to feel divided, like they have to pick a side,” he says. “That’s not fair, because they’ve invested a lot into us. Out of fairness to the fans, I don’t want to make it their problem. I will say that Jason and Zack are still good friends of mine.”

Ironically, the last time Payne saw Godfrey was just a few hours before he meets *Prog*. Though Max Read is no longer in The Enid, the guitarist still lives and works at The Lodge. Payne stayed there last night. When he got up this morning, he bumped into his former bandmate.

“I’d gone to get a glass of water,” says Payne. “He happened to corner me to say hello. I said hello back. And I subsequently went to another room.”

He doesn’t know what he would have done two years ago, but it would have been very different from what he did now. “The old Joe Payne had a lot of self-doubt,” he says. “The new Joe Payne has learned from that and is going, ‘Fuck it, I’m going to do what I want to do.’ Because if that doesn’t make me happy, then why am I bothering?”

I Need A Change is out now via That Joe Payne. See www.thatjoepayne.com for more information.

Prog is delighted to report that the universe was not destroyed by Gazpacho's last album, *Molok*. At least, not yet. In case you missed the engrossing record back in 2015, it ended with a noise that would generate a random number when used in a CD player, and if that number correlated to the position of all electrons in the universe, it could ultimately wipe out the world.

The Oslo sextet aren't quite so reckless on their follow-up album *Soyuz*, thankfully. Instead of gleefully toying with the existence of mankind, they're concentrating on the concept of being frozen in time.

It's another heady, cerebral effort from the deep-thinking Norwegians, with their unique brew of art rock as always providing a lush foundation underneath all the metaphysics.

"I was thinking the other day, when my daughter was a two-year-old girl, they're great fun to be around and they're very cute and you can carry them around and they'll do what you say," says affable keyboardist Thomas Anderson through Skype from his home studio in Oslo.

"And now that she's 10, I realise that two-year-old is dead. I've got a 10-year-old in place of the two-year-old, but the two-year-old herself is gone. Even atoms that

made up that two-year-old, I think, are basically gone. So in the constant changes we're shedding skin all the time, and you can never hang on to anything. Even your body, the body you're inhabiting now, is not the same body that was born those years ago. So I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if you could pause the world?'"

One of the main motifs of the record is the ill-fated flight of Russian spacecraft Soyuz 1 back in 1967. Cosmonaut Colonel Vladimir Komarov, who was the only person on the mission, died after the descent module crashed back into Earth after a parachute failure.

Releasing 10 albums in 15 years is no mean feat, but when that canon includes scholarly concept records about the universe, consciousness and just about everything else, extra plaudits are in order. **Gazpacho's** latest effort *Soyuz* addresses the idea of being frozen in time, and it's another welcome dose of art rock from the Norwegians. *Prog* finds out more...

Words: Chris Cope **Images:** Justin Lambert

Gazpacho, L-R: Robert Johansen, Jan Henrik Ohme, Kristian Torp, Thomas Anderson, Mikael Krømer, Jon-Arne Vilbo.

“We’re always striving towards making the perfect album, and until we do, we’re not going to give up.”

Thomas Anderson

But the history books say the mission was doomed from the get-go, with Komarov knowing he was unlikely to make it back alive.

“This was back in the Cold War, and the leaders in the Kremlin wanted to get into space quickly because the Americans were

doing very well,” Anderson says. “But the engineers had a list of 200 problems with the spacecraft, and they said, ‘We have to resolve all of these 200 problems or this thing can’t fly,’ and the leadership says, ‘Well, we’re sending it up anyway tomorrow.’

“But he went anyway, knowing full well that this was not going to end well, no matter what. And he became frozen in time, as sort of an iconic cosmonaut victim of this crazy space race. But at the same time, it’s almost like Schrödinger’s cat. When he was in his little capsule, he was sort of 50 per cent alive and 50 per cent dead already. There was no chance it was going to work.

“So it became a great image for the idea of being out of time, because the guy was alone in the little capsule, much like you are in your skull — you’re alone in a capsule too and you’re orbiting the Earth in that capsule, and you’re waiting for this inevitable fiery crash. 



● A Moment In ime

"So this is sort of linked to this whole loose concept of being frozen in time, which the album is about. It makes me think a hell of a lot more than many of our other albums, and it's difficult to grasp, but at the same time, it makes perfect sense to me."

"Time is extremely fascinating if you try to be philosophical about it," singer Jan Henrik Ohme adds. "We've had all the good times – people talking about the good times of, 'Ah, remember when...' You can't freeze it. You can be in a position or a situation where you think, 'I just want to stay here forever,' but you can't. It's absolutely merciless. It just goes on, and boof, it's gone."

The album was recorded in Oslo and Fredrikstad, a city closer to the Swedish border, with former member Robert Johansen back behind the drum kit following the departure of Lars Erik Asp last year. It was mixed by John Rausch, who has pop VIPs Taylor Swift and P!nk in his credits, which helped to bring a crisp aura to its sound.

Ohme says *Soyuz* was recorded the "modern way – when you can, where you can".

"We're all in full-time jobs," he adds, nodding to the time constraints of juggling employment with life as a musician. "I manage a department at Sony Music. Thomas has his own studio and has tonnes of commercials to do. Michael [Krømer, violin] is a computer engineer – his company invents new computer chips, they're a huge company. Kristian [Torp, bass] is working at a venue in Fredrikstad, doing everything from being the sound engineer to doing backline tech."

The sound of *Soyuz* is yet another progression in the band's weighty, prolific back catalogue, which spans an impressive 10 albums in just 15 years.

"*Molok* was quieter, it was more introspective. This is a more outgoing album. It's noisier, it's got lots more musical ideas crammed into it, it has a greater sense of space and it has a bigger sense of excitement," says Anderson.

"This one is mixed in between the future, past and present and it's a more current album. And by that I don't in any way mean political or current affairs, which doesn't interest me, but it's an album that sort of jumps out of the speakers at you more than *Molok* did, and it's a continuation of the Gazpacho sound. It sounds more modern, as it has more electronic beats and sounds."

Take the lead track *Soyuz One*, for instance, which throbs with man-made thumps, while *Exit Suite* enjoys violin-led soundscapes grounded by punctuated clock ticks. The orchestral *Sky Burial* occasionally channels the melodies of Scott Walker, while the creepy *Hypomania* dips into Muse-esque grandeur.

In typical Gazpacho style, though, the eight tracks manage to juggle gloomy melancholy with uplifting melody. It can be unnerving at times, yet wholly emboldening too.

"We don't rely on Gazpacho to feed us, we don't need money in the band," Anderson says. "We sort of decided that as long as we're interested, then probably other people will be interested too. And at the same time, music has become cheap. By that, I mean if you go to



Jan Henrik Ohme, Gazpacho's singer.



"We don't have a Wakeman, or the long, fast, technical solos, or the 'look at me' musicians. We're more a collective that wants to get the best out of all of the members."

Jan Henrik Ohme

Spotify now, you can listen to anything you like, and there's 1,000 new albums coming out every day by different bands.

"So I think if we're going to be releasing albums, we need to make an album that could only have been made by us. So it's unique in the sense that every time we make an album it could only be Gazpacho that made it, and as long as those criteria apply, then none of the albums will top any of the other ones – they're all different aspects of the same thing."

It's fair to say the Norwegians – whose line-up is completed by guitarist Jon-Arne Vilbo – have done a grand job of maintaining their own unique sound. The group was formed by Anderson, Ohme and Vilbo back in 1996, the band name snatched from a screensaver that featured the Marillion song

title, rather than the cold soup. But it wasn't until 2003 that their first full-length album *Bravo* was released.

The floodgates opened after that, and by 2010 they had already unleashed six records, including the critically acclaimed *Night* and *Tick Tock*, both of which helped to crystallise the artful, classy Gazpacho sound we're familiar with.

"When we started out, we hadn't found Gazpacho yet," Ohme says. "The first album was us getting to know each other and what we could and could not do. We don't have a Wakeman, or the long, fast, technical solos, or the 'look at me' musicians. We're more a collective that wants to get the best out of all of the members."

"We'd search for a sound, and it took us until 2007 to find it, I think. We first found it on the albums *Night* and *Tick Tock*, and after doing two of those concept albums with many long songs, we kind of went back to, 'Right, if we try to make our sound now what Gazpacho sounds like, but make shorter songs again,' and we made *Missa Atropos* and *March Of Ghosts*. We kind of dabbled going back to playing with shorter songs, and then we went back to the longer concept albums."

"We're trying to move within what we can do, so that we don't keep making the same album every time."

Meanwhile, as *Prog* chats to Anderson through the marvels of video technology, the musician shows off his surroundings, including a view outside the door of his studio. It's been snowing heavily, and it paints a picturesque image of life in Norway.

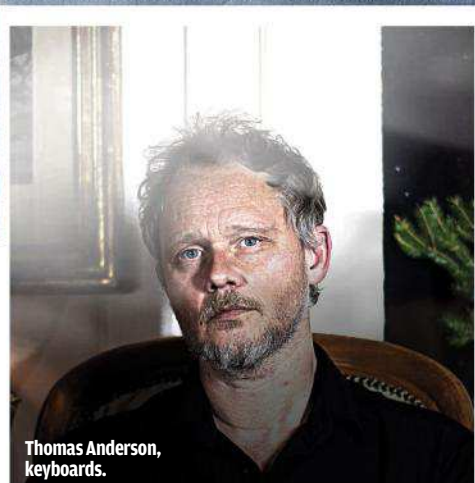
degrees north. "I'm a different person now from when the snow is gone and the sun is out. Now it's pitch black when I leave the office and it's pitch black when I go to the office. Of course that impacts you and your state of mind. You can listen to a Norwegian artist, even pop artists now, and listen and hear inspiration or call it the sound of Norway.

summer house, and that we can go to cabins in the mountains and write stuff. It gives us access to shitloads of nice scenery and privacy, because a lot of these cabins in the mountains can be so remote that you can make as much noise as you possibly want."

So where are Gazpacho at in 2018? They're performing perhaps their lengthiest shows yet around Europe this summer, including



Six Appeal: "As long as we're interested," say Gazpacho, "other people will be too."



Thomas Anderson, keyboards.

For a nation with a population of just over five million, the Scandinavian country has been punching above its weight in the prog scene for years. From Leprous, Ihsahn and Jaga Jazzist to Major Parkinson, Wobler and Enslaved, there's a hell of a lot going on in the Nordic country at all ends of the experimental spectrum.

"The climate and the light will impact you," Ohme says, reflecting on living at 59

"If you listen to some of our music, it's funny, because we often have Arabic scales in some of our songs, and more Russian scales as well, if there's such a thing. We use some of the same scales that some of the Russian composers are famous for. The reason for that is that both Thomas and I love classical Russian composers.

"We try to pull in forms of old music into our songs one way or another. Michael on the violin is great at what he does – we've incorporated some ancient Norwegian folk tunes and melodies that we haven't written, but it's like trad Norwegian from the 1500s, 1600s, 1700s, and put them in the music."

Anderson, however, isn't quite so sure about how much of Norway seeps into Gazpacho's songwriting. "I don't feel that it influences us in any way other than we have access to my

a stop-off at the Be Prog! My Friend festival in Barcelona and a gig in London in May, with the set due to span their back catalogue.

And you wouldn't bet against the Norwegians continuing their prolific run of form with more new material in the near future. Their quest for musical perfection, it seems, continues in earnest.

"We're always striving towards making the perfect album, and until we do, we're not going to give up," Anderson says.

"I think the closest to a perfect album in the world is Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love*," he adds. "If we ever top that one, then I'll let you know and I'll be saying, 'That's it for me, thank you very much.'" ☺

Soyuz is available now via Kscope. For more information, see www.gazpachoworld.com.

Toundra, with Esteban Girón
second from right.



TURBULENT

PREMIÓNGO DE AVESCUA



Despite being born from a crisis of confidence and a battle with depression, **Toundra's** new album *Vortex* is far from bleak. The Spanish post-rock instrumentalists have instead crafted an album of cinematic scope, bursting with hope and self-belief. Frontman **Esteban Girón** opens his heart to *Prog*.

Words: Dannii Leivers

// "I'm a sad guy normally. I don't like to say depression, because I think depression is a very strong word, but during the months we wrote *Vortex*, I was at the gates of a depression. I decided not to open that gate. The good thing about music is that it can save your life. I wanted to do an album that was going to help me, to be the reason to keep walking."

Toundra guitarist and pianist Esteban Girón is in the mood to talk. It's nearing the end of a long, emotionally draining day of press interviews. Although he's speaking to *Prog* today to promote the Spanish instrumental quartet's fifth record *Vortex*, it's also the first time Girón's felt able to discuss the mental health issues that took hold of him during the months leading up to and during the writing and recording of the album. Speaking down the phone from Madrid, it's immediately clear that the last several months have been anything but easy. As such, the conversation quickly takes on a sense of therapy, with Girón keen to share his painful experiences in the hope it might help others.

"There's a lot of light on the album, the most melodic parts we've ever done," he says, recalling the writing sessions that saw the band decamp to his remote country home in northern Spain. "But on the other hand, Alex [Pérez, drummer] was saying, 'Are you okay? There's melody, but it's sad.' I was like, 'Okay, you're discovering something here.'"

Coining that dark, introspective period his "30-year-old crisis", the frustration of having to hold down a regular job

"I started to think, 'Okay, this was a post-teenage dream. Maybe it's time to close the door and start another kind of life.'"

on top of the band made Girón feel like he was failing to accomplish his lifelong dream of being a musician. Matters spiralled and after losing his spark and confidence, he almost ended up dissolving the band he'd formed over 11 years ago. Ultimately, though, it was Toundra's music, a brave and sprawling, vocal-free amalgamation of progressive and post-rock, that provided the remedy.

"All my life has been focused on this band, playing in Europe and making records," he explains. "Then you see your friends and family and they're happier than you. You feel alone, even when you're with a lot of people in the same room. I'm the musician I want to be but I don't see a lot of money, so I started to think, 'Okay, this was a post-teenage dream. Maybe it's time to close the door and start another kind of life.' But after thinking that for months and not being social, I saw all the music we've made, all the places we've played and all the things we've lived together. I thought, 'What am I doing? I've been playing music since I was seven years old. If I don't do this, I'm going to be dead.'" 

FLOW

They may not have a vocalist to express their world views and political standpoints, but Toundra – completed by drummer Alex Pérez, bassist and synth player Alberto Tocados, and guitarist David Paños – identify as being a political band: “Everything you do in your everyday life is political and has political meaning.”

Girón maintains that each of their albums *I, II, III* (named in a tongue-in-cheek tribute to Led Zeppelin) and especially 2015’s *IV* were influenced by volatile political landscapes and the destructive nature of mankind. *Vortex*, on the other hand, has been conceived within a maelstrom of personal turmoil, mirrored in the album’s apocalyptic artwork, which shows a traveller traversing the desert beneath a huge, looming, black lunar eclipse.

Writing and recording the album helped Girón to rediscover not only his love for music, but his self-worth as a musician. That healing is evident in the bruising sonics of *Vortex*’s eight tracks, and no more so than on *Mojave*, an unflinching, 11-minute centrepiece where gentle ambience ebbs and flows before thundering into an intense soundscape of crushing riffs.

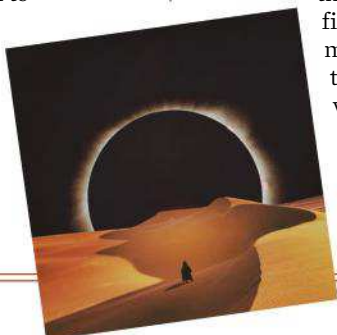
As such, *Vortex* conjures a sense of grandiose scale, more so than on any of their previous albums. Tangled arrangements and swelling rhythms collide with seismic peaks, and songs such as *Cobra* and *Tuareg* take the sharp melodies and raw, post-rock tropes of loud/quiet dynamics that have been employed so well by Toundra’s peers, Mogwai and Explosions In The Sky. Yet while the majority of their music has alternated in its influences, from 70s prog to 80s hardcore, *Vortex* takes its cues from some unexpected sources.

“In our catalogue, you can see the ‘Toundra Pink Floyd albums’ and ‘Toundra rock’n’roll albums,’” says Girón. “*II* and *IV* were written

“This album was inspired by bands from outside the post-rock scene, from John Williams, Max Richter or The War On Drugs.”

at times in our lives when we were listening to a lot of Pink Floyd. They’re more progressive, they have more ambience and they’re not based on riffs like *III* and *Vortex*. This album was inspired by bands from outside the post-rock scene, from [film score composer] John Williams, [British-German neo-classicist] Max Richter or [cinematic Springsteen-esque singer-songwriter] The War On Drugs.”

It’s that uninhibited approach to songwriting that’s led the band on all manner of meandering musical rambles. Between *IV* and *Vortex*, they teamed up with flamenco vocalist Francisco Contreras. Under the moniker Exquirla, they released a double vinyl album, *Para Quienes Aún Viven*



Images And Words: Toundra's music does the talking.

[For Those Still Alive], an exploration of sonic polar musical opposites. And while the result ain’t exactly prog in sound, it’s certainly, and unmistakably, prog in spirit.

“I met this guy, Francisco, at a festival, and we realised that, even though he was a flamenco singer and I was a hardcore guy, we had a lot of things in common,” says Girón. “I’m a flamenco music fan too. So after a few years, and after some rums, I told him I’d like to work with him. We have a killer album of eight songs. We recorded it and we toured it here in Spain with a lot of fans in the venue. It was great.”

Despite a willingness to embrace perpetual progression and myriad influences in their lawless musical world, Girón is adamant that, as Toundra, one aspect of their sonic tapestry is strictly non-negotiable. “Toundra’s not going to have a singer, never,” he says emphatically. “Toundra is four people. Four friends. We’re like a gang, like brothers, and we really respect what we do together. We’re happy doing it this way.”

But do they ever worry about the limitations of keeping their music instrumental? “I’ve been hearing that since I formed the band,” Girón responds. “And you can see me, a guy from a 600-people village in the north of Spain, here with our fifth album, talking to one of the most important magazines in the UK. People tell me that we’re limited in terms of success, but I see a lot of Spanish bands with vocals doing indie rock music and they’re playing venues for 100 people while we’re playing to

400 people in the same cities. Vocals aren’t going to give you success.”

Even by the time the band inked a deal with Superball/Century Media in 2014, they’d become one of the biggest names in the Spanish scene. However, as Girón explains, although more and more bands from their home country are beginning to break through internationally, there’s still a lack of infrastructure in place to nurture and promote both new and established artists.

“We have several good bands here in Spain and there are good gigs, but there’s not a lot of festivals and there’s not a lot of labels trying to help this kind of music,” he sighs. “It’s sad. You have to play a lot of places you’re not supposed to play, like pop rock festivals.”

While getting booked on inappropriate bills alongside bands like Franz Ferdinand and Liam Gallagher presents its own challenges, notwithstanding some apathetic audiences, stepping outside their comfort zone has enabled Toundra to grow in confidence. “After 10 years, we’ve played those festivals and won respect from the media,” says Girón. “We can play wherever we want because of that.”

It’s also meant that after 10 years, Toundra are the kind of band who, despite ploughing a distinctly niche furrow, can land on pretty much any bill and end up conquering the room. But what’s really propelled them to success is being fiercely aware of who they are sonically, as well as knowing exactly what they stand for.

“A whiskey label offered us €12,000 to play a gig in Madrid,” remembers Girón. “We were like, ‘Thank you, but we prefer to do things our way.’ They needed a cool band for a party that was respected by the press, but all the things I had to do to keep this band alive... It’s not going to be a tool for a marketing guy who knows nothing about this music. My music and my band, the thing I created from nothing, it’s the thing I love most in this world.”

Vortex is out now on InsideOut. See www.toundra.es for more information.

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THE PROG INTERVIEW

GARY BROOKER

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 **Gary Brooker**. The vocalist and pianist of Procol Harum is also their longest-standing original member and one third of the writing team behind their seminal Summer of Love anthem *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*. Brooker has also worked with and alongside the likes of Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr and Kate Bush, as well as creating solo work, while 2017 saw a new Procol Harum album, as well as a deluxe anthology to celebrate their 50th-anniversary. *Prog* sits down with the man to discuss his seminal musical career... so far!

Words: Mike Barnes **Portrait:** Alex Asprey

Back in 1966, Southend-based group The Paramounds split. They'd scored a hit single in 1964 with their version of *Poison Ivy* while they were still all teenagers, but time was showing that was likely to be a one-off and that they'd achieved all they could playing R&B covers.

Vocalist and pianist Gary Brooker hadn't written songs before, but had some ideas and decided to simply "give it a go". He was pleased to find

that the process came naturally, and began working with lyricist Keith Reid, with whom he would forge an enduring songwriting partnership, and organist Matthew Fisher.

The first recorded effort produced by this trio could not have been more spectacular – the epochal single *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*, released in May 1967 under the name Procol Harum. The song became part of the

soundtrack to the Summer of Love, and one of the defining songs of psychedelia.

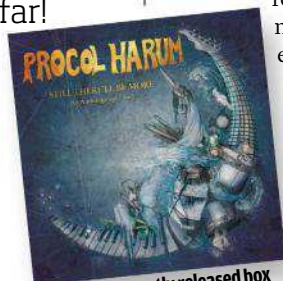
It inhabited its own world courtesy of Reid's striking, surreal lyrics, but also had a majestic vocal melody and memorable organ line by Fisher. It was a No.1 hit in the UK and has gone on to be one the top-selling singles of all time. For their debut album they drafted in former Paramounds guitarist Robin Trower and drummer BJ Wilson.

Procol were an exploratory group and, into the 1970s, they were in the vanguard of prog rock, although their music has always erred towards songs – mostly composed by Brooker and Reid – with a subtle inner complexity rather than overt displays of instrumental flash. Also in the 1970s,

their work with orchestras produced some particularly successful results.

Although Procol Harum have been out of operation for long spells since their initial split in 1977

“We all have to be in Procol Harum. It's not like we're five blokes who play whatever we want: we are Procol Harum and that's the mother ship.”



Above: the recently released box set *Still There'll Be More*.



Above: the *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* single.

– during which time Brooker has enjoyed a solo career and collaborations with other artists – in 2017 they released their first new studio album in 14 years, *Novum*, their 12th in total. A box set and anthology both titled *Still There'll*

Be More have just arrived to mark a sort of belated 50th-birthday celebration for the group.

Although someone who had met him hinted that he might not be the easiest of interviewees, Brooker was affable throughout and clearly enjoyed detailing the course of his remarkable musical voyage. When *Prog* explained that the format of the interview was to span his entire career, he was quick to note, “Don't forget that it's not over yet.”

Looking back to *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*, can you describe the atmosphere of the time?



The Paramounds, with Brooker far left.



The psychedelic era was really an expanding out and a realisation that you could, in that point in British music, do whatever you wanted. There didn't seem to be any boundaries and if there were, you completely ignored them.

