EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

ROGER WATERS

"I'm being asked to don the Pink Floyd mantle..."

PROG

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AMAZING MUSIC

pink floyd

All Equal In The End?
How *The Final Cut* shaped the future of Roger Waters and Pink Floyd






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ISSUE 88 14.06.18

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WILLIE CHRISTIE

The time that Dave and Roger were in the studio together, it was frosty. There's no question about it.

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HAKEN

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DVD COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

L-1VE

Haken's first ever live album! Recorded and filmed during the bands 10th anniversary tour, featuring tracks from across the bands discography.

Available as **2CD/2DVD digipak** & as **digital audio download**.

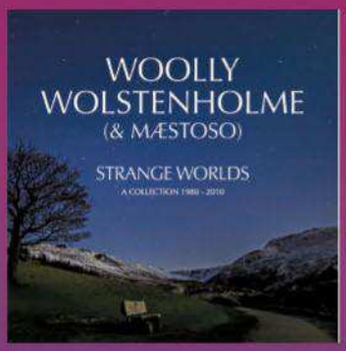
The DVD includes 4 bonus tracks filmed at **ProgPower USA 2016**, as well as all of the official videos from the 'Affinity' album.

Recorded live in Amsterdam: AFFINITY.EXE/INITIATE IN MEMORIAM 1985 RED GIANT AQUAMEDLEY
AS DEATH EMBRACES ATLAS STONE COCKROACH KING THE ARCHITECT THE ENDLESS KNOT VISIONS
Recorded live in Atlanta: FALLING BACK TO EARTH EARTHRISE PAREIDOLIA CRYSTALLISED

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'STRANGE WORLDS'

- A seven CD clamshell box set featuring the entire solo recordings by barclay James Harvest founder member Woolly Wolstenholme & his band Mæstoso contains the albums "Mæstoso", "Black Box Recovered", "One Drop In A Dry World", "Fiddling Meanly (Live At The Mean Fiddler)", "Grim" & "Caterwauling"
- Also featuring a bonus disc of twenty previously unreleased demos & alternate recordings with an illustrated booklet featuring an essay by BJH authorities Keith & Monika Domone.

COMUS
'FIRST UTTERANCE'
REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION

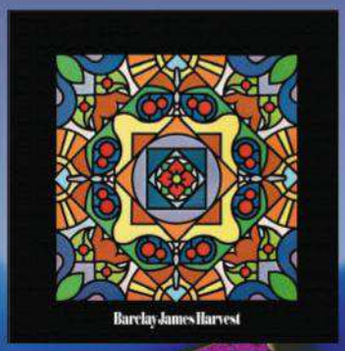
- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered and expanded edition of the legendary album First Utterance by COMUS.
- Includes four bonus tracks taken from the 'Diana' maxi-single, along with the song 'All the Colours of Darkness', recorded during the "First Utterance"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

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

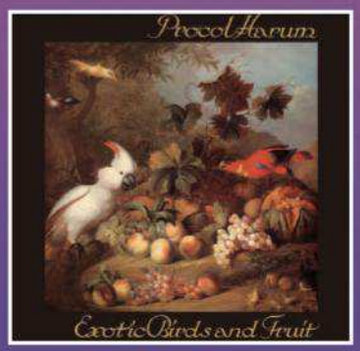
- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered and expanded edition of the legendary self-titled debut album by Barclay James Harvest. This reissue has been ewly remastered from the original master tapes and also includes nine bonus tracks, including the classic Early 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.

PROCOL HARUM



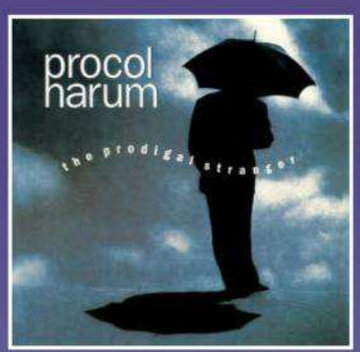
'GRAND HOTEL'

- New expanded 2 disc (CD/DVD) edition of the classic album by Procol Harum with five bonus tracks (three previously unreleased) & a DVD (NTSC / region free) of the Belgian tv film "Procol Harum" – first broadcast in November 1973, released on DVD for the first time.
- Restores the original album artwork & book, along with a lavishly illustrated booklet with essay by Procol Harum authority Roland Clare featuring exclusive interview quotes from Gary Brooker.



'EXOTIC BIRDS AND FRUIT'

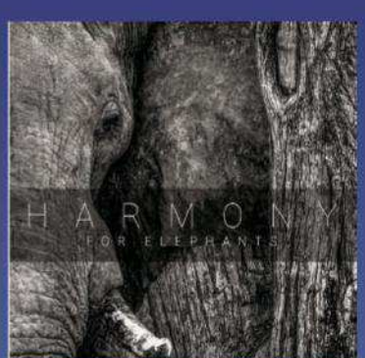
- New expanded 3 CD edition of the classic 1974 album by Procol Harum.
- Two bonus tracks, along with the full recording for BBC Radio One in concert from March 1974 and a complete previously unreleased 65 minute live performance for fm radio in Dallas, Texas from July 1974.
- Includes a lavishly illustrated booklet with essay by Procol Harum authority Roland Clare featuring exclusive interview quotes from Gary Brooker.



'PRODIGAL STRANGER'

- New remastered & expanded release of the 1991 reunion album by Procol Harum
- With three previously unreleased bonus tracks.

VARIOUS ARTISTS 'HARMONY FOR ELEPHANTS'
CHARITY ALBUM

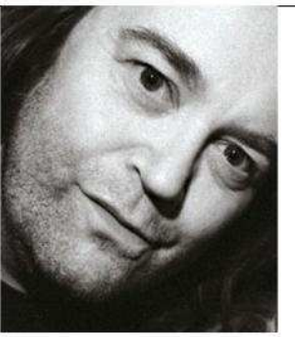


- Esoteric Antenna is pleased to announce the release of a charity album featuring new tracks by legendary artists from the "progressive" music world; "Harmony For Elephants". The album features new music donated to raise funds and awareness for the charity Elephants for Africa, an organisation dedicated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



GUGUY HARROP

Ed's Letter



Hello and welcome to the new issue of *Prog* Magazine. This issue is always an exciting one for the editorial team, because it's the issue where we announce the nominations for the Progressive Music Awards. If you turn to page 12, you can read all about the impending 2018 Awards and discover who's been nominated.

As always, it's a pretty tough call. We start by going through the last 12 months of *Prog* magazines, listing down everyone who we think deserves a shout in each category. Then the hard work begins, trying to whittle those rather long lists down to just 10 final nominees. Then it's over to you guys to vote for them and allow us to end up with one more than worthy winner.

Every year the choice is made so much tougher by the vast scope of music we're faced with, and the inherent quality of what we hear. I've said it before and I'll say it again, it really does pay testament to the immense depth of quality in the progressive music world. I know it sounds cheesy, but to even get a nomination is a considerable achievement.

For this issue's cover story we've taken a look at Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut* album. Not an obvious choice, I'm sure you'll agree. But an album that's really grown into itself over the ensuing 35 years. And had Pink Floyd never made *The Final Cut*, it certainly would have made for a very different future for Messrs. Gilmour, Mason and Waters. Daryl Easlea's excellent story (p 36) points out that this album paved the way for the enormous success that all three have enjoyed ever since.

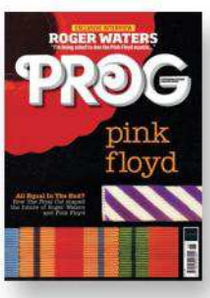
Enjoy that, and the rest of the issue. And don't forget to have your say in the 2018 Progressive Music Awards. No registration required this year: just dive and and vote. Off you go. We can't wait to see who you all vote for...



Jerry Ewing - Editor

NEXT ISSUE July 19 ON SALE

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MOSTLY AUTUMN

2018



MARCH
3 CRS AWARDS,-Rotherham
25 The Crescent -York

APRIL
7 Artrock Festival-Germany
8 Cacao Fabriek- Helmond - NL

JUNE
3 Robin 2- Bilston
8 Islington 02-Academy-London
23 The Wharf- Tavistock
24 The Fleece- Bristol

JULY
1 Rambling Man Festival
28 Cambridge Rock Festival

SEPTEMBER
1 The Sage-Gateshead
2 The Waterfront- Norwich

OCTOBER
20 Citadel-St Helens
27 Prog en Beauce Festival-France

NOVEMBER
3 Bury Met-Bury
16 Fruit- Hull
30 Spirit of 66-Verviers-Belgium

DECEMBER
1 De Boerderij-Zoetermeer-NL
2 Zentrum Altenberg-Oberhausen
6 The Stables- Milton Keynes
9 Robin 2-Bilston - with Touchstone
16 The Crescent-York

Bloody Well Write

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

TURN IT DOWN A NOTCH

Excellent article by Alison Reijman on the subject of constant talking throughout gigs [*Paper Late*, 87]. My wife and I have got so fed up with this at one venue we attended regularly that we've stopped going. Sadly the problem seems to be endemic — we even experienced someone in the seats behind us at Wembley Arena yelling into his mobile phone during a Deep Purple concert!

I remember reading another article in *Prog* mag encouraging fans to get out and go to live gigs as venues are struggling to continue and even closing down, and yet while I can understand the sentiments behind such encouragement, there is a reason for the decline in attendance figures and I can't help wondering if the problem is rather more involved.

For example, we recently went to the London Palladium for the Yes 50th-anniversary convention and concert and a couple of weeks later attended the Jethro Tull 50th-anniversary concert at the Royal Albert Hall. Both venues are absolutely delightful and a real pleasure in terms of accessibility, reasonably priced tickets, quality of sound, ease of getting to the bar, availability of food either in the venue or nearby, attitude of staff, the way in which security searches are carried out and, of course, the architecture and welcoming feel of the actual buildings.

Now I appreciate that most venues can't compete with the Albert Hall or the Palladium as regards the latter point, but on all the others, surely a little more effort could be made to make the customer experience more enjoyable?

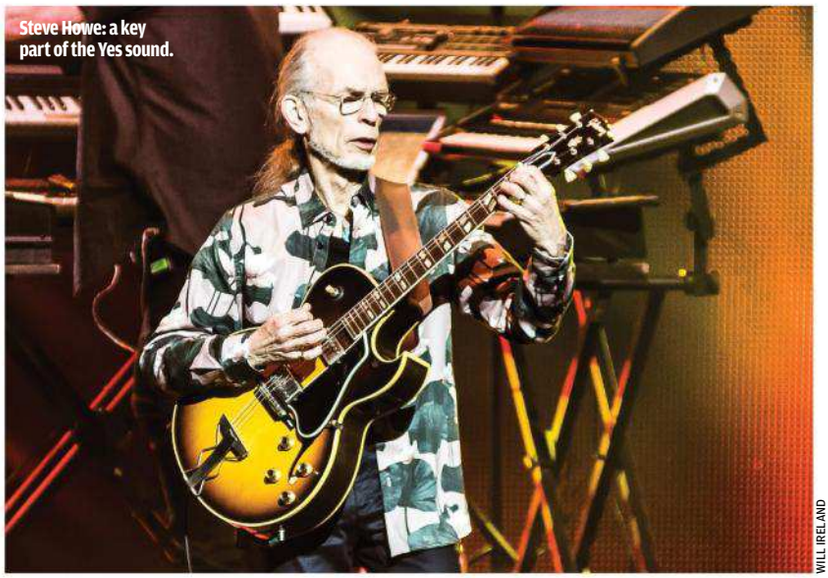
On the opposite end of the spectrum there's Wembley Stadium and The O2, both of which are interested in one thing only and that, of course, is money. More unfriendly, utterly soulless venues would be difficult to imagine. We're herded like sheep and paying through the nose for the privilege of endless queues for anything to eat or drink, seats closer to the sky than the stage, dodgy sound (although to be fair the sound at The O2 is excellent), hostile security and so many stairs to climb that vertigo starts to kick in. As for the quality and price of the food and drink when you do finally get served... well, let's just say I'd sooner go hungry and thirsty.

So come on venues, and performers — make an effort! And if you're a small venue, make some seats available. If you're a performer, choose a venue that goes the extra mile for its customers or, if you can, lay down some ground rules when you book a venue. Cut out the queueing round the block in the rain just to get in, get your sound sorted (which usually amounts to simply turning it down from 11 to 10 so it's not distorted!) and take a leaf from Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club — absolutely no talking during performances or you're out!

Graham Smith

Below: *Prog* 87's *Paper Late* has got tongues wagging...




Steve Howe: a key part of the Yes sound.

WILL IRELAND

ALL GOOD PEOPLE

I enjoyed reading your last edition, celebrating 50 years of Yes and the beautiful *Fish Out Of Water*. I thought you did a great job in staying neutral about the debate of which version is the most entitled to carry the legacy.

I find this whole debate among fans sterile and pathetic. I was also disappointed with Rick Wakeman's column where he took a dig at Steve Howe and that version of Yes. I found it a tad petty from someone who spent his whole career in Yes being in and out of the band anyway.

I went to see the Yes concert in Newcastle recently (the Howe version) and it was simply wonderful. I can't wait to see the ARW concert on June 12 in Newcastle too.

I don't buy the argument that Jon Anderson has more legitimacy to play Yes because he is the only founder member of the band still on this world. For a start, Steve Howe and his guitar is at least as crucial to the Yes sound as Jon's voice, and he's been in the band during the peak of their career. Secondly, Chris Squire himself — whom I see as *the* one who was indeed the most pivotal member of Yes — enjoyed Billy Sherwood's bass playing qualities so much that they formed a band together (Conspiracy) when Jon Anderson formed ABWH.

I mean, there's no question that Yes' history is tortuous and full of bad feeling, to say the least. It's quite ironic and sad to see a band tearing itself apart after having preached an idealistic peace and love message so much over the past few decades.

TWEET TALK

follow us on twitter.com/progmagazineUK

CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY
@CHatherley79
Taken my OB-6 on holiday to Cannes. Gotta look after my little buddy. Rooftop gig with Nakhane tonight-ahhhhh!



RICK WAKEMAN
@GrumpyOldRick
The news always seems so depressing in the morning. Hard to start the day with a smile on your face when there's so much bad stuff going on in the world. The toilet's blocked as well.



NICK BEGGS
@NickBeggs
Steven and I enjoying a fruit fancy in Guadalajara

LETTER



THE SUMMER OF '76



I read the feature on Chris Squire in issue 86 with avid interest. It took me back to the heady days of 1976: that wonderful hot summer when I first fell in love and lost my virginity! And then there was the music…

During late '74 and '75, my good classmate Dave (who was to later join an early line-up of Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark) introduced me to Yes. As my idols up to that point were Bolan, Bowie, Elton and Alice Cooper, this was like stepping up from the Championship to the Premier League. I steadily picked up their back catalogue from the local second-hand record stores, as soon as pocket money would allow.

When I finally got to hear Chris' solo effort I was immediately hooked, so I'll definitely be someone prepared to meet the large cost for the deluxe edition. However, my favourite solo band release was Jon Anderson's amazing *Olias Of Sunhillow*. If ever there was an album befitting the deluxe treatment, this is it – fantastic sleeve art, and a luxurious inner booklet detailing the storyline.

What I really want, though, is the opportunity to hear a 5.1 surround sound mix. So can whoever owns the rights seriously consider this?

Ron Birch

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

The other argument that makes me angry is the one saying that no other musicians should be allowed to play Yes songs unless they've been part of the band, preferably since the beginning. Does that mean Yes' music will die when they're all gone ? Following this logic, no orchestra should play Beethoven because he's not the director any more, or that no church organ player should play the Tocatta and Fugue from Bach.

I'm delighted that other younger, talented musicians are taking over the legacy of this beautiful music. Prog music has to survive past us and on for decades and centuries to come. The music will evolve but that won't prevent our great-grandchildren from hopefully appreciating a Genesis, Yes, Pink Floyd, Crimson or Marillion concert played in 200 years by musicians or orchestras. That would be a wonderful thing.

Didier Grillot

BOX SET BLUES

I began thinking about this letter as I was waiting for delivery of the eight-disc Procol Harum box set, *Still There'll Be More*.

I own all the Procol albums on vinyl and bought the original CDs, the Salvo 2009 reissues, the four-disc *All This And More* box set and various compilations over the years. So I have now bought many of these tracks at least six times. The first three CDs of *STBM* contain repetitions of numerous singles and album tracks and I must question their inclusion here.

Below: Procol Harum's *Still There'll Be More*. Is it worth it?



The box set is surely only aimed at huge fans and/or completists. No one with a gap in their collection with a passing interest in Procol would consider shelling out the better part of £80 for this set. And yet here we are, the true fans having to pay again. Will the next box set be called *Surely There Can't Be Any More*? At least Gentle Giant had the good grace to name theirs *Scraping The Barrel*.

I must say that the packaging, the DVD content of the *STBM* set and the two live CDs are wonderful. I would gladly have bought the DVDs and CDs individually. *Prog*'s review sadly fails to mention the highlights of the Bournemouth set: a rousing *The Blue Danube*, which moved me to tears and the fuller *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* including the missing 'Home on shore leave' verse.

Sadly not included in the box set is a CD copy of the download-only album *Some Long Road*. This doubtless features Geoff Whitehorn on guitar, for whom I feel most sorry with this *STBM* set. He has been Procol guitarist for 24 years, longer than all the others combined, but he barely features on it.

Since the release of *STBM*, Esoteric/Cherry Red have had the temerity to reissue both Procol's *Grand Hotel* and *Exotic Birds And Fruit*, supposedly with wonderful unreleased stuff. I already have a Strange Fruit release of the 1974 BBC concert included therein, so will save my money this time.

I was pleased that so many wrote to *Prog* to support my plea for more seats at gigs. The Bush Hall rose to the occasion for me a few weeks ago.

David Potter



MARIUSZ DUDA
@Marivsz_Riv
I know it's hard to believe, but I'm playing the guitar on the new @riversidepl album :) "Waste7and" is going to be a really accomplished one. It combines the emotional character of the first two and the production maturity of the latest two releases. And yes - I love this game :)



CRAIG BLUNDELL
@craigblundell
Mexican pick n mix!!!!! #woolies #80s #thosethatknowknow #mexicocity

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INTRO

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

THE PROGRESSIVE MUSIC AWARDS 2018 ARE HERE!

All the nominees are announced for the seventh annual Progressive Music Awards. Now here's your chance to pick the winners...

The Progressive Music Awards returns for the seventh year this September. The event will once again be held at the Underglobe in London, on the site of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, and will take place on Thursday September 13. There are 15 awards up for grabs this year, eight of which are reader-voted, and the remaining seven are chosen by the magazine's editorial team. All of the awards are created with the aim of heralding the artists that have taken progressive music ever onward over the last 12 months.

Steven Wilson leads the nominations charge this year, with three nominations, including Best UK Band/Artist and Album Of The Year, while Big Big Train, Marillion, The Fierce And The Dead, Tony Banks, Italian prog rockers PFM, Amplifier, TesseracT, Swedish singer Anna Von Hausswolff, Norwegians Motorpsycho and Spanish post rockers Toundra all weigh in with two nominations apiece.

"I think the categories and nominations offer a wider variety and spread of artists from all over the world than any other year," says *Prog* Editor Jerry Ewing. "That's testament to the popularity of the genre on a worldwide basis. When we started *Prog* magazine almost 10 years ago, we worked with a small group of exceptional specialist labels, and I'm pleased to say we still work with those labels today. But in the ensuing years we've seen the music spread, we've seen the arrival of all manner of new organisations that we're now dealing with, from individual bands who deal with their own business on a day-to-day level all the way through to the biggest multi-national corporate labels. In a tough economic climate, that development is most pleasing to behold and speaks volumes about the strength and depth of progressive music.

"From the young, up-and-coming artists who have graced the pages of *Prog* in the Limelight section, all the way through to the winner of the coveted Prog God award, it's nice to see the magazine making sure we cater for every level of achievement. Plus, of course, today we get to deal with progressive music further afield in all manner of hugely successful events, festivals, television and radio shows and beyond."

Readers can vote in the Limelight, Event, Video Of The Year, Album Cover Of The Year, Best International Artist/Band, Reissue Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Best UK Artist/Band categories, while the Outer Limits, Outstanding Contribution, Chris Squire Virtuoso Award, Visionary, Industry VIP, Lifetime Achievement and Prog God Awards are all decided by the magazine's editorial team.

You can view all the nominations over the page, and this year we've made it even easier for you to cast your votes. There's no registration for voting. You just head over to the *Prog* magazine website at www.loudersound.com/prog/ and make your choices.

We'll be announcing the host, live entertainment and Prog God over the next couple of issues, and readers will be able to find out all the gossip from the ceremony as it happens via the website. As usual we'll be bringing you live coverage of the event itself, so make sure you're logged in on the night. The *Prog* Magazine Progressive Music Awards souvenir issue will go on sale on September 27.

Now turn to page 14 for the list of this year's nominees. Who will you vote for? **JE**





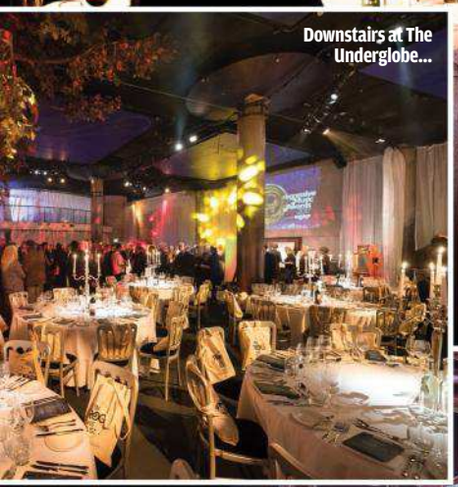




Beatrix Players perform at last year's Prog Awards.



Last year's Prog God Carl Palmer collects his award.



Downstairs at The Underglobe...

> **"I think the categories and nominations offer a wider variety and spread of artists from all over the world than any other year."**
>
> **Prog Editor Jerry Ewing**





Al Murray and Danny Baker.



Steve Hillage and Jakko Jakszyk.

This month, Intro was compiled by

Chris Cope
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Isere Lloyd-Davis
Martin Kielty
Rhodri Marsden
Jo Kendall
Natasha Scharf
Nick Shilton
Rick Wakeman
Phil Weller
David West

WILL IRELAND, KEVIN NIXON

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The Nominations

Make sure your vote counts.

Vote Online at: www.loudersound.com/prog/

LIMELIGHT

(Last year's winner – Beatrix Players)

Awooga
The Blackheart Orchestra
Blanket
Golden Caves
I Am The Manic Whale
IT
Midas Fall
Myrkur
VLMV
When Mary

EVENT OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Be Prog! My Friend)

ArcTanGent
Be Prog! My Friend
Big Big Train Cadogan Hall Shows
HMS Prog
Keith Emerson: A Musical Celebration
Marillion Royal Albert Hall Show
Space Rocks
Steven Wilson Royal Albert Hall Shows
Trinity III
Yes Fans' 50th Convention

VIDEO OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – King Crimson – *Heroes*)

Amplifier – *Kosmos*
Gazpacho – *Exit Suite*
Orphaned Land – *Like Orpheus*
Perfect Beings – *Vibrational: Mysteries, Not Answers*
PFM – *The Lesson*
TesseracT – *King*
The Paradox Twin – *Planeta*
Toundra – *Cobra*
Anna Von Hausswolff – *The Mysterious Vanishing Of Electra*
White Moth/Black Butterfly – *Evelyn*

ALBUM COVER OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Tim Bowness – *Lost In The Ghost Light*)

Big Big Train – *Second Brightest Star*
Caligula's Horse – *In Contact*
Gold Key – *Hello, Phantom*
Pye Hastings – *From The Half House*
Motorpsycho – *The Tower*
Robert Reed – *Sanctuary III*
The Fierce And The Dead – *The Euphoric*
Threshold – *Legends Of The Shires*
Toundra – *Vortex*
Wilson & Wakeman – *The Sun Will Dance In Its Twilight Hour*

INTERNATIONAL BAND/ ARTIST OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Opeth)

Enslaved
Gleb Kolyadin
Motorpsycho
Orphaned Land
PFM
Sons Of Apollo
Spock's Beard
Tangerine Dream
Anna Von Hausswolff
Von Hertzen Brothers

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Steve Hillage – *Searching For The Spark*)

Alan Parsons Project – *Eye In The Sky 35th Anniversary Box*
Bruford – *1977-1980: Seems Like A Lifetime Ago*
ELP – *Fanfare 1970-1997*
Gentle Giant – *Three Piece Suite*
King Crimson – *Sailors' Tales*
Marillion – *Misplaced Childhood*
Procol Harum – *Still There'll Be More*
Rush – *A Farewell To Kings*
Chris Squire – *Fish Out Of Water*
10cc – *Before, During, After*

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Anathema – *The Optimist*)

A Perfect Circle – *Eat The Elephant*
Arcane Roots – *Melancholia Hymns*
Tony Banks – *Five*
Paul Draper – *Spooky Action*
Peter Hammill – *From The Trees*
Gleb Kolyadin – *Gleb Kolyadin*
Leprous – *Malina*
Lifesigns – *Cardington*
Tangerine Dream – *Quantum Gate*
Steven Wilson – *To The Bone*

UK BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner – Marillion)

Amplifier
Tony Banks
Galahad
Peter Hammill
Kino
Lifesigns
Magenta
TesseracT
The Fierce And The Dead
Steven Wilson

The founding member of progressive rock band Bram Stoker, has selected a unique collection of tracks from the archives for release



LIMITED EDITION
DOUBLE VINYL ALBUM

Available exclusively from the Bram Stoker Archives website

'Manic Machine' proves that Pete Ballam is a unique, insightful and boldly experimental musician. He deserves so much more respect than has ever been accorded to him.

Malcolm Dome – Prog Magazine

★★★★★

"A superb album of progressive rock with 21st century quality yet retaining the feel of classic 70's prog"

Shaun Geraghty – Progzilla Radio

★★★★★

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NICK MASON HITS THE ROAD WITH HIS SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

The drummer brings Floyd classics to life across Europe in September.



Nick Mason (centre) and his band touring a full-on Floyd extravaganza.

Following four acclaimed low-key London shows in May (see our review on page 122), Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets will head out on a full European tour in the autumn. This will include six UK shows in September: Portsmouth Guildhall (23), London Roundhouse (24), Birmingham Symphony Hall (25), Manchester O2 Apollo (27), Glasgow SEC Armadillo (28) and Nottingham Royal Concert Hall (29).

The European part of the tour precedes these British gigs, with the dates as follows: Stockholm Cirkus, Sweden (September 2), Copenhagen Forum Black Box, Denmark (3), Rostock Moya, Germany (4), Amsterdam Theatre Carré, Netherlands (6), Antwerp Stadsschouwburg, Belgium (8), Den Atelier, Luxembourg (9), Paris Olympia, France (10), Düsseldorf Mitsubishi Electric Halle, Germany (11), Hamburg Laeiszhalle, Germany (13), Stuttgart Beethovensaal, Germany (15), Berlin Tempodrom, Germany (16), Leipzig Haus Auensee, Germany (17), Vienna Stadthalle F, Austria (19), Milan Teatro Arcimboldi, Italy (20) and Zurich Samsung Hall, Switzerland (21).

The Pink Floyd drummer is joined in the band by former Floyd bassist Guy Pratt, Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp, guitarist Lee Harris of The Blockheads and Dom Beken of The Orb.

Their set consists of early material from Pink Floyd, including tracks from the band's first two albums, *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* and *A Saucerful Of Secrets*, with the group performing some songs that haven't been played live for many years.

This marks the first musical tour Mason has undertaken since he hit the road in support of *The Division Bell* with Pink Floyd in 1994. He last performed onstage as a member of Floyd during the Live 8 event in 2005, although he did appear at a Roger Waters show in 2011 alongside David Gilmour. His last live show prior to May's London gigs was the closing ceremony for the 2012 London Olympic Games. **MD**

"The group will be performing Floyd songs that haven't been played live in years."

Tickets for the upcoming dates are on sale now at www.thesaucerfulofsecrets.com.

INTRO extras

TEMPLES ON MARS AND SUMER JOIN VOYAGER FOR *PROG* SHOW

British proggers Sumer and Anglo-Kiwi prog rockers Temples On Mars have been added to Voyager's *Prog*-sponsored London headline show at The Borderline on July 3. Voyager will also be appearing at Ramblin' Man Fair, UK Tech Fest and Bloodstock over the summer. They will also play Birmingham's Asylum on July 4.



Plini: getting weirder on his new EP.

NEW EP FOR PLINI

Aussie guitar hero teams up with jazz guitarist and British saxophonist on his latest collection.

Plini is to release the *Sunhead* EP independently this July. The four-track veers in a different direction from the guitarist's previous releases, with more of an emphasis on jazz fusion, ambient and electronic styles.

"It sounds like a cliché but it's an evolution of my sound based on stuff that's happened in my life," he says. "This EP has got some weirder time signatures and more complicated harmonies, but I think it still sounds pretty pleasant."

The new EP's recordings were specially written to enable Plini to work with some very eclectic guests. Joining him this time are The 1975's saxophonist John Waugh, French-Canadian keyboard player Anomalie and American jazz guitarist Tim Miller. "I met John the last time I played in London and I love his playing," Plini reveals. "It's a similar sort of thing with Anomalie, and I've been a fan of Tim's for a long time. I bumped into him at a convention and it turned out that he'd been teaching some of my music to his students. That was a bit of a fanboy moment for me."

The musician also has some ideas for the full-length follow-up to 2016's *Handmade Cities*. "I'd really like to work with vocalists," he admits. "This EP started out like it was going to be an album but I decided I didn't really like three of the tracks enough!"

Plini is currently on tour with TesseracT, but he will be returning to Europe this summer to perform at this year's Download, Be Prog! My Friend and ArcTanGent festivals.

For more information, visit www.plini.co. **NRS**

MIKE VENNART DIVES INTO THE PLASTIC SEA

The former Oceansize man unveils his second solo album.

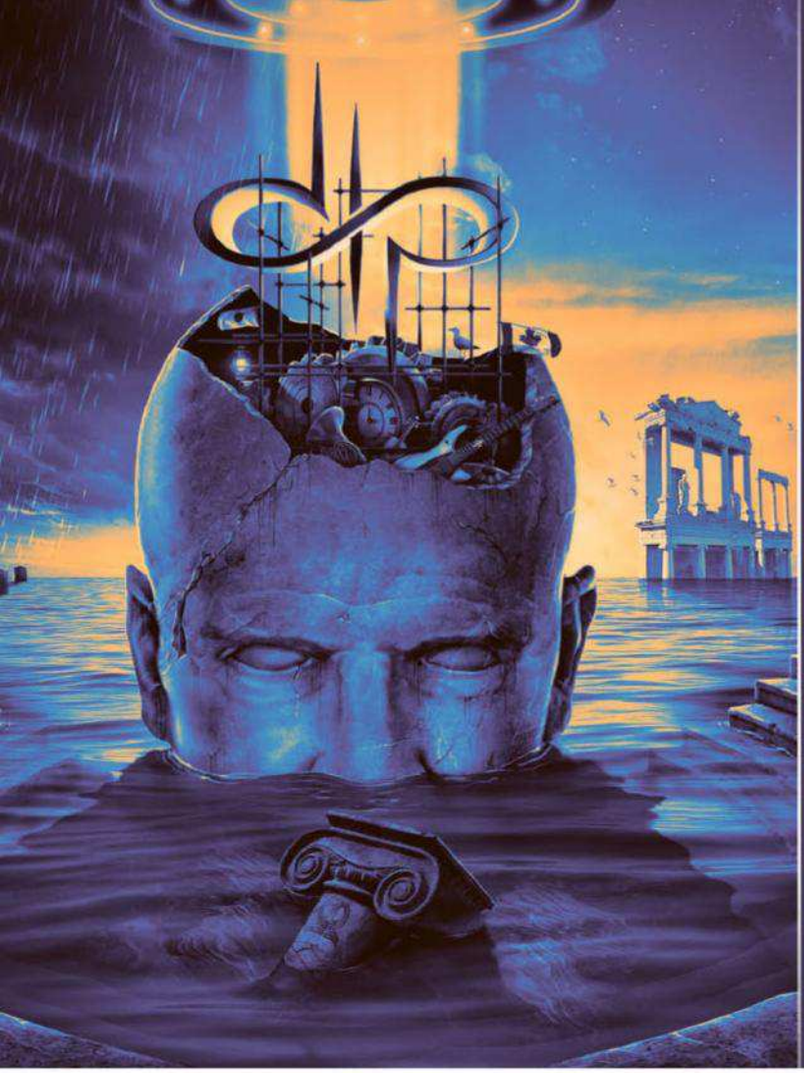
Mike Vennart admits he doesn't quite have a full explanation for calling his second Vennart album *To Cure A Blizzard Upon A Plastic Sea*, but he gives it a bash for *Prog*. "The overarching theme is madness," he says. "*To Cure A Blizzard...* is about mindfulness, the fine line between controlling your agitation and the 'ignorance is bliss' approach. The second half comes from the song *Immortal Soldiers*. I thought it was an alluring set of images."

Vennart tells us that his obsession with the Cardiacs means Tim Smith's "mucky paw prints are all over it". Recommending the track *Immortal Soldiers* as a good summary, he says: "It's been nice to break out of the traditional poppy trick. You don't know what chord's coming next, you don't know where the phrasing ends. I had a lot of fun making it!"

The album is out on September 14 via Medium Format. For more, see www.vennart.com. **MK**



Mike Vennart: ready for a solo sea voyage.



DEVIN TOWNSEND PROJECT

OCEAN MACHINE

LIVE AT THE ANCIENT ROMAN THEATRE PLOVDIV

IN STORES 6TH JULY 2018

The monumental show at the Ancient Roman Theatre in Plovdiv, Bulgaria captured in full.

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FAD GADGETS

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

STYLOCARD

A few years ago there was a fad among ultra-geeky types for business cards that doubled as printed circuit boards (or vice versa). However, as inventor and musician Tim Jacobs noted, most of them were pointless, so he endeavoured to create one that had "some kind of token utility". The result was the StyloCard, a scaled-down, 1mm-thick version of the 1970s instrument which you play with a crocodile clip. Connect it via USB to a computer, fire up your favourite sound generating program and revel in your new-found technological miniaturism.



www.mitxela.com

CABOT

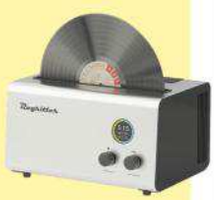
We've all found ourselves in that awful scenario where our cajon player suddenly goes AWOL and we're left with a cajon with no one to hit it. Nightmare, right? This device, conceived and built in Kyoto, solves that problem; it attaches to the side of the cajon and uses three robotic arms to thwack out the rhythms with metronomic precision. Construct your beats using a footswitch or an iPhone app, press go, and text your cajon player to say that his or her services are no longer required. Job done.



www.cajon-robot.com

DEGRITTER

Over the years, many techniques have been used to rid records of dust, but this has to be the most elegant. Its Estonian inventors wanted to create a cleaning machine that "looks good" and "does not sound like a vacuum cleaner", and the Degritter is the rather pricy result (£2,316 to you, chief). It uses purified water and ultrasonic frequencies to loosen the filth, and like a budget kitchen appliance it comes with three washing settings and a drying mode. It hit its funding goal on Indiegogo with relative ease, reminding us that people are willing to spend eye-watering amounts on achieving sonic perfection.



www.degritter.com

RICK WAKEMAN'S CAPED CRUSADES

THE EURO-NO-VISION SONG CONTEST!

Rick comes up with a progtastic solution to make up for the lack of inspiring Eurovision entries.

When I was a lad, the Eurovision Song Content was a must-watch TV special. That was when the top pop stars of the day from a small number of European countries mostly sang out of tune in front of a live audience. The winner was usually picked from the few who *could* sing in tune, and they were often British, such as Cliff Richard, Lulu, Bucks Fizz and Sandie Shaw. The songs were half-decent too, written by established songwriters with numerous hits under their belts, often making the winning song a huge hit all around the globe. Then it all changed.

Loads of small European nations were invited to join in the fun and it finally got to the stage where there were more entries than ever and around 95 per cent of them were total rubbish. Now it seems to be about singers dressing up as animals, or wearing basically nothing, attempting ridiculous dance moves... sorry, but it's a fucking song competition!

This year's was a total fiasco. It's got so political that countries vote for whatever politically suits them and, let's face it, the whole of Europe hates us so we were doomed from the outset. We've tried hard over the last few years, trying to relive our past glories with established singers such as Engelbert Humperdinck. That failed miserably. We tried a punk approach but that failed as well. Then we reverted to the pop approach and that failed too.

So what's the answer?

It's so obvious: a prog entry! The piece of music would be so long that there would be no time for any other entries and we'd be bound to win. There would still be hints of the past with song titles such as *Tales From Topographic Boom Bang-a-Bang* and *Dark Side Of Making Your Mind Up*.

> **"The piece would be so long there would be no time for any other entries and we'd be bound to win."**

This year's programme was far too long so they should introduce a trap door for contestants to be dropped into with Graham Norton being in charge of the lever. This could easily reduce the show from three-and-a-half hours to around 10 minutes.

So there you have it! Maybe the guys and gals at *Prog* could organise the very first Europrogvision entry. I'm already writing mine, it's called *The Six Wives Of A Puppet On A String*!



KEVIN FEBRUARY

HEAD WITH WINGS

Gloom has rarely sounded better as Joshua Corum teams up with half of Earthside.

IF PATIENCE IS the greatest virtue, then Head With Wings must struggle to sleep from the glow of their haloes. The Connecticut band released their debut EP *Living With The Loss* in 2013 and now, five years later, having shrunk from a quartet to a duo, they're finally poised to unveil their first album, *From Worry To Shame*. The hold-up, according to vocalist and guitarist Joshua Corum, was that they were determined to stick with the producers of the EP, Frank Sacramone and Jamie Van Dyck of Earthside.

"After our first EP came out, they were headlong into releasing their album *A Dream In Static*," says Corum. "Basically, it was just a matter of, 'If I want these guys to work with me on my full-length album, I just had to put up with their schedule.'"

Corum and Sacramone first collaborated on the Burning Sideways album *Feet Of Clay*, and they clicked right from the start. "Going into the first Head With Wings EP he was there at every rehearsal, every show, just studying the band, figuring out what was unique about us," says Corum. "When someone comes up to you and says, 'I have you figured out, I want to put this on record,' I'm definitely not going to say no."

From Worry To Shame is a concept album inspired, in part, by someone who used to be Corum's neighbour. "I would have a beer with him, we'd talk, he'd tell me about his life and it was just one of the saddest tales I'd ever encountered," he says. The stories Corum heard started to fuse with his own ideas about how people deal with the consequences of their vices and bad decisions. With the dark subject matter and the melancholy that pervades the album, it's not surprising to learn that Corum considers Steven Wilson a musical inspiration.

"I just think Steven Wilson does the narrative stuff so well, it comes across in a way that it could have been about him," Corum says. "It's genuine enough where it's relatable. It's not sci-fi prog where it's too hyper-conceptual, you're just getting face value content. I like writers that write in a way that you might be thinking about the song a week from now. That's something to strive for, for any musician."

For the singer, the key to the band's sound is his creative and musical partnership with Brandon Cousino. "We have a way of locking our guitars together that Frank would probably say is unique to Head With Wings," Corum says. "The way our voices speak together on guitar, those weaving arpeggios, the way my vocals interact with his guitar is different to the way my vocals interact with my rhythm guitar. So, you have these identities that Frank is able to help us understand. Brandon's better at arranging material than I am; I'm good at melodies, I'm a good riff factory. He's probably more of the compositional strongpoint in our band, so between this cast of characters we get it done." **DW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Joshua Corum *(vocals/guitar)*, **Brandon Cousino** *(guitar)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A dash of Porcupine Tree, a hint of Anathema, plenty of ennui, and a generous shot of existential despair set to a soundtrack of exquisite guitar work

CURRENT RELEASE

From Worry To Shame is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE

headwithwings.bandcamp.com

"I like writers that write in a way that you might be thinking about the song a week from now. That's something to strive for, for any musician."



Head With Wings, L-R: Brandon Cousino, Joshua Corum.

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

YOUR PROG CHEF: IVAR BJØRNSON, ENSLAVED

On the menu: In The Crust Of The Crimson Pizza Pie



"I started cooking very young, making simple stuff for my parents on the weekends. They let me experiment and I really got into it when I left home. Then I'd have friends over and I'd cook for them. Now I love cooking for my family – I do it a lot."

Ingredients (makes 2 big pizzas)

1.5kg plum tomatoes, handful of parsley and basil, ½ garlic bulb, 1 small carrot, olive oil, 1 celery stalk, 1 semi-hot chilli, 50g dry yeast, 3 cups flour, 3 cups water, 3 tsp salt, 1 tsp sugar, rocket, 500g mozzarella balls, 200g Parma ham, white truffle oil to taste.

Preparation

"Put the flour in a bowl with 2 tsp salt and the yeast. Mix lightly. Combine 1 cup of freshly boiled water with 2 cups and a drop of cold water, and mix in 3½ tbsp good olive oil. Add to the flour and mix until it forms a dough. Cover the bowl with cling film and keep at room temperature for an hour. After 45 minutes, preheat the oven to 220°C/Gas Mark 7.

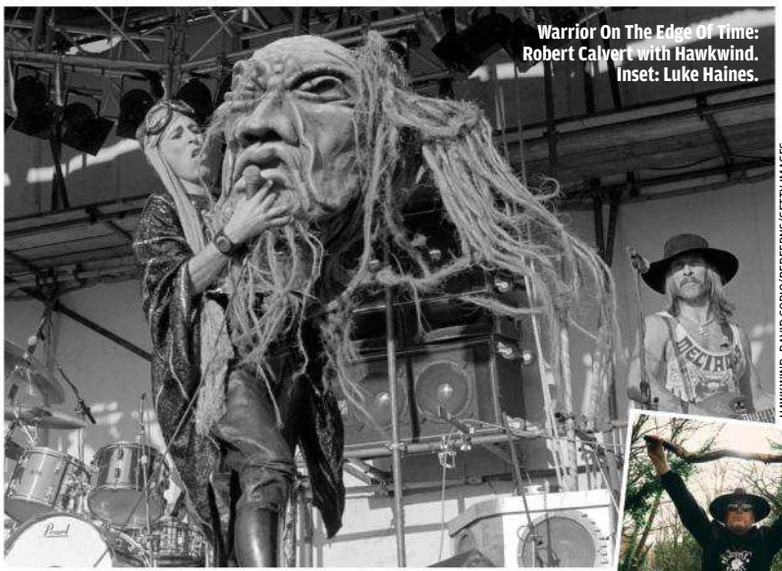
Meanwhile, cut the parsley, garlic, carrot, celery, onion and chilli into small pieces. Core the tomatoes, cut the skins into smaller flakes and set them apart. Take a big pan and cover the bottom with olive oil. Over a medium heat, cook the veg until the onion turns translucent. Add the tomato skins and salt. Continue cooking until the skins start to dissolve. Add the basil, and use a stick blender to make a nice, even sauce. Add the sugar and cook until the sauce has thickened and is spreadable.

The sauce and dough should be ready at the same time. Use a rolling pin to make two rectangles from the dough and place on baking trays. Add the sauce, mozzarella and ham. Cook each pizza in the oven for 12 minutes, or until the cheese browns. Once cooked, add generous amounts of rocket and drizzle the truffle oil.

Cooking is always just the pleasure of having a social moment. And to get philosophical, the whole point of life is to do unnecessary stuff, to overdo things, just for fun. Spending four hours cooking is definitely something you don't have to do, but if you enjoy the meal together afterwards, you get to know people a little bit better." **JK**

MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



Warrior On The Edge Of Time: Robert Calvert with Hawkwind. Inset: Luke Haines.

HAWKWIND: DAVID CORIO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES
LUKE HAINES: DAVID TITLOW



LUKE HAINES

Former Britpopper and Auteurs songwriter is spaced by **Robert Calvert**'s strangeness and charm.

"When I was growing up, and then in art college, there was a subculture of people into Gong and Hawkwind, who I had always dismissed as hippie bands. Then I heard the Calvert era, which got me into Hawkwind, and I love all eras of the band now. From *Quark, Strangeness And Charm* [1977] and *25 Years On* [1978], Calvert seemed to turn Hawkwind into a different band because those albums sound nothing like the early albums.

My favourite three Calvert albums are probably *25 Years On*, *Captain Lockheed And The Starfighters* and *Freq*. I love *Captain Lockheed*... for its full-on-ness. *Freq* is the album that seemed most prescient about the times we live in because it's about the destruction of the working class. It was absolutely ahead of its time – it's a really angry album, although it was fairly ignored at the time. I also like what Calvert did with Steve Peregrin Took, in which no one seemed particularly interested in 1974.

I'm not massively keen on the idea of genres. Actually, a lot of what is called prog is a lot more post-punk than anything that actually *was* post-punk. It's full of ideas and madness, which is what rock'n'roll should be.

Calvert really pushed me towards concept albums and being fairly full-on about it – the only way to approach stuff is to run straight at the wall head first, minus the crash helmet. I made a weird drone album about a year and a half ago called *Freqs*. Although it was nothing like his album *Freq*, it was a subconscious homage if you like.

Calvert was an artist who clearly wouldn't have been stopped by the constraints of the music industry or anything like that. Without alluding to mental health in a negative way, and we're obviously a lot more aware of these things now, he was batshit crazy, but in a really good way. He didn't want to be a rock star but weirdly made a *great* rock star. He carved out this world of his own. For me, he's up there with David Bowie." **NS**

"He carved out this world of his own and he's up there with David Bowie."

I Sometimes Dream Of Glue is out now on Cherry Red. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/lukehainesuk.

PROG IN BRIEF



STUART WOOD

Ashley Hutchings (right) releases a new collection of songs and spoken word pieces this October via Paradise And Thorns. *By Gloucester Docks Revisited And Other Tales Of Love* continues the love story on 1987's *By Gloucester Docks*.

A double album containing previously unreleased live recordings of **Clannad**'s early material will be released on July 13 via MIG. *Turas 1980* was recorded in Bremen as part of the influential Irish folk band's tour nearly 40 years ago.



Mint Field, L-R: Amor Amezcua, Estrella Sánchez.

MINT FIELD

Shoegaze- and krautrock-inspired Mexican dreampop duo.

"MOTHER NATURE," say Mint Field when asked for their key inspirations. "The beautiful sunsets, sunrises, clouds and isolation of the slow beach town where we grew up. Another thing we had in common was that we loved the smell of mint. And the colour. Pretty much everything about mint."

Some might notice, hearing the Mexicans' debut album, that the sultans of shoegaze — Cocteau Twins, My Bloody Valentine, even Sonic Youth — were inspirations too. In Tijuana, the two friends Amor Amezcua and Estrella Sánchez, now 21, were the only kids at high school who were into such music. It's what brought them together, and they began improvising every day: "It gave us something we could relate to."

Mexican dreampop, it turns out, has a viable vision and *Pasar De Las Luces* (which translates as *Move Away From The Lights*, or *Passing Lights*) has won them a following in the States, where they've played Coachella and SXSW. They recorded it over two "super fun" weeks in Detroit with producer Christopher Koltay ("there was no pressure, everything felt natural, pure"). They channelled their muses, detoured into Neu!-style krautrock and hit on a brooding beauty.

Sánchez, who was briefly a professional bowler, and Amezcua explain that music helps them find the excitement they crave. "When we toured the USA we found everything new: seeing the cities, meeting people — it was tiring on the road but even the van was an interesting thing, even our backs hurting. Because we're experiencing all this for the first time."

Their youthful enthusiasm, when asked if they're "progressive", extends to a positive-inclining maybe. "With genres, we are open to change. We can be different from one track to another because that shows another side of us. Every new level shows you are stronger. As a person you are not only one thing. We reflect what we are through music. So it would be crazy to just be one sound always. Always be changing."

So just as the listener has swum in the effects-heavy guitars of what might be a Slowdive tribute, on the next track Mint Field will sidestep into a groove which recalls Michael Rother cranking up Cluster over a locked-in rhythm.

It's charming that two then-teenagers — they now live in Mexico City — found that such musical sources spoke to them more fluently than anything more contemporary, and impressive that they can create similar sounds with such authority. Mystery, too — there's a melancholy sadness to their stylings, with Sánchez' voice a floating, almost spooky presence. "There is memory, and then there's wishing those memories could stay in your life forever." In the black and white video for *Ojos En El Carro* they whirl around in white Victorian dresses and drown like Ophelia. It could hardly be more 4AD in 1987 if it tried, yet their innocence and idealism scorch any scepticism.

They're hungry to do more, recording another EP and as eager to tour again as only 21-year-olds tend to be. "When we come home, we're like — no, we want to keep on going! For the rest of our lives." **CR**

"With genres, we are open to change. We can be completely different from one track to another because that shows another side of us."

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Estrella Sánchez *(vocals, guitars),* **Amor Amezcua** *(synths, drums)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A modern, Mexican reboot of shoegaze, krautrock and stoner jams

CURRENT RELEASE

Pasar De Las Luces is out now via Innovative Leisure

WEBSITE

www.mintfieldband.com





ROGER GLOVER

THE BUTTERFLY BALL AND THE GRASSHOPPER'S FEAST

(PURPLE RECORDS, 1974)

In 1973, Alan Aldridge and William Plomer published a picture book titled *The Butterfly Ball And The Grasshopper's Feast* that was based on a 19th-century poem of the same name by William Roscoe. On the surface, it seemed unlikely to stir any conceptual inspiration from a former Deep Purple member but, as Roger Glover now recalls, it did just that.

"I'd seen a four- or five-page spread from the book in the colour supplement of a Sunday newspaper and thought then it looked a bit lively. Then in 1973, after I had left Purple, I went into our management's office one day and saw the book on a table there. And at that point I was asked if I fancied doing an album based on it!"

Although the initial idea was for this to be the soundtrack to accompany a proposed movie, Glover wasn't the first choice for the job.

"Pink Floyd were asked to do it but weren't available. Jon Lord was also approached and turned it down. So it came my way. But I was excited by the possibilities as it allowed me to go in any musical direction. I could be as inventive as I wanted."

Despite the logistical difficulties in co-ordinating the vast array of talent that appeared on the album, what emerged was an impressive musical experience. Its range spanned psychedelia, folk and flamboyant pop rock, and Glover made sure the album didn't become a whimsical dalliance by using the abilities of master craftsmen like Eddie Jobson and Michael Giles to great effect. He also had a different vocalist for every character.

"I wanted voices that captured the personality each of the roles had," he says. "I didn't want to get in experienced session vocalists because I didn't believe they could do justice to what I was after. What mattered was more the personality of the singers coming through, rather than the quality of the voice."

While the proposed movie never got made, the album was a big success. *Love Is All* was also a surprise hit single, and *No Solution* was a very early example of lyricism dealing with environmental issues. In many ways, the listener can hear how bands like Kansas might well have been influenced by *The Butterfly Ball...* as there are clearly elements of pomp rock throughout.

"It now sounds of its time," Glover says today, "but I still get Purple fans coming up to me and saying how much they liked what I did musically on it."

MALCOLM DOME

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Half Full Glass Of Wine: Mildlife's influences include Tame Impala.

MILDLIFE

Prog, psych, jazz and disco? Meet **Adam Halliwell** from the Aussie foursome who are doing things differently.

Mildlife have been likened to everyone from The Alan Parsons Project and Tame Impala to Daft Punk and Tortoise, and there are plenty more references that could be made. The Australian band's debut album *Phase* is a hazy, groove-laden journey through a kaleidoscope of colour with nods to 70s prog, jazz exploration and psychedelic trip-outs. It's an absorbing affair that's easy to get lost in.

"You could put it into some sort of genre, but I think it comes from so many different parts," reflects guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Adam Halliwell. "We all listen to different stuff – we listen to all sorts of jazz music, krautrock and then disco. You add all these parts and it all kind of mixes in with one another."

The group – completed by James Donald, Kevin McDowell and Tom Shanahan – formed in the early 2010s and set about trying to break the mould in their home city of Melbourne.

"In the [local] music scene there's lots of shit going on, and we kind of wanted to try to make something that didn't sound like anything else happening," Halliwell says.

Although not directly linked to the band, the musician points to Melbourne's Make It Up Club, a well-established weekly night where experimental, avant-garde and improvised music is showcased, supported and nurtured.

Australia's busy prog scene often throws the limelight on rockier acts like Karnivool, Dead Letter Circus and Plini, but Mildlife share more in common with the likes of the free-flowing Krakatau than any of their guitar-thrashing peers.

More Herbie Hancock than Haken, Mildlife may not quite be prog in the conventional sense, but their desire to break boundaries and toy with the possibilities of music making gives them a strong experimental edge. Their lush production and often summery vibes keep one foot in the now with the other pointing back to the 70s and 80s.

"We never set out to make anything proggy, it just kind of happens," Halliwell says. "When everything combines, maybe that's what comes up. Prog music, I think, is people trying to make something interesting and not following formulas as such." **CC**

> **"We wanted to try and make something that didn't sound like anything else."**

Visit www.mildlife.com.au.

PROG IN BRIEF



ART ZOYD ARCHIVES

Art Zoyd's Gérard Hourbette (right) has died at the age of 64. The pioneering composer, writer and director passed away on May 4. The violinist and keyboard player was a founder member of the experimental French band.

Danish prog rockers **Odd Palace** have just released their debut album, *Things To Place On The Moon*, through Prime Collective. The band will also make their debut UK live performance at London's Thousand Island venue on June 22.



God Is An Astronaut: facing into the abyss.

