

PHIL COLLINS

Fun and games with Peter Gabriel, Robert Fripp, John Martyn, Led Zeppelin and more...

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players in the
history of prog

FISH

Full studio report on final
album *Weltschmerz*, as
retirement beckons...

SOFT MACHINE

How the Canterbury
legends made their first
album in 37 years

HAWKWIND

How the space lords
hooked up with Wombles
man Mike Batt



Riverside
Coheed & Cambria
The Pineapple
Thief
Nosound
Skyharbor
Vennart

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Special Providence
Will



Michael Holmes
Subterranea Original Soundtrack

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ISSUE 91 27.09.18

IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE



COVER
FEATURE



**Keyboards
are often at
the very
centre of
the prog
universe...**

Keyboard Greats p 33

You chose the Top 50 Greatest Keyboard Players prog rock has ever seen...

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Rob Connor's artwork has featured on Pink Floyd's *The Endless River*, which makes him pretty prog in our opinion. And his record collection most certainly backs that up...

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We caught the first night of Camel's UK tour, Yes feat. ARW at The Whiskey in LA, Bloodstock Festival, Resonate, Gordon Giltrap, This Winter Machine, ArcTanGent, Green Man Festival, Goblin, Plini, Caligula's Horse, Oh Sees and more.

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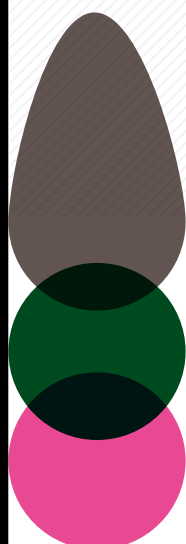
Mainman Mariusz Duda reflects on a band resurrected with new album *Wasteland*.

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A whole new universe opens up as Coheed plot their return to planet prog.

Soft Machine _____ Pg 94

The Canterbury legends celebrate their 50th anniversary with a new album...



COHEED AND CAMBRIA

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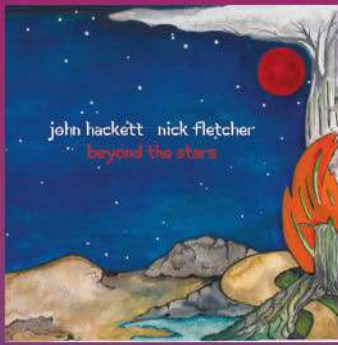
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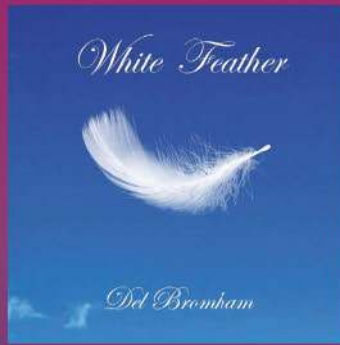
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13 OCT ACADEMY, MANCHESTER • 14 OCT O2 ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM • 16 OCT ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON



JOHN HACKETT/ NICK FLETCHER ‘BEYOND THE STARS’ (NEW STUDIO ALBUM)

- Beyond the Stars sees John and Nick on an epic journey through time and place, from wistful reminiscing about happier times to a vision of a dystopian future. The songs take you on a rollercoaster ride showcasing Nick Fletcher's incredible virtuosity on the guitar alongside John's trademark flute.

Release Date 12th October 2018
EANTCD1072



DEL BROMHAM “WHITE FEATHER” (NEW STUDIO ALBUM)

- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of White Feather, the wonderful new studio album by Del Bromham. Best known for being guitarist and principal song-writer for the classic rock band STRAY, White Feather sees Del explore a series of musical styles over 12 intensely personal songs, all with his inimitable approach.

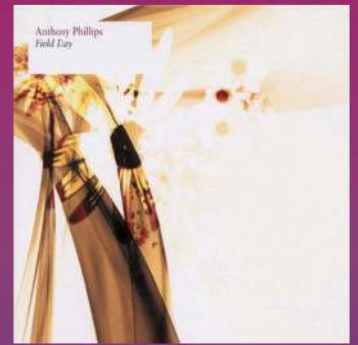
Release Date 12th October 2018
ECLECD1073



TIM BLAKE “BLAKE'S NEW JERUSALEM” (VINYL)

- Newly re-mastered 180 GRAM VINYL LP edition of the classic 1978 ambient masterpiece Blake's New Jerusalem by Tim Blake. Cut at Abbey Road studios 180 gram vinyl LP reissue

Release Date 12th October 2018
ECLECLP2579



ANTHONY PHILLIPS “FIELD DAY” (2CD/1DVD DIGIPAK EDITION)

- Beautiful instrumental double album originally released in 2005.
- With this new edition, Anthony has revisited the recordings, re-mastering the original stereo mixes and has created a 5.1 Surround sound mix with engineer James Collins.

Release Date 26th October 2018
ECLECD32648



PROCOL HARUM “LIVE IN CONCERT WITH THE EDMONTON ORCHESTRA”

(REMASTERED 180G VINYL EDITION
PLUS BONUS SINGLE)

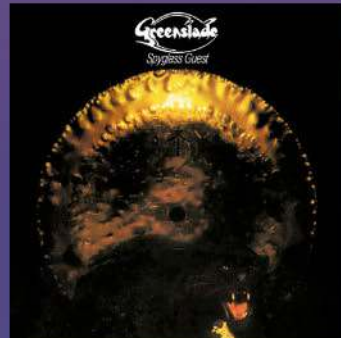
- Re-mastered 180 gram vinyl edition of the classic album Live in Concert with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra by Procol Harum.
- Cut at Abbey Road Studios and includes a bonus 7-inch single which is a facsimile of a rare 1972 French picture sleeve release with edits of 'Conquistador' and 'A Salty Dog'.

Release Date 26th October 2018
ECLECLP2650

(REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION)

- Re-mastered and expanded edition of the classic album Live in Concert with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra by Procol Harum, includes five bonus tracks (two previously unreleased), drawn from the B-side of a single and the rehearsal sessions for the concert.
- The release also includes an illustrated booklet featuring material from Gary Brooker's personal archive and an essay by Procol Harum authority Roland Clare.

Release Date 26th October 2018
ECLECD2650



GREENSLADE

“SPYGLASS GUEST” (REMASTERED & EXPANDED 2CD EDITION)

- Expanded 2 CD edition of the classic 1974 album, Spyglass Guest by GREENSLADE.
- Newly re-mastered from the original master tapes and featuring an illustrated booklet with many rare cuttings.
- Includes a bonus CD of previously unreleased recordings made for BBC Radio One's In Concert programme and Sounds of the Seventies in November 1974

Release Date 26th October 2018
PECLECD22647

ALSO AVAILABLE - GREENSLADE "GREENSLADE" (REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION)
PECLECD22645



TANGERINE DREAM ‘THE PINK YEARS ALBUMS 1970-1973’ (4CD REMASTERED CLAMSHELL BOX SET)

- Esoteric Recordings' Reactive label is pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered 4 CD clamshell boxed set which gathers together the first four legendary albums by Tangerine Dream, originally released on the Ohr label in Germany between 1970 and 1973, known by fans as “The Pink Years” albums. Features “Electronic Meditation”, “Alpha Centauri”, “Zeit” and “Atem” packaged in replica card sleeves and also includes a poster.

Release Date 28th September 2018
EREACD41037



DJABE & STEVE HACKETT ‘LIFE IS A JOURNEY: THE BUDAPEST LIVE TAPES’ (2CD/1DVD SET)

- “The Budapest Live Tapes” captures on two CDs and a DVD Djabe & Steve Hackett performing selections from that album on the concert stage for the first time, along with classic Genesis material such as ‘Fly On A Windshield’, ‘Los Endos’ and ‘Firth of Fifth’ and Steve Hackett material such as ‘Please Don't Touch’, ‘The Steppes’ and ‘Last Train To Istanbul’. The DVD in this set also includes the bonus features “Life is a Journey” (screen film), ‘Beams Over the Nulvi Mountains’ (music video) and the short documentary “The Journey Continued in 2018”.

Release Date 28th September 2018
EANTCD31071

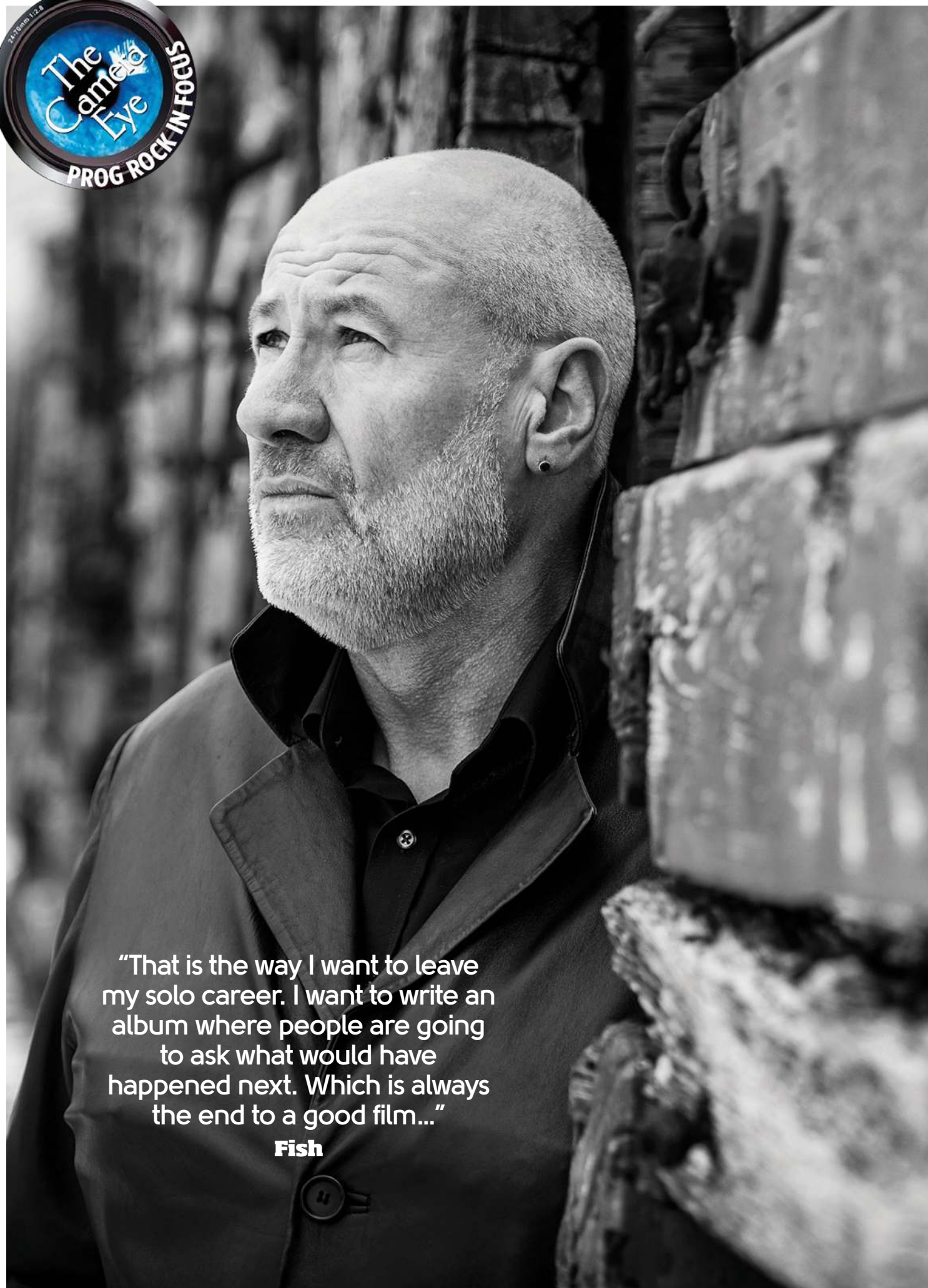
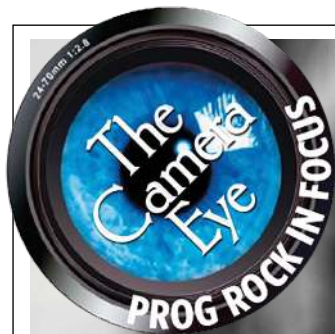


RENAISSANCE

‘PROLOGUE’ (REMASTERED & EXPANDED EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered and expanded edition of the classic 1972 album by Renaissance, “Prologue”. Re-mastered from the original Sovereign Records master tapes and adds the rare single version of ‘Spare Some Love’ as a bonus track (appearing on CD for the very first time). The booklet features a new essay and exclusive interviews with Annie Haslam and Terry Sullivan and fully restores the original album artwork.

Release Date 28th September 2018
ECLECD2644



"That is the way I want to leave my solo career. I want to write an album where people are going to ask what would have happened next. Which is always the end to a good film..."

Fish

Ed's Letter



Coincidental timing means that I'm writing this the night before the seventh annual Progressive Music Awards. I could have pretended that the event had already happened, but doing that would no doubt make something go awry on the night! And I'm not one to tempt fate like that. What I will say, however, is that I very much doubt we'll ever go to press the day before the awards again. That's a dual workload that none of the Prog team is likely to ever want to endure again, I can assure you!

So in this issue we look at the greatest ever keyboard players from this genre of ours. It's our belief that the keyboard player is to prog what the guitar hero is to heavy metal. Judging by the enormous amount of you who got involved, you agree. Thank you for voting and offering your comments. Turn to page 33 to see how your favourites fared and whether your comments got included. And also, we know that these polls result in plenty of comments mulling over the results, both on social media and in your letters. You, the readers, voted for the Top 50, we didn't choose the list. So perhaps try to refrain from the 'How dare you not feature...' type comments aimed at the magazine this time, eh?

We've also got fascinating stories with Fish, Phil Collins, The Pineapple Thief, Riverside, Hawkwind, Soft Machine, Coheed & Cambria and more this issue. And we'll be bringing you all the coverage of the Awards in the next issue. But spare a thought for Art Ed Rus, who is currently finishing off designing Prog 91 at home with a bad back. That also sadly means he'll miss the Awards. Rus, this issue's for you. The awards won't be the same without you, mate. Prog on...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



You can subscribe to Prog at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/PROG. See page 116 for further details.

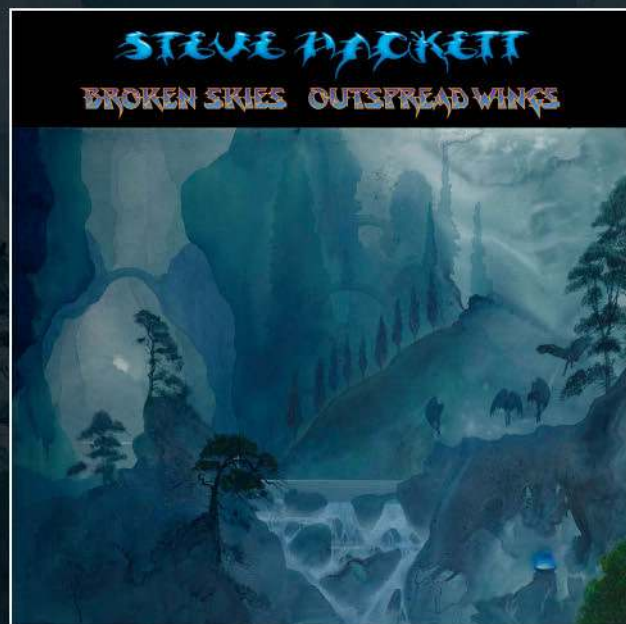


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Steve Hackett

Broken Skies Outspread Wings (1984-2006)

In Stores 5th October 2018

Spanning the years 1984-2006, this 6CD + 2DVD collection includes remastered versions of the albums 'Till We Have Faces', 'Guitar Noir', 'Darktown', 'Feedback 86', 'To Watch The Storms' & 'Wild Orchids' – all including bonus tracks. The 2DVD's contain the full 'Somewhere In South America' live film, plus live rarities and 5.1 mixes of selected songs.