A Whiter Shade Of Pale fitted into our idea at the time, which was to do something different. It was a long single. It was in fact longer to start with, because it had three verses. I think it was probably about seven minutes.

Somebody told me that they were playing nothing over 2:47 on

Peter Hammill has said that one of the songs that most influenced him was the 17-and-a-half-minute *In Held 'Twas In I* from Procol's 1968 album *Shine On Brightly*. He realised then that it was okay to write something of that kind of length and ambition. How did it come about?

If you throw yourself back then there was a lot more freedom. I mean, it was a forward-

out of it. It starts off with the beginning of the universe, really, if that's possible. There's some of a Buddhist chant and it ends up going to Heaven. It's even got drug addiction in the middle.

The style that most people associate with the group was established in 1969 with *A Salty Dog* - that mix of bluesy earthiness with a grand, dramatic sweep.

It gets somewhere, doesn't it? Well, that did kind of cement us, in our own minds as well. Strings had often been used on record, but it combined a song with an orchestral setting. We play the title track today and it's as big as *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* to the audience.

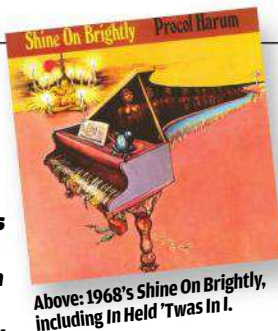
When people talk about what fed into 70s progressive rock, very few mention the influences of R&B and soul, although many of the musicians grew up playing that music. But in Procol Harum's music, that influence is overt. Would you agree?

I see what you're saying there. Music to me is about conveying an emotion and you get that from having grown up with Ray Charles and Little Richard and Sam Cooke.

That thread runs through and as you say, it's not always identified. But what's often not at the front of these prog rock bands is first-class vocals. You might, overall, get a good recording with marvellous, clever playing, but at the end of the day the vocalist has got away with quite a bit. You got it with Traffic because Steve Winwood followed that path and had grown up with those same influences and, if you like, he can be a soul singer when he wants to.

Your 1971 album *Broken Barricades* features a lot of Robin Trower's flamboyant lead guitar playing. It was also his last album with the group before he embarked on a solo career. Did he let himself off the leash, or was he proving a point, perhaps?

I think it just happened organically. On *A Salty Dog* we let the organist, Matthew Fisher, be in charge of the production and



Above: 1968's *Shine On Brightly*, including *In Held 'Twas In I*.



A Kaleidoscope Of Colour: Procol Harum in 1967.

the radio. I remember the figures! It wasn't true: I think the public were up for as much of a change as the people creating things.

You followed it with *Homburg*, which went to No.5 in the UK, but your chart success tailed off after. Was there pressure to produce more hits?

There was enormous pressure. Because *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* was so big on a world stage, people wanted another one, which was nigh on impossible as it came at a time when it just hit people's ears and rang some sort of bell. And it's always been a great mystery why it did that.

thinking idea but it was perfectly acceptable. You talk about Hammill, well, Pete Townshend heard that and felt the same. He told us once that he got the idea of *Tommy* from that piece.

Might I even say that it was 'progressive', because the word existed, but it was not a pigeonhole that you could put bands into. *In Held 'Twas In I*, you certainly couldn't call it pop, it would be hard to call it rock. There's only one pigeonhole that we ever fitted into and that's Procol Harum.

It's got a lot of strange pieces that we knitted together, but you can get some kind of story

They said, 'Look Gary, you can take a piece of dogshit and you can cover it with chocolate. But when you bite into it, what have you got?' We should have gone home at that point.

BARRIE WENTZELL PHOTOGRAPHY

he did a good job. Then he left and if you listen to *Broken Barricades*, there's hardly any organ on it at all. And that bit more space allowed Trower to come to the fore.

Robin Trower got involved in the writing a bit more. He did at least three on *Broken Barricades*. He was always a great guitarist but he had to invent a different way of playing for the music that I'd written for Procol's first, second and third albums. It wasn't an easy twang-along; the easy part of it was that he had to play a blues solo and it sounded right. But when he couldn't figure out the chord, or if it's in E Flat,



Something Magic:
Brooker in 1967.

which guitarists don't like, he would just find a good low guitar note that would vibrate through it all. Brian May does it all the time with Queen but Trower invented that.

Your former manager Chris Wright has stated that the live album Procol Harum recorded with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, released in 1972, "completely regenerated your career". Is that accurate?

At the end of the day, yes. We were selling albums in America,

not here. Here, they pretty much lost it around the time of *Shine On Brightly*.

With Trower we did play once with an orchestra and choir in Stratford, Ontario, which was the first time we'd done it live. We didn't play much, just *In Held 'Twas In I* and *A Salty Dog*, I think. But it was a tumultuous reception and a lot

of people were there, and that led on to an invite from the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

We just did it at the end of the tour. I wrote out the

orchestrations and Trower did what he did on the recorded versions. But he never really liked the idea.

You couldn't play loud when you're with an orchestra, so he had to have a tiny little amp that was a big as a radio. He did it, fair enough, and it was very impressive, but it was not his idea of what a group should be doing. So he left and we got in a new guitarist, Dave Ball.

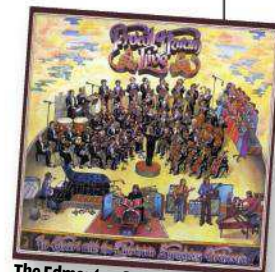
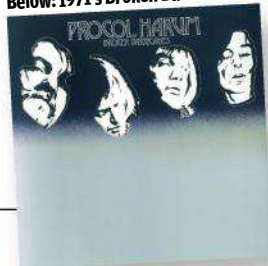
And that was when Edmonton said, "Would you like to come and play?" and Chris Wright said, "Yes." Everyone said, "Yes, we'd like to do it." It was done wholeheartedly.

With 1973's *Grand Hotel* you carried on with an expansive sound...

I had a lot of song ideas in my head. Most of the *Grand Hotel* songs are quite split personality things that change mood. There are almost two songs in every song, like *Robert's Box*.

We thought we'd have that big, lush sound. It wasn't all

Below: 1971's *Broken Barricades*.



The Edmonton Symphony
Orchestra live album.



Piano Man:
Brooker in 1968.

done with orchestra but there was quite a bit. We did use some outside influences like Christiane Legrand on *Fires (Which Burn Brightly)* – she was a French jazz improviser but was also from The Swingle Singers who had done a lot of classical interpretations. But after that we thought, “Let’s get back to being a five-piece band.”

How did you get to work with Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller on Procol’s Ninth?

The one after *Grand Hotel* was *Exotic Birds And Fruit* which was produced by Chris Thomas, as he had produced us since *Home*, and we were always in AIR Studios. So we all fancied a change.

Leiber and Stoller came about because I’ve always had great admiration for them as songwriters and producers. And also, they had just produced Stealers Wheel. And we thought, “Oh, they do come out of New York and do [English] groups.”

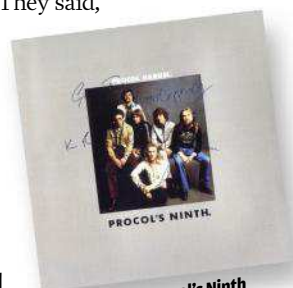
We went to The Who’s Ramport Studio and the first day at eight o’clock, Mike and Jerry said, “We’re going for dinner,” so we said, “Oh, what time will you be back?” They said,

“We’re not coming back.” That was a shock because we were normally there until four in the morning.

We had a constant battle with them because they had a catalogue of new songs that they wanted us to record. It was strange because it had nothing to do with what we all should have been there for. It was all very disruptive.

And after we’d recorded most of the album we finally got to do a Leiber and Stoller song. Chuck Jackson did it originally – *I Keep Forgettin’*. They also put a little bit of brass on it, which we’d never had before.

But the best thing they did was *Pandora’s Box*, which had strange instrumentation with a marimba. The way they had drawn out the instruments, and made them weave in and out of each other, was magnificent. In fact, they made a hit out of it.



Above: 1975's Procol's Ninth.

PRESS

Procol Harum, L-R: Matt Pegg, Geoff Dunn, Gary Brooker, Josh Phillips, Geoff Whitehorn.

PRESS/ALEX ASPREY



In the BBC Prog Britannia documentary, you said you were surprised that Procol's last 1970s album, *Something Magic*, ever got made.

I don't think we were up for doing it with Leiber and Stoller again, nice guys as they were. We made it at the end of 1976 in Miami with another set of producers — brothers Ron and Howie Albert, who had been making a name for themselves.

We went from London straight to the studio, played through something like 14 or 16 songs. They said, "Look Gary, you can take a piece of dogshit and you can cover it with chocolate. But when you bite into it, what have you got?"

We should have gone home then. I think we were shocked more than anything. If we'd been more mercenary and sensible, we would have turned round and said, "You guys can fuck off too." They said shortly after that, "We wouldn't even be here but our boat's broken!" [Laughs]

They liked some of the songs. In the end it was a co-production, so we weren't doing everything they'd say. Keith Reid had written a long story called *The Worm And The Tree* and I'd always envisaged it as being fairytale-like with melodies and instruments depicting the characters. So I played it to them and they said, "That's interesting."

I'd not thought about singing it and it ended up being spoken. So I orchestrated it and we got a few guys in playing strings and woodwinds, beefing it up, and then there was an album.

We had always been at it — periods of writing, of recording and then out on the road. And suddenly, after 10 years, and with our 10th album, we have another

18-minute piece. We had gone full circle. And when you were looking around comparing that with what else was going on, you thought, "Wait a minute, we might have lost touch here." We did an American tour in 1977 and then everyone said goodbye.

Outside of Procol Harum, as well as your solo albums, you've played on George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass* and Kate Bush's *Aerial*, done sessions with Bill Wyman and Ringo Starr, and even made an appearance in the 1996 film *Evita*. Is there a particular non-Procol Harum moment that stands out for you?

“There's only one pigeonhole that we ever fitted into and that's Procol Harum.”

I immediately started up doing some other things that I'd not really been able to do because I was in Procol Harum. You didn't mention Kate Bush's *The Red Shoes* — I played on that as well, and sang one for The Alan Parsons Project. I ended up playing on lots of people's records, some of which you've mentioned there, and of course

also playing live with bands.

As far as high points go, it's all been a high point. It was a high point being in Eric Clapton's band. To be playing when he's playing a solo is something else, I can tell you. Bill Wyman's band, playing with some of the great British musicians — I'm thinking Georgie Fame and Albert Lee.

Also with Ringo's All-Starrs — I was with them for three years with Jack Bruce, Todd Rundgren, Peter Frampton, Simon Kirke and Ringo, of course. So they're all high points as they're all extremely different.

Keith Reid's lyrics for Procol Harum have been a crucial part of the group's identity. Was there ever an obligation to use a particular lyric for a particular song?

No, not at all. I always had a whole folder of Reid's lyrics that didn't get used. Sometimes the idea was too brief and I couldn't fit it into something or it didn't spur an idea. Now and again there would be something I liked, but there would be some words in it that I just couldn't sing. Sometimes Reid just said, "Oh, okay, and didn't try to change it."

There was some epic sea story, which had a line, 'And so he walked the plank.' And I can't remember what rhymed with it now, but 'plank' is unsingable. I did try, but you cannot sing 'plank'. [Laughs] So it never got done, that one.

Procol Harum's most recent album, 2017's *Novum*, is the first where you didn't collaborate with Reid, but instead worked with Pete Brown. Why is that?

The previous album to that [*The Well's On Fire*] came out in 2003 and that's a long time [ago]. There were other things going on — personal things, people being ill, and court cases — so the atmosphere didn't inspire you to go and do Procol. I think Reid lost interest quite a long time ago.

I spoke to Pete Brown about it two years ago. I knew Pete from when he was doing Cream and he just said, "If you're ever thinking of doing something bear me in mind. I'd love to contribute."

He does what he wants to do, but admires Keith Reid and knew that you have to have a certain kind of lyric if it's going to be a Procol song. He'd change

a line if it was too long, without changing the meaning of what he had written. He would have changed 'plank'!

You could have continued in a solo career, but revived Procol Harum. Does it have its own identity?

We all have to be in Procol Harum. It's not like we're five blokes who play whatever we want: we're Procol Harum and that's the mother ship. After our last exploit, the *Novum* album, we thought the recording went very smoothly, so we just want to go and do it again.

There's a Facebook campaign to get Procol Harum inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. How important is that to you?

I hadn't really thought about it. If they said that Procol Harum are being inducted in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, I might say, "So what?" or, "It's about time after 50-odd years." I don't know what you have to do to be in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. I would have thought that if you're still doing it with class and integrity and quality, [you might qualify]. I can sing better today than I did 50 years ago, and 50 years later we have made an album that I stand by with great pride, so I'm doing my bit. 🎵

Novum is out now via Eagle Rock. *Still There'll Be More — An Anthology 1967-2017* is out now via Cherry Red. For more information, see www.procolharum.co.uk.



Above: 2017 album *Novum*.

New spins...

THE FIERCE AND THE DEAD

Eight years on, as punk and prog spectacularly collide, Matt Stevens and co's third album documents some concerning electric dreams.

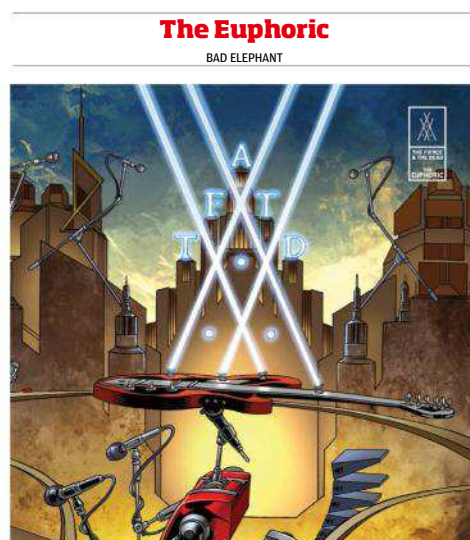
Words: Matt Parker **Illustration:** Mark Buckingham

Considering the current geopolitical maelstrom, the seemingly shrinking list of official 'reasons to be cheerful' and the general sense that — despite our utter information overload — no one, anywhere, knows what the hell is going on, it follows that bands from all over the spectrum are moving toward material that is darker, angrier and, frankly, more confused.

Guitarist Matt Stevens' instrumental, proggy, post-something rockers The Fierce And The Dead have been plying their studio trade for some eight years now. Their talent is combining the punk and the progressive (an area of much greater crossover than documentaries would have you believe), with a bold underline of the type of underground, critically kosher metal found amid the single-origin coffee beans in your hipster record shops. They are masters at headlocking this hipper, artsier end of heaviness and persuading it to do their bidding in service of a sort of unpretentious progged-up post-rock.

2011's debut *If It Carries On Like This We Are Moving To Morecambe* and 2013's follow-up *Spooky Action* both stirred a chunky and unfashionable soup of Helmet, Hüsker Dü and battered delay pedals. Whether or not they were intended to be, both were endearingly rough around the edges — a far cry from the glistening, honed crescendos of *Explosions In The Sky* et al. Instead they offered a spikier, reactive vision of instrumental rock, with a bit of punk's spit and lack of polish.

And so to *The Euphoric*, their third album proper, which takes this worthy amalgam and attempts to stretch it with the addition of more: "More psychedelic, more spacey, more synths, more downtuned guitars," says Stevens. More weirdness, says Prog. Opener *Truck* forms a bridge between old and new, with a squelching, flabby-bottomed distortion sound that's straight out of the *Queens Of The Stone Age* tone book, while Kevin Feazey adds a chest-shaking bass that seems to peak the



A diverse, dynamic and destabilising document. Post-rock for a post-truth era.

sub-woofers in a sort of crumbling sketch of a four-string. It is one of their darker, more haunting and heavier efforts, but will still seem like a logical step to TFATD veterans.

Prog, however, would rather be slapped in the face with new material than massaged into it. We'd recommend *Dug Town* as a better starting point if you want to figure out what growth has occurred since *Spooky Action*. Sticksman Stuart Marshall's hesitant, angsty ricochet beat opens up to reveal a sombre synth bed evoking a sort of paranoid electronica that recalls the soundtrack to Nicolas Winding Refn's retro-fetish gangbang *Drive*. If you're inclined to dance, this would be 'sad, swaying' territory. A guitar run that feels like a depressed Vangelis builds, before a crisp

single note is left hanging. It's just five seconds of reverberation but it feels cavernous and, when it gives way, Stevens and co-guitarist Steve Cleaton fill the vacuum with a twin-guitar avalanche that sounds like Thin Lizzy dropping a Weezer outro. You're left feeling like you've travelled from West Coast hip-hop, had a layover in Berlin electronica, only to wind up in Birmingham, sharing a bag of chips with some Sabbath fans.

Dancing Robots is similarly enthralling. Its modulation-warped opening arpeggios might be par for the post-rock course, but it transforms into a hip-shaking shuffle of the sort that, placed in a live context, proves essential in combatting the curse of 'gig-leg'. In the middle of all this are sections that seem to have been wholesale sampled and transplanted from some lost Rage Against The Machine classic, such is the Morello-esque funk menace of the breakout riff.

Convincing across this kind of varied landscape is a challenge that should not be underestimated, and Marshall is the hidden hero here. Melodic instrumentalists can do a lot to convince with tones and pedals, but percussionists need to be able to change mindsets to achieve the same effect. Marshall does this with ease — in the jazz flurry he uses to underpin the close of *Dancing Robots*, the grunge drive of 1991 or the alternately tom-thundering rawk and funk snare-snapping *Parts 7 & 8* — he seems to stretch and pull TFATD's musical glutens to surprising new shapes. It is somewhat unfair to single out players, though, because here there is a group-wide conspiracy in the inversion of the classic rhythm section, where the evolving rhythmic and stylistic vortex is cleverly held together by a melodic and tonal palette of similarly hued layers of fuzz, chime and reverberation.

There's a throughline then, but not where you'd expect it. Instead we get something better: a diverse, dynamic and destabilising document. Post-rock for a post-truth era.



AMORPHIS

Queen Of Time NUCLEAR BLAST

Finnish prog metallers throw the kitchen sink at widescreen album.



The Bee, the opening track from Amorphis' 13th album *Queen Of Time*, starts with some trickery, as a distant vocal ushers in some wobbling, Banco de Gaia-style trance. It doesn't take long for the jagged guitar riffs that dominate the album to assert themselves, though. Throw in several key changes to heighten the song's towering scale, rapid switches between clean singing and demonic growls, plus a turn from the great kargyrra-style throat singer Albert Kuvezin – leader of Tuvan folk punk band Yat-Kha – and you're left with a song that doesn't so much

The kind of thing Genghis Khan might have used to rouse his troops.

take on Led Zeppelin's *Kashmir* as tear up the template and dress it up for sacrifice.

Message In The Amber is jauntier, with a folky, Nordic riff, galloping rhythms and the unexpected arrival of a near-celestial choir towards the climax. *Daughter Of Hate* has its roots in black metal, but confounds expectations with a saxophone solo, some spooky chanting and a genuinely sinister spoken interlude from lyricist Pekka Kainulainen. *The Golden Elk* keeps things racing along before sweeping strings and Spanish guitar add an unexpected plot twist and it all subsides with gently tumbling piano.

Wrong Direction is less aggressive than most of *Queen Of Time*, and may be an easier point of entry for prog fans wary of the band's metallic roots – there's even some flute! – although the growls eventually return.

Heart Of The Giant canters along in relaxed fashion before the strings zoom in and the choir takes over, and wild guitar solo follows wild keyboard solo until it appears as if the song is engaged in a giant game of one-upmanship with itself. The Ennio Morricone-tinged *We Accursed* follows, an uplifting, ride-into-the-sunset album climax that isn't. Because *Grain Of Sand* follows, with a grinding riff, an exultant chorus and a blink-and-you'll-miss-it choral interlude that could have been torn straight from the pages of Jon Anderson's *Olias Of Sunhillow*. Dutch singer Anneke van Giersbergen shows up on the rousing *Amongst Stars*, while *Pyres On The Coast* soars and spits and wavers, and includes a bit that sounds like an excerpt from Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds*.

Queen Of Time is a crazily ambitious, relentlessly epic album. It sounds like the kind of thing Genghis Khan might have used to rouse his troops had Spotify existed in the 13th century, conjuring up inspiring visions of great battles, fierce storms and vengeful gods. It's also kinda silly, should you choose to look at it like that. But we're not.

FRASER LEWRY

ARMONITE

And The Stars Above CLEOPATRA

The sky's the limit for the Italian duo.

After the critical acclaim heaped on 2016's *The Sun Is New Each Day*, Italy's Armonite collective, led by composer Paolo Fosso and violinist Jacopo Bigi, are stepping up activities by signing with LA-based Cleopatra Records. The company's horror and/or music film division was a major incentive, confirmed by the cinematic quality of the duo's latest album. It takes a similar, mainly instrumental path to its predecessor, if lighter and more diverse. Fosso's resonant piano themes and Bigi's virtuoso violin are the main focus, underscored by a band that includes the pronounced bass presences



of Alberto Fiorani and Porcupine Tree's Colin Edwin. While tracks such as *The March Of The Stars* uncork episodic classical prog tropes, *By Heart*, *The Special Drink* and *Ghosts* explore soundtrack-friendly atmospheric, including *By The Waters Of Babylon's* sumptuous duet between the two band leaders. *Clouds Collide* sees Maria Chiara Montagnari singing Armonite's first fully formed song, recalling *Hounds Of Love* era Kate Bush, while *Blue Curaçao* strays into fusion grooves. Two bonus tracks – one Fosso's piano solo, the second a string quartet flare-up – complete an album to be proud of. **KN**

AVA

Waves WWW.MUSICOFAVA.COM

Ambient classical lustre from Anna Phoebe's latest project.

This is the first release from the duo of Anna Phoebe and Berlin-based classical composer Aisling Brouwer. A four-track EP, it has a delicate porcelain beauty, yet also an underlying firmness and passion. The combination of the former's violin masterstrokes and the latter's piano lilts is fascinating. When you listen to the title track, it's as if the pair are bonded by a telepathic musical attraction, as the gentle, pastoral arrangement brings into focus the effortless wonder of nature. These are comparatively short compositions, as if the duo are teasing us for



something grander and more eloquent later this year, when they release an album. But don't be fooled – there's so much going on musically, it's as if we're being given an insight into the language of two artists who complement one another well. *Mass* has a mournful tone, while *Into The Deep* is a little more uplifting and *October Day* strolls with a beatific gaze. The overall impact is of music that's very visual, and certainly belongs at the classical end of the progressive spectrum. AVA is a special project, and *Waves* is a superb introduction to what they're capable of achieving. **MD**

BLANKET

How To Let Go MUSIC FOR NATIONS

Blackpool post-rockers aim high on debut full-length.