STUART WOOD

GOD IS AN ASTRONAUT

Irish three-piece pen ninth album inspired by a tragic death.

"I REMEMBER LIFTING the coffin in the church and thinking, 'This is just so wrong, to be carrying a young child like this,' and it made me feel the need to write something to come to terms with that feeling," explains heavy-hearted God Is An Astronaut frontman Torsten Kinsella.

Irish three-piece God Is An Astronaut recently released their ninth album *Epitaph*. Upon hearing the tragic news of the passing of their seven-year-old cousin, brothers Torsten and Niels shelved all of the musical material they had been working on so far and used the tragic event as sole inspiration for the album.

"Music began to make sense again, because music is something therapeutic for my brother and I," Torsten explains. "To come to terms with an event like this, music was to the only way because I believe that it can help people and it certainly helped us, as well as the father of the deceased."

Followers of the band who have been expecting another post-rock masterpiece comparable to 2005's *All Is Violent, All Is Bright* or a continuation of 2015's arty atmospheric *Helios I Erebus*, will be surprised by the new album's grave and morose theme, yet touched by this deeply moving tale of a family's loss.

"When you're in the music business for 16 years, the question of what the fans want and expect from you is often raised," says Torsten. "With this album, none of that mattered. It was like we were making music for us completely. How it would go down with the audience was never something that factored in for me."

The album is a sad and complex musical journey, as each song reveals a new chapter of pain and disbelief. The soft piano melody on title track *Epitaph* is followed by the hopeful and strengthening guitar riffs in *Seance Room*, before plunging into *Oisín*, the final, beautifully heartbreaking tribute to the late child.

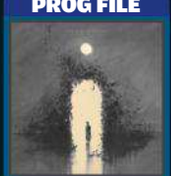
"*Oisín* was written on the day that we received the terrible news," Torsten says. "Our best work tends to come from darker subject matter. There seems to be a stronger emotion there that I'm able to capture. We felt that the sounds on the album needed to be disturbing and twisted, so we put in some pitch plug-ins that pulled notes out of tune. To me, the effect is that it sounds like a funeral."

The band collaborated with fellow Irish musicians Xenon Field to create a heavier sound design and French artist Fursy Teyssier on the sombre artwork of a boy in the moonlight, surrounded by darkness. A poignant music video made by the Kinsella brothers and featuring post-mortem photography was also released.

"*Epitaph* is a video for anybody who has lost children," says Torsten. "The pictures in the video are memorial pictures, meaning that the families wanted to have them taken to remember the children by.

"It's important to write for the right reasons instead of worrying what the critics are going to say," he says. "This is the most honest record we have every made. Of course, I'm proud of our previous albums, but I know that this one is better." **ILD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Torsten Kinsella *(guitar, piano/synths)*, **Niels Kinsella** *(bass)*, **Lloyd Hanney** *(drums)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Melancholic post-electronica and atmospheric funeral drone

CURRENT RELEASE

Epitaph is out now via Napalm

WEBSITE

www.godisanastronaut.com

"Music was the only way because I believe that it can help people and it certainly helped us, as well as the father of the deceased."



THREE MINUTE BOYS

A Prog writer asks if there's a place for singles in the world of prog?

With several children, I spend considerable time providing a taxi service: school runs, activities, parties etc. Predictably this entails regular battles over control of the car stereo. Frequently the wonders of progressive rock lose out to London's Capital and Kiss radio stations.

Much of commercial radio revolves principally around the pop singles du jour. As such – and readily acknowledging that beauty is in the ear of the beholder – while driving I'm treated to a diet of monotonous dross, a bland musical formula with endlessly banal lyrics.

So is there a place for singles in prog? Historically in the 1970s there were some hugely successful prog singles. Greg Lake reached number two in the UK singles chart in 1975 with the timeless, bittersweet ballad *I Believe In Father Christmas*. Four years later, Pink Floyd went one better with *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2* hitting the top spot. It's also notable that *Another Brick...* was Floyd's first single release in a decade.

Subsequently in the 1980s and 1990s, prog enjoyed further success in the charts particularly from Yes, with singles plucked from *90125*, and from Genesis, who enjoyed a handful of Top 10 hits including *Mama* and *We Can't Dance*. Marillion also enjoyed singles chart success in the 1980s, with particular mention going to their number two hit *Kayleigh*.

But that was then and this is 2018.

Recently various progressive bands have chosen to release singles, either lifting a particular song from an album or releasing a standalone track. In the former category, Marillion released *The New Kings* and *Living In FEAR* from 2016's wondrous *FEAR* album. In the latter, Big Big Train recorded *Merry Christmas* last year and filmed a video starring Mark Benton to accompany it.

Most progressive bands continue to embrace the album format and eschew the short play format meaning that prog singles are the exception rather than the norm. But in select cases they do serve a limited purpose. After all, like it or not, the mainstream is driven by singles. There is nothing wrong with a prog band striving to become better known rather than being satisfied to remain part of a sometimes wilfully separatist genre.

Singles are a vehicle to achieve that greater recognition, even if the standard three-minute format often necessitates certain musical compromises. And at worst there's some fun for prog fans to see how high in the singles chart they can propel their favourite band. But until prog bands or their labels have the financial firepower to get their singles played on the radio, let alone television, it seems that singles will only take them so far.

NICK SHILTON

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



The course of true prog never did run smooth! Festival founder Rob Palmen, and inset, with co-organiser Ingo Dassen at Valkenburg Openluchttheater.

MIDSUMMER PROG

Founder **Rob Palmen** brings modern progressive sounds to a fairytale location in the south of Holland.

Rob Palmen will never forget the moment he first stepped foot in the Valkenburg Openluchttheater. The Glassville Music boss had been looking for an open-air venue to host a prog all-dayer when a band from his roster suggested the leafy Dutch site. It didn't take him long to make a decision.

"I thought, 'Wow, this is a beautiful place. We're going to *have* to do it here!'" he laughs.

Palmen has been a prog fan for as long as he can remember and, as a seasoned festival goer, wanted to host the sort of event he would want to go to. His inspiration came from the likes of Germany's Night Of The Prog and Red Rocks Music Festival in the US, but he wanted to bring some of that magic to the Netherlands.

"I tried to look at it from a fan's perspective: how I would like to be treated at a festival?" he says. "We have friendly security, normal toilets and personnel who clean the toilets every hour, and there are people walking around picking up garbage the whole day. It's a nice environment and it stays nice. We also set the capacity for a seated audience so people have the space to sit down and enjoy the event. This makes it feel like you're part of something quite intimate.

"Valkenburg is a really nice city that's very accessible by public transport and has lots of restaurants so quite a lot of people make a weekend of it and turn it into a little holiday."

The midsummer event — now in its second year — is a collaboration between Palmen and the Maastricht music venue Muziekgieterij. It's already played host to Anathema and Pain Of Salvation, and this year's five-band line-up includes Riverside, The Gathering and Amplifier, but the 850 capacity means some restrictions on the band selection.

"We can't host the really big prog acts because the venue is just too small," he admits. "We also only have five spots to fill so you have to pick the right combination and there are so many good bands out there... that's one of the reasons we might want to expand to two days next year."

> **"I thought, 'Wow, this is a beautiful place. We're going to *have* to do it here!'"**

This year's event — held on June 23 — is sold out but the team are working on a special line-up for 2019. Tickets go on sale this autumn. **NRS**

For more, visit www.midsummerprog.com.

PROG IN BRIEF



BEN GIBSON

Enchant are to release a limited edition 10 CD box set on July 20 via InsideOut. *A Dream Imagined...* also contains two bonus discs. The band are currently working on new material for their ninth studio album.

Black Peaks (left) release *All That Divides* on October 5 via Rise Records/BMG. The follow-up to 2016's *Statues* has been produced by Adrian Bushby (Muse/Foo Fighters) and continues the band's heavy style. It ends with a seven minute two-parter.

Distorted Harmony's new album will be released independently on July 19. *A Way Out* contains 11 new tracks and will also be available as a limited edition Digipak with three bonus acoustic tracks. It's their first CD with their new line-up.

The Paradox Twin release their debut *The Importance of Mr Bedlam* on June 29 via John Mitchell's White Star Records. The album, based around conspiracy theories, also features guest vocals from former Touchstone singer Kim Seviour.

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Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

May 2018

Compiled by Official Charts Company

1	**A PERFECT CIRCLE**	Eat The Elephant *(BMG)*
2	**TESSERACT**	Sonder *(KSCOPE)*
3	**RADIOHEAD**	OK Computer *(XL RECORDINGS)*
4	**TAME IMPALA**	Currents *(FICTION)*
5	**ROXY MUSIC**	Roxy Music *(VIRGIN)*
6	**KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD**	Gumboot Soup *(HEAVENLY)*
7	**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**	Every Valley *(PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)*
8	**JETHRO TULL**	Heavy Horses *(RHINO)*
9	**IHSAHN**	Ámr *(CANDLELIGHT)*
10	**BRIAN ENO**	Music For Installations *(UMC)*
11	**SIGUR RÓS**	Route One *(XL RECORDINGS)*
12	**GOAT**	Double Date – OST *(ROCKET)*
13	**WIRE**	Nine Sevens *(PINK FLAG)*
14	**MASTODON**	Emperor Of Sand *(REPRISE)*
15	**THE MOODY BLUES**	Days Of Future Passed *(DECCA)*
16	**ROGER WATERS**	Is This The Life We Really Want? *(COLUMBIA)*
17	**JEFF LYNNE'S ELO**	Wembley Or Bust *(RCA)*
18	**SIGUR RÓS**	Liminal Remixes *(XL RECORDINGS)*
19	**WISHBONE ASH**	Vintage Years (1970-1991) *(MADFISH)*
20	**JONATHAN WILSON**	Rare Birds *(BELLA UNION)*
21	**STEVEN WILSON**	To The Bone *(CAROLINE)*
22	**FM**	Atomic Generation *(FRONTIERS)*
23	**MARILLION**	Misplaced Childhood *(PARLOPHONE)*
24	**DAVID GILMOUR**	Live At Pompeii *(COLUMBIA)*
25	**MOGWAI**	Every Country's Sun *(ROCK ACTION)*
26	**THE MOODY BLUES**	Days Of Future Passed – Live *(EAGLE)*
27	**RUSH**	A Farewell To Kings *(UMC/VIRGIN)*
28	**AYREON**	Universe – Best Of – Live *(MUSIC THEORIES)*
29	**CAVERN OF ANTI-MATTER**	Hormone Lemonade *(WARP)*
30	**ANTHONY PHILLIPS**	Private Parts & Pieces IX-XI *(CHERRY RED/ESOTERIC)*

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

WIN! FRANK ZAPPA'S *THE ROXY PERFORMANCES* BOX SET!



In December 1973, Frank Zappa and The Mothers played a series of legendary concerts at the Roxy Theatre on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood. The five shows across three nights included a private, invite-only performance/soundcheck/film shoot followed by back-to-back double-headers. A few days later, Zappa brought his band and camera crew to Ike Turner's Bolic Sound in Inglewood for a filmed recording session. All of this music was captured, and is now available as a mega seven-CD box set via Zappa Records/UMC.

This collection, totalling nearly eight hours, documents the Roxy shows as they happened and presents brand new 2016 mixes by Craig Parker Adams from 96K 24-bit transfers of the multitrack masters. The set is rounded out with a 48-page booklet that includes photos from the performances, extensive liner notes, first-hand recollections about the shows and archival press reviews.

"This is one of my favourite FZ line-ups ever," says Ahmet Zappa, who co-produced the collection. "This box contains some of the best nights of music Los Angeles has ever seen with their ears at a historic venue. Hold on to your hotdogs people. This box is the be-all and end-all. This is it. This is all of it. It's time to get your rocks off for the Roxy."

The shows have never been released in their entirety until now, and we have one box set to give away. For your chance to win, answer this question:

What Frank Zappa album came out in the same year as these shows?

a) *Bongo Fury*
b) *The Grand Wazoo*
c) *Over-Nite Sensation*

Email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject 'Zappa Comp'.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from June 14 to July 19. 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



RED BEE
Silent Enemy
DINNER FOR WOLVES

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



THE PARADOX TWIN
The Importance of Mr Bedlam
WHITE STAR

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



KONTINUUM
No Need To Reason
SEASON OF MIST

The Musician
Dustie Waring



HAPPY THE MAN
Crafty Hands
ARISTA

The Writer
Dannii Leivers



VOYAGER
Ghost Mile
NOVA DISTRIBUTION

The Reader
George Turner



THIRD EAR BAND
Alchemy
HARVEST

JOHN HOLDEN

Multi-instrumentalist enlists some famous faces for debut effort.

IT'S NOT OFTEN an unknown, amateur musician whacks out a debut album featuring contributions and cameos from the likes of prog stalwarts Billy Sherwood, Oliver Wakeman and former Enid singer Joe Payne, but John Holden isn't one to think small.

The Cheshire-based multi-instrumentalist's 'don't ask, don't get' motto paid off in style on his inaugural effort *Capture Light*, which blends together melodic, song-based prog rock with a total of 14 guest appearances spanning the likes of keyboards, drums, vocals and sax to mastering help from Cosmograf's Robin Armstrong.

"It was my wife's fault, really," smiles Holden. "I did a load of demos, and I thought they were sounding quite good, then I sent them to a chap called Rob Aubrey, who works a lot with Big Big Train, just to get some feedback.

"But his opening line was something like, 'I'm going to be brutal about this,' and he basically ripped them to bits. That was a turning point really, because I had to make a decision if was I going to carry on or just stop.

"I decided that I was going to carry on and make it sound as professional as I could, and that basically meant starting again. Because I'd been working in splendid isolation doing absolutely everything myself, my wife suggested that I reach out to some other people. I think she was thinking local musicians, but my reach was a little bit bigger than that."

Holden says the album has been likened to "everything from Mike Oldfield to Chris de Burgh, to the Carpenters and West End musicals" – but it's his deep-rooted love of free-thinking, classic prog that gives his songwriting that absorbing, experimental edge.

"There are no limitations or boundaries on where the music or the subject matter goes, which is the key thing for me," Holden adds.

"But unlike a lot of prog, there's no extraneous noodling – it's very song-based and everything that's in there has to earn its place in the music."

Holden is a man with humble beginnings. The musician played in small bands in his late teens while being hamstrung by a lack of belief in his abilities to tackle prog, and as he settled down he sold off his instruments.

"I knew one day I'd come back to it, and after a long break about 10 years ago, I was in a position where I could buy some decent instruments again," he says.

As Holden revels in warm reviews for *Capture Light* – Beardfish's Rikard Sjöblom recently plugged it on Facebook, too – it appears the two-and-a-half years of hard work spent writing and recording has paid off.

"I've got a full-time job and I've got my own company," Holden explains, "so I was getting up at four or five in the morning and working through to 9am, then I'd do my day job, then I'd do some more at night and at weekends. But it was worth it in the end." **CC**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

John Holden *(guitars, bass, keyboards, programming)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Yes conjoined with rock opera theatrics

CURRENT RELEASE

Capture Light is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE

www.johnholdenmusic.com

"There are no limitations or boundaries on where the music or the subject matter goes, which is the key thing for me."



Thinking Big: John Holden doesn't hold back.

STUART WOOD

MUSIC TRUMP(ET)S WAR

Once upon a time, there was a man with a trumpet. And when he was a soldier in the US Army landing on the beaches of Normandy, he kept it by his side. Once, when he was standing guard at night, his captain told him: "Don't play tonight, there's a sharpshooter out there." But our man thought: "That guy out there is just as scared and lonely as me. I'll play a piece for him." The next day, a POW was brought into the camp, and he asked: "Who is the trumpeter that played 'Lili Marleen' last night? When I heard that song, the war was over for me - I just couldn't use my gun any more." The man with the trumpet was called Jack Leroy Tueller. And though it may sound like a fairy tale, this is a true story. A story only music can write.




th•mann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

My Record Collection

ADRIAN LUKIS

He's gone from *Selling England By The Pound* to *Toast Of London*, with lots of other stuff in between. But it's progressive rock that brought theatre and poetry into a young boy's life.

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Ben Meadows

"When I was 13, I was sent off to a boarding school in Berkshire called Wellington College, where I discovered prog. We all had record players and a record shop nearby, in Crowthorne. We'd be pondering which Sinclair amp to buy and spend hours going through hi-fi magazines trying to find the best deck.

We listened to Elton John, Alice Cooper and everything else from the time, but for many of us, **Genesis** were *the* band. At first I got into *Trespass* — I loved the lyrics, and the references to classical mythology. Somehow it got a hook into me and caught my soul. But above all, Genesis were public schoolboys and *I* was a public schoolboy. This was a strong case of self-identification. I thought, 'Wow, I can understand these guys!'

Bands would visit about once a term, and one day Genesis came to play. Peter Gabriel had broken his leg so was sat with that in plaster. They played *The Knife*, which is an incitement to revolution. A cool older student called Tony Mercer stood up and smashed his chair. He's probably the CEO of a multinational now.

The arrival of each new Genesis album became really exciting — actually holding the sleeve in your hands, looking at the artwork, reading the words. This was like our Bible. As I got older, I read more and my mind expanded. Genesis became part of the whole process of me growing into an adult and discovering art and... beauty. Something like *Supper's Ready* is a great work of art.

Then you have **Yes**, and *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. There were 700 boys at the school, so we traded lots of music and ideas. I was playing guitar so I was aware of how complex Yes' music was. There was me, plodding away, trying to work out Steve Howe's style. The lyrics sounded good, but what did they mean? I couldn't grasp them like I did with Genesis.

"My manager said, 'You've got tables to serve.' I said, 'I'm talking to Peter Gabriel.'"

I discovered **Emerson Lake & Palmer** at the same time, from their first album. I remember it sounding so very delicate with *Lucky Man*. We'd all get a bit excited by *The Barbarian* — people said a note was so low that unless you had good enough speakers, you wouldn't hear it. Deep on all levels! ELP were the first band I saw live, somewhere in Leicester Square. Keith Emerson threw knives and pulled the keyboard on top of himself. Then I fell for *Tarkus* and *Pictures At An Exhibition*.

These bands were an interesting bridge to classical music, and a lot are classically trained. So around 17, for the first time ever, I raided my parents' classical collection. Hearing **Beethoven**'s 4th Symphony, I was absolutely consumed by it, like I was with early Genesis. Prog led me here.

What I liked about all these bands was the great musicianship — it gave them such a wide palette to go forward with. At 15 I got into **Roxy Music**'s first album. I heard *Re-Make, Re-Model*, and that amazing voice of Bryan Ferry, and was hooked. I saw them play the Fairfield Halls in Croydon — it was outrageous and fun and they consciously dressed themselves as works of art. Along with David Bowie and Peter Gabriel's shaved head, they had quite a radical impact, wearing eyeshadow and lipstick before the dawn of glam.

I discovered **Curved Air** when my hormones kicked in. Sonja Kristina looked like she came from Haight-Ashbury. I was very hippie at the time and I wanted a brood of blond children and to live in the forest. The music was great — sexy, sweaty, and I loved *Vivaldi* and *Back Street Luv*.

When I was 18 I was working in a hippie restaurant in Bath. I had a band and we were semi-serious and writing Genesis-y songs. We'd been spotted by someone who thought we could go down well on some US airbases and they offered us a contract to tour. We didn't know what to do. A woman called Lynn who we knew offered a hand, saying, 'Do you want Peter Gabriel to look at this?' You can imagine the reaction! One day, I came out of the kitchen and Peter Gabriel was there, sitting in a chair. I took off my apron, sat down and we talked for half an hour. My manager said to me, 'You've got tables to serve,' and I said, 'I'm talking to Peter Gabriel.' Peter told me, 'You don't want to touch this contract, we were burned in the early days.' He was very kind.

Drugs did play a part in getting into this stuff. We were all smoking as much dope as we could, then did LSD for a short period. I remember dropping acid and having **Jean-Luc Ponty**'s *Aurora* played to me. Fantastic! Musically, it's a bit more jazzy, but it's still got the depth and skill. In that period there was so much diverse music to enjoy.

I didn't define **Jethro Tull** initially as prog, but Ian Anderson was fascinating — conjuring characters and commanding the stage in such a crazy, trippy style. I'd been acting since I was nine and in school plays since 13. As hard as I tried, my guitar playing and poetry writing weren't as good as these bands'. But I found a common bond with the theatricality of these people who were playing characters. *Thick As A Brick* is Tull's pinnacle. It has a lot of humour and is a great song in itself.

If **Joni Mitchell** was available I would marry her because everything she says is brilliant. Also, her arrangements and lyrics are beyond compare. You want experimental? Try *Hejira*. The story of *Coyote* is incredible. God, she's epic.

I've rediscovered **Pink Floyd** as I've got older. There was a retrospective about *The Dark Side Of The Moon* on TV a while ago and I realised that they are giants. The mood might be melancholy at times but I find it profound. Their Cambridge intellectualism and Englishness is a big draw. *'Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way'* is like something by TS Eliot, Evelyn Waugh or Cyril Connolly. These are clever people writing clever lyrics.

I first got into **Supertramp** with the song *School* — it was quite political, like Floyd. It suggested the education system was going to cheer you up but really the establishment was going to take your soul away, a sort of Rousseau idea. They would be great at these songs that sounded so happy but were subversive. I saw them headlining at Reading Festival and they were note-for-note excellent, which I liked.

Genesis are still my top pick and I go to see [tribute band] The Musical Box when I can. I've tried to get my daughter hooked — she's in her 20s and she doesn't get it. I'm always surprised by this — it's obviously brilliant!"

You can see Adrian on the big and small screen soon in The Voyage Of Dr Dolittle, Judy, Amundsen, Vera, Poldark and Bulletproof.


Supertramp
Close to the Edge
THICK AS A BRICK
GENESIS
THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY

ADAM HOLZMAN

Son of Elektra Records boss Jac Holzman, veteran jazzer Adam Holzman has spent his entire life steeped in music. He recently took time out from his busy schedule to talk to *Prog*.

Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Diana Siefert

Best known for his time in Miles Davis' *Tutu*-era band, Adam Holzman has also been Steven Wilson's keyboard player of choice since 2012. He's just released a new solo album, *Truth Decay*, that mixes songs and instrumental music, and features contributions from Nick Beggs, Craig Blundell, Theo Travis and others. Holzman is a prodigious talent who feels equally at home with jazz, prog, psychedelic pop and electronic music. "That's where I live, man. I grew up loving rock and progressive rock when I was in high school."

When *Prog* caught up with Holzman to talk about his latest release, he was in Toronto, Canada, on the latest leg of Wilson's *To The Bone* tour.

What would you normally be doing right now on tour if you weren't talking to *Prog*?
Because it's a Sunday I'd be finishing my cartoon because that's when I publish a cartoon on Facebook. I'd either be out for a long walk or scrapping around the venue, trying to find a piano to practise with.

So how's the current tour been going?
Amazing. It's been the longest single stretch I've ever been on tour for: a week of rehearsals and 41 concerts. For me, that was some kind of milestone and one of the most heavy-duty tours I've ever done in my career.

How do you stay sane when spending that amount of time on the road?
It's actually fairly easy because the organisation is really together, so all I really have to worry about is playing. It's exhausting and there's some serious work involved but I love it. When I go home, that's when I have to figure out how to stay sane!

"It's important to have music about something that matters, something about what's going on the world right now."

What's your favourite song in Steven's set?
Even though I love playing *Home Invasion* and the opportunity to solo, probably my favourite song night after night is *Ancestral*. There's something about the way it builds and the climax it finally reaches — you just can't beat it.

So let's talk about your new solo album...
I didn't start working on it seriously until the summer of 2017. I had most of the material together and I started planning how I was going to do the recording. Apart from the writing, it was relatively quick — three or four months and only a month mixing. It wasn't possible to get everyone together in the studio but everyone that added their contributions are people I play with all the time anyway. There's already a natural rapport there, so it doesn't have that clinical 'slice and dice' feeling that an 'email record' has.

Stylistically, the album covers a lot of ground.
I'm digging this format where I bring in a lot of people from all the different projects I'm involved with. Normally when I do an album it has a narrow band focus. This time it was really fun to bring in elements of my outside projects. I have a trio in Italy so the song *I Told You So* represents that element. *Ectoplasm* and *Phobia* are more directly related to the early-70s Miles [Davis] vibe, things like *Dark Magus*, *Pangea*, *Live-Evil*. I love that stuff and I guess because I played with him I think I understand how to get to that sound.

Steven Wilson plays a scorching guitar solo on *Phobia*. Did you give him any direction on what to play?
I chose a track with my New York rhythm section playing on it, which I thought would be fun for him, plus I know he really likes a lot of the early-70s Miles era, the scorched-earth jams and stuff. I told him, "This is an opportunity to channel your inner Pete Cosey." That was the only guidance I gave him. I wanted something that was going to be more acid rock and he certainly delivered that!

You're comfortable in having a foot in jazz, rock and progressive rock.
That's where I live. That's the kind of music I've been playing almost my whole life, in that grey area between jazz and rock.

You include a cover version of Love's classic track *A House Is Not A Motel*.
I chose that because it has a connection on several levels for me, one of which is that it was originally released on my dad Jac Holzman's Elektra label. I've been collecting old Elektra albums, trying to recapture a little bit of my childhood. I've always owned copies of *Forever Changes*. Although the song is from the 1960s, *A House Is Not A Motel* speaks very much about the times we're in right now.

The title track of *Truth Decay* overtly expresses your grave concerns about the current state of politics and rhetoric. Should politics and music mix?
Yes. There's a long list of examples where it does mix. In the 60s a lot of the rock bands incorporated politics in their songs but people also forget that Herbie Hancock, Miles and others at that time were also very political and made a lot of statements in their music, in the songtitles and in their presentation. It's important to have music about something that matters, something about what's going on the world right now, so I'm much more interested in doing that than a standard love song. I'm optimistic about the future but I'm pessimistic about the present!

Off the top of your head, what's the one prog rock album that every home should have?
Close To The Edge by Yes. The writing and playing are amazing, a band at the height of their powers. The place that Yes got to, it's tough for bands to get that deep into what they do these days. Between market forces and everyone being so fragmented, it's hard to find that intense focus that you need to be able to make a record like that. The only way you get there is to do nothing but that, for months at a time. *In The Court Of The Crimson King* is in this category as well.

Truth Decay is available now via Big Fun Productions. See www.adamholzman.com for more information.


BÜHNE
STAGE

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD, IT'S A BATTLE OF Words

As **Roger Waters** prepares to bring his hugely successful *Us + Them* tour to British shores, *Prog* grabs a rare chat with the man himself to discuss the themes behind his tour, and to get the inside story on the upcoming *Animals* reissue project.

Words: Wibo Dijksma/NPO2 **Images:** Giuseppe Maffia/NurPhoto /Getty Images

On June 26, Roger Waters' latest live extravaganza, the *Us + Them* tour, rolls into Dublin for the first of two shows. There will then be six concerts across the UK, the centrepiece of which is almost certainly going to be Waters' headlining performance at London's Hyde Park on July 6. It's the kind of massive live concert for which Waters became famous with Pink Floyd in the late 70s, and over the last decade, few have surpassed prog's arch-conceptualist when it comes to stadium-sized events.

Following Pink Floyd's final performance at Live 8 in July 2005, Waters toured *The Dark Side Of The Moon* from 2006 to 2008. In 2010 he took Pink Floyd's *The Wall* out on a tour of the world's arenas, which later moved on to outdoor stadiums. And now there's his *Us + Them* jaunt, a kind of Pink Floyd's greatest hits, plus a few songs from last year's *Is This The Life We Really Want?*, Waters' first solo album proper for a quarter of a century.

Given that as of 2013, *The Wall Live* is the highest grossing tour by a solo artist, you'd have to say that Waters is doing alright. *Is This The Life We Really Want?* is a fine piece of work, while the continued runs around the world with the Floyd back catalogue prove that the man behind a lot of the ideas and music that emanated from Pink Floyd in the late 70s is getting things right.

Perhaps even more interestingly for the now 74-year-old musician, back in 2010, as he launched the tour of *The Wall*, he announced: "I think I have a swan song in me and I think this will probably be it." Eight years down the line, the facts tell a somewhat different story...

"Very good point. I think the tour is because two years ago now, Paul Tollett and the people from Goldenvoice [promotions company, founded by Tollett] asked me to do Desert Trip [festival], which was a Coachella thing. Because I did Coachella in 2008 and they'd always go, 'Oh we want you to come back and blah blah blah...'

"But Coachella is all sorts of young people doing whatever it is that young people do, and then he had this idea of getting a bunch of more established acts together one autumn and that's what we did. So basically his idea was: let's get Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, The Beatles [Paul McCartney], Bob Dylan, Neil Young and The Who up, weirdly enough. That's the six acts, and we would do it over a weekend, you know: two acts a day, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. And if the tickets go well, we'll do another weekend.

"Well, the tickets did. I think there were 500,000 ticket requests in the first few hours. And so I put a lot of work into putting that show together, and realised I had been asked to don the Pink Floyd mantle, which hadn't really happened before. And I said, 'Yeah, okay, I can do that,' and I did. But having done all that work, I thought, 'Maybe if this new record comes out well, maybe I can put a show together that's some of what I did at Desert Trip and a few songs from the new record.'

"So that's what I've done. The ideas in it are kind of embodied by the song *Us And Them* from *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which is about searching within ourselves to find love and empathy for all fellow human beings."

As you've mentioned, this tour is 75 per cent old material, 25 per cent new material, but you also said it will be connected by a general theme. So what links it all together?
Well, it's called *Us + Them*, and it's called that largely because there's a verse in the song that says: *'With, without, And who'll deny it's what the fighting's all about?'* Well, the answer to that question is: almost everybody will deny that with/without is what the fighting's all about. It's a war on terror. Also it's about ideology, but what is it really about? Most people think that everything has happened because somebody is right and somebody is wrong and the people who are wrong have to be put in their place, and the best way to do that is to bomb them, or invade their country, or whatever it might be.

But that's not what war is about. War is actually about keeping rich people rich and poor people poor. That's the function of it. And not just because there's just so much money in the economies of the Western countries. Well, the ones who make weapons, which is mainly the United States, the UK, Russia, Germany, France, Belgium — those are the main ones. So much is tied into the armament industries, in the great military industrial complexes Eisenhower warned us about. So that is the reason we're in perpetual war.

Do you think you'd ever be able to make an album with songs that weren't connected in theme?
I couldn't personally. I can't write a song that isn't connected with how I feel. I think that maybe if my songs have an enduring quality to them, it's that they're truthful, that they're very heartfelt. I mean, I'm not saying I know the truth and other people don't, but I'm saying I tell the truth I believe in as directly as I can in the songs I write.

Are any of the gigs on this tour being filmed for a future release?
We're actually filming the show in Amsterdam. I don't know what we'll do with it when we've filmed it but that's where we're going to do the filming. That's been decided now.

Is there anything else Pink Floyd-related that you've been working on?
Yeah. I've just been working with Po [designer Aubrey Powell]. There's a reissue of *Animals*, a 5.1 mix of *Animals* so I've been working... Well, I haven't been working, he's been working. He came up with some new photographs of Battersea Power Station to use as a CD cover for the new 5.1 mix. It's beautiful.

See bit.ly/waters-interview to listen to the full Roger Waters interview. For more information on the Us + Them tour and Roger Waters, see www.rogerwaters.com.



Us + Him: Roger Waters gets ready to bring his live show to UK fans.

"THERE'S A REISSUE OF *ANIMALS*, A 5.1 MIX. IT'S BEAUTIFUL."

While few **Pink Floyd** fans will rate *The Final Cut* as their favourite album, there's no doubt it's one of the band's most significant, being both a fascinating snapshot of Roger Waters' megalomania and the final release from the group's best-known line-up. Unknowingly, it mapped out the future for all parties concerned…

Words: Daryl Easlea
Images: Willie Christie

ALL Equal IN THE End?

Almost 10 years to the day since the release of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, a new Pink Floyd album, *The Final Cut*, was launched. A decade earlier, the material for *Dark Side…* had been worked up thoroughly on the road and bore writing credits from all four band members. Now the group – a trio after the departure of keyboard player Rick Wright – had become, through default more than by design, a method of carriage for *de facto* leader Roger Waters' words and music alone, with session musicians heavily featured throughout. The music had few discernible hooks, no standout commercial moment, and no track from *The Final Cut* was ever played live by the band.

This didn't initially stop the Floyd juggernaut: fans worldwide had been waiting for three-and-a-half years for a new LP, their longest wait to date. And so, on its release in March 1983, *The Final Cut* became Pink Floyd's first UK No.1 album since 1975's *Wish You Were Here*. *Rolling Stone* gave it the full five stars and suggested that it may have been "art rock's crowning masterpiece".

However, the juggernaut would soon jackknife. *The Final Cut* disappeared

almost as soon as it was released, leaving the album, a single and a 19-minute 'video album' as its only footprint. There were to be no promotional appearances, no group publicity photographs and no tour. It barely touched any year-end polls, and soon became 'Exhibit A' in the painful, public breakdown of the group.

If the album featured at all in interviews retrospectively by both Roger Waters and David Gilmour, it was portrayed as a time of abject misery. "That's how it ended up," Gilmour told David Fricke in 1987. "Very miserable. Even Roger says what a miserable period it was. And he was the one who made it entirely miserable, in my opinion."

"It came and died, really, didn't it?" says Willie Christie, who shot the album's cover photo.

Christie has great insight into the album and the period — Waters was his brother-in-law and "after a relationship had gone south", Christie was living in an outhouse over the garage at the Waters' house in Sheen at the time.

"Because the break-up was on the horizon," he adds, "I think David was finding it very tough; Roger for different reasons. That was a great shame. David had said publicly that the songs were offcuts from *The Wall*. Why regurgitate? I never saw it like that. I loved it and thought there was some great stuff on it."

While it would clearly be a very perverse fan that would name *The Final Cut* as their favourite Pink Floyd album, it's certainly worth a lot more credit than it's given. Yes, *The Final Cut* is the greatest example of high-period megalomaniac Waters. However, for all his writing and singing, it needs to be taken as a Floyd release, and not a solo Waters one — it has some of Gilmour's best guitar solos, with drummer Nick Mason curating some of the greatest sound effects in Floyd's career.

As a protest album, it's one of the strongest ever produced in British rock. Had it been made by Elvis Costello, Robert Wyatt or The Specials, it would have far more retrospective gravitas. *'What have we done to England?'* Waters sings on the opening track *The Post War Dream*, as a brass band, that most quintessentially British sound, plays out. It locates the album squarely in the post-Falklands invasion landscape of 1982, while looking back to the beachheads of 1944. As Cliff Jones noted in *Echoes: The Stories Behind Every Pink Floyd Song*, it was "the most lyrically unequivocal of all Pink Floyd albums".

> "By the time we had got a quarter of the way into making *The Final Cut*, I knew I would never make another record with Dave Gilmour or Nick Mason."
> **Roger Waters**



1983's *The Final Cut*, the final chapter of the classic Floyd line-up.

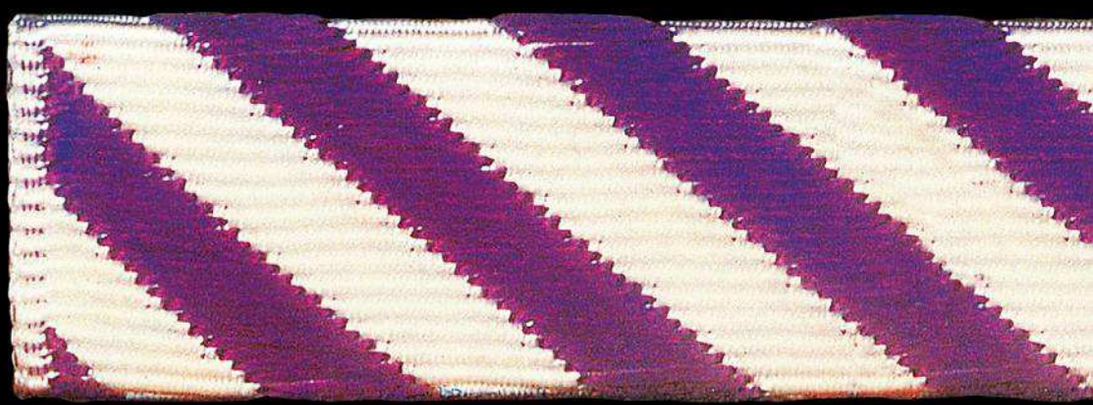
Moreover, the album is phenomenally significant in the group's career. Had it been a far better experience and a bigger seller, it may have allowed Floyd to conclude, or perhaps continue, on a triumphant, cordial high. Instead, it left a nagging sense of unfinished business, which led to the split, the commercial triumph of the Gilmour years and the group's enormous afterlife.

The genesis of *The Final Cut* is well known. Some of its material dates from five years previously, when Waters came up with the original cassette recording of *The Wall* in the summer of 1978. He had written around three albums' worth of material. He was driven in a way that the other band members, who seemed to want to escape Floyd at the time, simply were not. To Waters, it was like picking hard at a scab — he knew he shouldn't, but he just had to explore further this monster that he had helped create.

Pink Floyd as we knew them finished on June 17, 1981 at London's Earl's Court, when the final show of the 31 *The Wall* gigs concluded. That year's return to touring was to gather material for the Alan Parker-directed filmed version of *The Wall*. There were offers — with considerable irony — for the band to tour stadiums. Waters, of course, ran a mile from them.

Meanwhile, serious contemplation was given to the idea of playing the shows with Andy Bown of Floyd tribute group The Surrogate Band taking Waters' place. "I was asked if I would be interested if the situation arose," Bown says today. "I said yes, I would be."

However, the idea was quickly vetoed by Waters.





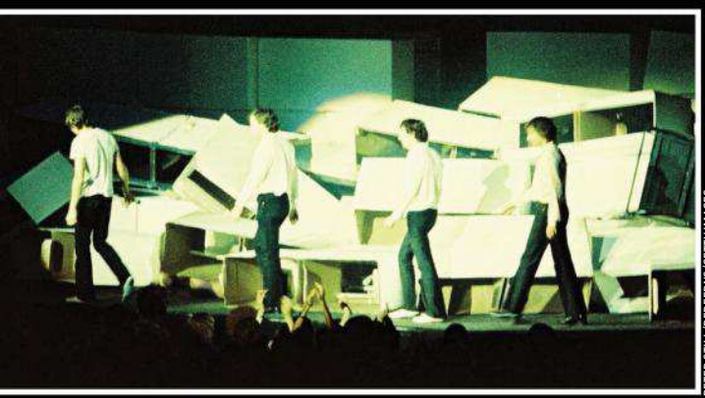
The Wall **(above), and the end of an era as that album's hugely successful tour came to an end in 1981 (below).**



PETER STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



PETER STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



PETER STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

There was talk of a soundtrack album to the Parker film, but there was hardly a great deal of material: versions of *In The Flesh* (with and without the question mark) performed by the film's Pink, Bob Geldof; *Wall* outtake *When The Tigers Broke Free*; and *What Shall We Do Now?*, which was left off the album's original running order. This project evolved into *Spare Bricks*, where these tracks were supplemented with additional *Wall* offcuts *Your Possible Pasts*, *One Of The Few*, *The Hero's Return* and *The Final Cut*.

However, when Argentina invaded the Falklands — the British-ruled islands in the South Atlantic, some 300 miles off the Argentine coast, in April 1982 — and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent a task force to counteract this, Waters suddenly had his subject matter. The pointlessness of the ensuing 74-day conflict, resulting in the loss of 907 lives, evoked again the death of Roger's father, Eric Fletcher Waters, at Anzio in 1944. Waters relished the conflation of the past and the present. He was going to write a modern requiem.

And so *Spare Bricks* became *The Final Cut*. Its title was a Shakespearean reference to Julius Caesar being stabbed in the back by Brutus: "This was the most unkindest cut of all."

"*The Final Cut* in film terminology is the finished article," Gilmour said in 1983. "When you stick all the rushes together basically in the right order, you call it the 'rough cut', and when you've cleaned it up and got it perfect, you call it 'the final cut'. It's also an expression for a stab in the back, which I think is the way Roger sees the film industry."

Waters' frequent run-ins with director Alan Parker on the making of the film of *The Wall* are no secret. It was clear, too, that the members of Pink Floyd, never the chummiest of outfits, were growing ever further apart. The UK premiere of *The Wall* on July 14, 1982, at the Empire Theatre in London's Leicester Square, was the only time the three-man Pink Floyd were ever seen in public together. No one yet knew that Rick Wright had gone from the band, with the party line being that he was 'on holiday'.

Originally titled *Anzio, 1944, When The Tigers Broke Free* was issued as a single in July 1982. The track was full of pathos and huge in its intent. *Apples And Oranges* in 1967 was the last time so many eyes had been on the chart performance of a Floyd single, *...Tigers...* being their first 45 since *Another Brick In The Wall, Part Two* in 1979. The single, which was fundamentally Waters with the Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir and Orchestra, was labelled as being from *The Final Cut*. Ironically, it didn't make it to the album until it was reconfigured for CD in 2004. It only reached No.39 in the UK charts.

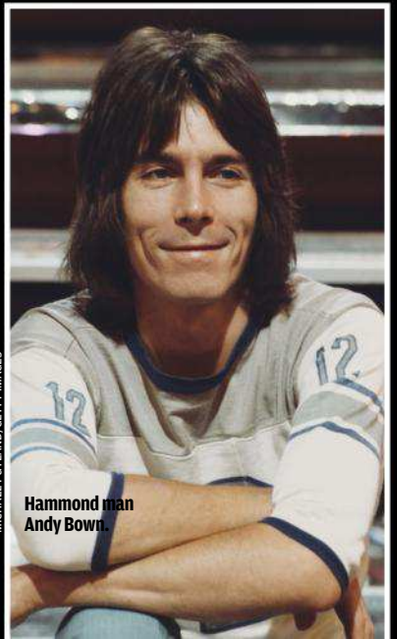
After the single's release, Roger Waters told *Melody Maker* in August 1982, "I've become more interested in the remembrance and requiem aspects of the thing, if that doesn't sound too pretentious."

After then arriving at *The Final Cut*, "the whole thing started developing a different flavour, and I finally wrote the requiem I've been trying to write for so long".

Requiem For The Post War Dream was to become the subtitle for the album. By this point, Waters said that the group had "got to the stage of a rough throw-together of all the work we've done so far".

After the US premiere of *The Wall* and a holiday, he was to return to work in earnest that autumn. The sessions began in July and lasted through to that Christmas. Fittingly, it's a truly UK-centred album. After the French, New York and Californian sessions for *The Wall*, here the band visited Abbey Road, Olympic, Mayfair, RAK, Eel Pie, Audio International, Gilmour's home studio Hookend, and Waters' home studio The Billiard Room. With *The Wall* co-producer Bob Ezrin excommunicated, Michael Kamen and James Guthrie co-produced with Waters and Gilmour.

With Mason racing cars and presiding over a failing relationship while beginning a new one, Gilmour struggling to write new material



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Hammond man Andy Bown.

"It was wonderful to work for them in that live situation: it's rare to meet a rock band that know how to behave. And the Floyd organisation treated the hired guns very well indeed."

Andy Bown



The back cover of *The Final Cut* shows how Waters felt stabbed in the back by Alan Parker over the film of *The Wall*.

and Wright leaving just a memory, Waters was in a frantic hurry to complete the album that had, by now, taken on a whole new lease of life. "I started writing this piece about my father," Waters said in 1987. "I was on a roll, and I was gone. The fact of the matter was that I was making this record and Dave didn't like it. And he said so."

"Dave didn't like it" has become the shorthand for *The Final Cut*. After a cordial start, it soon became apparent that Waters and Gilmour would need to work separately. Engineer Andy Jackson would work with Waters and Guthrie would work with Gilmour, occasionally meeting up. "The relationship was definitely frosty by that stage," Jackson told *Floydian Slip* in 2000. "There's no question about it. I don't think anyone would want to deny that. So, the time that Dave – Dave in particular – and Roger were in the studio together, it was frosty. There's no question about it."

Yet this frostiness made for great art. And there was innovation too. Italian-based, Argentine-born (which no doubt would have appealed to Waters' sense of humour) audio inventor Hugo Zuccarelli had approached the group to try out his new 'Holophonic' surround sound that could be recorded on stereo tape. For a group so associated with their audio pioneering, this was a positive boon. The system utilised a pair of microphones in the head of a dummy. Zuccarelli played Mason, Gilmour and Waters a demo of a box of matches being shaken that sounded as if it was moving around your head.

The group were of one mind to use the system. Mason began to gather the sounds in the Holophonic head, which, as he noted in *Inside Out*, "answered to the name of Ringo". He duly recorded Tornados at RAF Honington, the sounds of cars passing, the wind and various ticks, tocks, dogs, gulls, steps, shrieks and squawks. On the disc, sound effects lushly careened between headphones. The missile attack at the start of *Get Your Filthy Hands Off My Desert* is arguably the greatest sound effect on any Pink Floyd record.

Ray Cooper played percussion, Raphael Ravenscroft added saxophone, and on the closing track, *Two Suns In The Sunset*, veteran drummer Andy Newmark took Nick Mason's place.





Inset pic: Willie Christie's original 1977 *Vogue* shoot in the Henley field.



WILLIE CHRISTIE/REPRODUCED COURTESY CONDE NAST PUBLICATIONS

It took two players to replace Rick Wright. While Kamen played piano, Andy Bown took Hammond duties.

"It was wonderful to work for them in that live situation: it's rare to meet a rock band that know how to behave," Bown recalls. "And the Floyd organisation treated the hired guns very well indeed. Recording is different — you're not living with each other in the same way. I remember almost nothing from those sessions. I wonder why."

Waters' exacting attempts at nailing a vocal recording led to the well-reported incident of Kamen doing a Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*, writing furiously in the control room. When Waters came to investigate what he was doing, he saw that Kamen had repeatedly written: "I must not fuck sheep." According to Andy Bown, Kamen was "a lovely cuddly bear with a wacky sense of humour".

His scribbling wasn't confined to Waters. "He wrote a whole crazy manuscript page of total fly-shit for me. Unreadable. And signed it," says Bown.

Willie Christie, who was to photograph the album's strikingly modernist cover, popped by Mayfair Studios in Primrose Hill. "It was obvious Roger was making the running," Nick Mason said about that time in *Inside Out*. "Roger is sometimes credited with enjoying confrontation, but I don't think that's the case. I do think Roger is often unaware of just how alarming he can be, and once he sees a confrontation as necessary, he is so grimly committed to winning that he throws everything into the fray — and his everything can be pretty scary... David, on the other hand, may not be so initially alarming, but once decided on a course of action is hard to sway. When his immovable object met Roger's irresistible force, difficulties were guaranteed to follow."

"I was in a pretty sorry state," Waters said. "By the time we had got a quarter of the way into making *The Final Cut*, I knew I would never make another record with Dave Gilmour or Nick Mason."

Gilmour said in 2000, "There were all sorts of arguments over political issues and I didn't share his political views. But I never, never wanted to stand in the way of him expressing the story of *The Final Cut*. I just didn't think some of the music was up to it."



MGM/UA/KOBAL/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Roger Waters on the set of *The Wall*, looking at his younger self.



After much arguing with Waters, Gilmour surrendered his producer credit on the album — but not his share of producer royalties. He was even to say, "It reached a point that I just had to say, 'If you need a guitar player, give me a call and I'll come and do it.'" He said in 1983, "I came off the production credits because my ideas of production weren't the way Roger saw it being."

"I was just trying to get through it," Gilmour told this writer in 2002. "It wasn't pleasant at all. If it was that unpleasant but the results had been worth it, then I might think about it in a different way. I wouldn't, actually. I don't think the results are an awful lot... I mean, a couple of reasonable tracks at best. I did vote for *The Fletcher Memorial Home* to be on *Echoes*. I like that. *Fletcher...*, *The Gunner's Dream* and the title track are the three reasonable tracks on that."

> "Because the break-up was on the horizon, I think David was finding it very tough; Roger for different reasons. That was a great shame."
> **Willie Christie**

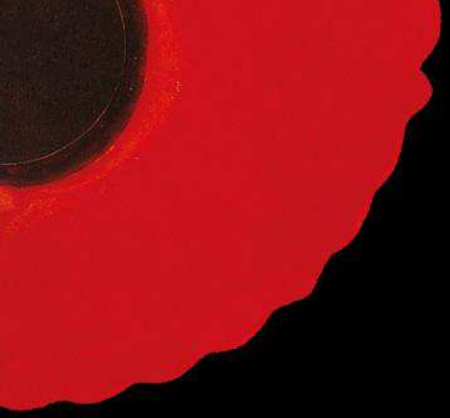
Overlaid with Waters' disgust at the Falklands war, the collapse of the socialist post-war dream and grieving for his father, the narrative of *The Final Cut* focuses on the figure of the teacher from *The Wall*, who had been a gunner in the war, staring down modern life. The central character of *The Wall*, Pink himself makes an appearance on the title track. Waters is frequently self-referential in his choice of words. For example, *'quiet desperation'* and *'dark side'*, two most Floydian phrases, are used. It's hard to select one track or another as they're part of a piece. As album keyboard player Andy Bown says, "I like it all. Eaten whole."

Of the original album's 12 tracks, *The Hero's Return* and *The Gunner's Dream* are two of Waters' finest moments side by side: full-bleed paranoia with his unlimited capacity for beauty and empathy. *The Hero's Return* began life as *Teacher, Teacher* from *The Wall*. The band's demo from January 1979 has synth drone with Gilmour on a loud slide guitar. Here, the hero is haunted by images of the war he can't discuss with his wife.

There's little guitar but plenty of saxophone, so much a feature of 1973-'75 Floyd, on *The Gunner's Dream*. Here, Waters' voice, as with a lot of the album, is the lead instrument. The song examines the sudden powerlessness of a situation when confronted by the jackboot. Referencing war poet Rupert Brooke, Waters delivers one of his finest vocals. It also introduces the imaginary character Max, an in-joke name for producer Guthrie from the sessions.

Journalist Nicholas Schaffner says, "In some ways *The Final Cut* qualifies as Roger's equivalent of John Lennon's highly acclaimed primal scream LP, released in the wake of The Beatles' 1970 disintegration."

And the screaming doesn't stop.



A decade and a half after his wails on *Careful With That Axe, Eugene*, possibly Waters' career-best bellow is on *The Gunner's Dream*, where he howls for a full 20 seconds. *Rolling Stone* said it contained some of the most "passionate and detailed singing that Waters has ever done". And it's certainly there, as he enunciates every vowel as if his life depends on it.

The Fletcher Memorial Home, where *'colonial wasters of life and limb'* assemble, offers another standout moment, with Waters giving tyrants past and present the chance to get together before applying a final solution to them. Gilmour's solo and Kamen's beautiful brass arrangement enhance the song's gravitas.

While the title track is similar to *Comfortably Numb* in its arrangement, *Not Now John* is the album's rocker. It's a call and answer between Gilmour and Waters — one as the jingoistic right-winger so celebrated in the early 80s, and the other attempting reason. The US, sensing the one song that resembled conventional rock (complete with Gilmour's ultra-Floyd guitar work) suggested a radio recut was done, with Gilmour and the backing vocalists singing 'stuff' loudly over the song's obvious use of the word 'fuck'. It was issued as a single with a Willie Christie-directed video in May 1983 and scraped into the UK Top 30.

The album's closer, *Two Suns In The Sunset*, was inspired by Waters' recent viewing of banned docudrama *The War Game*. In the end, the hero drives off and sees the nuclear explosion, a result of someone's anger spilling over until, ultimately, the button is pushed. He now understands *'the feelings of the few'*. As the explosion comes, Waters suggests, *'Ashes and diamonds, foe and friend, we were all equal in the end.'*

For the final song from 'the original Pink Floyd', it ends with a session sax player, a session drummer and a producer playing piano. By then, it seemed that even Waters was removed from his own story. The surrogate band had taken over.

Even Hipgnosis and Gerald Scarfe were now surplus to requirements. Scarfe has said he had done a test version of a cover for *The Final Cut*, but Waters himself would oversee the artwork with graphic design company Artful Dodgers. His brother-in-law, *Vogue* photographer Willie Christie, was called upon to take the photos that made the sleeve. As Waters' house guest at the time, the pair discussed the concept at length.

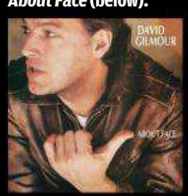


UNIMEDIA/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

"We were talking about it all the time from conception," he says. "Roger asked me to do the stills. They came out of ideas we had talked about — poppies featured a lot because of the theme of it. I did the stills in November 1982, the poppies and the strip of medals. The field was near Henley. We needed a field of corn and I'd done a *Vogue* shoot down there in 1977. A prop company called Asylum made me up some poppies as real poppies don't last."

Asylum also made two uniforms, complete with the knife in the back. Christie's assistant, Ian Thomas, modelled the outfit, holding a film canister under his arm. "That was the whole idea of the knife in the back and the film canister," Christie says. "That [Alan] Parker had stabbed him [Waters] in the back."

David Gilmour (above) and his 1984 solo album *About Face* (below).



In another shot, Thomas is seen lying dead in the poppy field, watched over by Stewart, the Waters' pet spaniel. In the gatefold, Thomas can be made out in the distance, while the outstretched hand of a child, Oliver Quigley, holds poppies.

The sleeve also contained an image for *Two Suns In The Sunset* and the Japanese welder (another assistant, future fashion photographer Chris Roberts) for *Not Now John*, which was shot in Christie's studio in London's Princedale Road. Christie went to show the group the work in progress.

"David hadn't been involved or consulted," he says. "I slightly found myself in the middle. It was a little bit awkward as I'd been talking to Roger, but David's a really good bloke, a genius. It was a little, 'Oh, David, sorry I haven't showed you. It's not me,' sort of thing."