The artwork was created by the legendary Roger Dean, and the set includes a 60-page artbook with liner notes, lyrics, rare photos & more!

See Steve Hackett & band live with a full orchestra!

1st October – Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham

3rd October – Bridgewater Hall, Manchester SOLD OUT

4th October – Royal Festival Hall, London SOLD OUT

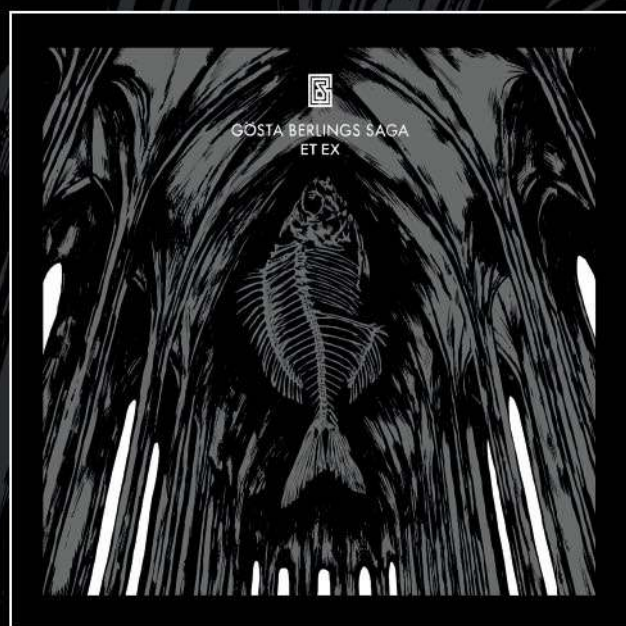
5th October – Symphony Hall, Birmingham SOLD OUT

7th October – The Sage, Gateshead

8th October – Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow

10th October – Regent, Ipswich

11th October – Palladium, London



GÖSTA BERLINGS SAGA

ET EX

In Stores 12th October 2018

The fifth album by Gösta Berlings Saga from Stockholm, Sweden.

'ET EX' contains 8 energetic and genre-defying instrumental tracks, showcasing the contrast between minimalism and maximalism while putting "progress" back into progressive rock.

Mastered by Heba Kadry at Timeless Mastering (Björk, The Mars Volta).

Available as special edition Digipak CD and as 180gr. LP + CD.



HAKEN

Vector

In Stores 26th October 2018

The band's much-anticipated fifth studio album. Mixed & Mastered by Adam 'Nolly' Getgood (Periphery, Devin Townsend Project)

"We don't like to make simple music. We always aim to defy expectations, and I believe we've surpassed what we aimed to achieve with our new album." – Ross Jennings (vocals)

Available as limited 2CD Mediabook (with instrumental versions), Gatefold 2LP + CD with etching, Standard Jewelcase CD & as digital download.

Exclusive transparent orange vinyl available from BurningShed.com

Bloody Well Write

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CLASSIC CAMEL

Having read your excellent feature on Camel in *Prog* 90 and the comments made by the band, in particular those by Andy Latimer himself, I feel a new album isn't completely necessary. All Camel fans, myself included, would welcome a new record, but not if Andy was unhappy with the process because of his health issues.

The prog world know what a talented and humble individual Andy is and I'm sure would be just as happy with the wonderful albums already recorded should he decide a new one isn't possible.

Camel: one of the finest prog bands Britain has given the world. With or without a new album!

Alan A

LETTER FROM AMERICA

I discovered your magazine when I was travelling last Christmas. I immediately ordered a subscription. I love that you cover both older bands and new ones. I'm a 62-year-old retired male living in southern California. I have been a fan of rock music ever since I saw The Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* when I was eight. My first prog album was *Sgt. Pepper*. My first prog concert was ELP.

When I saw The Story Of Prog Metal on the cover of issue 89, I said to myself, "They better mention Fates Warning. They practically invented the genre."

Of course, they were one of the featured bands in the article, which I enjoyed immensely. Two bands who I think should be added are King's X and Monster Magnet. King's X might be considered more prog than metal. *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska* and *Faith, Hope, Love* are classics. Monster Magnet might be more metal than prog, but they add a lot of different textures and sounds with their guitars. I also think Dave Wyndorf is one of the more creative lyricists. *Dopes To Infinity* and *Powertrip* are both great albums and kind of proggy.

One list I would like to see you do is the top 10 composers. Not necessarily the lyrics, but the music. Someone who writes 90 per cent of their band's music or writes for more than one project. People like Steven Wilson (Porcupine



Prog90, looking at Camel's classic *Moonmadness*.



Camel with Andy Latimer (front).

CARON MALCOLM/PRESS

Tree), Tuomas Holopainen (Nightwish), Arjen Lucassen (Aeryon), and Tobias Sammet (Edguy, Avantasia). But the guy I would put at the top would be Jim Matheos. Not only does he write all the music for Fates Warning, but also OSI and his instrumental solo work. His ambient sounds project *Tuesday The Sky* is instrumental prog at its finest. As a composer, Jim takes a different approach to every release as every album sounds different to any others. Fates Warning's latest, 2016 release *Theory Of Flight* might be his best ever.

One more thing. In the 70s I was into fusion music and I would like to tell you about two of the best concerts I've seen. One show I saw was Jean-Luc Ponty when he had Daryl Stuermer (Genesis, Phil Collins) and Allan Holdsworth (UK at the time) on guitar. All they did was stand there and play, and it was one of the most mesmerising shows I've seen.

Another was Harvey Mandel (Canned Heat) and Larry Coryell. Mandel was playing Jeff Beck-style instrumental fusion with a band. Coryell then came out by himself with an acoustic guitar and just played and improvised.

Mandell and his band returned for a rousing jam session before Coryell did another acoustic set. He topped off the evening by picking up the electric guitar again and just jammed on it for 15 minutes. This was about 40 years ago and I still recall a lot of this show — that's how good it was.

I later saw Mandell again a couple of years later as part of John Mayall's band. I always thought that John Mayall And The Bluesbreakers were the one of the first jam bands. I always thought there was a fine line between prog and jam bands. I have a DVD where Warren Haynes is jamming with Coheed And Cambria!

TWEET TALK

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MARIUSZ DUDA
@Marivsz Riv
Recharged.



CRAIG BLUNDELL
@craigblundell
#nowplaying #Supertramp
#breakfastinamerica the
old man wore this out
when I was a kid, SUCH
a wonderful album #music



JUDY DYBLE
@judydyble
So... cobwebs in my face
as I walk out of the door...
it must be autumn

LETTER

Issue 90 of *Prog* has been an inspiration! Not only for the interesting articles, like the review of Ramblin' Man Festival (which I went to, and it's so exciting to read about something I have been involved in!) but the CD that comes with the magazine!

I've enjoyed a lot of the music on these CDs, and often research some of the bands. My music collection has grown immensely in the last year but not all bands speak to my heart and soul. However, as soon as I heard the track *Calling* on the *Prog* mag CD by Stuckfish, I was spellbound. I can't think of a better word, but you know what I mean.

Philip Stuckey's voice is rich and vibrant, and I connect with the whole sound. Atmospheric melodies,



harmonies and the sound mix is mind-blowing. I bought the whole album of *Calling* immediately. Some albums I'll play now and then, some I play so frequently it's almost like an addiction! *Calling* is going to be one of those.

I hope to make it into your magazine as an artist one day – that is, as a lyrics writer. Thanks to Cruise To The Edge, I now have many, many Facebook friends from all over the world, including musicians! I now write lyrics for [Argentinian proggers] Bad Dreams, as Jorge Tenesini took an interest in my writing, and they have recorded three songs for their new album that include my work! My website is reflections.online. I'd love for you to check it out.

I am on such an amazing life journey and you are now part of that journey, *Prog*!

Sue Lumb

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

Sorry for such a long letter. If I said everything about music that I wanted to, you would need a whole issue for it!

William Bevins, Brea, CA

FOLKING GOOD MUSIC

In regards to the Paper Late article in *Prog* 90, as far as I'm concerned, folk and prog have always walked hand in hand. There are many examples of it in the past and I believe that it's still very evident in many of today's folk and prog artists. Your article mentioned the band LAU who I have seen live several times here in Cumbria – what a stunning act they are!

Buzz Elliott, West Cumbria.

GABRIEL'S GAP

Many thanks for Daryl Easlea's excellent article on Peter Gabriel's gap year between Genesis and *PG1* [*Prog* 89]. It was an engrossing read and provided some interesting information on sessions I didn't know about. I have subsequently found these tracks on YouTube. If there is an album waiting for the deluxe box treatment, surely it's *PG1*!

Ian Garlinge

SCHOOL OF PROG ROCK

I wonder if anyone is able to help point me in the right direction. As a lifelong (well, not yet, but I will be) prog fan, I've been wondering about doing something academic given my passion. I've had a brief look at university syllabuses (syllabi?) but nothing jumps out at me.



Below: *Prog* 89, which went behind Peter Gabriel's 'gap year'.



In essence, I was thinking of a thesis around the enduring relevance of prog rock. The prog rock movement, starting in the mid-1960s, carried forward the principles of groundbreaking music performed by artists that often had classical training and were in a position to know what the rules are to break them. That the movement has endured for over 50 years with some original bands still intact and performing and many others emulating them gives confidence that the genre will thrive for decades or more to come. Sounds fun, at least to me!

I'd want to do some research on the artists who preceded Genesis, Yes, King Crimson, Pink Floyd, VdGG, how the prog movement did and didn't use them and why it seems to be enduring.

Anybody know anyone that can help?

Paul Goodge

MARJANA SEMKINA
@marjanasemkina
I'm pretending to live in a Pre-Raphaelite painting. I think it works.



BRUCE SOORD
@bsoord
Popped to @hmvWatford to get a copy of our new album. Out now!



PROG

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INTRO

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

STEVEN WILSON TO INVADE OUR HOMES WITH HIS LATEST LIVE DVD

To The Bone DVD gets release date as the British musician begins work on his next solo album.

► **Bollywood dancers, mesmerising film** footage from Lasse Hoile and a captivating career-spanning set – the final night of Steven Wilson's lavish London residency last March will soon be available to enjoy in the comfort of your living room. *Home Invasion: In Concert At The Royal Albert Hall* was recorded on the UK leg of the artist's *To The Bone* tour and is available on DVD and Blu-ray, with or without the live CD, via Eagle Rock Entertainment from November 2. A deluxe five-vinyl box set with an exclusive bonus EP recorded over the previous nights will also be available via Caroline International on March 20, 2019.

"[A show of this scale is] something I've always wanted to do right from the beginning," says Wilson. "I've always been very interested in the possibilities of music and film together partly from being as interested in cinema as I was in music when I was growing up. I was always very excited about the possibilities of fusing the two

and, I think, when they go together very well, it's the most powerful artistic medium of them all.

"Sometimes I take these projectors and films around the world and it ends up looking like a postage stamp projected on a shower curtain because you can't always get the production in. But at the Royal Albert Hall, you've got the space to do it and there are no limitations in terms of what you can achieve visually so it seemed a very logical thing to pick that venue and film that show."

All versions of the new release feature guest vocalist Ninet Tayeb and a handful of Porcupine Tree reworkings. The DVD and Blu-ray also include Jess Cope's stunning animations, a special appearance from The Bollywood Company dancers, a brand new interview and an exclusive rehearsal set

filmed at the Royal Albert Hall before the evening's performance.

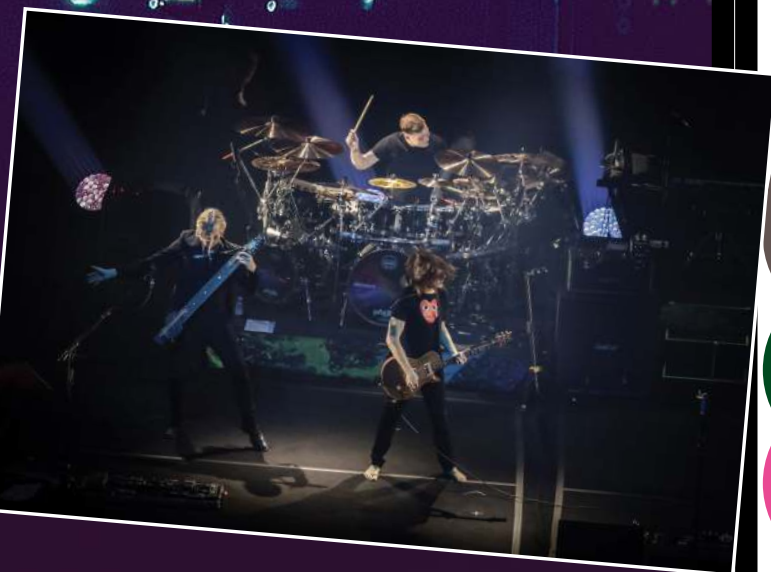
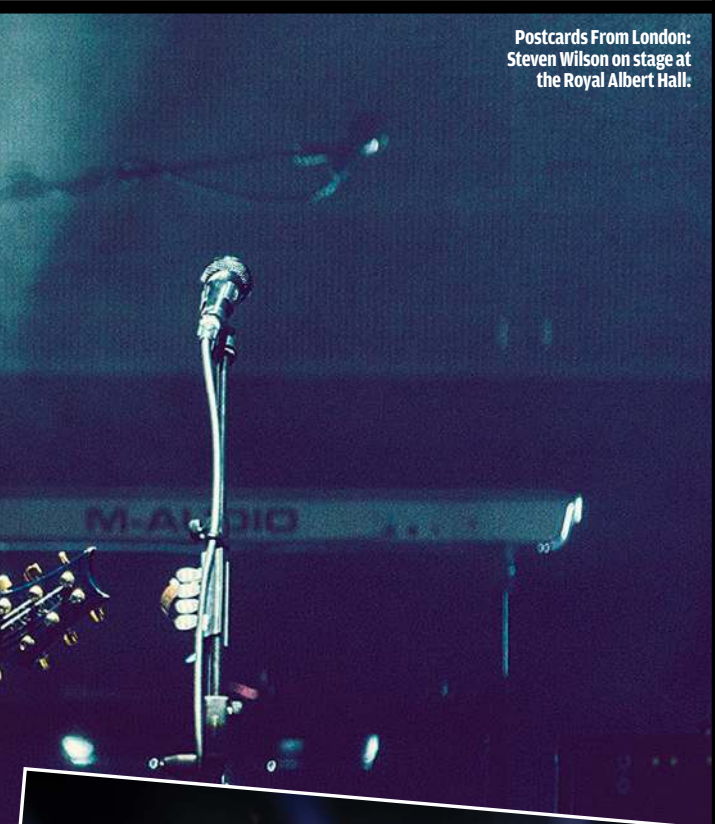
"Without an audience, the film crew were able to really use that space so those bonus songs have a very different aesthetic to them," Wilson reveals. "If you came to the show and you're getting the DVD as a memento then you'll not only see what you saw on the night, but you'll also see what you couldn't see because it was filmed behind closed doors."