Blanket don't mention post-rock in their list of genres on Facebook, with the Blackpool quartet instead plumping for the rather more grandiose terms 'cinematic rock', 'ambient' and 'soundtrack'. The swelling, instrumental nature of their debut album *How To Let Go* does readily nod to post-rock luminaries such as Explosions In The Sky and Mogwai, but to give the group some credit, there's enough in the 10 songs to thrust this band beyond any lazy comparisons. There's *The Devil Holds Fast Your Eyelids*, for instance, a kinetic whack of souped-up bombast that wouldn't sound out of place on



prog metallers Tesseract's new record. Meanwhile, *Worlds Collide* opens with luscious vocal harmonies before twinkling piano gives the distorted foundations a luminescent aura. While Blanket aren't breaking much new ground here, they're a welcome addition to a scene in need of fresh blood, with the near nine-minute *Immemorial Sea* an emotive highlight. But the last word should go to *Our Tired Hearts*, possibly one of the most beguiling, triumphant slices of post-rock – sorry, cinematic rock – you'll hear this year, as its slithering chord progressions tickle that sweet spot somewhere deep inside. **CC**

BRÜCKEN FROESE

Beginn ESOTERIC

Propaganda/Tangerine Dream collaboration bears fruit.

Although she has intermittently reunited with icy German synth-pop noirists Propaganda, the band that first made her famous, Claudia Brücken has since kept busy by collaborating with several different musical partners, as well as forging a solo career. This hook-up with Jerome Froese (former member of electronic pioneers Tangerine Dream, alongside his late father Edgar) is definitely one of the more interesting projects she's put her name to, even if it's closer to the avant-pop blueprint she was first known for than TD's ambient electronic dreamscapes. *(The) Last Dance* is



decorated with rainy streaks of synth as Brücken sings a resigned lament with a weary elegance. *Wounded's* aquatic keyboard motif is similarly alluring, and then the sonic textures cloud over as she admits, 'For your crime I am paying, like a prisoner I'm serving my time,' before emerging back out into daylight. The furious tempo, techno bleepscape and austere dystopian spoken vocal on *Sweet Sense (of) Liberation* (why all the brackets?) may be a touch too 1984 throwback for comfort, but the lush, lullabyish dreampop of *Forevermore* could seduce even the dourest of techno puritans. **JS**

BURNTFIELD

Hereafter PROGRESSIVE GEARS

Amsterdam Finns' fleetingly enchanting debut.

It's customary for debut albums to be shot through with the excitable energy of artists thrilled to be making their first major statement to the world. But this Helsinki-formed, Dutch-based quartet sound like they're taking a more considered approach. That's no bad thing in itself, but sometimes the pace starts to plod, to the point that tracks such as *Sub-zero* sound weary, even if sedately soaring guitar licks offer pastel shades of colour at times. In the end they just about succeed by the sheer persistence of the chorus, but it still sounds a little too much like an AOR anthem on serious downers. Likewise,



anyone who likes their rock with the odd jagged edge may well find songs such as *Feeling Of Love* and *In The Air* a little gooey and soporific. Burntfield fare better when a few more contrasting dynamics are thrown into the mix to bring some strong melodies to life. The undulating waves of finger-picked guitar that underpin *My Grief* are pleasingly hypnotic as violin hums softly over them. Later, the extended guitar solo that leads us out of *What Remains* flits from twittering, excitable birdsong to synthesised shredding to histrionic angst, adding a welcome burst of energy. **JS**

DYLAN CARLSON

Conquistador SARGENT HOUSE

Original drone lord journeys through a mythic America.

Dylan Carlson is one of music's great unsung visionaries. With his former band Earth, he drew up the template for the kind of drawn-out, hypnotic doom metal that the likes of Sunn O))) would later weaponise. Where Carlson's 2014 album, *Gold*, found him exploring gothic European folk music, here he turns his attention to the vast open spaces of the southern USA. Expansive and desert-dry, the instrumental *Conquistador* could be the soundtrack to an imaginary western scored by La Monte Young. It's a concept album of sorts, charting a journey made by a real-life conquistador across what

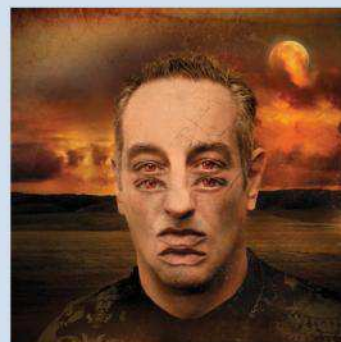


would become Nevada, Texas and New Mexico. The 14-minute title track moves at a glacial pace, a heat haze rising from its every drawn-out chord. When *The Horses Were Shorn Of Their Hooves* and *Scorpions In Their Mouths* ramp up the volume as they trudge hypnotically forward, a sparse cymbal crash occasionally shattering the latter's repetitive grind. Like all great works of minimalist art, a weird kind of beauty begins to take shape within the noise. Like the conquistador of the title, you've got to take time to find it, even if you don't know exactly what it is you're supposed to be looking for. **DE**

ARENA

Double Vision VERGLAS

Bombast and big ideas from neo-proggers on top form.



The ninth album from Arena finds the quintet on bold form with a studio album that captures the energy of their live shows. *Double Vision* might be the heaviest album of their career — it certainly packs more weight than its two closest predecessors, 2015's *The Unquiet Sky* and *The Seventh Degree Of Separation* from 2011. Instead, this feels closer to *Contagion* and *Immortal?* from the early 2000s.

Production duties are shared between keyboard player Clive Nolan, drummer Mick Pointer and guitarist John Mitchell, with the latter handling mixing and mastering, and

It's rather glorious, chock-full of bombast and operatic grandstanding.

the results of their combined efforts are hugely impressive. There's never a moment where the sound becomes cluttered, even when the band are really giving it some welly. Instead, every instrument has its own space in the mix.

The opening *Zhivago Wolf* starts with Mitchell laying down a meaty riff over Pointer's cascading tom-toms, before the sound opens up to make room for Paul Manzi's mighty voice to take centre stage. *The Mirror Lies* is a slab of keyboard-led symphonic rock punctuated with stabs of heavy metal riffage from Mitchell. *Scars* begins as a power ballad, with Manzi pleading, 'Help me to find a way to talk to you,' but it all kicks off when Mitchell steals the spotlight with an incandescent extended guitar solo that's positively loaded with drama.

Paradise Of Thieves asserts its prog credentials with its odd time signatures and, as much as Arena emerged from the 90s neo-prog scene, this is one of several songs that harks back to the heydays of Uriah Heep and Deep Purple.

Red Eyes is a standout, with Nolan's keys playing against Mitchell's hefty riffing and a seriously catchy hook in the chorus. The organ sound lends the track a hint of the late 60s when bands like Vanilla Fudge and The Nice bridged the gap between psychedelia and the birth of heavy metal. The acoustic guitar that leads the way into *Poisoned* provides a breather after the intensity of *Red Eyes*, while there's a touch of Ian Gillan in Manzi's vocals.

Opera Fanatica from *Pepper's Ghost*, and *Moviedrome* from *Immortal?* have shown that Arena have never been afraid to tackle ambitious, long-form compositions, but they really stretch their wings here with the seven parts of *The Legend Of Elijah Shade*. It's rather glorious, chock-full of bombast and operatic grandstanding. Fingers crossed they'll play it live.

Arena might not be prog's most prolific band with just nine studio albums across 23 years, but *Double Vision* proves the importance of quality over quantity.

DAVID WEST

BRIAN ENO

Music For Installations UMC

Ambient master plays to the gallery.



It's evident from the illuminating essay in the 64-page booklet accompanying this six-album set that had Brian Eno not had a chance meeting with Andy Mackay on the London Underground, which provided the invitation to a then-nascent Roxy Music rehearsal, he would have gone on to enjoy a productive career as an artist or lecturer in academia, making occasional dips into experimental music.

Awash with glistening shards and half-formed melodies.

Beautifully illustrated, the booklet chronicles several phases of his extramural activities: 1960s art college dilettante, exploring video and the vistas of New York's roofscapes during the 1980s, projecting digital paintings onto the sails of Sydney's Opera House in 2009. The man who quietly began revolutionising music with 1975's *Discreet Music* and *Another Green World* also embarked on a longer journey from obscure underdog to art-establishment acceptance.

Non-intrusive and ephemeral, the reflective, consonant nature of his music allows listeners to be as passive or as engaged as required. His impeccable sound design is awash with tiny, glistening shards, distant tolling bells, half-formed melodies distended and caught in a shimmering heat haze.

Eno's habit of recycling his palette of sound effects means that much of the material assembled here has a familiarity, at least in their sonic components, if not in the actual finished product. Thus we find fragments of *The Shutov Assembly* wafting within the sizzling distortions of *77 Million Paintings*.

The gradual nature of Eno's music is as much about holding his nerve as it is about compositional prowess. Fifteen relatively static minutes elapse before the introduction of any significant shift in the sonic landscape. Accompanied by visual stimulation, such moments could be missed. Yet isolated from the kaleidoscope of geometric shapes, the small incident becomes a major event. Even divorced from their intended settings, these pieces stand up in their own right.

The collection of shorter tracks on disc five, originally sold at gallery shops, lacks the flow of the other compositions. Feeling somewhat sketchy and out of context, such offcuts sparkle efficiently enough, though the ponderous, churchy chords of *Delightful Universe* (*Seen From Above*) seems overinflated by Eno's usual pared-back aesthetics.

Covering 1986 through to the present, these six albums gather together what is a substantial body of work that includes a smattering of previously unreleased tracks and rarities. Twiddling knobs in the ranks of Roxy Music and beyond may have initially distracted him from pursuing his original vocation, but Eno's always enjoyed playing a long game when it comes to art and music.

SID SMITH

CHURCH OF THE COSMIC SKULL

Science Fiction KOZMIK-ARTIFACTZ/SEPTAPHONIC

Lightning strikes twice for Nottingham cult rockers.

Nottingham's psychedelic proselytisers return with the follow-up to 2016's excellent debut *Is Satan Real?*. Their new release is *Science Fiction*, and it builds on the template of the first album, bringing together the trippy vibe of Jefferson

Airplane with the grooves of early Deep Purple. There's less of the darkness of *Is Satan Real?* and the overall mood feels much more upbeat and celebratory. The vocal harmonies are always a treat and lend a gospel influence to their white-wardrobed, cosmic benedictions. That element becomes most prominent in the bluesy *The Cards That You're*



Playing and Go By The River, where the blend of Hammond organ, guitar and electric cello really capture a classic Summer Of Love sound. *Cold Sweat* is wonderfully catchy, while *Timehole* (*Gonna Build A Rocket Tonight*) recalls the

propulsive drive of Steppenwolf. Not one to be left behind after his previous headlining status, Satan pops up once more on *The Devil Again*, but there's no sense of the band trying to be menacing or provocative. Instead, the track seems closer to the blues tradition of songs with an infernal theme. **DW**

JENNIFER CLARK

Ascan SELF-RELEASED

Alan Reed bassist takes her turn in the spotlight.

Often found playing bass in Alan Reed's band, Jennifer Clark turns leader with this five-track EP of instrumentals.

Glasgow-based Clark plays bass, guitar and keys, aided and abetted by fellow Alan Reed band member Darren Callow

on guitar, with Andrew Samson from Scots alternative hip-hop group Stanley Odd on drums. The production is generally good, although several tracks feature a distressingly thin lead guitar tone that rears its ugly head from time to time. *ReEntry* is the atmospheric opener, with guitars layered over Samson's steady pulse.



Ascan, the title track, has a nocturnal, brooding mood, while *Eva* sets a gentle, pastoral prog pace. The harmonies of *Ascendant* aim for a 70s Steely Dan vibe but the standout of the bunch is the closing track *Heliosphere*. The

song begins with an Oldfield-esque acoustic melody, gradually adding on new sounds and layers until the whole picture is revealed. At times the EP feels like a calling card for someone seeking work composing soundtracks for film and TV, but sonic bugbears aside, Clark's debut in the driving seat shows compositional promise. **DW**

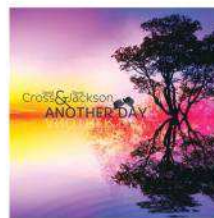
DAVID CROSS & DAVID JACKSON

Another Day THE RIGHT HONOURABLE RECORDING COMPANY

Larks and sparks as King Crimson and VdGG vets collaborate.

When your previous credits include *Larks' Tongues...*-era King Crimson and Van der Graaf Generator, two of the most revered bands in progressive music, expectations about what you do next are always going to be high. Yet with

enough experience under their belts since their respective departures from those esteemed musical institutions, Cross and Jackson have little to prove to anyone. Their rapport means notions of ego are put aside in order to concentrate on enjoying a richly varied collaboration. There's a playful quality in pieces such as *Predator* and *Breaking*



Bad, in which sax and violin play cat and mouse with bassist Mick Paul and drummer Craig Blundell's stop-start backing. A tight-knit quartet excelling in solid, rock-dominated excursions, at the heart of their work together is a focus on the texture

of the music as much as the actual notes. Though there are no particular surprises, *Another Day's* expansive production delivers plenty of likeable, anthemic moments that play well to each of the principal's strengths, with Jackson's saxes spitting grit and gold as Cross's vapour-trail melodies provide emotional and ethereal contrast. **SS**

THE DEAN WEEN GROUP

rock2 SCHNITZEL

Avant-rock provocateur, and half of late weirdos Ween, returns to the fray.

Alongside Aaron 'Gene' Freeman in Ween, Mickey 'Dean' Melchiondo made a series of wildly eclectic albums as great as they were unclassifiable, forging hitherto unseen links between metal, prog, old-time country and R&B. Ween's dissolution in 2012 allowed Dean to briefly return to his hard-rocking side project, Moistboyz, before forming his own band soon after. 2016's *The Deaner Album* was a terrific illustration of his many and occasionally wayward talents, as is this follow-up. Regular bandmates Dave Dreiwitz, Claude Coleman Jr and Glenn McClelland are joined by various guests



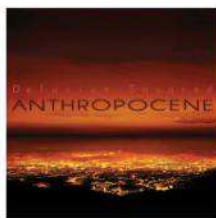
for rock2, among them Parliament-Funkadelic guitarist Michael Hampton and Low Cut Connie's Adam Weiner. But it's very much shaped by Dean's eccentric vision, be it turning Iron Knowledge's old soul classic *Showstopper* into a riffy prog metal feast or a *The Wire*-inspired *Someone Greased The Fatman*. He also finds room for a pure blast of space rock on the wonderful *Waste Station 9*, where he sounds like an interstellar Hawkwind. And while it wouldn't be a Dean Ween record without a dash of puerile nonsense (*Pussy On My Pillow*), there's plenty to enjoy. **RH**

DELUSION SQUARED

Anthropocene SELF-RELEASED

Sans vocalist, French proggers are diminished rather than deluded.

Although Magma remain a going concern, it's fair to say that France has not been a progressive rock hotbed in recent decades. More recently, though, there's been a prog mini-revival spearheaded by the wonderfully unique Lazuli, the more muted post-rock tones of Demians and, since 2010, Delusion Squared. *Anthropocene* is Delusion Squared's fourth album, but significantly, it's their first following the apparently amicable departure of vocalist Lorraine Young. The band are now reduced to a duo, with guitarist Steven Francis stepping up



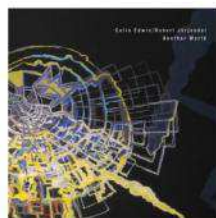
to handle all vocals in Young's absence. While *Anthropocene* ploughs a similar furrow to its predecessors musically – think *Signify/Stupid* Dream-period Porcupine Tree – Young's absence is striking. Francis' vocals are broadly serviceable but seem one-dimensional and rather thin, suffering in comparison to Young's rich tones, which imbued the first three Delusion Squared albums with much of their undeniable charm. *Anthropocene* has an intriguing and thought-provoking concept – dystopian parallel universes – which would have been better served by more inspired material. **NS**

COLIN EDWIN & ROBERT JÜRJENDAL

Another World HARD WORLD

New fusion mutant from prolific bass Goliath.

Porcupine Tree bass titan Colin Edwin is getting about. Fresh from lending his meaty rumble to Italy's Armonite, here he's collaborating with renowned Estonian guitarist Robert Jürjendal. Over nine tracks, the pair reach for the stars through a panoply of moods, joined by trumpeter Ian Dixon (Ape, Ute, Irmin Schmidt) and Norwegian electronica boffin Isak Nygaard. Dixon's crystal clear horn is often the dominant sound as Edwin applies himself to shaking the earth with his Wobble-resounding bass. Jürjendal keens below, until those occasions when he rears like



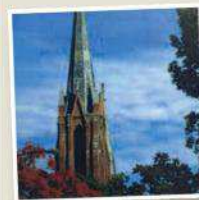
Robert Fripp with razor blades in his amp, Nygaard adding loose rhythms and electronic pastels. The quartet are equally at home packing in changes (*Memories Of Sand* glides from deserted New York-at-dawn reverie to billowing fusion in the flick of a plectrum), or mining subterranean grooves, such as the celestial dub-scape of *Frozen Fields* or the sky-sailing *Dance Of Kaia (Earth)*. It would be glib to liken this spangled beauty to Fripp and Eno's 70s collaborations, but there's obviously similar kinetic telepathy erupting in the colours of these ever-shifting sound paintings. **KN**



ART-ROCK

Chris Roberts samples the new releases on the prog/rock boundary.

It can be tricky to lay the ghosts of previous musical incarnations to rest and have your new one judged on its own merits. It took ages, for example, for those averse to Talk Talk's early synth-pop chirrups to embrace *Spirit Of Eden* as one of the most pure creations of its time, if not all time. Not for a moment to place **Daniel Blumberg's** *Minus* (Mute) in that lofty bracket, but it's an astonishing leap forward from a man formerly in indie coasters like Cajun Dance Party and Yuck, and who often had to tolerate articles defining him as a film star's boyfriend. Well, it seems he's undergone a break-up and is pouring out his troubles on this chilling, thrilling record, produced by frequent Scott Walker collaborator Peter Walsh. It's raw in emotion and regal in sound, its agonised violins and scraped guitars describing illness and loss with devastating beauty. It will ensure that Blumberg's now defined as the artist who made this candid confessional.



John Maus is rarely backward in coming forward with frank emotion, although his sixth album *Addendum* (Domino) is relatively buoyant. A spontaneous project conceived alongside last year's *Screen Memories*, it emphasises a poppier side to his electronica while channelling Suicide, Godley & Creme and unsettling lyrics about babies in dumpsters. Its second half

becomes more grandiose.

This makes it kindred to the **Near Future** debut *Ideal Home* (Blanc Check), where Blancmange's Neil Arthur and Gazelle Twin's Elizabeth Bernholz combine on a smart album of shifting surprises, from the Pop Art commentary of the title track to the vinegary *Fish And Chips*, via spoken word and drones to the deceptive *Kites Over Waitrose*. It wears its cleverness lightly. Meanwhile, **John Foxx's** *Metamatic* (Metamatic), is reissued in three-CD form.

The galloping dark horse this month is the sublime second **Modern Studies** album, *Welcome Strangers* (Fire). Herein, the Scottish "kosmische chorale" collective balance

Tindersticks-tinged arrangements and good old heartstring-tugging. There's chamber pop, jazz rhythms, strings, brass and a spiritual lift akin to Big Big Train. The interacting voices of Emily Scott and Rob St John, a soulful Nancy & Lee, chime with potent poignancy, and your brain, ticker and feet are moved. Textbook.

Down South, **Artmagic's** *The Songs Of Other England* (Bandcamp/AWAL) luxuriates in a hazy, folk-influenced feel that's equal parts Gilmour and Hackett, as singer/all-rounder Sean McGehee and Suede guitarist Richard Oakes paint in twilight.

Happy Endings (Onomatopoeia) is an exuberant yet elegiac emission

from **Crayola Lectern**, the Robert Wyatt-acclaimed, Damo Suzuki-collaborating, alt-psychedelic seer of Sussex. Untethered and moonstruck; its own eerie cheery beast.



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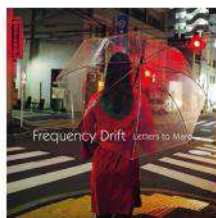
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FREQUENCY DRIFT

Letters To Maro GENTLE ART OF MUSIC/SOULFOOD

Epic soundtracks, no less.

The word 'cinematic' could have been invented for Frequency Drift's grandiose epics. Films were a major motivation when keyboardist Andreas Hack formed the band and set 2008's *Personal Effects Pt. 1* concept debut in a dystopian *Blade Runner* future. After its inevitable sequel, 2011's *Ghosts...* welcomed Nerissa Schwarz's electric harp, giving the band its most distinctive sonic component. Over the next two albums, the band arrived at their trademark sound: widescreen ballads peppered with world music, folk, ambient and prog metal bombast.



Their latest replaces earthly guitars with twinkling electric harp flurries, drummer Wolfgang Ostermann's subtly woven rhythms, and electronic orchestras influenced by Japanese arthouse cinema.

They frame new vocalist Irini Alexia's soul-baring lyrics about loss. On first listen, ballads such as *Underground*, *Deprivation* and *Escalator* seem tailored for closing credits. The instrumental sections are always sumptuously exotic, but further immersion reveals a hotbed of intricate tonal microsurgery going on, before the triumphant-sounding *Ghosts When It Rains* brings down the curtain. **KN**

FRODE HALTLI

Avant Folk HUBRO

There's nowt so tuneless as 10-piece Norwegian jazz folk fusion.

"Just how prog is the accordion?" Well, if you factor in players such as Lars Holmer, Maria Kalaniemi and Kimmo Pohjonen with his King Crimson associations, the answer is 'plenty'. Norwegian Frode Haltli is another practitioner with a keen interest in creating inclusive spaces for musicians that include Motorpsycho's Ståle Storløkken. The triumph here is the extent to which the 10-piece ensemble he directs weave between improvisation and composed sections, and the blending of traditional folk sources and newly written pieces. Often emerging from tremulous



beginnings, tunes blossom into garlands of unfurling melodies, one layered over the other. The ancient Hardanger fiddle frequently takes the lead in evoking images of cold landscapes from which indomitable spirits reside and rise up. Though essentially

acoustic in nature, delicate sprays of electronica glisten between Haltli's ruminative notes. Ritualised choral chants and skronky electric guitar add textures and lustre, subverting possible expectations of an album whose principal instrument is the humble accordion. It may be called *Avant Folk* but it's so much more than that. **SS**

JANE GETTER PREMONITION

On Tour BIG FUN PRODUCTIONS

Guitarist envisions a bright future for fusion.