Gilmour looked at the photographs and told Christie, "'Well, actually, the knife wouldn't go in like that — it would go in sideways, as your ribcage wouldn't allow it to go in straight, vertical.' Roger pooh-poohed that, thankfully, as I thought I'd have to have the thing remade and have to reshoot it. It might have looked a bit strange if you had the knife flat. Aesthetically, whenever you see a knife in the back, it's always vertical, not horizontal. So, it's a good point, but it wasn't given much credence."

The sleeve was a powerful close-up of a serviceman's lapel, showing a poppy and his medals. The modernist lower-case rear sleeve just listed three members of Pink Floyd. This was the first time the wider world became aware that Wright was no longer a member of the group — and that this was clearly a work 'by Roger Waters, performed by Pink Floyd'.

The Final Cut was released on March 21, 1983, on Harvest. It's hard now to convey just how exciting it was when it came out. It shot to No.1. It was an album to pore over — this writer recalls people especially loving *Two Suns In*

"I was on a roll, and I was gone. The fact of the matter was that I was making this record and Dave didn't like it. And he said so."
Roger Waters



WILLIE CHRISTIE

The Sunset, saying things like, "Waters has done it again." The album stayed on the UK charts for 25 weeks and sold three million copies worldwide. As well as the UK, the album topped the charts in France, West Germany, Sweden, Norway and New Zealand. It reached No.6 in the US.

The critics were, of course, deliciously mixed. Richard Cook wrote in the *NME* that Waters "picks out the words like a barefoot terminal beachcomber, measuring out a cracked whisper or suddenly bracing itself for a colossal scream… the story is pitched to that exhausting rise and fall: it regales with the obstinacy of an intoxicated, berserk commando."

"Truly, a milestone in the history of awfulness," said Lynden Barber in *Melody Maker*. "Expect the usual sycophantic review in the pages of *Rolling Stone*."

A week later, Kurt Loder duly obliged with a five-star review that opened with the phrase, "This may be art rock's crowning masterpiece, but it is also something more. With *The Final Cut*, Pink Floyd caps its career in classic form, and leader Roger Waters — for whom the group has long since become little more than a pseudonym — finally steps out from behind the 'Wall' where last we left him. The result is essentially a Roger Waters solo album, and it's a superlative achievement on several levels. Not since Bob Dylan's *Masters Of War* 20 years ago has a popular artist unleashed upon the world political order a moral contempt so corrosively convincing, or a life-loving hatred so bracing and brilliantly sustained… By comparison, in almost every way, *The Wall* was only a warm-up."

Roger Waters (above) and his 1984 solo album *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking* (below), with *that* cover…



The *NME* review ends with the extremely perceptive comment: "Underneath the whimpering meditation and exasperated cries of rage, it is the old, familiar rock beast: a man who is unhappy in his work."

"I was in a greengrocer's shop, and this woman of about 40 in a fur coat came up to me," Waters told Chris Salewicz in 1987. "She said she thought it was the most moving record she had ever heard. Her father had also been killed in World War II, she explained. And I got back into my car with my three pounds of potatoes and drove home and thought, 'Good enough.'"

And it was good enough, but not good enough for what Pink Floyd had become in popular perception. As Nick Mason was to write, "After *The Final Cut* was finished there were no plans for the future. I have no recollection of any promotion and there was no recollection of any live performances to promote the record."

Had there been a tour to support it, it could have been a huge sustained hit. There's just something about it, like all art from that strange 1980-'83 period in the UK, such as *The Boys From The Black Stuff* or *Brideshead Revisited*, that when you're locked into it, it can't fail to make you feel moved. The early 80s, unless you lived through them, are very hard to explain. The 60s and 70s seemed clear-cut, and when people do think of the 80s, it's that later flash, brash, wedges-of-money time.

We also need to review where Floyd's 70s peers were by 1983. Led Zeppelin were long gone. Queen were licking their wounds from an ill-advised, all-out assault on disco. Genesis had gone 'pop'. Yes were, quite by accident, about to reinvent themselves as a techno-stadium monster. It could be said that Pink Floyd were the only ones doing what they always did — or at least post-1975 Floyd. But, as said, it wasn't enough.

Within 11 weeks of the release of *The Final Cut*, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government were re-elected with a landslide majority of 144, which left Labour with its worst post-war performance. At once, the result reinforced Waters' concerns about the whereabouts of the post-war dream and demonstrated how out of step he was with his audience.

Both main protagonists made solo albums. David Gilmour released *About Face* and Waters made his other 1978 concept idea, *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking*, with much of the same team as *The Final Cut*. ("That was jolly good fun," Andy Bown recalls. "And terrific musicians to work with. Bloody good album too.")

In October 1985, Waters issued a High Court application to prevent the Pink Floyd name ever being used again, considering it a 'spent force'. He finally had the nerve to make the final cut. Waters and Mason, however, simply did not, and the next chapter of Pink Floyd was about to begin, taking the band back to stadiums and making a noise that sounded like the best of the albums from 1971-1975.

Unlike Led Zeppelin, who all but went into cold storage following the death of John Bonham, and would only reactivate a good decade later, the actions that followed *The Final Cut* set the Pink Floyd camp up to become the strident prog behemoth they are today, and one that Roger Waters would eventually match with his own stadium endeavours over the last decade.

Roger Waters is currently on his Us + Them tour. See www.rogerwaters.com for full dates and more information.

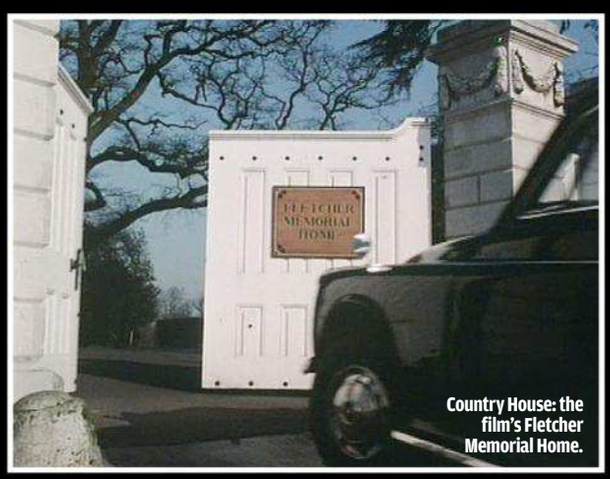
Who Cares What It's About, As Long As The Kids Go

Willie Christie, the man behind the film of *The Final Cut*, reveals all about making movies on the motorway, an unexpected Napoleon, and how Roger Waters wanted Margaret Thatcher to suffer...

Words: Daryl Easlea
Images: Willie Christie



Motor Mouth: Waters undergoing therapy in *The Final Cut*.



Country House: the film's Fletcher Memorial Home.



The teacher character reading the *Daily Mail*'s fawning tribute to Margaret Thatcher.

Realising how the power of the video of *Another Brick In The Wall* had helped propel the song to being a worldwide hit, smarting from his experience of the motion picture of *The Wall* and with no intention whatsoever to tour, Roger Waters decided the way to get the message of *The Final Cut* out to the MTV generation was to make a long-form video for four of its tracks.

Waters asked Willie Christie to make the film of *The Final Cut*. "Looking at it with hindsight, I think it's pretty good," Christie says. "People weren't really making promos then. It was very early days — nobody quite knew what the score was."

After discussing ideas with Jack Simmons, a colleague from advertising, and with Nick Mason in the early stages, Christie took his concept to production company Lewin and Matthews, who had been making commercials. Barry Matthews became the film's producer.

Shot in the spring of 1983, the story focuses on the ex-gunner, now teacher (Alex MacEvoy) sitting in his living room with his wife (Marjorie Mason), both reprising their roles from the film of *The Wall*. They're watching images of the fleet returning home from the Falklands war, in which their son has been killed. The gunner plans to take his army revolver and assassinate Margaret Thatcher, whom he holds personally responsible.

These images are intercut with a variety of sequences where Waters, the only member of the group to appear, is seen with just his mouth illuminated, talking to a therapist in a room at the Fletcher Memorial Home. We catch sight of the therapist's name — A. Parker-Marshall, played by actor John Stedman. Parker is, of course, Alan Parker, and Marshall is Alan Marshall, producer of *The Wall*. "There was all that going on," Christie says. "It was fine, but it wasn't of great concern to me. I just batted on regardless."

Waters and Christie discussed each track. "The whole idea was to have something modular so it could work as a whole, but be separated also. We talked in general terms of what it was about and then he was very good — he left us alone."

The film begins with *The Gunner's Dream*, filmed initially on an unopened stretch of the M11 motorway where the gunner stops his car to see his son standing on a bridge. Floyd watchers note that this is the road that links the capital to Cambridge, where two decades earlier, Pink Floyd were founded. It was sheer coincidence.

The Gunner's Dream moves into *The Final Cut*, where we see Waters interspersed with vintage newsreel footage — suffragettes, Indira Gandhi, Marilyn Monroe, Edith Piaf... all strong women. "Strong women were very much Roger's thing at the time," Christie adds. "I knew his mother... She was a very strong woman, she played a big part in things."

Jarring as it does on the album, *Not Now John* moves the action to an industrial setting, highlighting the then strong popular fear of all UK trade moving to Japan. "We were in the decommissioned Croydon B Power Station. It was extraordinary: it was deserted, cold and damp, and all the steps and railings on the gantries were really high. I couldn't go up to the

top, it was too high for me, and guys worked on this thing all the time."

Terry Gilliam was to film *Brazil* there the following year. It's now an Ikea.

Not Now John is a cross between *1984* and *Carry On*, with visual jokes aplenty — geisha girls turn into Hot Gossip-style dancers, and there are strong caricatures of the British workforce. The young woman walks through the sequence, which builds to a Japanese boy throwing himself off the gantry, a reflection of the album's lyrics about that country's adolescent suicide rate.

The 19-minute film concludes with *The Fletcher Memorial Home*. Shot in an empty country house near Barnet, north London, it encapsulates early-80s politics in five minutes. The dictators on the record are all brought to life, with an added Napoleon: "A guy came in for the casting and he just looked like Napoleon," says Christie. "We had to use him!

> "Strong women was very much Roger's thing at the time, I knew his mother… She was a very strong woman, she played a big part in things."
> **Willie Christie**

"That ended up being rather comic and surreal. Roger wanted Thatcher to really suffer. No surprises there!" Christie adds with a laugh. "RW would have loved to see MT brown bread. He told me to spend the whole budget on it. When she gets shot, she must be pulled back on a hoist and disappear. In the event, we did it a bit comic book — she ends up on the croquet post. Roger wanted a big statement."

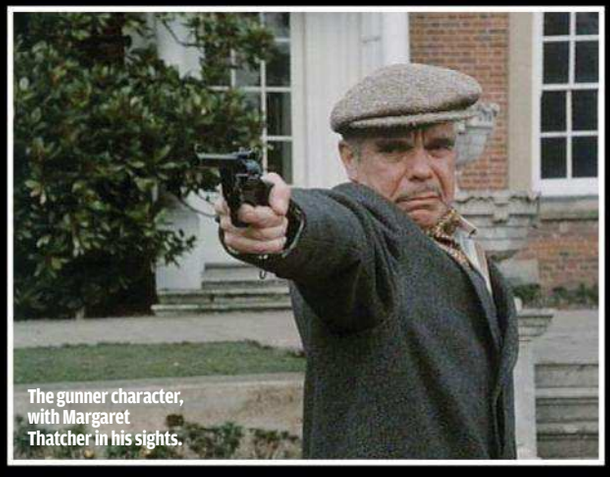
The teacher is seen reading a January 1983 copy of the *Daily Mail* heralding Thatcher's visit to the Falklands. "You didn't do a bad job yourself, Maggie," fawns the inside headline. The film ends with the dictators all in their home, with Thatcher alive. Whoever is killed will be replaced and the cycle will continue.

On the film, Christie worked with lead cameraman Richard Greatrex (who went on to be the cinematographer on *Shakespeare In Love*) and camera operator Mike Roberts, who'd just returned from working on *The Killing Fields*.


The geisha girls of *Not Now John*.


The world's dictators… and Napoleon.


Thatcher and Churchill get the Waters treatment.


The gunner character, with Margaret Thatcher in his sights.

"It was a happy shoot," Christie says, even when Waters himself came on the set, filming in a suburban house in Enfield. "Roger came in and did his bit. That was dynamic. We played the track and he synced along. Then he asked for bigger speakers to jack it up, so we played it really loud and he sang along with it, and we really got the energy of him singing. That was an afternoon's work. As we did it, it was close on his mouth and we just ran the camera round. That was sort of easy."

It was less easy when Waters saw the footage assembled for the first time. Christie went to Olympic Studios, where Waters was then recording *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking*.

"It was the only way to do it — they had a whacking great screen; it was a dubbing studio. It shouldn't have been shown on such a huge screen because it was early days. Everybody else was there: Andy Newmark, others. Roger wanted it to be very bleak and more spare — he wasn't best pleased. He mouthed off a bit, so the editor and I left feeling a bit despondent."

As Christie was leaving, Waters came running out and reassured them that it was "'90 per cent really good', so that bucked us up a bit. In the end, it was okay. Rog was great."

With the amends sorted, the video was ready — only for the climactic scene of *Not Now John* to fall foul of the BBC. Whereas the main 'fucks' had been changed to 'stuffs', the *'Oi, where's the fucking bar, John?'* right at the end had been left in.

"The whole build-up of the boy coming over the railings on the original cut was really dynamic as it built with the music and it ran on longer, so his final jump rather took your breath away," says Christie. "The BBC couldn't have 'fucking', so out it came, and we had to recut it and it just lost some of that momentum."

The clip was shown on *Top Of The Pops* on May 12, 1983, the week Spandau Ballet were at No.1 with *True*.

The Final Cut video came out in May 1983 and went to No.1 in the UK video charts. Like the album itself, it exists solely in its own space and time. At that point, it was the only way you could see 'Pink Floyd.' It was hardly as if they were going to turn up at your local venue, and in the long backwash of *The Wall*, this was it — it was something new by them. For a Floyd footnote, it's absolutely fascinating.

"It was a good effort," Christie says. "Looking back on it now, I think it holds up. Roger and I had a lot of laughs and a lot of really good times. I learned a lot from him."



“IN THESE DAYS OF REMOTE COLLABORATION, JUST BEING IN THE ROOM TOGETHER AND BOUNCING IDEAS OFF EACH OTHER IS ALMOST A LOST ART. I’M REALLY HAPPY WE GOT TO EXPERIENCE THAT.”

Tom Brislin

FISHING FOR LUCKIES

Are so-called supergroups so commonplace in prog that their aura of mystique has faded? Now Roine Stolt has entered the fray with **The Sea Within**. They may have a stellar line-up and Jon Anderson on backing vocals, but they've already lost their lead singer. Is it more trouble than it's worth? *Prog* finds out.

Words: Rich Wilson **Images:** Will Ireland

The mere mention of the word 'supergroup' is equally capable of eliciting elongated, cynical yawns or spontaneous delight, depending on your viewpoint. For some, such side projects away from the band members' usual musical day jobs are merely projects of folly designed to create a secondary income. Yet such unabashed cynicism is often unfounded, especially when acts create albums worthy of more attention than a snobbish, instant dismissal.

Occasionally, such side projects can also evolve into fully fledged bands that can almost make you forget the group's background. In recent years, the likes of Transatlantic, Flying Colors and even Sons Of Apollo have proved that. Now The Sea Within are vying to become authentic new additions to that list.

For all the musical attributes their self-titled debut possesses, sceptics may yet round on The Sea Within, given the nature of their formation. It seems there was no initial romanticism involving kindred musical souls bonding over prog. In fact, the background to the project was rather more practical, as guitarist and vocalist Roine Stolt explains.

"It sounds a bit boring to say it was a band put together by a record label but to be completely honest, that's what happened," he says, perhaps too candidly. "A couple of years ago, I was talking to Thomas Waber at Inside Out. Although I've been in The Flower Kings, Transatlantic and others, I just mentioned to him that I was looking forward to doing something new. I wanted to start working with different musicians and he just said, 'Why don't you do it?' It was brought up again after a couple of months and finally I said, 'Yes, let's do it.'

"The first person I contacted was my long-time friend and bass player, Jonas Reingold. I suppose that also seems a bit boring but we have a good working relationship and have been playing together for a long time. Maybe for me, that was a security thing because it meant I immediately had someone there whom I knew really well."

Their initial dilemma was to agree on the sound they wanted to create. Listening to the final product, it's evident that the music is technically adept without becoming overblown, with an emphasis placed on the songwriting. It's also quite distinct from anything that Stolt has recorded previously. Is that a fair summary of their intentions?

"Yes, I think so," Stolt says. "When I first talked to Jonas, we both agreed that the songwriting should be really important. It wasn't really supposed to be just an album with flashy instrumental playing, like when all the guys back in the 70s were doing the fusion supergroups. The focus was more on songwriting and to try to push each other into corners where we hadn't been before.

"I can't really speak for the other guys but for me personally, I didn't want to just do an album. It was more of a long-term plan. I've been in The Flower Kings on and off for

The Famous Five: the prog stars looking to transcend mere supergroup status.

THE BAND WITHIN

Find out who's who in prog's latest supergroup.

ROINE STOLT



Guitarist/vocalist and keyboard player Stolt formed The Flower Kings in 1994, and has released 12 albums with that band. He's also recognised for his work with the supergroup Transatlantic, in which he plays alongside Mike Portnoy, Neal Morse and Pete Trewavas. They have released four studio albums to date. His discography also includes work with Kaipa, The Tangent and, more recently, with Yes legend Jon Anderson on their well-received Anderson/Stolt project.

JONAS REINGOLD



One of Roine Stolt's closest musical collaborators, Reingold worked with Stolt in Kaipa before the two reconnected when the bassist joined The Flower Kings in 2000. He's also performed on countless albums, including working with Karmakanic, Agents Of Mercy and Nad Sylvan. His talents also extend to working as a producer, most recently on The Syn's *Trustworks* album in 2016.

TOM BRISLIN



Roine Stolt: "We have been friends with him for a long time and Jonas had played sessions with him a couple of times. Tom was the next guy we brought into the band. Tom is someone who has been playing with diverse people. Most people know him from playing with Yes when they did the *Symphonic* tour, but he's also played with Meat Loaf and Debbie Harry, as well as Camel."

MARCO MINNEMANN



Roine Stolt: "I had been listening to Marco Minnemann, who is a great drummer. He's always working and I understand why because he's really good and has lots of energy. Marco was the first guy we got on board. He's been a guy who has been in demand for some time, playing with people like Steven Wilson and UK, and is also in his own band The Aristocrats."

DANIEL GILDENLÖW



Primarily known as the singer and guitarist with Pain Of Salvation, Gildenlöw's back catalogue also includes work with Ayreon and The Flower Kings. He's also performed live with the latter and Transatlantic, and appeared as a session musician with a range of more obscure acts, including Ephrat and Spastic Ink.

CASEY MCPHERSON



Possessing more of a pop-edged, accessible voice than Gildenlöw, McPherson's career began as part of Endochine in 2004. The singer/guitarist then became part of Alpha Rev, who've recorded four studio albums to date. He then teamed up with Mike Portnoy, Steve Morse, Neal Morse and Dave LaRue in 2012 as part of another prog supergroup, Flying Colors. **RW**

the last 20 years now. It just gets to a point where you feel of course you *could* do another album, but it would be nice to try something different. It just felt like I needed to have a home for my songwriting, a home for playing live and somewhere for me to play music with four like-minded people."

Between them, Stolt and Reingold then began to draw up a hitlist of musicians they felt would be ideal for the project. Given their elongated careers, their little black book of prog contacts was extensive. However, the practicalities of arranging recording time and tour commitments for The Sea Within proved insurmountable for some of the musicians on their initial list.

"We started looking for people to join us and at one point, we were talking to Jordan Rudess of Dream Theater," says Stolt. "Basically, because of his commitment to Dream Theater, it would have been too difficult, as when they're out on tour, they do something like 100 gigs in a year. He offered to play something on the album but wouldn't be able to participate in any touring.

"We got drummer Marco Minnemann involved early on, as well as keyboard player Tom Brislin. Daniel Gildenlöw is a guy whom we've worked with in a different capacity in The Flower Kings. He has a great voice and stage presence, and he was a natural choice."

Such collaborations aren't without risks. The band members reside on different continents and although there had been some past musical interactions between them, there remained the concern that they might not gel on either a personal or musical level. They also needed to ensure that their ultimate creation fitted their criteria of being original and not simply rehashing the past. That was something Stolt was well aware of.

"It really is a weird situation," he laughs. "You call up a couple of people and you say, 'Let's start a band,' but you haven't played a single note [together]. It's not like you can just hire a rehearsal room, play for a couple of nights, put on a tape recorder and see if anything interesting comes up. Here we had to have all the planning, book the studio in London and fly the guys in. It's taking a risk, yet there's something to learn from everything. You go into the studio and start working on the music and realise that your original idea for a song takes a whole new direction. You have to compromise because this isn't your band. We would also try to surprise people by playing in completely different ways to how you normally would. That all makes it really interesting."

"There were definitely some surprises which happened just from being there," adds Brislin. "That was one of the things I was really happy about. In these days of remote collaboration, just being in the room together and bouncing ideas off each other is almost a lost art. I'm really happy we got to experience that. All of us are used to leading projects, so there's a trust you have to put in each other. You know, letting other perspectives in and letting their creativity shape the project. That goes for me as well. I would shape things a certain way and everyone else would put



The Sea Within: looking to make waves with their debut album.

PRESS/ JIM ARBOGAST



“IT REALLY IS A WEIRD SITUATION. YOU CALL UP A COUPLE OF PEOPLE AND YOU SAY, ‘LET’S START A BAND,’ BUT YOU HAVEN’T PLAYED A SINGLE NOTE TOGETHER.”

Roine Stolt

their own fingerprints on it, which would lead the music down other paths than those we might have expected.”

There was one further complication during the recording sessions. Frontman Daniel Gildenlöw began to realise that he wouldn’t be able to commit enough time to the band, and although he appears on the record, he declared that touring wouldn’t be feasible. Currently, it’s unclear as to whether he’ll return for any follow-up recordings, which gives him the rather unwanted title of being one of the few musicians to record an album and then leave the band before it’s even released.

“One of the problems was that we didn’t seriously talk through these things before we got together,” says Brislin. “We just met up, recorded and then started talking about the live thing. Then we realised that Daniel also has his own band and, most importantly, he has a family with young children. My kids are grown up so it’s very different for me. For Daniel, he’s in demand at home and I think one band is all he can handle at a time.”

“It was just one of those things and it’s not a big deal,” adds Stolt with a touch of defiance. “We’ve all been in different bands over the years and we’re used to people leaving, or new people coming in. That’s the way it is. Bands keep going as long as the music is strong.”

Gildenlöw’s apparent departure proved fortuitous for vocalist Casey McPherson, who was immediately approached by Stolt to become their new lead singer. There was also time for McPherson to add his vocals to three of the tracks, increasing the number of singers featured on the album to five. As if this wasn’t enough, Stolt also approached Jon Anderson to sing on the album’s pivotal, 14-minute track, *Broken Cord*.

“I think it’s great to have different singers on the album as it adds colour,” says Stolt. “Many of the bands I like had more than one singer, such as Fleetwood Mac or The Beatles. The variation can be a great trademark and I felt that *Broken Cord* would benefit from Jon’s voice. I thought he might be really busy with ARW but I sent him a simple MP3 in an email, said we were working on the album and that maybe he could find an afternoon where he could do it. I suggested we could pay him or maybe in return I could play on something for him.

“The next morning, I opened my email and he had already sent me the files with a message wishing us good luck with the album. He didn’t even reply to my suggestion of being paid! Jon just took the files and started singing on it. He’s one of the few people I think still has the passion for music.”

Certainly The Sea Within have created a distinctive album, which proves that well-intentioned, so-called supergroups are capable of becoming true bands in their own right. Their journey will continue when they set out to play live later this year, confirming that this engaging act are far more than just a single studio project.

The Sea Within’s self-titled debut is out June 22 via Inside Out. For more information, see www.theseawithin.net.

A Labour Of Love

Writing a prog rock opera which clocks in at over one hour and 40 minutes is no mean feat, but when you throw in a debilitating injury and band members leaving during the recording process, things become all that more applaudable. **Schooltree** songsmith Lainey Schooltree tells *Prog* more…

Words: Chris Cope **Portrait:** Philip Doyle

"When I wrote *Heterotopia*, one of the things that I thought to myself was, 'I'm going to do something so impossibly grandiose that it can not be ignored,'" reflects Schooltree's effervescent linchpin Lainey Schooltree. "It took such a radical use of all of my resources. I spent every dollar I had, I borrowed money after that, and I ruined my body. I dedicated everything that I had to making it happen and making it happen to the standard that I wanted it to be, and there's a price to be paid for that. But I think it was worth it."

It's fair to say the Boston prog group's second album *Heterotopia*, released last year, was a labour of love. The concept rock opera, which tops 100 minutes and juggles heady inspiration from the likes of Yes, King Crimson and Kate Bush, took around four years to complete. But during that time principal songwriter Schooltree suffered a false start, throwing away some of her material, before she developed a debilitating repetitive strain injury in the first week of production after playing for nine to 10 hours a day. Oh, and two band members left the group during the recording process, too.



Schooltree, L-R: Sam Crawford, Peter Danilchuk, Lainey Schooltree, Tom Collins and Ryan Schwartzel.

PRESS/CHRIS ANDERSON

The pain and misery was worth it. The record's 24 songs are an intoxicating blend of prog adventurism mixed with melodic rock opera pomp, and it landed a somewhat surprised Schooltree the best new/unsigned band title in *Prog*'s last Readers' Poll.

To cut a very long story short, the concept of the album offers an immersive world as it follows lead character Suzi on a compelling adventure. "The shortest version of the story is that a girl loses her body and has to journey through this other world of the collective unconscious to get it back," Schooltree says.

"Initially the plan was to challenge myself. I get bored easily and flourish under situations where I feel pushed, and the idea for me was to try to fulfil my potential. But at most stages, I felt like, 'I don't know if I'm doing this right.' I ended up throwing out a lot of my story just weeks before I held a workshop. But it sort of magically came together after that.

"Then I got some serious injuries in the first week of production. I was used to playing three or four hours at a time, but not that long. Never having had an injury like that before, I wasn't able to identify it, so I was like, 'I'll play through the pain, it's rock'n'roll, man!'

"Then I ended up not being able to use my hands at all. I couldn't turn a door knob or drive. I lost my independence for a few months, and had to do a lot of rehab work."

The band, at the moment, is completed by Ryan Schwartzel on bass, guitarist Sam Crawford, Pete Danilchuk on synth and Tom Collins behind the drum kit.

"One of the many trials that happened during the course of making the album was losing half of the band while we were in the studio," Schooltree reflects.

Guitarist Brendan Burns and bassist Derek van Wormer both departed the band amicably, with — genuine, for once — artistic differences being one of the main factors behind their decisions.

It seems a prog rock band had been a long time coming for Schooltree, whose first indulgence in music came when a piano was given to her family when she was around six years old.

"It felt like I had been waiting forever for an instrument in the house," she says. "I took a few lessons, but I was mostly self-taught. What I preferred to do was to write than to learn music. I always wrote, and I would perform for my friends and did recitals."

After bagging a degree in music and political science, Schooltree soon moved to Boston and ended up performing stand-up musical comedy in double act The Steamy Bohemians with one of her college mates.

"We would write funny songs together," she says. "We were in the music department and it was so serious and we felt very repressed. They made us feel especially wild and bad. We were college kids, and we liked to party."

Schooltree admits that it felt like her "whole career in comedy was just basically putting off what I really wanted to do, but was scared to do" — to launch a serious rock band.

The musician fell for prog when a schoolfriend grabbed her by the hand and led her on an adventure into the likes of Yes and King Crimson.

"I was just blown away — I was like, 'Holy shit, this exists?'" Schooltree recalls. "I couldn't believe this intersection of the sophistication of classical music… or just like the exploration of different ideas and complex changes, was happening in a rock format."

It's that freedom which punctuated *Heterotopia*, and looks set to form the foundations of Schooltree's next record, which should land sometime in 2018.

Instead of regurgitating the rock opera vibes, the group are set to channel modern day proggers and jazz-dwellers like Knower and Thundercat, as well as Everything Everything and Mutemath — and even EDM production.

Put it simply, the Schooltree you knew and loved on *Heterotopia* is likely to shapeshift into a whole new being.

"I feel ready to move on," Schooltree acknowledges. "I really need to find new things and new ways to challenge myself. One of the biggest challenges for me as an artist with her head up her butt is to see what are people listening to, what is popular, and why do I hate it so much?

"I truly despise most top 40 music. But finding artists like Knower or Everything Everything was my way in.

"They are innovators, and innovation is what really interests me right now. To be an innovator in this era is one of the great challenges to artists now and that is something that I am striving for."

Heterotopia is out now and is self-released. See www.schooltreemusic.com for more information.


“To be an innovator in this era
is one of the great challenges
to artists now and that
is something that
I am striving for.”



Fly From Here

"WE'RE BASICALLY TREATING THIS AS OUR DEBUT ALBUM."

It's all change for **Temples On Mars**, the band formerly known as Agent. But after a line-up shake-up *and* a band name change, can the band successfully start afresh? *Prog* talks the music biz, modern prog and mental health with their frontman **James Donaldson**.

Words: Sophie Maughan
Images: Marcus Maschwitz

Out Of The Ashes: the former Agents are reaching for new heights as Temples Of Mars.

"We were playing decent festivals — we did HRH Prog and it was such a wonderful experience. But then the people we were meeting at those festivals and the people that had been in the audience watching were telling us, 'I tried typing your band name into Spotify and couldn't find you!' It was a frustrating situation as we were making an impact, but there'd be no follow-up."

If anyone can understand the importance of a definitive moniker and the brand cohesion that goes with it, it's Temples On Mars guitarist and vocalist James Donaldson. Hailing from London (by way of New Zealand and South Africa), the rising melodic prog rockers formerly known as Agent were gearing up to release what was supposed to be their third album, but it ended up becoming Temples Of Mars' debut release. Following numerous cases of mistaken identity ("If you looked us up online, it would bring up everything from underwear to real estate agents — it was almost embarrassing," Donaldson confides with a rueful chuckle), the band decided they needed a name change.

"I have to say that I'd wanted to change the name of the band for a number of years," Donaldson says. "I'd been pushing it for a while, but then we had some members change and we started to go in a different direction. So we had a talk and it was like, 'Guys, why don't we just make this basically a new band?' And that's essentially what it is now. We're treating this as our debut album — we obviously haven't done one with the line-up we have now. Everyone gets on and we've all been involved with the scene for quite a while now — we all knew each other from previous projects so it was a no-brainer, really."

His unwavering confidence in the decision to rebrand and reinvent is certainly commendable, but it's still a risky move. When a band change their name while undergoing personnel changes, it can be difficult to make that transition while keeping hold of their fans. The million dollar question here is whether or not Temples On Mars feel they were able to find their niche *and* still put themselves back on the radar?

"Yes, absolutely," Donaldson responds without hesitation. "It was a smart choice to change it and we've got zero regrets. We'd had a few references made to other bands with 'Mars' in their name, but when there's like six billion people on the planet, you're always going to get some words in common in the English language."

While the final single to be released under the Agent name — *Made Of Gold*, from 2013's *Kingdom Of Fear* album — was veering away from the music once synonymous with the band, the Temples On Mars core sound seems to have returned home to those progressive soundscapes, though in a more modern way.

"Myself and Gerald [Gill, guitarist] both like the modern prog thing," Donaldson enthuses. "One of the advantages of being a modern prog band is that there are no real rules. You can play in whatever time signature — we've even got one song on the album that's in 9/4 [*How Far Will You Go*] but it totally grooves like a 4/4! But then you can have a beautiful soft falsetto part followed by a heavy guitar or breakdown.

"We don't like or relish the idea of being pigeonholed — it suits us because we can go anywhere from here. The variety is there because



we don't really want to get bored with the songs or feel like we're playing the same song for 12 songs. Gerald really likes beautiful quiet music, while I'm more partial to the bombastic, straight-down-the-middle simple riffs. I do, but I can't always, play poly guitar rhythms and sing different vocal timings. We have our own mix of styles, but all in the modern prog realm."

On their debut album, the four-piece have melded expansive and conceptual prog with a distinct radio-friendly sheen. From the Middle East meets outer space melodrama of multi-layered intro *Bon Voyage* to the driving guitars of *Gods & Kings* and lush atmospherics of *Suicide By Tiger*, as an ensemble, Temples On Mars have delivered a dynamic body of work. It's undeniably accessible yet it still retains a narrative depth and harbours a message on a subconscious level, as evidenced in the video for first single *So In Love With Your Own Drug*. The video depicts a character who appears to be fighting with himself. *Prog* suggests it could it be argued that the song is an allegory of modern-day life and a contemporary commentary on the societal ills we face.

"Visually, it presents a cool aesthetic, but yeah, you've hit the nail on the head there," Donaldson says. "These days everyone's really into themselves – it's all about 'Follow my Instagram' and how many bloody Facebook likes you can get. The guy is fighting with himself, and with all his dependence on social media, in the end he was actually damaging himself."

That underlying sense of darkness carries through to tracks like *Afraid Of Living* and *Death In The Afternoon*, which are less about post-millennial narcissism and focus instead on a much more intimate subject matter. Donaldson tackles issues of mental health and suicide, topics brought uncomfortably close to home for him after he lost his best friend – and best man – to suicide.

"The way I've always written lyrics and songs is based on real-life events. My best mate took his own life, my girlfriend at the time's friend did the same, and another friend's sister – it just seemed to be everywhere," Donaldson quietly notes, trailing off momentarily as he reflects. "It's a real problem so that's why the theme came up on the album. And to be honest, when something like that does happen, or when someone close to you goes away, it does leave you with a bit of darkness. Even though we have very deep things on the album, all of us are quite light-hearted and easy-going guys. But there are definitely some dark places within, and with the lyric writing. Sometimes I need to go somewhere else – to that darker place, emotionally and mentally – to get that material.

"I think we need to look at not just the music industry but the world we live in generally. Being a creative person, I think you're more open to these issues. If I think of all the times I've been truly happy being part of the industry or playing music, it's been way less than the amount of times I've been stressed or annoyed. That said, if anything positive can come out of a tragedy like that then I'm happy about that. If people listen to that song and it changes their preconceptions or makes them think about the impact of any potential actions they might take, then to me that's just a bonus."

> "ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A MODERN PROG BAND IS THAT THERE ARE NO REAL RULES. YOU CAN PLAY IN WHATEVER TIME SIGNATURE – WE'VE EVEN GOT ONE SONG ON THE ALBUM THAT'S IN 9/4."

What has proved to be entirely positive, however, is the fans' reaction to Temples On Mars' accessible yet esoteric approach to progressive music. What's going to be the secret to raging against the ever-changing music biz machine while still living the dream?

"All the bands that really kick off and explode have got everything happening at the same time," Donaldson says. "They're in a magazine like *Prog* and they might be getting played on the radio. You're on a tour. Your video's getting played on TV or whatever. You've just got to be everywhere at the right time and at the same time.

"Right now, we're just very happy with the magazine stuff, playing some shows, but we really need to work on ensuring we get more shows over the coming months, and a bit more radio play. If we can focus on that and get all of that right, then we're in a very good position for the release of album number two which we have started working on in terms of the demos.

"Gerald and I have a problem where we can't stop coming up with silly ideas [laughs] – we're always the instigators! I could tell you some very funny stories about him... although some of them are probably not for print. There may very well be repercussions!"

Temples On Mars' self-titled debut is available now via Primordial. See www.templesonmars.com for more information.



Temples On Mars, L-R: Dean Gibb, James Donaldson, Gerald Gill, Daz Carikas.



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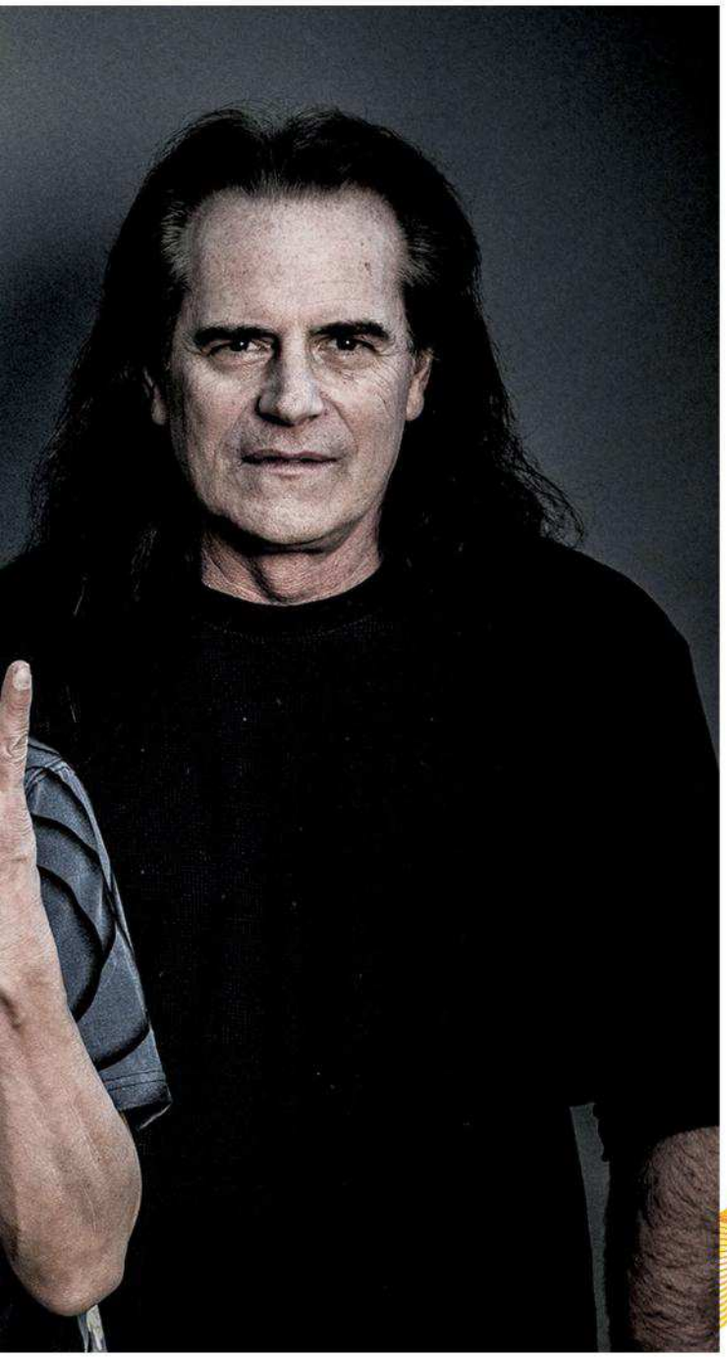
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Spock's Beard, L-R: Alan Morse, Ted Leonard, Ryo Okumoto, Dave Meros.

Signal To Noise



The 13th album from **Spock's Beard** sees a departure and a welcome return. **Dave Meros** and **Ted Leonard** discuss the band's past, present and future.

Words: Nick Shilton **Photo:** Kat Mueller

"That was the best show I've ever played," bassist Dave Meros muses, somewhat ruefully, as *Prog* recalls a superb Spock's Beard live performance at the now long defunct Astoria in London in June 2001, when the band were promoting their fifth album, *V*.

"That whole tour was great but that gig in particular was where everything came together exactly right," he elaborates. "The energy was massive, the sound was great, the audience was awesome – it was a perfect gig. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime things."

At the time, Spock's were demonstrating some real momentum. "There was a buzz building up for sure," Meros agrees. "And then *Snow* came out and far surpassed *V* as far as CD sales. Our live attendance was the highest it had ever been. It seemed like every year the band would take another step up. It was a great feeling. But then we all know what happened..."

Just over 15 years ago, Spock's Beard were profoundly shaken by the departure of their leader, vocalist and keyboardist Neal Morse, shortly after the release of their sixth album *Snow*. Before the shock announcement about Morse's departure it seemed that Spock's, then the great white hopes of a resurgent prog movement, were on the brink of a significant breakthrough to a much larger audience.

While *V* and *Snow* may have represented the band's high-water mark commercially, it was Morse's fervent desire that the group should continue without him. Meros, Morse's guitarist brother Alan and keyboardist Ryo Okumoto have honoured their former colleague's wish ever since.

With the band fronted by Enchant singer Ted Leonard since the subsequent departure of drummer/vocalist Nick D'Virgilio in 2011, it's striking that Spock's have now recorded more studio albums without the iconic Neal Morse than with him.

Looking back over quarter of a century, Meros admits that he didn't originally think Spock's would last over 25 years and build a catalogue of 13 studio albums. Indeed, when their debut album *The Light* emerged in 1995, the band had no great expectations.

"We just recorded *The Light* as a vanity project – we were just having fun," Meros says. "When we started in 1993 we weren't even aware that there was a prog rock audience. We thought it had died out and we were just doing it for fun."

After playing a couple of low-key shows, the band decided to record the album properly for the princely sum of $4,000, just to see what it would sound like. Against the backdrop of a largely moribund prog scene worldwide, Spock's had no preconceived notions of what *The Light* might achieve.

"We didn't expect it to go anywhere so it was a nice little surprise when it did," Meros reveals.

But *The Light* fired the starting gun on what has been a lengthy career and allows us to fast forward to 2018. While the respective departures of Neal Morse in 2002 and D'Virgilio in 2011 might have killed off many lesser bands, Spock's have persevered and now seem in perhaps their best health in a long time. What's more, they're bolstered on new album *Noise Floor* – albeit only on a guest basis – by D'Virgilio's return to the drum stool following the resignation of drummer Jimmy Keegan in late 2016.

"When we started in 1993 we weren't even aware that there was a prog rock audience. We thought it had died out and we were just doing it for fun." **Dave Meros**



Spider-Man: keyboardist Ryo Okumoto.

STUDIO PICS: STAN AUSMUS



Beard Bigwigs: Ryo Okumoto and Alan Morse.



Mix Masters: producer/mixer Rich Mouser with Alan Morse.

While Spock's have weathered considerable storms over the years with the departures of Morse and D'Virgilio, the decampment of the popular Keegan nonetheless represented another cloud. "It was obviously a shock to our world to have to go back to the drawing board and figure out what to do in Jimmy's stead," Leonard says.

However, it presaged a subsequent silver lining. Initially Okumoto spearheaded a challenging search for a replacement drummer for Keegan and received assorted submissions. As Meros points out, "We've been extraordinarily lucky having Nick and Jimmy. The hardest thing to find is a drummer of that quality who can sing high harmonies – that's a rare bird."

The search was soon paused, though, as the band started work on *Noise Floor* and discovered to their obvious delight that D'Virgilio was willing to return to the studio with Spock's after a six-year absence.

"Shortly after we started the search, we got busy putting this album together and possibly lost sight of the process," Leonard says. "We stopped pushing it once we knew Nick was going to do the album and then postponed worrying about who's going to play it live. We were stoked when Nick said he would be willing to record the album."

Understandably, Spock's have sought to cajole D'Virgilio into rejoining the band but, at least for now, the drummer has declined. "He's such a busy guy, so we know the prospect isn't very likely," says Leonard.

D'Virgilio has, however, performed live with Spock's on a few occasions in recent years, most notably playing *Snow* with the band in Tennessee at Neal Morse's Morsefest in 2016, on Cruise To The Edge and at the Night Of The Prog festival in Loreley. "It was a complete blast having all of us on stage for *Snow*, both in Tennessee and in Loreley," Leonard enthuses.

With D'Virgilio unable to commit to significant time on the road for the foreseeable future, the band will be heading out on tour in the autumn with a new live drummer. As to whether D'Virgilio will ever return to Spock's on a full-time basis, Leonard sounds dubious, irrespective of the drummer's availability.

"For us it would be awesome, but I think it would be weird for him. I've likened it to when Peter Gabriel left Genesis and Phil Collins took over as singer. It would be like if Genesis got Collins back but only to play drums because Ray Wilson would sing. That would be extremely weird for Phil."

Personnel changes aside, *Noise Floor* is arguably Spock's Beard's strongest album in the post-Neal Morse era and is characterised by some of their most melodic and compact material to date. That said, there's no formula or grand design behind these characteristics.

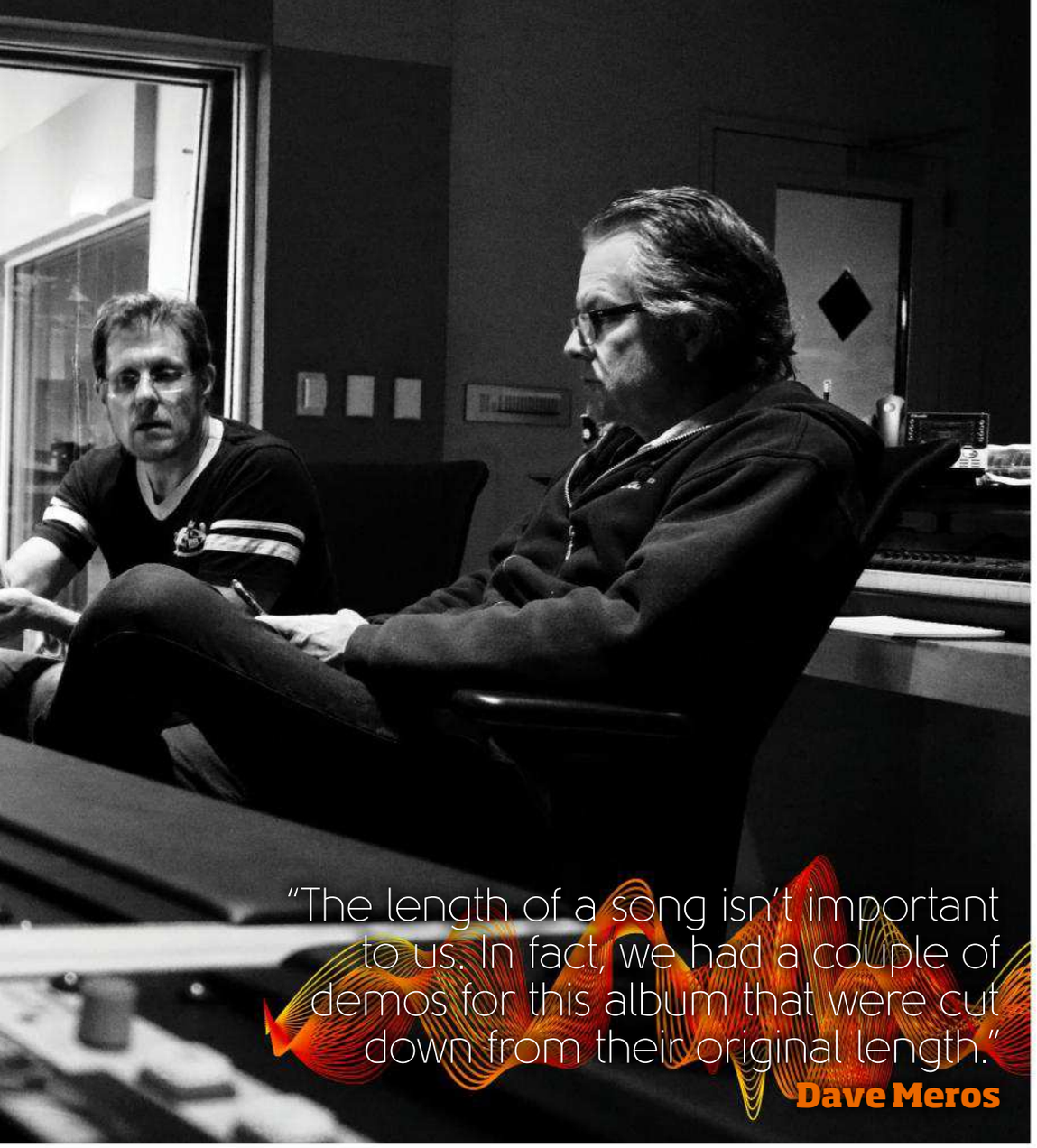
"Any time we sit down to write a song, it's not usually with an intention to steer it in one direction or another," Leonard states. "There was no intention to make the album more melodic or less complicated or anything like that. As songwriters we approach it with what's appropriate for the song. There's not a whole lot of forethought to trying to fit a song into some mould or whatever."

So it's largely coincidental that the longest song on *Noise Floor* only just exceeds eight minutes?

"It just worked out that way," says Meros. "With our long songs we don't set out to write a big epic. Instead there will be a song that starts growing and pretty soon it's 20 minutes. The length of a song isn't important to us. In fact, we had a couple of demos for this album that were cut down from their original length."

"We didn't set out to avoid writing an epic for this album, but sometimes when you're writing a song, it can feel like it's done at a certain point," adds Leonard. "When a band stretches a song out for the sake of it, I think you can hear it. Of course we all love our crazy prog moments, but what sets us apart is the songs and the fact that there are hooks that sink into you."

STUDIO PICS: STAN AUSMUS



> "The length of a song isn't important to us. In fact, we had a couple of demos for this album that were cut down from their original length."
>
> **Dave Meros**

Speaking of hooks, *Noise Floor* opens with the decidedly uptempo and direct *To Breathe Another Day*. "We definitely stuck the most energetic song up front," Meros agrees. "We knew we had a number of mid-tempo songs on this album so the placement of certain songs was strategic."

Intriguingly, *To Breathe...* was originally written by long-time Spock's Beard collaborator John Boegehold with Kansas in mind when that band were considering using songs penned by outside writers for their 2016 comeback album *The Prelude Implicit*. Boegehold's *Days We'll Remember*, which features on the *Cutting Room Floor* bonus disc accompanying *Noise Floor*, has a similar genesis.

While Kansas ultimately elected to essentially keep their writing in-house by co-opting producer/songwriter Zak Rizvi into the band, Spock's have no qualms about utilising outside writers, with Boegehold and Stan Ausmus both making contributions.

Perhaps as a reaction against the Neal Morse era of the band, when their erstwhile leader dominated the writing credits, Spock's are far from territorial about songwriting. "There's a lot more variety regarding who contributes to this album than there was on [previous release] *The Oblivion Particle*," Leonard explains. "Most of the time when John writes we do pretty much what he writes, but we took some liberties with *To Breathe Another Day*, especially with the drums and even with the song structure."

"It sounded a bit more like a Kansas song originally," reveals Meros. "We pumped up the energy from its original state."

Following the almost AOR tones of *To Breathe...*, *Noise Floor* gets proggier as it continues, culminating with closing track *Beginnings* via some more complex material, not least Okumoto's instrumental contribution *Box Of Spiders*. "That song, which couldn't be weirder, was placed to break up the sing-songy songs, so it's perfect right there," Meros says. "It sounds like what it would look like opening a box of spiders!"

Noise Floor also represents Leonard's third album with Spock's, although his association with the band dates back two decades – the other group he fronts, San Francisco proggers Enchant, opened for Spock's in the States and Europe way back in 1998. However, having joined Spock's when Enchant were on an unofficial hiatus, he regards the former now as his principal musical home.

"Since then Enchant have made an album [2014's *The Great Divide*] and we're making another one this year. But Spock's has been the priority. At the point I joined, there was nothing going on with Enchant."

Stepping into shoes vacated successively by Neal Morse and D'Virgilio might appear a daunting task but Leonard has taken it in his stride and made the role his own. "From a live perspective I never felt uncomfortable fronting the band," he says. "When you're called in to be the lead singer of a band, you can't tiptoe in, you have to jump in. Audiences are like bumblebees – they sense fear!

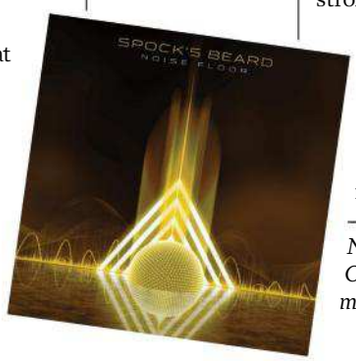
"From a recording perspective, this album is finally me just being me vocally. On the previous two albums I accepted direction a lot more. I was more stubborn this time."

He acknowledges both similarities and differences between his roles in Spock's and Enchant. "The camaraderie and energy on stage in both bands is the same. Enchant stretches my vocal range a little bit more but Spock's requires more of me musically. I love that in Spock's I get to play some stuff that's a little more challenging."

The band's challenge in 2018 is to ensure that they continue to stand out from the prog crowd in an oversaturated market. Given the quality of *Noise Floor*, they remain at the forefront of the scene. However, Meros is realistic about what they can still achieve.

"Originally I thought that Spock's could really go somewhere and become our only band, with all of us making a living from it. I don't have that hope for us any more," he admits. "I don't think that's possible, especially in today's music business climate. So it's more about legacy."

With a rich back catalogue and strong live reputation, Spock's have strong foundations on which to continue to trade. "None of us want to be stagnant – we all want the next album to be better than the previous," Leonard says, "so I think it's more artistic ambition at this point than monetary or anything else."