The musician adds, "It's pretty crazy to think about it, but I feel really at home on that stage. I've done that venue several times now and it almost feels like my place, y'know? I think very often with filmed events, the band come across as very stressed, but it was a very relaxed evening. I remember thoroughly enjoying it and feeling



"At the Royal Albert Hall, there are no limitations in terms of what you can achieve visually."

Postcards From London:
Steven Wilson on stage at
the Royal Albert Hall.



completely at ease with myself. I hope that comes across."

In the meantime, Steven Wilson takes his *To The Bone* tour back on the road this autumn with shows confirmed for Japan, Australia, Canada and North America. He returns to Europe early next year and will knuckle down to his sixth full-length album once he's back home.

"I'm just beginning to toy with new ideas and new material. I'm in what I call the research and development stage," he says. "All I'll say it that it's going to be completely different to the last record. Something I want to avoid more than anything else is just making the same record in the same style twice and this one is definitely not going to fall into that category! Hopefully it'll be out in early 2020."

You can catch up on the latest updates, watch the *Home Invasion...* DVD trailer and eye up the latest tour dates at Wilson's official site. Visit www.stevenwilsonhq.com. **NRS**

This month, Intro was compiled by

Jeremy Allen
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Jo Kendall
Martin Kieley
Hannah May Kilroy
Rhodri Marsden
Matt Mills
Chris Roberts
Natasha Scharf
Rick Wakeman

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE TANGENT

Andy Tillison teams up with Jonas Reingold, Theo Travis, Luke Machin and Steve Roberts on latest.



He's Got The Music! The Tangent's Andy Tillison.

▶ **The Tangent's 10th** album *Proxy* sees Andy Tillison in the mood for personal reflection. Written and recorded during a European tour, the follow-up to last year's *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery* has no overarching concept, but a group of dovetailing themes.

"It's got unchallenged optimism and some good old pessimism," Tillison tells Prog. "The idea of 'proxy' could mean a lot of things. The first song is in the context of proxy war, hence the pawn on the album cover. Later, in a more personal song, I refer to the music I write as a proxy for who I want to be... rather than being it!"

"There's a couple of regrets, things I didn't achieve. There's another about a whole music scene I missed out on because I was being snobby about it!"

He also explores the way people of his generation, who grew up in the 70s, react to the modern world. "We wanted the future so much, but now we've got to the future we get nostalgic about the past," he says. "The 1970s were a very difficult time for a lot of people. And you could smoke in hospitals, which is shit."

As ever, the band refuse to be limited in musical style, with Emerson Lake & Palmer, Chick Corea and Jamiroquai all referenced. Tillison chooses the first five minutes of *The Adulthood Lie* as the single he'd release, containing the key repeated lyric, 'There's still time.'

Proxy arrives on November 16 via InsideOut. For more, visit www.thetangent.org. **MK**

ZIO ANNOUNCE THEIR DEBUT

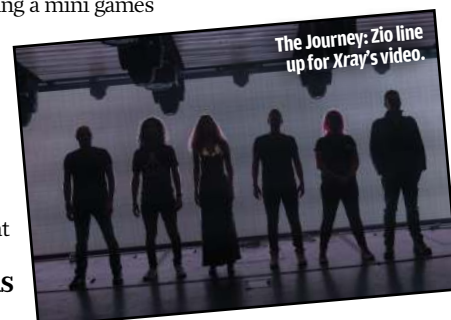
Ex-Karnataka musicians team up with Joe Payne and Franck Carducci for mammoth conceptual project.

▶ **Drummer Jimmy Pallagrosi** has confirmed that his new band Zio are releasing their first single *Xray* at the end of September. It's the first track from their ambitious full-length *Flower Torania*, which will be out later next year.

"It's a concept album involving storytelling, fantasy and sci-fi inspired by the video games I grew up playing, and each of the characters in the story will be played by different vocal guests," explains Pallagrosi. "I've written an accompanying story which starts with a small kid discovering a mini games console at his local skate park. I've even built the console which will be featured in *Xray's* trailer."

Former Karnataka bandmate Hayley Griffiths and ex-The Enid frontman Joe Payne appear on that first single, with Franck Carducci also confirmed as villain.

Zio play their first UK gig on October 21 at the Half Moon in London's Putney. See www.facebook.com/jimmypallagrosiZIO. **NRS**



OPETH UNVEIL THEIR EPIC NEW LIVE DVD

Historic US show gets a release date and Åkerfeldt teases forthcoming studio album.



Rock on! Opeth backstage at the Red Rocks Amphitheater.

Opeth prepare to release their fourth live audio-visual recording on November 2. *Garden Of The Titans: Live At Red Rocks Amphitheatre* is out on DVD, Blu-ray and vinyl through Moderbolaget/Nuclear Blast. It contains footage recorded last May at the famous Colorado venue that's previously hosted Jethro Tull and Rush.

Frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt says, "When we arrived, you could see the list of everyone who's played there. It's legendary, and the view from the stage is absolutely beautiful because it's so high up. It's such a beautiful amphitheatre surrounded by the Red Rocks and it looks like it's been hacked into the mountain. It's amazing."

The breathtaking scenery also inspired the cover art, which was created by long-standing collaborator Travis Smith. He and Åkerfeldt even borrowed some ideas from another well-known album cover.

"In the past we'd nicked things from Deep Purple because they're one of our favourite bands so I thought, 'Let's do a *Deep Purple In Rock* tribute!'" laughs the musician.

Meanwhile, Opeth are currently working on the follow-up to their 2016 album *Sorceress* which they hope to start recording in Sweden at the end of this year.

"I was going to take a sabbatical of some sort, but it only lasted about two weeks!" Åkerfeldt says with a laugh. "I opened a floodgate and started working really hard so right now, we have enough new material for an album and a half. We're in a luxurious position of being able to cherry-pick songs and I'm now sitting with the lyrics."

Describing the early demos as "more cinematic than previous albums", the musician admits he's been listening to a lot of Queen and wants the new material to have a larger-than-life sound.

"There's one song where the main inspiration is Dave Brubeck's *Take Five* because I like that beat, but it turned into more of a crooner with lots of strings. There's probably a jazz influence on that song but other than that,

I would say it's more of a hard rock album but with intricate time signatures. I don't want to say too much at this stage but they're what I like to think of as really good songs."

Opeth are aiming to release their as yet untitled album next year and will play a handful of festival shows over the summer months. **NRS**

For more, visit www.opeth.com.

INTRO extras

MUSE REVISIT THE 80S ON LATEST ALBUM

Muse release

Simulation Theory on November 9 via Warner Music. The retro-tinged 11-track includes recent singles *Something Human* and *The Dark Side*, and sees the band teaming up with an eclectic mix of names, including Rich Costey (*Drones*) and hip hop producers Mike Elizondo and Timbaland. *Stranger Things* poster artist Kyle Lambert is behind the 80s-inspired cover. Deluxe and super deluxe versions with bonus material are also available.

Journey To Friendship: Rikard Sjöblom.



SJÖBLOM SWOOPS IN ON GUNGFY!

Former Beardfish frontman and Big Big Train musician revisits childhood memories on his fourth album with Gungfly.

Rikard Sjöblom returns with Gungfly's new album *Friendship*, released via InsideOut on November 9.

Inspired by real-life moments from his childhood, the lyrics explore the nature of human relationships and how they change with time.

"It's very reflective," says Sjöblom. "I started thinking about childhood and a lot of these events that happened. Some of the stuff was mixed together - something that happened to me with one friend ends up mixed in with a story that happened at another time in my life."

The album also includes the second part of *If You Fall* - the first appeared on last year's *On Her Journey To The Sun*. "It was supposed to end up on that album but I'm glad it didn't because it fits better with the songs on this album," he says. "It's like creating a cliffhanger, like they do on television - they throw in the kitchen sink in the hope the network is going to continue. That's what I did!"

He cites the title track as one which features "quite a lot of the musical elements" found elsewhere on *Friendship*, adding, "there are shorter songs which wander into rock territory and flirt with heavier stuff, but most of the time it's prog rock, you know?"

Having previously played opening track *Ghost Of Vanity* live, Sjöblom predicts the new music will mix well with his older material. "We're venturing further and further into Prog Rock Land," he says happily.

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

MIDLAKE SIDE-PROJECT IS GO

Paul Alexander embraces an ambitious concept on Two Medicine's bold debut recordings.

Midlake bassist Paul Alexander started big when he made Two Medicine's debut solo album *Astropsychosis*, released on November 2 via Bella Union. Exploring a more psychedelic vibe than he's usually associated with, he tackled the giant theme of the future of humanity in a world we're destroying.

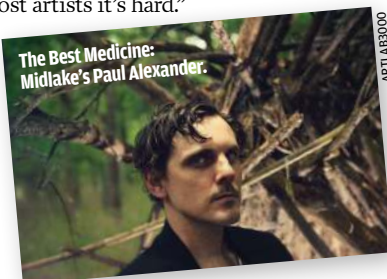
"Keeping objectivity while I was doing it was kinda hard," he tells *Prog*. "I was trying to discover what my writing was like. Does it make sense? Does it sound like real music?"

Looking back, he can say, "It's a good accomplishment, just to find out that I could do it. I think for some artists it's easier, but for most artists it's hard."

Two Medicine (Alexander with Aimee Adams) play four UK dates in October and November as a duo. The musician jokes that "people not leaving" is his aim, adding, "I think Midlake fans will like it. It dovetails enough."

For more information, visit <http://smarturl.it/Astropsychosis>. **MK**

The Best Medicine: Midlake's Paul Alexander.



ARTLAB3000



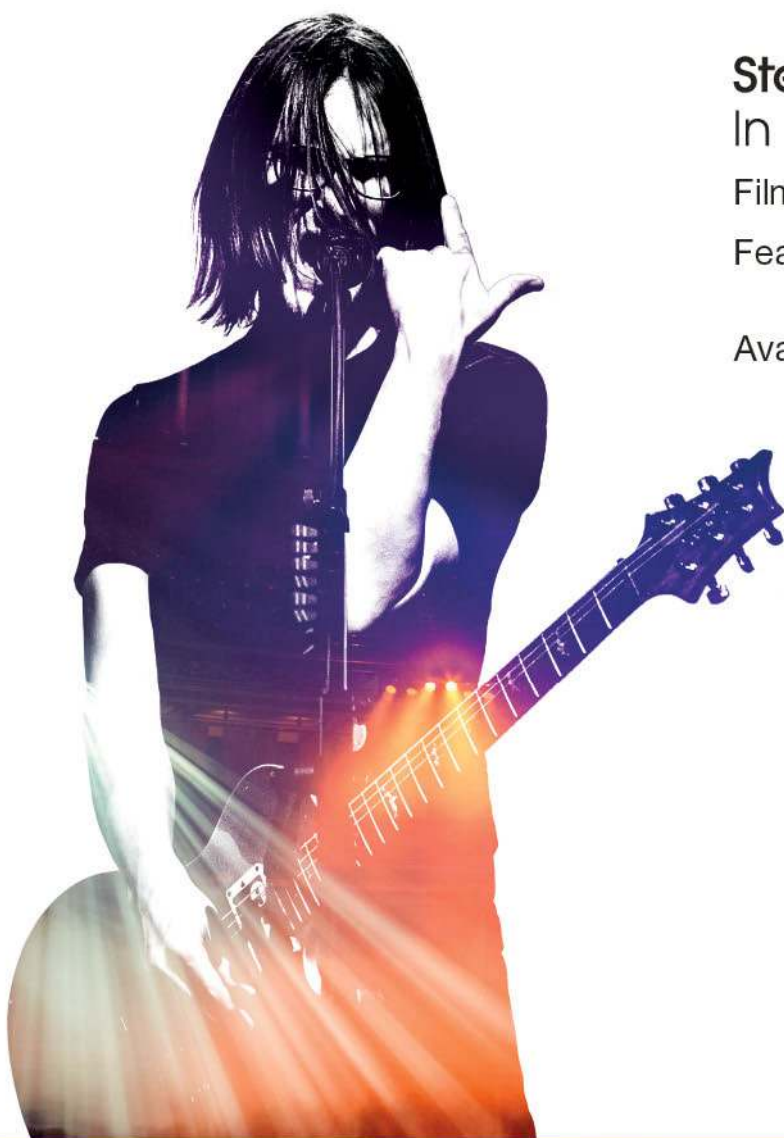
"We have enough new material for an album and a half."

Steven Wilson Home Invasion In Concert at the Royal Albert Hall

Filmed on his sold out *To The Bone* world tour

Features Steven Wilson songs drawn from the
past 20 years of his catalogue

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Facing New Challenges:
Antimatter's Mick Moss.

ANTIMATTER TACKLE TOUGH THEMES ON THEIR LATEST DISC

Liverpool frontman revisits his past on autobiographical seventh album.

► **Mick Moss explores** the relationship between recreational drugs, spiritual enlightenment and addiction on Antimatter's *Black Market Enlightenment*, out on November 9. And dealing with the personal subject matter wasn't the only challenge he faced.

"I wanted to pull an album out of myself completely from scratch, which is something I haven't done since the early days," Moss says. "It really gave me a lot of freedom to go anywhere. I made a few rules and one of them was to try to write away from the acoustic guitar as much as possible. Instead I would write on keyboards and electric guitar in the hope that would draw a different type of music out."

The album is mixed by Anathema's Daniel Cardoso, who also co-produced Antimatter's 2015 release *The Judas Table*. It finds the Liverpool singer-songwriter once again teaming up with long-term collaborator Vic Anselmo, while there's a guest appearance from Armenian folk musician Vardan Baghdasaryan, who plays the stringed kamancheh. *Black Market Enlightenment* is also the first studio album to be released on Moss' Music In Stone imprint.

"I've taken the crazy route of self-releasing because [last year's live DVD] *Live Between The Earth & Clouds* went well and I really enjoyed the direct-to-fan route of things rather than sending it through a third party," he reveals.

Antimatter begin their Black Market Tour in November and play one UK show at London's Black Heart at the end of that month. For the full list of dates and more, visit Antimatter's website at www.antimatteronline.com. **NRS**

INTRO extras

SYMPHONIC CD FOR VAN GIERBERGEN

Anneke van Giersbergen releases first live album with an orchestra on November 16 via InsideOut. *Symphonized - Live With Residentie Orkest The Hague* was recorded in Tilburg and The Hague with one of Holland's leading symphonic orchestras back in May. The 11-track recording includes new versions of material originally performed by van Giersbergen in Vuur, The Gathering and The Gentle Storm, along with a handful of surprises.



The Final Frontier: Within Temptation embrace the space age on new album.

WITHIN TEMPTATION'S FUTURISTIC VISIONS

Dutch group explore the dangers of the digital age on *Hydra*'s delayed follow-up.