With *On Tour*, guitarist Jane Getter hits the road, recording the material from her 2015 album *On live* at Outreach Festival in Austria and New York's Iridium Club. There was a dark time in the 80s and 90s when fusion lost its bite and became elevator music with added chops. This is definitely not that. Getter and her band are ferocious, unleashing the kind of intensity that defined Return To Forever and Mahavishnu Orchestra. The players include Testament's Alex Skolnick on guitar, Adam Holzman on keys, Chad Wackerman on drums, and vocals from Chanda Rule and



Living Colour's Corey Glover. It all kicks off in *Opener* as Wackerman lets rip with a drum solo over Holzman's ambient keyboards. *Pressure Point* is all knotty, intertwining guitar lines, and there's a marvellous percussion spot from Mino Cinelu on

Falling, which features a beautiful solo from Getter. *Diversion Intro* shows she can be lyrical, while *Diversion* starts off as a straight-ahead jazz tune before Getter cuts loose with some fiery runs. There's real heft to the riff of *Train Man* and the closing *Somewhere Jam* sees the band trading solos with power and imagination. **DW**

GAZPACHO

Soyuz KSCOPE

Grand themes examined in a microcosm generate cosmic emotion.



A new Gazpacho record is always a mouth-watering prospect. This, their 10th, bucks the trend begun on *Night* in 2007 for ambitious concept albums. Instead, *Soyuz* is a collection of songs orbiting around the themes of frozen moments, the fleeting nature of experience and the desire to make time stand still.

Zooming in on private experiences gives the album a greater punch.

Soyuz One is one of two tracks reflecting on the first in-flight fatality in the history of space exploration. Gazpacho's usual unmistakable ingredients are present: Jan Henrik Ohme's enigmatic vocal melodies take centre stage amid a dark and brooding soundscape, but things are stirred up a little. Keyboardist Thomas Anderson's programming is more prominent this time, charting a course somewhere between Radiohead's electronica and Peter Gabriel's *Up*.

In contrast, *Hypomania* is a straight-ahead rocker. Ohme has never echoed Thom Yorke as closely as he does on these verses, and the chorus is a towering cathedral replete with tolling bell. It's a natural candidate for a single.

Exit Suite may allude to a Radiohead songtitle but both it and the haunting *Sky Burial* share more DNA with the grandeur of Kate Bush's most recent works. Sparse piano chords with lush strings recall Bush's *A Sky Of Honey* suite, simultaneously conjuring the intimate and the universal, the intellectual and the spiritual. "These mountains made you small/We waited day and night," Ohme sings, reflecting on the duality of light and dark, which is a recurring theme.

Soyuz Out is the standout, recounting the personal cost of the pioneers of the space race via the catastrophic re-entry attempt of cosmonaut Colonel Komarov, who volunteered for what he knew was a suicide mission. The juxtaposition of a choral arrangement against a sample of the oldest voice recording — a rendition of *Au Clair de la Lune* from 1860 — is not so much prog as sonic sculpture.

Recent Gazpacho albums have been far-reaching in their concepts, spanning aeons, encompassing mythology, the supernatural and religious ritual. *Soyuz* zooms in on the private experiences of individuals on borrowed time and packs a greater punch as a result. When their ambitious writing seeks to marry grand ideas to situations in microcosm, their music gains an additional emotional weight.

Soyuz is another challenging listen from the Norwegians, one that demands and rewards investment from the listener. It's not just another impressive addition to a supremely consistent catalogue, it's one of their most stellar achievements yet.

CHRIS MCGAREL

LUNATIC SOUL

Under The Fragmented Sky KSCOPE

Riverside mastermind finds comfort in sound.



If Marusz Duda's last album under the Lunatic Soul banner, 2017's *Fractured*, was an exploration of internalised grief in the wake of the deaths of both his father and his Riverside bandmate Piotr Grudziński, then this follow-up finds him slowly but defiantly attaining some kind of closure.

The eight tracks that make up *Under The Fragmented Sky* swim with a nocturnal ambience, but there's a swelling urgency to them that was absent from its predecessor. Duda once again takes glitchy, sometimes hazy electronic music as his starting point, but this time around he introduces



Despite the gloomy titles, it's anything but downbeat.



guitars, drums and the odd metallic clang that sounds like a spanner being dropped in an empty warehouse.

Typographically challenged opening track *Heaven* sets the tone: a pulsing soundscape of chiming chords and wordless vocals that suggests a soul drifting through the ether. It's startling and hypnotic, drawing you in without you knowing it.

Only half the songs feature vocals, some of which barely even qualify for the description. *Trials* is a swirl of skittering glitchy noise, evocative piano and skeletal guitar overlain with a repeated mantra of 'I try so, I try so hard to pretend' that's simultaneously disconnected and utterly heartfelt as it builds to a finale that turns chilled out techno prog into something darker. No less unsettling is *Sorrow*, a 90-second long acoustic passage that mixes discordant background noise and a haunting falsetto keen into the mix.

There are songs here that approach the conventional. The title track, for one, ebbs with a narcotic bliss. 'Down came the rain, broke the silence, tranquilised me, made me forget,' sings Duda, like a man still processing everything he's been through in recent years. Occasionally he even sounds like he's having something approaching fun: a glimmer of positivity threatens to break out of *The Art Of Repairing*, with its heartbeat synths that evoke nothing so much as a gothic Giorgio Moroder. Duda's plaintive vocals only appear towards the end of the track. Weirdly, the Vocoder effect that should come across as robotic and inhuman only makes them sound more human.

Despite the gloomy songtitles, the net result of *Under The Fragmented Sky* is anything but downbeat. By the time of the final track, *Untamed*, beams of light are beginning to break through the clouds. 'So it's done, you won the fight, war is over, you can stop,' intones Duda gently.

It's a conversation with himself, an instruction that life goes on no matter what tragedies befall you. As redemptions go, *Under The Fragmented Sky* is a triumph.

DAVE EVERLEY

OLA KVERNBERG

Steamdome GRAPPA

First-class jazz rock from Norwegian violin virtuoso.

Norwegian violinist Ola Kvernberg has occupied a special position that has seen him moving elegantly between folk and jazz, but his third solo album has him stomping over pieces that unashamedly rock in tone, texture and intent. As a member of ex-Motorpsycho drummer Kenneth Kapstad's Grand General ensemble, Kvernberg has previous form, and in this respect, *Steamdome* feels like a useful continuation. Blessed with a line-up that sees Kvernberg fronting bass, keyboards, guitar and no fewer than three drummers/percussionists, this is music overflowing with energetic



shuffles. It's emblazoned with sunny rays of Hammond organ chords, surging guitar and dazzling flurries from Kvernberg's high-wire violin. Had Focus and the first edition of Mahavishnu Orchestra ever collaborated, it could have sounded like this. There's

a passion hardwired into the themes, which are contained within thoughtful and visceral arrangements. It's this combination of elements that provides the players with a freedom they clearly relish. It continues to be a source of joy that so many Nordic players have embraced the modes and influences of 1970s jazz rock and fusion. **SS**

THE NATIONAL JAZZ TRIO OF SCOTLAND

Standards Vol. IV KARAOKE KALK

It's oh so quiet...

Hopefully, you'll have a soothing balm to hand in order to alleviate your poor suffering sides, newly aching from the hilarious irony of The National Jazz Trio Of Scotland being neither a trio nor jazz. So with that out of the way, what exactly are they? Well, they're Scottish, minimal, chilled and, actually, something of a soothing balm. Tinkling, occasionally toy-pitched piano-fortes (which are very rarely in the least bit forte) get serially morose in minor keys as TNJTOS emote via sonic swoons and make CSNY's *Our House* sound like Slayer's *Raining Blood*



by comparison. A *Quiet Life* features the spell-breaking sampled parps of a big band at full honk, while *Move* and *Far From You* offer Latin flavours, the latter showcasing the full fragility of Kate Sugden's vocal. "She's as good as people like Liz

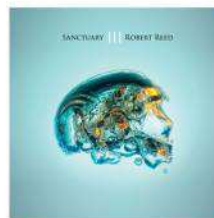
Fraser," opines keyboardist Bill Wells in the accompanying PR. Fair enough if he's talking about the noted *Carry On* film actress, but while Sugden's delivery is certainly effective in this particular setting, she's no more a Cocteau than her accompanying combo are a jazz trio. That said, there's an awful lot to love here. **IF**

ROB REED

Sanctuary III TIGERMOTH

Reverence to Oldfield with a few irresistible new tricks.

The third journey into Robert Reed's world of high-class homages to Mike Oldfield is laced with lovely passages. To those who deem him merely an Oldfield copyist, Reed's retorted that the master is pleased someone's picked up the baton in the medium of long-form music, and the previous *Sanctuary* albums showed a blend of respectful replication and diverting proficiency. The presence of *Tubular Bells* producers Tom Newman and Simon Heyworth, and drummer Simon Phillips, adds credibility and consummate sound quality here. Reed says he's moved on from the first two



albums, but the Oldfield trademarks are still here, especially in the way phases close and new ones begin, and in that warmly strident guitar tone. There are lots of female and choral vocals, which nudge it into 70s Rick Wakeman territory, and perhaps too much

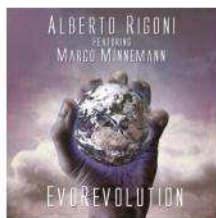
Gaelic fiddle-di-dee. Overall, though, in atmosphere, *Ommadawn* is the key influence. There's something endearing about the devotional immersion into the art of a hero, and while this feels faintly less convincing than the start of the whole trip, its invitations to forsake logic and lose yourself in its meanderings are often irresistible. **CR**

ALBERTO RIGONI featuring Marco Minnemann

EvoRevolution AR MUSIC

Drum and bass, but not as we know it.

Alberto Rigoni's latest release sounds a bit like what happens when the guitarist has to leave a band practice too early to go to work, leaving the freshly emboldened bass player and drummer alone in the rehearsal room. The main chunk of *EvoRevolution*, which features the ever-impressive and ever-busy Marco Minnemann behind the kit, is the 33-minute title track, which was largely composed on the bass guitar and has decorative samples strewn across it like baubles on some strange Christmas tree. At its best, the six-chapter instrumental piece is



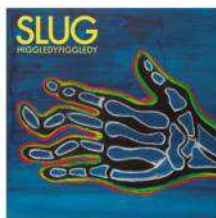
an exciting exploration through prog rock chops, jazz fusion intricacies and distorted chunk thanks to the thunderbolt fingers of accomplished Italian bass slinger Rigoni, but if you lose concentration, it can end up sounding like a bit of a directionless jam session that dangerously teeters on the edge. The sprightly *Back To Life*, a second track that clocks in at a comparatively skimpy four minutes, is more concise and song-orientated but still manages to take left turns with adroit fretwork and jagged timings. The surprise finale shows, though, that sometimes less can indeed be more. **CC**

SLUG

Higgledy Piggledy MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

A bareback thrill ride on an unpredictable mollusc.

Where once Ian Black was marking time as the touring bassist for Mercury-nominated artful indies Field Music, he's now onto his second, significantly more assured full-length release as the driving force of Slug. It's hardly surprising that *Higgledy Piggledy* finds Black forging an identity all his own in comparison to 2015's feet-finding debut *Ripe* when you consider Slug's original studio incarnation featured his former band's siblings Peter and David Brewis. Encouraged by *Ripe*'s plaudits, Black has composed, produced and played every instrument here. Casting aside



generic constraints, he's embraced fresh possibilities and delivered an album of abundant charm. So who's in here? There are wafts of pastoral XTC, suggestions of Neutral Milk Hotel, a crumb or two of Cake, a steely core of political dissatisfaction softened by humanising elements of wry humour, engaging vocal fragility and melancholic psych-Prince sensuality. It's a delicious hotchpotch with a wide vocabulary. Garnished with strings here, hung off a driving riff there, *Higgledy Piggledy* does what it likes, when it likes, and as a consequence, it delivers a thrill ride of unexpected surprises. **IF**

SONAR WITH DAVID TORN

Vortex RARENOISE

Swiss quartet team up with US soundscaper to spectacular effect.

When David Torn checked out Sonar's music, he was immediately taken by their sparse, interlocking compositions. And after arranging to produce *Vortex*, with the notion of making a few cameo appearances, he ended up playing on every track. Sonar's music is built from minimal elements in a similar way to the dovetailing guitar patterns of 80s King Crimson, and also the math rock of 90s bands like Don Caballero and Trans Am. But whereas those groups could overcomplicate matters, Sonar's guitarists Stephan Thelen and Bernhard Wagner operate as one



instrument, regularly shifting their emphasis as if surveying each piece from different angles. Bassist Christian Kuntner offers subtle punctuation, while drummer Manuel Pasquinelli is constantly inventive without grandstanding. Meanwhile,

Torn hovers in and out of the space they create. On *Monolith*, clipped guitar notes build up to an almost funky momentum. Torn's notes bloom into a vast panorama on *Waves And Particles*, while on *Part 44*, Pasquinelli's high-hats and Sonar's guitarists create a perpetual-motion groove, inviting Torn to weigh in with a ferocious solo. **MB**



POST-ROCK

Alex Lynham guides us through the peaks and valleys of essential post-rock.

Despite the weather, it's allegedly spring now, which means more band announcements from Bristol's ArcTanGent Festival (August 16-18). Top of the list in terms of alumni from this column are a reformed Vasquez. They join an already formidable line-up that includes legendary math-rockers Giraffes? Giraffes! playing their first UK show, post-metal heroes Pelican, rising proggers Poly-Math, and Prog faves Bluenek and Vennart.

And as luck would have it, **Giraffes? Giraffes!** are also about to release their new album *Memory Lane* (Top Shelf). It's a typically exuberant masterclass in dense, frenetic riffs, tight grooves and a tracklisting cut into 37 parts, with some motifs lasting as little as 15 seconds. It can be a disorientating listen at times, but fans of Giraffes? Giraffes! would surely expect no less. In terms of finding just where the limit of complexity in experimental instrumental rock is, it's genuinely mind-bending. The nine-part *HUG OF DEATH* section is available to stream now and it's highly recommended.

Another band from this year's ATG crop are post-rockers **Halo Toru**, who return with their second album *Man of Stone:*



First Chapter (self-released). Taking its cues from modern progressive rock, post-rock and math, while retaining an accessible edge, it's the most confident and consistent we've yet heard the band. For a taste, the A Perfect Circle-like opener *Earth Exit Bloom* is a good place to start, while the atmospheric *Always The Last*

To Know and the title track, which features Solareye from Stanley Odd, are also well worth exploring.

Breaking away into more atmospheric territory, Andy Othling's ambient project

Lowercase Noises have released a new album, *The Ironic Distance* (self-released).

Written after returning home from a living-room tour at the tail end of last year, it comes from the enforced creative restriction of using only one guitar and synthesiser on each track. As a result, it's an unusually focused thread of drone-like ambient, where motifs emerge and evolve organically, without the sleights of hand that dense, multi-part arrangements can offer. Check out *Of Course It's All Things* for an introduction.

In slightly more energetic fare, New Haven four-piece **Wess Meets West** have just released their third album



A Light Within the Fracture (Hassle). It's at its best when alternating between intricate math-inflected post-rock and angular alt-metal. It's a grower in general, although tracks like *Skylar*, *There's Rot* are hard not to like straight off the bat.

Finally, for something completely different, Danish math-proggers

Odd Palace are set to release their

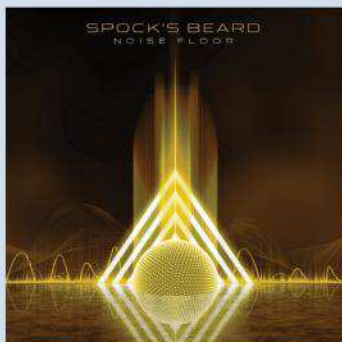
debut record in June. Taking inspiration from all over the place, from King Crimson to the speed-freak mathcore of Protest The Hero, *Things To Place On The Moon* is a white-knuckle ride from start to finish. *Chemical Solutions* is a good place to start, but at the time of writing, there's nothing publicly streamable.



SPOCK'S BEARD

Noise Floor INSIDEOUT

American prog stalwarts in bold, defiant form.



We may call our music progressive, but we don't half hate it progressing sometimes. And some Spock's Beard fans have unfairly blamed new vocalist Ted Leonard for the rather smoother musical path the band have taken in the last five years or so. But as if to show once more that it was no accident, Alan Morse and co – with Nick D'Virgilio back in the studio drum seat, if not the live band – have made one of the most defiantly immediate, hook-laden

One of the most defiantly immediate records of their career.

and upbeat records of their career. It's by no means bereft of knotty, adventurous, structurally labyrinthine detours, but the predominant mood is loud and proud.

The 52-minute album proper (we'll come to the bonus EP later) opens with the urgent AOR of *To Breathe Another Day*, full of blustery, life-affirming, kinetic guitar licks, beefy riffing and furious keyboards, sandwiching the kind of arena-straddling chorus that would have done Kansas or Toto proud. Better still for anyone with a soft spot for hook-laden melodic rock is *Somebody's Home*, which builds from a lilting acoustic intro into a rhythmically stuttering verse before exploding into a redemptive arms-to-the-heavens chorus.

There's a touch of polemical bite on *Have We All Gone Crazy Yet*, as it sarkily observes, 'Everything's on fire but they say it's for the best,' but for the most part it's an instantly arresting piece of prog pop... and then a gear change. Halfway through, it spins off into a dizzying whirlwind of hyperactive keyboards and instrumental jazz rock (going, if you will, *Crazy*), and it turns out that this is a sign of what's to come on the second half of the album.

One So Wise matches the uptempo feel of the opening track, but this time the chord structures are full of obtuse angles and wrong-footing jazz improvisation, as Yes-ish harmonic shape-shifting and guitar spirals tie your ears in knots. *Box Of Spiders* then raises the stakes further, as discordant synth jags barrel into furious jazz piano and squealing guitar histrionics. You'd be forgiven for wondering if this is SB's way of saying, 'Not proggy enough for ya? Well, *have some of this!*'

A similar juxtaposition of broad strokes and bolshy complexity can be found on the bonus EP *Cutting Room Floor*, lulling newcomers with three highly agreeable slices of string-laden soft rock before the angular shredding that closes *Vault* leads into the squawking techno and discordant avant-abrasiveness of *Armageddon Nervous*.

So if you still hanker after the Spock's Beard of 20 years ago, maybe try this album before you buy. But if you're someone that has as much of a taste for sugar as you have for spice, then come on, feel the Noise.

JOHNNY SHARP

TANGEKANIC

Hotel Cantaffordit REINGOLD RECORDS

Modest but highly satisfying live set from Tangent/Karmakanic fusion.

This live album epitomises the old adage that necessity is the mother of invention. While prog giants ancient and modern continue to cross the globe on a regular basis, for lesser bands, international touring can be at best a hand-to-mouth existence and at worst an impossibility. To facilitate playing live last year, the solution for cash-strapped bands The Tangent (led by British keyboardist Andy Tillison) and Karmakanic (led by Swedish bassist Jonas Reingold) was to pool their resources. As such, the merged Tangekanic hit the road as a five-piece with guitar virtuoso Luke



Machin, the much-travelled vocalist Goran Edman and drummer Steve Roberts. With its unironic title and band selfie that adorns the cover, this bootleg-style live album was recorded last October at the fabled New Jersey Proghouse venue. At times *Hotel Cantaffordit* is very low-key and relaxed (and whoever introduces the band at the start of this single disc sounds almost comatose), but at others, the album bristles with intensity. That's particularly evident on Karmakanic's wonderful *God, The Universe & Everything Else Nobody Cares About*, which possesses greater charm here than in its studio format. **NS**

THE AARON CLIFT EXPERIMENT

If All Goes Wrong AARON CLIFT

Imagine Dream Theater with a more obvious melodic hue.

There's much to admire about this trio from Austin, Texas. They're prepared to tap into the influence of Rush, Marillion and King Crimson, without ever being formulaic. So while opening track *Faith* crashes through with blues rock power, courtesy of some scorching guitar from Van Wilks (one of many guests brought in), *Better Off Before* has a Beatles-style psychedelic quirkiness, and *Castle In The Sky* has a jazz fusion approach. The upshot is an album that sounds like Dream Theater, yet with its own melodic freshness. Aaron Clift



himself has a voice that tells a story, and Dave North adds dramatic guitar touches that neatly complement Clift's own keyboard swathes. On occasion, such as with the clambering *Dream Within A Dream*, the underlying atmosphere is the main dynamic. They can also convincingly range from pure power to more delicate inferences in the same song, as happens on both *Savage In A Fancy Suit* and *Wild Hunters*. The highlight here is the title track, though, bringing to mind *Trick Of The Tail*-era Genesis. However, the album is very charismatic and enticing throughout. **MD**

THE MYSTERY OF THE BULGARIAN VOICES featuring Lisa Gerrard

BooCheeMish PROPHECY

The Bulgarian Choir meet the Dead Can Dance singer, with mixed results.

The *Le Mystère De Voix Bulgares* recordings that came out on 4AD in the 80s were compiled by Swiss musicologist Marcel Cellier from recordings of the Bulgarian State Television Female Vocal Choir. They were contemporary choral arrangements of traditional songs, with extraordinary harmonies sung with emotional power. These are new compositions by choral arranger Petar Dundakov – traditions need a little flexibility to stay fresh. Gerrard's occasional lead vocals blend in well. *Mani Yanna* starts with beautiful vocal melismas over a background of shifting



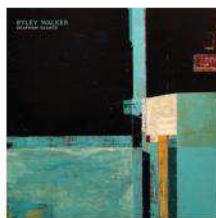
harmonies. What it doesn't need is the entrance, after three minutes, of strummed acoustic guitar and percussion, including sounds like tabla and bass synth notes. The original *Le Mystère* recordings employed percussion sparingly, to accent the metric complexity of some of the songs, and on the animated *Pora Sotunda*, this approach feels more rhythmically pertinent. But the arrangements, which even include Bulgarian artist SkillR's beatboxing, feel like an attempt at modernising music that doesn't need it, while robbing it of its mystère. **MB**

RYLEY WALKER

Deafman Glance DEAD OCEANS

A landmark masterpiece for Chicago's Dream Brother.

Chicago-based singer-guitarist Ryley Walker says that when he started recording his fourth album since 2014's *All Kinds Of You*, he wanted to make "an anti-folk record... something weird and far out that came from the heart". That's one of several reasons why Walker recalls the late Tim Buckley. Then there are the rich vocals, continuing with a questing spirit and manifesting in backdrops veering between smoky jazz-laced watercolours and exotic progressive rock. It's all enhanced by Ryley, co-producer LeRoy Bach and heavy Chicago friends deploying intricate



webs of guitars, burnished flute and languid double bass (a further twist added by pastoral sections that indicate his love of classic Genesis). Irresistible in its emotional pull, the album unfolds as a roller coaster of moods. The tremors in Walker's battle-scarred voice also invoke Tim Hardin or Jackie Leven on *Expired*, while the tortured soul of original influence John Fahey haunts *Rocks On Rainbow*, and *Telluride Speed* hurtles through complex twists and turns like extreme jazz prog. Such astonishing visions would have been hailed a landmark masterpiece 50 years ago. Today that still stands. **KN**

WOODEN SHIJS

V THRILL JOCKEY

West Coast proggers on fire.