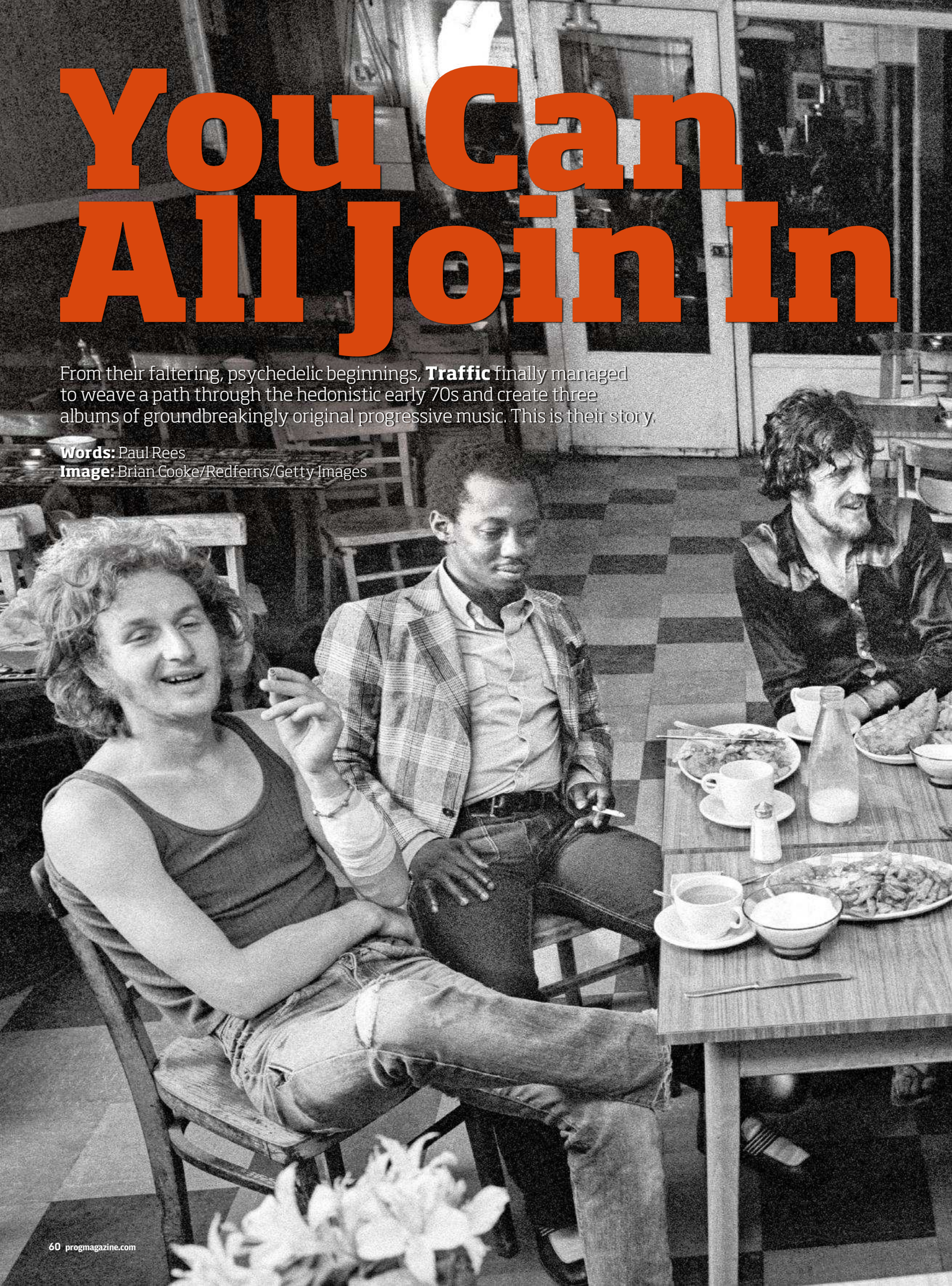


Noise Floor is available now via Inside Out. See www.spocksbeard.com for more information.

You Can All Join In

From their faltering, psychedelic beginnings, **Traffic** finally managed to weave a path through the hedonistic early 70s and create three albums of groundbreakingly original progressive music. This is their story.

Words: Paul Rees
Image: Brian Cooke/Redferns/Getty Images



One of British progressive music's most adventurous and daring extended bursts of creativity began in 1970, just as spring was whispering its arrival. It was then that Steve Winwood was back at The Cottage, the tumbledown dwelling tucked away among 1,200 acres of the rolling Berkshire Downs that had been his sanctuary and also laboratory for the last three whirlwind years. Winwood had first brought his new band, Traffic, here at the dawning of Britain's Summer of Love in April 1967.

Not yet 20, the Birmingham-born Winwood was already by then a veteran of Brummie R&B stompers The Spencer Davis Group: he had joined that band as a mere 14-year-old. On *Gimme Some Lovin'*, the No.2 smash he co-wrote for them in 1966, and other rollicking sides of theirs, it was entirely possible to mistake the callow teenager's singing voice for that of Ray Charles', such was its resonant power and the depth of its soul.

Always a restless spirit, Winwood grew tired of pushing against the self-imposed boundaries of the Spencer Davis sound and so threw in his lot with three more questing lads from the Midlands. They were guitarist Dave Mason and drummer Jim Capaldi, both from Worcestershire, and Chris Wood, an art school student and jazz buff from just up the Black Country road in Stourbridge and who was self-taught on sax and flute.

Together at The Cottage and over jam sessions that would often as not go on for whole days, the four of them cooked up a whimsical, lysergic debut album, *Mr Fantasy*, released at the end of '67. This gave up a second No.2 hit, a novelty sing-song entitled *Hole In My Shoe* that was penned by Mason and loathed by the other three, Winwood especially. Ten months later came *Traffic*, a weightier, more potent brew, but with songs that still largely conformed to the snack-size, verse-chorus format of contemporary pop.

Once again Winwood yearned, and now for a kind of music more ranging and expansive, something with which to stretch out his exceptional talents.

Dissolving Traffic, he first formed a supergroup, Blind Faith, with Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker. This lasted for a single album of lumbering psych blues and a fractious US tour before falling apart.



Traffic at Mike's Cafe, London, on July 11, 1971, L-R: Ric Grech, 'Rebop' Kwaku Baah, Jim Capaldi, Steve Winwood, Dave Mason, Chris Wood, Jim Gordon.

Shorter still was his next stint as a sideman in Baker's Air Force, the eruptive drummer's 10-piece leviathan remaining intact for just a brace of gigs at Birmingham Town Hall and the Royal Albert Hall in January 1970.

It was from the wreckage of that ill-conceived collective that Winwood crawled back to The Cottage. On this occasion he brought along with him his record label Island's maverick in-house producer, Guy Stevens, and a bunch of ideas gestating for a solo album that he imagined being called *Mad Shadows*.

Working alone with Stevens in the homey living room of The Cottage, rugs thrown down on the floor before a roaring fireplace, Winwood managed to concoct a couple of tracks: a stately jam, *Every Mother's Son*, and a punchier blues, *Stranger To Himself*. Both flexed Winwood's musical muscles, but he was nevertheless still dissatisfied, missing the push and pull he got from being surrounded by musicians who were sympathetic to his whims and also able to help translate for him.

"Winwood was amazing, but a very quiet, shy kind of guy," says Phill Brown, engineer on the *Traffic* album sessions. "He doesn't communicate brilliantly and wouldn't talk to anyone for days on end. It was left to the more voluble band members, Capaldi and Mason, to verbalise everything."

Finally, Winwood summoned Capaldi and Wood to join him once more at The Cottage. Mason he didn't bother with, having instigated the guitarist's dismissal from the ranks not long after they had completed the second Traffic album. Stevens left too, Island owner Chris Blackwell subsequently taking personal charge of the sessions, which soon enough evolved into a fully fledged Traffic reunion. About that Winwood made just one stipulation, which was that he would now be the undisputed leader of the band.

With the extravagant Capaldi cheerleading and fragile, mystical Wood bringing with him a traditional English folk tune called *John Barleycorn* that he'd heard on *Frost And Fire,* a 1965 album by Hull folkies The Watersons, the stage was set for Traffic to at last become the band Winwood had wanted all along. That's to say, one capable of harnessing a dizzying array of musical styles — folk, blues, rock, jazz, classical, world — and then make them over into a fresh, original form that ebbed, flowed and soared.

What became the *John Barleycorn Must Die* album was the first, giant step along that path. From this launching point, they proceeded to conjure three more studio albums that marked them out as prodigious explorers and rare virtuosos. Yet it also extracted from Traffic's three principals a heavy price, and it could be said that not one of them was ever the same again.

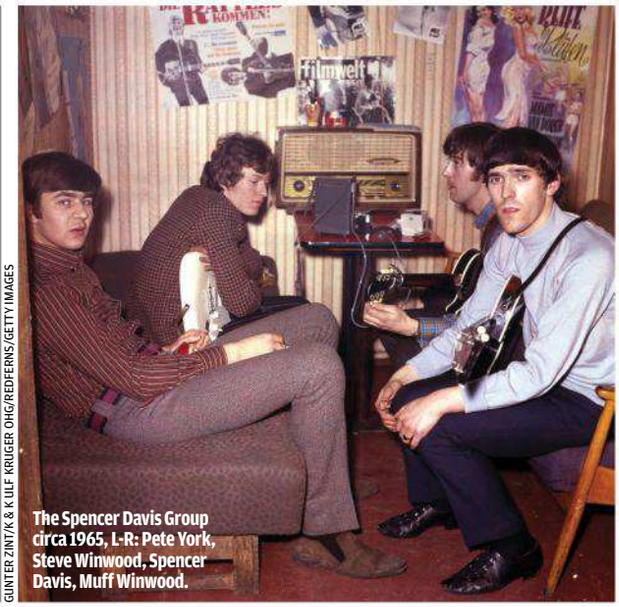
As the 70s opened, the sound of folk rock had been blown across the Atlantic in the gusts made by The Band's first two albums, the Byrds' Gram Parsons-enhanced *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo*, and Bob Dylan's rustic-hued one-two of *John Wesley Harding* and *Nashville Skyline*. Just a few months before Winwood, Capaldi and Wood got their act together again the home-grown, Sandy Denny-fronted Fairport Convention had picked up the baton on their transformative *Liege & Lief* album. Traffic duly took in this agelessness-seeking spirit, but as a starting point rather than the ultimate destination.

Taking shape over three freewheeling months, initially at The Cottage and then under Blackwell's guiding hand at both Island's Basing Street studio and Olympic in London, Traffic preferring to record by candlelight, *John Barleycorn Must Die* had at its base the prevailing bucolic mood. However, from there it vaulted to a more celestial sphere. Take just one of its standout cuts, *Freedom Rider*. Essentially a languid, woozy, country-fied lament, it gets caught up in the slipstream of Winwood's pulsating Hammond and from there hurries off on the flurries of Wood's spiralling sax and flute fills to a distant, less distinct but more evocative horizon.

"I always thought the trio was the best of Traffic," says Gordon Jackson, a long-time friend, fellow musician and sometime roadie to the band. "Chris in particular really came alive. There's nobody could say that he was the best flute or sax player technically, but his invention on those instruments was simply tremendous. His playing came straight from his soul. That was just what it sounded like sometimes too, the grinding of his soul.

"We called Jim 'the Gypsy' and he was of that nature. There was a bit of Romany in his attitudes and he was a traveller in many ways. He was the band's lyricist, of course, and more a poet shall we say. And every time Steve put his fingers to a guitar or piano, or opened his mouth to sing, something came out that transcended the normal. He has his failings as a person, but I guess you can't have everything."

Much later described by Winwood himself as "perhaps the definitive Traffic album", it was released that July to effusive reviews and strong sales. To begin with they toured it as a three-piece, Winwood's organ filling out the holes in their live sound and Capaldi



GUNTER ZINT/K & K ULF KRUGER OHG/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The Spencer Davis Group circa 1965, L-R: Pete York, Steve Winwood, Spencer Davis, Muff Winwood.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Traffic in 1968, L-R: Chris Wood, Steve Winwood, Jim Capaldi, Dave Mason.

1970's classic *John Barleycorn Must Die.*





"Every time Steve put his fingers to a guitar or piano, or opened his mouth to sing, something came out that transcended the normal."
Friend and roadie Gordon Jackson

BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

and Wood playing at the top of their games. Then tragedy struck. Early the next year, Capaldi lost his newborn son to a cot death. Shattered, he stopped playing drums and offered to step down from the band. Winwood refused him and instead brought in two bodies to cover for his stricken comrade, Ghanaian percussionist 'Rebop' Kwaku Baah, a fellow survivor of Baker's Air Force, and American drummer Jim Gordon who had done sessions for The Beach Boys, The Byrds and George Harrison, and who had not long jumped ship from Clapton's beached Derek And The Dominoes.

This latest line-up retired to Basing Street to make a new Traffic album, the defining point of which would be its 11-minute-plus title track. *The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys* rose up from a lyric Capaldi roused himself to write about the withering effects of the music business on the artist. To this Winwood introduced a musical backdrop that moved like shifting sand: neither solely rock, blues or jazz, but each and more besides, changing almost from one bar to the next. Altogether, and elsewhere on this, Traffic's most restless record, shades and styles got jumbled up in the same pot, shaken into new shapes, then broken down and started up again.

"It kind of sums up Traffic in a way," Capaldi said at the time. "The eclectic-ness — you can't put your finger on it at all, yet you know it's familiar."

In advance of the album's release, Winwood marshalled another unexpected detour. At the same time as adding erstwhile Blind Faith bassist Ric Grech to the live ensemble, he re-recruited Mason for a spurt of six UK dates that yielded a so-so live album, *Welcome To The Canteen*,

Traffic on stage at The Kirklevington Country Club, March 1970, L-R: Steve Winwood, Jim Capaldi, Chris Wood.

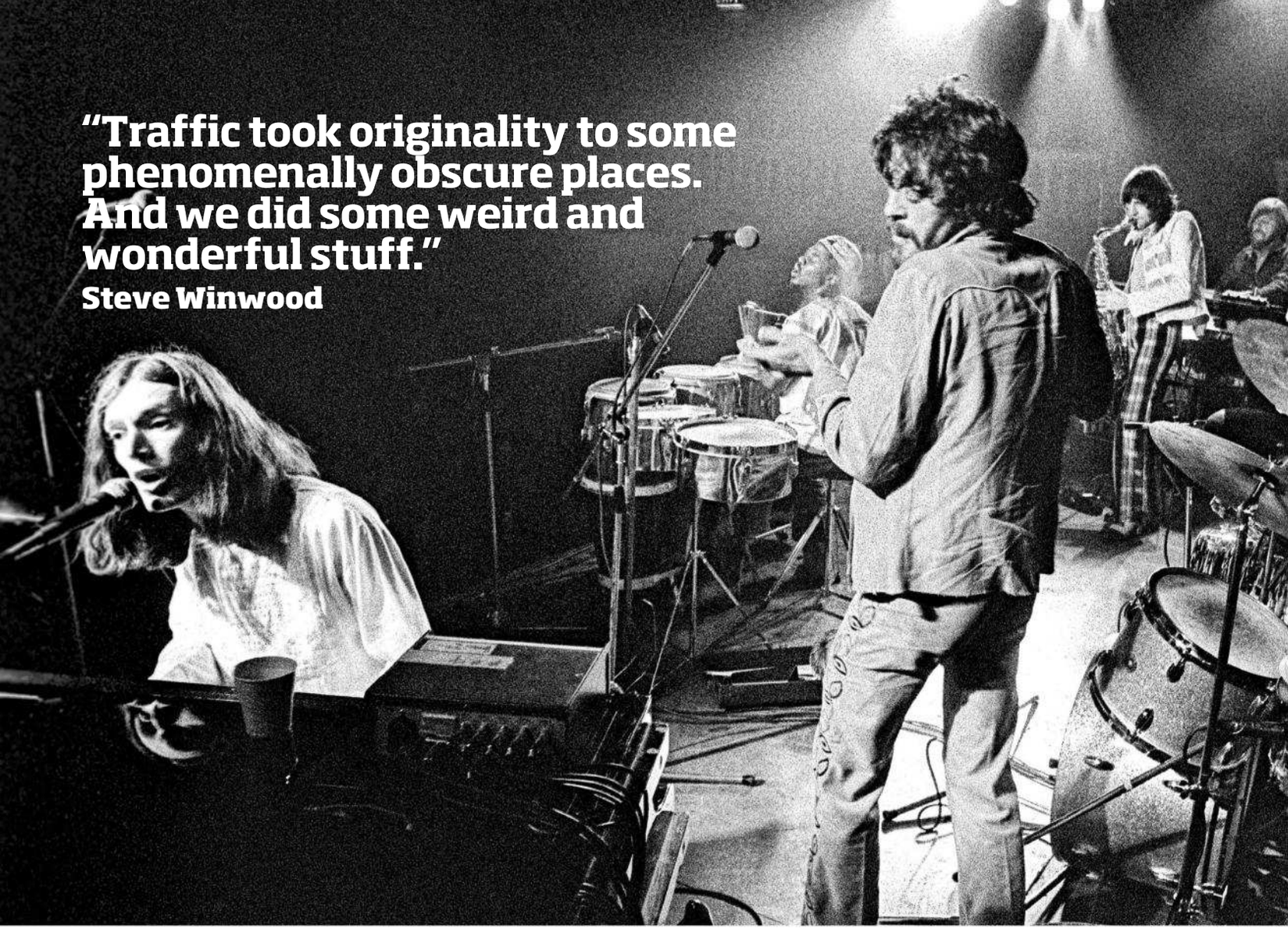
Traffic's fifth album, 1971's *The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys*.



credited to the individual members rather than to Traffic. Another blink and Mason was gone again, *The Low Spark...* album was flying up the US charts and Traffic were blazing a trail across a troubled nation in the third year of Richard Nixon's presidency. Aptly, perhaps, something rotten was also festering at Traffic's core.

"Back at the hotels, members of the band were partying [and] in this particular case it was always Grech and Gordon," soundman Richard Feld told writer Dan Ropek in text reproduced for the 2016 Chris Wood box set, *Evening Blue*. "There was a lot of smack, and really scuzzy groupies around. It was ugly."

Directly after the final date of the US tour in Minneapolis-St Paul, Winwood fired the errant rhythm section. Grech died of renal failure in 1990. In 1983, Gordon murdered his 72-year-old



"Traffic took originality to some phenomenally obscure places. And we did some weird and wonderful stuff."
Steve Winwood

mother, beating her with a hammer before fatally stabbing her with a butcher's knife. He was diagnosed as schizophrenic and remains incarcerated in a psychiatric prison in California.

Nor was the malaise confined to the support players: Chris Wood had started a long, painful slide into alcoholism. Weary of the chaos, Winwood once again considered breaking up Traffic.

In the midst of his deliberations and at Blackwell's urging, Capaldi went off to Alabama to make a solo album with the crack Muscle Shoals studio players. He returned raving to Winwood about the dexterity and adaptability of the musicians. It was enough to compel Winwood to hire one half of the Muscle Shoals' rhythm engine, bassist David Hood and drummer Roger Hawkins, to bolster Traffic for another swing around the States.

This kicked off in New Haven, Connecticut during the first week of February 1972, before a packed auditorium on the Yale University campus. To begin with at least, the meeting of British rock aristocracy and the disciplined, relatively conservative Muscle Shoals duo was not without its teething troubles.

Muscle Men, L-R: Steve Winwood, 'Rebop' Kwaku Baah, Jim Capaldi and Chris Wood with Muscle Shoals players Barry Beckett, David Hood and Roger Hawkins live at Birmingham Town Hall, March 20, 1973.

1973's erratic *Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory*.



"Roger and I had never played a big concert before then," explains David Hood. "When we were starting out, we did fraternity parties and school dances, and then we got to be so busy in the studio business. That first night, we go out there, there's maybe 8,000 people in the house, and with the lighting and everything, we couldn't read our chord charts. We were just flying blind and it was so loud we couldn't hear too well either. It was crazy. I thought I had been thrown into a psychedelic nightmare.

"The Traffic guys would get pretty fucked up. Winwood I think only on hash or marijuana, but Chris Wood was doing a lot of alcohol and all kinds of drugs; Rebop too. Capaldi I would say was more of a speed freak. He would just jump around and do crazy stuff. The daily itinerary would say, 'Be in the lobby for 8am to leave for the plane.' Roger and I would be down 10 minutes ahead of time, sat there with all of our stuff, neat and combed. After a while, the Traffic guys would drag themselves down, one at a time. Sometimes Chris or Rebop would even have to be carried through."

Slowly but surely as the tour progressed, this transatlantic Traffic melded together. Even still, its foundations were shaky. On the road, Winwood was struck down with a painful abdominal condition. On his return to England, he was rushed into Cheltenham General Hospital with a burst appendix. It took months for him to recover, but by the autumn of 1972 he had gathered Capaldi and Wood at his pile in the Cotswolds to prepare new songs. From there, they flew out to Muscle Shoals to cut the next Traffic studio album with Hood, Hawkins and Hammond player Barry Beckett.

Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory was put down quick, Winwood producing and at a rate of one track per day between 11 and 17 December. While standard practise for the Muscle Shoals men, this production line efficiency was at odds with Traffic's more typical approach for taking the scenic route to making records, ideas often as not bubbling up from their extended jams.

"Nobody worked like we did," claims Hood. "We would play a song one time off the chart and then we'd got it, and I'm sure they were amazed at that. All of those songs were first or second takes, which was just our normal thing. To us, time is money."

For sure it was a culture clash, but when the two parties gelled, the results were spectacular, Traffic's liquid



BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

grooves sliding over, or else slipping in between the vice-tight Muscle Shoals swing. The problem was, the excellent *Evening Blue* aside, this happened for tantalising parts of the other four songs but not all through, so the album as a whole flickered yet didn't sparkle.

Not that it didn't sell, especially in America. On the US tour to back it up, such was their dazzling interplay that Traffic could draw the breath from the most cavernous room. That much was captured on the subsequent double live album that Blackwell ordered up from the European leg: *On The Road* was sprawling, but also intermittently stunning.

At times touching at a kind of musical perfection, Traffic might even have been too good to last. Certainly, Winwood eventually had enough of flying quite so close to the sun.

"Playing in that band was great, even a little overwhelming," says Hood. "I also think it ended up becoming something other than Traffic started out to be. It got to be where we would play everything a certain way, every time, and that was something that started to bug Winwood a little bit, though he never complained.

"After the tour was over, in January '74, he sent the three of us a letter. It was very nice and complimentary, but he said that he felt that it had just gotten to be too big and that it was time to go back to their original idea. I have to say I was let down because I was enjoying being on the stage, travelling all over and flying first class. After a while, you get used to those kinds of things."

Though they didn't know it at the time, the back-to-basics album that Winwood, Capaldi and Wood proceeded to make was to be their valediction. Reconvening at Winwood's home and in his stable-sized 'garage studio' toward the end of 1973, Blackwell back as overseer, they rustled up seven pastoral-sounding songs that harked back to The Cottage days. As a whole, *When The Eagle Flies* was a slighter, less substantial work than either of *John Barleycorn Must Die* or *The Low Spark...*, but it had its own easy charm.

Even before the album was released, Traffic went back on the road with a vengeance, augmented once more by Baah and also new bassist Rosko Gee. Between February and May 1974, they played 40 dates around the UK and Europe, hitting a stride.

The stumble and fall came later that summer when the tour arrived in America. Since they shared a fear of flying, Winwood and Wood elected to cross the Atlantic on board the QE2. Winwood had also arranged to have a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud shipped over so he could drive himself between gigs, cocooned off from the rest of the world — and from his bandmates too.

At New York's Academy of Music on September 18, the fifth day of the tour, Traffic unravelled. Wood took to the stage for the early show appearing unsteady on his feet and played like a man lost in a fog. Winwood tried to cover the cracks by playing over him, but it was like applying a Band Aid to an open wound. The ailing Wood was so incapacitated he didn't even make the late show. All through the rest of the tour, he wore the haunted look of a hunted man and his performances were just as indistinct. Attendances at the shows were erratic, as if people had been warned off by an ill wind.

"It was always obvious that the fame didn't sit with Chris like it did with the other two," reasons Steph Wood, his sister. "Steve was Mister Cool and Jim the showman, but Chris was I think a bit of a fish out of water."

After an uneven show in Chicago on October 27, Winwood complained of having stomach pains again. The next day, he climbed into his Rolls-Royce, said goodbye to the others, and drove off. The others assumed he was on route to their next date in Knoxville, Tennessee, but in fact he was bound for home and Traffic's race was run.

"I'd had enough of album, tour, album, tour," Winwood told *Rolling Stone* in 1988. "I was on a treadmill and there was no way of getting off. I just had to say that's it with Traffic — no way I could do it any more."

"Steve completely withdrew," says Phill Brown. "That was just burnout. When I got back together with him in 1976 to do his first solo album, he wore a duffel coat with the hood up when we were recording, and had his Hammond set up so he was looking at the wall. I think he had been through two or three years of fairly hard times."

Winwood recovered his bearings and went on to make a string of successful solo albums, though only the pick of these, 1977's self-titled set and 1980's *Arc Of A Diver*, managed to trace echoes of former glories. Capaldi too would go on making solo records, four of them back down at Muscle Shoals.

Chris Wood never did get back on his feet. He died from pneumonia on July 12, 1983, aged 39, by which point he was living back at home with his parents. Seven months before that, Baah, Wood's junior by a single year, had been taken by a brain haemorrhage.

In 1994, Winwood and Capaldi regrouped as Traffic for one more solid album, *Far From Home*, and a tour. In 2004, the band were inaugurated into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. The following year, stomach cancer claimed Capaldi. Winwood still carries the torch, though there are murmurings that he's considering his retirement. These days, he's wont to claim that he can barely recall his vanished youth. Yet looking back in 1988, he was able to sum up Traffic's singular journey through those four years.

"Traffic took originality to some phenomenally obscure places," Winwood reasoned. "What we wanted to do was create something that was completely our own. We wanted to create a form of music that people would recognise as Traffic music. [And] we did some weird and wonderful stuff."



EVAN AGOSTINI/GETTY IMAGES

Jim Capaldi (left) and Steve Winwood at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction dinner in New York City, March 15, 2004.

1974's pastoral *When The Eagle Flies* album.



SOLITUDE AND SPACE

IO Earth's fourth album *Solitude* considers the often stigmatised, private world of mental health conditions – and sees the symphonic proggers finding focus and balance in the process.

Words: Matt Parker
Images: Wendy Vissers-Hagenbeek



Two thirds of people in Britain will suffer a mental health issue in their life and yet often the illness is hidden, the sufferer feels alone and the rest of the population can seem either dismissive, or wilfully ignorant. Birmingham symphonic prog collective IO Earth's new album *Solitude* — a musical exploration of mental health and ability — was first born out of an encounter with an Alzheimer's patient that was hard to ignore.

"We did a video for a song called *Insomnia* [from 2015 album *New World*]," explains Dave Cureton, the band's guitarist and, alongside pianist Adam Gough, its co-founder. "The video is about a daughter being killed, basically, but we needed a house where it could be set. Long story short, this guy lends us this old house to film in, he was an elderly chap, and his wife had some kind of health issue that involved [advanced] Alzheimer's. When we were filming she was literally just sat in a chair, staring into space. I don't even think she knew we were there. These nurses came in to care for her and make sure she was alright, get her ready for bed in the evening. And it kind of hit home, really: this woman was just locked in herself. It didn't matter that there were 10 people walking around her house with cameras and playback music. That really hit us."



Although Alzheimer's itself is a degenerative physical disease that causes a decline in mental ability, it often comes hand in hand with mental health conditions and there is an acknowledged, albeit complex, link between dementia and depression. The day spent in the presence of someone so visibly suffering got Gough and Cureton thinking about the stigma of these issues, and they became keen to explore the impacts of the myriad conditions, not to mention the feelings of isolation that so often occur behind closed doors. "When people say, 'mental health' they think there's something wrong," says Cureton of the stigma. "But it's also [mental ability issues] like dementia and Alzheimer's, as well as [mental health issues such as] schizophrenia and the 'darker' side of it. Some people are ashamed of being that way, when really it's something you can't do anything about. It's a shame that people have to go through that."

Whether it's cause or effect, poor mental health is particularly common among musicians and those in the public eye, notes Cureton. "When the album was released, I saw something on Facebook that said that



IO Earth, L-R: Jez King, Luke Shingler, Rosanna Lefevre, Christian Jerromes, Dave Cureton, Adam Gough, Christian Nokes.

"WHEN THE ALBUM WAS RELEASED, I SAW SOMETHING ON FACEBOOK THAT SAID THAT MUSICIANS ARE THE MOST DEPRESSED PEOPLE IN THE WORLD."

musicians are the most depressed people in the world," he tells *Prog*. The full study, a joint effort from Help Musicians UK and University Of Westminster entitled *Can Music Make You Sick?* found around 70% of its respondents reported suffering anxiety and depression.

"I suppose they're always striving to be the next big thing. We're lucky, we don't get any bad stuff written about us, but I can imagine that if you're Justin Bieber or something and reading every day that somebody wants to kill you... I don't know..." Cureton tails off. "I'm quite happy in a little prog world where no one knows who I am!"

Aside from its thought-provoking inspiration, *Solitude* is a remarkable step forward for the band musically. Since winning *Prog*'s 2010 Readers' Poll for best new band, IO Earth — now a seven-piece ensemble including sax, bass, keys, guitar, drums, violin and new vocalist Rosanna Lefevre — have continued to evolve at a rapid pace, but on *Solitude* they sound more like a unit, and that multifarious line-up is now deftly balanced. Songs like the title track start in dusky silence and grow to grand orchestral gut-wrench, all skewered through by Lefevre's cut-glass vocal. Space

"I LOVE STEVE VAI AND FRANK ZAPPA, WHICH HAS ALL THAT TECHNICAL STUFF GOING ON, BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE YOU CRY. WE'RE FOCUSING MORE ON THE EMOTION."



New World: IO Earth's new singer Rosanna is helping to take them forward.

is used confidently and generously, eschewing the 'everything, always' pitfall of many symphonic rock types.

"We wanted to get the sound really honed-in," says Cureton, who says he worked closely with producer Miguel Seco on that aim. "You would assume that the darker stuff would be the heavy, rock-y stuff, but the darker side is more in the clean guitar tone. They create more of an atmosphere with the nice reverb and big delays. A song like *Race Against Time*, for instance, has this big, heavy section at the start where it drops into the vocal, it's got this nice little three-note chordal thing changing all the way through and it creates a really good atmosphere underneath the vocal."

But even without the complication of a seven-piece semi-orchestra, it would have been easy to undermine such sensitive subject matter by jumping in with their size 16s and dropping big riffs all over the top of it. Did the band have conversations about avoiding that?

"Yeah, from a guitarist point of view, I can — blowing wind up me arse — solo all over the entire album, and I'd be happy to do that," says Cureton. "But I also know when to shut up and I think that's important in music, so I'm very mindful when I'm playing. I always say to Adam, 'Is this over the top? Is it too much? Do you need this?' Because I'll just play and play and play and think, 'That's great, that is!' But is it really doing anything for the song? It comes back to those bands that put technique in front of emotion and the heart and soul. I love that stuff. I love Steve Vai and Frank Zappa, which has all that technical stuff going on, but it doesn't make you cry. We're focusing more on the emotion."

The record feels like an evolution, but also a maturation, or as Cureton puts it, "more like an album of one band". This seems to be due to two things. The first is the arrival of Lefevre, a Wolverhampton local, who joined following the departure of Norwegian native Linda Odinsen and seems to have added a new spring to IO Earth's step. Not least because her proximity has meant the group have been able to more frequently rehearse and perform as a full unit. Secondly, on their fourth album, the writing relationship between Cureton and Gough seems to be achieving a zen-like balance.

"I met Adam in secondary school," recalls Cureton of their long shared history. "We were in Music and he played this thing and I thought, 'That's really nice, that!' Then we had a PE session and we were getting changed and I went up to him and said, 'Do you want to make a band with me? You play the piano, I play the guitar — I think it would be quite cool.' He was like, 'Yeah, okay then…' The elaborate joke being that Adam said, 'But let me put my clothes on first!'

"Then, from like 14/15, we would just meet up at his house and write music. We were never interested in playing covers. We always wanted to write our own music and, from that age onwards, always have done. We've never collaborated with anyone else, it's always just been me and him.

"Our first song we'd ever written — and this is the proggiest title ever, though we didn't even know what prog was then — was called *Romantic Night With Romeo*, which was an instrumental. It was beautiful!" laughs Cureton. "I think the second song we wrote was called *Why Do People Have To Die?* and was a very angst-y title. That was another ballad!"

Fortunately, *Solitude* has a little more subtlety than this early output and across 25-ish years and some fairly tumultuous changes in the band, their friendship has endured. "I think mainly it's down to the fact that we're chalk and cheese," says Cureton. "Adam's very laid-back and very calm and I'm the complete opposite! But I think if we had two calm people, nothing would get done — and if we had two nutters, nothing would get done!"

The fact that the relationship works and has not only lasted but actively advanced is worth celebrating and it's evident in IO Earth's steady growth, too. "A lot of it comes down to just pure willpower and just wanting to succeed," says Cureton. "We just keep going, just keeping running and breaking down walls. That's it really. We're an independent band and we give as good a product as we can. A lot of people have said that the production of our albums match anything that's signed or any high-profile band. That's what we do: we don't cut corners or scrimp. It's always the best that we can do financially and musically."

The fan feedback for *Solitude*, particularly given the sensitive subject matter, is proving the weight of that statement. "We've had quite a lot of fans, who have said that, 'I've suffered from depression,' or 'I have a family member who suffers from certain conditions,'" concludes Cureton, "and they really feel it in the music. That's the kind of feedback you want: that people get it completely."

Solitude is out now via IO Earth Music. See www.ioearth.com for more information.

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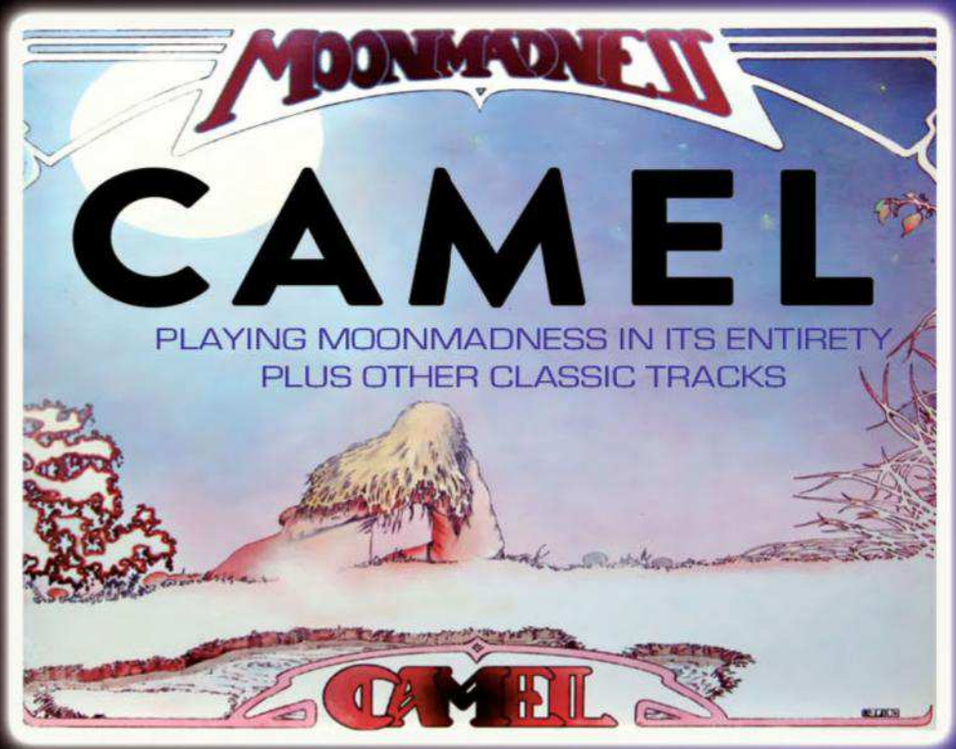
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Song within a song



The Decemberists

They're the Grammy-nominated Portland, Oregon rockers who take influence from Roxy Music and British folk, delight in creating concept albums and hope to one day do musical theatre. But now we have to ask: **how prog are The Decemberists?** **Words:** Paul Rees

With its nagging synth arpeggio and punching, slashing glam rock guitars, *Severed*, the lead single from The Decemberists' eighth album *I'll Be Your Girl*, sounds like Roxy Music running headlong into the current art rock 'it' girl, St Vincent. It sounds nothing, in fact, like the band from Portland, Oregon's two previous records, each one rooted in American alt-folk-rock, or indeed like any of the four other wide-ranging collections that preceded them.

"Roxy Music was sort of our guiding star during the first week in the studio, though I think we went on and moved pretty far astray from that at times," acknowledges Colin Meloy, The Decemberists' frontman and songwriter.

"I think artists who work right at the edge of their understanding and ability can make the best work of their lives. When you're working safe within your comfort zone you might be making stuff that's commercial or appealing and pays your bills, but at the end of the day, is that the stuff that's important? The things I've been most excited about in this band's history are where I feel I've really pushed myself."

> **"As a kid, I was sort of lost in my own world a lot. My parents used to call me the Underwater Boy because I was off in my own head so much."**
> ***Colin Meloy***



The Decemberists' eighth album, 2018's *I'll Be Your Girl*.

The above quote could be an extract from a prog rock manifesto. The Decemberists formed in 2000, with Meloy having moved to Portland from his native Montana, and the band have habitually taken a scenic route. In 2004, the quintet — completed by Meloy's co-founders, bassist Nate Query and keyboardist Jenny Conlee, plus guitarist Chris Funk and drummer John Moen — released a labyrinthine 18-and-a-half-minute track based on a mythological Irish epic, *The Tain*. Their fourth album from two years later, *The Crane Wife*, took a Japanese folk tale as its source material and pivoted around two intricately detailed song cycles.

A Smiths obsessive when taking a Creative Writing programme at the University of Montana, Meloy's tastes expanded to encompass the alt-country movement of the late 80s and the British folk revival begun two decades earlier. Bookish-looking and soft-spoken, he's talking this morning from his car, which he's navigating along the backroads that wind off the freeway from Portland and lead out to the farm 20 miles south of the city where he lives with his illustrator wife and two children.

Meloy is no stranger to multitasking. Alongside the day job, he has issued a string of limited-edition covers EPs such as *Colin Meloy Sings Morrissey* and *Colin Meloy Sings The Kinks*. He's also penned the *Wildwood* trilogy, a series of bestselling children's books about a magical forest.

"As a kid, I was sort of lost in my own world a lot," he explains. "My parents used to call me the Underwater Boy because I was off in my own head so much. I've had that drive to create things and stories ever since then. It's like it's a muscle that has to get used or I would go crazy.

"Early on with The Decemberists, particularly when we didn't really have anyone listening to us, it felt very freeing to try new things. I would think, 'Oh God, if I was in a metal band I would totally make a concept record about a mythological Irish text.' Then it occurred to me that I was in a band, so what was stopping me?"

By 2007, Meloy's grand vision for The Decemberists, named after an 1825 revolutionary uprising in



PRESS/AUTUMN DE WILDE

Colin Meloy and the band circa 2009's *The Hazards Of Love*.

PRESS/ HOLLY ANDRES



The Decemberists:
Rock. Band.



Folk Tales: the band in 2005.

Imperial Russia, had accelerated to the point that the band performed five shows accompanied by full orchestras, including a date at the Hollywood Bowl with the LA Philharmonic.

This led on to their most elaborately conceived record, *The Hazards Of Love*, in 2009. Starting off as an intended musical theatre piece, it ended up a full-blown concept album, replete with recurring musical themes, a parade of characters and an episodic narrative about a woman named Margaret and her shape-shifting lover. The title was lifted from a 1964 EP by stalwart English folkie Anne Briggs. Altogether, it was something that Jethro Tull might have conceived of at the zenith of their imperial phase.

"I never really listened to that much Tull to be honest, and still haven't," Meloy demurs. "Jenny is really the Tull-head in the band. To my mind, *The Hazards Of Love* owed as much to the British folk revival artists — Fairport Convention, Shirley Collins and Anne Briggs — as it does to some of the 70s prog records that I encountered growing up. I got inspired by a lot of that music.

"With prog, I just really liked the idea of playing with the genre and the medium a little bit. To piece together a folk tale and folk archetypes and see what kind of story it would create. I think we had established by then that we were comfortable playing with those longer-form narratives. In respect of that, *The Tain* had kind of set you up to be prepared for what was coming next."

On *The Hazards Of Love*, Meloy did also make at least one explicit prog reference. The escalating keyboard pattern that introduces the piece was a nod to the opening bars of Roger Glover's 1974 fantasy rock opera *The Butterfly Ball And The Grasshopper's Feast*, on which the Deep Purple man reinterpreted the children's poem of the same name with help from David Coverdale, Ronnie James Dio and Glenn Hughes, among others.

"Mom got that record for me from the library when I was a little kid and I listened to it endlessly," Meloy says.

The Decemberists duly took *The Hazards Of Love* out on the road and performed their own magnum opus in full, front to back. Not quite the giddy heights of excess attained by Rick Wakeman doing his infamous King Arthur production on ice, but nevertheless very much in keeping with the trailblazing spirit of The Who with *Tommy* and Pink Floyd with *The Wall*, and running contrary to the more austere mood of the times.



2006's *The Crane Wife*, inspired by a Japanese folk tale.



***The Hazards Of Love*, 2009's ambitious concept album.**

> **"The things I've been most excited about in this band's history are where I feel I really pushed myself."**
> **Colin Meloy**



PRESS/AUTUMN DE WILDE



***The King Is Dead*-era band (above) and their 2011 album (below).**

"Rick Wakeman did what?" Meloy gasps, incredulous, when mention is made of the caped one's barmy escapade of 1975. "You're kidding, right? Well, we missed an opportunity there.

"Whenever we did festivals on that tour, we would only play *The Hazards Of Love*, which is sort of the opposite of what you're supposed to do. In some ways, and although maybe there was boldness there, it was also I think an impulse to self-sabotage for some reason. It was a very interesting experiment, but coming out of it I felt all of a sudden that a cloud had lifted. I just wanted to go off and write music that people could sing along to, you know?"

The result of Meloy's new-found sense of peace was 2011's *The King Is Dead*, excellent but so R.E.M.-like in its alt-rock, verse-chorus formality that their guitarist Peter Buck even made a guest appearance. Its singalong aspect was enticing enough that the album debuted at No.1 in America. Similarly straight-ahead, *What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World* followed in 2015 and was also a Top 10 US hit. By contrast, there are moments, even whole songs, on *I'll Be Your Girl* where Meloy's deep and mellifluous voice is the sole tick familiar to The Decemberists.

A new producer, John Congleton, has blessed the band with the same slick surfaces and noir-ish undercurrents of two of his other clients, Lana Del Rey and the aforementioned St Vincent. Meanwhile, on propulsive tracks like *Everything Is Awful* and *We All Die*



PRESS/ALICIA J. ROSE

Young Meloy isn't so much off with the fairies as staring down the barrel of Trump's America. Generally, he describes the mood of the album as a "nihilistic disco apocalypse", which actually suits it very well.

"Absolutely, but it couldn't not be," he says of this state-of-things subtext. "It's such a calamity that we're witnessing right now. Even though I didn't want to make a topical record, as much as anything because I didn't know if I was the guy to do that, but it's really unavoidable that this stuff comes through.

"Making every record, you go into the studio as armed as you can be, sometimes with a pretty good idea of what you're going to do, sometimes not. This time, I had a handful of songs. Some of them felt that they fit together better than others. The challenge was to find the thread that connected them.

"At the end of the day, a record is a collection of songs, like a book of short stories. But I believe the best short story collections are the ones where there is some sort of thread binding them together, a glue that means you would read it start to finish and in that order. That's how I've always approached sequencing records."



PRESS/HOLLY ANDRES

The Decemberists, L-R: Jenny Conlee, John Moen, Nate Query, Colin Meloy, Chris Funk.



The 2015 Top 10 US hit album *What A Terrible World, What A Beautiful World.*



2017's *Queen Of Hearts* collaboration with Olivia Chaney.

Meloy is also still liable to vault for something more otherworldly and infinite-sounding. A good example of that is the peak point of *I'll Be Your Girl*, a meandering eight-minute-plus, two-part extravaganza titled *Rusalka, Rusalka/Wild Rushes* that fixates on two of his pet subjects: bodies of water and the other-beings that may lurk within.

A high-wire exercise in soothing the listener first and then pulling the rug out from under their feet, it picks up where Meloy and the band left off in 2017, with the Grammy-nominated collaboration with another English folk singer, Olivia Chaney: the album *The Queen Of Hearts*, released under the name Offa Rex. It also suggests that Meloy isn't done yet with exploring and adventuring.

"I still want to do a musical theatre piece, which has been appealing to me since I was a child," Meloy avers as he pulls into his garage. "I've made steps towards that in the past, and with *The Hazards Of Love*, but then kind of retreated. It's really been a question of trying to find a way in, but that's definitely something I would love to do.

"In some ways, as a band I feel like we're on our own island. Though not because we stand alone necessarily, but as much because I'm deeply insecure in terms of how I think our band is regarded by other people. It was pretty open-ended going in to start work on this album. I had a general idea about what I wanted, but it was very much unformed. I felt like I wanted to make something big. But in retrospect, I always want to make something big, so that wasn't a new tack for us."

I'll Be Your Girl is out now via Capitol/ Rough Trade. See www.decemberists.com for more information.

YOUR SHOUT!

They love concept albums, Roxy Music and the acid folk revival. So naturally it begs the question: how prog are The Decemberists?

"Great band. I enjoy their stuff and have seen them live a couple of times. Varied instrumentation and lyrically intelligent. Not old school prog, but definitely more complex than most mainstream bands."
Chris Walters

"I can take or leave most of their works, but I can't go past *The Mariner's Revenge Song* and *The Crane Wife: All Parts.*"
Cheyny Tacos McGee

"Great band who touched on prog a couple times earlier in their career, most notably their 2009 concept album release *The Hazards Of Love*. Unfortunately they've abandoned any experimental song structure and have gone more towards traditional indie pop."
Paul Franzosa

"Decemberists are great. And, for a while at least, they were quite prog, especially *The Tain* and *The Island*. And then there's *Hazards Of Love*, one of the finest rock operas of our time."
Chris Anderson

"Fantastic bunch of folkers. As prog as you want with *The Crane's Wife*. Prog at the folk end of the street."
Gary Morley

"Their track *Everything Is Awful* sums them up."
Richard Lewis

"What's to debate? Innovative storytellers, not afraid of doing a concept album, etc. Great band."
Dr. Nick

"*The Island* is one of the best progressive rock pieces over the last 15 years."
All Media Reviews

"Great band with hints of folk prog, but overall not that proggy."
Kevin Murphy

"*The Crane Wife* album is the closest thing to the Second Coming Of Tull."
Ben L. Connor

"Like all good bands they have an eclectic approach in both their style and musical instrumentation. They have actively acknowledged that, for certain albums, progressive rock was a reference point... for others, a different sphere of reference. For me they are an excellent band and yes, they are a progressive group of individuals."
Paul Devenny

"Love 'em, but prog? Mmmmm, not sure about that."
Alan Royes

"I look at them in the same light as the Battles or Tortoise: great indie prog sound! another band that's really good in this genre is God Is An Astronaut!"
Todd Zornow

"My favourite band. *Hazards Of Love* is definitely in prog territory and the rest probably not, but who cares. The important thing is that they never repeat themselves and are fabulous live."
Mike Kershaw

"Never heard of them."
Sally Jane Carter

LIFE'S A LONG Song

Prog joins **Arena** in a leafy corner of Surrey to look back over the band's tumultuous two-decade history, listen to their ambitious new album, discover the pros and cons of beards and find out why size really doesn't matter...

Words: Jerry Ewing **Images:** Guy Harrop



"This itches too much. I'm shaving it off."

Three figures are slowly making their way up the inclined entrance to Virginia Water station. Three men, perhaps of a certain age, long of (slightly thinning) hair, and heavily bearded. The incline might not be the steepest in the world, but our three heroes move somewhat laboriously all the same. To the uninitiated it might look like the Fellowship, winding their slow way across Caradhras in the Misty Mountains, a scene from *The Lord Of The Rings* transposed onto the leafiest of Surrey's green enclaves. For the locals, one assumes, it's something of a shock.

Mick Pointer, for it is he, grumpily continues scratching at his beard, while Clive Nolan, for it is also he, gently goads him.

"I think it looks rather good," he chuckles mischievously.

"It hides how much weight I've lost," admits Pointer.

"Ah, but a beard hides a multitude of sins," says Nolan.

"And chins," grumbles Pointer, like a curmudgeonly Gimli.

Prog, for it is also us, has travelled down to this delightful corner of Surrey for the first time in 20 years. And for this, there's good reason. Two decades ago, this writer ventured down here to meet, for the first time, Arena, the progressive rock band formed by former Marillion drummer Pointer and (still) Pendragon keyboard player Nolan. *Classic Rock* magazine had just come out, and Arena, with their third album, the conceptual *The Visitor*, were taking a few more steps up the ladder, as it were. They'd just been joined by a young guitarist called John Mitchell and were touring their new opus, and *Prog* was to travel with them to Holland for their gig at the Boerderij in Zoetermeer.

Chatting with Nolan on the recent HMS Prog mini-cruise, he put forward the idea that it might be a laugh for us to reconvene for another chat, given the impending release of a new Arena album, *Double Vision*, the band's ninth. Although our paths cross regularly, *Prog* hasn't ventured down to Virginia Water, the base of Clive Nolan's operations and home to his Thin Ice Studios, since 1998. Mick Pointer has travelled all the way up from his home in the West Country. Sadly, after one or two false starts, where we'd have convened at John Mitchell's own Outhouse Studio in Berkshire, the guitarist is not present, having had to journey to France. But this ably highlights the kind of logistical headaches that can plague a band like Arena.

Ten minutes later and Mick Pointer is no longer grumbling about his beard but studiously going over the menu of the Viceroy Of India curry restaurant — a favourite, so Nolan informs me, of one-time Virginia Water resident, the late Sir Bruce Forsyth. With the entire restaurant to ourselves on this midweek lunchtime. there's nothing else to be done but sit back, enjoy some fine spicy repast and discuss all things Arena.

When, *Prog* asks, we went out to Holland 20 years ago, did either Nolan or Pointer really envisage being seated here together discussing the band's ensuing progress all this time later?

There was no *Prog* magazine back then, although *Classic Rock* did fly the flag

"Things got pretty hairy on the tour for *The Visitor*. Certainly not how we'd envisaged things tuning out."
Clive Nolan



Men At Work: Arena, shot exclusively for *Prog*, May 2018.

for the genre to a point. But all this time later, here we all are again…

"I don't think you tend to think of things like that unless it's in hindsight," muses Nolan. "I don't think any of us had any idea where things might take us back in 1998. Obviously you hope things will work out for the best. And in some ways, the core of the band has remained the same ever since. But back then, if you were going to try to do the kind of thing Arena were doing, it was still largely considered commercial suicide, which is why we were so pleased when a magazine like *Classic Rock* came along. And then 10 years later we got *Prog*, which is even better."

Alongside the core of Nolan, Pointer and Mitchell, back then they were joined by singer Paul Wrightson and bassist John Jowitt. The band had formed three years previously and made something of a splash in the prog pond with 1995's debut album *Songs From The Lion's Cage*, recorded with vocalist John Carson. He'd been replaced by Wrightson for 1996's *Pride*, which continued the band's momentum, both albums picking up fans of Marillion and Pendragon along the way.

But Arena hankered for even bigger and better things, and 1998's conceptual *The Visitor* was supposed to be the album that set them on their way. Rush cover designer Hugh Syme was drafted in to create the distinctive sleeve, and the ambitious concept was fashioned into the band's live show. What Arena weren't expecting was that the band would all but implode as the tour progressed, both Jowitt and Wrightson departing the fold.

"Yes, things got pretty hairy for a while on that tour," Nolan recalls. "Certainly not how we'd envisaged things turning out. But there was a lot of friction, arguments. I remember when we got back we had to sit down and lay down a few ultimatums. And the upshot of that was that Paul and John left the band. It was frustrating because we'd spent a lot of money on the band and we were starting to see some kind of return. We sold a lot of those early albums."

Undaunted, Arena drafted in singer Rob Sowden and bassist Ian Salmon and released three more albums: *Immortal?* in 2000, *Contagion* in 2003 and *Pepper's Ghost* in 2005. They were all fine records, but none could really stem the worrying feeling that their chance had come and gone, especially with the core trio all engaged in other projects. Nolan not only has Pendragon but also an increasingly successful career in musical theatre. Mitchell toured with his Kino project, joined Jem Godfrey in Frost* and later fronted It Bites. Meanwhile, as well as running Arena's hub of operations, Verglas Music, Pointer had his own touring tribute to his old band Marillion. "You won't believe some of the shit I've had for doing that," he sighs, raising his eyes skywards. "But we've all had a right laugh playing old songs I helped write."

"I don't know if we ever sat there and actually thought it might be done," he ponders when asked if he wondered whether Arena had finally run aground when Sowden announced he wasn't really into continuing with the band. "Did we Mick? No, I'm certain we didn't. But everyone had a lot of stuff going on outside of Arena. I think there was just the feeling that we'd come back to it at some point."



"I always thought *The Seventh Degree…* was a great set of songs, but then you get some people moaning that there are no epics. You feel like you can't win sometimes."
Mick Pointer

Come back they did, but not before a six-year hiatus between albums seemed to signify they might never be back at all. But when they did return, it was with current singer Paul Manzi, formerly of the Oliver Wakeman Band. John Jowitt returned on bass for a few years before the current line-up fell into place with bassist Kylan Amos joining in 2014.

The first fruits of the Manzi-fronted Arena was 2011's *The Seventh Degree Of Separation*, a concept album about a man's final hour alive. It's a splendid collection of tunes, including the Prog Award-nominated *One Last Au Revoir*. To our ears, it's one of the finest albums the band have ever recorded, but the reaction of a prog fanbase who sometimes seem only too happy to find fault was to quibble about the lack of long songs on offer.