► **Sharon den Adel** says *Resist* has rekindled her passion for Within Temptation. The band's seventh album, out via Spinefarm/Universal on December 14, nearly didn't happen as the singer says personal issues sapped her creativity after 2014's *Hydra* world tour.

"My father got sick and I didn't have the energy I needed to write for Within Temptation. I didn't know if I would continue with it," she tells *Prog*. "I was very far from Within Temptation at the time so different music came out and that became [solo pop project] My Indigo. In a way, that was my therapy and it allowed me to rediscover what it was that I love about Within Temptation. It took me a few years but I'm back on track again."

Den Adel describes the new 10-track as having a more "modern sound" compared to the six-piece's previous material, and it's accompanied by a futuristic new image which will be reflected in their upcoming live shows.

"The songs are still bombastic, but in a different way. We still have elements of the orchestra but they're not playing all over any more... it's more roughened up," she says. "Most of the songs are inspired by the digital age we're living in right now and the hidden dangers surrounding that. If the wrong people get their hands on technology, they can abuse it and it can be very dangerous."

Material from *Resist* will be previewed on the band's forthcoming winter tour, which includes five UK shows scheduled for November. For the full list of dates and more, visit www.within-temptation.com. **NRS**



Riverside

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SONY MUSIC

FAD GADGETS

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

ODD

Sports fans gain great pleasure from the sound of a tennis ball pinging off a racket or a cricket ball being hit for six. But what if the impact of a ball could be

transformed into beats? Two graduates from the Royal College Of Art, Nathan Webb and Pasquale Totaro, have developed a chuckable sphere called Odd which, combined with an app, becomes a drum

machine. The promo video features kids in baseball caps chucking it at walls to create beatscapes, and who's to say that's not possible? It's certainly believed by the 2,000 people who've funded the Kickstarter project nearly six times over.

www.oddballing.com

SONY DMP-Z1

It's time to play audiophile bingo! The blurb for Sony's eye-wateringly expensive music player promises "tighter bass", "authentic detail", "transparent and clear vocals", "the warmth and character of vinyl" and the ability to "enjoy your music just as the artist intended". At the core of my suspicion of all high-end audio devices is the knowledge that the manufacturers don't have a bloody clue what the artist intended - but if you don't mind spending more than £6,000 on something with a large, gold knob, knock yourself out.

www.sony.com



COTODAMA LYRIC SPEAKER

In recent years, some streaming services have begun displaying lyrics on the screen of your phone or tablet as the song plays. The words are, however, a bit small. This isn't a problem with Lyric Speaker, which is basically a 22-inch LCD display with speakers. After assessing the mood of the track, it displays the lyrics in large letters using appropriate motion graphics, floating or whizzing across the screen as they're sung. It's a bit like an eye test, but weirder.

www.lyric-speaker.com



SIX DEGREES OF RICK WAKEMAN

Rick catches up with an old friend of a friend of a friend.

► The other day, I saw this man deliberately cross the road and make a beeline for me. I wasn't worried as I genuinely like people and enjoy meeting all the different kinds I'm lucky enough to meet. He stopped in front of me with a nice welcoming smile and I did my best to reciprocate.

"We have a mutual friend that's going to really surprise you," he said as an introduction.

"Go on," I replied in anticipation.

"Gordon Blansett," he replied in rather an over-confident tone.

"Err, Gordon Blanket?"

I answered, slightly confused.

"No, Blansett!" he said. He was still smiling.

"Give me a clue," I countered.

My new friend looked disappointed and said, "I really thought you'd remember him straight away... This will jog your memory!" Then he took a deep breath and added, "South Harrow."

"Ah yes," I replied, "I was brought up in that area. I went to church there, I was in a band there and my first real girlfriend came from South Harrow... but I can't quite place Gordon Branflake at the moment though. More of a clue needed please..."

"It's Blansett," he said somewhat tetchily.

"Okay... Wood End Infant School."

"Yes, I was there from 1954 until 1956, and I'm guessing so was Gordon Blackbird?"

"Blansett," he said in a loud voice, "Blansett, and no, he didn't go there but his sister's best friend did."

"And did I know his sister's best friend?"

I replied. By now, I was beginning to feel extremely confused.

"I don't think so," he pondered. "But anyway, one day, when your mum was picking you up from school, Gordon's sister's best friend's mum was also picking her son up. At the time she was looking after Gordon who was sitting in her Morris Eight and he waved."

"Waved at me? Why?"

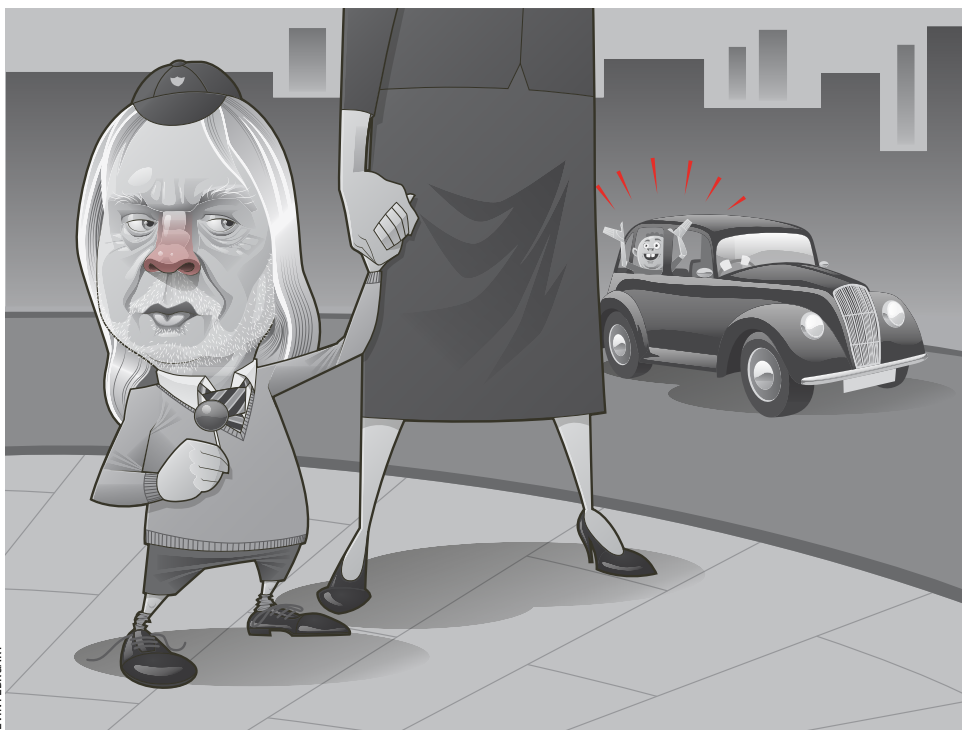
"Well," he said, "his sister said she believed that he was waving at his mum but Gordon always said he had an inkling you were going to be in a rock band one day so was actually waving at you."

"Ah, right," I said, trying to look interested. "I'm very sorry that I can't actually recall the event but out of interest, was there a reason you crossed the road to tell me this?"

"Yes," he said, solemnly. "Gordon died last week and I thought you'd like to know."

There aren't many times I've been lost for words, but this was certainly one of them. How do you follow up a statement like that?

"Gordon said he had an inkling you were going to be in a rock band one day..."



KEVIN FEBRUARY

GWENNO

The DIY Welsh synth-progger takes on the Cornish cause.

YOU'D THINK THAT, by the age of 21, if you spoke three languages, had starred in your home nation's favourite evening soap and headlined as a lead dancer in Las Vegas, your career might have peaked. But for Gwenno Saunders – born in Cardiff to a socialist activist mother and Cornish poet father – a pop career beckoned after her time on *Pobol y Cwm* and with Michael Flatley's *Lord Of The Dance*.

"The Pipettes were a pop band, yes," the synth player and songwriter says of the band she was in back in the early noughties, "but an indie, conceptual one. We were licensed to Universal but there was no slick production, just really great pop music."

"I was making experimental Welsh and Cornish pop before then," Saunders explains. "The Pipettes seemed an interesting opportunity to work with other people, which I wanted to do."

Second album *Earth Vs The Pipettes*, written by Saunders and sister Ani, featured electronica, 80s pop and sci-fi as themes – from Jeff Wayne to Wham!, as *Daily Music Guide* put it. But the Pipettes' time was up ("It wasn't meant to last forever, it was a shooting star") so after briefly touring as synth player with Australian dance act Pnau and, er, Elton John, Saunders was ready to go it alone again – and experiment.

Living in London, Saunders met and married fellow Welshman and musician Rhys Edwards. They returned to Cardiff, to a thriving community of outsider artists, and started work on two EPs for Edwards' Peski label, sometime home to Cate Le Bon and Edwards' own electronic outfit Jakokoyak. Saunders' first album,

2014's *Y Dydd Olaf* ("The Last Day") embraced her native tongue in an electropop science-fiction odyssey based on the book by Welsh novelist Owain Owain. "It's about a robot overlord taking over the world and everyone being turned into a clone," she says. "It was a cry to celebrate cultural diversity when we're all being told to like the same things."

"Outsider music in Wales, and DIY and experimental culture, resonated with me," she continues. "I drew a lot of strength from the language – it's defiant and honest and the language I speak with those closest to me."

As a child, Saunders' uncle taught her piano.

The socialist choir her mother sang in gave her inspiration, as well as the Celtic-language records that played in the house. But Saunders spoke Cornish with her father, Tim, and that became the basis for latest album *Le Kov* ('A Place Of Memory'). "He'd given me this language and I wanted to make it my own. I did a lot of research: Cornish was at its peak in the Middle Ages and I was fascinated by characters that kept it going," she says, citing the Aphex Twin album *Drukqs* as an influence. "It's in Cornish and it's so exciting."

Le Kov's swirling synthpop soundtracks take in abstract art, a Cornish uprising and, to lighten the mood, poppy fan favourite *Eus Keus?*, a 17th-century harvesting phrase that asks, 'Do you have cheese?'

"There's a lot of playfulness in Welsh and Cornish; this is the kind of song my sister and I would have wanted to sing as kids," she says. "It's a lot of experiences crammed into one album." **JK**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP
Gwenno (vocals, synthesiser)

SOUNDS LIKE
Various waves of 60s prog pop, psychedelic art-rock and dreamy synthpop

CURRENT RELEASE
Le Kov is out now via Heavenly

WEBSITE
www.gwenno.info



"My father gave me this language and I wanted to make it my own."

Golden Girl: Gwenno is striking out on her own.





YOUR PROG CHEF: **PETE TREWAVAS (MARILLION)**

Something Fills The Hole (Caribbean chicken thighs with sweet potato)

“I’ve always been interested in food and was always hanging around the kitchen when my mum was cooking, so I picked up a few basics. I used to cook a bit when I left home and could rustle up a mean chilli when Fiona and I were first married.

“When our two sons, Callum and Luke, came along, I would find myself cooking for them when not on tour or while Fiona was at work. Funnily enough both Callum and Luke are very good cooks, as is Fiona. Over the years I’ve cooked less and less, but still keep my hand in now and again.”

Ingredients (serves 4)

8-12 chicken thighs (two or three per person), 2 large carrots peeled and cut into chunks, 2 red onions cut into chunks, 1 red and 1 yellow pepper roughly cut into chunks, 2-3 sweet potatoes, green vegetables of your choice, olive oil, Dunn’s River chicken seasoning, salt and pepper.

Preparation

“Marinate the chicken thighs for at least half an hour in a little olive oil with the Dunn’s River seasoning and salt and pepper, to taste.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Peel and cut the sweet potatoes into wedges, place in a roasting dish and drizzle with oil, mixing it through with a wooden spoon. Season with salt and pepper.

Oil the bottom of a large oven-proof dish and scatter the vegetables over the base, laying the chicken thighs on top. Bake both the chicken and the potatoes in the middle of the oven for 35 minutes.

When the chicken is cooked through – test it by poking the flesh with a sharp knife or fork to make sure the juices run clear – and the sweet potato is soft and caramelising, remove from the oven and serve with a steamed green vegetable of your choice. I like to use broccoli.

My favourite place for food tourism is the US as the seafood is amazing, especially lobster from Maine. I love to try new things, but when I’m on the road I do like one home comfort – I take my own granola, homemade toasted oats and all.

I chose this recipe as it’s a bit of a household favourite, but it’s actually been perfected by Luke and his girlfriend Dayna. Like most dishes, it’s very easy to cook once the preparation has been achieved. I hope you try it and enjoy as much as we do.” **JK**



MY PROG HERO Inspiring the wider music world...



Noise Floor: SikTh are a big inspiration for Luke Caley [inset].

LUKE CALEY

Press To Meco’s guitarist and vocalist likes to mix business and pleasure where **SikTh** are concerned.

“I started really getting into rock music when I was about 11 or 12, and that’s when I first picked up a guitar. At school, there were a few kids with older brothers who were into tech metal but until then, I had no idea that music could be so complicated and sound so good. I would have been about 13 when I first heard SikTh and a couple of years later, the local band I was in ended up supporting them. They made this noise that I’d never heard before and that was when I really got into them. Within a few months they become my favourite band.

Dan [Weller] is one of two guitarists who’s had an impact on the way I play, in particular the way he uses chords. From a technical perspective, *Summer Rain* and *As The Earth Spins Round* are just unreal, but *Peep Show*, from their first album *The Trees Are Dead...*, has influenced me the most. I really wanted to develop that kind of sound into my guitar playing.

I know a lot of people hold SikTh responsible for djent, but I feel djent is a lot more syncopated and rhythmic, whereas SikTh are more about melody. In my opinion, they’re one of the most

important bands in progressive metal from the last 15 years. They left such a stamp on the scene and they were relatively ahead of their time. [When they reformed] they came back bigger than ever, it was almost that everyone else caught up.

I got in touch with Dan when Press To Meco first got started and he’s been really supportive of this band. We recorded in the studio with Dan when SikTh announced their reunion and I was so excited. After we’d wrapped up for the day, he’d be practising SikTh riffs in the same room and the teenage guitarist in me was fanboying pretty hard over it!

We supported SikTh in 2017 and straight after, we were the main support for Arcane Roots. They were such a good band and [Melancholia Hymns] is unreal, it’s so good. They and Black Peaks are pushing the prog-tinged alternative rock scene and I think it’s impossible not to respect them for how far they’re bringing the genre.” **NRS**

Here’s *To The Fatigue* is out now via Marshall. For the latest tour dates, see www.presstomeco.com.

“They’re one of the most important bands in prog metal from the last 15 years.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Jethro Tull’s reissues campaign continues this winter with an expanded version of their debut. The three-CD/DVD set of *This Was* is out on November 9 via Rhino and includes rarities, live recordings and new remixes from Steven Wilson.



Alan Parsons (left) has signed a new deal with Frontiers, ahead of his next studio album, which is due out in spring 2019. Parsons has confirmed it’s tentatively titled *The Secret* and will explore musical and lyrical themes close to his heart.



Gulp, L-R: Guto Pryce, Lindsey Leven, Gid Goundrey.

GULP

Super Furry Animals bassist explores his proggy side...