What a long, strange trip it's been for these West Coast dreamers. This album was recorded in the summer of 2017 as the outskirts of Portland threatened to burn to the ground and the ash of the wildfires fell on the band and the city like dirty snow. However, Wooden Shijis attempted to not let the adverse conditions harsh their mellow. The gentle *Staring At The Sun* might reference the layers of ash and the licks of flame, but it does so through such a beautifully woozy sheen of blooming colours and tripped-out oscillating guitars that the threat of



being engulfed by the flames seems very, very far away. Truth be told, most of V makes you feel like you're happily floating just off the face of the earth. All of the band's familiar tropes are here: Neil Young, The Doors, The Velvet Underground

(at their most dazed) and Soft Machine all play their part in a record that's gentle and densely layered. V is forever giving up licks of melody, with each listen revealing lovely, elongated refrains that float upwards into the light, just like the curls of smoke that finally dissipated over Portland must have done last year. **PW**

ZOLA JESUS

Okovi: Additions SACRED BONES

Rare cuts and mixes from the dark prog innovator.

Remix albums can be hit or miss. Either they don't add anything to the original recordings or, in the case of Zola Jesus' *Versions* – a bold collection of orchestral reworkings – they're a resounding success. As a companion to last year's acclaimed *Okovi*, *Okovi: Additions* sits somewhere in the middle. Among the four remixes are four previously unreleased tracks that build on the grandiose album's dark themes. Opener *Vacant* sits somewhere between Cabaret Voltaire and Depeche Mode, with its gothic reverb and dark synth-pop atmosphere. Then there's the EDM earworm *Bound*, the brief



but anthemic ballad *Pilot Light*, and *Bitten Wool*, where Nika Roza Danilova's passionate vocals really come to the foreground. All work brilliantly in the context of *Okovi* but seem rather abrupt on their own. The remixes add little with the exception of

Exhumed and *Soak*. The former's pop sensibilities are plunged into darkness with a fierce post-metal remix from Wolves In The Throne Room. The dance-driven latter is elevated to a powerful ballad, just falling short of *Versions*. Although *Okovi: Additions* works an extension to its breathtaking parent, it feels incomplete on its own. **NRS**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the Prog sofa for the ones that nearly got away...



Fearlessly experimental and uncompromising, it's hard to imagine Jenny Hval existing in any other period in time. The Norwegian artist's ambient, softly subversive long-players *Apocalypse Girl* and *Blood Bitch* are both empowered and empowering works, and the new EP *The Long Sleep* (Sacred Bones) will similarly stretch the minds of some listeners and the patience of others. Elements of jazz, electro-drone and spoken word punctuate four variations on a theme, with identity, consciousness and the concept of creativity all in the ether. It's slightly pretentious and strangely enchanting stuff that you'll keep coming back to.

Produced by Billy Sherwood, Ben Craven's 2016 album *Last Chance To Hear* was a fine piece of trad prog, with the spacey *Spy In The Sky Pt.3* even featuring vocals from one William Shatner. That song features on *The Single Edits* (bencraven.com), a set of 11 highlights from the Brisbane artist's solid, melodic back catalogue, all cut down to bite-sized, streaming-friendly morsels. This taster might well entice fans of John Mitchell, Spock's Beard, Cosmograf et al to sample Craven's three albums in full.

Keeping the flag of instrumental prog flying in Limerick, Ireland, **Zombie Picnic** return with their second album, *Rise Of A New Ideology* (Golden Shred).

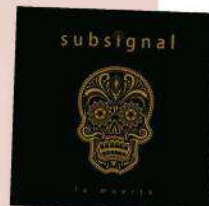
Using portentous soundbites from TV news and interviews, they do for overpopulation and futurism what Public Service Broadcasting did for the space race and miners. Leader Jim Griffin's lyrical guitar dominates bold, engaging arrangements that drift from Floydian space rock to Crimonesque clangour to the squalling punk of a Television or Wire. It's compelling, well-measured stuff from a band who clearly have something exciting on the go.

The second album by German group **Subsignal**, *La Muerta* is their first for their new label, Gentle Art Of Music, a fitting home for their accomplished brand of melodic/neo-prog. This is surely their most immediate and confident record to date, replete with big vocal harmonies, sterling keyboard/guitar solos, catchy tunes and big, polished production. If Lifesigns, IQ or even Panic Room feature in your life, then stare *La Muerta* in the face.

Queen, Bigelf, Jellyfish and Jim Steinman came to mind while enjoying *Book II*, the

highly personal second album from Philadelphia's **Rausch**, led by eccentric and singular keyboardist/vocalist Don Rausch. Cheeky musical theatre, prog metal pyrotechnics and Blue October levels of introspection combine on an irresistible work that plays like a rock opera and runs the gamut of emotions, from elation to anger to melancholy and back. Transfixing stuff.

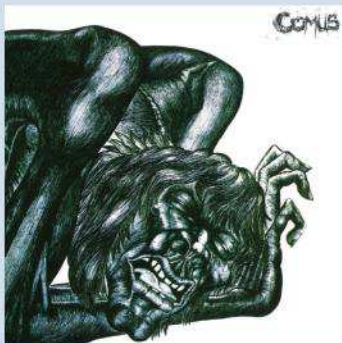
Finally this month, just a reminder that **Tangerine Dream** are bundling in their utterly mesmerising 2015 EP *Quantum Key* with the upcoming reissue of 2017's *Quantum Gate* (Kscope), which makes this a double helping of reassurance that Edgar Froese's musical legacy is in safe, sympathetic hands.



COMUS

First Utterance ESOTERIC

Holy grail pagan-prog rarity from Bowie's Beckenham protégés.



You could expect a £700 price tag if ever a copy of Comus' 1971 sole LP on Pye's progressive offshoot Dawn turned up (begging the question: how many future prog collectibles passed through my impoverished teenage hands before they were swapped or sold?). In the decades since its release, a devoted cult has built around *First Utterance*, including Sweden's Opeth, Current 93 and now in metal circles.



Weirder than any folk, darker than most prog.



The band's first major fan was David Bowie, who let the nascent Comus - formed by art students Roger Wootton and Glenn Goring - cut their musical teeth with weekly shows at his Beckenham Arts Lab before he invited them to open his 1969 concert at London's Purcell Rooms. With Bowie's encouragement, Comus developed a theatrical act that was stunningly bonkers live but, according to them, hampered by a befuddled producer in the studio.

On the surface sounding like a pagan collision between Principal Edwards Magic Theatre and Curved Air, or the Incredible String Band on bad acid, *First Utterance* may be built on violins, flute, bongos and Arcadian chorales, but it crackles with ominous tension as Wootton and co-singer Bobbie Watson multitrack surreal lyrics concerning violence (*Drip Drip*), rape (*Diana*) and mental strife (*The Prisoner*).

It was obviously lodged deep in this reviewer's soul as, although it's been 47 years, hearing it now brings every dark nuance springing to life, with *Diana* a suitably atmospheric opener, singers incanting like witches at a coven as Colin Pearson's violin and Andy Hellaby's bass pulse threateningly.

The Herald is the set's astral jewel. It's a 12-minute epic and after Watson's ethereal intro over Rob Young's flute, it bursts into a dazzling stretch elevated by Goring's rippling guitar. Although Wootton can overdo the sinister dramatics, he sounds less like an enraged munchkin when he reins it in, invoking Hammill-esque turmoil when duetting with Watson on *Drip Drip*, before it turns into a pagan bongo hoedown. By *Song To Comus* and *The Prisoner*, the vibe has morphed into a disturbing medieval protest ritual.

Weirder than any folk and darker than most prog, the album stalled against record company problems, splintering the group until later reunions. Following 2005's Comus box set, Esoteric's expanded presentation (with Malcolm Dome sleeve notes) remasters the LP, along with *Diana* maxi-single songs and haunting outtake *All The Colours Of Darkness*, which beautifully highlights Watson's appealing fragility.

There was much pain and rage glowering in Comus's dark, unsettling magic. Now it's sounding oddly relevant again.

KRIS NEEDS

BARK PSYCHOSIS

Codename: Dustsucker FIRE RECORDS

Overlooked second album from post-rock progenitors gets double vinyl reissue.

Bark Psychosis are an unfortunate example of why pioneers don't always win. Having defined a particular strain of emotive post-rock on their 1994 debut album *Hex*, which would effectively act as a template for a host of similar-minded bands who came after them, they promptly split up on its release, torn apart by the pressures of making it. And then when they returned to the fray 10 years later with the release of *Codename: Dustsucker*, everybody's attention was elsewhere, distracted by the last hurrah of the indie rock mainstream epitomised by The Strokes and The White Stripes.

Many people regard this album as more of a solo record from Graham Sutton, the last remaining member of the original band, but even if the spacey counterpoint of John Ling's bass playing is sometimes missed, there's a clear tonal and thematic connection back to the first record. And for a band who never tried to hide the fact that Talk Talk were a major influence on their sound, the presence here of Lee



Harris on drums and percussion suggests a return to the source of their original inspiration.

Certainly, opening track *From What Is Said To When It's Read* takes us right back to the hushed, small-hours atmosphere of *Hex*. It's a psychedelic lullaby of quietly strummed

guitar with subtle flecks of wah wah around the edge, Sutton's sombre vocal reinforcing this impression, singing as though he doesn't want to wake the sleeping city - but a sudden blast of unidentifiable noise puts paid to that.

The Black Meat emphasises that while the songs are still full of subtle sonic detail, the arrangements are a little less discursive than before. On saying that, both *Miss Abuse* and *INQB8TR* are pretty far out, the former all hypnotic acid squiggles and cosmic voices, the latter a trippy voyage into the earth with processed rhythms and echoing vibraphone.

But more than anything, *Codename: Dustsucker* displays a heart and intimacy missing from many of Bark Psychosis' post-rock descendants. **JB**

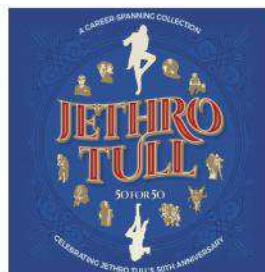
JETHRO TULL

50 For 50 PARLOPHONE

Forever a Tull moment: life is a long song.

Since releasing their debut in 1968, when Harold Wilson was advocating the I'm Backing Britain campaign and Daniel Craig, Kylie Minogue and the Big Mac first appeared on Earth, Jethro Tull have enjoyed remarkable durability. They've fallen in and out (let's be honest, mostly out) of fashion, and been through over 30 band members across those five decades. Yet Ian Anderson has kept the name afloat, whether they've been perceived as America-pitched stadium rockers or morris-dancing folkies.

From codpieces to country gents, Tull have explored more genres than is usually acknowledged, from blues to prog to electronica, from world music to Christmas songs to hard rock. Their hard rock may not have been hard enough for Metallica fans, as the controversy over their 1988 Grammy win showed (in fact, that winning album, *Crest Of A Knave*, sounds more like Dire Straits than Def Leppard), but that's Tull for you - you think they're one thing, then they're another. It's



a shame sceptics don't dive into their catalogue more often. Much like their musical structures, it's a wealth of twisty surprises - a joyful track like *Songs From The Wood* has more ideas than most manage on a whole album.

This 50-track selection, curated by

Anderson himself, gives a fine overview of a band who've sold 60 million albums, and you don't do that if you're just a googly-eyed bloke on one leg with a flute. Genres are genres, but songs cross bridges - these tunes have engines, and Anderson's a detailed lyricist. One imagines his stories of lusty liaisons with mysterious women are a reason why Nick Cave is such a fan.

As with any compilation, you can't please everybody - this reviewer's favourite album, *Thick As A Brick*, feels under-represented - but the greats you'd expect from *Aqualung*, *Heavy Horses*, *Too Old To Rock'n'Roll* and *A Passion Play* are on this lively, colourful three-CD set. (There are one-CD and LP edits available too.) Fifty not out, but definitely out there. **CR**

MANSUN

Attack Of The Grey Lantern: 21st Anniversary Edition KSCOPE

Britpop's prog gatecrashers get the four-disc treatment.

The Britpop era was notable for many things, but forward-looking music wasn't one of them. The scene's leading lights were content to strip-mine the past, repurposing other people's glories for their own nefarious needs. The Kinks, The Who, The Beatles... if it had ever strutted down Carnaby Street in a pair of Cuban heels and a Nehru jacket, someone, somewhere in 1996 was taking the pastiche out of it.

Chester's Mansun were gatecrashers at Britpop's great fancy dress party. Their debut album, 1997's *Attack Of The Grey Lantern*, was, as frontman Paul Draper correctly points out in his sleeve notes to this four-disc reissue, "one of the oddest records to hit No.1 with". Conceived as a solo album about a superhero named Grey Lantern until Draper got bored of the idea halfway through, his vision was to hitch punk's can-do ethos to the sort of mad ambition that was in short supply at the time, like a Budgens Brian Wilson.

Attack Of The Grey Lantern certainly succeeded on that front. It's not so



much an album that's in hock to prog's grand traditions as one that uses mad-scientist logic to subvert pop songs: *Taxloss* mashes up the Fab Four, Little Jimmy Osmond and John Barry strings across seven minutes like it's the most normal thing in the world; *Stripper Vicar* is

the finest tale of sexual deviation since *See Emily Play*; and even the album's blockbuster single, the tremulous, tremendous *Wide Open Space*, can't resist deploying barbershop-style 'bah-bah-bah' backing vocals that scream 'Danger: Maverick Minds At Work.'

Attack Of The Grey Lantern fleetingly turned Mansun into mid-table pop stars, but the album took on a life of its own afterwards, which explains this 21st-anniversary reissue. For anyone who wants to see what made this cracked pocket masterpiece work, the CD of demo tracks and alternative takes fished from down the back of Draper's sofa fill in the blanks.

It's not so much that they don't make them like this any more, it's more that they never really did at the time. **DE**

MARILLION

Unplugged At The Walls/Tumbling Down The Years EAR MUSIC

Not your usual stadium blockbuster memoirs.

There was a point in the 1970s when the live album represented a band's coming of age. It was something you earned the right to release, a wondrous artefact preferably recorded far from Britain's shores in some exotically named hall and overdubbed to the point where it wasn't really a live album at all, but what the hell.

These days a live album is far more likely to be a tour souvenir than a career landmark, and it's just possible that Marillion, trailblazers as ever, may have been partly to blame for the format's demise. For it was in 1984 that the band released *Real To Reel*, a budget makeweight that felt like a throwaway release when compared to the elaborate gatefold splendour of their studio output.

Cut to 2018 and they're still at it. This year Marillion will re-release eight live albums (like clay pigeons, they're being fired out in pairs), and these two follow hot in the footsteps of January's duo of *Holidays In Eden Live* - recorded at the Marillion Weekend in Port Zélande, The



Netherlands, in 2011 - and *Size Matters*, from the same event in 2009.

Up first is *Unplugged At The Walls*, a live acoustic album recorded at a restaurant in the Welsh border town of Owestry in 1998. Originally released by Racket Records the following year,

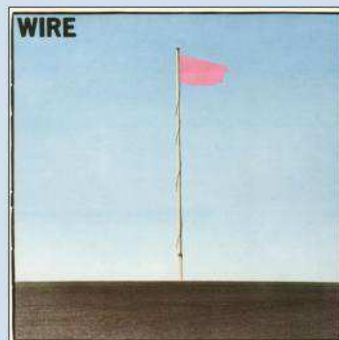
it's most notable for a trio of unlikely cover versions. There's a lovely, wistful take on Radiohead's *Fake Plastic Trees*, a straightforward version of The Beatles' *Blackbird* featuring bassist Pete Trewavas on acoustic guitar, and a mournful run-through of Dion's 1968 hit *Abraham, Martin And John*. Beautifully recorded, it captures the band at a special moment, relaxed amid the cream teas and rattling cutlery.

For the second album, *Tumbling Down The Years*, we head back to 2009 and Center Parcs in Port Zélande. Another Racket original, it might not share the uniquely bucolic feel of *Unplugged*, but it's solid enough, and *This Train Is My Life* and *Slainte Mhath* are outstanding. **FL**

WIRE

Pink Flag/Chairs Missing/154 Special Editions PINK FLAG

Down to the Wire with lavish expansions.



In the late 70s, Wire started applying progressive rock questing and arty obliqueness to punk rock's basic chassis to place themselves in the vanguard of the post-punk movement. They had started 1977 as a coruscating racket at London punk epicentre the Roxy, appearing on the club's live album. Its producer Mike Thorne saw something in Wire and after they signed to EMI prog stronghold Harvest, he produced that December's *Pink Flag*.



Well-deserved remasters to honour a seminal band.



The album's 21-track barrage of short, sharp shocks crackle like one final manifestation of punk's minimal onslaught, buoyed by art-school lyrics and Buzzcocks catchiness on the *Mannequin* single. Slower grinds like *Reuters* and the title track forge templates for the emerging post-punk movement.

Now acting as an Eno-like presence, Thorne's glacial synths and dramatic keyboards brought prog and psychedelic flavours into August 1978's transitional *Chairs Missing*, which had been trailed on 45 by the luminously melodic West Coast vocal harmonies of *Outdoor Miner*, followed by the mischievously insidious *I Am The Fly*. While the gentle psychedelic swirls continued on tracks like *French Film Blurred*, the punky shouting had been replaced by atmospheric explorations, as on *Marooned* and *Heartbeat*, vocally veering into jagged Magazine territory on *I Feel Mysterious Today*.

September 1979's toweringly cinematic *154* (named after the number of gigs they'd played so far) is routinely named as Wire's masterpiece by original fans, starting with the apocalyptic despair of *Should Have Known Better*. Bassist Graham Lewis's well-brought-up intoning now often replaced Colin Newman's cockney-stylised vocals as the album's panoramic scope embraced bleak Only Ones-like vulnerability, dreamy Syd Barrett surrealism and a propensity for lucid experimentation, along with Thorne's often dominant synthesisers. It strikes gold in the clanging black hole of *The Other Room*, oddly poignant *A Touching Display* and perfectly formed confection *Map Ref. 41N 93W*.

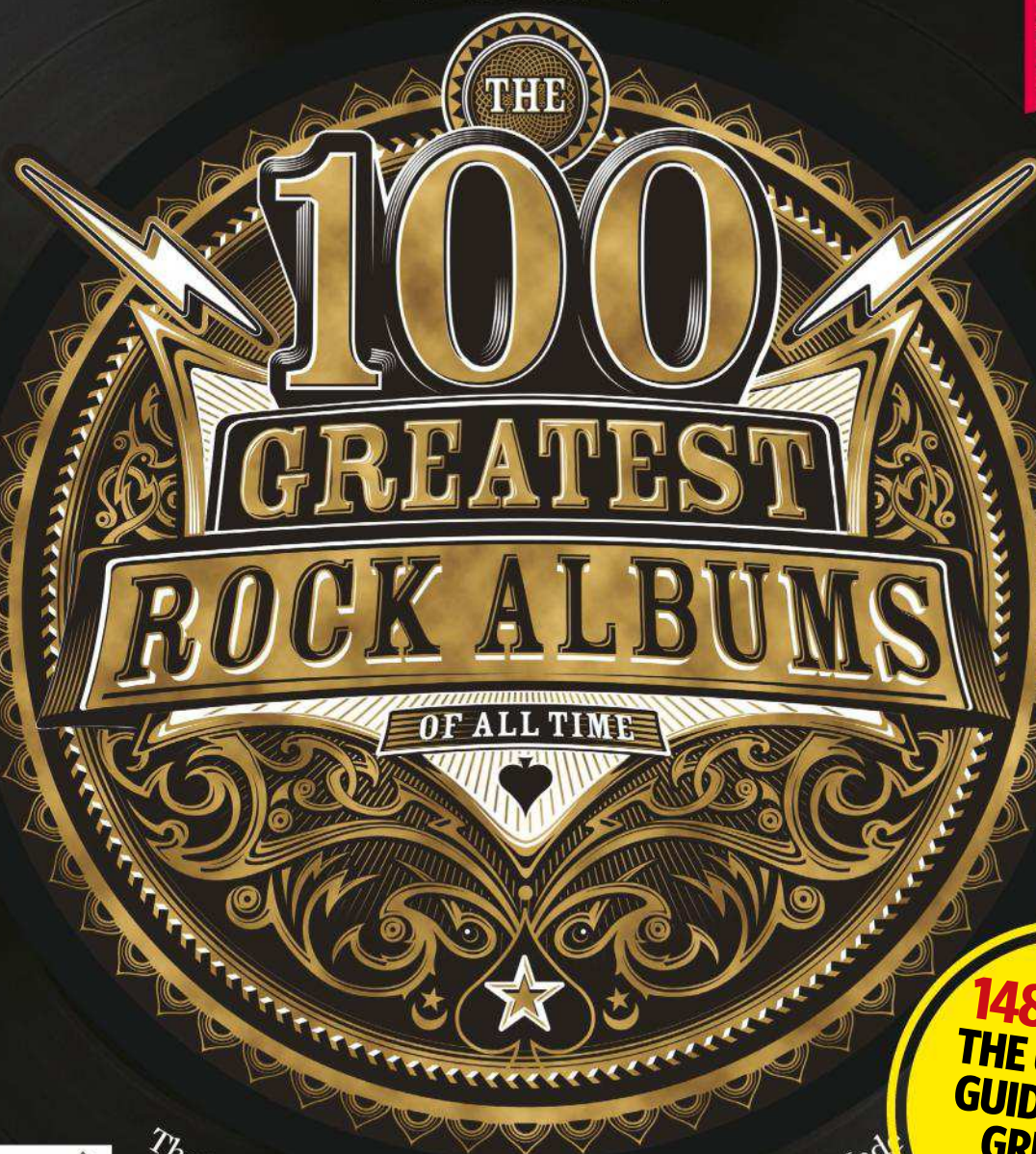
It had only been two years since that spiky first statement but although Wire were busy mapping out punk's progressively hued aftershock, their evolution had become so rapid that it derailed them into solo projects for several years.

Spearheaded by the RSD *Nine Sevens* singles box, each remastered album has been replanted in a lavishly illustrated 80-page hardback book containing further discs of singles, demos, rarities and torrentially prolific demo sessions - well-deserved, consummate monuments to honour this most seminal band (and its perhaps overlooked producer) on the tangled mantelpiece of cutting-edge late-70s British music.

KRIS NEEDS

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SVEIN FINNERUD TRIO

Plastic Sun ODIN CD/LP

1970 Scandi jazz classic rises again.

1970 was a pivotal year for jazz as its traditional templates shattered into kaleidoscopic pieces that chimed with turbulent times. Although the exploits of Miles Davis and co are well-documented, every corner of Europe seemed to harbour coterie of fearless jazz warriors straining for liberation on unknown musical planes.