Prog suggests that the quality of the actual songwriting should be the yardstick here, not the length of the songs. It causes Mick Pointer to jab the air with his finger to reinforce his point.



Arena, L-R: Kylan Amos, Clive Nolan, John Mitchell, Paul Manzi, Mick Pointer.

"I'm glad you said that," he says. "I always thought it was a great set of songs, but then you get some people moaning that there are no epics. You feel like you can't win sometimes."

Of course, Pointer's own former colleague Mark Kelly once opined that Marillion "could record a 14-minute fart and some of our fans would like it simply because it was 14 minutes". Such are the quirks and foibles of an often stubborn fanbase frequently resistant to change. Not that *The Seventh Degree Of Separation* sticks out like some sore thumb in Arena's body of work — it just featured some shorter songs…

Perhaps equally stubbornly, 2015's *The Unquiet Sky* was notable for the absence of any whoppingly lengthy songs. But with new album *Double Vision*, a compromise of sorts seems to have been reached.

By now we've moved on to Nolan's Thin Ice Studios, just down the road. We're sat supping beer and discussing the new album, which *Prog* is about to hear for the first time. It features six shorter songs, among them the robust rockers *Zhivago Wolf*, *The Mirror Lies* and *Scars*, plus the poignant, acoustic *Poisoned*, which was penned by Nolan for the late Ian Baldwin, his collaborator in many of his musical theatre endeavours.

But perhaps the one track that will be whetting the appetite of *Prog* readers more than any other is album closer *The Legend Of Elijah Shade*. At over 22 minutes, it's by far and away the longest piece of music Arena have ever turned their hands to. It sounds amazing, and as we scour the lyrics Nolan has handed over, the dark and mysterious story unfurls around us. Full of intrigue, it's also laden with references to past works. When faced with the clamour for longer songs, it's almost as if Arena have responded with everything, kitchen sink and more.

"We didn't do it because we knew some fans were moaning about us not having recorded anything that tended toward the epic for a while," Nolan notes. "It was because we hadn't done anything like that, so we thought, 'Why not give it another go?'

"I suppose *Moviedrome* from *Immortal?* was the last really epic tune I'd written for Arena, and that was back in 2000, so I did wonder whether I could still do it.

"But as with most long prog epics, it's not just one piece of music. [Genesis' 1972 track] *Supper's Ready* is essentially several pieces threaded together in the studio — that's how all the classic 70s bands created those massively long bits of work. So once I had the basic story, that's how I approached *…Elijah Shade*. And it was good, once we really got going, to do that kind of thing again."

And the references to past works?

"Aha," he says, beaming with pride. "Well, for one, if you take the first letter of each section of *…Elijah Shade*, it spells out the word 'Visitor'. Other than that, well, let's leave it for the fans themselves to discover."

By the time you read this, Arena's live shows will already have happened. Within days of our meeting, the band were in deepest Devon, rehearsing for the tour that will take them through four UK dates, the bulk of Europe and a quick jaunt over to Canada.

Because of the ubiquitous nature of the musicians in the band (Manzi fronts the increasingly popular Cats In Space, as well as the other members' aforementioned endeavours), there's always a danger that Arena's own progress could get stymied by the other projects. But in reality, a return of nine studio albums over the band's 23 years in existence, plus five live albums, three EPs and four live DVDs, is pretty good going in this day and age.

"There's a really good feeling in the band right now," Pointer says. "We know we've made a great album and we're just itching to get out there and reconnect with everyone."

"If I'm honest," adds Nolan, "Arena's probably the strongest now, as a band, since the first couple of records. This line-up's been solid for four years, we know we've made a good album and we know we can still do it. Bring it on…"

Double Vision is out now on Verglas Music. See www.arenaband.co.uk for more information.

"One great cliché about Finland is that there's not a lot else to do during all those dark months. You can't deny the effect of living somewhere where it's really dark for six months and then really light and sunny for six months. It's a schizophrenic existence. In winter, the weather is really shitty so all you can do is stay at home and write songs..." ***— Janne Perttilä***

I Feel The Dark

The fourth release from **Barren Earth** is a dark concept album dealing with the modern world and the death of human contact. Guitarist **Janne Perttilä** meets *Prog* to discuss the timely concept's creation, the seasonal extremity of their native Finland and being accepted by prog fans.

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Vesa Ranta

Stranded in some godforsaken snowdrift in the middle of winter, Barren Earth were at least able to occupy themselves with the task of creating their fourth studio album. After celebrating their tenth anniversary last year, they hit the studio to compose the follow-up to 2015's *On Lonely Towers* and, not entirely surprisingly, the now emerging results are a little downbeat.

A Complex Of Cages is a deep and daring concept piece that delves into timely thoughts of social and emotional isolation, disintegrating communities and the gradual death of human contact. As complex and intense as fans will be expecting, while also hitting new heights of kaleidoscopic, organ-driven prog splendour, it feels like a sustained plea for mankind to stop gawping at screens and start forging human connections in the real world.

"It's based around the idea that society is this huge structure built out of cages," guitarist Janne Perttilä explains. "Some of the songs refer to an imaginary society in which people only move between their own little boxes, safe from human interaction.

"On a deeper level, you can be locked inside your head, constrained by destructive thought patterns, and that leads to social isolation. It's not as if communication between human beings is better than ever right now, with social media and tailored advertising, is it? We're probably spending more time taking selfies than we are talking to other human beings, you know?"

The Finn's exasperation is more than apparent and sincere, but these are hardly themes that will strike anyone as particularly fresh or innovative in 2018. What sets *A Complex Of Cages* apart from any number of like-minded cautionary, conceptual tales is the way its creators' infectious exuberance is never overshadowed by the weight of the songs' world-weary themes. As dark as this music often is, Barren Earth consistently sound like they're having an obscene amount of fun playing it. According to Perttilä, the strange duality of life in Finland lies at the heart of his band's music.

"You can actually notice many people's personalities change when it becomes dark," he notes. "In the darkest time of the year, nobody's smiling or saying anything, except when they're getting really drunk. Around the spring time, people suddenly become ready to put on a carnival! [Laughs]

"It's kind of a schizophrenic thing and people go between those two extremes. It's inevitable that our music would be influenced by that, I think. If we didn't live here, the music would be very different... or maybe we wouldn't make music at all."

The highs and lows of Finland's meteorological duality are clear within *A Complex Of Cages*, an album that despite its often brutal approach could hardly offer more in terms of light and shade, heaviness and fragility, ugliness and beauty. Away from their poetic interpretations of those issues, Perttilä admits that dealing with Finland's seasonal extremity is a very real problem that requires some serious scientific attention. The country's legendary propensity for gloom may have been overstated at times, but it doesn't take a scientist to acknowledge the potential effects of a scrotum-withering, sunless Finnish winter.

"At least it's been acknowledged now that darkness is not good for you and it's very easy to get really depressed, especially with the Finnish tradition of solving all of our problems with alcohol! There have been studies, trying to find the root cause of the problem, whether it's a physical thing that can be cured with vitamin D or something else. There is more talk about mental health issues in Finland. Maybe someone could come up with a happiness pill for all of us, or just put something in the water? The thing is," he laughs, "it would probably just be vodka in Finland!"

Whatever future Finnish authorities may or may not decide to sedate the population with, there is obviously *something* special in the native water



> "You can actually notice many people's personalities change when it becomes dark. In the darkest time of the year, nobody's smiling, nobody's really saying anything, except when they're getting really drunk."

already. A decade in, Barren Earth are now veterans of a scene that seems to be drifting ever closer to the prog monolith. As with contemporaries Amorphis (with whom they share bassist Olli-Pekka Laine) and progressive pagan metallers Moonsorrow (with whom they share drummer Marko Tarvonen), Perttilä and his comrades began firmly in the underground metal scene but have steadily drifted into more adventurous musical waters.

A Complex Of Cages still contains a healthy chunk of the band's trademark death metal bluster and Jón Aldará's guttural growls will inevitably alienate more sensitive listeners, but this is the work of musicians who refuse to acknowledge a divide between their two favourites genres.

"We just go by our instincts, I guess," says Perttilä. "It's such a clichéd thing to say but it's true! We wanted to form a band and our main influences were death metal and progressive rock. There was never a master plan other than making the best records we can. We never forced ourselves in any way. Sometimes we do have specific plans, but usually those are the first to fly out of the window."

If the result of this relaxed approach to writing songs is fluid epics like new album centrepiece *Solitude Pith*, then it's clearly working. In fact, it may be entirely unintentional but Barren Earth increasingly sound like a prog band with death metal influences, rather than the other way around. The arrival of new keyboard player Antti Myllinen in particular seems to have added several fresh layers of old school flair to proceedings. Perttilä chuckles at this idea, and with good reason...

"Well, Antti is a different-sounding player from Kasper [Mårtenson], our previous keyboard player, but he's also using very different sounds. The strange thing is that Antti comes from a more metal background, whereas Kasper was a traditional piano player who ended up in a metal band. That created some really exciting tensions and contrasts. Antti leans much more to the death metal side, so that was one of the challenges for this record – to keep it diverse now that everyone who's writing the songs comes from a death metal background! But I think we did a great job. It's still pretty diverse and dynamic."

Barren Earth: exploring more fertile proggy pastures on new album *A Complex Of Cages*.

A guaranteed treat for anyone who enjoys the sound of old school, analogue keyboards rippling over monstrous metal riffs, the heavier moments on *A Complex Of Cages* almost seem to pick up where Opeth left off after *Deliverance*. It's only a passing resemblance, but another thing the Finns share with their Swedish forebears is that omnipresent sense of a real, living, breathing, red-blooded *band* behind the ornate arrangements and dazzling technicality.



Barren Earth, L-R: Antti Myllynen, Marko Tarvonen, Jón Aldará, Olli-Pekka Laine, Sami Yli-Sirniö, Janne Perttilä.

"We're pretty old school, the way we compose. Somebody puts together a rough demo at home but then we physically go to a practice space and jam everything out, and maybe have a few brews too!" Perttilä grins. "We have such a great time playing together and trying out different things, coming up with different structures. Maybe that's the key, to just do the things that make you happy. There are no outside expectations put on us. No one's livelihood is depending on this band, although I guess there are good and bad things about that."

Outside of their loyal fan base, Barren Earth remain an elusive and enigmatic force. Partly due to a lack of regular touring over the years, they remain more of a cult concern than rising heavyweights, and yet their music could hardly be more perfect for the many who favour prog's darker hues. The summer of 2018 is already looking to be the band's busiest to date, with numerous festival appearances planned and tentative plans for further touring later in the year. As Perttilä notes, the obvious reason why Barren Earth haven't connected with more prog fans is that those people simply haven't had the pleasure yet.

"It's strange because we're an old band already, but we only did our first proper European tour last year," he shrugs. "We're still an unknown band for many promoters because we haven't played that much, so that's been a vicious circle. But we do have a feeling about this album, though, so maybe things are changing for the better and we'll get to play a lot more shows this time. There's a lot of music on this record that's really well suited to being played in sweaty rock clubs. It's not just for listening to when you're sitting at home and sipping wine…"

As summer approaches, Finland will be expecting the sun to come out and the darkness to recede, but the subtle message of impending dystopian turmoil that lurks at the heart of *A Complex Of Cages* will lose none of its pertinence or efficacy as the weather improves. In confronting some of the modern age's most pernicious ills and welding those ideas to music that defies easy categorisation, Barren Earth have proved that there are many worse ways to spend the winter than staying indoors, writing songs and making fresh connections with other humans.

"Until now, most exposure to us has been through metal media so it's very flattering for us to be in *Prog* for the first time," Perttilä says. "But it's not like we only get long-haired dudes with Cannibal Corpse T-shirts at our shows, complaining that we should play faster! If there's some kind of avenue taking us further into the prog world, we'll take it. We're hoping prog fans will have the patience to hear more than 15 seconds of the first track!"

> "It's based around the idea that society is this huge structure built out of cages."

A Complex Of Cages is available now via Century Media. See www.barrenearth.com for more information.

SOIL SAMPLES

Barren Earth's proggiest moments.



Curse Of The Red River (*Curse Of The Red River*, 2010)

Slithering from the shadows like some lost King Crimson ritual, the opening track on the first Barren Earth album sets out the Finns' stall with lashings of imperious menace. Although rooted in the growling crunch of death metal, the influence of prog's darker exponents (not to mention Opeth and Led Zeppelin) is hearteningly apparent.



As It Is Written (*The Devil's Resolve*, 2012)

Grandiose, muscular and fuelled by the spiralling melodies of Finnish folk music, this glacial paean to the dark side wears its debt to traditional heavy metal with pride, but there's a Katatonia-like level of melodic and structural invention going on too. Extra prog points for that mellifluous mid-song piano breakdown.



The Vault (*On Lonely Towers*, 2015)

The monumental conclusion to *On Lonely Towers*, Barren Earth's remarkable third album, *The Vault* is a sprawling, 11-minute prog metal odyssey of almost outrageous opulence. A soulful showcase for then new vocalist Jón Aldará, its snail's-pace drift and eerie dynamics suggest that Barren Earth have become the death metal Floyd – with a dash of ELP.



Solitude Pith (*A Complex Of Cages*, 2018)

A Complex Of Cages is the Finns' fourth album, and it's their darkest and strangest yet, with *Solitude Pith* its brooding, mildly unhinged centrepiece. From its explosive, pomp-powered chorus to the thrilling, Fripp-in-hell midsection, and on to a wonderfully melodramatic finale, it's an emotional roller coaster with lashings of turbocharged Hammond. **DL**

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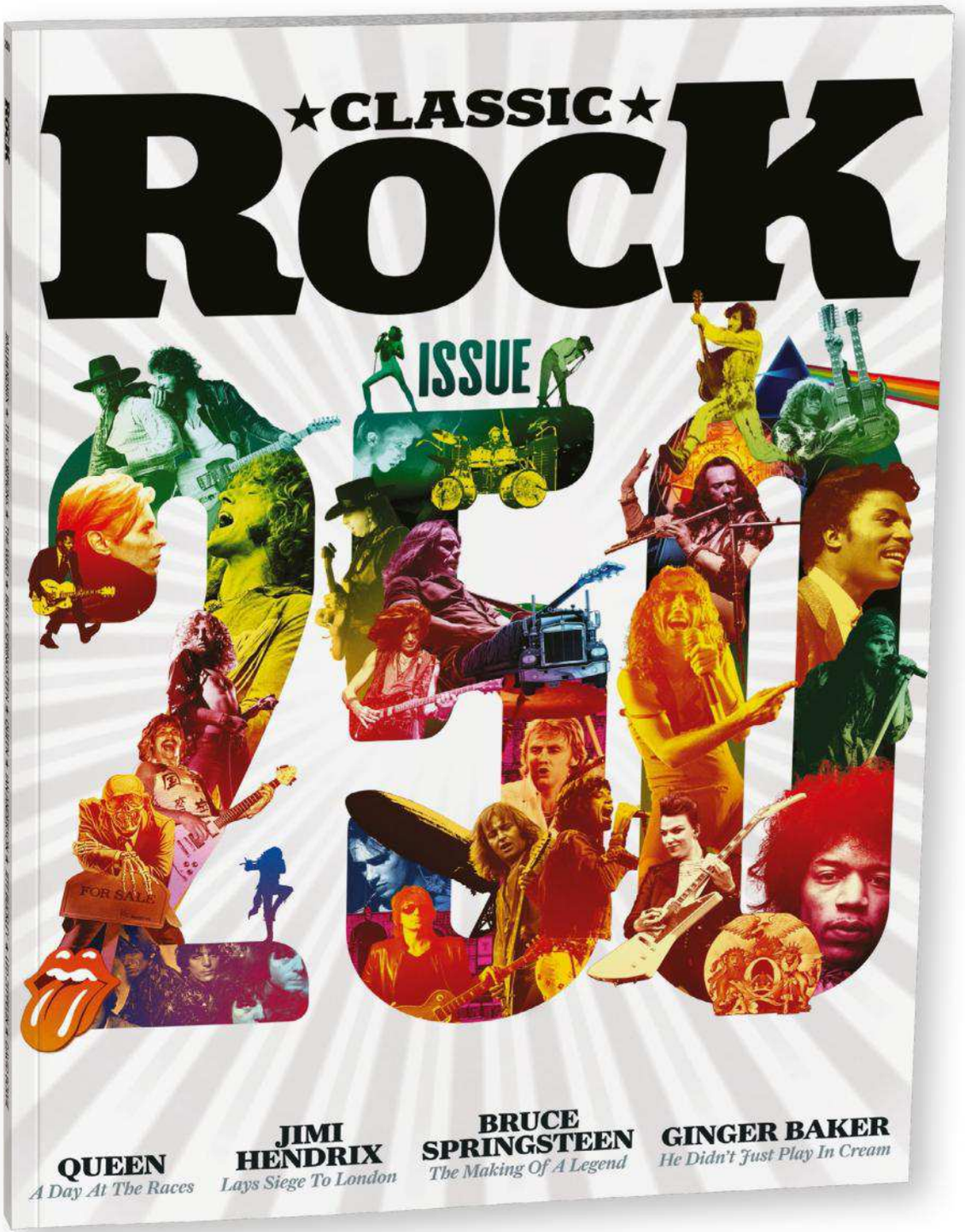
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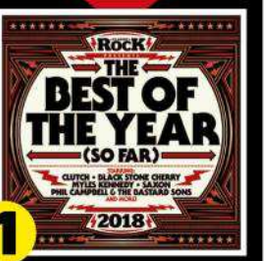
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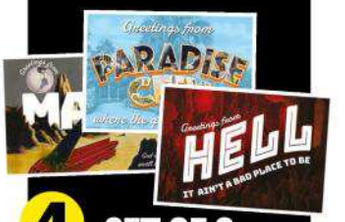
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The Art Of Repairing: Mariusz Duda explores themes of loss and living on his new album.

Mourning glory

Death cast a long shadow over *Fractured*, last year's album from **Mariusz Duda**'s solo project **Lunatic Soul**. Its remarkable follow-up remains shaded in the darkest darks, but as the Riverside man tells *Prog*, he's now taking his first steps back into the light.

Words: Natasha Scharf **Images:** Sightsphere

Death has long held a skeletal grip on the arts. Themes of sorrow and grief have left their ghostly imprint on canvas, parchment, celluloid and polycarbonate, and within the last few decades, they've shaded parts of the progressive world too. From Porcupine Tree's melancholic hymns to iamthemorning's heartaching tales, prog has been touched by the same dark hand that caresses the work of multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Mariusz Duda. Not only does he paint from a darker palette with Riverside, but also with Lunatic Soul.

He's previously described his solo project as his "darker ego" but after nearly a decade of creating haunting lullabies, death's grip has begun to loosen. His latest creation, *Under The Fragmented Sky* — released in the late spring rather than in the usual autumn — adds faint ripples of light to his body of work.

"The subject [of death] has always fascinated me but when death knocked on doors near me in real life, I started to push it away a bit," Duda says. "That's why I changed the mood on [last year's] *Fractured* and *...Fragmented Sky*, but they're still connected with my darker side."

Music is Duda's therapy. In 2016, his life was turned upside down when his Riverside bandmate Piotr Grudziński suffered a fatal heart attack and the group's future was thrown into doubt. Less than three months later, Duda's father died just as suddenly.

As the singer-songwriter's life unexpectedly slowed down, it also gained new meaning. Duda retreated to the studio and poured his grief into making the noises that became *Fractured*. With its driving anger, strobing beats and vocoder effects, the album was unlike anything he had created before. It was less about dark ambience and neoclassical hues and more about rhythm, melodies and experimenting with electronics.

It was a lengthy process, but a cathartic one. Yet *Fractured* wasn't the end of the tale. A handful of mostly instrumental tracks didn't quite fit on the electronic-influenced album so instead of plonking them on the end as bonus material, Duda came up with the idea of a maxi-single. It was originally to be set around an edited version of the 12-minute epic *A Thousand Shards Of Heaven* — a song he composed on Grudziński's old guitar — but he soon realised that if he added a couple more songs, he would have not only a full album but a companion piece that would bring closure to this particular chapter of Lunatic Soul.

"*Fractured* was supposed to be sharp with some electronic versions, but things like *Untamed* and the title track just didn't fit," reveals Duda over the phone from his home in Poland. "For me, an album should be coherent from beginning to end, as if it's one piece. I removed the instrumentals because they were too organic, too mellow and too melancholic, but I don't think *Under The Fragmented Sky* sounds like a 'Best Of' or leftovers. I think it has its own identity. That's why I decided to release this as a full album."

He pauses and adds with a laugh, "I hope this album is better than *The Endless River*! No offence, but so many people felt that Pink Floyd would have been better if they could have added that material to an anniversary release of *The Division Bell*, right? I'm happy they released it separately because more

"I hope this album is better than The Endless River*! I think it has its own identity."*



Soul Survivor: Mariusz Duda.

"Am I coming out of mourning? Yes, I think so."

people got to hear it, but many of those tracks sound like unfinished ideas. I don't want my album to be compared to Pink Floyd's because each track on *...Fragmented Sky* is finished – the whole album is complete and coherent."

Duda is upbeat as he recalls his most recent musical journey and he frequently chuckles mid-conversation in anticipation of what he's going to say next. He's open, friendly and even treats *Prog* to a sneak preview of a new demo. It's all a far cry from the moody persona portrayed in Lunatic Soul's melancholic promo shots. Yet Duda has every right to be excited right now. Not only is he currently working on Riverside's new album (see box), but with *...Fragmented Sky*, he's created a diverse and very cohesive companion release.

The eight-track recording mixes new ideas with further studio experimentation. Where *Fractured* was a reaction to his life shattering, *...Fragmented Sky* sees Duda assembling the broken shards in new lyrical and instrumental formations. It represents the transition between life and death. There's the moody *Trials* with its punctured dance beat, the powerful simplicity of the soul-searching title track, and the Gary Numan-meets-Dead Can Dance song *Shadows*. The album's lead track is closer *Untamed*, which the musician describes as "one of the most positive songs of my career". The uplifting melody suggests he's closing the door on one of the toughest periods in his life and heading towards a brighter future. Is this an indication that he's coming out of mourning?

"Yes, I think so," he says almost immediately. "... *Fragmented Sky* has some dark moments, but spring is outside the window so I thought it would be nice to start with a more positive kind of song. Also, two years have passed since my father's death and Piotr's so it's time to move on, definitely. I want to start [that process]."

Despite most of the album being recorded during the *Fractured* sessions – penultimate track *The Art Of Repairing* is an exception – *...Fragmented Sky* explores new sonic territories and mixes them seamlessly, yielding a slightly different sound compared to its predecessor. Yet Duda's inspiration comes not from the modern world of 65daysofstatic or his Kscope labelmates North Atlantic Oscillation and Richard Barbieri, but from his studio experiments. It was there that he made the most of his unexpected spare time to try out new ideas, especially with his vocals.

"I decided to experiment more with my voice – I'm always trying to sing in different pitches and I wanted to really transform it in different ways," he says. "I was listening to artists like [US indie folk band] Bon Iver and LCD Soundsystem, but for the first time in my career, I used vocoder effects like Daft Punk. I think you can find voice experiments like that in every track, but if you ask me about inspiration then this album was mostly influenced by *Fractured*."

He adds with a chuckle, "My burden is that I always try to focus on melodies. I can't record modern electronic music without melodies so when I experiment with weird sounds, it always has to have melody."

Although his studio experiments with Lunatic Soul have also afforded him the opportunity to experiment away from the format of a live rock band, he's also been able to expand on his ideas with Riverside. This symbiosis has fuelled a circle of creativity to organically strengthen both ventures, but does the studio project directly impact on how he writes for his more traditional outlet?

> *"I'm a happy person. I just make sad songs."*

"Every experience on every album influences the next," he replies. "It doesn't matter which [project] I'm working on, it's mostly my music and I do what I feel in that moment. If I make a dark album with Lunatic Soul, I don't want to repeat that and make another dark album with Riverside so I always try to make those two things different from each other. I don't want to repeat myself so I went more to the light [with *...Fragmented Sky*] mostly because I wanted to bring Riverside back to dark music."

Duda pauses to laugh, and adds, "Be prepared for something really, really dark this time!

"But Lunatic Soul has helped me a lot in the studio," he continues. "For instance, because I don't use electric guitar on any of the songs, I have to use different instruments and make them sound like electric guitar. Thanks to this, I can now make an album without Piotr on guitar."

This October, it'll be 10 years since Lunatic Soul's first release: the self-titled recording the musician affectionately refers to as "the black album" on account of its dark cover. Yet despite all the changes in Duda's life, not to mention the expanded fanbase brought by prog's modern resurgence, he's clear that the goal for his solo project has never wavered.

"I started Lunatic Soul mostly because I wanted to do more music – it really was that simple," he says. "When I started, I was recording the albums mostly in between Riverside tours. The only difference now is that in 2016, we had to cancel the tour because of Piotr's death so I had much more time in the studio. But what I wanted to do with Lunatic Soul was to create an alternative world for me. I still have that world, I still have this project and I can create something different than what I do in Riverside. I can do something every year if I want to."

But there's one thing Duda has yet to achieve with Lunatic Soul and that's a live show. He's reiterates that it's just a studio project, but would he ever play the songs live?

"Maybe," he says with some hesitation. "It's interesting because these days, if you only have a studio project, it's musical suicide. But thanks to Riverside, I can create my music with Lunatic Soul without having to worry about how to play it live. I can just experiment with different effects. The day I play live probably will come..." he pauses and chuckles, "but I'm not sure if it will be as Lunatic Soul or under my own name yet. We will see!"

Whatever he decides to do, one thing is certain: this is the end of one chapter, but where he will head to next remains to be seen. But as Duda has previously said that art comes from unhappiness, *Prog* wonders if that reflects his own personality. "No, I'm a happy person," he laughs. "I just make sad songs inspired by death and dreams!"

Maybe death hasn't entirely loosened its grip on Lunatic Soul after all.



Under The Fragmented Sky is out now via Kscope. See www.lunaticsoul.com for more information.

RIVERSIDE: THE NEXT CHAPTER

Frontman **Mariusz Duda** grabs his black trench coat and wades into the wastelands for Riverside's next album.

When Piotr Grudziński died, Riverside's future looked uncertain. The remaining members – Mariusz Duda, drummer Piotr Kozieradzki and keyboard player Michał Łapaj – cancelled their outstanding tour and took some time out to grieve.

After months of deliberation, the Polish proggers decided they would continue as a trio and pushed ahead with plans to release the 'complementary' ambient album *Eye Of The Soundscape* in September 2016. After a string of live shows, they're back in the studio working on the official follow-up to 2015's *Love, Fear And The Time Machine*.

"The theme is post-apocalyptic," reveals Duda. "I thought it was a nice metaphor because in a way, Riverside's world ended when Piotr died so now we're rebuilding everything. It will be slower, darker, more intense and heavier than the previous albums, but not like [2009's] *Anno Domini High Definition*."

The album, currently untitled, is scheduled for release at the end of September and includes a guest appearance from Riverside "soulmate" and live guitarist Maciek Meller, also part of the Meller Gołyźniak Duda side project. But Duda's got an even bigger surprise: *Prog* can confirm that the frontman will be experimenting with a lower vocal register.

"I think it will be interesting, but don't worry, I won't be singing like that all the way through," he says. "I've decided to focus more on the melodies this time, vocal and instrumental. I remember when I was a kid [in the 70s] I was into a lot of historical-themed entertainment and they always started with a theme tune that would maybe sound something like Jethro Tull's *Songs From The Wood*. These kind of things could appear on the new Riverside album... maybe!"

Riverside hope to tour later this year, with further dates tentatively scheduled for next spring. **NRS**

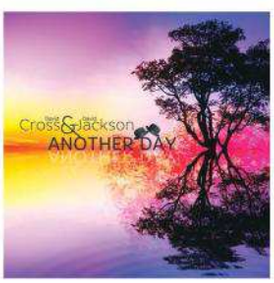
VAN CRIMSON?

It's a match made in heaven for prog veterans **David Cross** and **David Jackson**, who unite for debut collaboration *Another Day*.

Words: Dom Lawson **Portraits:** Chiemi Cross

Having contributed their musical talents to some of the most revered and groundbreaking prog albums of them all, David Cross and David Jackson will require little introduction to most *Prog* readers. The violinist's membership of King Crimson during the *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* and *Starless And Bible Black* era and the saxophonist's integral position within arguably *the* classic Van der Graaf Generator line-up mean that both are highly significant figures with legacies and reputations to match.

As a result, the release of new collaborative album *Another Day* is certain to pique the interest of the prog hordes. A rambling but subtly focused exercise in semi-improvised prog abandon, it teams the duo with bassist Mick Paul (David Cross Band) and drummer Craig Blundell (Steven Wilson) across 57 minutes of vibrant but wonky art rock. Cross and Jackson's respective instruments blend seamlessly, as if they'd been working together for decades. In fact, the two veterans' paths didn't officially cross until well into the 21st century.



"Yes, it does seem strange but I only ever managed to see King Crimson once, and it was before Cross was in the band," Jackson reveals. "It was only because we were on the same bill or the same festival or whatever it was. So our paths didn't cross in the Crimson days and they didn't between then and now, because we both did lots and lots of other things. Once we were both off the prog scene, it wasn't going to happen. But we both went seriously into education, so we've got ever such a lot in common, David and I."

"I suspect we did cross paths back in the Crimson days but we certainly didn't communicate very well with each other if we did!" laughs Cross. "I did see him when I was running a jazz club called the Gypsy Queen in Camden, as a sort of community outreach project, in the 80s and 90s. I think David played at something there. I remember seeing him on [iconic BBC TV science show] *Tomorrow's World*, talking about Soundbeams [an interactive music technology system used by disabled people, a project Jackson was heavily involved in promoting in the 90s] and working with kids with disabilities. I was involved in education myself so I was interested in those ideas as well. So I knew of him, rather than knew him. In the end, we only really met properly in 2010."

As the twosome explain, it was almost as if they were destined to work together. Back in 2009, Jackson contributed to an album called *Down In Shadows* by an Italian prog band called N.y.X. Also involved was esteemed Chapman Stick virtuoso and King Crimson alumnus Trey Gunn, and there were plans for the ensemble to embark on a few dates around Italy in 2010. What began as a planned five-date excursion steadily shrank down to a single date at a prog

> "I SUSPECT WE DID CROSS PATHS BACK IN THE CRIMSON DAYS BUT WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T COMMUNICATE VERY WELL WITH EACH OTHER IF WE DID!"
>
> **David Cross**

Right, L-R: David Cross and David Jackson. Above left: their debut *Another Day*.





DGM/KING CRIMSON PRESS

King Crimson in 1973, L-R: Robert Fripp, David Cross, John Wetton, Bill Bruford.

festival in Verona, at which point Gunn withdrew from the gig ("…because he probably didn't think it was worth it!" Jackson chuckles). Now needing a replacement to make the gig worthwhile, N.y.X. eventually picked David Cross' name from a list of potential candidates. Suddenly the violinist found himself chatting with David Jackson about flying to Verona and making some music, both together and with Italian prog heavyweights Arti e Mestieri and Osanna respectively.

"We spoke on the phone and arranged to meet at beautiful Stansted," Jackson recalls. "I was wearing a cowboy hat. He was wearing a beret. Eventually we said hello and we haven't stopped chatting since, to be honest. Somehow we managed to sit together on the plane that day, which was a miracle. Within a few minutes, we realised that we were on exactly the same medication and had the same oesophageal problems!"

As they flew across Europe to Verona, Cross and Jackson quickly worked out that they had plenty in common, not least a shared interest in pursuing new and exciting music, rather than merely trading on past glories on the nostalgia circuit. That first conversation has clearly led to a strong creative and personal bond between the two men, along with a real sense of shared excitement at the unexpected chemistry that seemed to magically appear between them.

"I think what excited me about Jackson was that he's very forward-looking and not stuck in the past," Cross says of his friend. "He's got respect for his legacy but he wants to make new music and to do new stuff. That's exactly what we did when we got to Verona.

"We managed to persuade the organisers to let us do a little set of our own, which we improvised our way through. It was all completely fresh. Suddenly, I was the navigator and he was the captain of the ship, or maybe it was the other way round — I can't remember which! [Laughs] But it was all improvised. That kind of understanding, that mutual madness and desperate desire to do something new and innovative, it really brought us together. That really typifies the way we interact now."

"Within a week or so of that show in Italy, we arranged to meet in London and we played some tracks together," Jackson remembers. "We developed a great friendship and a great way of working and we had a great laugh as well. On the second session, we plugged everything in and played and it became that song on the album, *Arrival*. Stuff we played on the first session became things like *Last Ride*, because we started to back-compose from all the improvisations. There was so much great stuff to work with."

Bolstered by that formidable Blundell/Paul rhythm section, the material on *Another Day* is primarily instrumental and superficially free-form, as Jackson's unmistakable tone and Cross' untamed violin scorch across a precise but fluid and unpredictable rhythmic bedrock. Both recognisably prog and fervently progressive, it veers from thudding art rock angularity (*Predator, Breaking Bad*) to rich, evocative jazz rock (*Last Ride, Trane To Kiev*) via blissfully melodic and uplifting glimmers of sonic hope, such as the climactic *Anthem For Another Day*. What it definitely doesn't do is deliver the expected or stick to a formula, and that's an ethos both men are quietly proud to uphold.

"It was fairly upfront when we started to put the album together — we wanted it to be uncompromising but we wanted it to be accessible as well," Cross notes. "So that means riffs and rhythms or chants, things that the audience can relate to and get locked into, but also being able to be as avant-garde or as dissonant as we want. We deliberately moved away from clever time signatures and that kind of thing, so that when we were doing the rock stuff it was always fairly well grounded, and the way you were supposed to relate to it, physically and emotionally, was fairly obvious."

"What makes it magical, working with David, is that there are so many ways of working," says Jackson. "I never realised how many different ways there were to collaborate with people. Van der Graaf was very structured and it wasn't an easy process writing for the band or



IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Van Der Graaf Generator in Paris, May 25, 1974, L-R: Peter Hammill, Hugh Banton, Guy Evans, David Jackson.



Davids Jackson and Cross: the bowler hat fashion trend starts here...

even getting work accepted. It's not that easy getting stuff past Cross either, to be honest! But having all these different strategies to write, that's what makes music so interesting with him. He does these little sketches sometimes and they're just brilliant. I can elaborate on those and then he really goes to town with what he plays. There's a burning desire to do something new and we work really fast. It's really been fantastic."

Nothing in prog is ever simple, of course. Such is the strength of his newfound professional relationship with Cross, that Jackson has now become a permanent member of the David Cross Band too. The result is that the two men now collaborate and perform as the standalone Cross And Jackson duo, as fellow members of Cross' titular band, and now as part of the Cross And Jackson quartet that made *Another Day*. Reading between the lines, it's clear that everyone involved is simply revelling in the freedom and potential of all the various permutations conjured by this meeting of legendary minds. As Cross notes, when sublime chemistry spontaneously erupts between a group of musicians, all you can do is go with the flow.

"Yeah, it just kind of happened and it was beyond our wildest dreams really," he notes cheerfully. "We were experimenting a bit. We'd agree on a key and a tempo, play with a click track and see what came out of it. Sometimes we'd pre-record some sax and violin and other times everything was completely open. But it all worked. Craig and Mick were absolutely incredible. There was some real mind-reading going on. In the song *Mr Morose*, there's a moment at the end where Mick and Jackson suddenly played the same phrase. It hadn't occurred anywhere before, but suddenly they played it together. It's an extraordinary kind of feel that came out of these sessions. It's really amazing."

"Yes, that song was a blind improvisation and at the end of those four minutes, both Mick and I played exactly the same thing at the same time," adds Jackson. "It was absolutely astonishing. We were all shivering all over, like, 'How the hell did that happen?' Then it was time for the next improvisation and the engineer suddenly gave us 15/8 at 172bpm and it was, 'Oh my God, off we go again!'"

Speaking of engineers, it would seem rude to talk about *Another Day* without acknowledging that the album was mixed by David Jackson's son, Jake. An acclaimed recording engineer and producer, he has also worked on Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds' wildly successful recent studio albums, as well as releases from many other high-profile acts. As his proud dad explains, Jake's wealth of experience really pushed *Another Day* to unexpected heights.

"He's an absolutely brilliant, award-winning engineer, and he's added an awful lot to this record," says Jackson Senior. "I was able to do rough mixes and send them off to him, and then he puts his producer's hat on, because he does a lot production now, and he'll make some suggestions. We've had a few arguments too, of course! But he's an extraordinary talent. The album is sonically sparkling. I've never heard myself so good and I'm sure Cross feels the same."

Now that their musical lives are thoroughly interwoven, both Cross and Jackson speak excitedly about the future, the continuation of the project begun on *Another Day* and the ongoing expansion of their improvisational and songwriting partnership. What comes across most strongly is that both are thrilled to be enjoying such a rich musical life at this stage in their lengthy careers. Having narrowly avoided each other when prog was young, these two mavericks are determined to rinse every last drop of inspiration from their mutual appreciation society.

"Working with David has fed back enormously into everything I do," says Cross. "He's such a fantastic musician, but a great entertainer and a wonderful communicator too. I'm learning such a lot and I actually think I'm improving as a musician as a result. There's a real joy and a real spontaneity to all of this and it's fantastic."

"This does absolutely feel like a long-term thing," Jackson concludes. "Bearing in mind that we're both getting on a bit! I'm 71 and he's 69, so you've got to get on with it, haven't you? But he's a guy with many irons in the fire and I am as well. We're both jugglers, really — juggling other business, other bands and other projects all the time — but I think that really adds to this collaboration. Working with David really is wonderful. It's exciting. There will be more!"

Another Day is out now via The Right Honourable Recording Company Ltd. See bit.ly/cross-jackson for more information.

"WE DEVELOPED A GREAT FRIENDSHIP AND A GREAT WAY OF WORKING AND WE HAD A GREAT LAUGH AS WELL."

David Jackson

Be Prog! My Friend Preview

Everything you need to know about Barcelona's Prog Award-winning festival, **Be Prog! My Friend**...

Words: Natasha Scharf

FRIDAY



A PERFECT CIRCLE

Billy Howerdel: "It's been a long time since we last played in Barcelona – I think it was back in 2004 and I remember walking around the city and being wowed by it, so we're looking forward to playing there again.

"We've been touring locally since *Eat The Elephant* came out. We've played about seven of the new songs and the reception has been good so far.

"I've been looking forward [to playing the new material] – these songs are a reflection of where we're at as musicians and people in 2018 so it's what we're most interested in presenting at this point."



PAIN OF SALVATION

Daniel Gildenlöw: "We played at Be Prog! in 2014 and we're really happy to be back. Since we've been doing quite a lot of shows around the world with *In The Passing Light Of Day*, we have a strong set and the band line-up is stronger than ever, so it's going to be very nice to stand on stage and deliver that to the crowd.

"We'll be playing a lot from the new album and some old material that hasn't been played in a while. There will be one or two songs that people might be a bit surprised to hear so it'll be an interesting show."



ORANSSI PAZUZU

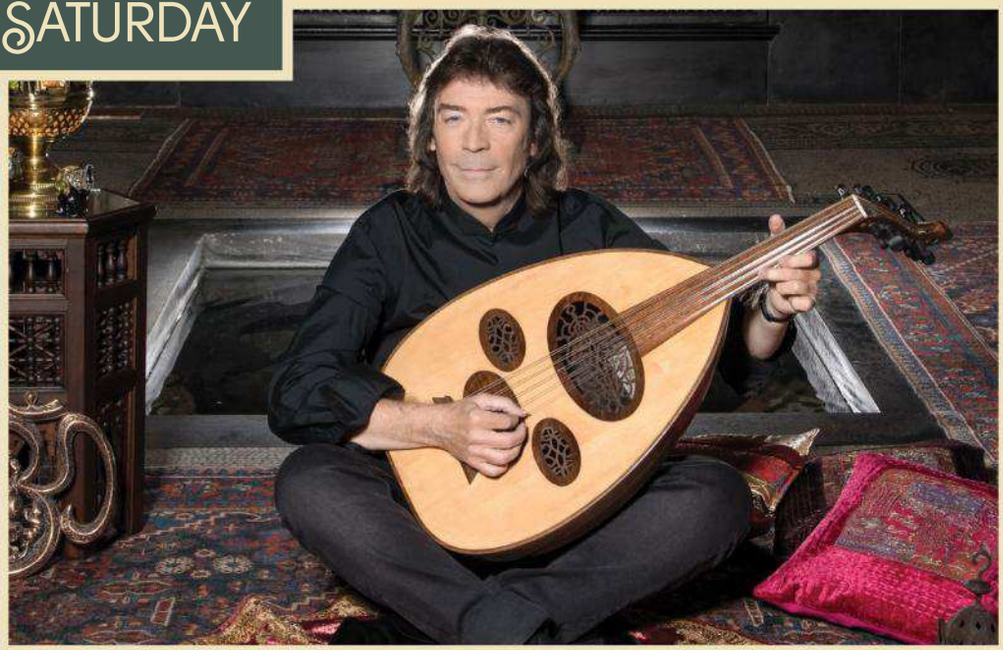
Jun-His: "This will be our second time in Barcelona but our first Spanish festival and I like the concept because there are so many different bands. I'm going to try to catch a bit of A Perfect Circle because I've never seen them live. It'll be fun to play at night because I know Spanish people don't go to sleep so early – they're out partying or seeing bands. Oranssi Pazuzu are at their best right now and we want to give a set that represents that, so we'll try to take things to another dimension and mix it up with a couple of songs we haven't played for a while."

Also playing

PERSEFONE
Expect a strong set of tunes from this Andorran six-piece who lean a little more towards the metal side of prog.

BARONESS
The US progressive sludge powerhouse return to the Catalonian capital with a set that includes material from their latest album *Purple*.

SATURDAY



STEVE HACKETT

Steve Hackett: "It'll be great to play at the Be Prog! Festival – I always love playing to the fantastic crowd in Barcelona! It's always a tremendous buzz to be in that wonderful vibrant and creative city too, with its amazing art, beautiful buildings and fantastic fountains.

"We'll bring our special Genesis Revisited show, involving big Genesis favourites like *Supper's Ready, One For The Vine, Firth Of Fifth* and much more. There'll also be a special solo selection celebrating the *Please Don't Touch* anniversary and including the GTR hit *When The Heart Rules The Mind*. See you all there!"

Also playing

PLINI

The Aussie guitarist extraordinaire will be showcasing tracks from 2016's *Handmade Cities*, and there may even be a preview of his forthcoming release.

BURST

This is a very special reunion show for the Swedes, who will be playing their *Lazarus Bird* album in full, along with a selection of their other choice cuts.



GAZPACHO

Thomas Anderson: "It's our first festival of the year and we haven't played in Barcelona since 2009 so we're looking forward to it immensely. A lot of people there either won't have heard of us or won't have seen us live so we're going to give them the best of the best, with live favourites and a few new ones.

"I love playing shows in hot weather: I love being in the heat of the moment and getting into that vibe of being on stage. It's important to stay hydrated though, so have some beers, have some wine – Spanish cava is fantastic – and enjoy yourself!"



SONS OF APOLLO

Derek Sherinian: "We're very excited to bring Sons Of Apollo to Europe. We've been playing throughout the US and the shows are going over great. People are really loving the band and we're having a great time.

"We'll be playing *Psychotic Symphony* in its entirety and there will be a couple of other surprises to fill out the set. The show will be action-packed and flow nicely. There *will* be a couple of Dream Theater songs from the era that Mike [Portnoy] and I worked together but you'll have to come along to find out which ones!"

BE PROG! MY FRIEND

The Essential Info...

FRIDAY JUNE 29

5.15pm – 6pm Persefone
6.30pm – 7.40pm Baroness
8.10pm – 9.50pm Pain Of Salvation
10.35pm – 12.20am A Perfect Circle
12.50am – 2am Oranssi Pazuzu

SATURDAY JUNE 30

5.15pm – 6pm Plini
6.30pm – 7.50pm Gazpacho
8.20pm – 9.50pm Sons Of Apollo
10.30pm – 12.20am Steve Hackett
12.50pm – 2am Burst

TICKETS: Weekend tickets cost €130 in advance or €140 on the door. Day tickets are available from €75 in advance. Bringing kids? Under-13s are eligible for discounted advance tickets and there's free entry for children under five.

LOCATION: The festival takes place in the central courtyard of Poble Espanyol, Av Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, 13, 08038, Barcelona, Spain. It's about 30 minutes on foot from Las Ramblas and easy to access via public transport.

TRAVEL: The closest airport is Barcelona, which is seven-and-a-half miles away. Public transport is recommended to reach the festival site. Either take the metro to Espanyol or the Autobús to Poble. If you're travelling by car, you'll find private parking nearby.

DISABLED ACCESS: There's a disabled viewing area at the event.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS: The festival site opens at 4.30pm on both days so you can soak up the city before enjoying the live bands. This year, there will be a signing tent with a professional photographer to ensure a great experience for all fans.

ACCOMMODATION: Rest your weary head at a nearby hotel or B&B. You can find local deals and hotel packages at www.beprogmyfriend.com.

ABOUT THE LOCATION: Poble Espanyol was built in 1929 and is designed to look like a Spanish village with replicas of buildings from different regions. It's packed with bars and restaurants where you can enjoy the local tapas and beers.

DON'T FORGET TO PACK: Sun cream, ear protectors and extra euros to spend on the official merchandise. Bought some bargain booze in Barcelona? Leave it at the hotel or you won't be allowed onto the site!

Disclaimer: all details are correct at time of press. Please visit www.beprogmyfriend.com for any last-minute changes.



THE PROG INTERVIEW

KLAUS SCHULZE

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 electronic music pioneer **Klaus Schulze**. He played with Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Tempel before launching a solo career and going on to work with a wide variety of musicians. He turned 70 last year but is still making new music and has just released a new album, *Silhouettes*. He looks back over his expansive and impressive career with *Prog*...

Words: Rob Hughes

Klaus Schulze is one of the chief architects of electronic music. Having been an early member of two of Germany's most influential avant-gardists – Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Tempel – he embarked on a solo career that's since yielded dozens of albums and a dizzying array of collaborations. His meandering soundscapes and ambient drones have helped shape the course of experimental music over five decades, his restless creativity showing few signs of letting up.

Born in post-war Berlin, Schulze began as a guitarist, switching to drums in Psy Free before bumping into fellow traveller Edgar Froese at the Zodiac Free Arts Lab in 1969. Froese duly invited him to join Tangerine Dream, forming the nucleus of the line-up (along with Conrad Schnitzler) that released debut LP *Electronic Meditation* a year later. When Schnitzler quit soon after to form improv ensemble Eruption, Schulze briefly signed up, before hooking up with guitarist Manuel Göttsching and bassist Hartmut Enke as Ash Ra Tempel. Their self-titled debut, consisting of two elongated tracks that married proggy ambience to open-ended kosmische, landed in 1971. Crucially, it found Schulze playing around with electronica, as well as keeping pulse behind the drum kit.



Klaus Schulze's latest album Silhouettes, released in May.

The dynamics of band life, however, clearly didn't appeal. Within months he'd quit to go solo, assembling a variety of what he called "E-machines" for the otherworldly drone album *Irrlicht*. Schulze used a modified electric organ to achieve the sounds he wanted, processing and filtering a recording of a classical orchestra into a vast three-part suite. "I listened to the rock music of that time, but my music had nothing to do with the common music of this era," he explained later. "I was experimenting, I was searching for something new."

By 1974 he'd acquired his first synthesiser, used to full effect on that summer's *Blackdance*. The following year's ravishing *Timewind* saw Schulze use a sequencer for the first time, while its epic songs made direct reference to one of his key influences, 19th-century composer Richard Wagner. Indeed, he began to record as Richard Wahnfried in the late 70s, taking his alias from the name of Wagner's beloved villa in Bayreuth.

As Schulze's reputation grew, he found himself much in demand. He contributed to recordings by German supergroup The Cosmic Jokers, produced The Far East Family Band, created film soundtracks and teamed up with Stomu Yamashta and Steve Winwood in 1976 as part of the all-star fusion outfit Go.

> "Music, for me, was always a release from everyday life."

The advent of digital technology, combined with analogue synths, allowed Schulze even greater artistic freedom during the 80s. His music tended to become more accessible as the decade wore on, to the point where new wave countrymen Alphaville hit on the idea of bringing him in as producer of 1989's *The Breathtaking Blue*. Alas, it was a creative marriage that evidently wasn't meant to last.

Schulze started experimenting with samplers during the 90s, offsetting his solo work by getting together with Pete Namlook for a series of Pink Floyd-inspired albums as The Dark Side Of The Moog. More recently, in 2017, Schulze saluted his 70th birthday with *Eternal*, a set largely made up of reconfigured or previously unheard tracks.

Its release coincided with a bout of ill health that threatened to curtail his studio output, but he's now returned with *Silhouettes*, his first album of all-new material in five years. A sublime, meditative work, Schulze describes it as "a reduction to the essential things... a renewed awareness of what is really important".


Dark Side Of The Moog: Schulze today, still pushing boundaries.

KLAUSE SCHULZE/PRESS

INTERFOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Machine Music: Klaus Schulze in 1973, the year he released *Cyborg*.



ALAIN DISTER/RETNA PICTURES/AVALON

Ash Ra Tempel in 1973, L-R: Klaus Schulze, Manuel Göttsching, Hartmut Enke.

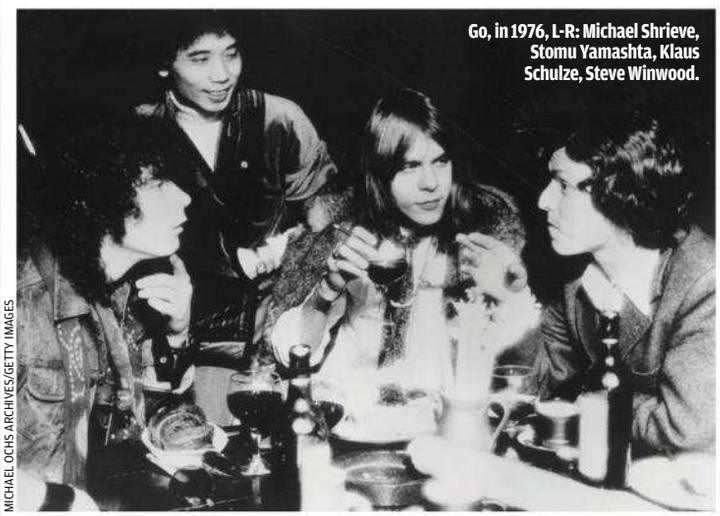
Tell us a little about the development of *Silhouettes*.
In a way it came about like it always does with a Klaus Schulze record: it just happens. There *is* no plan. The music I have in mind is the music I hear while it's being played. It's always been like this, but on the other hand, this one took quite a long time.

You've said that the album came about after a period of reflection. Was there anything in particular that triggered it?
For *Silhouettes*, I didn't really have a specific idea or concept in the beginning. The time of reflection came after my disease had dominated quite a large part of my life. It's a renal disease, very treatable with dialysis, but unfortunately related to side effects from time to time that are unpredictable. When I recovered and slowly went back to normal mode, I had longer quiet periods of looking back at the past, at my entire life. I guess this is normal when you celebrate your 70th birthday.

It wasn't until the summer of 2017 that I was ready to go back to the drawing board. When I played the first notes, I realised what they meant to me, how deep they really sounded once I started listening. I simply didn't want any distractions within the music. I wanted it to be as pure as it could be, just the distilled essence and nothing fancy to take away from the inner musical core of the sounds and harmonies.

The songs on *Silhouettes* sometimes take a while to reveal themselves. Has that always been part of how you operate?
Probably, yes. But with *Silhouettes* it was different, because the music revealed itself to me more than at other times in the past. Or maybe I was more of a listener. It played itself like a very emotional live concert – without thinking, really – only that it happened in the studio.

It's very important to me to take my time to develop the musical themes – the build-ups, the peaks and the circles closing in, pretty much like in classical music. That's why I simply cannot do five-minute tracks.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Go, in 1976, L-R: Michael Shrieve, Stomu Yamashta, Klaus Schulze, Steve Winwood.

Going back to your early days, was there much room for experimental music in Berlin during the mid to late 1960s?
Not really, but in Berlin there was at least a small scene forming with me, Ash Ra Tempel, Tangerine Dream and others. And, in contrast to Munich or Düsseldorf, we had this wall all around Berlin, so there was a pretty 'private' vibe at the time. From there it sort of did spread out, but we ourselves were still kind of isolated from the rest of the world.

You began as a guitar player before switching to drums with Psy Free. Why did you make the transition from one instrument to another?
Initially I just had the feeling. I'd always liked drums and had been a guitar player before. And I'd developed my own technique back then. I would put the guitar on the floor and treat the strings with metal plates, pipes, bottlenecks and other things. There had been a little experimenting with drums here and there, but it really kicked in – pun intended! – when I joined Ash Ra Tempel as a drummer.

Later I switched to the synthesiser because I realised it gave me greater musical freedom and variety of expression.

What are your recollections of meeting Edgar Froese in Berlin?
Ah, Edgar [smiles]. He introduced me to the professional side of making music. Psy Free, the band I played in before, had more of that amateur attitude, but when Edgar asked me to join Tangerine Dream, they were already working on a professional level. Over time, we both developed different points of view regarding the music we did.

Tangerine Dream's 1970 debut album, Electronic Meditation.



Can you describe the chemistry in Tangerine Dream between you, Edgar and Conrad Schnitzler?



JAKUBASZEK/GETTY IMAGES

Klaus Schulze at Berlin's Tempodrom on September 19, 2009.