“UM, THE ORB?” offers Guto Pryce after a few minutes of traversing the recesses of his mind. “You know The Orb? That’s pretty proggy. Good 20-minute soundscape. I dunno if that could be described as prog? I’m definitely into that...”

The Welsh musician, best known as the bassist with psychedelic indie pioneers Super Furry Animals, is attempting to uncover the progressive influences behind Gulp, the brilliant under-the-radar duo he shares with his wife Lindsey Leven (or trio, if you include guitarist Gid Goundrey). Together they make mini-kaleidoscopic kraut-pop masterpieces that swirl around the memory and whisper influences that should make you happy: Giorgio Moroder, The Velvet Underground, Nancy & Lee...

“Punk rock, my first love, kinda spat all over prog, which probably put me off it,” admits Pryce. “But I do admire anyone who wears a cape.”

He ruminates further and adds: “I’m actually beginning to come round to the idea that prog was more punk rock than punk. It’s a real *fuck* you saying, ‘I’m going to play this song for 20 minutes in a cape to a stadium full of people.’”

Prog is a broad church, loving and inclusive, and Gulp’s psych, folk and krautrock-inflected sonic landscapes fit the ticket, even if Pryce is struggling to find his place in it all. “The tracks usually start at about 10 minutes and then we sculpt them down into a pop song,” he adds helpfully. “We listened to a lot of Donna Summer records in the studio – just for the

repetitiveness – and although we try to keep our songs down to three-and-a-half minutes, we also like the idea they can be 10 minutes as well.”

Gulp’s first album *Season Sun* arrived in 2014, and much has changed between then and now, as second album *All Good Wishes* hits shops. Pryce and Leven have upped sticks from the former’s native Cardiff to the East Coast of Scotland, which Pryce describes as “drier” with “different light”

and “more progressive politics”. Gulp are not a political band, he says, with their music more an antidote to the present horror show of British public life: “We do preach love and tolerance and beauty, which is probably becoming political. I think our music is about escapism with a dreamlike, otherworldly quality.”

Another big change for Pryce and Leven came with the birth of a baby. The infant is just seven weeks old when we chat on the phone, and Pryce says he’s started “getting into high-pitched xylophone music” à la *Rockabye Baby*. The arrival will delay any touring for now, and Pryce suggests that family life may delay further any prospect of a new Super Furies’ album.

“We may do some more touring,” he says. “Making an album is such an intense experience. Everybody in the band has families now and we can’t go to the studio for three months and just live on wine and olives. It’s just not practical. Furies may yet find a way of making a record that fits into all our lives.” **JA**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Lindsey Leven
(vocals, keyboard),
Guto Pryce
(bass, production),
Gid Goundrey (guitar)

SOUNDS LIKE

A rainforest shower in a melty psychotropic paradise

CURRENT RELEASE

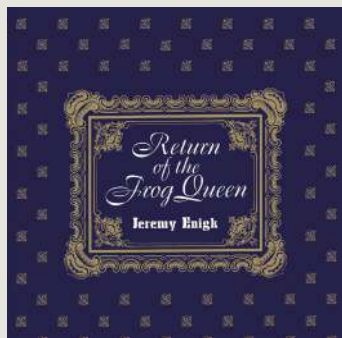
All Good Wishes is out now via ELK Records

WEBSITE

www.gulpgulp.co.uk



“I’m actually coming round to the idea that prog was more punk rock than punk.”



JEREMY ENIGK

RETURN OF THE FROG QUEEN

[SUB POP, 1996]

It's somewhat surprising to regard this album as an elliptic progressive cascade, because it comes from a man who had previously built his reputation in Sunny Day Real Estate, a band who were among the pioneers of the emo movement in the early 90s. When they split up in 1995, frontman Enigk took something of a left field turn and in the process came up with this multi-faceted solo album.

Much has been made of the fact that *Return Of The Frog Queen* was recorded soon after Enigk had converted to Christianity, and there's certainly an influence from that situation on his lyrical stance here. You can sense that Enigk was reaching out, striving to come to terms with an inward emotional turmoil. But while it's easy to interpret songs like *Lizard* and *Explain* as introspective, bringing into focus the main man's new perspective on life, this nonetheless shouldn't be seen as a record that's only about a religious epiphany. You can still enjoy the compositions on here without having any interest in Enigk's personal views on life or his belief system.

The music here is dark, but never bleak. The use of a string section, plus various wind instruments, gives the tone a depth that draws the listener in and keeps them absorbed. There's a restive spirit running through the album that tells of a man searching for answers. This makes the songs intriguing and mature but also allows plenty of room to manoeuvre. Enigk never clutters the sound, and in doing so gives himself space for exploration.

There are times when Syd Barrett and Peter Hammill come to mind. Yet, while both these giants could sometimes revel in chaos of their own creation, what happens here is that Enigk uses his own attempts to find a way through a maze of self-doubt to a distinct artistic path. This means that he draws you into his world and keeps you enthralled.

No song on *Return Of The Frog Queen* is lengthy – *Shade And The Black Hat* is the longest, and that's under five minutes – but brevity allows Enigk a chance to show how it's possible to turn even short compositions into suites if you have the requisite musical temperament.

There's a wide spectrum of soundscapes used throughout, which delve down classical, jazz and melodic routes. At its best – on the title track, *Carnival* and the aforementioned *Shade And The Black Hat* – this is a remarkably articulate album that's full of progressive aspiration.

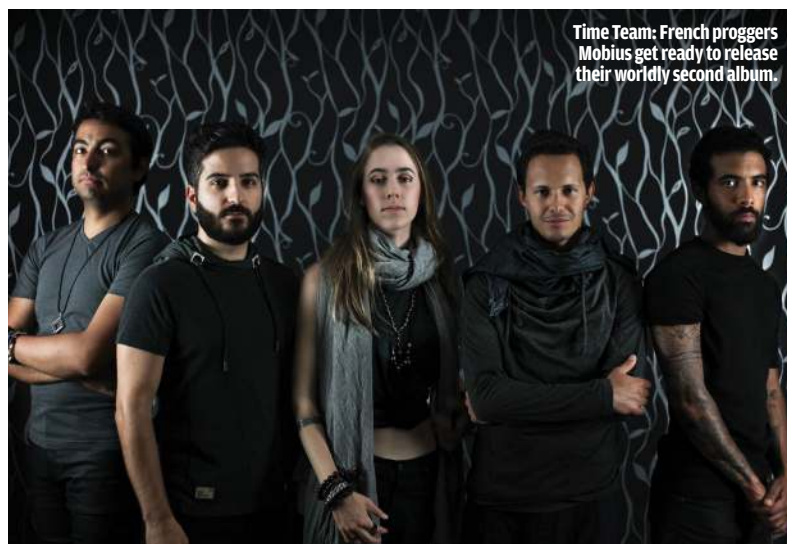
Enigk went on to release several more solo albums, the most recent being 2017's *Ghosts*. A remastered edition of *Return Of The Frog Queen* came out earlier this year, with bonus material added.

MALCOLM DOME



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Time Team: French proggers Mobius get ready to release their worldly second album.

MOBIUS

French musicians **Alexandre Gaudencio** and **Xavier Pompon** use their music to explore mortality.

"We all come from different backgrounds and like different music, so we just try to blend what we like into our songs, without any consideration for the style. It happens to be prog music because we like that."

Bassist Alexandre Gaudencio defines Mobius by putting their eclecticism front and centre. In 2016, the Lyon-based experimentalists debuted with the lauded *The Line*; an hour-long explosion of progressive bombast that united the melodies and polyrhythms of Tesseract with the orchestral grandeur of Symphony X.

"*The Line* was quite symphonic, because that's what we were listening to while writing," Gaudencio recalls, introducing a style that puts Mobius leaps ahead of their local peers.

Guitarist Xavier Pompon explains, "In Lyon, it's more [about] metalcore and deathcore. I like growled singing, but it is overused in a way. It's great when it brings power to a section of a song, but when I see a band and they spend the whole gig screaming, it gets tiring. I can't keep my attention on the music."

Ever the aural explorers, Mobius are preparing to venture even further away from the

norm with the impending *Kala*, due out next year. Replacing the symphonic might of *The Line* with a more avant-garde undercurrent directly inspired by Indian folk music, the quintet's second album balances instrumental wizardry with Héli Andrea's gorgeous singing.

"Héli's vocals are really what set the band apart," says Pompon. "With the music, which is really punchy and hard, those kind of clean vocals over it – I can't find that kind of music very often, unless it's something like [dark rockers] Evanescence."

While *Kala*'s music and vocals ultimately weave a gorgeous aural tapestry, the concept behind the disc is much more crushing.

"*Abhinivesha*, the first song, comes from the death of Héli's relative," Gaudencio explains, "so this album explores the concepts of life, death and temporality."

Mobius' ability to stare in the face of emotional strife and create something beautiful makes *Kala* all the more impressive. Prog fans owe it to themselves to experience the resulting tunes and themes. **MM**

See www.mobius-band.com.



"Héli's vocals are really what set the band apart."

PROG IN BRIEF

Caravan's keyboard player **Jan Schelhaas** releases *Ghosts Of Eden* on November 16. The solo album follows last year's independently released *Living On A Little Blue Dot* and is available to pre-order via PledgeMusic.



Dave Kerzner's (left) new band **In Continuum** release *Acceleration Theory* on October 20 via Bandcamp. It includes songs originally meant for Sound Of Contact's second album. Big Big Train drummer Nick D'Virgilio and Yes vocalist Jon Davison are among the guests.

ARTMAGIC

Suede guitarist and pop producer team up for Albion-inspired folk.

THERE'S SOMETHING OF a good cop/bad cop dichotomy with Artmagic. Guitarist Richard Oakes, who was plucked from West Country obscurity by indie titans Suede in the early 90s, is cooler than a cucumber just out of the fridge. Vocalist Sean McGhee, whose writing and production credits include Britney Spears, Alanis Morissette and Robyn, is the conceptual architect, and he's the more serious of the two.

Artmagic came together in 2008 thanks to a serendipitous *Doctor Who* connection which involved Sean and a friend of Richard's meeting regularly down the pub to discuss all things Gallifreyan. The singer doesn't feel this story is relevant to our tête-à-tête today, even if a Venn diagram of Prog readers and fans of the Time Lord would probably generate an ample intersection. Artmagic have released two albums six years apart, and the latest — *The Songs Of Other England* — is a work of sumptuous, understated beauty (*The Farmer And The Field* featured on the Prog 88 CD).

The title track of the album in particular is a divine tribute to the arcane folk traditions of Albion, and a nod to the secret musical history of our once proud nation. There are narratives throughout written from the perspectives of the underrepresented and the disenfranchised. Film director Derek Jarman provides inspiration, not so much for his output as his methodology: "His whole thing at the beginning when he didn't have money to shoot in 35mm or afford proper sets and professional actors was to allow the budget to define the aesthetic," says McGhee. Thwarted by work commitments, including Suede, the

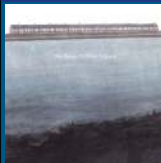
pair wrote songs from scratch in McGhee's Tottenham studio in 2014, working quickly.

"Richard used to be very reticent to do anything off the cuff like that and over the years he's really warmed to it," says McGhee. "He's really good at it." Oakes learned to improvise in front of members of the reformed Suede when the old method of bringing songs to the studio stopped working for them. "You've got Ed Bueller, Brett Anderson and Neil Codling all standing over you giving you live punditry on what you're playing," says Oakes, laughing. "Oh that's good; play that again. Don't like that, do what you were doing before. You have to get used to that and put your artistic ego aside."

As a duo, Oakes shares an equal footing with McGhee. Despite more than two decades of playing guitar with Suede, he'll always be the new boy to many. "It used to really irk me and Neil but now we just accept it," he says philosophically. "Sean's husband Phil is a big Marillion fan, and people still talk about Fish. He hasn't been in the band for 30 years! It's just absurd, but there we are."

McGhee's anxieties include people thinking the album's title might be in some way a reference to a certain referendum: "We wrote these songs before the Brexit vote, which I think is a terrible thing for this country. There was a moment a few years ago where the idea of Englishness was being slightly rehabilitated, but now we're back to this two World Wars one World Cup little Englander jingoistic Empire bullshit that I have no interest in." **JA**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Richard Oakes (guitars, keyboards),
Sean McGhee (voice, synthesisers, bass)

SOUNDS LIKE

Ambitious electric folk garnished with Oakes' inimitable guitar sideswipes

CURRENT RELEASE

The Songs Of Other England is out now via Artmagicmusic

WEBSITE

www.artmagicmusic.com



"We wrote these songs before the Brexit vote, which I think is a terrible thing for this country."

Artmagic, L-R: Richard Oakes, Sean McGhee.





GRAB THAT CASH AND MAKE A STASH

A *Prog* writer asks if VIP tickets are really worth the dosh?

Asked about deluxe ticketing packages in 2010, Bruce Springsteen's longtime manager Jon Landau replied that such add-ons were likely to become a fixture on the scene. "If you call something deluxe or unique," he mused, "this is America - someone will buy it." He'd seen the future of rock'n'roll and its name was the VIP hospitality package.

Not every A-list act has exploited fans' bottomless well of blind devotion, but in the present climate it's almost de rigeur for large-scale shows to involve labyrinthine layers of scaled pricing. This summer the Roger Waters spectacular at Hyde Park offered Golden Circle tickets for £299, which bagged you entrance to a fenced-off area near (ish) the front and a bar with a slightly shorter queue than the bars at which Joe Average Punter grew a beard waiting. King Crimson have advertised a £295 Royal Package (you meet one of them and get a T-shirt), while Dream Theater have marketed similar notions. Steven Wilson is inviting fans to register interest in VIP "upgrades" for forthcoming dates.

This wheeler-dealing isn't of course confined to the world of prog. Earlier this decade you could have shelled out almost two grand for a front row seat at Bon Jovi, but hey, you took home a folding metal chair with a Bon Jovi-logo cushion on it. Some fork out a month's wages to attend a Justin Bieber soundcheck. *Prog* is only following the market: that's sound business. The former CEO of AEG Live, Randy Phillips, once stated that the top acts make as much moolah from 10 percent of the audience as from the other nine percent of mere "general admission" mortals.

Such bread-head cynicism theoretically keeps prices down for the great unwashed. Bands squeeze their live loyalists to make up for what they no longer make from record sales, and it's better that obsessives pay full whack to the artists than to unofficial scalpers and sharks. Yet something sticks in the craw about this tide of 'tixploitation'. The irony of Waters berating capitalism sat uneasily with his various roped-off areas, which might have been marked Rich, Less Rich and Missing-Meals-To-Be-Here. Gold/platinum/velvet-lined seats may offer you a superior sightline and sound (whether they do is another debate, and depends on specific shows), but to the proles - sorry, punters - behind you it's, if not a kick in the teeth, at least a flicked V-sign, or an impression of Harry Enfield's Loadsamoney waving his wad. You can't blame musicians for maximising earnings, or management for milking prevailing trends, but you might ask: is this another death throe in the spirit of rebel outsider music?

CHRIS ROBERTS

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



Painting By Prog: illustrator extraordinaire Pete Fowler.

CHRIS MCANDREW

PETE FOWLER

It's *Prog Boy* in the flesh and a case of creature - and castle - comforts for the artist-musician.