After gestating in 1967 in Norway, the Svein Finnerud Trio – featuring its late pianist leader, bassist Bjørnar Andresen and drummer Espen Rudd – recorded their second album, *Plastic Sun*, one February 1970 day, before it was released on Sonet.

The free spirits of inspiration were obviously flaming on that day as, for 35 minutes, the trio exercised their Paul Bley fixation by covering the pianist's then-wife Annette Peacock's *Cartoon* and *Touching*. Apart from Ornette Coleman's *Dee Dee*, the other five tracks were their own compositions, from funky workouts to free-form starbursts.

After starting with the languid reflection of *Bernhard* and exhaling the



sublime chamber jazz crescendo of *Alnafet Street*, the trio dive into their 10-minute funky workout around *Cartoon*, which swiftly dismembers itself into improvised scabbling as musical fragments scatter like ectoplasmic litter in the wind, the musicians reducing their

respective solos to parallel dimension matchwood, all topped by gabbling alien vocals. Even in anarchic 1970 free jazz, SHT were cavorting in areas only the UK's most gleefully free-form mischief-makers dared frolic.

After the title track settles as a breezy, Latin groove and further vocal strangeness graces *Touching*, *Dee Dee*'s almost 14-minute romp uses Ornette's original as a launch-pad for more fractured anarchy. Finnerud's *Parelius N* starts as a muted rumble before the LP closes with a minute of *Strings*, showing the humour considered vital to balance the weirdness.

Svein Finnerud Trio shoot relentlessly and they usually score, although that does depend on where the listener has planted their goalposts. **KN**

VARIOUS

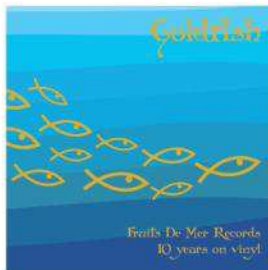
Goldfish: Ten Years Of Fruits De Mer Records FRUITS DE MER

Ocean's Ten; celebrating a decade of the UK's most hallucinogenic record label.

In the fickle shoestring world of independent record labels, it's little short of a miracle that Fruits de Mer are celebrating a decade of squirting often unhinged psychedelic magic and pure British eccentricity like octopus-like ink out of its squid-like bottom, frequently to solidify into an immortal statement or memorable genre classic.

To mark the occasion, the label, with typical lack of restraint, is the subject of a book (reviewed on page 115) and has released a gatefold triple album (with bonus 45) straddling the catalogue since Tor Peders' ebullient version of Van der Graaf's *Theme One* launched it in 2008. But you'll find an array of names, familiar or little known, tackling the 60s and 70s chestnuts that originally motivated the label, or concocting their own in the same spirit. Prog, psych, space rock, Krautrock and acid folk all sound subliminally FDM – surely the hallmark of a great label?

Highlights include the Pretty Things torpedoing The Beatles' *Helter Skelter*, Schizo Fun Addict's take on the Small



Faces' *Ogdens Nut Gone Flake* that was the first 45's B-side, Sendelica wrangling the Velvet Underground's *Venus In Furs* and Stay pickling the Stones' *2000 Light Years From Home*. There's also veteran folk outfit Tir Na Nog's *I Pick Up Birds At Funerals*, the Chemistry

Set's wonderfully titled *Kiss Me, Vibrate And Smile*, Soft Hearted Scientists' demented *Caterpillar Song* and incredible acid-folkies *Beautify Junkyards*. Cranium Pie roast The Beatles' *Baby You're A Rich Man* and Superjford conquer Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. Meanwhile, stalwarts such as The Honey Pot, Us And Them, Permanent Clear Light, Vibravoid, Nick Nicely, Crystal Jacqueline, Sidewalk Society, Kris Gietkowski and Astralasia represent the label's amoebic assimilation of electronic dance music.

Yes, 10 years of Fruits de Mer. What would life be like without a label that can release a tune by something called Blue Zeta Giant Puppies? Treasure them, and treasure this much-deserved trophy awarded to themselves. **KN**

ZAPPA/MOTHERS

The Roxy Performances ZAPPA RECORDS

Roxy music, by way of a seven-CD Zappa set.



In the quieter moments, when you're in the pub with your mates, and darts or seeing how many pickled eggs you can fit in your mouth have lost their allure, here's a game you can play. Choose which classic band line-up and what show you'd shave off the rest of your hair to have seen, and then debate it between you in a full and reckless voice until the barman tells you to keep it down or you'll all be barred.



Eight hours of elan, humour and mind-boggling dexterity.



This writer has lost many nights arguing David Lee Roth-era Van Halen (first album tour, LA homecoming show) against Led Zeppelin's debut at the Royal Albert Hall over Yes playing just about anywhere on their original *Fragile* tour. Honestly, you'll shout yourself hoarse, lose friends and then come to some strange accord just before closing time. No, you're welcome.

That said, it seems I've been remiss in my choices. Since this seven-CD box set came through my door with a sound like a brick hitting the window, I can only be heard shouting one thing in my local: "Zappa and the Mothers, 1973 line-up, Roxy Theatre, LA!"

As a man who likes Zappa the way a fat child likes chocolate, it's been hard to stomach the infighting between the remaining factions of the family, and it's hard not to sneer when you see the hand of Ahmet Zappa in this (the man, remember, who's keen to resurrect Frank as a touring hologram), but *The Roxy Performances* are something in spite of him. They predate the acrimony and the ugly scrum that's currently arm-wrestling over the Zappa estate in a Californian courtroom somewhere.

Truly, it's better to remember the good times, and what good times this box set brings. Five incredible shows over three nights, including one invite-only show (though it's hard to spot the join), as well as the sessions a few days later that the band recorded in Ike Turner's Bolic Sound studios.

Nothing's new under the sun, some of this was unearthed on the following year's *Roxy And Elsewhere*, in 2014 on *Roxy By Proxy* and the soundtrack to *Roxy The Movie*, though if you want to lose yourself in almost eight hours of a band playing with such elan, sophistication, humour and mind-boggling dexterity, then you've come to the right place.

If there is such a thing as capturing lightning in a bottle, then it happened here in this recently opened club on a corner of the Sunset Strip, Frank centre stage, calling the caterwauling heavens down. God, was there ever such a glorious noise again?

PHILIP WILDING

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ORPHANED LAND

All is One ROCKPALAST

Israeli proggers look to their homeland in a gritty documentary.

The artwork for Orphaned Land's 2013 album *All Is One* seamlessly conjoins the symbols for Christianity, Judaism and Islam, with the Israeli prog metallers promoting peace among the faiths. The new one-hour documentary of the same name digs deeper into the background of a band living in a Middle Eastern religious and political hotbed, where it's the norm for houses to have safe zones and bomb-proof bunker shutters, as the group's members harrowingly describe in their own homes. Fans looking for a glimpse into Orphaned Land's music, writing process or life on the road



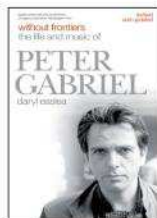
will be disappointed, but the story of the group's connections – or lack of – to faith is a more important and engrossing story to tell. Singer Kobi Farhi is the documentary's most absorbing presence, and he admits with some embarrassment that he briefly developed extremist views against Arabs as a teenager following a terror attack which killed a 14-year-old girl. He's a champion for peace now, as are the rest of Orphaned Land, and the takeaway message from this intriguing documentary is that music, as it always has been, is a force for good in trumping hate and division. **CC**

WITHOUT FRONTIERS: THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF PETER GABRIEL

Daryl Easlea OMNIBUS

Revised and updated Gabriel. Now with added Brian Pern.

Originally published in 2013, just as Gabriel took a year off after a flurry of activity that included the *Scratch My Back* covers project with other artists, the *New Blood* orchestral reworkings of some of his catalogue and the *Back To Front* tour, this engaging look at the life and career of the former Genesis singer has now been updated. There's been plenty to talk about in the ensuing five years, including Gabriel's appearance at the 2014 Progressive Music Awards where he was crowned Prog God, his *Rock Paper Scissors* North American tour with Sting, and the Brian Pern *Life In*



Rock comedy series on BBC TV which saw Gabriel's character lovingly lampooned, and even featured a cameo from the man himself, showing his all-round decency. Sadly, what it doesn't feature is the studio album follow-up to 2002's *Up*, seeing as we've now been waiting 16 years for a new Gabriel album.

Little wonder the man himself states here: "I love detours and distractions and I'll always go off on a tangent rather than finish my homework." Still, if you've not read this knowledgeable and lovingly created tome on the great man, it can help occupy your time as we wait for that bloody follow-up. **JE**

THE INCOMPLETE ANGLER: TEN YEARS OF FRUITS DE MER

Dave Thompson SELF-PUBLISHED

Tales of vinyl-infested oceans from the Brit psych label.

While his subject celebrates reaching their 10th with a monolithic triple album (reviewed on page 113), veteran author Dave Thompson has written the roller coaster story of this "truly remarkable label" that started with founder Keith Jones' simple desire to release gorgeously collectible vinyl cover versions of 60s and 70s musical highlights. This was in 2008 when CDs ruled, rendering expansive cover art obsolete, let alone the subsequent tsunami of faceless downloads. Yet there were enough like-minded artists and record buyers to keep Fruits de Mer afloat. Happily, the label now enjoys

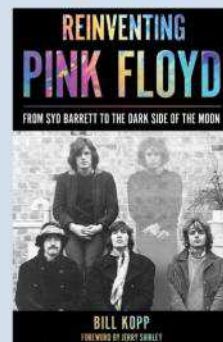


the kind of cult following that will snap up every beautifully pressed artefact. Writing with the insight and passion of a true fan, Thompson forensically analyses the label's convoluted releases and bolsters his action-packed tale by interviewing roster heroes and famous fans, including Judy Dyble, the Pretty Things, Bevis Frond, Todd Rundgren and Carl Palmer, along with the tuned-in psychedelic gaggle who pump the label's lifeblood. Few in today's prog-conscious world deserve such literary affirmation as Fruits de Mer, and Thompson does them proud. **KN**

REINVENTING PINK FLOYD: FROM SYD BARRETT TO THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

Bill Kopp ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD

In-depth study of how Floyd got from Syd to *Speak To Me*.



Trust Robyn Hitchcock to come up with the bons mots. A Syd Barrett devotee, he here describes the late Floyd founder as "the rocket booster that got them off into the stratosphere and then just fell away". He also thinks the band should have changed their name post-Syd, but then the outfit's history wouldn't be half as much fun as soap opera.

Bill Kopp is less interested in gossip and feuds than he is in the progress of Floyd's music between *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. He's intrigued by

Analysis and opinion on a brilliant creative rebranding.

how they got from Barrett's departure and uncertainty as to what to do next to making one of the most confident, epochal albums of all time. They didn't magic *Dark Side...* out of thin air: almost every idea they tested in the run-up was useful, every apparent blind alley a catalyst. The author digs into their recordings both well known and little known, offering analysis and opinion on what became a creative rebranding.

For a group of individuals now notorious for not getting on well, the younger Floyd fathomed a highly collaborative process in these years. They were hungry enough to park egos and survive management crises, and their restless energy was channelled completely into their art.

They experimented with electronica, musique concrète, film soundtracks, the showcases of *Ummagumma* and the conceptualism of *Atom Heart Mother* before landing, in side two of *Meddle*, upon the crystallisation of *Echoes*. Here it was as if their ideas had coalesced into a sense of narrative, albeit an unconventional one. Its flow was translated, with the substance of Waters' most astute lyrics, into the ocean of *Dark Side...*, but not before they'd honed that material through intense live workouts. Its majesty brought them back from the near-wilderness and made the mainstream wilder.

You can trace its seeds in the earlier endeavours, and Kopp provides forensic examination. Of their playing along to the Apollo 11 moon landing for the BBC's *Omnibus* (later released on *The Early Years* as *Moonhead*), Gilmour remarked dryly, "There was a panel of scientists on one side of the studio, with us on the other. I was 23." That evolved into *Money*.

Kopp has unearthed rare bootlegs, offering formless jams and early drafts where, for example, *Eclipse* is smothered in spoken-word loops designed by Nick Mason. Barrett remained a muse even in his absence, and Floyd's music found presence. This book coherently captures what happens when the band you're in starts playing different tunes.

CHRIS ROBERTS

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Take a bow

JETHRO TULL

VENUE ECHO AUDITORIUM, LIVERPOOL
DATE 07/04/2018

Liverpool's Echo Arena — in which the smaller, posher Auditorium is housed — is a monument to modern mega entertainment. Tonight represents the fourth date of Tull's 50th-anniversary tour, but upon entering the giant glass doors down the side of this circular monolith, we feel more like we're attending a convention.

There are shining escalators, attentive ushers and, perched upon the sensible, hard-wearing carpet of the Auditorium's upper level, a small carry stand. A somewhat ignominious home for a band famed for odes to arable ancestry, it's a little different from the bedsits and blues clubs that offered Tull their first lodgings. But then this is a band that, 36 members and 21 albums later, is itself a little different.

Their challenge tonight is appraising that journey — to tread the line of dew-eyed nostalgia necessitated by this golden anniversary, without undermining a long legacy of creative momentum. It will require tact, self-awareness and a little of the mischief that Ian Anderson has always so ably embodied. We don't have to wait long for the latter. Across the tannoy, a voice recognisable in its scuffed Lancashire drawl politely informs us: "Jethro Tull himself will be onstage in 10 minutes!"

Throughout their distinguished history, Tull have operated with a speedily rotating cast of musicians. Tonight's group is now identical to the musicians involved in Anderson's solo line-up, and are thus markedly well-honed.

The hammering blues rock of *My Sunday Feeling*, accompanied by a rapid-cut onscreen compilation of Tull imagery, announces their arrival. Anderson, conspicuous in his absence, enters stage right, flute to lips, displaying a surprising store of catlike agility. There's no codpiece and the bulges might be in different places now, but *Love Story* immediately convinces, the hard rock leanings of guitarist Florian Opahle proving well-suited to the group's bluesy debut.

"Gosh, how time flies," reflects Anderson once the dust settles. And as we're shown a Jeffrey Hammond video link that segues into *A Song For Jeffrey*, it slowly dawns that tonight's live tribute to a band of 36 members "minus the flute player" might be less *Nightlife* and

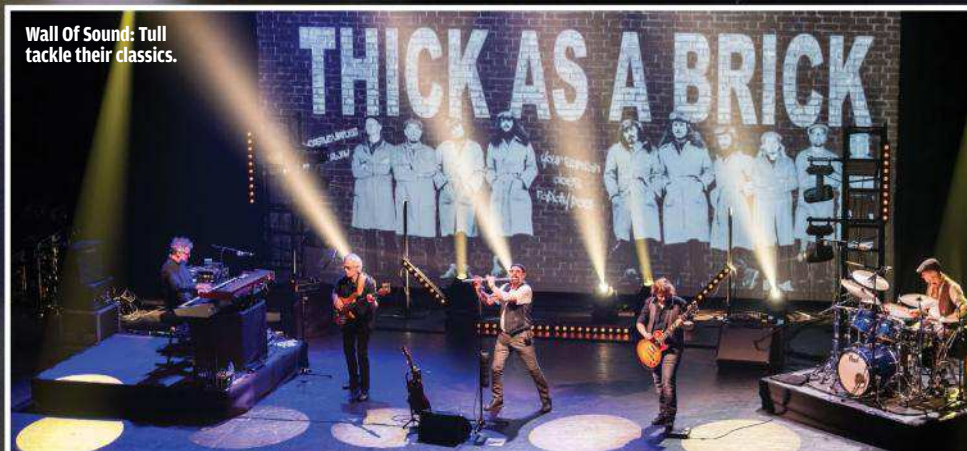
more *This Is Your Life*. Nostalgia thus takes precedence. Scott Hammond is granted, after mock debate, the "tinsiest winsiest drum break-ette" in tribute to Clive Bunker, and soon all manner of celebrities are appearing onscreen to intro their favourites, all duly performed by our live hosts. Joe Bonamassa selects *A New Day Yesterday*, Tony Iommi picks *Bourée*; Iron Maiden's Steve Harris requests a cut from *A Passion Play*.

The band do their best to restore a pace that's often lost to the between-song 'living history'

Joe Elliott, is particularly underwhelming. The roller-coaster backing is tight but the 'ring on' refrain is flatter than a coastal lowland.

All this is not to say Tull aren't still capable of surprises, though. Change is shown to be a good thing on *Farm On The Freeway*, which feels more pertinent than ever and is brought to vicious life by this powerful, electric incarnation of Tull. Bassist David Goodier's vocal melds well here, while Anderson, sprawling and animated, plays the flute like he's punching it.

Wall Of Sound: Tull tackle their classics.



element. Opahle in particular looks desperate to be let off the leash, but structure forbids it here. Fortunately, Anderson's virtuoso flute theatrics are still present. He whirls, spits and wrings sounds from his instrument that thrive amid the rock cacophony.

The same cannot be said of the man's vocals, which, stretched taut across the diverse wealth of Tull's back catalogue, take on the reedy, waif-like quality of latter-day Dylan. The boisterous riffing of *My God* highlights the relative weakness of his snapped vowels, while segments of iconic tunes like *Heavy Horses* and *Aqualung* are disappointingly dealt with via pre-taped video performances from unspecified singers. Harmonic masterclass *Ring Out, Solstice Bells*, here requested by Def Leppard's

Tonight's finale marked is *Locomotive Breath*, and a handful of the crowd are emboldened enough to dance. Creeping to their side of the stage, Anderson locks eyes with these devoted few, hammering out the track's iconic solo.

It's the whisper of an exchange, of that cyclical energy transfer that powers the live experience beyond sound, comfortable seating and ample parking. It's gone too soon and *Prog* is left wondering what a straight set in a darker, stickier room would have delivered. For a moment, though, Tull thunder.

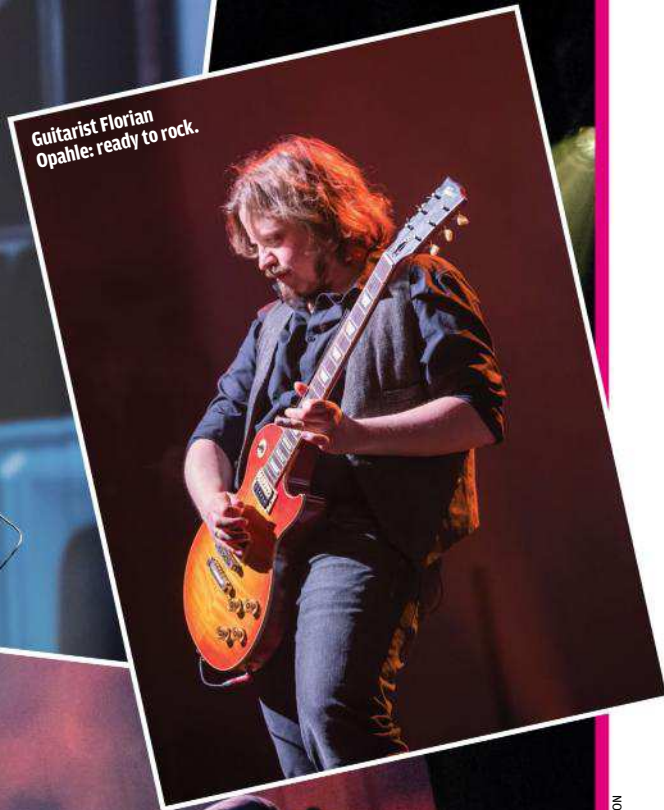
MATT PARKER



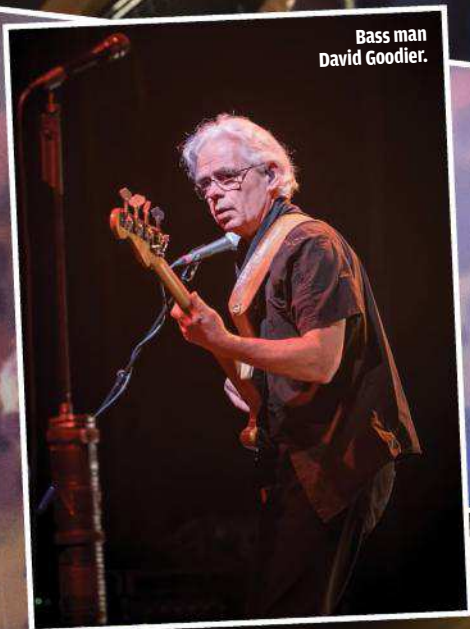
Wind Power: Ian Anderson rocking the flute.



Guitarist Florian Opahle: ready to rock.



Bass man David Goodier.



Keyboardist John O'Hara in the spotlight.



"Anderson's virtuoso flute theatrics are still present as he whirls and wrings sounds from it."

Drummer Scott Hammond, with Tull in full flight.

NICK HARRISON

YES

VENUE	PALLADIUM, LONDON
DATE	25/03/2018

On a second night at the London Palladium, Yes are celebrating their 50th anniversary as a band. Just consider that fact for a moment. Few things in life even endure for a half-decade, and along the way Yes have suffered their share of turbulence, though the band's legacy speaks for itself. A day of birthday events including a Q&A with Prog editor Jerry Ewing precedes this show, and expectation from the packed venue approaches fever pitch as the house lights dim.

Yes are introduced by Bill Bruford, the group's illustrious former drummer whose unexpected arrival triggers the first of many standing ovations. Bruford observes: "I'm the only founder member able to be present tonight," which draws a mix of catcalls and laughter, though if this comment could be viewed as acerbic, he follows up with: "Yes are a bit frayed around the edges, but they have earned respect and withstood the test of time, and like a fine wine, they get better with age. They're a wonderful band."

Coming from a man who can be slightly snuffy about his erstwhile colleagues, such

endorsement is priceless to the current Yes, based around guitarist Steve Howe (a sometime member since 1970) and Bruford's successor Alan White (an ever-present since 1972) – though due to ill health, the latter is ruled out tonight until the show's closing stages. Having deputised following White's back surgery, Jay Schellen once again proves a competent stand-in.

Full marks have to go to the band for their choice of location – the Palladium is an absolutely beautiful venue for a rock concert, with perfect sound and a lighting rig that complements the dazzling colours of the music.

Kicking off the first set with *Yours Is No Disgrace* and *I've Seen All Good People*, Yes appear to be on safe ground, though the following day, complaints of overplaying from Howe appear on the Prog Magazine Readers' Facebook group. And later on, Howe forewarns of a differing arrangement of *Sweet Dreams* from *Time And A Word*. Clearly, some fans believe the band should just bite the bullet and play the songs the way they know them.

Current frontman Jon Davison dedicates *Onward* to the late

Chris Squire and "his surviving family members in the audience". It's a truly wonderful composition, heart-melting in its gorgeousness, and Davison, a key performer alongside the ever-dependable Geoffrey

Downes, is in celestial voice. Reflecting the gravitas of the event, Davison even wears a suit for tonight's show.

The once reclusive Howe now plays more of an active role, his solo spot *Mood For A Day* preceding the final run-in of *Wonderous Stories*, *Parallels* and a crystalline *And You And I*.