> When I recovered and slowly went back to normal mode, I had longer quiet periods of looking back at the past, at my entire life. I guess this is normal when you celebrate your 70th birthday.

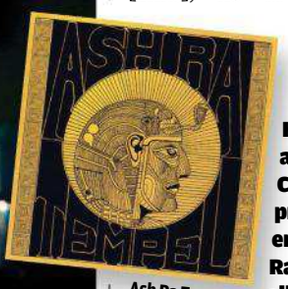
Edgar *was* Tangerine Dream. Anybody who would join the band had to accept the fact that it was Edgar who made the decisions. That was okay for me, but at a certain point I realised I needed to follow my own musical path, to pursue my own vision. That's when I left to found Ash Ra Tempel with Manuel [Göttsching], who was a better guitar player in my eyes as well.

Conrad felt more like a neutral in that scenario as he didn't argue that much about harmonies and structures, but seemed to be discovering his instrument in a childlike way.

Edgar remembered you as "a very bad drummer, but he had some craziness about him!". Do you know what he meant by that?

He most certainly was talking about the way I played fills, rolls and breaks. The fills always ended somewhere, but never right on the beginning of the next bar [laughs]. That continued with Ash Ra Tempel, but Manuel got so used to it after a short while that he really missed it when I wasn't there and another drummer was playing instead.

When I played those breaks or fills he could just start playing whenever he felt like it, and it never seemed too late. That's why we stayed together in Ash Ra Tempel so long, because it felt like a good fit. The closest personal musical connection I had was with Manuel in Ash Ra Tempel. Also with Hartmut [Enke], who was a decent bass player. A very good musical team, I think.



Ash Ra Tempel's eponymous 1971 debut album, featuring Klaus Schulze.

How influential a figure was Conny Plank, who produced and engineered Ash Ra Tempel's debut album in 1971?

Not very influential, really. He was a great engineer at the studio where we had our first professional recording session booked. And Conny knew how to handle us [laughs]. We were quite different than your usual professional band, who you can interrupt any time and say, "Can you play that again, please?" When Manuel was

asked to repeat a certain part on the guitar, he said: "What?!" because he didn't know how to do it. And it was the same with me. We only played what we felt in the moment so we couldn't repeat any of that. Conny got that immediately, so it was a 'take it or leave it' approach regarding most parts of our recording sessions.

You didn't hang around as a member of either Tangerine Dream or Ash Ra Tempel. Was there something about being in a band that you felt limited you?
Yes, especially with Tangerine Dream, as Edgar told us what to do. With Ash Ra Tempel it was much better, but still limited due to the other people that I had to keep in mind and react to. That's why, in the end, I went solo. That was the only way I could determine 100 per cent of what I wanted to do. It was probably the most important step for me.

You recorded your solo debut, 1972's *Irrlicht*, in your newly built studio, and the album featured organ, drones and distorted orchestrations. Musically, did it suddenly feel like anything was possible at that point in time?
I'd just started as an amateur, really. I still had no big studio at hand at the time. We had to record the orchestra at Berlin University with just one standard microphone. Of course the quality wasn't exactly overwhelming, but at the time this was all we had and we were just happy to get the opportunity to record in the first place. Nobody was actually interested in my music at the time, so for us it was great.



1976's Moondawn album that saw Schulze introduce the Moog.

Can you explain the attraction of electronic music?
You can do everything, you can express anything. You can not only improvise the music itself, you can also improvise the *sound* of it, which wasn't possible before.

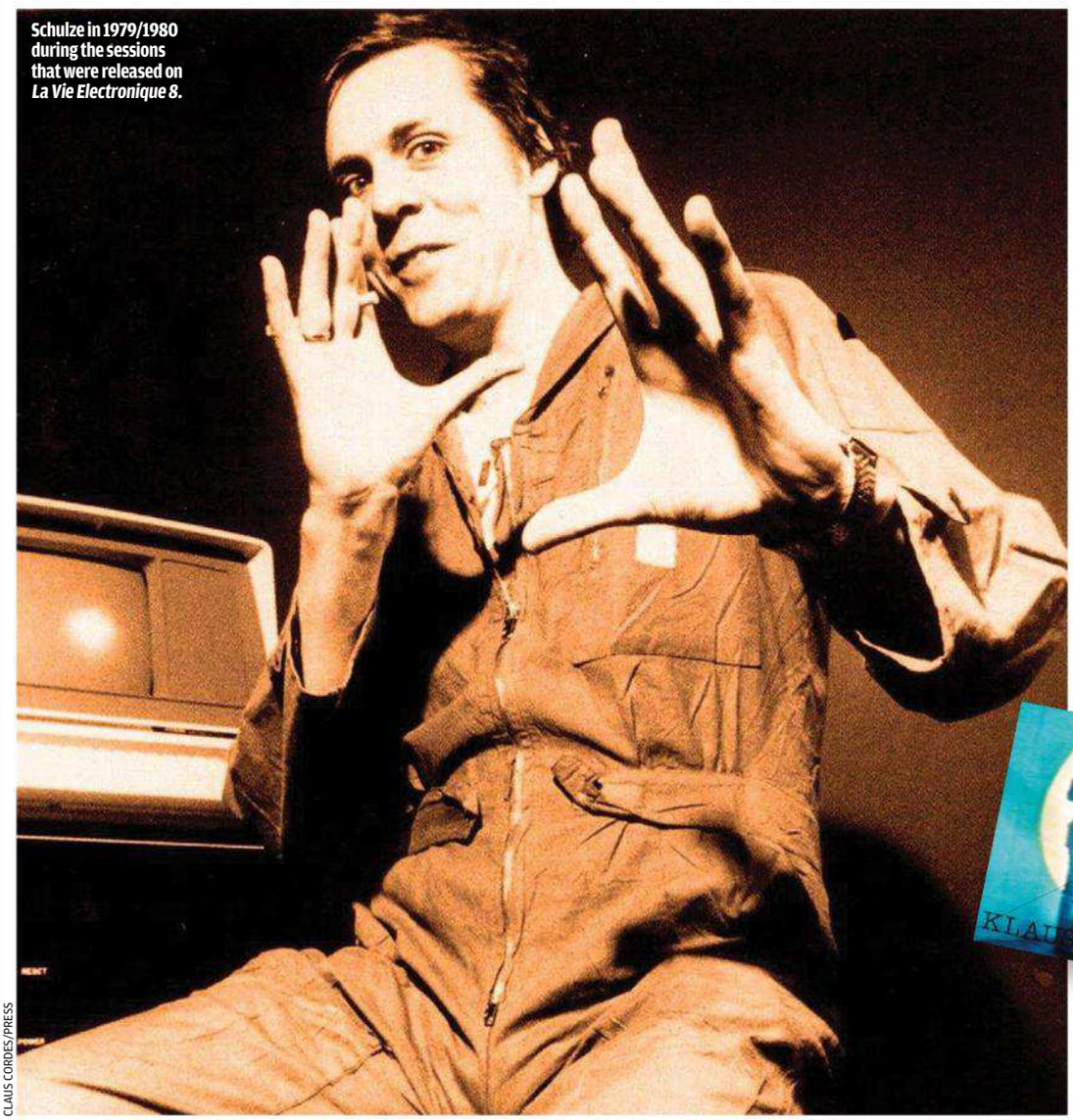
Other artists, such as Jean-Michel Jarre, took your pioneering approach to electronic music and made it commercial. Did you welcome that?
If you came from a totally experimental background like ours, you found that kind of music *very* commercial. We rather loved other artists like Pink Floyd, who were actually not sounding a lot less commercial than Jean-Michel Jarre. But their mix was very interesting – long tracks that blended improvisational parts with fixed structures. They had great melodies that came from experimenting, but ended up being used in a very commercially successful way.

Jean-Michel Jarre's music was not really my thing. He came and visited us in Berlin once, but Edgar was much more excited than I was. I was more fascinated by Pink Floyd and their experimental roots.

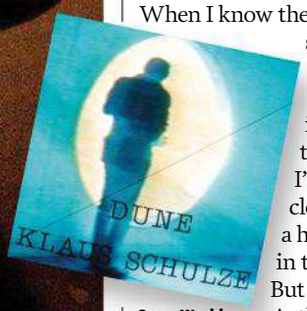
When you began using the Moog on 1976's *Moondawn*, did that change your philosophy on making music?
Somehow, yes, because I was then very much into experimenting with the sounds alone. The Moog was just incredibly ballsy and flexible; the sound blew me away. Of course, with it came the issue of losing the tuning all the time, but we soon used the ARP to cover that. At least you didn't have to tune the ARP every five minutes like the Moog, which was a nightmare on stage.

What do you remember most about Arthur Brown, who sang on 1979's *Dune* and with whom you ended up touring Europe?
[Laughs] He was a crazy guy, in the best possible sense. And also a great actor. I loved him. I remember one night we had a show together somewhere in France. When it was time to get going I went onto the stage, only to find Arthur wasn't there. So I played the first half of the concert by myself, and in the break he suddenly turned up. I asked where he'd been and his rather dry reply was that he'd been in a restaurant eating some excellent chicken, and that he'd simply forgotten about our concert.

I'm the complete opposite. When I know there's a concert scheduled, I'm nervous as hell for weeks in advance. On the day itself, I'm already close to having a heart attack in the morning. But that was Arthur. He could forget his concert because of some delicious French chicken dish!


Schulze in 1979/1980 during the sessions that were released on *La Vie Electronique 8*.

CLAUS CORDES/PRESS



Crazy World: 1979's *Dune*, which featured Arthur Brown on vocals.

Why was Richard Wagner such an important figure to you? And what did the alias Richard Wahnfried allow you to do that you might not have done as Klaus Schulze?

Wagner was important for my development because of his long and extended themes. The openings of his operas alone were incredible. Also, he was pretty revolutionary within his musical scene at the time and he broadened a lot of horizons with his work. I liked his operas, but on the other hand, when all those vocals kicked in, I couldn't really handle them. For me that was a bit much.

> It's very important to me to take my time to develop the musical themes – the build-ups, the peaks and the circles closing in, pretty much like in classical music. That's why I simply cannot do five-minute tracks.

Adopting the name Wahnfried allowed me to be even freer than I already was. Using that moniker I could do things that ignored the existing 'Klaus Schulze style' completely. I could also invite other musicians over and play sessions with them the way we liked, with no rules.

In 1989 you produced *The Breathtaking Blue* for German new wave hitmakers Alphaville. What did you learn from that?



Schulze today: "My music is always a constant flow of improvisation..."

CHRISTIAN PIEDNOIR (ALPHA LYRA) - COSMIC CAGIBI

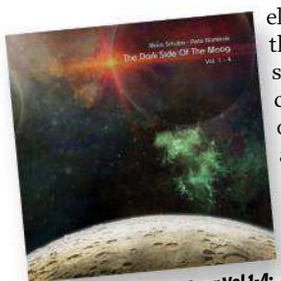
[Laughs] I realised that I'm not really a producer! I met other professional producers who tried to push their taste into the music of a certain artist, but that's not my way of doing it. I respect other artists and their music, so I was a very 'soft' producer. I try to support the creativity of a band, not put *my* ideas onto them.

What made you begin the series of Pink Floyd collaborations with Pete Namlook in the early 90s?

It was more of an accidental thing. We'd met at the Frankfurt Musikmesse [trade fair] by chance, and two days later – to my surprise – he knocked at my door and said: "We need to do something together." I said, "Okay, let's go." So that's how we started doing *The Dark Side Of The Moog* series.

He had a very different approach to making music – very rational, very tidy. Funnily enough, we never actually worked side by side throughout all those albums we made, except for one concert together in Hamburg. Instead, we kept sending musical tracks to and fro until an album was done.

How did the advent of samplers help in terms of your creativity?



The Dark Side Of The Moog Vol 1-4: Schulze's tribute to Pink Floyd.

Samplers changed everything for me. You could grab any sounds that existed and use them on the keyboard, even the sound of a car outside, until it fitted into the music. It was a great tool. It gave me even more freedom, so I could do things that even a synthesiser couldn't do by itself.

As electronic music has developed over the years, has it gone in the direction you hoped it would?

Rather not! In the beginning it was all about experimenting. And it was a completely new thing, very exciting for audiences and creators alike. After decades of electronic music, the fascination of sound got lost. The commercialisation of electronic sound also didn't help, with typical pop song structures incorporated into pure electronic music. People started using preset sounds only, so a lot of stuff started sounding the same. Hardly anyone uses a synthesiser any more to create their own abstract sounds.

You've also stressed the importance of the listener in terms of your music. Do you see the listener as an active participant in a performance?

100 per cent. My music is always a constant flow of improvisation. The thing happens in the very moment, so an audience's immediate reaction flows back and re-influences me and so forth. It's a perfect loop. For me, that's very satisfying as I get to play new things every day. I'd get bored if I played the same songs every night. It's the reason for me being on stage and improvising. To experience what happens.

Often I get asked what I'm going to play and I always reply, "I don't know," which is the truth. The audience influences what I do a great deal, whether they know it or not. And very often they're very silent. I love that, because I can then play so very quietly and low. That's helped create some great magical moments, because they were so receptive. If you can hear your audience talk, something's wrong.

You once said that "music is a dream without the isolation of sleep". Has it always felt like that to you?

Music, for me, was always a release from everyday life. It created a special surrounding, a room within a room, so to speak. Especially if you created it yourself. That's probably the reason why I still keep making music today.

Silhouettes is out now via SPV. See www.klaus-schulze.com for details.

New spins...

KLAUS SCHULZE

Where does a veteran electronic innovator go when he's already been to deep space and back? The krautrock monarch marks turning 70 with a reflective late-career peak.

Words: Kris Needs **Illustration:** Chris Keegan

While releasing hundreds of epic recordings over the last 46 years, Klaus Schulze has often been hailed as European electronic music's leading trailblazer and ambassador, and more recently a living embodiment of krautrock royalty. When it came time to record his first studio album in five years, a period that had seen him fight debilitating illness and turn 70 in 2017, Schulze knew he had nothing to prove and was free to make the album that mirrored what he calls this "phase of reflection, of retrospection, of pure contemplation".

Recording at his home studio, Schulze describes *Silhouettes* as a "reduction to the essential things", pruned of extraneous frills or foibles, with "no great distractions, nothing to force your attention in a certain direction, no major effects or gimmicks, no frills or dominant rhythms. It was important to me to paint the pictures in the depth of the space, the sonic fields of tension and atmosphere."

As a result, Schulze could have made the most beautiful album of his long career as he focuses on imbuing those key elements (synthesised strings, cathedral organ, glistening ectoplasmic sequences) with every molecule of his soul before weaving them with microtonal skill gained from a lifetime's questing and learning.

That life started in post-war Berlin, where Schulze was born and grew up. He studied electronic theory with Swiss-born composer Thomas Kessler before joining the anarchic fray at Berlin's Zodiak Free Arts Lab, best known as the birthplace of Tangerine Dream.

Schulze played drums in that band's first line-up, alongside guitarist Edgar Froese and cellist Conrad Schnitzler. He played on 1970's chaotic *Electronic Meditation* before, ironically, clashing with Froese over bringing in DIY electronics. He then co-founded Ash Ra Tempel with Manuel Göttsching before going solo with the astonishing musique concrète of 1972's *Irrlicht*. He added synths to 1973's *Cyborg* and released a string of albums that saw him traversing similar orbits to progressive rock at a time before electronic music and prog had acquired their defining tropes.

The press-crowned 'King of Cosmic Music' spent the oncoming decades releasing albums, soundtracks and collaborations at a staggeringly prolific rate. Technology changed around him and he inevitably saw new musical planets he'd discovered get overrun by less imaginative hordes, but Schulze steadfastly remained on his own sonic flight path.

Silhouettes is instantly recognisable as the same individual who created *Irrlicht* all those years ago. Rather than mere sounds or pulses, that's all down to the deepness of its creative soul: a track may start with a familiar deep string chord, but it'll then be twisted to celestial ecstasy with finite precision or enhanced by dancing space-sprite pulses.

As ever, each of the four tracks fits a side of the double album incarnation, ranging between 15 and 23 minutes long. The opening title track could be the best, dispensing of earthly pulses for its first nine minutes as it floats aboard fathomless strings, until flickering pulses manifest like gated ghosts that either drive the next episodes or hover like barely discernible ectoplasm. This music of the spheres sounds like it could go on forever and the remaining three tracks could even come from later in the same epic.

Der Lange Blick Zurück starts like an ethereally glacial space symphony, its lonely strings drifting like the spaceman cut loose in *2001: A Space Odyssey* before it swells into the set's purest manifestation of its composer alone in the woods with his memories.

Quae Simplex introduces spectral cathedral organ shadowed by ghostly fluttering bats that morph into firefly sequences. Deploying those unusual chord variations and his shimmering gating effect, Schulze arrives at a startling new rhythm mutation of the kind of sequencer pulses Tangerine Dream may have spoiled forever through autopilot overuse. When a muted beat creeps in, the album briefly looms into a luminescent strain of symphonic prog before being assimilated into the surrounding twilight gauze.

Washed in an almost tangible wistful melancholy, *Châteaux Fais des Vents* ends what's been a remarkable journey with distant sequencer clouds and mournful rising strings casting back to earlier years while facing the ravages of time and illness full on with an almost defiant beauty.

Schulze can be safe in the knowledge he has created another milestone – both for himself as his masterpiece and the music he has played such a huge part in bringing to the world.

Silhouettes

OBLIVION



> **Pruned of frills and foibles, woven with microtonal skill gained from a lifetime's questing and learning.**



MATT BABER

Suite For Piano And Electronics BAD ELEPHANT

Solo debut from Sanguine Hum keyboards man.



Marrying classical piano with murmuring electronica, Matt Baber's solo sojourn is a world away from the panoramic landscapes of Sanguine Hum. His keyboard playing for that Oxford-based band has adorned epic, florid songs about a future Earth in which energy is created by fusing the power of cats always landing the right way up with the power of buttered toast always landing face down. (This was achieved, on their 2015 album *Now We Have Light*, by buttering cats.) It's fair to say *Suite For Piano And Electronics*, which does what it says on the tin, is less spectacular. Instead it focuses on a sharp, minimal approach to merging the time-honoured with the contemporary. The results are subtle and unassuming but often intriguing.

> **The results are subtle and unassuming but often intriguing.**

Away from the Hum, Baber beds down gently propulsive synth loops and faint rhythms, then garnishes them with melodic or repetitive piano lines. It's no shock that he cites his influences as Steve Reich and Philip Glass, even if the net effect gives off a hint of Boards Of Canada. The backdrops are so reticent that this never qualifies as techno — it's the piano that takes you by the hand and leads you along.

Debates can be had about which sections seem closer to which Keith: the more animated flurries might recall Emerson, while the jazz elements echo Jarrett. Overall, the classical (Baber's also a fan of Ravel and Bartók) wins out over anything more physical or sensuous.

Baber's a multi-instrumentalist who came within a whisker of being Sanguine Hum's drummer, though he elected to handle keyboards as it gave him greater strength in shaping the band's sound. It's perhaps odd then that *Suite...* doesn't do a whole lot with rhythm, and a little more action may have boosted the conversational prowess of the key-tickling.

The album can get a tad earnest in parts. You feel obliged to sit still, on your best behaviour, furrowing your brow, as opposed to experiencing anything so trivial as fun. Again, this seems rather odd, given Sanguine Hum's breezy sense of humour. On the other hand, its ambience makes a committed, melancholy statement that undeniably takes control of the space you're in. Baber has been sketching out ideas for this album for almost 20 years, and it's clearly an act of devotion and dedication.

It's tricky to cite specific moments on a set of brief instrumentals titled *Part 1* to *Part 10*, but the background reverbs and foreground splashes of *Part 7* make a telling impact. This is an album that will sneak up on you one quiet day and make perfect sense.

CHRIS ROBERTS

ASG

Survive Sunrise RELAPSE

Cosmic riff worship of the highest order.



The sixth album from North Carolina's ASG sees the quartet reuniting with their regular producer/engineer Matt Hyde to further hone their stoner/space rock/Southern metal sound. Hyde was the man behind Monster Magnet's finest hours, but if there's a point of reference for *Survive Sunrise*, it's Mastodon circa *Once More 'Round The Sun* and *Emperor Of Sand*. Alternatively, the band could fit into the desert rock scene alongside Kyuss and QOTSA, although ASG are both heavier and better songwriters than Josh Homme and co. The twin guitars of Jason Shi and Jonah Citty create a kaleidoscope of swirling, churning riffs that wash away the detritus of the world and replace it with a bubbling brew of psychotropic potency. *God Knows We* is all intertwining harmonies, and the lumbering heaviness of *Lightning Song* brings in a touch of early Black Sabbath. *The Heaven Moon* and *Hawks On The Run* seem designed to set heads banging, and the former features some nimble interplay between Scott Key's drums and the dual guitarists as they lock together for maximum impact. There's not a dud song here – this is progressive stoner rock done damn right. **DW**

BLACK BOOK LODGE

Steeple And Spire MIGHTY MUSIC

Danes hit the spot on album number three.

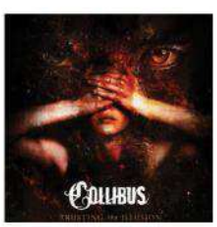


Scandinavia, it seems, is the gift that just keeps on giving. In the last year we've had fine records from the likes of Leprous, Major Parkinson and Ihsahn, and now it's time for Black Book Lodge to shine. The Danes have found themselves under the radar of many prog fans over the last few years, but the quartet's stock will now surely rise with their third album *Steeple And Spire*. Guitarist and vocalist Ronny Jønsson said: "The snow on the mountains and landscapes of our two former releases have melted on this one – the sun is out and beaming down, and it feels great, doesn't it?" Well, yes it does, Mr Jønsson, with the two-part opening salvo *Weightless Now* moulding together the metal sludge of Mastodon with the grimy melody of Queens Of The Stone Age or their brother in arms Alain Johannes. Proggers will lap up Black Book Lodge's bold musical palette. *In Halves* channels the dearly departed Chris Cornell before turning it up to 11, while *Sum Of Every I* pays homage to *that* keyboard riff midway through Rush's *Tom Sawyer*. Intoxicating in all the right ways, as far as modern day prog albums go, this is certainly up there. **CC**

COLLIBUS

Trusting The Illusion NO DUST

Potent prog metallers scratch the surface.

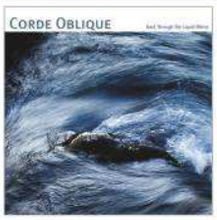


Collibus are fast becoming masters of writing the 'perfect' progressive metal song. The Manchester outfit have the formula nailed, with gung-ho riffery, soaring choruses and vivacious leads all slathered with lashings of crisp production. Their second album, *Trusting The Illusion*, is a storming snapshot of this, with opener *What We've All Become* juggling gunfire guitar and haunting keys, while *Fear Of The Fall*, at nearly eight minutes, is a labyrinth of metallic twists. But sticking to the oft-trodden recipe has its pitfalls, with the album failing to unearth its own identity. Tracks like *Better Off Alone* feature slightly identikit structures, the songwriting struggling to get the juices flowing, while *End Of The Line* sounds like an unwanted discard from a latter-day Symphony X record. It's not quite so surprising, then, that one of the record's most alluring moments is found with *Give Into Me*, a piano and voice-only tune that shows off Gemma Fox's pinpoint vocals amid heart-tugging chord progressions. Taken at face value *Trusting The Illusion* gets the job done, but could push harder. It ticks all the boxes but doesn't dig much deeper. **CC**

CORDE OBLIQUE

Back Through The Liquid Mirror DARK VINYL

Former tunes remade and remodelled by Italian chamber folksters.

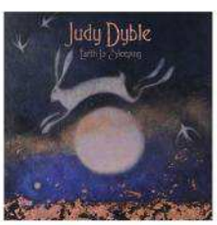


Bandleader and composer Riccardo Prencipe revisits his past on the seventh release from Italian progressive folk band Corde Oblique. *...The Liquid Mirror* was recorded live in a Napoli studio and features songs from across the group's catalogue, including tracks from 2016's *I Maestre Del Colore*. The stated goal was to cast the music in a new light, but the arrangements and performances remain stubbornly faithful to the originals. There are covers of Anathema's *Flying*, which sounds less melancholy and more ethereal when sung by Annalisa Madonna, and Sepultura's *Kaiowas*. Again, they've both appeared on previous releases, although the latter sounds beefier here thanks to Alessio Sica's urgent drumming. Edo Notarloberti's violin often leads the melodies with Prencipe's acoustic guitar playing the rhythm beneath it, all of which lends a gypsy folk air to proceedings. There's a danger of sameness creeping in, though, as there's not a great deal of tonal variety, and despite Annalisa Madonna's impassioned vocals, the music lacks the range of violinist Anna Phoebe's folk prog rock crossover. Perhaps some new material is in order. **DW**

JUDY DYBLE

Earth Is Sleeping ACID JAZZ

Venerated folk veteran enjoying second act.



Folk rock legend Judy Dyble's history with Fairport Convention and Trader Horne has become more properly celebrated in recent years, with various reissues and reunions, an autobiography, a 2013 album that involved collaborations with Julianne Regan and King Crimson's Pat Mastelloto, and last year's *Summer Dancing*, recorded with Andy Lewis. This new album comprises sweet and sorrowful songs, gathered amid a warm, rustic glow. Themes range from grief over lost love to fresh hope, and folk dominates any rock. *She Now Owns A Heart Of Stone* is one of the few tracks where the musicians get to stretch out and summon a groove. Yet Dyble's distinctive voice offers character enough through strong storytelling and such bucolic daydreams as *Marianna* and the Martin Quittenton co-write *Velvet To Atone*, a reworking of the Trader Horne original. *Lullaby For Ellie* eulogises her granddaughter, while *Faded Elvis* is rather less rose-tinted. For Dyble's admirers, it's all about the voice – extraordinarily English and evoking an era when nature was considered a valid subject matter for songs. It's heartening to see a 'forgotten' artist re-energised. **CR**

FUTURE WAR BRIDE

Majahua GLOVES OFF

It's been a long, strange trip for the Copenhagen quartet.



Insisting that you didn't want to make an album that was just a copy of the 60s and then dousing your record in sitar, woozy vocals and a shimmering coat of psychedelic gloss is a curious way of laying your cards on the table. Protest that you're simply standing on the shoulders of the 60s, a trick Oasis tried without much luck in 2000, and then ape Strawberry Alarm Clock and The Beatles at their most tripped out, and it makes the point rather moot. At their best, though – and let's face it, they're not smashing any boundaries here – Future War Bride are a lovely mix of kaleidoscopic pop notes and off-kilter psych rock, as demonstrated by last summer's lead track *Gloves Off. Legs In Mini Skirts* is a whimsical three-minutes-plus of swirling melody; the delicate *Thin Air* is as lovely and coloured as glass shot through with sunlight; and *Apple Tree* brims with ambition, rising up on a bank of strings as its protagonist finds himself very far from home. *Once I Was A Bird* is probably the most accomplished of the songs here, awash with psychedelic tropes, but reaching for something more and filled with promise. **PW**

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

What We Did On Our Saturday MATTY GROVES

Double CD of the 50th-anniversary show at Cropredy 2017.



Fairport Convention are still making new albums – 2017's *50:50@50* is a fine set – but if they spend a bit more time curating their legacy at the annual Cropredy Festival and repackaging it via live albums and DVDs, rather than knocking out new releases, no one's going to begrudge them that. Especially when their anniversary present to the world is a career-spanning set of this quality.

> **Much welling up, waving of arms and singing along.**

The group's mix of folk and folk-influenced originals now sounds oddly timeless and ageless. A cast of guests, and Fairporters past and present, sing and play with great brio throughout. A cover of Richard Farina's *Reno Nevada* – from the repertoire of Fairport's first incarnation – finds Iain Matthews and Judy Dyble in fine voice, with Richard Thompson adding urgency with an eccentric, brilliant guitar solo.

The years have seen some other changes, with the ensemble vocals on *Walk A While* now more robust than on the diffident original. Thompson is to the fore again on *Poor Will And The Jolly Hangman*, a track that was excised from *Full House* (1971) but has since cemented its place as one of the group's best songs. It's no contest, but he's the star of the show as his endlessly inventive guitar playing lifts every song on which he appears.

Vocalist Chris While – who took on the Sandy Denny role at the 2007 *Liege And Lief* concert at Cropredy – is particularly likely to cause shivers on *The Deserter*, while on *Come All Ye*, she exhorts the band to play music that will *'rouse the spirits of the air and move the rolling sky'*.

Similarly, PJ Wright does an excellent job, stepping in for Denny's husband, the late Trevor Lucas, on *The Ballad Of Ned Kelly*. The song was recorded when Denny and Lucas were both in Fotheringay, but it was also played live by Fairport in the 70s.

The recent *Our Bus Rolls On* is a bit of self-referential, good-humoured light relief, although hardly one of their more vital tracks, and *Matty Groves* is disappointing. With its drastically shortened instrumental section, the group have casually discarded one their most exciting creations.

Proceedings close inevitably with *Meet On The Ledge*, which now means many things: a nostalgic harking back to the past, an evergreen message of hope for the future, and a rallying of the clans that has us thinking of all those who are no longer able to make that meeting.

There was much welling up, waving of arms and singing along. And that was just me in my front room.

MIKE BARNES

HAKEN

L-1VE INSIDEOUT

First live album (and DVD) from rising British proggers.



Haken have held off from making a live album until now because the band were concerned about making sure the results were perfect. On the basis of *L-1VE*, they needn't have worried — besides deft musicianship, theirs is an assured performance, and the audience clearly love it.

Primarily showcasing tracks from 2016's *Affinity* LP, the first two deviations from this are significant. *In Memoriam* from *The Mountain* has proven a live favourite for the band, with the dynamic transition between the opening piano motif and muscular lead riff one of the most exciting points of the

> ***Visions* is the standout, a taste of the band members' interaction.**

set. Apart from anything else, it's probably got the best single chorus hook, with the guitar parts providing atmospherics, downtuned riffs and frantic arpeggios to counterpoint the main vocal melodies in a style that recalls Aussie proggers The Butterfly Effect.

The second, *Aquamedley*, a medley of cuts from their 2010 debut *Aquarius*, stands in pretty stark contrast to a lot of the newer material aired in this performance. Overtly jazz-fusion-inspired and with more explicit nods to both classic prog and Dream Theater-style modern progressive metal than their latest records, the shift in pace and mood is nevertheless pulled off with style and verve.

Of the tracks from *Affinity*, the strongest are opener proper *Initiate* with its aggressive chordal stabs, and athletic keyboard workout *The Endless Knot*, which comes armed with a Pendulum-style drum and bass breakdown to close the main set in fine form. Neon-tinged *1985* is enjoyably saccharine, and judging by the audience reaction, something of a fan favourite. The opening riff, with its Police and Rush overtones, is a guilty-pleasure retro workout, even if the rest of the song sounds like nobody so much as Haken. More than anything, the *Affinity* tracks show an admirable lack of snobbery about relentlessly blending genres, styles and moods, often with brilliant results.

Returning to encore, the band rattle through a stirring rendition of *Visions*, complete with shredding keyboard solo. It's probably the standout performance, and allows you to get a taste of the interaction between the band members on stage as they navigate the lengthy instrumental middle eight.

Although their touring profile has increased substantially over the years, with a cult band like Haken there will be fans in far-flung places that can't make it to a show. As it goes, this is a decent consolation prize, with the package also serving as a milestone for the band in terms of their progress thus far. Apparently a fifth album now is in view – this is the bridge to that new horizon.

ALEX LYNHAM

HEAD WITH WINGS

From Worry To Shame SELF-RELEASED

Promising debut with emotional, real-life inspiration from the US duo.

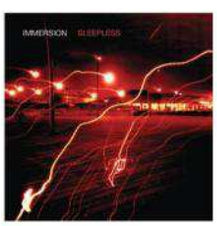


Head With Wings don't skimp on tragedy. The weighty story pervading the Connecticut duo's debut album *From Worry To Shame* channels real-life events like the Sandy Hook school massacre while also tapping into the kidnapping and murder of vocalist and guitarist Joshua Corum's cousin in 2008. But in despair often come flickers of light, and the record hints at the powers of healing. Musically the album takes the melodic sheen of modern-day proggers such as Karnivool and Dead Letter Circus before sprinkling some metallic P-Tree moments and Radiohead-esque introspective musings. Opener *Goodbye Sky* is a delicious display of alt-rock merging with the swooping choruses of tech metal, while *Somewhere Something Gives* manages to sound oddly uplifting despite the aching lyrics: *'Blood flows down the halls, bullet holes line the walls, the kids were not the same ever again,'* sings Corum. Progressive more by left turns and thought-provoking concept than fretboard vanity or overblown pomposity, HWW's debut doesn't always thrill – some of the more sedate tracks can lag – but there are more than enough points of melancholic majesty to make this well worth a listen. **CC**

IMMERSION

Sleepless SWIM

Post-punk royalty return with album for robots and humans alike.



Immersion are the husband and wife duo of Wire frontman Colin Newman and Minimal Compact co-founder Malka Spigel. Both players have spent their musical careers exploring how the least number of notes can often make the biggest impact, and it's a philosophy they continue to explore on their latest album. Partly this involves a consolidation of their core sound – warm Krautronica, simple guitars, metronomic rhythms – with tracks such as *Off Grid* and *MS19* almost writing themselves, chillout music for robots. But there's more of a human element present on *Sleepless* compared to previous releases, much of it coming from Spigel's expressive bass playing on the likes of *Microclimate* and *Hovertron*. And the post-punk motorik of *Propulsoid* could almost be Wire themselves. But *Sleepless* saves its two most experimental, and interesting, tracks until last. *Manic Toys* is accurately titled, its shuffling digi-dub, nagging three-note melody and detuned bells sounding like a snapshot of some futuristic nursery. In contrast, the ambience of *Seeing Is Believing* touches on the hauntological, its siren call of synth and filtered beats evoking fever dreams of the late 70s. **JB**

INFINITE MUSIC

A Tribute To La Monte Young FIRE

Be thankful for the drone has no ending.



The log cabin on the Idaho plains in which La Monte Young was born in the 1930s was a throwback to earlier pioneering times. His childhood memory of hearing the wind and storms playing between crisscrossed logs for hours or even days at a time etched itself deep into his psyche. That haunting, sometimes forbiddingly desolate quality is discernible in the molasses-thick drone music with which Young's established his reputation as a minimalist pioneer in the 60s. His influence upon countless bands and players, including a young John Cale, shouldn't be underestimated. This recording is taken from a live performance originally conceived for the 50th-anniversary celebration of The Velvet Underground. Spacemen 3's Peter Kember, Zombie Zombie's Etienne Jaumet and Celine Wadier, a master of Indian Dhrupad singing and tanpur, offer a fairly liberal and accessible interpretation of Young's eternal drones. The three pieces flow with analogue-style undulating synth waves, upon which Wadier's beatific vocalising adds a yearning humanity to what could have been so much arid circuitry. At volume, these tones vibrate with transcendent power. **SS**

LISA LARUE

Origins MELODIC REVOLUTION

Native American songwriter's hit-and-miss round-up.



This Oklahoma-based keyboard player and songwriter has been ploughing a mystically inclined furrow within the American prog scene for quarter of a century now, collaborating with the likes of Oliver Wakeman, Asia's John Payne and Gong's Gilli Smyth, among many others, but this is the first time it's all been collated. LaRue's natural habitat is found among the meandering synth instrumental passages that abound here, but she fares better when she ventures off-piste. The piano lament of *Hurtful Words*, co-written with Italian composer Federico Fantacone, stands out, as does the vocal contribution of Jo De Boeck (of Beyond The Labyrinth) on *Beautiful Illusion* because they add more arresting layers of musical texture. Likewise, the 17-minute *Prometheus* is uninspiring for its first half but then bursts into exhilarating life with machine-gun percussion, juddering guitar riffage and crazed key-shredding. Elsewhere, LaRue eschews hooks, riffs and musical touchstones for rather directionless explorations. Many of her pieces claim spiritual inspiration from Cherokee roots, but often the results wash over you without leaving their mark on head or heart. **JS**

MARY LATTIMORE

Hello From The Edge Of The Earth GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

LA-based harpist turns one-woman chamber ensemble.

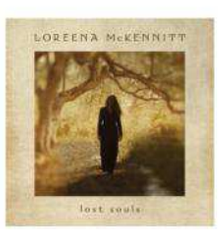


Mary Lattimore has worked with musicians as diverse as Meg Baird, Jarvis Cocker and Thurston Moore. Here she plays solo harp, also overdubbing keyboards, guitar, vocals and theremin to form a kind of one-woman chamber ensemble. Eno-esque keyboards add depth to the luminous harp cadences of the 11-minute *It Feels Like Floating*, with a wordless vocal chorus towards the end. It feels rather like passing by some beautiful scenery without getting anywhere in particular. The shorter *She Never Saw Him Again* is similarly constructed, although it disintegrates into a spacey end section of backwards and processed instruments. The title track is more concise and has a Celtic air about it, a feeling carried on into *Baltic Birch*. Here, her plucked melodies are boldly underscored by electric guitar lines, electronic currents eddying around them. It's difficult to make comparisons as so few people play this instrument in this context, but the glittering harp and poised grand piano notes of *On The Day You Saw The Dead Whale*, along with her pellucid synth washes, evoke the spirit of pianist Harold Budd. The album ends with the exquisite, song-like *Wind Carries Seed*. **MB**

LOREENA MCKENNITT

Lost Souls QUINLAN ROAD

Canada's New Age queen reigns eternal.



With its delicate arrangements and the gentle caress of Loreena McKennitt's vocals, it might be tempting to treat *Lost Souls* as background music. But the album's delights are there for those willing to give it their undivided attention. Four decades and 15 albums into her career, McKennitt's voice has lost none of its charm, even when she's almost at a whisper on *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. *Spanish Guitars And Night Plazas* features elegant flamenco guitar from Daniel Casares. The instrumental *Sun, Moon And Stars* has a distinct Middle Eastern accent and could be the perfect accompaniment to a scene of the Dothraki riding the plains in *Game Of Thrones*. *Breaking Of The Sword* commemorates the Battle of Vimy Ridge in the First World War, complete with a choir and military drumming, while McKennitt's folk roots assert themselves on *A Hundred Wishes*. Several of these songs have been unearthed from the singer's vaults and date from around the time of 1991's *The Visit*, sharing that album's Celtic mood. Yet whether Celtic, flamenco or Middle Eastern in tone, they're united by that celestial voice that quietly entrances the listener, warm as a summer breeze. **DW**



PROGRESSIVE FOLK

Paul Sexton scours the new releases to find there's nowt so prog as folk.

When an artist cites 1950s beat poetry, the Italian twilight movement Crepuscolari and Hermeticism philosophy among her influences, she's likely to be building it into music of ethereal allure. So it is on **Emma Tricca**'s *St. Peter* (Dell'Orso), her first release since 2014's *Relic* and the result of her wanderings in Europe and New York. The end result is heightened by her embrace of sounds both acoustic and electric, and her vulnerably real voice. It's also an album with a notable guest list, including Howe Gelb, Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley, the Dream Syndicate's Jason Victor and, on the mystical, spoken-word *Solomon Said*, no less of a forebear than Judy Collins.



The dramatic chords and cantering fuzz guitar of *The Unbroken Circle*, the opening track on *All That Remains* (Cardinal Fuzz) by **The Left Outsides** is the first of many imaginative elements on the fifth album by the duo from Walthamstow. The depth of their sound suggests the work of a larger band, but Alison Cotton and Mark Nicholas share lead vocals and trade ever-engrossing instrumentation, she of the harmonium and viola, he of bass, guitar, piano and drums. The sounds of rainfall and birdsong heighten the pastoral effect, and how could you fail to be intrigued by titles such as *Naming Shadows Was Your Existence* and *Clothed In Ivy, Obscured By Dust*?



Dorian Sorriaux's *Hungry Ghost* is the recently unveiled title track from his debut solo EP on Soulseller, and casts the French guitarist from American-French-Swedish rockers Blues Pills in a new hue. Over the course of two studio albums with the band, he's been on a fast track to the rock guitar figurehead status of a latter-day Peter Green. The new song is an entirely different and unplugged affair with distinct and appealing vocal echoes of Fleet Foxes.





Skeletal Blues, the self-released debut album by London four-piece **LOCKS**, sets off at a tidy percussive pace, and more than a hint of Adam And The Ants' Burundi beat, with the single *Bodies*. It's decorated here and throughout by the expressive violin of Marian McClenagan. Across the piece, their confident, charismatic and sometimes shadowy urban folk is given further presence by the vocals of Locks Geary-Griffin, who recalls Florence Welch or even Siouxsie Sioux.

Finally to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, home of the redoubtable **the innocence mission**, who return with *Sun On The Square*, the latest expression of their near-20-year odyssey and first since signing with Bella Union. The delicacy of Karen Perls' vocals and imagery are renewed on 10 new songs, of which the upfront *Green Bus* sets the mood with its beautiful, rippling acoustic guitar and aching strings. Further highlights such as *Shadow Of The Pines* and *Light Of Winter* enhance the porcelain-precious appeal.



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NEEDLEPOINT

The Diary Of Robert Reverie BJK

Fourth album of jazzy, pastoral prog from mellow Norwegian crew.



Needlepoint may hail from Norway, but their heart lies in the pastoral hinterland of Canterbury, sometime in the early 1970s. For fans of Caravan, Camel et al, *The Diary Of Robert Reverie* is a rather lovely, understated treat, but there's something here for anyone who likes their music warm, melodic and avowedly analogue. A concept album in the loosest sense, as our lonely protagonist drifts through a dreamy netherworld, these nine relatively compact songs are like fleeting glimpses of a drowsy summer's day. Bjørn Klakegg's feather-light harmony vocals and Olaf Olsen's busy but never overpowering drums define Needlepoint's sound here, but there's plenty of instrumental colour as well, whether it's the psych-blues guitar of *Robert Reverie*, the Soft Machine-esque fuzz bass of *On The Floor*, or the elegiac organ of *In The Sea*. Sometimes the arrangements lose shape, with songs fading before they've established themselves, but *Grasshoppers* and *Beneath My Feet* add some urgency. Less inclined towards jazz fusion than previous releases, *The Diary...* is nevertheless still pleasingly kaleidoscopic, its faery folk whimsy offset by a hint of darkness. **JB**

NIK BÄRTSCH'S RONIN

Awase ECM

Latest precision offering from Swiss outfit.



It's eight years since *Llyria*, the last studio album from Nik Bärtsch's ritual groove outfit, Ronin, was released. Of course, the Swiss pianist hasn't been idle. Ronin's 2012's live double album helped bridge the gap and 2016's *Continuum*, a beguiling string section-augmented offshoot, partially assuaged those missing his pointillistic style. Happily, the Ronin quartet have continued to perform live, but a new album after so long feels like a special occasion. A dedicated martial arts practitioner, Bärtsch's work embodies a graceful economy of movement combined with the rapid and often unexpected transference of energy from one body to another. Drummer Kaspar Rast's extrasensory beats accent and underpin breathtaking exchanges between Sha's sinuous woodwind and saxes and bassist Thomy Jordi's kinetic pulses. Filled with dynamic themes, these dovetailing syncopations might sound cerebral but Ronin's music is *intensely* physical, with a punchy groove that's irresistible. Not a solo in sight, this is the sound of four people moving as one. If their back catalogue is a treasure chest spilling over with glittering jewels, *Awase* is their most spectacular gem to date. **SS**

PRAM

Across The Meridian DOMINO

Midlands weirdo-pop combo return in style.



A decade-long sabbatical and the loss of original singer Rosie Cuckston don't appear to have caused Pram too much damage. In fact, they sound reanimated on this first studio album since 2007's *The Moving Frontier*. Perhaps it's all down to various members' immersion in other projects during the interim, but the quartet have rarely sounded so playful. The skronky *Shimmer And Disappear*, with its horn blasts and off-kilter groove, is radiant sci-fi jazz. The strange *Electra* is a companion to the experimental folk of Broadcast and The Focus Group, a wordless female voice creeping through the mist. Multi-instrumentalist Sam Owen rises to the occasion, her vocal rising over a whining synth and shifting layers of manipulated sound on the exquisite *Mayfly*, which would have sounded at home on the soundtrack of *The Wicker Man*. Harry Dawes' theremin is an eerie foil to Owen as *Where The Sea Stops Moving* moves from a ghostly lullaby to the kind of thing Cardiacs might frolic about in. Meanwhile, the creepy *Doll's Eyes* is offset by the glitchy ambience of *Wave Of Translation*. Alt-pop, electronica, prog and more – Pram have all corners covered. **RH**

KONTINUUM

No Need To Reason SEASON OF MIST

Third instalment of heavy mood music from Reykjavik.



Funny old things, genres. While prog is one of relatively few genres whose musicians regard it as a community and a proud tradition rather than a restricting pigeonhole, such labels are always going to be in the ear of the beholder. So if you listened blind to this Icelandic quintet's third album, didn't look at the iTunes category describing it as 'prog, black post-metal', you could quite naturally respond with different descriptions, such as 'stadium goth', 'post-punk noir', and even 'Interpol on steroids'.

> **It thumps you in the gut on an instinctive, emotional level.**

Whatever musical camp you think Kontinuum are coming from, the title *No Need To Reason* rings true: the opening bars thump you in the gut on an instinctive, emotional level that puts chin-stroking analysis on hold for the duration.

The track concerned is called *Shivers* and that title is also apposite. After eerie, echoing guitar arpeggios tease us in, we're thrust into a huge, booming cave of chiming, portentous chords, ghostly backing vocals and gothic melodrama. Further in, broodingly despondent soundscapes such as those on *Neuron* and *Low Road* offer the same opportunity to wallow in gloom offered by some of The Cure's earliest output, or The Chameleons' more impressionistic, melancholy moments.

The guttural growls on the title track betray a metal influence, but the band are moving away from that arena. And while listeners with heavier tastes may bemoan the disappearance of the chugging snatches of thrash that punctuated Kontinuum's earlier material, those who can't resist a sad melody will have no such complaints.

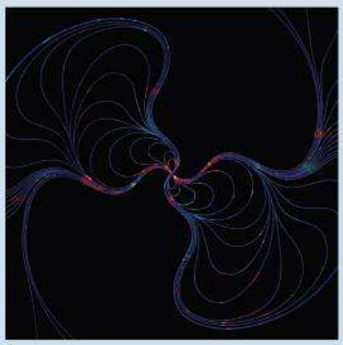
Other idiosyncracies have also been smoothed out. The occasional snatches of Icelandic we heard on their previous two albums are gone, which arguably doesn't help when the songs begin to merge into each other a little, and a familiar English tongue doesn't make for a more accessible lyrical narrative to this particular reviewer's ears. *'Woken up by an electric sun,'* Thorgeirsson recounts on one song, before we later *'run for cover from the rain...'* then find that this is *'under ancient sky... we feel as worlds collide'*. And the song's title? *Erotica*. We may be none the wiser, but the yearning minor chords, writhing, recurring guitar figures and captivating atmosphere of the piece carry the day regardless.

By the time the album ends with the hypnotic, heavy shoegaze of *Black Feather*, you've surrendered to the feeling, like you're in front of an impressionistic painting that seems to swallow you up. And whichever section of the gallery you choose to house it in, its eyes still seem to follow you around. **JOHNNY SHARP**

THE ORB

No Sounds Are Out Of Bounds COOKING VINYL

A confusingly paced return for the ambient masters.



Seventeen albums in and The Orb have invited the guests round. Joining Dr Alex Patterson at the controls are Youth, Roger Eno, bassists Jah Wobble and Guy Pratt, Holly Cook (daughter of Sex Pistol Paul) and more. And while the casual listener might assume this to be a bold ploy that will transport the listener to parts unknown, well, it isn't. Keyboards wibble and squelch, motorcycles screech from speaker to speaker as if flying by at the Isle Of Man TT, trains rattle noisily over rails, water burbles, birds sing, gibbering voices fade in and out, and it's very much back to business as usual. Great songtitles, plenty of sonic trickery, but business as usual.

> **Great songtitles, plenty of sonic trickery, but business as usual.**

Most of the guest vocals, unfortunately, are unspectacular. Opener *The End Of The End* sounds like a wonky mesh of the band's own remix of Primal Scream's *Higher Than The Sun* and Dido's *Thank You*, while *Rush Hill Road* skanks along happily enough but Holly Cook's turn at the mic feels lackadaisical. What we're left with is an album where the most obvious songs aren't terribly interesting, and the most interesting moments aren't terribly good songs. *Pillow Fight @ Shag Mountain*, despite being punctuated by roosters, doesn't travel far from where it starts, and *Other Blue Worlds* barely gets off the ground at all.

Curiously, the last 30 minutes of *No Sounds Are Out Of Bounds* are brilliant. It's an album that gently wheels itself to a close rather than races to a climax, and *Doughnuts Forever, Drift, Ununited States* and *Easy On The Onions* all sound like the BBC Light Programme run through some weird, otherworldly filter.

If there's anything that ties all this together into anything approaching a concept, it's the possible return of the Cold War. *Wolfbane* kicks off with rave klaxons and offers a brief hat-tip to Tom Tom Club's *Wordy Rappinghood* before wobbling off in the direction of nuclear destruction, describing how six-and-a-half-million people would perish should The Bomb detonate above New York City. Meanwhile, *Doughnuts Forever* opens with senior brass being given a tour of a missile silo.

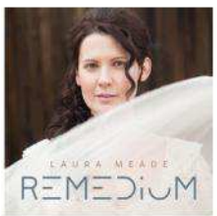
And if this is the last album you happen to hear as the rockets rain down and the earth is turned to thick black soot, the final half an hour could provide you with a suitably calming exit. With a decent pair of noise-cancelling headphones, it might even feel quite uplifting, especially as the 15-minute *Soul Planet* slowly winds up through the gears and down again, and you dance slowly in the embers, the horizon on fire.

FRASER LEWRY

LAURA MEADE

Remedium DOONE

IZZ vocalist's not-quite knockout first foray.

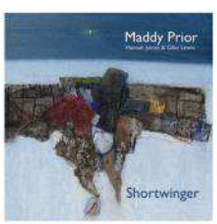


There's a really great bit on *Remedium*, the debut solo album by IZZ singer Laura Meade. It comes three-quarters of the way through opener *Sunflowers At Chernobyl*, where a sudden, buzzing guitar solo looms abruptly into view. It sounds like the kind of thing that might surface were you to rummage around in Brian Eno's tape basement for unheard mixes of *Baby's On Fire*. It's entirely unexpected, it gives the song an entirely different feel and it makes you think there's a lot more to come. There isn't. *Remedium* is a gentle, reflective album. It's well sung, it's thoughtful, and it might appeal to those with a few Renaissance albums knocking about in the attic. However, the production is weak, the band never really sound like a band, and in the end it's difficult to feel involved in an album whose natural state is so introverted. There's a detectable sense of adventure on a song such as *Dragons*, but it's buried by the sonics. Worse, some of the songs steer away from art rock and veer dangerously towards musical theatre, which is fine if that's your thing, but for the rest of us? Too much Andrew Lloyd Webber, not enough Huw Lloyd-Langton. **FL**

MADDY PRIOR With Hannah James And Giles Lewin

Shortwinger PARK

Steeleye Span legend soars high above the rest.



With a voice and talent undiminished by the decades, it's almost impossible to believe that Maddy Prior's career extends over 50 years. In 2012, she recorded *3 For Joy* with accordion maestro and singer Hannah James and Bellowhead's Giles Lewin. On *Shortwinger*, Prior revisits the collaboration with outstanding results. If *3 For Joy* drew on medieval songs, *Shortwinger* finds its focus in all things ornithological. It opens with *Austringer*, a song about hawking, and includes an a cappella setting of Emily Dickinson's poem *The Owl*. Prior achieves a quite transporting alchemy with James and Lewin, not only sharing vocal duties, but allowing their instrumental brilliance to shine. *The Lucky Blackbird/House Of White Roses* – two instrumental wedding tunes – are as sweet with longing as you'd hope. *Murmuration*, a meditation on the magic of starlings, is simply breathtaking. The three voices loop in and out of each other while James' accordion plays simply in the background until Prior takes up the wintry melody. Prior's voice has always opened a window on lost worlds and is capable of great joy, but it's at its meditative best on *Shortwinger*. **RM**

RING VAN MÖBIUS

Past The Evening Sun APOLLON

Scandinavian trio party like it's 1971.



Reassuringly these days, there are plenty of bands who seem intent on keeping the original spirit of prog alive. Norway's Ring Van Möbius are a new addition to the list, though their USP – besides a healthy obsession with ELP, King Crimson and, in particular, Van der Graaf Generator – is that they've decided not to bother with guitars at all. The three-piece instead rely on Hammond organ, Moog, percussive tricks and busy basslines for effect, powering their way through this debut album in a way that suggests they haven't been listening to much else since the mid-70s. The title track weighs in at over 20 minutes, fed by knotty keyboard runs, crashing drums and plenty of distortion. Frontman Thor Erik Helgesen is heavily indebted to Peter Hammill for his approach, his lyrics hinting at something profound and transformative. The piece moves along at a fair old pelt before subsiding into softer instrumental passages that eventually segue into the more becalmed *End Of Greatness*. Third and final track *Chasing The Horizon* is aptly named, the band gradually picking up speed as they go from a pensive lull to hair-flailing charge. It all makes for an invigorating ride. **RH**

DAVE SINCLAIR

Out Of Sinc D-SINCS MUSIC

A quiet storm from the Caravan key man.