Artist, illustrator, DJ and musician Pete Fowler is no stranger to the pages of *Prog*. In the early days of the mag he appeared - with some favourite and very experimental sounds - as a subject of My Record Collection, and when we came up with the concept of long-running comic strip *Prog Boy*, Fowler was first choice for visuals.

But where does his love of prog start? "As a kid, comics and watching cartoons were the big things for me," he says, "and anything related to music. 2000AD had that, and became a touchstone. Meanwhile, I was exposed to quite weird music at an early age and I'd say Jethro Tull's *Living In The Past* planted a seed."

Growing up in Cardiff, Fowler had the modern culture of a capital city around him, mixed with deep, Celtic history. It was a haven for prog rock and psychedelia. "I had record shops in town such as Spillers and especially Kellys," he says. "A lot of people were interested in prog and psych and you'd pick up great stuff all the time. Even knowing that Rockfield Studios was close by was such a buzz."

Native band Super Furry Animals spotted Fowler's work in a free

paper, and commissioned him to create the sleeve for *Radiator* [1997]. A partnership flourished from there. "I like their colourful point of view and playful angle," he says. "Their influences were across the board, and exotic. Working with them lead to a lot of things."

Fowler then created his own world of super furry creatures with his Monsterism concept and went on to collaborate with bands such as Acid Mothers Temple ("a walking cartoon of a band!") and chief Charlatan and experimental head Tim Burgess. Recently, Fowler has worked with CADW, the Welsh government's historic environment service, on a project celebrating standing stones, castles and Welsh literature. "It was called *Weird And Wonderful Tales* and we re-explored the *Mabinogion* [legends of 12th century Wales] over six locations with storytellers and art," he says. "Welsh folklore is well

prog! Wizards, goblins, ladies of the lake, giants... It was a really important project for me. I realised I'd been carrying these characters around with me and drawing upon them my whole life." **JK**

See petefowler.tumblr.com.



"Welsh folklore is well prog!"

PROG IN BRIEF

John Hackett & Nick Fletcher's *Beyond The Stars* is out via Esoteric on October 12. It's described as an "epic journey through time and place". Hackett and Fletcher first teamed up on John Hackett Band's 2017 CD *We Are Not Alone*.



Former Tesseract vocalist Ashe O'Hara returns with **Voices From The Fuselage's** (left) new concept album *Odyssey: The Founder Of Dreams*. The sequel to 2015's *Odyssey: Destroyer Of Worlds* is out via White Star on November 9.

Toska release their debut *Fire By The Silos* on November 2. The Brighton instrumentalists take their inspiration from Karnivool and Hans Zimmer, and kick off their first ever headline tour on November 6 at Manchester's Satan's Hollow.

Shattered Skies' latest full-lengther *Muted Neon* comes out independently on November 16. The theatrical quartet's second album is packed with songs of triumph over struggle and follows on from 2015's *The World We Used To Know*.



Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

August 2018

Compiled by Official Charts Company

- 1 **TAME IMPALA** *Currents* **FICTION**
- 2 **ELO** *Secret Messages* **EPIC**
- 3 **ALL ONE TONIGHT** - Live At The Royal **EAR MUSIC**
- 4 **A PERFECT CIRCLE** *Eat The Elephant* **BMG**
- 5 **BLUE OCTOBER** *I Hope You're Happy* **BRANDO**
- 6 **BIG BIG TRAIN** *Merchants Of Light* **ENGLISH ELECTRIC**
- 7 **ROGER WATERS** *Is This The Life We Really Want?* **COLUMBIA**
- 8 **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** *What We Did On Our Saturday* **MATTY GROOVES**
- 9 **ORB** *No Sounds Are Out Of Bounds* **COOKING VINYL**
- 10 **WOODEN SHJIPS** *V* **THRILL JOCKEY**
- 11 **JEFF LYNNE'S ELO** *Wembley Or Bust* **RCA**
- 12 **MASTODON** *Emperor Of Sand* **REPRISE**
- 13 **MOGWAI** *Every Country's Sun* **ROCK ACTION**
- 14 **RUSH** *A Farewell To Kings* **UMC/VIRGIN**
- 15 **EPICA** *Vs Attack On Titan Songs* **NUCLEAR BLAST**
- 16 **GRATEFUL DEAD** *Anthem Of The Sun* **RHINO**
- 17 **DAVID GILMOUR** *Live At Pompeii* **COLUMBIA**
- 18 **MYSTERY** *Lies And Butterflies* **UNICORN DIGITAL**
- 19 **MOODY BLUES** *Days Of Future Passed* **DECCA**
- 20 **SWANS** *Soundtracks For The Blind/Die Tur Ist Zu* **MUTE**
- 21 **TANGERINE DREAM** *Sessions 1* **INVISIBLE HANDS**
- 22 **FLAMING LIPS** *Greatest Hits - Vol 1* **RHINO**
- 23 **ACT II** *TARJA Act II* **EAR MUSIC**
- 24 **ROXY MUSIC** *Roxy Music* **VIRGIN**
- 25 **BLODWYN PIG** *Ahead Rings Out/Getting To This* **CHRYSLIS**
- 26 **TESSERACT** *Sonder* **KSCOPE**
- 27 **KING GIZZARD & LIZARD WIZARD** *Gumboot Soup* **HEAVENLY**
- 28 **JUDY DYBLE** *Earth Is Sleeping* **ACID JAZZ**
- 29 **WIRE** *Pink Flag* **PINK FLAG**
- 30 **MARILLION** *Brave* **RHINO**

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! SIGNED STEVEN WILSON ARTWORK!



Prog is giving away a special print taken from Steven Wilson's *The Raven That Refused To Sing* music video, signed both by Wilson and the artist Jess Cope. The print in question is titled *Heal My Soul*, and is the visual above. The print is large and sized at 50x40cm. This print and others from the video can be purchased here: www.owlhousestudios.com/index.php/store/raven-prints. Each print is professionally mounted on high quality card and posted with care to arrive the way it left the studios.

South African born animator Jess Cope started her career working with the likes of Tim Burton and on the popular kids' TV series, *Postman Pat*. In 2012, Cope was introduced by Roadrunner Records to Storm Corrosion, the collaboration between Steven Wilson and Mikael Åkerfeldt of Opeth, and she animated and directed the music video for their track *Drag Ropes*.

Wilson then approached her to work on his solo albums and she has subsequently created music videos for the tracks *The Raven That Refused To Sing*, *Drive Home*, and *Routine*. In conjunction with Partizan, Jess directed *People Who Eat Darkness* and *Song Of Unborn* from the Steven Wilson album *To The Bone*. She has also directed music videos for Metallica, Devin Townsend, Skyharbor and Passenger.

Steven Wilson begins the world tour in support of his new album *To The Bone* in November. For more on Wilson and tour dates, see www.stevenwilsonhq.com.

For your chance to win this signed print, answer the following question:

Which famous musician and producer engineered *The Raven*...?

A Nick Mason

B Greg Lake

C Alan Parsons

Please email your answer to prog@futurenet.com with the subject 'Wilson comp'. For more on Cope and Owl House Studios Ltd visit www.owlhousestudios.com.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This online comp will be open from September 27 to October 31. Postal entries can be sent to: Prog, Future Publishing, 4th Floor, Emerson Studios, 4-8 Emerson Street, London SE1 9DU. 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



THUMPERMONKEY
Make Me Young, Etc
AWOOGA

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



FOUR SECONDS AGO
The Vacancy
3DOT RECORDINGS

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



HAKEN
Vector
INSIDEOUT

Musician
Billy Howerdel



RUSH
2112
ANTHEM

The Writer
Rachel Mann



THE PINEAPPLE THIEF
Dissolution
KSCOPE

The Reader
Robert Symes



DREAM THEATER
When Dream and Day Unite
MECHANIC

godsticks henry fool iamthemoorning ian anderson katatonia lunatic soul mansun mick karn mothlite no-man nordic giants north atlantic

anathema blackfield bruce soord crippled black phoenix dalis car daniel cavanagh engineers gavin harrison gapacho gleb kolyadin

oscillation nosound old fire osi paul draper pink floyd porcupine tree richard barbieri sand se delan steve hogarth / richard barbieri



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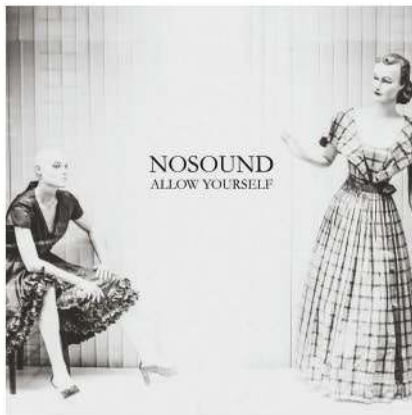
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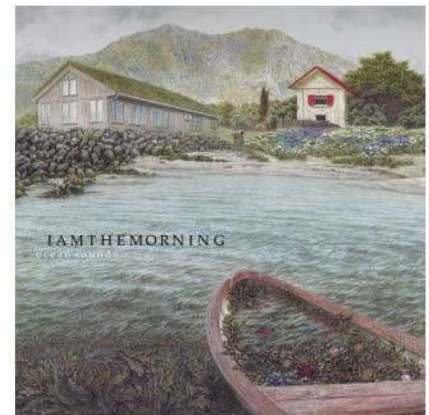
White Moth, Black Butterfly Atone

Tesseract and Skyharbor songwriters release expanded version of critically acclaimed album Atone.
Available on CD / DL

5th October

kscopemusic.com/wmbb

Listen to Atone



Iamthemorning Ocean Sounds

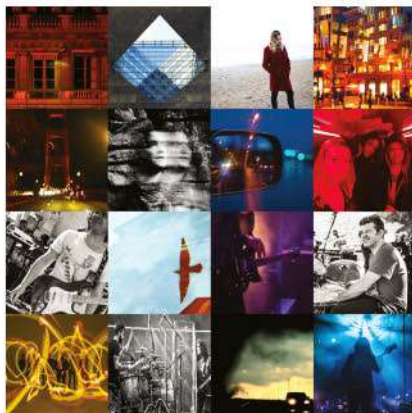
The new intimate studio film from the highly praised Russian duo recorded on a remote Norwegian island

Available on CD+Blu-ray / LP / DL

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kscopemusic.com/iatm

Listen to 5/4 from Ocean Sounds



Anathema Internal Landscapes 2008-2018

A 13-track journey through the best of Anathema's Kscope years.

Sleeve notes written by songwriter Daniel Cavanagh and artwork by Travis Smith.

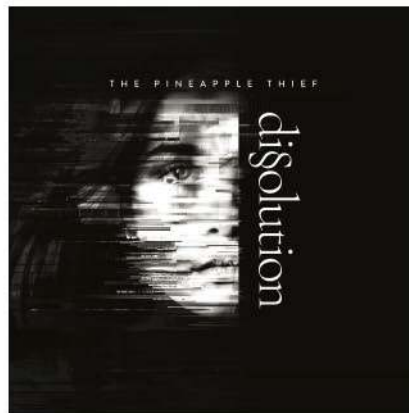
CD / 2LP black vinyl / DL

26th October

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LIVE IN 2018

1/10 BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB LEEDS
2/10 UNION CHAPEL LONDON
10 Years of Kscope
3/10 DEAF INSTITUTE MANCHESTER
4/10 THE MACKINTOSH CHURCH GLASGOW
anathemamusic.com/tour-dates



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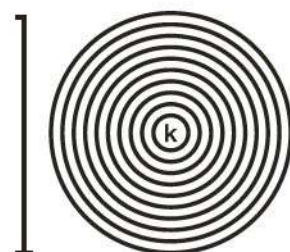
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ROB O'CONNOR

You'll know his artwork from acts such as Siouxsie And The Banshees, Blur and Floyd's *The Endless River*. Let's go prog-spotting with Stylorouge's creative whiz.

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

“I grew up listening to mainly black music in a household where my mum and dad liked to sing together. My older sister was a bit of mod, into ska and bluebeat. I lived directly between two record shops, Challenger & Hicks in Dartford and Carousel in Swanley, and it was the biggest thrill of my week to go to either or both of them. I gravitated towards the blues – my first single was by local boys the Rolling Stones – and I used to paint pictures of mainly blues artists on my bedroom wall, while the back of my bedroom door was all about Charlton Athletic FC.

My teens were spent listening to bands such as Pretty Things and The Kinks, and lots of early pirate radio. I couldn't imagine a band being any better than **Cream**. I always thought the *Disraeli Gears* artwork was fantastic, but only later would I realise that cover was revolutionary. Martin Sharp took the countercultural style and printed it in dayglo inks. No one had done that before.

The first band I saw live was Canned Heat supported by **The Groundhogs**. Groundhogs came from a blues trio base but then moved into their own niche. *Thank Christ For The Bomb* is a really interesting record. It has the blues and prog, mixed with a story about war and alienation. It was quite intense for a 17-year-old to get into after the Stones, but along with Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow*, it was preparing me for sounds to come.

A lot of the things I listened to from my sister's collection were on Tamla Motown. I was drawn to The Temptations – the arrangements were different and they had a rock sensibility. Their songs became a big political deal, preceding Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*. They have a compilation, *Psychedelic Soul*, that I go back to often as I like the idea of fusing soul with rock, which is where

Humble Pie come in. I'd got into Small Faces after the hits and continued listening to what Steve Marriott did after. I pull out *Performance: Rockin' The Fillmore* a lot. I love live albums and this does it for me every time.

I got into **Family** after hearing *In My Own Time*. In those days, singles had a habit of floating into the Top 40, no matter how odd. I love Roger Chapman's vocal – at that point I was aspiring to make my voice sound like his. My favourite album is *It's Only A Movie*, but I have to acknowledge *Bandstand* for its superb TV-shaped sleeve.

I used to go to Farningham folk club every Friday night – it's where I learnt how to drink! –

so I heard **Fairport Convention** there. I loved the first two albums and bought *What We Did On Our Holidays*. I loved Sandy Denny's voice and followed her through Fotheringhay and her solo career. Sandy is a winner from beginning to end – her songwriting is really good around the period of *Sandy*, and she died too young.

Coming from Kent, I was keen to find out what was going on with the Canterbury sound. The most challenging end was **Soft Machine**, although it did introduce me to Robert Wyatt, who I followed for years, and **Kevin Ayers**. I found Ayers the most quirky, strange and wonderful creature. What I like about *Whatever She Brings* is the length of the tracks as much as anything – they immerse you. The whole album is great. It was cheeky, challenging and slightly rebellious in a hippie, non-aggressive kind of way. He's funny in the same way that Viv Stanshall is.

I remember him being lauded as part of the Harvest Records group. Then he went to Island, which must have been a bit of a coup as that was the label that nurtured that kind of crazy spirit. He sat right there alongside the mavericks like **John Martyn**, who I was a fan of from the moment I heard him. This was at university – I'd started in Brighton but in my second year I was in Coventry. Coventry in the 70s was seedy and unpleasant, a 1950/60s town centre that was barren and postmodern. Music was a good escape and I'd see lots of bands. My flatmate got me into *Solid Air* and that's what I go back to the most from his catalogue. He turned into a bit of an arse in the end, but he continued to make great, transcendent music and his later electric stuff, the things he did with pedals and sound, was very innovative.