Personally, this reviewer could have lived without the 53 minutes pulled from *Tales From Topographic Oceans* (Yes' infamous, fabled 1973 conceptual double album) that fills the show's entire second half. Jon Anderson's interpretation of a set of Hindu teachings is viewed alternatively as an all-time nadir in the bloated era of 1970s music or, to a handful of diehards, some kind of Holy Grail.

The album contains some wonderful themes, including *Leaves Of Green*, which is a fragrant vocal/acoustic guitar interlude from a much larger piece (*The Ancient*), but tonight reminds us that its contents have more padding than a convention of Meat Loaf impersonators.

With White having reclaimed the sticks from Schellen during *Ritual* (*Nous Sommes Du Soleil*), a three-song encore sees Trevor Horn take the mic for *Tempus Fugit* from the underrated *Drama* period, before the group sign off with renditions of *Roundabout* and *Starship Trooper*.

Some people in the world of prog may dismiss Yes as a band that should no longer exist, but try telling that to a packed Palladium that hang on to, and celebrate, their every word – however ludicrous those words may sometimes be.

DAVE LING


"The Palladium is an absolutely beautiful venue for a rock concert, with perfect sound and a lighting rig that complements the dazzling colours of the music."

Tonight At The London Palladium: Yes deliver a fan-friendly set.

BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

VENUE	THE ELECTRIC FACTORY, PHILADELPHIA
DATE	31/03/2018
SUPPORT	LEPROUS, THE DEAR HUNTER

North Carolina quintet Between The Buried And Me have been leading the progressive metal scene for over a decade, with their latest record,

Automata I, reinforcing their mastery of melding crushing sophistication and soaring catchiness. It's no surprise, then, that this headline show explodes with all of the lustrous savagery fans expect.

They're preceded by two equally remarkable acts. Up first are Norwegians Leprous, who begin with a bittersweet lone cello recital before fully delving

into their entrancingly thunderous arsenal. Naturally, they prioritise tracks from 2017's *Malina*, faultlessly pulling off *Bonneville* and *From The Flame*, among others, before closing with *Mirage*. In between, they do justice to the rhythmic hypnosis of *The Price* and guttural atmospheres of *The Flood*, both from 2015's *The Congregation*.

American folk/orchestral/progressive rock group The Dear Hunter are up next, clearly relishing the opportunity to present some dynamic and invigorating material. Specifically, their penultimate performance of *Witness Me* is headed by livelier nods to nearly every album. The combination of *The Old Haunt* and *The March* is a highlight, while other

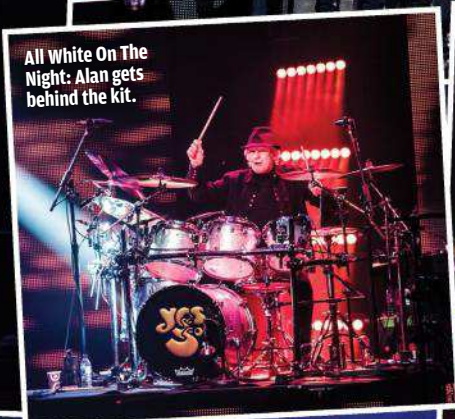
High Drama: Trevor Horn takes the mic.



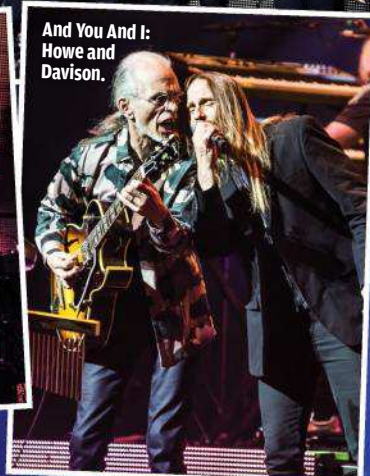
Banging The Yes Drum: Bill Bruford.



All White On The Night: Alan gets behind the kit.



And You And I: Howe and Davison.



Yes Men: the band celebrate their 50th in style.



COLDBONES

VENUE 229, LONDON
DATE 12/04/2018

Hot on the heels of the Russian Circles explosion and jostling alongside the progressive instrumental forays of bands like Scale The Summit and Intervals, post-rock instrumental outfit Coldbones' release of *Where It All Began* comes at a good time.

Unfortunately, it's not good enough to fill the venue, and with the room less than half full, we can't help but feel a little sorry for the Kent trio, who have spent the last week travelling the UK for their album launch tour. Still, it's early days, and if the strapline on their social posts reading "This is only the beginning" is an indication of their optimism, a thin crowd won't dissuade them.

At a succinct 32 minutes long, *Where It All Began* is a little short to warrant a full-blown headliner show, and so Coldbones don't appear on 229's stage until 10.15pm. Funnily enough, the 45-minute set works in their favour, highlighting their tightly packed but no less affecting waves of sound, which avoid the often self-indulgent characteristics of post-rock. The venue has a student nightclub vibe, but its acoustic set-up lends itself perfectly to an atmospheric battering, and with an extra two musicians in tow, the band enjoy exceptional sound quality.

They begin with a few songs from the new album, peaking with the title track. It builds from a gentle twinkle, with Max's percussion providing the pivot, to a smash of reverberation, high-pitched tonal shards cascading from Jordan's guitar.

Having a touring keyboard player and second guitarist turbocharges the sound, and suddenly it feels like we're in a much bigger venue, or on some barren windswept hinterland. Similarly, *New Heights* uses the quiet-loud motif to great effect, echoing the emotional peaks and troughs of Deftones.

While still bleakly dark on stage, save for some string lights, the kinetic energy unleashed by the musicians as they reach the crescendos brings the performance to life.

Without a vocalist, Coldbones rely heavily on the instrumental narrative, and while this works on their new material, a turn to earlier work from the *Distance* EP shows a few cracks in their method. Working to a slightly staid template of repetition, the less developed approach on songs like *The Hands Between Us* becomes a little mundane.

However, they return to the present and show real invention on an uplifting outing of the jangly, 90s-inspired *Decay*, and with the dynamic slices of metallic guitar on *Moments*. In one final wallop of strobe-drenched tremolo, they leave their mark.

HOLLY WRIGHT

standouts, such as *Mustard Gas*, *The Revival* and the sublime finale *The Moon/Awake*, demonstrate why they're one of the best bands around.

BTBAM kick things off with selections from *Automata I*, including *Condemned To The Gallows*, *Millions* and the two-part powerhouse of *Gold Distance* and *Blot*. In between, they pay respect to

their prior masterworks, with stunning renditions of *The Coma Machine*, *Dim Ignition*, *Astral Body*, *Lay Your Ghosts To Rest* and even a section of *Obfuscation*. Their greatest epic – *Silent Flight Parliament/Goodbye To Everything (Reprise)* – is the perfect encore.

BTBAM always dominate in a live setting, and they certainly deliver here.

Aided by two exceptional opening ensembles, they provide an astounding array of devilish yet serene progressive metal majesty that further enhances their reputation as a supreme modern act in the genre. Let's hope they offer a comparably stellar line-up when it's time to tour *Automata II* later this year.

JORDAN BLUM

ROADBURN FESTIVAL

VENUE	VARIOUS VENUES, TILBURG, THE NETHERLANDS
DATE	19-22/04/2018

Roadburn Festival is known for its sheer volume of musical variety. Across a number of venues in Tilburg over four days, there's everything from intense metal to out-there prog. It also frequently showcases musical collaborations, from Damo Suzuki jamming with Earthless (more on that later) to a bunch of Icelandic black metal bands playing music they wrote especially for the festival.

Cult Of Luna and **Julie Christmas** have collaborated before, on their spacey post-rock 2016 album *Mariner*, and tonight they play the album in full for one last time on the main stage. Christmas' vocals are reminiscent of Björk at times, and the album has an apocalyptic, almost sci-fi vibe that's made all the more mesmerising as the band appear silhouetted onstage by the strobing lights and bursts of smoke, with Christmas dancing and shaking like a woman possessed.

Motorpsycho are one of the bands on the bill chosen by the festival curator, Converge frontman Jacob Bannon. The Norwegians' expansive blend of progressive psych and experimental heaviness takes up two hours on the main stage on Friday, but the length doesn't deter the masses. Against a trippy backdrop of swirling imagery, the band play a set that's bursting with hypnotic guitar riffs and which perfectly spans their career, from 1997's *Un Chien D'Espace* to the title track from their new album *The Tower* which closes the set to the audience's delight.

The Green Room that plays host to Finnish quartet **Kairon**; **IRSE!** may be small, but the band's sound is anything but. They take us on a journey that encompasses psychedelic prog, shoegaze, pastoral interludes and jazzy experimentation, with varied vocals that even elevate to falsetto levels.

Visually, they're entirely lost in the music, shaking their dreads against a backdrop that features a stoned-looking, blinking cartoon frog.

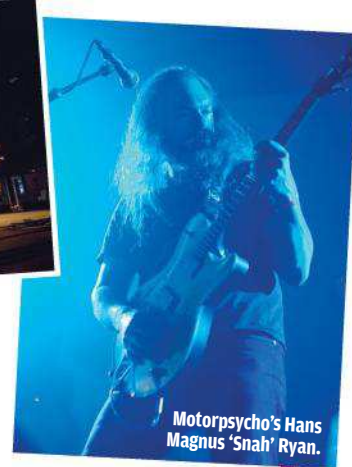
Roadburn Festival this year boasts a special presentation of Japanese psychedelia, and as part of this, Can legend **Damo Suzuki** plays two special sets, first with **Earthless** at the new venue Koepelhal on Friday, and again with fellow Japanese musicians **Minami Deutsch** on Saturday in

the Green Room. Both are entirely improvised, full of drawn-out jams. Earthless' set is more heavy psych and Minami Deutsch more neo-Krautrock. With Suzuki at the helm both times, waving his arms as if in a trance and lost in the creativity that's pulsing around him, both capture the spirit of Roadburn.

Hugsjá is another musical collaboration, this time featuring Enslaved's Ivar Bjørnson and Wardruna's Einar Selvik. It merges Norse history with grandiose music that's both contemporary and primitive – some of their instruments even date back as far as the Stone Age. It's richly cinematic and moving, but also a full-on cultural experience, with Selvik explaining the concepts and stories behind the songs.



Godspeed You! Black Emperor: entrancing the audience with two sets.



Motorpsycho's Hans Magnus 'Snah' Ryan.



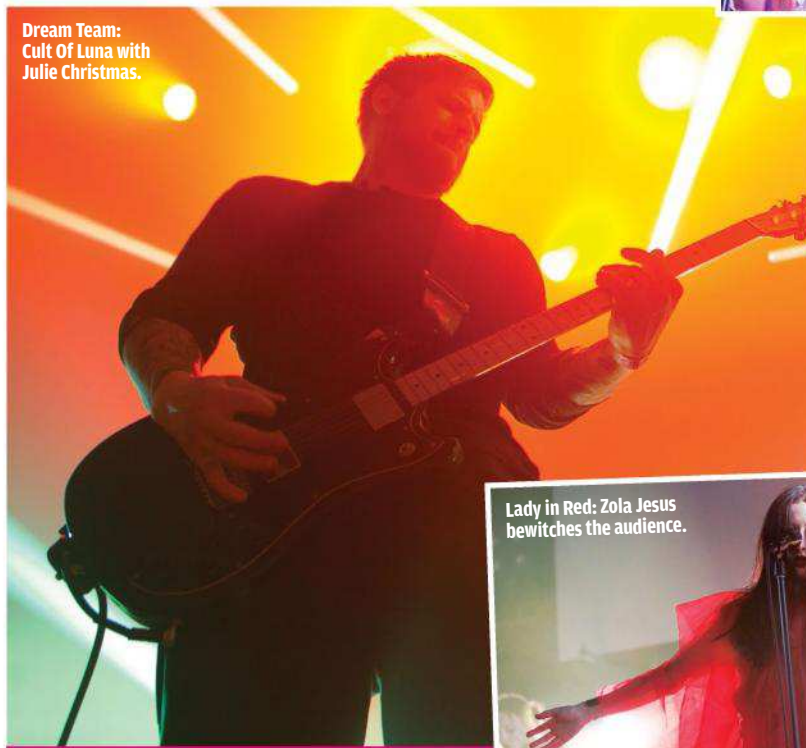
"Godspeed You! Black Emperor ride the wave between beauty and extremity."



Can Do: Damo Suzuki goes improv.



Time Traveller: Hugsjá's Einar Selvik on a trip through Norse history.



Dream Team: Cult Of Luna with Julie Christmas.



Lady in Red: Zola Jesus bewitches the audience.



NORTH SEA RADIO ORCHESTRA

VENUE	THE LEXINGTON, LONDON
DATE	15/04/2018
SUPPORT	VÄLVE

VÄLVE is the experimental side project of bassoonist and saxophonist Chlöe Herington (Knifeworld, Chrome Hoof). Aided by Emma Sullivan on fuzz bass, Elen Evans on harp, and using an array of rhythm boxes and loopers, Herington decorates The Lexington with a bewitching tapestry of glitch rock.

Real-time electronic manipulation of all manner of percussive devices is interspersed with honeyed soprano sax lines and three-part vocal harmonies. The performance is mesmeric and improvisational, ranging from Aphex Twin abstractions to childlike songs with arresting lyrics in the vein of Brian Eno's vocal works. It's a spellbinding way to open proceedings.

After a brief delay caused by what leader Craig Fortnam cheekily dubs an "organ malfunction", it's time for North Sea Radio Orchestra. As is traditional, Fortnam has written a new piece to introduce his chamber orchestra to the audience. The brief intro cleanses the palate and is more a cheery 'hello' than a raucous fanfare.

The Wound features the voice of Sharron Fortnam evoking a young Kate Bush in timbre and phrasing. This is all very pleasant and civilised, as befits a Sunday teatime. *Berliner Luft* shakes us from our English pastoral reverie. Part Krautrock, part contemporary classical, it comes off as a mash-up between Neu!, Zappa's *Uncle Meat* and the theme from *The Magic Roundabout*. No, really, Fortnam strums his nylon-string guitar insistently while the wind section and violin weave devious serpentine phrases.

This segues into *Morpheus Drone*, a beguiling cello solo that draws from Celtic and Eastern modes. The audience is rapt, wavering as the mood takes them between spontaneous dance and pin-drop silence. This is varied, refined yet extremely accessible music. There follow some classic texts from William Blake and Thomas Hardy set to a chamber score with a distinctly Elizabethan feel. Gryphon, anyone?

A new piece, tentatively titled *Guitary*, requires a drum track on Fortnam's phone, which serves as the backbone to an incredible display of composition and ensemble playing. This is the highlight so far, which is clear from the gasps its sinuous journey elicits from the crowd.

There are well-documented connections between NSRO and Cardiacs so *Morpheus Miracle Maker* is introduced as "for and about that genius Tim Smith". Later, *Personent Hodie* ends with Terry Riley-esque organ and vibraphone winding down like a clockwork musical box.

He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven is a fine setting for the WB Yeats poem, and it's a serene set closer, sending us happily onto Pentonville Road at 6.45pm, to arrange our route home in time for a cuppa and the end of *Antiques Roadshow*.

CHRIS MCGAREL

MAGENTA

VENUE	THE DOME, LONDON
DATE	07/04/2018

There's no support for Magenta at The Dome tonight, but there's no danger of anyone feeling short-changed as the band play two albums, *We Are Legend* and *Seven*, in full over the course of their two-and-a-half-hour set.

First, to get those prog muscles warmed up, they start off with *Speechless*. The mix takes a moment to settle down, particularly with Christina Booth's voice being a little low at the outset, but as the band hit their stride, the sound gradually moves closer to equilibrium.

While *Speechless* is one of the more straightforward songs in Magenta's repertoire, from there they launch into the epic *Trojan*, the first track from last year's excellent *We Are Legend*. Chris Fry always has a smile on his face as he makes his guitar wail, and it's a treat to hear a guitarist play melodies in his solos rather than another technically polished but robotic shredder trying to set a new land speed record.

"Is anyone else warm or it just me being menopausal?" asks Booth after *Trojan* reaches its zenith to loud acclaim. The frontwoman's banter is entertaining all night, even if bandmate Rob Reed scolds her for talking during applause, of which there is plenty.

Colours shifts through an impressive array of tempos, but drummer Jiffy Griffiths navigates them all without missing a beat. "Don't frighten our drummer, he's very shy," says Booth, introducing Griffiths, who also plays in the Kinky Wizzards. He's a bundle of energy, leaping to his feet to give his cymbals a thorough thrashing.



"There's an undeniable frisson that comes from using real musicians."



Chris Fry lets fly with a melodic solo.

Legend wraps up the first part of the performance with bluesy playing from Fry and terrific dynamics.

The second part begins with *Prekestolen*, which Booth introduces as an interlude to "refresh the palette". The band are joined by Karla Powell on oboe and Katie Axelsen on flute. In an age when so many bands rely on backing tracks, there's an undeniable frisson that comes from using real musicians, and the two guests add an extra dimension to the sound.

The rest of the main set is taken up with six tracks from 2004's *Seven*. Compared to *We Are Legend*, there's more of a neo-prog vibe to songs like *Gluttony*, *Envy*, and *Lust*. *Anger* is a definite highlight, building from just acoustic guitar and voice towards a spectacular finish.

The crowd has thinned a little by the time *Sloth* wraps things up – presumably people have trains to catch. But the early leavers miss out on encores *The Lizard King*, surely the catchiest song in Magenta's catalogue, and finally *Pride*, which borders on fusion thanks to Rob Reed's funky keyboard work. That concludes a long night's work for the band, but it never felt like it for a single moment.

DAVID WEST



We Are Legend: Kristina Booth and Rob Reed.

KEVIN NIXON

JORDAN RUDESS

VENUE	ST PANCRAS NEW CHURCH, LONDON
DATE	03/04/2018

As Ian Dury noted, there ain't half been some clever bastards. The prog scene is teeming with 'em, from polymath musicians to lyrical geniuses. But as a genre that prefers to let the music speak for itself, apart from Wakeman, Anderson, Eno and perhaps a Genesis alumnus or two, there are few who stick a noggin over the 'Evening With...' parapet.

Which is why it's good to see Dream Theater keyboardist Jordan Rudess don his storytelling cape for this *From Bach To Rock* tour. A youthful 61 and no stranger to the format (he and DT guitarist John Petrucci did this in 2000), the New Yorker has a stack of tales that date back to being recognised as a child prodigy in second grade to inventing his own music software. Sat at a Yamaha grand in this gorgeous Grade I-listed building, Rudess performs two sets that cover his life chronologically.

With the precocious Mozart as a benchmark, there's an embellished *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, then Bach's *Partita No 5*. Utterly charming and at ease, Rudess describes a prog awakening as a teen, playing a great medley of Floyd, Genesis and Crimson tunes that ends with a dramatic, sung *The Court Of The Crimson King*. After a little Chopin (Rudess was hailed as the next big concert pianist sensation at Juilliard, but took a rockier road) and *Imagine*, it's time for a break, bums off pews for a leg stretch and a tippie from the table at the back.

Set two has the funniest vignettes of finding his way in rock, trying to slip in 7/8 breakdowns while playing prom dances and performing at bankers' dos where a D minor could cause wallets to snap shut immediately.

On to meeting Mike Portnoy, and Liquid Tension Experiment's *Hourglass* — a seamless

synthesis of classical and rock — before a triple whammy of *Hollow Years*, *The Silent Man* and *The Spirit Carries On* sees a flurry of camera phones emerging to capture the moment.

When iamthemorning's Marjana Semkina joins him, there's a tender *Space Oddity*, then Rudess commandeers a velvet and carved-oak lectern for a funky *Blues Jam* on an iPad, showcasing his GeoShred software.

After that, it's back to the piano (we're surprised he hasn't seized the Victorian pipe organ

just 20 feet away) for the neoclassical *Interstices*, his tsunami-survivors tribute *For Japan*, DT's

The Dance Of Eternity, and the most elaborate *Chopsticks* ever heard.

Time flies and attention is pin-drop rapt. Given the opportunity, a fan Q&A might have worked, and the evening could have been all Dream Theater, Liquid Tension and Rudess originals alone. But one thing's clear: Rudess is a twinkling, not-so-little star himself.

JO KENDALL

"Sat at a Yamaha grand in this gorgeous Grade I-listed building, Rudess performs two sets that cover his life chronologically."

Worship Music: the stunning St Pancras New Church.



WILL IRELAND

Special guest Marjana Semkina.



CHARLIE BARNES

VENUE	EAGLE INN, SALFORD
DATE	21/03/2018
SUPPORT	PEAKS

Up first at tonight's show is Ben Forrester, also known as Peaks. There's a hint of the one-man-band mathy post-rock of Mylets in what he does, without really fully dispensing with the singer/songwriter trappings that work well for his playing style and voice. The use of guitar and vocal loops to build up textures and atmosphere around the motifs recalls a certain

prog-pop kid with a keyboard and a looper terrorising Amplifier crowds at the start of the decade.

Speaking of which, Charlie Barnes may have long ago become Charlie Barnes the band, as opposed to Charlie Barnes with a keyboard and looper in a hiking rucksack, but his intensity and stagecraft have only improved with time. Some might have worried that due to his day job with indie pop megastars Bastille, he'd lose something, but there's still the same sense of fun, and the same over-the-top rock star persona Barnes used when playing to five people on his own, rather than to a full venue.

Breaking character for a second, he says, "It's hard to do the same banter you do every night when most of the room are your friends," presumably a reference to the numerous members of Oceansize and Amplifier hovering near the stage. Indeed, when his pick goes AWOL at the beginning of the set, Mike Vennart leans in to hand over a few from his pockets, in a slightly Spinal Tap moment.

Of the new material, *All I Have* works the best, though there are people visibly singing along to the chorus of *Maria*, and *Will & Testament* is surprisingly much stronger live than on record.

An early highlight is heavy rocker *Macbeth*, *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* from his second LP *More Stately Mansions*, and it's a welcome, heavy deviation from his usual tone. "Here's a song from when I thought choruses were for sellouts," Barnes says with a laugh, introducing *Easy, Kid*, another track from *More Stately Mansions*. Though naturally there were a number of great choruses on that record, the best tonight is *Sing To God*, which closes the set in fine form.

Though the day job prevents frequent touring, tonight just goes to show that it's really a case of quality over quantity.

ALEX LYNHAM

THE LUCID DREAM

VENUE THE VICTORIA, LONDON
DATE 05/04/2018

Just two days after playing this modest east London venue last March, what should have been the triumphant start to a European tour soon turned to misery following the theft in Paris of every piece of The Lucid Dream's equipment. This wasn't just the loss of instruments, amps and pedals, but the abrupt and cruel cessation of a long journey that had begun while the band were still in their early teens.