It's difficult not to be touched by the time the Caravan keyboard maestro's latest solo album floats into the sunset after nine reflective ballads, some dating back to 1971, the year his former band released their landmark *In The Land Of Grey And Pink*. Dave Sinclair's seventh solo work since 1993's *Moon Over Man* literally takes its title from his heart – 2014 saw him undergo two operations to correct cardiac arrhythmia. Sadly they weren't successful, leaving him, as he says, out of sync. The mood of tracks such as *Back With You* and *If I Run* is predominantly melancholy reflection, although the underlying theme is escape from modern-world ugliness. Sinclair's fragile vocals are joined by Yammy's exotic vocalising, and the Derby Cathedral Choir on *Our World*. His keyboards are bolstered by a large supporting cast, including Caravan homeboy Pye Hastings' acoustic guitar on *Blue Eyes*, a ballad that steers towards yacht-rock waters that swell into dazzling hue on *On My Own*. Everything might sound calm on the surface but the album's resonance comes from knowing the battle being fought below. We can only wish Dave well on his future voyages. **KN**

RIVERSEA

The Tide SELF-RELEASED

Northern studio project's long-gestating second LP is a mature gem.



This ain't rock'n'roll, this is file sharing! It took Marc Atkinson and Brendan Eyre six years to put Riversea's second album together that way with a clutch of guest musicians, and while it's hardly the most romantic approach, you can't say anyone's time was wasted. Marc Atkinson's soft-sung but subtly captivating vocals are backed by burbling keyboards and an understated backing choir on *Shine*, while the midnight piano elegy of *To Those That Are Left Behind* and the gently contemplative *Your Last Day* evoke a truly beautiful sadness. The rimshots and tasteful tickles of guitar that abound here are the tools of soft rock more than prog, however many soaring guitar solos guest performers such as Lee Abraham contribute. Yet MOR is more in this case, and that musical template is backed by some very strong words. Everyone loves an adventurous lyrical concept, but few can hit home as squarely as when *Strange Land* sums up an age of paranoia by asking *'which ones have the bombs inside their bags, which ones are the innocents being torn to rags?'* Riversea have taken a long time to sing something simple, but they've still made us sit up and listen. **JS**

SAGA

Live In Hamburg EARMUSIC

Vinyl reissue for hard to find double live album.



Like their Canadian counterparts Rush, Saga like nothing more than a live album as a stopgap in their recording career. This one was limited to 5,000 copies when it was released in 2016, coming hard on the heels (possibly a little too hard) of 2013's *Spin It Again! Live In Munich*. Not only does this seem like a case of indecent haste, but the band couldn't even be bothered to leave Germany in order to record another live record. Like a curate's egg, though, *Live In Hamburg* is good in parts. Actually, it's very good in some parts. It also has a unique selling point – a setlist that forgoes a lot of material aired on any of their previous seven live albums. This is a move that could be considered brave, foolhardy or both – imagine a Rush live album that dropped *Tom Sawyer* and you're close. It's hard to gauge what the audience might have made of it, but they holler accordingly, even for a drum solo that could best be described as exasperating. Still, the highlights of *Live In Hamburg* are many, and there's no denying the strength of songs like *Wildest Dreams* or *Wind Him Up*, or Michael Sadler's impeccable vocal reaching out ever higher above his audience's heads. **PW**



PROGRESSIVE METAL

Dom Lawson buckles up for a delve into the darker, heavier side.



Further evidence that the UK is leading the way for mad-eyed, progressive doom, Brighton crew **King Goat**'s colossal second album *Debt Of Aeons* (Aural Music) is an absolute feast of skewed riffs, brooding heaviness and wild melodic ideas. Vocalist Trim has a commanding, hellfire preacher baritone that imbues even the most deranged moments with authority. The operatic crescendo midway through *Eremite's Rest* is almost indecently thrilling, and closer *On Dusty Avenues* gives Boss Keloid a run for their money in the psycho-deli-doom stakes.

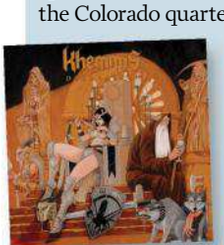
Similarly inclined towards the business end of the artistic bong, **Morag Tong** are less precise and audibly more heavily medicated than King Goat: new album *Last Knell Of Om* (self-released) is a shimmering barrage of blitzed-out space blues, replete with persistent but ephemeral nods to Floyd and a sense that certain riffs could and probably will go on forever in some meta-cosmic realm. You don't have to be stoned to appreciate this, incidentally, but a quick preparatory spliff couldn't possibly hurt.



The kind of album that appears from nowhere and casually changes your life forever, **Soldat Hans**' extraordinary *Es Taut* (self-released) marries exquisite dynamics and textures redolent of Godspeed You! Black Emperor with the somnambulant languor of funeral doom. Drifting from crushing intensity to fragile, trombone-augmented folk dirges with the grace of gods, the Swiss have made one of the albums of the year. Insanely, it's available as a 'name your price' download from their Bandcamp page: soldathans.bandcamp.com. Take the hint and buy the damn thing. Did I mention that it might change your life?



There's a big buzz following **Khemmis** around and third album *Desolation* (Nuclear Blast) confirms why. Masters of epic, melodic and elegantly intricate doom metal anthems, the Colorado quartet have an accessible streak a mile wide, even at their most extreme. Shades of Savatage, *Seventh Son*-era Maiden and early Opeth may be more by accident than design, but the same questing spirit that drove the original prog metal era is more than evident here. Whether it's the beautifully succinct and memorable *Isolation* or the hulking, labyrinthine closer *From Ruin*, this album is both adventurous and disarmingly timeless. Much like label mates Pallbearer, Khemmis are redefining progressive doom with a grandiose flourish.



Away from more traditional metallic notions, virtuoso six-string futurist Yatin Srivastava channels his love for a post-TesseracT world through his **Yatin Srivastava Project**'s new album *Chaos//Despair* (self-released). While not exactly an exercise in radicalism, the guitarist's unique flair and gift for penning melodies that gently absorb much of the genre's flagrant complexity make the likes of *Ozone* and *The Unknown* a welcome and subtly eccentric addition to the post-millennial polyrhythmic canon.



THE SEA WITHIN

The Sea Within INSIDEOUT

Supergroup is sum of its parts and then some.



Listening back to this double disc extravaganza, you quickly realise that there probably wasn't a single moment when someone wandered into the rehearsal room or recording studio and suggested that perhaps it was all a bit much. Two discs and a band line-up that reads like the festival headline bill of some esoteric gig in the French countryside means that *The Sea Within* was never going to be an exercise in restraint. Any sort of real constraint was probably never an option for a band that features members of The Aristocrats, Karmakanic, The Flower Kings, Pain Of Salvation and Flying Colors.

> ***The Sea Within* is the sound of a band getting carried away.**

It's an unlikely phrase given the company we're keeping, but there are certain aspects of The Sea Within album where less really is more. Ask Roine Stolt, very much the architect and inspiration behind the band, and he has this to say: "People have asked me how I would describe what we have done, and it is almost impossible... here everything goes."

And how it goes. If there is to be a criticism of *The Sea Within* it's the occasionally egalitarian approach: everyone gets to have a go almost all the time. Given the ludicrous level of talent on display here, this is just one case in point: Marco Minnemann not only plays drums like a particularly aggrieved John Bonham, but he also sings and plays guitar too. It's hard to begrudge the band the jam elements on this record, but The Sea Within are clearly at their best when (more) streamlined and considered.

Fans of the band and its counterparts will no doubt go completely gaga for the 14-minute-plus *Broken Cord*, and there's no doubt that it's startling and impressive, but in parts it feels like a studio blow-out gone that step too far. Which, you might argue, is the point of a band like The Sea Within. But then you only have to listen to the comparatively understated *They Know My Name* (a relatively meagre five minutes and 10 seconds in length) to realise what a band with this much throttle can do when they decide to coast for a bit. Ditto *The Void*, which is a muscle-flexing power ballad with a suitably dreamy synth solo that zigzags to an air-punching crescendo.

The album might best be described as uneven, but it's the sound of a supergroup going through the gears and, to mix metaphors, seeing what fits. From the bombastic *An Eye For An Eye For An Eye* (a title that tells you just how much fun they were having in the studio, as evidenced in its jazz middle section) to the sublime 70s pomp that is *The Hiding Of The Truth*, *The Sea Within* is almost always the sound of a band getting carried away and taking you with them.

PHILIP WILDING

SEASON OF THE CROW

Let It Fly SELF-RELEASED

Multinational prog metallers drop satisfying debut.

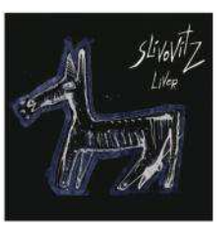


Prog has produced some wonderfully international combinations of musicians. Think supergroup Transatlantic, or even Nightwish. Season Of The Crow might top them all with members drawn from the States, Israel, Finland and India. As debuts go, *Let It Fly* is a cracking one, benefiting from sharp writing from drummer Gavin Carignan and the slick chops of Symphony X's bassist Mike LePond. The cool centre of this techy, heavy prog is the dark contralto voice of Riki Carignan. She offers a still point around which the pyrotechnics of Juha Merimaa's keys and Kapil Krishnamurthy's guitars dance, especially on *Let It Fly*'s centrepiece, *Modus Operandi*. Over its 15 minutes, everyone gets a chance to show off, but Carignan's rich voice ensures it retains focus. If there's nothing 'poppy' about this album, *Mine To Bleed* has the crispness of a single, while *Garden* deploys all the ballad feels without turning cheesy. Fans of Dream Theater and Symphony X will find lots to love here. The album closes with *Into The Sea*, which opens like a torch song, then explodes with a tonne of metal. It's confident, aggressive and melodic, and indicates a powerful way ahead. **RM**

SLIVOVITZ

Liver MOONJUNE/SOUNDFLY

Thrills and spills from fearless Italian fusion outfit.



The first live release from this Napoli instrumental septet captures the band blowing hard in Milan in May 2016. The material is drawn mainly from their two most recent studio recordings, 2015's *All You Can Eat* and 2011's *Bani Ahead*, and really shows just how much ground the players can cover. *Currywurst* is a hard-hitting funk workout where Pietro Santangelo and Ciro Riccardi, on sax and trumpet respectively, take the front seat. *Egiziaca* is led by Derek Di Perri's harmonica, which lends a bluesy flavour to their fusion, while Riccardo Villari's electric violin brings to mind Mahavishnu Orchestra on *Mani In Faccia*, which builds to a peak of manic intensity. There's only one cover – a radical rearrangement of Nirvana's *Negative Creep*. Opening with a yowl of feedback from guitarist Marcello Giannini and scattergun drumming from Salvatore Rainone, the track is driven by Vincenzo Lamagna's deep, growling bass, which lays down the platform for Santangelo and Riccardi to duke it out with abandon. *Liver* is a bracing experience – it's not an album for fusion neophytes, but a thrilling encounter for those able to navigate its twists, turns and fiendishly orchestrated chaos. **DW**

TALITHA RISE

An Abandoned Orchid House SONICBOND

Florid, sometimes languid soundtrack for the lost, lonely and dispossessed.



The house is haunted, it's said. Set back among the trees at the brow of the hill, home to ghosts and memories, the abandoned rooms seem to whisper something to you and then the words are gone. Evocative if ultimately empty, you can only imagine what might have once happened there. In the hands of Sussex songwriter Talitha Rise, the interiors are brightly lit again. Figures move among the swirling curtains, fill doorways, stare from the windows and live. For such a seemingly bleak starting point, *An Abandoned Orchid House* is a record that's filled with colour and ideas. For her part, Rise manages to evoke Kate Bush, Tori Amos *and* Stevie Nicks as she moves (possibly swishes) from one melancholy note to another. Which makes the whole thing sound like it's maddeningly sad. It's not – it's full of grace and beauty, with a possibly wounded heart. It's terrific, too, from the thrumming, folksy *Hungry Ghost* through to the gently climaxing, ever propelling *The Lake* and the slow jangle of *Valley*. There's a lot to unpack, a lot of stories waiting to be heard, the empty hallways breathing, the house finally filling with light. **PW**

THE DEVIN TOWNSEND PROJECT

Ocean Machine: Live At The Ancient Theatre INSIDEOUT

Career-defining three-CD and DVD set is DTP's swan song.

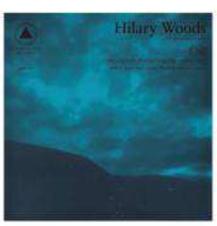


Devin Townsend has always sought to challenge himself, and in disbanding The Devin Townsend Project, which he's helmed since 2009, he's made his latest statement of intent. Before the band split, they closed their 2017 world tour by playing the seminal 1997 album *Ocean Machine* live in London, at the Be Prog! My Friend festival in Barcelona, and at the Roman theatre in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, with the third of these events captured here. Backed by an orchestra and choir, the first set is heavy and lush in equal measure. It's the material from 2016 DTP LP *Transcendence* that's the most cinematic and epic as it features the orchestral arrangements. *Stormbending* and *Higher* are the highlights, and deep cut *Om*, from the *Christeen* EP, is also excellent. Dismissing the orchestra, the band then blaze through the album. *Seventh Wave* and *Regulator* carry heft, but it's the unapologetically earnest *Life* and sprawling *The Death Of Music* that take the breath away. The recordings are superb, with the orchestral and choral accompaniment as atmospheric as you'd expect. Recommended as a bold document from an incredibly ambitious artist. **AL**

HILARY WOODS

Colt SACRED BONES

Arrestingly atmospheric debut from Dublin songwriter.



In a previous life, Woods was the teenage bassist in JJ72, the Dublin alt-rockers who enjoyed a number of minor hits – and a couple of big-selling albums – at the turn of the millennium. By 2003 she'd had enough, turning her back on band life to concentrate on raising her daughter. Her return to music began with 2014's *Night* EP, followed by *Heartbox* a couple of years later. She's also found time to compose horror movie scores for the Irish Film Institute and created sound designs for theatre, as well as crafting a series of home recordings that form the basis of *Colt*, her belated solo debut. A very fine work it is too, relying mostly on the spectral delicacy of Woods' voice and the judicious use of strings, piano and drones for less-is-more effect. She excels at conjuring atmospheres that manage to be both free-floating and claustrophobic, her lyrics hinting at some deep emotional upheaval. *'In the light we're dying,'* she sings on the ominous *Black Rainbow*. And while *Sever* suggests that cutting herself free from a toxic relationship is the only way forward, the hymnal procession of the Cocteaus-like *Inhaler* feels like the beginning of a slow but sure journey. **RH**

PHI YAAN-ZEK

Reality Is My Play Thing AGE OF WONDER

Long-awaited seventh LP from jazz-fusion virtuoso.



With an enviable cast of supporting players, most notably Marco Minnemann, Lalle Larson, Mike Keneally and Bryan Beller, US musician Phi Yaan-Zek has delivered this monolithic epic, a double album that overflows into a triple album in its special edition form. Split onto two discs, *Play Thing* and *Strange Thing*, the album is half with vocals, on the *Play* side, and half instrumental, on the *Strange* side. Though there are some strong cuts on the *Play* side, with *Abigail's Place*, *Kindling* and *Alive* the stand-outs, it feels like it's on the *Strange* side that the band are able to cut loose and enjoy themselves. *Eleven Wandering Mystics* is a whimsical journey through Mike Oldfield levels of strange that parses like a jazz-fusion take on *Altered State* from *Tubular Bells II*. *Beneath A Canopy Of Susurrant Stars* is a smoother, more laid-back affair, where legato guitar lines and delicate keyboard interplay are the name of the game. At the other end of the spectrum, the extrovert prog of *Subterranean Empires* shows another side to Yaan-Zek's guitar playing, with frenetic shredding, angular, acrobatic riffs, and melodramatic choral accompaniment. **AL**



AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...



The second album from Connecticut's **Mile Marker Zero** justifies the buzz around singer Dave Alley and band in New England. Fitted with serious chops and a solid theme, *The Fifth Row* (Prog East) deals with the rise of artificial intelligence. It flicks Waters-like through TV news channels to set the mood and period, and it buzzes through dizzying, Berkeley-Set prog metal lines to push the message, with Spock's Beard/Rush/Headspace song smarts in the mix too. It might run out of puff before the end of its 15-tracks, but it's still a rich and engrossing concept album well worthy of your ears.

Proggers Bram Stoker broke up in 1972 and reformed 30 years later, only to dissolve again like a vampire in sunlight. This left guitarist/songwriter **Peter Ballam** with a bunch of unrecorded songs, which he has now recorded with guest musicians on *Manic Machine* (www.bramstokerarchives.com). Suitably supernatural tales — a psychic employed by MI5 during WWII, a little girl unaware she's a ghost, Mayan prophecies — are set to burbling Hammonds, driving guitars and spirited vocals. It's old-fashioned, meaningful material, with Ballam showing the new blood how it's done.



Keyboardist Stephen Bennett, bassist John Jowitt and drummer Fudge Smith have a combined portfolio featuring — among many others — IQ, Arena, Tim Bowness and Pendragon. Together with guitarist H (not that one) and vocalist Tommy Fox they are **Time Collider**, whose debut release *Travel Conspiracy* (www.timecollider.com) is an assured, live-sounding set drawing on neo and modern prog. Given his seasoned backing band, Fox's relative inexperience can't help but show, but he'll develop in time, and these songs, and this band, are well worth bearing with in the meantime.



Dennis Young made his bones with avant-garde New Yorkers Liquid Liquid, and all these decades later he's still creating quirky synth music pushing boundaries and buttons. *Synthesis* (Bureau B) is packed with blips and blops and wibbles and washes you might expect more from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop than a co-writer of the much-sampled *Cavern*. Amid the digital melee of *Teotihuacan* and *Pulsar*, you can sense the pioneering mind of an artist still seeking, still pushing. For that alone, it's thrilling and admirable.



Dennis Young would get a kick out of the inventive stylings of **Us, Today**. This trio from Cincinnati make melodic, textured, instrumental music drawing on avant-jazz and post-rock, all with a left-field pop feel. Second album *Computant* (It.Me.Music) is a treat, with effected vibraphones vying with mathy drums grooves, crunchy guitar motifs and electronic elements. It's incredibly listenable and thoughtfully composed stuff infused with, ahem, good vibes. Ruth Underwood fronting Tortoise, anyone?



Finally, the reissue of 2016's *Harmony For Elephants* (Esoteric Antenna). It's part of a larger body of work raising awareness of the charity www.elephantsforafrica.org, with **Steve Hackett**, **Nad Sylvan** and **Anthony Phillips** among the artists contributing some truly beautiful, sweeping and often heart-rending pieces, befitting the animals and landscapes that inspired them.



PROCOL HARUM

Grand Hotel ESOTERIC

No reservations required with sixth studio album.



One of the byproducts of Gary Brooker's eclectic writing was that Procol Harum were never going to find it easy to meet the expectations that were set in motion following the phenomenal worldwide success of *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*. The further away the band drifted from that lachrymose vamp on Bach, the more their commercial star dimmed. That their albums were in fact filled with intriguing meditations and sparkling gems mattered little to the general public.

> **The cohesion across the album's entirety is tangible.**

Though adored by their hardcore fanbase, in the fast-changing world of the late 60s and early 70s they sometimes seemed like a band stranded, trapped in the cloying amber of their initial celebrity — too circuitous and cerebral for the rock crowd, too electric for the singer-songwriter scene, and lacking the instrumental pyrotechnics or elaborate stage shows deemed de rigueur on the burgeoning progressive scene.

By 1973's *Grand Hotel*, despite an American resurgence with the previous year's *Procol Harum Live: In Concert With The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra*, the *NME* could legitimately, if provocatively, ask its UK readers in a headline to an interview with Brooker, "So who loves Procol Harum?"

As it turns out, there's a lot to love about this expanded two-disc edition. Not only does the remastered album come with five bonus tracks from early recording sessions, three of which are previously unreleased, but the DVD contains a nine-track Belgian TV concert from 1973. Ronald Clare's comprehensive liner notes provide useful context and also boast commentary from Brooker himself in the accompanying sumptuous booklet.

With material written entirely by Brooker and lyricist Keith Reid, the cohesion across the album's entirety is tangible. While that trademark unwillingness to plant its flag on one stylistic hill remains, the careful crafting of each individual song builds up to something substantial. Around Brooker's careworn voice comes a line-up strengthened by new recruit Mick Grabham on guitar, whose added bite brings fire most especially to *Toujours L'amour* and *TV Ceasar*.

The title track occasionally threatens to buckle under the weight of massed choirs and the sweeping blandishments of a symphony orchestra, which is precisely as intended, given that such flamboyant augmentation perfectly illustrates the bloated grandiosity implicit in Reid's wordplay.

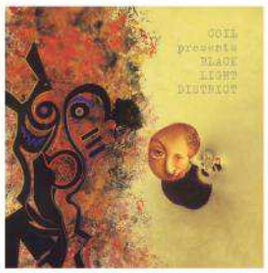
Overall, *Grand Hotel* provides further proof of Brooker and Reid being criminally forgotten about when considering their place in the pantheon of great songwriting partnerships.

SID SMITH

ELPH VS COIL/ COIL PRESENTS BLACK LIGHT DISTRICT

Worship The Glitch/ A Thousand Lights In A Darkened Room DAIS

Two mid-90s 'side project' albums by the experimental electronica outfit.



After offering a kind of bad-trip take on loved-up Acid House on *Love's Secret Domain*, Coil, not wishing to be seen to be jumping on the rave bandwagon, retreated from that scene. Their desire was to make music that was as stimulating and psychedelic, but without the need for generic repetitive beats.

This resulted in the disoriented 1995 studio sessions that yielded *Worship The Glitch*. ELpH was a name that Sleazy Pete Christopherson and John Balance gave to an entity manifested by their music, which they felt was causing their equipment to mysteriously malfunction. It was all incorporated into the music, hence the album's title.

Although *Dark Start* and *Bism* are reminiscent of early-70s Tangerine Dream, the queasy drones of *Opium Hum* makes it feel like you're sitting, sweating, grasping the chair arms and hoping it will all soon wear off. *We Have Always Been Here* is completely different in mood, opening out into space with what feel like little wisps of sound whizzing past your head,

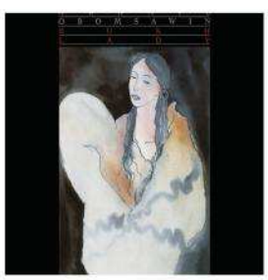
Maybe because of stories of the duo's exploration of the occult, not to mention their dark sense of humour, but there was always something slightly scary about Coil's music. Released in 1996, *A Thousand Lights...* introduced new member Drew McDowall and is typically uneasy listening. It also still sounds strikingly original, with the soundscape constantly being tweaked and twisted, even on the simple loops and drones of *Stoned Circular I*. Meanwhile, the twitchy, squelchy rhythms of *Red Skeletons* underpin a collage of eavesdropped telephone conversations.

Green Water feels like a steamy Elysian landscape, albeit one with a sense of lurking threat. But there is a resolution of sorts in the fractured female vocals on the beautiful albeit eerie closer, *Chalice*. **MB**

ALANIS OBOMSAWIN

Bush Lady CONSTELLATION

Re-release of mythical lost album by First Nations documentarian.



Alanis Obomsawin is a Canadian filmmaker and activist, and a member of the indigenous Waban-Aki Nation. For over 50 years, she has made numerous documentaries highlighting both the culture and plight of Canada's First Nations people, and has been lauded for her efforts. But before she discovered filmmaking, Obomsawin spent the 1960s as a singer and musician, performing both traditional songs and her own compositions at a time when the historical mistreatment of indigenous people was beginning to become a major political issue.

Yet it wasn't until the mid-80s that she recorded and self-released her only album. At the time, it quickly fell into obscurity, but it has since become a prized item among collectors of avant-garde and ethno-traditional music.

Bush Lady is regularly described as a 'magical' record, and while it's important to guard against exoticising music like this just because it doesn't conform to Western scales, its ability to transport the listener is undeniable. Opening song *Odana* is deceptively beautiful, a wonderful blossoming of strings and woodwind over which Obomsawin is entrancingly present, her voice both intimate and precise. It's a powerful, spine-tingling performance tinged with sadness, the words prophesying the destruction of the Waban-Aki's land.

The extended title track moves into more challenging territory, Obomsawin accompanied by just the solemn beat of a drum and a solitary violin as she recounts in mocking, halting English the tale of a 'savage' bush lady exploited and then rejected by her white lover, the narrative broken up with traditional chants and ululations. The sound is spacious, but there's a feeling of being trapped inside the story.

The similarly extended *Theo* is even more minimal, just the dry funereal drum again as Obomsawin describes the massacre of her village by rangers in 1759. A chorus of flutes occasionally appears, but it's a sweet counterpoint to an unpalatable truth. **JB**

PINK FLOYD

Relics/Pulse PINK FLOYD

From early to latter-day Floyd as more vinyl is released.



To any eye, untrained or not, the lavish four-disc vinyl box set of *Pulse*, remastered by James Guthrie and on 180g vinyl, compete with 52-page hardback book, is what probably grabs the attention here. But despite its somewhat lowly standing with some Floyd fans (not enough rarities, too much from the debut), it is the early years compilation *Relics* that wins out.

This writer first purchased it on the budget MFP label, when it boasted a garish pink logo. It was a gateway to a whole new Pink Floyd for someone who'd only just got turned on to *The Wall*, *Wish You Were Here* and *Dark Side Of The Moon*. It comprises the band's first two singles *Arnold Layne* and *See Emily Play*, along with material from their first three albums and the previously unreleased *Biding My Time*. The band's label, worried they'd gone in to record *Meddle* with no material prepared and would take forever to record it, decided to release *Relics*. The sleeve, drawn by Nick Mason, now reverts back to the original 1971 release, though Storm Thorgerson created a real version of the line drawing for the 1996 CD reissue. With Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets shoving this era back in the spotlight, it's a joy to rediscover the band's early experimentation, which sounds magical.

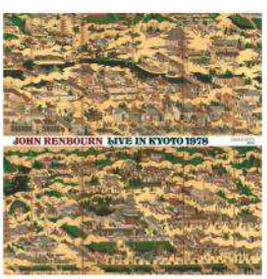
Your take on *Pulse* depends on how purist your view of the band is. Those who attended the 1994 concerts will no doubt revel in the augmented sound, especially the appearance of *Astronomy Domine* for the first time since the early 70s, and the very first offical airing of the whole of *Dark Side Of The Moon*.

Those who moan that the band were never the same after Waters departed, or that the Gilmour era is too lightweight, will undoubtedly go back to haranguing anyone who will listen that "It was all so much better in my day" and that "Nothing was better than the original", though this writer is sure that even such curmudgeons could find something to moan about concerning the band's earliest recordings, too. The grumpy old relics! **JE**

JOHN RENBOURN

Live In Kyoto 1978 DRAG CITY

Pentangle maestro's love letter from Japan.



The 60s produced some remarkable guitarists. In classical circles, aficionados chose between the virtuosity of John Williams and the feel of Julian Bream, while rock had its Claptons, Becks and Pages. Folk produced John Renbourn and Bert Jansch who were magnificent in collaboration as well as alone. Three years on from Renbourn's death, this release of his 1978 gig in Kyoto makes a compelling case for Renbourn's jazz and classical-infused 'folk baroque' technique.

Those who were at Jittoku Coffee House for Renbourn's gig have long spoken about how remarkable it was, not only for his playing, but also for his witty between-song chat. Luckily Sattoro Fujii recorded it and 40 years on, it's finally surfaced.

It's an extraordinary document that not only shows Renbourn at the height of his powers, but takes the listener into a lost, simpler world. What is lacking in fidelity – and these are lo-fi recordings – is made up for in warmth and intimacy. The performance is shot through with classics, including that spur to so many folk careers, Davey Graham's *Anji*, as well as a transporting and supple *I Know My Babe*. Renbourn digs deep into the folk tradition on tracks such as *John Barleycorn* and *The Earle Of Salisbury*, but it's the album's instrumental medleys that show up Renbourn's jaw-dropping technique. The sinuous interplay between *Lamentation For Owen Roe O'Neill*, *The Orphan* and *The English Dance* is ever evolving and mind-boggling, but Renbourn makes it seem effortless.

On *Jew's Dance*, he pulls off the trick of playing in two different keys at once. It's both dazzling and witty and reminds us why his album of medieval tunes *Sir John A lot* was so groundbreaking. The fact that Renbourn has now joined Bert Jansch at the Great Gig In The Sky only adds to this album's sense of pathos. Yes, there are other live documents out there, including *In Concert* with Stefan Grossman, but this captures Renbourn's wit, charm and talent like little else. It's pure fingerpickin' joy. **RM**

NIRVANA

Rainbow Chaser: The 1960s Recordings (The Island Years) UMC/ISLAND

60s outfit's first two proto-prog albums, now vastly expanded.



In the closing months of 1967, it was a close race between The Moody Blues and the Pretty Things as both looked to release rock's first fully fledged concept album. Coming up on the outside, unknown Island Records songwriting duo Patrick Campbell-Lyons and Alex Spyropoulos, trading as Nirvana, pipped everyone to the post that October with *The Story Of Simon Simopath* after releasing just one earlier single.

> **It boasts obvious songwriting chops and prog elements.**

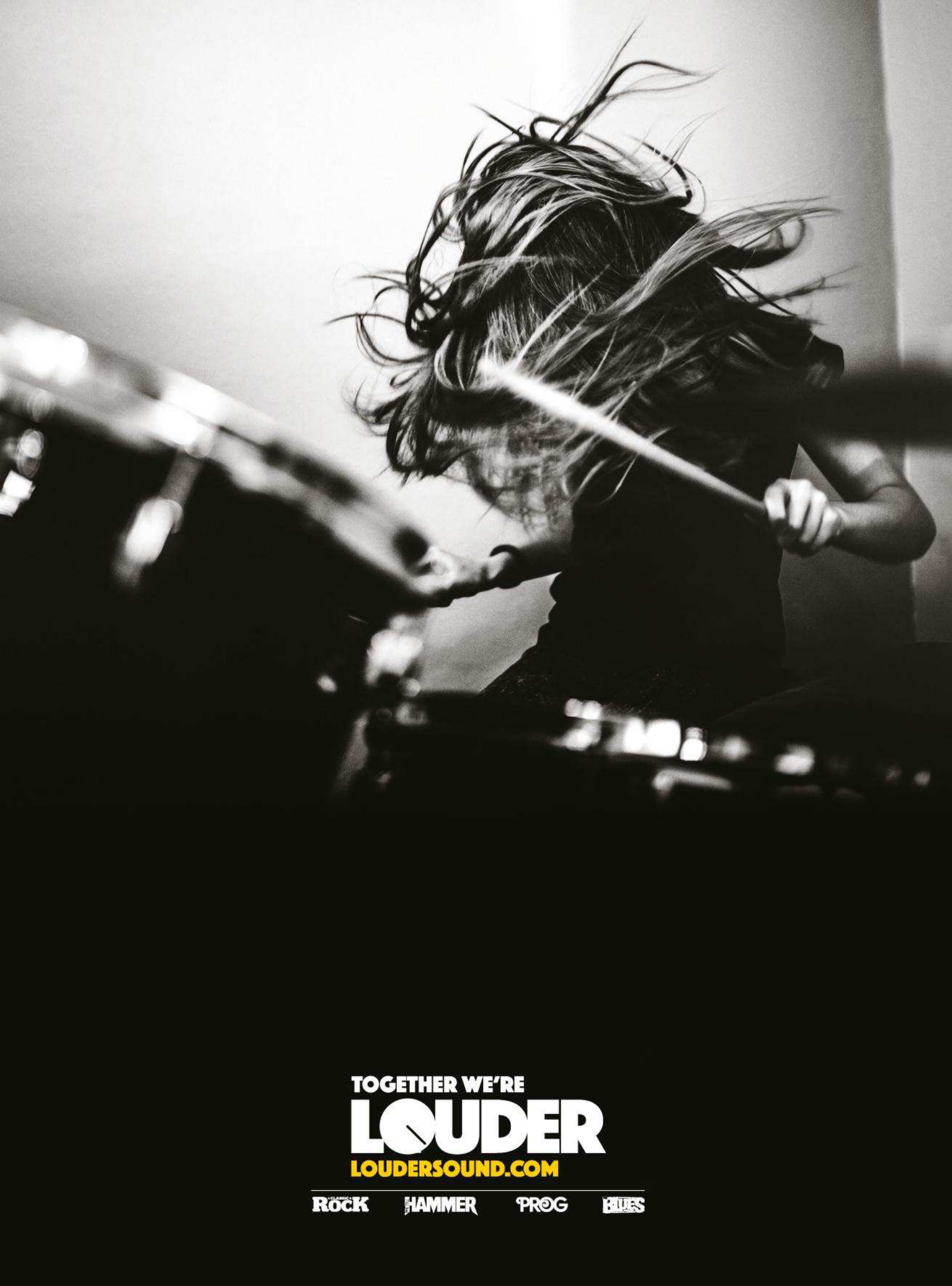
Although the luscious gatefold sleeve and liner story about a bullied boy who wished he could fly promised an escapism masterpiece, the Science Fiction Pantomime subtitle betrayed the childlike confections within: more West End musical than anything seismic, if boasting obvious songwriting chops while politely brandishing future prog elements such as the fantasy concept and baroque-classical arrangements. Held against the orchestrated grandeur of *Days Of Future Passed* or riveting heartbreak of the Pretties' *SF Sorrow* when they followed soon afterwards, Nirvana's cutely wrapped toytown pop vignettes could only pale.

Undeterred, Chris Blackwell produced a patchier second album, 1968's *All Of Us*, which included that exquisite first single *Tiny Goddess*, beautiful follow-up *Pentecost Hotel* and signature song *Rainbow Chaser*, which hit No.34, their only chart hit. After that album also failed and Blackwell rejected a proposed third album (later released on Pye), Nirvana split.

Island now wheel out the big guns in an attempt to reposition Nirvana as enigmatic late-60s pioneers, but this release is more likely to delight the cult following that's lapped up previous compilations and re-recordings.

Specialist compiler Philip Lloyd-Smee combines the first two albums and already familiar B-sides with 27 previously unreleased tracks, demos, backing tracks and early versions. Items of most interest include the original recording of *Tiny Goddess*, first album outtakes *Goodbye Baby Bunting* and *City Of The South*, and two early manifestations of their theme to the movie *The Untouchables* (including one by its actresses). Then there's *Rainbow Chaser* without its heavy 'phasing' gimmick (contrary to the notes, the Small Faces' *Itchycoo Park* was the first to deploy the technique) and alternative takes of third album tracks, including the legendary DJ Shadow-sampled mood-piece *Love Suite*.

Tiny Goddess, *Pentecost Hotel* and *Rainbow Chaser* remain the outstanding peaks in a selection that may still sound old-fashioned and lightweight against the seismic developments happening elsewhere in progressive music, but it's not without a certain period charm and drug-free innocence. **KRIS NEEDS**


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STEVE TIBBETTS

Steve Tibbetts ECM

Acoustic wizardry and cosmic electronica come together on startling debut from 1977.



Steve Tibbetts is best known for his 1980s recordings on the ECM label, pioneering the possibilities of marrying avant-guitar with world music rhythms, but his story begins with this home-recorded, self-released and frequently astonishing debut album from 1977. Tibbetts was still at college and in his early 20s when he made it, but it's clear he had a unique vision for exploratory instrumental music even then. He describes himself as a 'postmodern neo-primitivist' and early reviews place him in the same lineage as players such as John Fahey, though you can also hear the influence of progressive folk/blues artists such as Roy Harper and Mike Oldfield. Yet acoustic virtuosity is only one aspect of the brilliant soundscapes he creates on this record.

Sunrise/The Secret starts as a procession of fingerpicked arpeggios and flurries of notes, but the arrangement is taut and hums with a quiet tension. Then there's a sudden jump cut into a mysterious windswept realm of ringing harmonics and a lonesome Moog, gradually building to a cosmic crescendo.

There's more synth on *Desert*, almost pushing into *Wish You Were Here* territory, but it's on *Jungle Rhythm* that Tibbetts unleashes his full electronic arsenal – it's a throbbing, ecstatic piece of kosmische worthy of Tangerine Dream or Klaus Schulze. And then *Alvin Goes To Tibet/ How Do You Like My Buddha?* throws everything into the mix, starting like the soundtrack to an arthouse sci-fi film before some electric guitar and synth duelling commences over a backwards rhythm track and swampy bass riff.

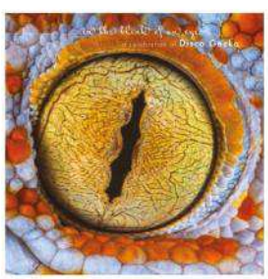
What makes this record so fascinating is the way in which Tibbetts fearlessly skips between genres and combines disparate sound sources yet produces a cohesive listening experience. Like artists such as Ryley Walker and Chris Forsyth, he's a player who refuses to be trapped by notions of what an acoustic troubadour should be.

Unavailable for over 20 years and now superbly remastered, this album is a major rediscovery. **JB**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

In The Blink Of An Eye DISCO GECKO

Chillout lounge lizards celebrate 20th anniversary.



Back in the 90s, while superstar DJ culture noisily swept the planet, the UK harboured an enormous grass-roots crowd that loved chilling to heavyweight dub reggae, ambient floatation and occasional acid-house flare-ups at London epicentre Club Dog. After participating in the club's hugely successful Megadog tours, Toby Marks, aka Banco de Gaia, released albums mixing Western beats with Eastern vocal sensibilities on the Planet Dog label, including 1995's breakthrough *Last Train To Lhasa*. He then started his Disco Gecko imprint in 1998 to accommodate his desire to promote "eclectic forward-thinking music with heart, integrity and beauty".

Marks celebrates his label's 20th anniversary by compiling this sublime set of highlights. His manifesto is repeatedly affirmed by sparkling gems that veer from the reflective calm of 100th Monkey (aka Andy Guthrie)'s *The Inuit Snow Song* and Andrew Heath's cathartic *A Stillness of Place* to the crunching house grooves of Finland producer LO18's *Huima* and Radium88's *Heavy Water, Falling Stone*. Between those two polar extremes nestles a galaxy of brain-soothing exoticism and mind-scrambling wonders. These include Animat duo Mark Daly and Michael Harding crystallising Eastern dub on *Translucent Transparent*, Simon Power invoking a video arcade on *How Proud We Are*, the radioactive creeper dub of Dr Trippy's *Darjeeling Daydream*, Dragonfly Trio in drum'n'bass-mangling flight on *Up*, and Marks' own languorous *Glove Puppet*. The latter features the smouldering tones of singer Sophie Barker, who also turns in a blinding performance on her *Road 66*.

With the roster all remixing each other's tracks, a barely containable mutual euphoria courses through every hallucinogenic twinkle, astral groove manifestation and subtly deployed galactic scrabble.

This mesmerising set shows how beautifully electronic-based music can marinate with the right passion, skills and crucial acknowledgement of that often-forgotten human element. **KN**

TWELFTH NIGHT

Fact And Fiction - The Definitive Edition F2/FESTIVAL MUSIC

Signature neo-prog landmark gets the treatment it deserves.



When the likes of Yes and Genesis selected a more mainstream direction, the early 1980s saw a flurry of so-called neo-progressive bands emerge in the UK. With the benefit of most of four decades of hindsight, ultimately it was only Marillion who truly broke through into the major leagues. Bands such as Pallas, IQ and Pendragon all enjoyed varying but lesser degrees of success. However, as misfortune would have it, it was perhaps one of

> **The third disc holds the real treasure: covers of *F&F* songs.**

the most intriguing bands of that era, Twelfth Night, whose promise ultimately proved the least rewarded commercially.

So far, 2018 has heralded a comparative glut of product for followers of Twelfth Night. Earlier this year, multi-instrumentalist Clive Mitten released his C:Live Collective's *The Age Of Insanity* album. Hot on its heels comes this version of Twelfth Night's signature 1982 album *Fact And Fiction*, which runs to three CDs.

As with so many progressive bands of varying vintages, this is not the first time that *Fact And Fiction* has been re-released – there was a version issued much earlier this millennium, replete with a handful of bonus tracks. However, this time around a much-expanded offering is available.

The first disc consists of the original 1983 *Fact And Fiction* album, while the second disc collects demos and live material recorded between 1983 and 2012, featuring not only *F&F*'s original vocalist, the late, great Geoff Mann, but also his successors at the microphone, Andy Sears and Mark Spencer.

For those already intimately familiar with the delights of this seminal prog album, it's the third disc that holds the real treasure, namely cover versions of *F&F* songs. These were recorded in some cases as recently as earlier this year by artists such as Galahad, former Pallas vocalist Alan Reed, ex-Touchstone singer Kim Seviour and Arena leader Clive Nolan, each demonstrating the timelessness of *F&F*. Fittingly, there are also 1992 live versions of the title track and *Love Song* by Eh! Geoff Mann Band.

All too often when a re-release is promoted as being 'definitive', that description proves to be far from accurate. Either there's the irksome sound of a barrel being scrapped for every last vestige of vaguely relevant material, irrespective of its quality, or there are glaringly frustrating omissions. Happily, *Fact And Fiction – The Definitive Edition* entirely lives up to its title.

This release is probably targeted principally at Twelfth Night completists and may stretch the patience of newcomers or the merely vaguely curious, but either way, it's been comprehensively and lovingly curated .

NICK SHILTON

Steve Hackett
Genesis Revisited
~ Band with Orchestra ~



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Thu	04	LONDON Royal Festival Hall SOLD OUT
Fri	05	BIRMINGHAM Symphony Hall SOLD OUT
Sun	07	GATESHEAD The Sage
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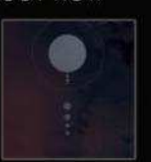
NOVEMBER

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WED 28 **MANCHESTER** ACADEMY 2
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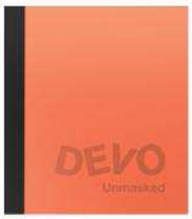
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DEVO: THE BRAND/DEVO: UNMASKED

Gerald Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh ROCKET 88

Devolution is real! Official pictorial history of Ohio's oddest.

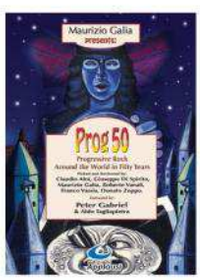


Flip it, flip it good. This curious two-in-one book comes as a topsy-turvy tome wherein one half – *Devo: The Brand* – is a treasure chest of classic Devo photos, iconography, interviews and memorabilia. Turn it upside down or backwards – which I guess is what Devo are hinting they did to pop culture – and you have *Devo: Unmasked*, in which are gathered rare, unseen photos of the band off duty and in civvies. The spooky thing is, they kind of look weirder without the helmets and costumes. One photo of Gerald Casale holding a friend's infant baby while sporting a leather hockey mask is creepier than anything Wes Craven dreamed up. The thing is, you can't stop looking at it, and therein lies Devo's weird magnetism. Casale and Mark Mothersbaugh have trawled through their personal archives. The group who flew the flag for deadpan surrealism through the new wave era and beyond, radicalising the video medium, are well represented by both the better-known imagery and the 'candids', which have a built-in irony. Their written contributions to their illustrated history are unsurprisingly articulate: "Memory is a plastic mutable file stored inside us meat computers," they reason. Total Devo. **CR**

PROG 50: PROGRESSIVE ROCK AROUND THE WORLD IN FIFTY YEARS

Maurizio Galia EDIZIONI APPLAUSI

An impressive attempt to squeeze the prog world into one paperback reference.

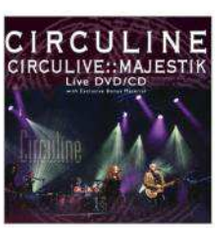


Last year, when we reviewed *I 100 Migliori Dischi del Progressive Italiano*, an Italian-language breakdown of the 100 best prog albums, we had one wish: put it all into English. Curated by Italian prog collector Maurizio Galia, *Prog 50* does precisely that, and with five other reviewers, along with a foreword by Peter Gabriel, it gamely tackles a huge task. You've got to get to grips with the categorising first. The book is separated into Kings, Knights and Troopers. A King (that's each country's big hitters) gets a whole page, Knights are six on a spread and Troopers eight. Then the country-by-country breakdowns begin. As a system it works well, and you'll easily make intriguing discoveries from places such as Peru, Korea, the Czech Republic and Estonia – many of which are 70s-centric, of course. Broken up with artwork and photos, although all in black-and-white, the text is clear, with notable references in bold, and a discography to go with each entry. The wizard hat goes off to translator Christine Colomo for making the content highly readable. **JK**

CIRCULINE

Circulive: Majestik INNER NOVA

New Yorkers rock out, tastefully, at RoSFest.



This CD/DVD set captures Circuline live at RoSFest 2016 following the release of their second album *Counterpoint*. The group grew out of a prog covers band and while their influences creep through occasionally, they never sound derivative. One of the band's selling points is the three-part harmonies by lead vocalists Natalie Brown and Billy Spillane, plus keys player Andy Colyer. However, it's Brown who shines brightest, particularly when lifting into the high notes of *Forbidden Planet*. *Hollow* boasts moments of great musical drama as it moves between Colyer's classically tinted piano and guitarist Beledo's choppy lick. Not just a riffer, Beledo, who resembles Tommy Wiseau under the lights, throws out some Adrian Belew freaky guitar shapes during *Inception* and shows his tasteful side with his lead work in the jazzy *Summit*. The midsection of *Nautilus* detours into ELP territory via Colyer's organ solo, although drummer Darin Brannon is a steady timekeeper, rather than a Carl Palmer human whirlwind. Circuline are a relatively new band, but those years spent playing prog classics have honed their confidence and stage presence, and their potential is clear. **DW**

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Live At Rockpalast MIG

Superb live document of VdGG's triumphant 2005 return.



The announcement in 2005 that Van der Graaf Generator had reformed and were to both release a new album and perform live for the first time in 27 years was met by the faithful with a delirious combination of disbelief and wonderment. Any doubts about whether VdGG still 'had it' were blown away as soon as the classic line-up of Hammill, Jackson, Banton and Evans took to the stage of the Royal Festival Hall in May of that year — it was an intense and emotional experience for both band and audience.

Van der Graaf Generator — Live At Rockpalast captures them in November 2005 (on the night of Peter Hammill's 57th birthday, no less) playing the Jazzfestival in Leverkusen, Germany, and despite it being near the end of their comeback tour, the band are still clearly buzzing with energy and the joy of playing together again. You can sense the audience's sheer delight too, a huge cheer of recognition greeting *The Undercover Man*'s introductory flute blips, like the sonar of a leviathan surfacing from the ocean's depths once again.

> **A leviathan surfacing from the ocean's depths once again.**

Hammill, looking elegantly gaunt and wiry of frame, commands your attention. He's in fine voice throughout, delivering both angelic falsetto and demonic baritone with gusto, even as he's sometimes pushed back from the mic by the force of his own words. But the cameras love David Jackson's juggling act with his saxophones, blowing like a man possessed and still wearing his trademark leather cap and sheriff's badge. In contrast, Hugh Banton exudes calm authority as his hands dance lightly over the keys, and Guy Evans is an unflappable if grim-faced powerhouse behind the drums.

The set is exemplary, with songs drawn from all of VdGG's key albums, as well as 2005's *Present*. *Scorched Earth* remains as strange and brutal as its subject matter, and *Darkness* is similarly elemental, Banton's tidal wave of organ pushing Jackson to ever greater heights of skronk. *Lemmings* is alternately harsh and dreamlike, Hammill bolstering the main riff with shards of noisy guitar, while the mock regality of *Every Bloody Emperor* is as timely as ever.

However, it's the passion and humanity of *Man-Erg* that best sums up this show — VdGG turn in a truly vital performance exactly because they haven't been flogging these songs to death for the past 30 years.

With Jackson having departed soon after, this is the only full-concert film of this line-up, so it's just as well that it looks and sounds terrific, with multiple angles, a crystal-clear mix and a vibrant edit delivering a genuinely immersive live document.

JOE BANKS

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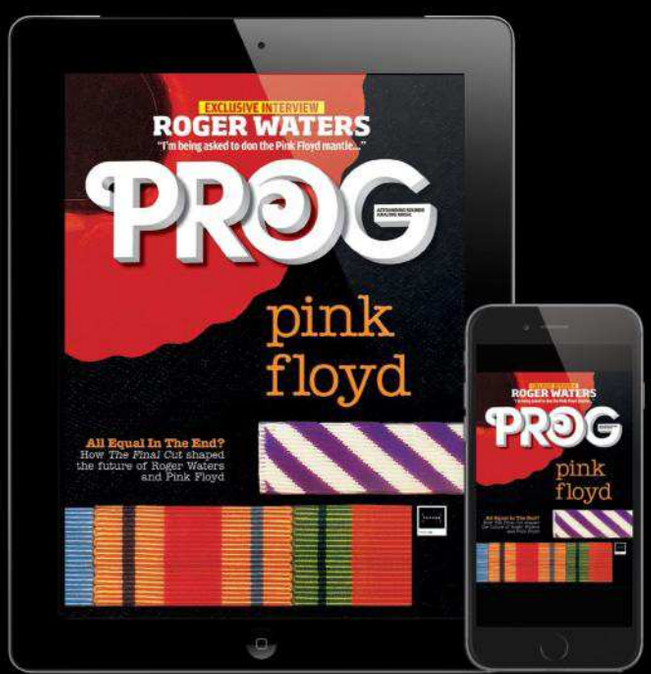
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Take a bow

WINTER'S END FESTIVAL

VENUE	DRILL HALL, CHEPSTOW
DATE	27-29/04/2018



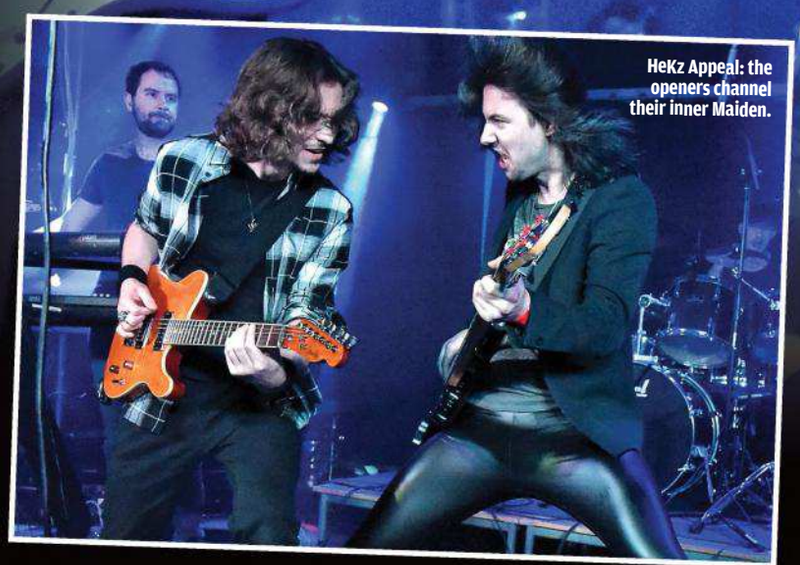
Melodic masters Mystery bring classy prog and capes to Chepstow.

FRIDAY

A good indication of any music scene's health is to see how things are faring at a grass-roots level. There is an argument to be had that Summer's End and Winter's End founders Stephen Lambe and Huw Lloyd-Jones are more movers and shakers in the prog world than that. However, the fact that this is only the second Winter's End festival (the original, much smaller event took place in Stroud in 2010) yet it still manages to draw an internationally acclaimed line-up and healthy crowds suggests that prog remains a flourishing genre.

> **"The fact that this is only the second Winter's End event yet it still manages to draw an internationally acclaimed line-up and healthy crowds suggests that prog remains a flourishing genre."**

There's plenty flourishing about the bands on display over the three days as well. And there's plenty of zip about openers **HeKz**, especially after they play their opener, new song *Quetzalcoatl*, and you half expect singer/bassist Matt Young, resplendent in spandex that would do Bruce Dickinson proud, to holler "Scream for me Chepstow!" The band's Rush-meets-epic-Maiden prog metal is enthusiastic enough, but after three albums, you might expect a bit more of their own character to shine through.



HeKz Appeal: the openers channel their inner Maiden.

Headliners **Mystery** are now dab hands at this live lark, as their recent *Second Home* live album and DVD conveys. Tonight they're full of melodic majesty, with a set that features most of 2015's *Delusion Rain* album, and also stretches back to 1998's *Destiny* for *Shadow Of The Lake*. Like his predecessor, Benoît David, Jean Pageau has a fine voice, a dash of Dennis DeYoung's commercial theatricality adding to the appeal of songs like *As I Am* and *If You See Her*. The rest of the band, led by guitarist Michel St-Père, are well drilled yet flamboyant enough to suggest that they yearn for stages bigger than the confines of Chepstow's.

It's a classy performance, the best *Prog* has seen from them. They deserve a shot at grander auditoriums than this.

SATURDAY

First up on Saturday are 80s veterans **Multi Story**, whose career-spanning set provides the perfect curtain-raiser for the first full day. Opening with *Breaking Ground* from the very first album, they sound vital and energised, with frontman Paul Ford engaging the crowd with aplomb as they generate an immediate atmosphere.

Alan Reed is leading his Daughters Of Expediency through opener *Begin Again* when, somewhat ironically, the Drill Hall fire alarm goes off. Thankfully it's a blip and we're spared beginning again, and the band plough through what ranks as one of the finest sets of the weekend. Reed's own material such as *Razor* holds its own with wonderful renditions of Pallas' *The Executioner* and *Crown Of Thorns*.