For me, **King Crimson** can do no better than *Red*. Fripp's genius is that he knows his place. He's the architect and guitarist, and he assembles such great players. When I worked [in the art department] at Polydor, we did the cover for *Beat* and I met Fripp. We'd done a *The League Of Gentleman* album and solo album *Let The Power Fall*, with artwork by Danielle Dax. I remember thinking what an amazingly generous spirit he is, with a great sense of humour. However pompous people might think they are, there's a humour in the music that makes them very credible.

I was into guitars and guitarists, and probably through Fripp I heard of John McLaughlin. I bought *The Inner Mounting Flame* by **Mahavishnu Orchestra**. It's not an easy album, but from that I got more into jazz. I love that he's a proper hippie and a Yorkshireman. He espoused the value of gurus and ended up being one himself. One time I saw him at Crystal Palace on a scorching hot afternoon. I looked up at him on stage and totally got it.

As a latecomer, I'd dismissed Japan. But after Japan I'd heard of **David Sylvian** and thought, 'He seems like an interesting character.' *Secrets Of The Beehive* caught me. Now I go back to it all the time. It reminds me of a 16th-century house that we'd moved into. It was very dark, gloomy, and you felt like you'd gone back in time. It really suited this album. I bought every Sylvian album ever since and this is in my Top 10. People think he's a bit up his own arse but he's got a lot to say, and this has a lovely ambience to it.

I'm always listening to new stuff – or new to me. DJ **David Holmes** is like Yello to me: he's a craftsman of sound. I've selected *Come Get It I Got It* as it's all sorts of music – soul, rock, electronic – and in a similar, cinematic vein to Barry Adamson. Holmes has made soundtracks for years and even if this music isn't for a soundtrack, it feels like one.

These days, eMusic online has been where I discover a lot of things – smaller bands, but very interesting stuff. The Decemberists' *The Hazards Of Love* and Midlake's *The Courage Of Others* are albums that have great atmosphere that take you somewhere, even though these aren't concept albums. These bands are not afraid to be acoustic one minute then electric the next, always with excellent storytelling. I get this from White Denim as well, one of the most intelligent rock bands of this century.

My latest adventure is promoting shows. It's that thing about live music – it got me as a teenager, it gets me now. And I want to pass that on.”

For Rob's art see www.stylorouge.co.uk and keep up with gigs at www.thebubbleclub.co.uk.



“Sandy Denny is a winner from beginning to end - her songwriting is really good around the period of Sandy, and she died too young.”





MATT BERRY

He's the BAFTA award-winning actor, writer and musician. And now he has a new, and rather unusual, covers album up his sleeve...

Words: Rob Hughes

Best known as the beardy braggart of television comedies such as *Toast Of London*, *The IT Crowd* and *House Of Fools*, Matt Berry has also forged an impressive music career, occupying a wonderful space between prog, folk and psychedelia. His latest album *Television Themes*, on which he's joined by regular compadres The Maypoles, finds him reconfiguring some of the most enduring signature tunes of his youth. Among the cultural delights absorbed by generations of British TV viewers from the 1960s to the 1980s are the themes from shows such as *The Good Life*, *Rainbow*, *The Liver Birds*, *Sorry!* and, naturally, *Doctor Who*. Berry explains all to Prog...

So how did *Television Themes* come about?

The label asked if I fancied doing a covers album at some point, which I didn't, unless there was a concept behind it. So this is the concept. I've never been a huge fan of artists doing covers albums that are a bunch of unrelated songs – it seems kind of disparate. Whereas with this, I was only interested in doing one if there was a theme. And TV themes seemed the most obvious to me.

Bearing in mind how familiar most of these themes are to entire generations, how did you set about doing the arrangements for them?

I didn't mess with them too much because there was nothing really wrong with the original arrangements. And if you start to become too complex with it then the melodies can disappear. So I wanted to be fairly faithful to it, but obviously I don't have a huge orchestra for those tracks where it's needed, so it is going to sound like it's been done by somebody else. At the same time I was very

keen to retain the atmosphere of the originals, for the simple reason that you can't get a lot of those tracks any more, commercially.

I didn't do it to make a novelty album or to make something that's funny. It's not just a pure nostalgic thing, it's about pieces of music in themselves that are worth showcasing. Creating television themes feels like a forgotten art rather than something frivolous.

How did these television themes help to shape you back when you were a kid?

I was born in the early 70s, so there wasn't much else to look at. Anything that was coming out, visually or through audio, would have an impact, whether it was scary or arresting or rich to listen to. When you're little you soak all this stuff up, and I was always sensitive to music.

It was an era when TV composers such as Ronnie Hazlehurst would affect your musical education without you even knowing it...

He was part of these things that I and millions of others got access to. And a lot of these things, interestingly, came about due to budget constraints. It was the same with *Doctor Who*. Delia Derbyshire was doing these experiments with tape and oscillators before *Doctor Who* came along, but the fact is that it sounded avant-garde and caused a huge stir because it was put onto a show that was watched by millions of people.

You've said that you had the urge to create music from an early age but didn't know anybody else who felt the same. Did that feed a DIY aesthetic?

Yeah. If you share an interest in something that no one else does then you have to learn everything about it. And the result, in terms of music, was that I *had* to become an engineer. I had to learn how to use early multitracks because I didn't have anyone else who could come and play a guitar part or whatever. So it made it a necessity. I was interested in how to manipulate tape and the fact that you could record four live events onto one tape. That blew my head off even then. I can still remember how incredibly exciting that discovery was.

You were also discovering albums for the first time. And prog rock too, right?

There isn't anything more prog to me than [Mike Oldfield's] *Tubular Bells*. I was still interested in two-minute pop songs but I wanted more. So it all began by listening to *Tubular Bells*, where someone does a song that lasts 23 minutes or whatever. It was like a dream, where you start in a certain position and then experience a whole bunch of other things by the time you get to the end. *Tubular Bells* was the first example of that for me. Then when I had a few more pennies in my pocket, I got *The Dark Side Of The Moon*.

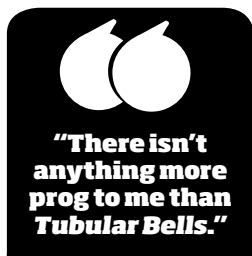
What were your first impressions of Pink Floyd and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*?

My parents weren't, and aren't, interested in music. Most people get a certain education from older relatives or siblings, but I didn't have that at all. So when I got these albums, like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, it was just a brown album. Or, in the case of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, it was just a black one with a shape on it and I was none the wiser as to who'd made this music, why they'd made it or when. But it had that certain sound to it that I loved – that sort of analogue sound. I still play that album now.

You have a home studio these days. Are you one of those people who can't resist going in there and tinkering about at all hours of the day?

Oh yeah, there's always something to work on. I'm doing a show called *Year Of The Rabbit* [a Victorian-era cop spoof for Channel 4] and I'm doing the score for that at the moment. So that's kind of interesting because I've been looking at photographs of Ennio Morricone when he recorded the spaghetti westerns, looking at how he'd positioned the amps and everything else in the room, which is relevant to what this new show is going to sound like. It looks like he treated the guitar and its amp as another orchestral element, which accounts for why certain instruments sound like they do on those old scores. Atmosphere is everything. We start filming in January, so *Year Of The Rabbit* will be out sometime next year.

Television Themes is out on October 5 via Acid Jazz Records. See www.themattberry.co.uk for more information.





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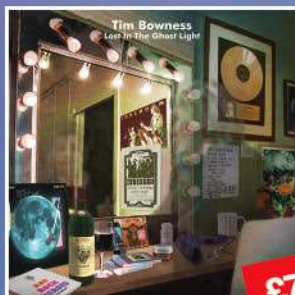
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THE GREATEST KEYBOARD PLAYERS *ever!*



Like all great ideas, this started with a discussion down the pub. The idea that, while the guitar hero is the central figure for heavy metal and classic rock, in the progressive world, the keyboard player is king. True, exceptionally great musicianship across all instruments is commonplace in prog, but the keyboards are often at the centre of our musical universe. So we asked you, the readers, if you agreed, and who you thought was the best. Outside of the Awards, we've never had such a massive response to a reader vote. So thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us. Turn the page, and find out how your favourite fared...

Compiled by: Dave Everley

Words: Malcolm Dome, Dave Everley, Jerry Ewing, David West



Hugh Banton

"It's legendary how complicated my organ was!"

From building his own instruments in Van der Graaf Generator to making electronic church organs, Hugh Banton is a pioneering prog force.

Words: Dave Everley

Why did you choose to play keyboards in the first place?

We had a piano at home so I started pressing keys at the age of three or four. I obviously took to it so my parents gave me piano lessons from the age of seven, and then I started on church organ when I was 12. I did that all the way through school.

When did you realise you could do it for a living?

It was with Van der Graaf. Electronics and music have been my two hobbies since the year

dot, so a couple of years after I started messing with the piano, I started messing with batteries and lights and that sort of thing. After I left school, my first job was with the BBC as an engineer but I swiftly realised that wasn't for me. When the opportunity came up with Van der Graaf in 1968, I switched to doing that.

Did you ever build your own keyboard?

Oh yes. The first sort of keyboard/organ thing I built, I was still at school – about 16 or 17. That was quite an unusual thing to do then. And with Van der Graaf, I was always messing with the inside of the organ and wiring it my way. In 1975 or so, I actually built an organ that I used in the band. It became known as HB1. I've no idea where it is now though.

In Van der Graaf, what were you trying to do with keyboards that no one had done before?

There were quite a few bands, such as Traffic, who used organ pedals instead of bass guitar, and I was quite keen on doing that. When our second bass player left, I said, "Instead of replacing him, shall I take up bass on pedals?" Which I did from thereon after. In order to make that work, I had to devise an organ that had bass pedals that were not just how you buy them in a shop – it had to have its own amplification, so I modified the organ to do that. The other thing I did was

Van der Graaf Generator, 1975, L-R: Hugh Banton, Peter Hammill, Guy Evans, David Jackson.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

to split the organ up. You have two keyboards on an organ – I wanted to have effects on one and not on the other, so I could be lead rhythm and bass, right hand, left hand, feet. My organ was completely split into three electronic sections, all with its own amplification. It's legendary how complicated it was.

It seemed like what could be done on a guitar was limited compared to what could be done on a keyboard. Is that how you felt?

Actually, no. I don't necessarily agree with that. The trouble with keyboards is you press a note and it gives you that note. On a guitar, you can bend it and all sorts of stuff. You can't strum a keyboard – there's lots of things you can't do on a keyboard. On the other hand, yes, sonically you can go to all sorts of places. But I've always seen them as going hand in hand.

Of your contemporary keyboard players, who were you most impressed by?

Vincent Crane. I can pinpoint an

MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Diego Tejeida (Haken)



"It has to be Richard Wright's solo on *Welcome To The Machine* by Pink Floyd. I first listened to it when

I was in my teens and I didn't really like it. I thought, 'Wow, how do they get away with getting the keyboard player that loud?' But I listened to it more and more and it's actually very elegant – every single note is supposed to be where it is, and the sound of it is incredible.

"Richard Wright was an expressive keyboard player – sometimes what he did was very simple, just holding a chord on a Hammond organ. But it's how he held it that was important." **DEV**



exact gig where I saw him with The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown and thought, "I want to do that." I was just watching Vincent playing organ and it was incredible. The sound he made was astonishing.

You left Van der Graaf in 1976 and went to work for a company that made electronic church organs. Why?

I'd had enough of being on the road for one reason or another and didn't want to know about it. I was looking for something else to do and going back to electronics was the obvious thing. It just so happened that I lived within 10 miles of a electronic church organ company called Makin Organs, and I went to them and said, "I've just built an organ, I know all about them, can I have a job?" And they said yes. I worked for them until 1992, then I set up my own company.

What did it involve?

A conventional church organ is a mechanical, wind-driven machine that's been around for hundreds of years. The idea was to make an organ that sounds as much like that as possible. It was a natural place for me.

Van der Graaf Generator reunited in the 00s. Are you still making electronic organs?

I call myself semi-retired. I'm still doing it but I've sort of backed off. I do electronics more to amuse myself than I do for other people these days. I've recently devised organ sound-generating PC-based software, which is HB3 — HB2 came somewhere in between. I used to get other people to write software, but I decided to learn how to do it myself. I'm recording a new classical album and it's entirely done on HB3. I might be one of the first people to play and devise an album on my own software.

In terms of your playing, which song are you proudest of?

Oh, I don't know. Maybe *Still Life*. Or if not that then *Childlike Faith* from the same album. At the time I didn't have the big modified organ. I was playing a very straight Hammond organ, and for six months or a year I just enjoyed doing that. Plus I can remember how to play them, which I find a lot harder with the newer songs. 🎹

THE TOP 50

The countdown of the best keyboardists of all time, as voted for by thousands of *Prog* readers, starts here!

50 MANFRED MANN

He's been the leader of the progressively minded Manfred Mann's Earth Band since 1971, and before that he owned the charts with the more R&B-based Manfred Mann, and dabbled with jazz rock with Manfred Mann Chapter Three. **You say:** "The man's simply done everything throughout a long and illustrious career, as well as regularly taking prog into the singles charts in the 70s. Respect." — **Chris Seddon**

49 WOOLLY WOLSTENHOLME

Wolstenholme was an integral part of what made Barclay James Harvest so special. Self-taught at both Mellotron and organ, his early sound helped pioneer the band's symphonic prog approach. His own solo work, recently reissued, is equally forthright. **You say:** "So often the forgotten man when polls of keyword players are discussed." — **George Grieve**

48 KLAUS SCHULZE

An early electronic prog pioneer with Tangerine Dream and Ash Ra Tempel, before going on to forge his own career with albums such as *Timewind* and *Moondawn*. He recently released his latest LP, *Silhouettes*, aged 71. **You say:** "Some people may see krautrock as separate from prog but I do not, and the best player in that genre has to be Schulze who, despite a huge catalogue over 40-plus years, remains consistently impressive." — **Kenneth**

47 JOHN BECK

Beck made his name with Cumbrian prog rockers It Bites, but his mercurial sound has also been heard with Sister Sarah, Unicorn Jones, Kino, John Wetton, Alan Parsons and, most recently, Fish. **You say:** "His playing really supported both Francis Dunnery's and John Mitchell's manic guitar lines — good sounds from synths as well as great backing vocals when live." — **Jeremy Allen**

46 ROGER HODGSON

A songwriting genius whose innocent explorations helped make Supertramp such a big success, Hodgson is no slouch as a keyboard player, adept at organ, Wurliitzer piano and synthesiser, as well as a host of other instruments. **You say:** "He single-handedly reminded us all with his distinct choppy and iconic playing that the piano is and always has been considered a percussion instrument." — **Tim Dueck**

45 DAVE SINCLAIR

As a founding member of The Wilde Flowers and Caravan, Sinclair's place in prog history was assured. He's also played with Matching Mole, Hatfield And The North, The Polite Force and Camel. He's still releasing solo albums, with *Out Of Sync* arriving earlier this year. **You say:** "The third of the triumvirate of Canterbury keyboard players. Dave Sinclair was one of the original members of Caravan, creating probably their two better-known pieces. He also contributed his own inimitable keyboards to the first Matching Mole album." — **Julian Christou**

44 MIKE RATLEDGE

The longest-serving original member of prog/fusion legends Soft Machine, Ratledge oversaw a shift from psychedelic whimsy through progressive fields to jazz exploration, working with the likes of Mike Oldfield, David Bedford and Syd Barrett along the way. **You say:** "A super aggressive and creative keyboard player." — **Christian**

43 THIJS VAN LEER

The indomitable keyboard player has fronted Dutch prog rockers Focus since he formed them in Amsterdam in 1969. Perhaps more famous for his yodelling, van Leer is an excellent keyboard player, as well as having a solo career in classical flute. **You say:** "Inspirational, eccentric, prolific and still loving his day job." — **Alison Reijman**

42 JEAN-MICHEL JARRE

Few have done more to promote the cause of synthesised music on such a grand scale than Jarre, with his enormous concerts in London's Docklands, New York, China and Russia. His early works *Oxygène* and *Équinoxe* were truly groundbreaking. **You say:** "Particularly great atmospherics married to clever tunes that could sustain a whole album of experimental keyboard music." — **Guy Roberts**

41 HUGH BANTON

Banton's strident organ sound helms what Van der Graaf Generator are about just as much as Peter Hammill's lyrics and vocals. He took on board the band's bass sound in 1970, adding playing bass pedals to his onstage activities and making us love him all the more. **You say:** "A unique player who made so much wonderful noise you didn't need guitar on most VdGG albums." — **Martin Painter**



He may be "semi-retired", but Banton is still pushing the limits of technology.