Or at least that would have been the case were it not for their fans' fervent belief in what the band were doing. Wasting little time, a crowdfunding campaign saw the Carlisle quartet raise the necessary £10,000 they needed to start all over again, and within a month they were back in action.

So all credit to The Lucid Dream for not just starting over, but also challenging themselves and their audience, pushing on to the next stage of development. Their recent single, the acid house-inspired *SX1000*, certainly threw a curveball, with some fans decrying what they saw as psych treachery, while others adopted a contrary stance and showered the lads with hosannas.

Yet as displayed here, this has proven to be something of a red herring. The single may well be an extreme example of where they're heading, but in common with Hookworms and their *Negative Space* album, or The Oscillation and *UEF*, the most intriguing psychedelic bands are beginning to explore the movements below the head as much as they are what's inside. And while all three bands remain distinct from each other in terms of both their approach and delivery, their terms of reference straddle each other's work.

Opening with new track *Alone In Fear* shows that if anything, The Lucid Dream are not only consolidating the dub foundations at the root of their variant of space rock, but they're also pursuing them to outer reaches. Indeed, with the muscle flexing *Bad Texan* sandwiched between that and another new track, the widescreen boom that is *Zenith*, the band's development begins to make perfect sense. So much so, that one pair of heads near the merchandise stall contemplate aloud the most appropriate intoxicants to complement the new material.

And it's not as if The Lucid Dream have abandoned their roots. *I'm A Star In My Own Right* remains a multicoloured skank, confirming that the congregation gathered at the altar of psychedelia is a broad church indeed. Elsewhere tonight, the mighty *Epitaph* brings the throng together in communion.

There's more than one colour to the psych spectrum, and The Lucid Dream know that well.

JULIAN MARSALEK

SUMER

VENUE TALKING HEADS, SOUTHAMPTON
DATE 05/04/2018
SUPPORT DECAPOD, TEMPLES ON MARS

For the south coast's progressive rock fans, it's a disheartening yet all too familiar sight: an evening of experimental music from a promising young band at the Talking Heads that draws an insultingly small crowd. Tonight, the 300-capacity venue – a cornerstone of Southampton's rock and metal scene – barely welcomes 50 people through its doors, resulting in a tiny but dedicated gathering, united in anticipation for polyrhythmic punishers Sumer.

But before this intimate concert can hit its cathartic, riff-fuelled climax, it falls to the mathematic Decapod to kick-start proceedings. The quintet's time signatures are astounding in their off-the-wall lunacy. However, their tone and arrangements are so heavily derivative of the masterful melancholia of Tool that it hinges on distracting. It's hard not to listen to cuts like *Sodium Glow* – which fuses subdued vocals, swaggering guitars and dancing percussion – without yearning to be experiencing the twisted originality of *Lateralus* or *The Pot*.

After Decapod's parade of lengthy, mid-paced tunes, the mighty melodies of Temples On Mars add an invigorating wave of rock'n'roll energy. Combining



Temples Of Mars: short, sharp shots of anthemic prog.

the confident pomp of metal, the pure catchiness of hard rock and the wacky eclecticism of prog, the London four-piece have a collection of anthems, thanks to their lauded self-titled debut album. The

exciting guitar riff of *When Gods Collide* is an early highlight, providing a heavy-hitting bang that's soon complemented by the soaring singing of *So In Love With Your Own Drug*.

Despite a short set, Temples On Mars prove that their greatest strength is their ability to make progressive music that's contained in brief, catchy snapshots.

Sumer suddenly roar into life as if from nowhere, stunning as they explode into the first of many addictive guitar- and drum-led grooves with zero fanfare. It's

a jolt of an opening that fits the tone of the rest of their 45-minute barnburner.

Boasting three guitarists and two lead singers, these British bruisers juxtapose crushing, early Mastodon-like heaviness with a sombre vocal styling reminiscent of the depressive side of Radiohead. The performance is as primal and visceral as progressive metal could ever hope to be, with frantic yet focused mania ruling the roost. It elicits an equally titanic response from the venue's minute gathering.

Even the cleaner and more emotive avenues that Sumer find themselves exploring on *End Of Sense* and *The Animal You Are* feel like they only exist to make the next immense breakdown all the more weighty and indomitable.

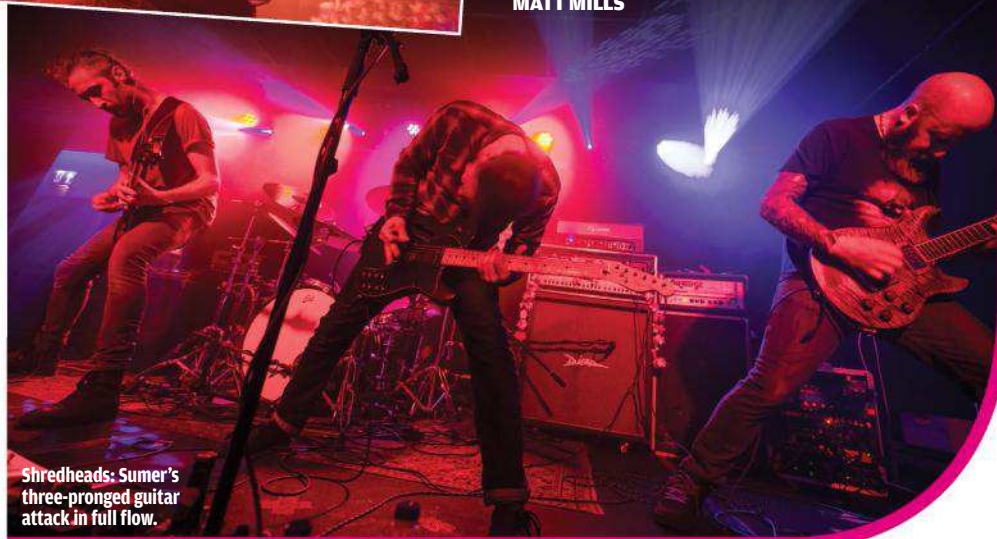
Needless to say, as *Pinch, Cut* closes out the performance with one final, gigantic shred, it's clear that this five-piece's direct approach to pummelling prog is one that spellbinds.

MATT MILLS

"Sumer's performance is as primal and visceral as progressive metal could ever hope to be."



Decapod: re-tooling classic prog sound.



Shredheads: Sumer's three-pronged guitar attack in full flow.

MARTIN BARRE BAND

VENUE O2 ABC, GLASGOW
DATE 08/04/2018

"I know Toto are on down the road, so thanks for making a choice," Martin Barre jokes, only to receive the loud response of, "We couldn't get tickets!" from one fan.

It's the first, but not the most important, audience interaction moment on an evening that, while slightly sparsely attended, is full of goodwill.

After opening with *Minstrel In The Gallery* and *Steel Monkey*, two things are obvious: first, that Barre is determined to illustrate Jethro Tull classics from a different angle (all the prog, but more blues than Ian Anderson would ever allow); and second, that bassist Alan Thomson is an incredible asset to that illustration. *Steel Monkey* as almost a funk groove is something to behold.

Frontman Dan Crisp's vocal performance obviously borrows much from Anderson, but he adds little twists and has slightly different takes on phrasing, which make his delivery a little more personal. He's also able to mix in a little Phil Collins and even (if you listen closely) Francis Dunnery, and the show is all the better for it.

The problem comes when they deliver some of their own songs. There's no getting away from the fact that a return

to straight blues, while delivered with depth and feeling, feels a bit bland when compared to the Tull reworkings. However, their reinterpretation of Robert Johnson's *Cross Road Blues* scores highly for becoming a mandolin-fuelled exploration of how it might have sounded on *Catfish Rising*.

The key moment comes during the quiet, near-silent end passage of *A Song For Jeffrey*, when someone shouts, "Shit!" and it's impossible to imagine it couldn't be heard on stage. It hasn't been shit, but by this point – 15 songs into a 21-song set – patience is certainly being tested.

The issue is clear: the band are playing a similar set to the one they've been playing for a couple of years, and there's been

no new music since 2015's *Back To Steel*. Yes, they know they've been working on the next album, and they're buzzed by what they've achieved before heading out on the road again – but we're not. If they'd released a new track before this tour, it might have been easier for the crowd to share the excitement.

The verbal attack seems to hit home. But instead of shrivelling away, the band up the ante with *Moment Of Madness*. The facial signals between them on stage have a different energy, and the night is saved. With a sleazy version of *A New Day Yesterday*, a killer rendition of *Love Story*, and the promise, "We'll be back, I can assure you of that!" the abiding memory is of great music played with warmth and passion – and Barre's guitar work rightly takes pride of place in a celebratory show.

MARTIN KIELTY

Into the blues:
Martin Barre.

"Barre is determined to illustrate Jethro Tull classics from a different angle."

DEATH AND VANILLA

VENUE THE SHACKLEWELL ARMS, LONDON
DATE 06/04/2018
SUPPORT MODERN STUDIES

That this isn't east London's throbbing social nexus hasn't deterred a sizeable mixed crowd for tonight's aural entertainment – trendy 20-somethings rub shoulders with more mature prog-leaning types.

Scottish retro-pop stylists Modern Studies warm things up with their gentle, moody, whimsical, slightly trippy compositions. With vocals split between

the clean, folksy delivery of keyboard player Emily Scott and the Jarvis Cocker meets Scott Walker baritone of guitarist Rob St John, the band visit tracks from the freshly released *Welcome Strangers*.

There's drama here, and a wide-ranging sound palette, yet Modern Studies remain steadfastly unhurried. Saving *Mud And Flame*, the most uptempo track of the night, until last, the band wrap up a well-received set.

Eschewing a conventional band line-up in favour of guitar, analogue synths, samples, a drum machine, effects galore and a vibraphone, the explorations of Swedish three-piece Death And Vanilla

are hard to pin down. One moment it's *Run Rabbit Run*, with its spacey weirdness channelled through a 60s garage band working late in a Berlin jazz club; the next it's *Ghosts In The Machine*, the lost cousin of the old *Randall And Hopkirk (Deceased)* theme tune arranged for Chris Isaak and a beatbox.

The band's ability to create rich, sometimes quite dark, hypnotic, multi-layered soundscapes is self-evident, with the inscrutable, reverb-drenched vocals of Marleen Nilsson suggesting insight into a reality beyond. However, it's not the most absorbing of physical performances. Given the potential addition of creative visuals

and lighting in bigger venues, this wouldn't be a problem, but the band should think about making their live act more accessible for punters in more modest surrounds.

There's a big cheer for *California Owls* and much swaying and bobbing of heads – close your eyes and a heavily medicated Stereolab are collaborating with Edith Piaf in the BBC Radiophonic Workshop as the ideal band for an episode of *Twin Peaks*.

Encore *Reality From Dream* is a lovely ending to the set as fundamentally choral church music blossoms then dies away, leaving a lone voice with the most minimal guitar evaporating to nothing.

GARY MACKENZIE

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA

VENUE	THE ADMIRAL, GLASGOW
DATE	21/03/2018

There are more instruments on stage than people in the audience, but that's not going to hold The Blackheart Orchestra back. Instead, duo Chrissy Mostyn and Rick Pilkington embark on the leanest of intense, intimate performances. There's everything from folk to trance, Canterbury scene to psychedelia, all delivered by a duo who seem to conduct natural music rather than create it.

Mostyn has a voice that sits somewhere between The Cranberries' vocalist Dolores O'Riordan and a Nordic princess, while Pilkington has the father figure musical understanding of the Eurythmics' Dave Stewart. Together they blend into something that feels genuinely ethereal.

Their attention to detail is breathtaking. That becomes part of the music, as does stamping on the stage floor which they must have sussed earlier. The connection between the two of them is also amazing, as they occasionally move round each other while playing the same synth, and even share the drumming technique of flaming (hitting the skin with both sticks just an instant apart), using a stick each.

Note well, there are no backing tracks at any point – each of the 16 instruments on stage are used, usually more than three at a time, and yet the motion is such that there's no sense of the pair pushing themselves to attain the accuracy they need to keep the mood moving. Plus, no song is overdone – once the idea is expressed they move on without ever labouring the point.

Drown Me Out ends what they describe as “the noisy stuff” and flows beautifully into the dreamier *Sebastian*, and *Wolves*. These two songs illustrate the delicate dynamic of their polyphonic structure, but the high point of the set is their peace anthem, *Marching Left To Right*. This sets Mostyn's innocent, observant voice on the challenge of expressing the pointlessness of battle from a child's viewpoint and is a real victory.

It would be sensual to the point of sexy if it wasn't for all the innocence. That's underlined by the fact that it's not until the very last song, *Hey Pluto*, that Mostyn and Pilkington look each other in the eye. And when they do it's almost orgasmic. The slight delay in the closing applause says everything: we happy few, we band of 14 brothers and sisters have to stop and ask ourselves, “Did that really happen?”

The Blackheart Orchestra's music is pleading for a world that deserves it, making us hope it's going to be this world. It's naïve while being revealing, relaxing while being thought-provoking, and if you're looking for a band that might help explain where we all are right now, it might just be these guys.

MARTIN KIELTY

JCM

VENUE	ROBIN 2, BILSTON
DATE	10/04/2018

Given the fact that JCM are really an offshoot of Colosseum, there's little surprise that the level of musicianship is exceptional. But this is never allowed to become too clinical or sterile. The trio onstage behave in a relaxed manner – they're clearly having fun with this project.

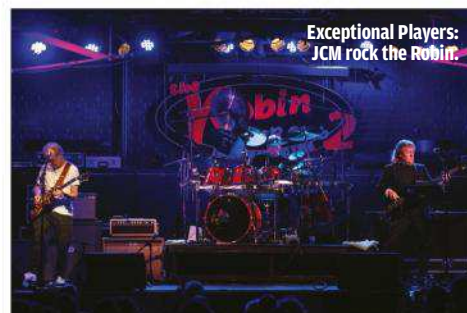
Clem Clempson proves himself to be a consummate guitarist, while Mark Clarke is definitely a performer for connoisseurs of the art of bass playing. Behind his kit, Jon Hiseman is a master drummer.

What the three have done is strip back Colosseum's renowned jazz rock approach, giving it a more powerful focus. And it works sublimely.

Opening with Colosseum's *The Kettle*, the first of two sets darts across songs taken from the mother ship and Colosseum II's extensive catalogue, a couple of compositions from Tempest (a band that featured both Hiseman and Clarke), plus tracks from the just-released *Heroes* album, wherein they pay tribute to some of the great musicians who have died in recent times.

Clarke and Clempson both handle the vocal side of things, and they do it well. A cover of Jack Bruce's *Grease The Wheels* is especially memorable, allowing the band to take the original blues base of the song and give it their own sheen and complex arrangement. And this part of the performance finishes with a bouncing run-through of Tempest's *Yeah, Yeah, Yeah*.

In a way, it's a shame the band feel the need to take a break. There's a noticeable



loss of momentum when the second part begins by again going into Tempest territory for *Strangeher*. They then tackle Larry Coryell's *The Real Great Escape*, which is very much suited to the style and timbre of the band. With purpose and poise now re-established, JCM then return to the bosom of Colosseum for a sprightly run at *Watching Your Every Move*, allowing Clempson to show his strengths as a tidy guitarist with virtuoso confidence.

Going back to his early days, Hiseman delivers a homage to Graham Bond with *Only Sixteen*. Maybe in this era of Yewtree, that choice is slightly questionable (take a look at the lyrics!), but even without a brass section and keyboards, it's a musical masterclass. And the set ends by revisiting Colosseum II for a brilliant strike at *The Inquisition*.

You'd expect solo spots to be part of the occasion, but there's only one: that comes from Hiseman at the start of the encore. The deft and incisive work underlines his right to be regarded as a percussive great. This leads into Jack Bruce's *Theme For An Imaginary Western*, which is a suitably climactic way to end this rather magnificent two-part show.

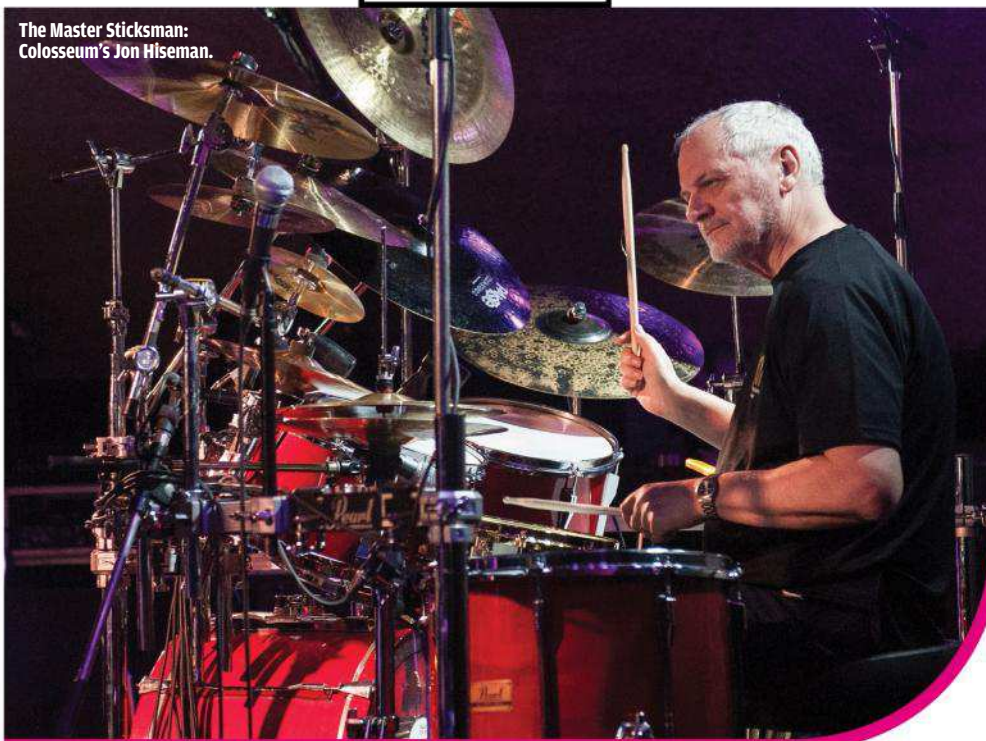
JCM are a covers band. But their approach has undoubted authority and passion.

MALCOLM DOME



“Jon Hiseman's deft and incisive work underlines his right to be regarded as a percussive great.”

The Master Stickman:
Colosseum's Jon Hiseman.





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PROG

Where's home?

I live in York and have done all my life. I love the place: a nice old haunted city with over 400 pubs!

Earliest prog memory?

In 1975, when I was eight, my older brother and I went to a pub for a few shandies. He played *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* in the car as we were driving home through the moors, under the stars. I remember this incredible connection between that music and nature, and that's fuelled me ever since.



First prog record bought?

After that night I had to have my own copy of *Wish You Were Here*. I bought it at Woolworths in York.

First prog gig attended?

Steve Hackett on the *Spectral Mornings* tour in about 1980 at York University. It was the very first concert I ever went to.

Favourite gadget?

I don't really have one. I've got an iPhone but I'm quite a simple sort of guy. I don't do social media myself, I just crack on old-style.



Are there any guilty pleasures in your record collection?

I'm a huge Bon Jovi fan – there's a lot more depth to the guy than people give him credit for. I thought *These Days* was a phenomenal piece of work. He's a great songwriter.

What would your specialist subject on Mastermind be?

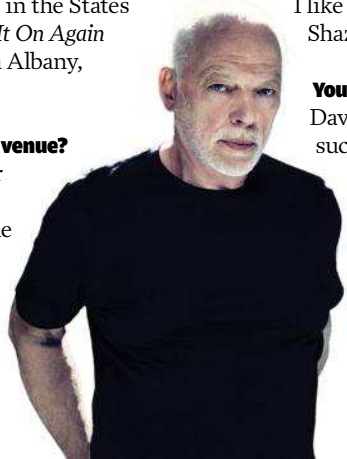
Well, I know a bit about Genesis and Pink Floyd, but let's go for 'barbecues' – marinating techniques, that kind of thing!

Your greatest prog extravagance?

I've been all over the world to see my favourite bands. I went to see Genesis in the States on their *Turn It On Again* tour [2007], in Albany, New York.

Your favourite venue?

On the regular circuit it's the Boerderij in the Netherlands – everything about it is just



Mostly Autumn's Bryan Josh

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

fantastic. But to see bands, I love the Royal Albert Hall and Manchester Arena.

Outside of music, what else are you into?

I love going to the Lakes and camping and walking in the hills – campfires and barbecues with friends, and drinking. I used to play squash to national standard in the 90s. I do still play but these days just with friends.

Are you a collector?

I collect beautiful, emotionally charged classical/soundtrack tunes, stuff by Hans Zimmer, George Fenton, Vaughan Williams. If I hear something I like on Classic FM, I'll Shazam it and buy it.

Your prog hero?

David Gilmour. He's had such a profound effect on my life.

The last proggy album you paid for?

A Curious Feeling by Tony Banks. I had it but lost it, so bought

it again. I love the atmosphere on that record.

The last prog gig you attended?

David Gilmour at the Royal Albert Hall for the *Rattle That Lock* tour. And more recently I saw Nightwish, but I don't really class them as prog. They're good friends of ours.

Ever been on a prog-related date?

On many occasions! About 11 years ago, before we were married, I took my wife [Mostly Autumn singer Olivia Sparnenn-Josh] to see Roger Hodgson in Germany. That was a date. A lot of my previous girlfriends enjoyed good music too.

"I'm a huge Bon Jovi fan – there's more depth to the guy than he gets credit for."

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?

Troy Donockley and I have had many wild nights out. We're very similar – he's like a brother to me. He's really good at magic!

The most important prog song to you personally?

Shine On You Crazy Diamond is the most perfect, emotional progression in music that I've ever heard.

Who is the prog muso you'd most like to work with?

Tony Banks – I would love to have the experience of working with him. He's got the technical and creative magic. He's phenomenal.



Which prog album gets you in a good mood?

I really enjoy *90125* by Yes. It's got such a punchy, uplifting vibe.

Who is the best prog artist you've ever seen live?

Pink Floyd at the Palace of Versailles, on the *Momentary Lapse Of Reason* tour [1988]. The setting was incredible. It was the first time I'd seen them, and it completely blew my mind.

Your favourite album cover?

Jeff Wayne's *The War Of The Worlds* – I used to stare at that one for hours.

Recommend us a good read.

Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels. They're hilarious.

And what are you up to at the moment?

We've got a few concerts coming up, including the Robin 2 and the O2 Islington in June, and Ramblin' Man Festival in July. Other than that, we're taking care of our baby daughter, Autumn, who's 10 months old now. We've just had the garage converted into a studio and I've started writing the next Mostly Autumn album.

See www.mostly-autumn.com for more information.

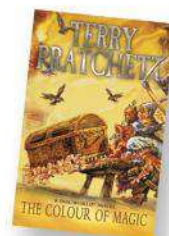




Photo taken by Paul Adam

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the reliability and precision of a modern one.*

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Jakko Jakszyk - King Crimson

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