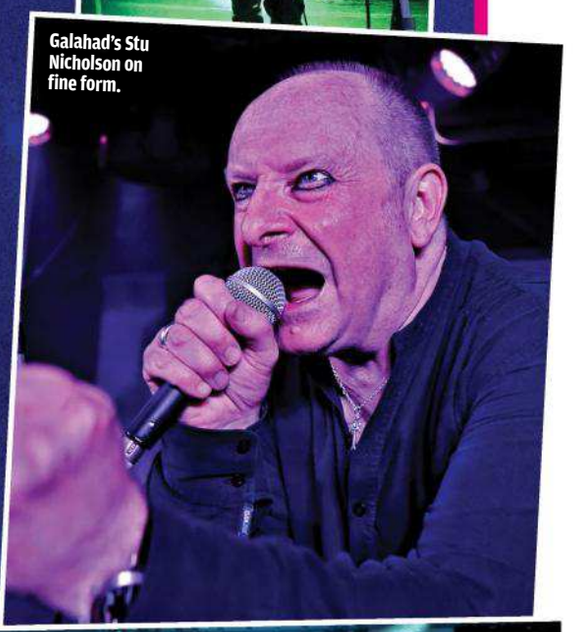
Galahad follow in fighting form while battling sauna-like conditions. Heavily eyelined vocalist Stu Nicholson skips around the stage and fluffs the occasional line, but is in jocular mood. The focus is on new one-track album *Seas Of Change*, split in two to start and close the set. Guitarist Lee Abraham provides a real depth of sound, working effectively alongside Dean Baker's vast keyboard repertoire, Spencer Luckman's relentless drums, and Mark Spencer, back again on bass. Older songs like *Sleepers* provide timely reminders of their tremendous 30-year prog legacy.

Live debuts don't come more challenging than that of **The C:Live Collective**. Clive Mitten (Twelfth Night) and musical companions, including Mark Spencer's third appearance of the day, are beset with technical problems from the outset. However, a reimagined *We Are Sane*, which forms the first movement of *The Fifth Estate* from the Collective's album *The Age Of Insanity*,

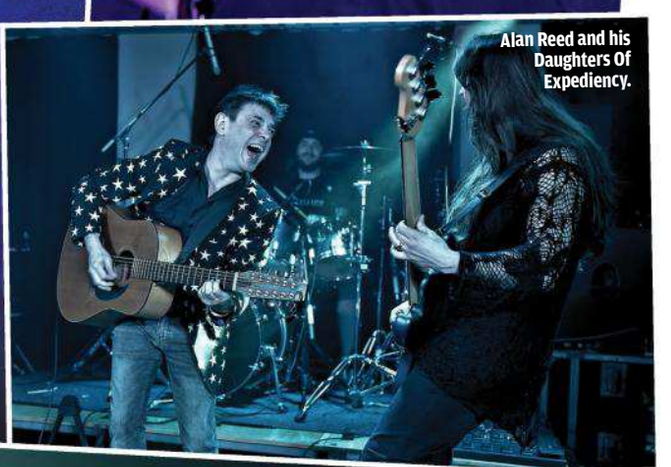


The C:Live Collective's Clive Mitten.

MARTIN REIJMAN


Galahad's Stu Nicholson on fine form.

Multi Story's Paul Ford.


Alan Reed and his Daughters Of Expediency.


Double Vision: Arena's Paul Manzi and John Mitchell.

is a revelation. Mitten's compelling, complex mind music features helicopters, church bells and ambient sounds. Lush orchestral soundscapes mingle with techno and jazz. His dazzling hallmark bass runs and Fudge Smith's massive drum attack give notice of what's to come, but they run out of time before the planned gospel choir version of *This City Is London*. It's unfinished business but rest assured, there will be another time. Watch this space.

Saturday's headliners **Arena** may have a new long-player out, *Double Vision*, but they're also celebrating the 20th anniversary of their epic concept album *The Visitor* (on which guitarist John Mitchell made his debut), and tonight they're playing the whole thing live. It's a move almost guaranteed to win over a crowd like Chepstow, and they duly

lap it up. Singer Paul Manzi adds a more muscular theatricality than original vocalist Paul Wrightson, and it seems to suit the band Arena are today.

It's not an easy task to follow an hour of conceptual, often breathtaking prog with a shorter set of singular songs, but by this point Arena are flying. They drop the tempo, though, for the fragile *Poisoned* from the new album, which Nolan penned for the late Ian Baldwin, his theatrical collaborator who sadly passed away in January. But from there it's a solid run of rockingly good prog tunes, guitarist Mitchell igniting the other new song *The Mirror Lies* with some demonic riffage.

Given the quality of *Double Vision*, let's hope we see Arena back out with a new live set concentrating on the new album. On this form, they deserve to clean up.

SUNDAY

Sunday's afternoon bill has a definite international feel to it, with Italy's **Karmamoi** opening up. Their heavy, occasionally slightly doomy sound is a brave move to wake up the sleepier punters, but it does the trick as the hall fills up healthily, with Sara Rinaldi providing an excellent turn on vocals.

It's over to Greece next for the much-anticipated **Verbal Delirium**, who turned in a well-received set at Summer's End festival last year, and once again they do not disappoint. Led by enigmatic frontman Jargon, intensity is this band's stock in trade, and they deliver it in the proverbial spades. The touchstone is undoubtedly Peter Hammill, and despite this sometimes being a divisive approach, there are no such fears here. By the time they finish a spellbinding *Dancing Generation* they have the crowd eating out of their hands. A triumphant performance.

The cosmopolitan afternoon returns to Wales for **Jump**, fronted as ever by the unique John Dexter Jones, whose combination of storytelling lyricist and between-song raconteur marks him out as a sort of cross between Fish and Springsteen. With standout tracks from recent album *Over The Top* such as the folksy *Saint Marie* and ode to a departed friend *Johnny V* (complete with a lyrical nod to Twisted Sister), the band are called back for a hasty encore of *The Freedom Train*, despite the clock ticking. Great stuff!

"The latest incarnation of Lifesigns conduct a masterclass in the finer arts, closing the festival with a peerless performance."

Tiger Moth Tales, stepping in for the absent Presto Ballet, offer another of the weekend's standout sets. Peter Jones is comedic, especially when he accidentally breaks the A key on his keyboard. He remarks that it will be more of a problem for Camel's Andy Latimer with whom he will soon be touring. The Moths are tight and terrific, their set comprising some of the most memorable songs from *Cocoon* and *The Depths Of Winter*.

Seamlessly, they regroup as **Red Bazar** for new song *Temple*, which is about cults, Jones explains carefully. With his extraordinary musical dexterity, emotive voice and total dedication to his craft, Jones should be anointed a national prog treasure, though the word 'genius' is also mentioned. Few present would disagree.

The latest incarnation of **Lifesigns** conduct a masterclass in the finer arts. Main man John Young's nerves soon dissipate as the band quickly gel, the set centring on latest album *Cardington*. He is in fine voice after his recent illness. The fluid guitar of new recruit Dave Bainbridge brings a fresh lyrical dimension to the cultured, melody-rich sound. Doubling on keyboards, he adds textures to the more multifaceted passages. Meanwhile, bassist Jon Poole is Tigger-like across the stage, but fails to rise to his feet immediately after an impromptu Spinal Tap moment. Incredulous onlooker Frosty Beedle almost misses a beat in his near-perfect drumming as a result. Instrumental *Kings* brings the show to a rollicking end, but Young has one more trump card, singing *Last One Home*, a beautiful ballad from would-be supergroup Qango, to close the festival with a peerless performance.

So Winter's End is, by and large, a winner. Given the fact that only a few years ago the organisers were concerned about finances, to see them adding Winter's End as a companion to Summer's End so successfully is a joy to behold.

JERRY EWING/ STEVE PILKINGTON/ ALISON REIJMAN



Alive And Kicking: Lifesigns' main man John Young.



Greek Treat: Verbal Delirium.

JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST

VENUE	ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC, MANCHESTER
DATE	06/05/2018

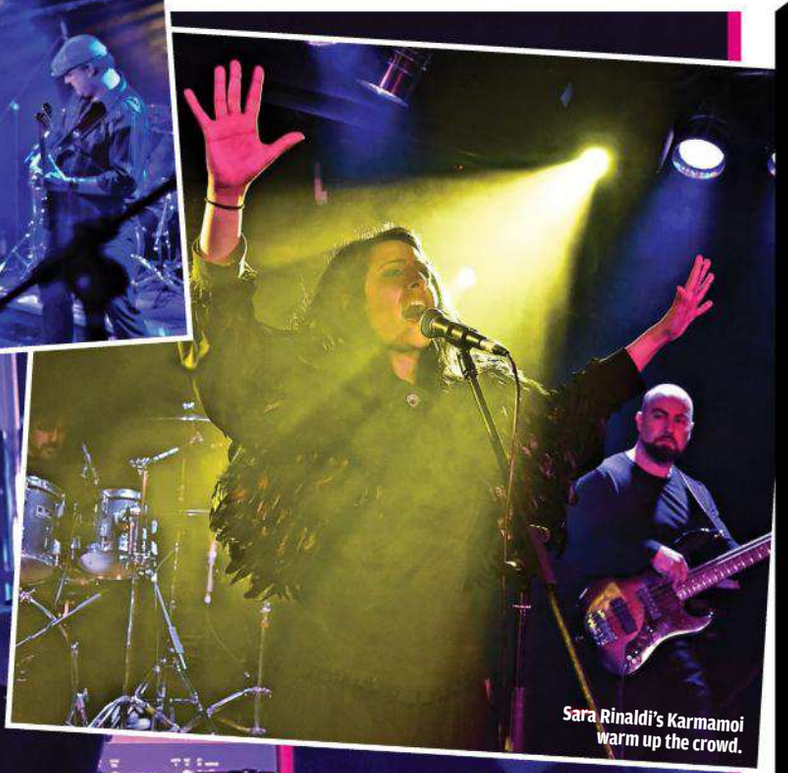
It's a celebratory situation here tonight, as Barclay James Harvest mark an amazing 50th anniversary. Only John Lees remains from the golden period of the 70s and 80s, when this band were unquestionably walking the line between progressive inclinations and melodic demands. And while the romantics among us might have wished to see Les Holroyd, the only other surviving member of that era, here tonight, in truth it was never going to happen – the bad blood still runs deep.

However, there's an exhibition staged at the venue to delight the diehards gathered, and the current incarnation of the band do a heroic job in capturing the spirit that has been prevalent across those five decades. The atmosphere is so laden with nostalgia and goodwill that everyone simply wants to enjoy what's on offer, rather than bemoan the absentees.

The band perform two sets, straddling their rich history. The first begins with *Mr Sunshine*, which harks back to the self-titled album released in 1970, before *Child Of The Universe* reminds everybody how BJH could always capture the zeitgeist of that time in their own inimitable fashion. There are so many high spots, including a stunning rendering



Flying High: Tiger Moth Tales.



Sara Rinaldi's Karmamoi warm up the crowd.



Twist And Shout: Jump's John Dexter Jones gets gnarly.

MARTIN REIJMAN

of *In Memory Of The Martyrs* and a memorable *The Iron Maiden*. It's clear the veteran Lees has a deep rapport with his current band, so much so that this never feels like it's anything other than four equals on the stage.

The second set opens with a medley that includes *Just A Day Away*, where John Joseph Lees joins his dad on cornet. The family moment gets a warm reaction from the crowd. *Summer Soldier* and *Medicine Man* take us back to the 70s, before the inevitable strains of the classic *Mockingbird* get a rapturous reception. The quartet then coast through to the finale of *Crazy City*, *The Poet* and *After The Day*, once more going back to their earlier days.

The encore holds something special. On *Early Morning*, Jez Smith plays Woolly Wolstenholme's Mellotron, a reminder of how much he's still missed, an inextricable part of the BJH history. And *Hymn* is a fitting conclusion to a show that affirms this band's place among the prog giants.

MALCOLM DOME

PETER HAMMILL

VENUE	ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON
DATE	27/04/2018

There are those singing, songwriterly types for whom one persistent and onerous task is to persuade audiences to shut their collective pie-traps during a show. The debate about whether or not people should be conducting boisterous conversations when quiet music is being played will probably go on forever, of course, but judging by tonight's performance – or indeed, any of his shows – Peter Hammill has no such worries.

After an initial rush of applause as he takes his seat at the piano, the entire gig is conducted in a haze of awed reverence. Maybe it's the sheer emotional might of these wild, wayward songs, or perhaps it's the self-evident truth that Hammill is plainly and truly possessed by his music (or it could be vice versa). Either way, as he moves to begin his first song, anyone planning to drop a pin thinks twice. It's a low-key gig in a small, anonymous church, but the atmosphere is electrified.

The closest thing he has to a 'greatest hit', *Easy To Slip Away* is a sublime and hair-raising curtain-raiser: the urgency Hammill brings to its (almost) chorus seeming ever more intense and fraught. He sings *'Hardly ever seem to get outside these days'* in a way that's more poignant and spiky than he could ever have mustered when he wrote the song as a 24-year-old.

Therein lies the magic of seeing Hammill in the flesh, as his third act plays out: all of the songs he plays tonight, whether it's a ferocious, guitar-led *Modern*, or a delicate, almost dreamlike *Gone Ahead*, could realistically have been taken from any point along his extraordinary timeline.

Shorn of their often perverse studio embellishments, Hammill's freewheeling diatribes tell you everything you need to know about the man singing them, which probably explains why, as ever, friendly chat is kept to a warm but polite minimum tonight.

Songs from last year's sublime *From The Trees* prove to be great highlights. *Anagnorisis* is as sharp as anything the veteran oddball has written in decades, and *Milked* is arguably the song of the night, its poetic coda (*'All the milk that's been spilled/All the tears along the way/All the words he's forgotten how to say...'*) filling the room with palpable melancholy.

He departs with a jaw-dropping rendition of Van der Graaf Generator's *House With No Door*, one of the band's most beautiful songs and yet another reminder that Peter Hammill's class of one is still not accepting applications. Long may we shut up and listen.

DOM LAWSON

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

VENUE	DINGWALLS, CAMDEN, LONDON
DATE	20/05/18

There's a nice irony here. When *The Final Cut*, the last album Nick Mason drummed on with Roger Waters, reached No.1 in the UK album charts in April 1983, Spandau Ballet were occupying the top spot in the singles chart with their hit ballad *True*. And yet you can probably imagine that neither Mason nor Spandau's Gary Kemp would have thought back then that they'd ever share a stage in the same band, and certainly not 35 years down the line.

It didn't take long after the announcement of the line-up for Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets for fans to swiftly decry Kemp's contribution before hearing a note. Speculation was also rife over what to expect at tonight's concert at a packed and very hot Dingwalls — pre-*Dark Side Of The Moon* Floyd was one rumour, just the first two albums alleged another. As it turns out, the former is correct.

Despite reports of intense rehearsals, even the most ardent Floydian acolyte will have been blown away by quite how good tonight's show is. To be honest, if things were going to unravel, it would have been with something like *Interstellar Overdrive*, but they choose to open with it, not putting a foot wrong throughout.

Astronomy Domine and *Lucifer Sam* follow, before the band stretch out on *Fearless* from *Meddle*. Next, there's the title track and *When You're In* from *Obscured By Clouds*, by which time it's more than apparent that we're witnessing something incredibly special, something the 500 or so crammed into the venue never thought they'd get the chance to see.

"It's apparent that we're witnessing something incredibly special, something the 500 or so crammed into the venue never thought they'd get the chance to see."

Equally, it's even more apparent what a genuine star Gary Kemp is. We knew he was a prog fan, but those online detractors clearly didn't. Those in the audience tonight who witness his searing and inquisitive guitar playing can't help but be impressed. Vocally, too, along with latter-day Floyd bassist Guy Pratt, he carries things with passion and ease, replacing Barrett's original inflections with a more earthy, London tone.

It's highlight after highlight. *Arnold Layne* has strangers beaming at each other disbelievingly. *The Nile Song* is introduced with, "Here's some heavy metal for you." *See Emily Play*, the never-before-played-live *Bike*, *One Of These Days*... at every turn, the previously unbelievable becomes the believable, right here in front of our eyes and ears.

Mason himself looks like he's having the time of his life, joking with the audience ("If that's too much of a mouthful for you then we're the Australian Roger Waters"), and drumming with that easy, timely feel that comes across on those early albums.

After encores of *A Saucerful Of Secrets* and a jaunty *Point Me At The Sky*, they bid us farewell. Bigger venues, ones the Floyd used to play, are coming later in the year. You can hear the clamour for tickets from here.

JERRY EWING



'The Australian Roger Waters', live in London.

JILL FURMANOVSKY



Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason sharing his Saucerful Of Secrets.

THE FIERCE AND THE DEAD

VENUE	THE BLACK HEART, LONDON
DATE	18/05/2018
SUPPORT	MARK BUCKINGHAM

Jovial instrumentalists The Fierce And The Dead have enjoyed some landmark gigs, including slots at Ramblin' Man, Summer's End and RosFest, but while the sweaty climes of Camden's The Black Heart barely leave room for a leg stretch, this celebratory big splash for their third album *The Euphoric* feels like a very big deal. The expectation of watching the live unveiling of tracks that, on record, signal the brilliant maturation of this Northampton four-piece has put their followers in the best of moods.

Comic book artist Mark Buckingham, the talent behind *The Euphoric*'s stunning retro-futuristic artwork, warms up the crowd with a theatrical amuse-bouche, trailing twinkling lights over his suit, which is decorated by jigsaw puzzle shapes. "This is my first ever gig," he grins, before ending his show with a seething ode to heartache.

Playing for a good 80 minutes or so, The Fierce And The Dead indulge in a broad-spectrum set. Kicking off with *Truck* and the quick-witted, groove-dabbled *1991*, they quickly get into the swing of things, concocting a conflict of pared down indie-esque jams and elevated space vibes. It's chuggy and cheeky, cerebral and contrary, as if subtly nodding to glistening sky-reachers like God Is An Astronaut and Nordic Giants, experiments that are anchored to earth by the double guitar play of Matt Stevens and Steve Cleaton, who also include elements of Pavement and splashes of desert rock.

"Sounds like the theme tune to a dark apocalypse," says a chap in the audience as they begin *Dug Town*, another taster from *The Euphoric*, which has a lilting, sombre bent to the intro. It builds and crashes, with sticksman Stuart Marshall putting some power behind its driving beat.

The beauty of this show comes of course with the platter of sounds on offer: Stevens' ever-changing styles of playing, embellished by pedals and the odd hop onto the synth to his side ("Where's your cape?" jokes one punter) provides the shards of light, while Kev Feazey gives it some bleary-eyed fuzz with his bass.

And then there are the proggier moments. *Magnet In Your Face*, *Ark* and *10 x 10* represent the other side of this complex clan with trick shots of Can and King Crimson. Then it's back to the present with a jaunty and piercing rendition of *Verbose* and the new-gen epic crowd-pleaser *48k*.

Palm Trees gets a roar and *666...6*, with only minutes to go, whips out hints of Genesis and Mastodon in one fell swoop. This shit ain't easy, but these fellas do it well.

HOLLY WRIGHT

SPACE ROCKS

VENUE	INDIGO O2, LONDON
DATE	22/04/2018

If you're looking for an appropriate visual metaphor to sum up the magic of the inaugural Space Rocks festival, it comes right at the end. As Lonely Robot's *Sigma* clambers towards a climax, someone wanders onstage in full spaceman clobber, holding a single red balloon. He stands next to frontman John Mitchell and releases it, and the pair watch as it climbs slowly towards the ceiling. It's the final act of the night: the musician and the astronaut, side by side, gazing up towards the heavens.

Organised in conjunction with the European Space Agency, Space Rocks' stated aim is to celebrate "space exploration and the art, music and culture it inspires", and The Indigo is dressed appropriately. There's a quarter-scale model of the Rosetta space probe dangling from the ceiling, and the venue is dotted with other craft, like the ExoMars Trace Gas Orbiter, launched in 2016 to sniff out methane in the Martian atmosphere.

There's even a Space Lounge, where excited young enthusiasts can mingle with the actual stars of science and space, and a suitably stellar cast has been assembled.

The first two sessions of the day are given over to the space folk, with astronaut Tim Peake talking about life aboard the International Space Station, and Dr Beth Healey managing to convince an enraptured audience that there's no better way to spend a year than in the merciless cold of the Antarctic plateau.

Even renowned astrophysicist Dr Brian May gets in on the act, brightly helping to answer questions from the audience that range from "Are there really aliens in Area 51?" to "Wouldn't we be better off spending all this money fixing Earth?"



KEVIN NIXON

Arcane Roots break out the synths for their experimental set.

The evening is given over to the musicians, and former Ash guitarist **Charlotte Hatherley** kicks off the show with a short set of atmospheric, space-themed break-up songs. Like much music of a futuristic bent, it sounds like it was made in the 1980s, but her songs are awash with an unusual, widescreen melancholy, and an elegiac cover of the Bee Gees' *How Deep Is Your Love* fits in seamlessly.

Arcane Roots follow with songs rearranged for synth, and it's initially a little fraught: *Matter* is stopped and restarted, with frontman Andrew Groves telling the audience, "This is the hardest thing we've ever done." But when it works it *really* works, and *Indigo* is a gorgeous Sigur Rós-plays-Peter Gabriel pinnacle.

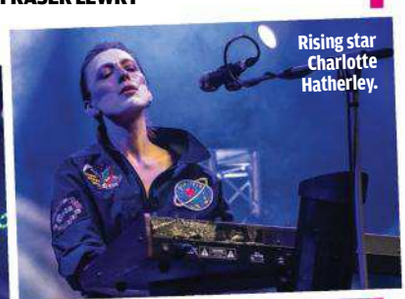
It's down to **Lonely Robot** to round off the evening, marrying science fiction and slick instrumentation to ambitious pop structures. *Are We Copies?* is thrilling, *Humans Being* is lovely, and former Touchstone singer Kim Seviour adds emotional weight to *Why Do We Stay?* and *Oubliette*. It's a stirring end to a brain-boggling, inspiring day.

FRASER LEWRY

> **"Lonely Robot marry science fiction to ambitious pop structures, a stirring end to a brain-boggling day."**



Out Of This World: Lonely Robot with singer Kim Seviour.



Rising star Charlotte Hatherley.

TRINITY III FESTIVAL

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	12/05/2018

The prog charity event of the year, Trinity has moved from the Leamington Assembly Hall to Islington for its final stand. Last-minute replacements **Jennifer Rothery** and **Riccardo Romano** are low-key openers but fill the hall with soaring vocals and stately keyboards on a collection of songs from the former's forthcoming EP and the latter's *B612* album.

Last Flight To Pluto are working on their second album of commercial rock stretched to prog-friendly lengths by superlative soloing, and today's set shows they're on the right track if the people dancing in the crowd are the judge.

Once their frontman has finished starching his cuffs, **Ghost Community** take us back to the heyday of neo prog. In an exuberant set finishing with a singalong, NWOBHM-tinged riffs are backed by keyboards guaranteed to please those here for Steve Rothery later. Part one over, we stop by the collection buckets before heading out into the rain in search of sustenance.

Prog mag editor Jerry Ewing kicks off the evening by running an auction to raise cash for cancer charities, and promising a very special show — he's not wrong.

Ex-Karnataka frontwoman Hayley Griffiths stands in as **Touchstone**'s singer for tonight. She's a revelation. From launching stridently into the proggy rock pop of *Strange Days* through live mainstays such as *Flux* and *Wintercoast* to a version of Karnataka's *Fairytale Lies*, she owns the stage. Dynamic, dramatic, confident and energetic, Griffiths stamps her personality over proceedings without sliding into pastiche or overkill. It's an outstandingly impressive performance that shows the band in a very flattering new light.

Drawing from their entire back catalogue but favouring most recent album *Bottled Out Of Eden*, **Knifeworld**'s blend of spiky psychedelia, off-kilter time signatures, experimental instrumentation and punky sensibilities are given full rein in a lively performance, with some great interplay between the band members. The last couple of tracks, *Feel The Sorcery* and oldie *Me To The Future Of You*, are highlights, and mainman Kavus Torabi looks justifiably pleased as he leaves the stage, wishing the audience "peace and love".

A tangible mixture of love and anticipation greets **The Steve Rothery Band**. Three gorgeous instrumentals from his 2014 *The Ghosts Of Pripyat* release demonstrate what a fine guitarist he is, with tracks such as *Old Man Of The Sea* veritable masterclasses in melodic soloing, and he's backed up by a slick and classy band.

The main event for many, though, is the performance of Marillion classic *Clutching At Straws*. From the understatement of *Hotel Hobbies* through an audience singalong to *Warm Wet Circles*, the near euphoria engendered by *Incommunicado* to Martin Jakubski's powerful vocal delivery and musical climax of *The Last Straw*, it's an undeniably emotional journey, capped with rousing encores of *Garden Party* and *Market Square Heroes*.

GAVIN HOBSON/GARY MACKENZIE

> **"Tonight Steve Rothery gives veritable masterclasses in melodic soloing, and he's backed up by a slick and classy band."**



WILL IRELAND

Straw Man: Steve Rothery revisits Marillion classics.



Cutting Edge Prog: Knifeworld.



Touchstone's Adam Hodgson with guest singer Hayley Griffiths.

GODSTICKS

VENUE	CAMDEN ASSEMBLY, LONDON
DATE	05/05/2018
SUPPORT	EXPLORING BIRDSONG

Camden Town might be thronging with bearded stoners – Desertfest is in full swing outside – but it's a different story as Liverpudlian trio Exploring Birdsong take the stage at The Assembly, where there's enough room in a sparse audience to swing several cats. For a band who've travelled 200 miles to be here ("Two toilet breaks!" says singer Lynsey Ward, helpfully), this must be something of a disappointment. They don't let it show, though, and the real losers are those who don't show up to support the support.

Exploring Birdsong are superb. A trio with an enterprising bass/drums/twin keyboard configuration, they sit somewhere in between the neoclassical whimsy of iamthemorning and Steven Wilson's more bombastic moments, and the closing *The Downpour* finds Ward's excellent voice cartwheeling towards a climax. Watch this space.

The crowd has swollen by the time Godsticks amble onstage and launch into a set in which riffs tag-team with each other and time signatures are tossed around with deft abandon. It's part Killing Joke, part Deftones, part Meshuggah. And while Darran Charles might not be the most convincing frontman, he's an affable presence and his playing is explosive.

He's formed an impressive partnership with new guitarist Gavin Bushell. At times – like at the climax of *Hard To Face*, or during the thundering intro to *Guilt*, the two mirror and complement each other's playing with almost supernatural onstage telepathy.

For all that, it feels a little flat until a mid-set pivot when a member of the crowd steps up to the stage and snaps his arms into a crucifix pose directly in front of Charles. It feels confrontational, but the guitarist doesn't react. Instead, it's as if the audience's shackles have come off. There's headbanging galore, we bounce a little higher on our soles and applaud for longer. And by the end it feels less of an exhibition of dextrous playing and more of a celebration.

The closing *Lack Of Scrutiny* is magnificently dramatic, while *Exit Stage Right* bucks, barrels and soars, and ensures the evening ends on a thrilling, almost overwhelming high.

FRASER LEWRY

TOUNDRA

VENUE	NICE N SLEAZY, GLASGOW
DATE	13/05/2018

They don't say much, but then again, they don't have to. This Spanish instrumental quartet don't even bother with vocal mics on stage, and with the support band having dropped out, they get down to business nice and early with a stage lit blue, with a star cloth behind them. It's all they need, because within moments they've claimed the room's attention with blistering overview-introductory piece *Cobra* and follow-up *Tuareg*, both from latest album *Vortex*.

They've moved on from calling their albums *I*, *II*, *III* and *IV*, and have also (it's relieving to report) moved on from spinning complex concepts about foxes escaping from forest fires to try to explain their music. Instead, they sell you their ideas with a new confidence and an open-handed attitude. They appear more comfortable with selling themselves, and that personality is probably what's going to get Toundra onto the next rung of the ladder.

Along with the music, of course. The *Vortex* material is more fluid and mature than their earlier work, and *Mojave* demonstrates the best of what they're currently doing live. It's easy to follow a cinematic storyline of something organic being overtaken by something industrial, a battle for dominance followed by an uneasy but optimistic truce.

Standout tracks from the catalogue, including *Kitsune* and *Strelka*, have a new strength this time round, underlining the fact that while Toundra are a competent band in the studio, what they do is best consumed live. Everything is delivered with a 'you're in on the joke' angle from the band, who never stop smiling, except when they're lost in the moment.

And there are plenty of moments tonight to be lost in. Post-rock was never this eclectic: one punter describes Toundra as "Mogwai performing *Master Of Puppets*" and that's a reasonable enough summary. Also present in the music are shades of Mastodon, Rage Against The Machine, late-era Iron Maiden and much more. When they start up *Cielo Negro*, it really wouldn't be a surprise if Roger Daltrey walked on and led them through a Who song.

One of the key elements to whisking an audience along with so much texture and depth is not to labour a point, and they don't. However, there's plenty for the audience to savour, from the authoritative drumming of Alex Pérez to the aggressive bass of Alberto Tocados, whose synth work offers a thoughtful extension to several tracks. Then there are the guitars of David Paños and Esteban Girón, who manage to lull with introverted sentiment before turning a piece on its head with argumentative extroversion. When they come back, they'll be even better.

MARTIN KIELTY

TANGERINE DREAM

VENUE	UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON, LONDON
DATE	24/04/2018
SUPPORT	RICHARD BARBIERI

In January 2015, Edgar Froese "changed his cosmic address". The founder and fulcrum of electronica empire Tangerine Dream gave his wife and manager Bianca his blessing to keep the torch burning, with Thorsten Quaeschning at the helm. Fifty-one years since they formed, and with a discography that lists over 150 albums, it's quite a legacy.

There's a faction among long-term fans who think this incarnation should play under the name Tangerine Dream Legacy: that without Froese it's not the real thing. The counter argument is that this project was never about personalities, and the 2017 album *Quantum Gate*, showcased tonight, was based on pieces written and conceived by Froese, who was keen for the current trio to bring it to fruition. If any reservations flicker early in the evening, they're swept away by tides of transcendent music that prove both eggheaded and emotional.

Prior to their performance comes a short set from Richard Barbieri, who recently provided the same function for former Porcupine Tree colleague Steven Wilson. Alone amid a cityscape of equipment both digital and analogue, he conjures compelling rivers of reverie, highlighting his recent work and offering a radical reading of Japan's *Ghosts*. It reminds us how significant his part in that watershed musical moment was. He normally likes to chat more, but time being tight will "let the music do the talking" here. It speaks volumes.



Machine Music: Richard Barbieri.

WILL IRELAND

Froese's widow Bianca introduces the Dream, chuckling that the band were once banned by the Vatican from playing in Catholic churches. They're most welcome in this chapel, where their impressive light show, revolving colour fields and refined lasers dance across the stained-glass windows. The music broods and burbles, ebbs and flows, latches onto relentless rhythms or floats into airy reverie. There's a tasteful mix of old and new material, and nobody's left feeling short-changed.

While they never acquired the cool of, say, Kraftwerk or Can, Tangerine Dream found the sweet spot between prog, space rock and techno more astutely than any other kosmische travellers. Quality control wasn't always flawless, but a cherry-picking set like tonight's is both textbook and touching. The second half, for better or worse, depending on your stance, feels like we're watching them in the 70s.

"The music broods and burbles, ebbs and flows, latches onto relentless rhythms or floats into airy reverie."

At other points, the skittering sequencers of Ulrich Schnauss inject a more modern, avant-garde presence, a yin to Quaeschning's yang, while Hoshiko Yamane's violin meanders mellifluously.

To conclude, they invite Barbieri back for a 20-minute improvised piece that marries adrenalin and ambient. The dream goes on.

CHRIS ROBERTS



Dream Team: the headliners cherry-pick from their rich catalogue.

HAWKWIND

VENUE	THE ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON
DATE	06/05/2018

The three-day Desertfest comes to a close tonight with Monster Magnet headlining The Roundhouse. Before them, Hawkwind perform a festival set in front of a mainly stoner rock and metal crowd. There are plenty of Hawkwind T-shirts on display, of course. Many wearers will have been at the band's 2017 headline show in this venue, but seeing the pioneers of space rock wow a non-partisan audience is an intriguing prospect.

They begin well with the evergreen *Sonic Attack*. Bassist-turned-vocalist Mr. Dibs terrorises the throng with Michael Moorcock's nightmarish public service announcement, which is delivered through a megaphone while apocalyptic visuals thrust the warning home. This seamlessly segues into the similarly prescient *Damnation Alley* and the juggernaut sets off.

That relentless riff and driving groove reveal a leaner, meaner machine than we've seen from the space rockers in some years. Much of that is down to the incredible rhythm section. Long-term drummer Richard Chadwick rarely gets the kudos he deserves, and tonight he's propelling the band with insistent authority, his mercurial, fill-heavy style ensuring the lengthy track never flags for a nanosecond.

The same can't be said for the next two tracks. It's difficult to argue that *Upside Down* and *The Watcher* are essential songs in the vast canon. Their inclusion early on seems like a missed opportunity to drive home the Hawks' reputation in the midst of a weekend of bands they've inspired.

Thankfully, the afterburners kick in for the next selection: the cosmic nihilism of *The Black Corridor* sets the scene for the classic *Born To Go*. We have lift off, and for the next 15 minutes we're treated to a masterclass in space rock.

The recent addition of bassist Haz Wheaton has much to do with Hawkwind's renaissance as a powerful live act — his Rickenbacker attack is pure Lemmy worship. He was born to this, and the locked-in groove with Chadwick's high-energy playing is thrilling. Captain Dave Brock's soaring lead guitar cuts through the fug as the jam gets ever more intense. Astounding music.

Mr. Dibs is back with more sci-fi poetry and the mantra of "All hail The Machine!" introduces recent track *The Machine*. Its live version leaves the studio counterpart in the dust. That riff is killer in this setting!

Drug paraphernalia and hash leaves adorn the projection screen for *Hassan I Sabbah*, evoking cheers from the stoner rock crowd. And then it's all over, much too soon. Where did those 80 minutes go?

An assertive performance has clearly made them some new fans tonight, but it feels like they should've planted their flag a bit more firmly in front of the (almost literally) floating voters.

CHRIS MCGAREL

KEVIN NIXON



"We're treated to a masterclass in space rock."

New boy Haz Wheaton (left) and old hand Dave Brock lock into a space rock groove.



Sonic Attack: Mr Dibs preaches the gospel of Moorcock.

JADIS

VENUE	BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON
DATE	05/05/2018

Their show may have been moved at the last minute from the larger neighbouring Dome, but after over 30 years at the prog coalface, Jadis aren't about to let a minor inconvenience like that throw them off their stride. A three-date UK mini-tour, nominally in honour of the 25th anniversary of the *More Than Meets The Eye* album, is their first in "a long time", and climaxes here in a two-hour show. Said album, produced by Marillion's Steve Rothery, remains one of the minor classics of the neo-prog era, and selections from it tonight win raucous approval.

The Southampton-based quartet are led by talented singer/guitarist Gary Chandler, whose playing is beyond impressive. His dexterity is matched by bassist Andy Marlow, drummer Steve Christey and, on keyboards, Martin Orford, who also served with IQ and John Wetton. While they're no slouches when it comes to bringing the thunder, their style builds on the strengths of melody. Harmonies soaring, they're more Steve Hackett than Steve Vai as their songs switch and swell between beauty and bombast.

Any hint of preciousness is punctured by Chandler's jocular onstage persona. "Oof, you can see my face now," he quips when the lights go bright. "My retinas just dissolved. You'll be wanting your money back." While this chit-chat breaks up momentum, it's generally funny.

Fortunately the music takes over as the set progresses. There's a semi-acoustic section from Chandler and Orford: it would have been acoustic, but Chandler "bought a £100 guitar which everyone told me not to because it'd break. It broke."

Then matters coalesce into a focus on their best assets. You begin to think that with a more wilfully enigmatic frontman they may have hit greater career heights, but Chandler's self-effacement is outshone by his gifted guitar work.

Whether it's later material like *Where Am I* or *Standing Still*, or jewels from their hallowed canon such as *Sleepwalk*, *Follow Me To Salzburg* or *What If I Could Be There*, they're blessed with a lush, surging sound that could grace larger venues. They close with *The Beginning And The End*, as Jadis prove themselves to be anything but jaded.

CHRIS ROBERTS

IO EARTH

VENUE	CRESCENT THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM
DATE	05/05/2018
SUPPORT	DAVE ONIONS

After a year off, the 'IO EARTH Extravaganza' once again hits the band's home turf of Birmingham. The programme this time includes a 'by request' set, followed later by the first public performance of their latest album *Solitude* in its entirety.

It's a tempting menu, but first we have a starter to deal with, in the shape of singer/raconteur Dave Onions, following the withdrawal of original support Telescope Road. While his rootsy, blues-influenced style is far from prog, the crowd nonetheless respond favourably to his highly entertaining and dextrous set.

After a short break, it is time for the first instalment of this IO Earth double show. Selected by fans, the set opens with the title track of the *New World* album, and two things are immediately evident. Firstly, there's the added dimension to the sound provided by the six-piece string/horn section, and secondly, perhaps more crucially, there's the impact of vocalist Rosanna Lefevre on the band.

While predecessor Linda Odinsen cut an almost ethereal presence, as if plucked from the pages of a gothic romance, Lefevre immediately injects a dose of 'rock chick' dynamism to proceedings. Clad almost entirely in black, she's reminiscent of a young Stevie Nicks with just a dash of Pat Benatar, and she commands centre stage with charismatic grace.

The material is fascinating, with welcome returns for *Live Your Life* and the epic *The Creation*, to name but two. As always, extrovert guitarist Dave Cureton provides the main musical focus, but he's careful to emphasise the crucial contribution of writing partner and keyboard player Adam Gough.

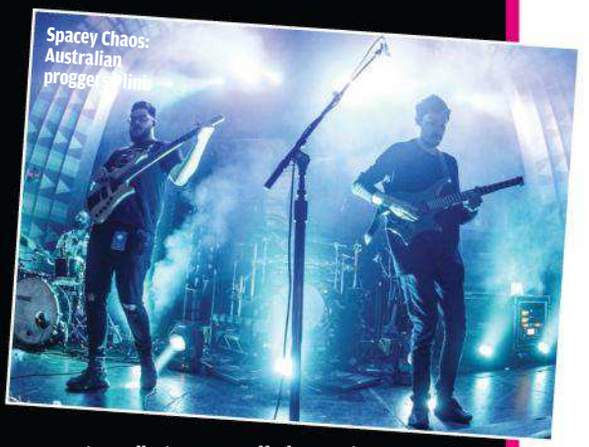
It's a great opening set, but the second part is better still. The *Solitude* album could have been tricky in a live context, owing to the introspective nature of this conceptual work, but it proves to be a real triumph tonight. The dramatic parts are writ large, with the delicately contrasting material retaining all of its impact, while Cureton has donned his trademark black leather for this half, once again looking reassuringly as if he plans to invade Solihull.

The big moment is saved for the end, however, as the band's frontwoman leaves the stage to be replaced by nine-year-old Neve King (daughter of violinist/guitarist Jez), clad in white and uncannily resembling a younger Lefevre. She walks to the front of the stage and delivers the final, unaccompanied lines of the piece beautifully, as the stunned crowd go from silence to rapturous applause, and there are tears around the venue. It's a spine-tingling moment to crown a genuinely superlative performance.

STEVE PILKINGTON

TESSERACT

VENUE	THE REGENT THEATER, LOS ANGELES
DATE	03/05/2018
SUPPORT	PLINI, ASTRONOID



Spacey Chaos: Australian progger Plini

STEPHANIE CABRAL

TesseracT's 2011 debut album *One* saw the British quintet establishing themselves as a leading force in modern atmospheric djent. Melding soaring melodies, pensive wording and angelic singing with fierce guitar riffs and abrasive rhythms, the band consistently create dynamic and emotional aural journeys that few contemporaries can rival. Intrinsically, then, their live performances are even more engrossing, as this show promoting their fourth studio LP, *Sonder*, demonstrates.

Boston's self-described 'dream thrash' five-piece Astronoid are the opening act, and channel the aggressive falsettos and/or transcendental intricacies of Circa Survive, Coheed And Cambria, Alcest, Devin Townsend and Cynic. Tracks like *Up And Atom* and *Tin Foil Hats* certainly provide plenty of sophisticated compositional shifts and wistful timbres. That said, their selections bleed together quickly and grow tiresome because they're so unvaried, making their slot impressive yet ultimately too one-note to truly enjoy.

Although Australian troupe Plini suffer a similar kind of redundancy by their finale, theirs is easily a more vivid and endearing experience. Using programmed backing voices to enhance their colourful bouts of spacey chaos, they conjure instrumental giants like Animals As Leaders and Nova Collective in their ever-changing progressive metal/jazz fusion arrangements.

Elements such as bells, muted notes and handclaps — in conjunction with plenty of synchronised lighting flamboyancy — ensure that their sonic constructions are perpetually arresting, albeit eventually becoming wearisome too.

As expected, TesseracT begin with the first song — and lead single — from *Sonder, Luminary*. With the light show primarily in blue, gold, pink and green hues, it's quite a pleasant sensory overload. Fortunately, they replicate other gems from the record (*King* and *Smile*) with equal accuracy and fervour, leaving the audience to feel every dense note and percussive outburst in their spines. The most surprising aspect, however, is how much their set serves as a celebration of their whole discography, as they also include a *Polaris* suite (consisting of *Survival, Dystopia, Hexes* and *Phoenix*) and older favourites like *Nocturne, The Impossible* and *Proxy*.

> **"Tonight feels like a triumphant survey of the group's serene, vicious and hypnotic legacy thus far."**

Really, it feels like a triumphant survey of the group's serene, vicious and hypnotic legacy thus far. In addition, singer Daniel Tompkins repeatedly thanks the crowd, making all in attendance feel like they belong to "one big TesseracT family", as he puts it.

While the preliminary duo could've offered more range, they still lay a sufficiently compelling foundation for TesseracT's headlining magnificence. In fact, hearing pieces from all four of the quintet's studio albums in one night reveals just how consistent and seamless their discography is. As a result, their ability to replicate such inherent unity with faultless precision means that their concerts are still downright extraordinary.

JORDAN BLUM



TesseracT's Daniel Tompkins leads the band through a faultless set.

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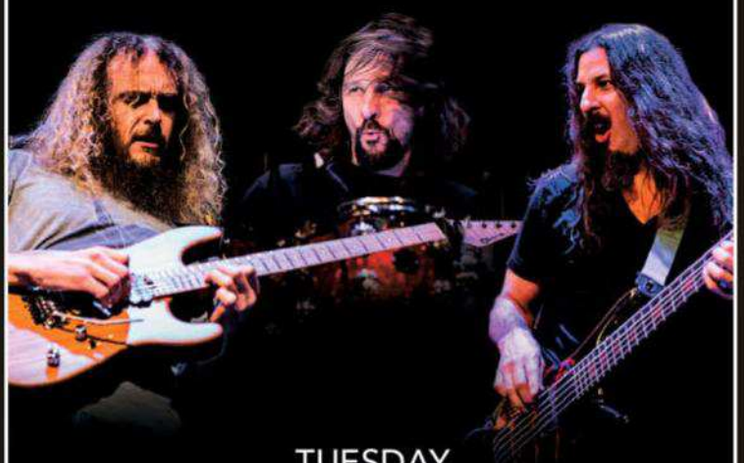
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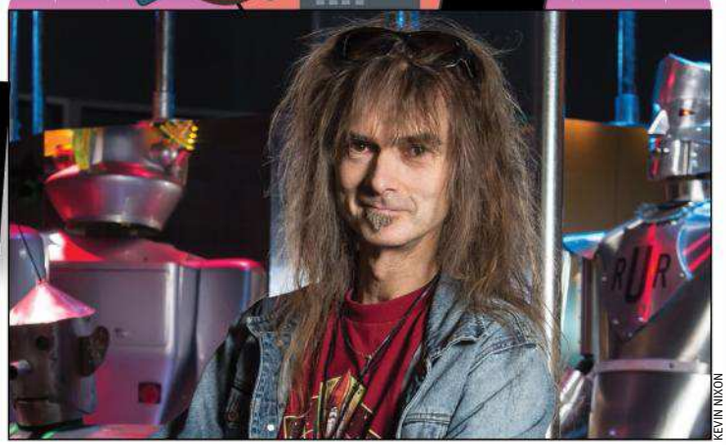
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KEVIN NIXON

Arjen Lucassen

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

Where's home?
I've just moved to an old school building in Oudemolen, a village in the middle of nowhere in the Netherlands. It's great for a recluse like me.

Your first prog memory?
Listening to Radio Caroline on a little transistor radio as a kid. There was a show called *Superclean Dreammachine* in the 70s – they played electronic stuff like Tangerine Dream.

The first prog record you bought?


An Electric Storm by White Noise. Delia Derbyshire's on there, it came out in 1969, and it's really groundbreaking and way ahead of its time. *The Visitation* is an incredible song.

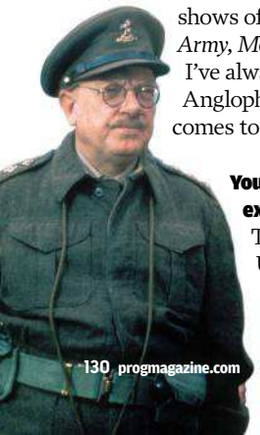
First prog gig?
Supersister, in the early 70s. They were a Dutch, Canterbury-style band in the vein of Frank Zappa – lots of organ, flute and humour. They were pupils at my school in The Hague and played shows there for us even after they had success.

Favourite piece of technology?

None! I have no time for it, I have no use for it. I've never even played a computer game. You'd laugh if you saw my phone, it's a 10-year-old Nokia and I hardly use it.

Any guilty pleasures in your music collection?
Crossing The Red Sea With The Adverts by The Adverts. I was a total punk in 1976 – I had spikey hair, a safety pin through my cheek. I loved The Damned, The Sex Pistols, 999, but The Adverts were my favourite.

Your *Mastermind* specialist subject?
Prog from the late 60s and early 70s. Either that or British TV shows of the 70s – *Dad's Army, Monty Python*. I've always been a big Anglophile when it comes to music and TV.


DAD'S ARMY: ALAMY

Your biggest prog extravagance?
The Ayreon Universe shows last year. They were the first live Ayreon shows, all three sold out so we put loads of money back into them. We had special effects, huge screens, 18 singers and robots onstage. They were *really* expensive.

Your favourite venue?
That's 013 in Tilburg in the Netherlands. It's where we did the Ayreon Universe shows, and it's where I started out in the early 80s with my first bands. I love the people there, and it's a big place but it's also intimate.

Outside of prog what are you into?
TV. I work all day and watch shows in the evening. I love *Blake's Seven* – it's so cheesy, so bad it's good – and *Six Feet Under* is my favourite show ever. I still buy DVDs and Blu-rays: I don't use stuff like Netflix.

The last album you bought?
Eat The Elephant by A Perfect Circle. I'm really liking it. I'm a melody guy and they've got some great melodies on there.

The last gig you went to?
Toehider at ProgPower Festival in Baarlo, Holland last year. [Singer] Mike Mills is brilliant, I use him on my albums whenever I can.

Ever been on a prog date?
Come on, you know the situation! But I did meet my current girlfriend through Ayreon's mailing list. She's a guitarist herself but is more into Michael Schenker, Led Zeppelin and early Queen than prog.

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?
Nobody! I really am a recluse, but Damian Wilson's one of the few people who can drag me away from home. About 12 years ago I had a heavy night out with the Mostly Autumn guys in Amsterdam and we partied so hard I actually lost my sense of smell. It's never returned.

What's the most important prog song for you?

> "I was a total punk in 1976 – I had spikey hair, a safety pin through my cheek."

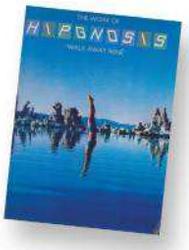
I Am The Walrus. The Beatles are up there for me, even higher than Pink Floyd. It's such a proggy song – it's so scary and weird and experimental, and such great production.



Which prog muso would you love to work with?
Kate Bush. But then I've worked with so many of my heroes – Keith Emerson, Rick Wakeman, Jon Wetton, Steve Hackett. So many of my dreams have come true.

The prog album that gets you in a good mood?
Camel's *Moonmadness*. I have such fond memories of listening to that album as a kid, and Andy Latimer is such a great guitarist. I met him at the *Prog* Awards and he's such a nice guy.

The best prog artist you've ever seen live?
Rainbow. They really are prog to me, especially the holy trinity of Blackmore, Dio and Powell. I was at every show they ever played in Holland.

Recommend us a good proggy read.


To be completely honest I've never enjoyed reading, but *The Works Of Hipgnosis: Walk Away René* is a beautiful book.

Your favourite prog album cover?
It's boring to say *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, but then again it's so iconic, so what the hell!

What are you up to at the moment, Arjen?
I'm remixing my *Into The Electric Castle* album for the 20th Anniversary release. I'm doing it in 5.1, there'll be new vinyl with cool packaging. And we're preparing for a headline show at Graspop Metal Meeting on June 22. It'll be Ayreon's first ever festival show, we're going on after Iron Maiden!

See www.arjenlucassen.com for more information.

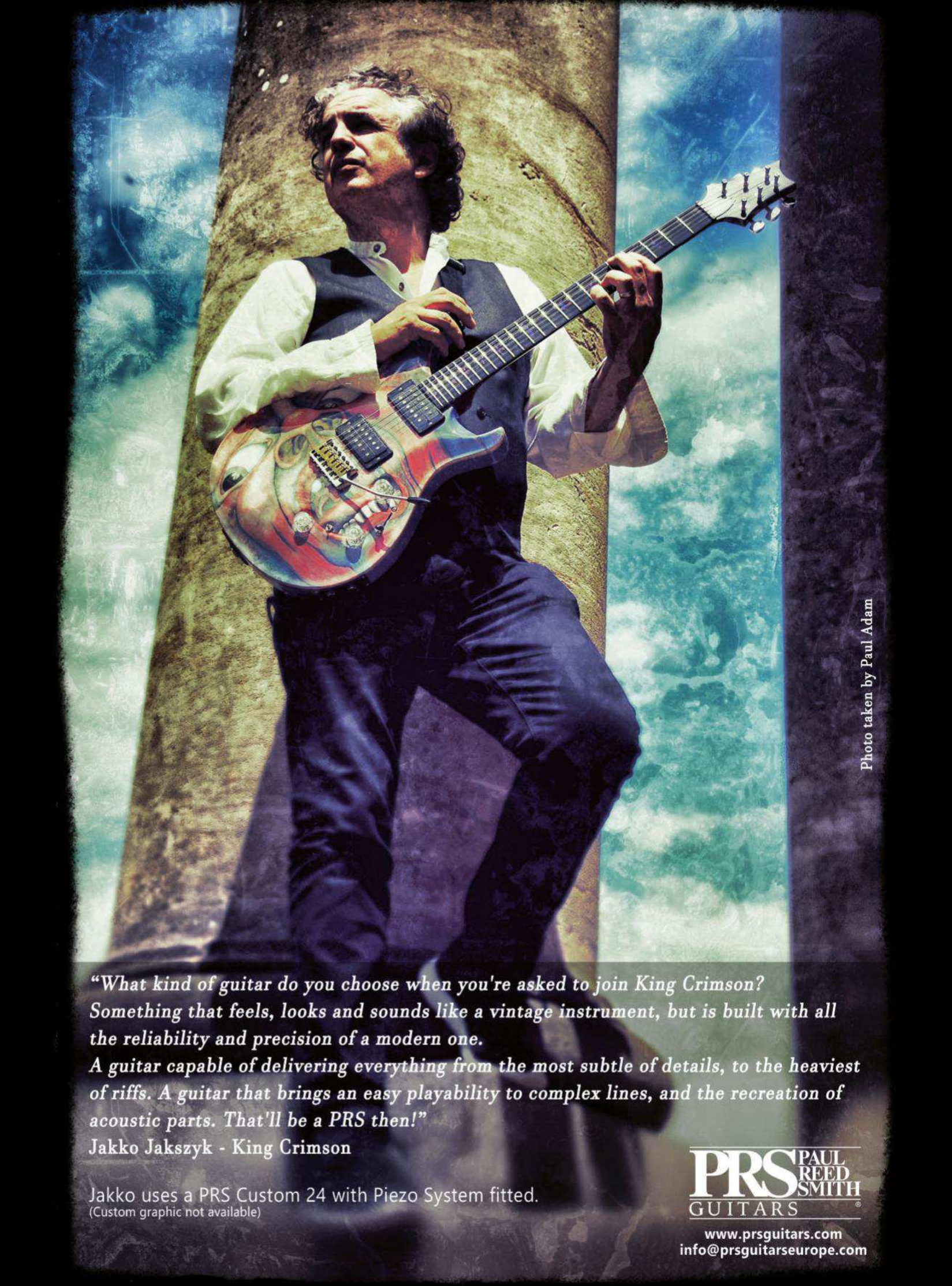


Photo taken by Paul Adam

"What kind of guitar do you choose when you're asked to join King Crimson? Something that feels, looks and sounds like a vintage instrument, but is built with all the reliability and precision of a modern one.
A guitar capable of delivering everything from the most subtle of details, to the heaviest of riffs. A guitar that brings an easy playability to complex lines, and the recreation of acoustic parts. That'll be a PRS then!"
Jakko Jakszyk - King Crimson

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DECEMBER 2018

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SUN 16 BRISTOL ST GEORGES
MON 17 LONDON UNION CHAPEL
TUE 18 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
WED 19 MANCHESTER ROYAL NORTHERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC

myticket.co.uk & venue box offices

NEW ALBUM 'PIANO ODYSSEY' COMING SOON!

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A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION

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