Roundtable

Three Men And 88 Keys

In a world of guitar heroes, what sort of person takes on the unenviable challenge of becoming a keyboard player, and what makes them tick? To find out, *Prog* brings together three of the best from The Tangent, Frost* and Big Big Train to tinkle their ivories and pick their brains.

Words: David West **Images:** Will Ireland

Picture a prog rock keyboard player and what do you see in your mind's eye? Someone ex-public school and classically trained, perhaps? "I spent my life trying to dispel the clichés about prog rock and where we all came from," says The Tangent's Andy Tillison. "The only problem is I'm the son of a vicar, I went to public school, I was in the fucking choir, therefore proving everything."

Danny Manners, from Big Big Train, grew up on classical, confessing that as a teen he was

"a little bit precocious, and a little bit objectionable", listening to Stravinsky and Debussy. After dallying with jazz, he found his way to rock when he encountered Gentle Giant. "I loved it at first hearing," he says. "I still love it."

Bucking the trend for growing up with classical music, Jem Godfrey of Frost* was into synthpop bands like OMD and Visage until his older brother introduced him to the joys of prog through Yes. Inspired, Godfrey taught himself to play by locking himself away over the summer holidays with a copy of Genesis' *Three Sides Live*, "so Tony Banks was my piano teacher and I carried on from there", he says.

How much does the keyboard player define the sound of progressive rock?

Manners: How long is a piece of string? It really depends on the band. There are completely keyboard-led bands, but there are bands where basically the keyboard is adding a bit of colour and atmosphere. I think in the wider genre of music, we're past this modernist phase where musicians were moving towards a frontier and exploring new things. We've reached the frontier and now we're in the postmodernist thing where you can still do individual things, but it's a question of taking this and that and merging it with something personal.

Can some synthesiser sounds make songs seem dated?

Tillison: This is a problem



Piano Men, L-R: Andy Tillison, Jem Godfrey, Danny Manners.

straight away. For example, if we get a nice little sawtooth wave that sounds really ballsy, we think, "I'm going to play that, it sounds fucking wicked." But everybody is going to be like, "That sounds so retro." Huh? What do you mean, retro?

But if my guitarist, who is 28, gets his guitar, slams it in to a Marshall and gets a sound exactly like Jimi Hendrix, everybody goes, "That sounds great." Why is that great and ours is retro?

Manners: The thing is, you can't use some sounds without summoning up all these ghosts. It's worse especially on something like the Mellotron because they're so associated with certain iconic tracks. If you pick a certain Mellotron sound patch, everyone goes, "It's King Crimson." But I think that's okay

now. It's fine to just take from wherever your inspirations are and just try to combine them in a way that's personal to yourself. But I think people do get hung up on the technology of it.

Godfrey: I'm jealous of that early phase because it's all been done now. There's never going to be that moment now where people have that kind of a 'wow' effect. It's the law of diminishing returns. With Frost* I was trying to do the opposite of what everyone else was doing, so we don't use Mellotron, we don't use weird guitar sounds particularly.

I feel a bit out of my depth here because I don't really think this deeply about stuff like this, to be honest. The way I approach things, I'm always in such a fucking hurry. "I need that sound, that'll do, that's

MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Rob Reed (Magenta)



"There's a track on Asia's second album called *The Heat Goes On*, which is fantastic. It's a real

barnstorming track, everyone's going hell for leather, then towards the end, Geoff Downes opens up into this amazing Hammond organ solo. I spoke to Geoff about it, and he says he got one take to do it - the band were in the room playing, and he just went for it. The Hammond has such an organic sound. It's really hard to get your personality into all these modern synths in the same way as you can into a guitar. But the Hammond gives you a real connection to what you're playing." **DEV**



Talking Heads: the painters and decorators of prog.



fine,” and I think that almost dictates against overthinking. As a songwriter I’m always thinking about the melody lines really and everything else serves that.

As Frost* is a band, we’re about songs and occasionally we’ll wander off and show off for a bit, but there are always choruses. In writing, composition and production terms, it’s the melody, and then everything else cascades down from that, so I don’t tend to think enough.

Is there a battle for sonic space between keyboard players and other musicians?

Manners: There is, yeah. We’ve got two guitarists live. They’re both instruments that can play more than one note at a time and they occupy the mid-range, so technically they’re fighting for the same space, but it depends on the egos.

In Big Big Train, one of the things I like is that everybody has an arranger’s ear – everybody does some arranging or writing or plays another instrument, so it’s not like the guitarist wants all the space and the keyboard player wants all the space. We’re pretty good at give and take.

Of course, there are times when you end up with clashes and they have to be resolved. It depends on the musician. It depends on your age. Older musicians, a lot of that ego stuff has been left behind. You just don’t have the energy for it any more.

Godfrey: Frost* is a bit of a benign dictatorship. John Mitchell’s brilliant, the guitarist, he’s very collaborative with the way he plays. We tend to write parts that work around each other: one’s the harmony, one’s the lead, and he’s quite happy to do lots of power chords because it means he’s got less to learn. When we do it live, he’s like, “You do that, I’ll just do E.”

What’s difficult live is that I’m playing complicated stuff and then I’ve got to sing so I’ve got to remember the lyrics, and between all that I’m thinking, “What am I going to say?” trying to plan the banter. Sometimes with Frost* it’s all a little bit manic onstage, so it’s difficult.

Tillison: I’m totally musically uneducated really. I don’t know how to read music or any of that kind of stuff, so it’s always just how it sounds. That’s the only way I know how to do it. I’m blessed with a guitarist who is 30 years younger than me and knows everything there is to know about fridge doors [Phrygian scales] and all these scales and modes. He talks to me about them and I nod politely, but somehow there’s a chemistry between me and him and it works.

Who are the keyboard players doing exciting things now in prog rock?

Tillison: Rikard Sjöblom from Beardfish is a fantastic player and to my mind he’s a magnificent organ player. There hasn’t been the space for a keyboard player to come through in many forms of music, not just progressive rock. Rob Reed was saying there’s no work because the guitarists are playing the keyboards in the studio. It’s very difficult to convince people you need a proper keyboard player. You can decorate your own home dead easily, it’s good, it’s all right, you got it done cheap, but wouldn’t it have been nicer if you’d got a decorator in? Hire a keyboard player. That’s our campaign guys – hire the keyboard player.

Godfrey: The painters and decorators of prog rock! 🎨

THE TOP 50

40 JOHN EVAN

Given that Jethro Tull grew out of The John Evan Band, their keyboard player between 1970 and 1979 is a staple part of the band’s history. He has run his own construction company for years now, but appeared on video dressed as a flower for Tull’s recent shows.

You say: “Understated perhaps, but always effective.” – **Danny Solomans**

39 HERBIE HANCOCK

A real jazz fusion legend, a keyboard player, pianist, bandleader and a composer, Hancock’s early work with Donald Byrd and Miles Davis schooled him in jazz. With albums such as *Head Hunters*, he ruled fusion, and with 1983’s *Rockit*, he invented jazz hip-hop.

You say: “Up there with Mahavishnu Orchestra, Weather Report and Return To Forever as a true fusion master.”

– **Kim Waterford**

38 ANDY TILLISON

Andy Tillison has been a major part of the modern progressive music scene since he formed The Tangent in 2002. He’s an artist dedicated to his craft, and is always looking to expand on his own musical horizons with unique collaborations.

You say: “Great vision, heart, musicality and technique! Each album is better than the next!”

– **Rich Ebersole**

37 TIM BLAKE

Instrumental in the formation of Hawkwind and an early member of Gong, Blake’s own unique musical vision found its feet with 1977’s *Crystal Machine* and 1978’s *Blake’s New Jerusalem*. He’s still pioneering new sounds with Crystal Machine.

You say: “A fluid and inventive player who has excelled in Gong, Hawkwind and solo... Can tackle fusion, cosmic and ambient with ease and grace. A top bloke!”

– **Amy Hassinen**

36 CLIVE NOLAN

Nolan came to prominence when he joined neo-proggers Pendragon in 1986. He remains with them today, as well as having formed UK prog rockers Arena. He’s also worked with Shadowland and Strangers On A Train, as well as indulging in his own theatre company Caamora.

You say: “Everything he touches seems to turn to gold, which is appropriate given Arena’s song *Midas Vision*.”

– **Chris Ryder**

35 ROD ARGENT

Argent’s work with The Zombies and Argent, both bands he founded, has established his reputation as an excellent keyboard player, harpsichordist and organist, as well as a songwriter of note. He penned hits such as *She’s Not There* and *Hold Your Head Up*, taking prog high up into the charts.

You say: “Very underrated, but his work with The Zombies and Argent put him up there with best keyboard players.” – **Ian Pope**

34 VINCENT CRANE

Crane’s incendiary organ playing for both The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown and Atomic Rooster set him out as one of the progressive world’s most unique talents. He also worked with Rory Gallagher, Peter Green and even Dexy’s Midnight Runners before he succumbed to depression, committing suicide in 1989.

You say: “Crane’s powerhouse keyboard sound in Atomic Rooster was as heavy as the guitars, yet he was also capable of beautiful introspection.”

– **Mike Simkiss**

33 JIM GILMOUR

Gilmour didn’t just add the epic keyboard sound to Canadian pomp rockers Saga, but he also added saxophone and vocals as well. However, it’s the lush waves of synthesiser and keyboards that colour the band’s albums that he’s best loved for.

You say: “Jim Gilmour had the perfect blend of sound, ideas and technique.”

– **Frank**

32 KEVIN MOORE

Moore was asked to join the fledgling Dream Theater by high school pal John Petrucci, colouring the band’s first three albums with his big keyboard sound. Since then he’s enhanced his prog credentials with OSI, Chroma Key and his own solo work.

You say: “Speed and dexterity, soul and heart, and what a songwriter.”

– **David Rogers**

31 DANNY MANNERS

Manners joined the seemingly ever-increasing Big Big Train line-up in 2012, in time to work on both their *English Electric* albums. His dexterous keyboard playing has lent much to the band’s sound ever since. As if that wasn’t enough, he sometimes plays double bass as well!

You say: “Danny Manners of Big Big Train is one of the best keyboard players in modern progressive rock I can think of.”

– **Joshua Downe**

30 PETER BARDENS

Before he made his name in the progressive world for providing highly atmospheric keyboard sounds with Camel, Bardens had already worked with some of music’s biggest names, including the likes of Rod Stewart, Mick Fleetwood and Peter Green. He’d also work with Van Morrison later in his career, before sadly succumbing to cancer in 2002.

You say: “Peter passed away a few years ago but his music lives on. Besides being in the Canterbury scene with Camel, he also played with Van Morrison on his *Wavelength* album.”

– **Dan Page**

Martin Orford

"I just sit at the back and make nice sounds..."

The ever-modest IQ and Jadis keyboardist reveals all about holding songs together, avoiding experiments and swapping touring for trains.

Words: Dave Everley

What inspired you to first take up keyboards as opposed to, say, the guitar?

Well, the piano wasn't as glamorous as the guitar, but it always looked more logical to me. You've got low notes one end, high notes the other, so just concentrate on the bit in the middle and it'll be fine.

Which other keyboard players were you influenced by?

I wasn't really influenced by keyboard players a great deal. I got into the whole progressive

rock thing late, so I went through the 1970s blissfully unaware that Genesis and Yes and ELP existed. By the time I discovered there were other people who were doing that sort of thing, I was doing it already.

You once said that you weren't cut out to be the next Keith Emerson. So what did you want to do with the keyboards?

I guess I liked being the engine room, adding and subtracting things and managing texture. I've never really seen myself as much of a soloist. I can play as fast as anybody else if I can be bothered, but I've never had any great desire to do that sort of thing. I think the guitar is a much more expressive instrument to have as a solo instrument. I've written just as many guitar lines over the years as I have keyboard lines.

Was there ever part of you that secretly wanted to jam knives between the keys or swish around in capes?

No. I'm not a flashy person like that. I'm not theatrical. I'm one of those 'sit at the back and make the right noises' guys.

One of the criticisms of the neo-prog movement that IQ were part of was that it wasn't moving things forward. Was that a valid point?

Neo-prog is a terrible term. Americans made that up. They weren't there. And it's not a valid point. Nobody else was moving music on either: metal bands

IQ, clockwise from left: Martin Orford, Paul Cook, Mike Holmes, Tim Esau, Peter Nicholls.



MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Thomas Anderson (Gazpacho)



"It's Tony Banks' solo in *The Cinema Show*, from *Selling England By The Pound*. I have a difficult

relationship with keyboard solos - I've never understood why the keyboard player is suddenly centre stage, and the song suddenly goes away. A good solo adds something to the whole picture musically, and that's what this does - it's a musical piece in its own right. If you look at him playing it live, he's such a deadpan presence. He looks like he's in his office, but he's got all these great tunes and genius chords in the background. He looks so Tony Banks." **DEV**



weren't, reggae bands weren't, funk bands weren't. But it was the prog people who got the flak for it. It was only from the press - you didn't get any of that from the progressive rock old guard. There was never a distinction among musicians. It was always from the outside.

Did you ever feel hemmed in by the prog scene?

Not really. I was never one of these people for experimentation in music. Experiments belong in a laboratory and not in a recording studio. I always try

to take the stance of trying to make progressive rock music more accessible to a mainstream audience. It didn't bloody work, but it was worth a go.

You quit IQ in 2007 and retired from music the following year after your second solo album, *The Old Road*. Why?

I didn't retire from music - I was forced out. The climate I was in didn't enable me to carry on with it any more. It was the point when broadband internet was coming in. People were illegally downloading everything. All of



the companies *The Old Road* was shipped out to went bankrupt, one after the other. And the album never paid its bills. I thought, "It takes four or five years to do this, every waking hour, and you never break even." The last track on *The Old Road* is about the end of my time in music. All you can hear at the end of that album is the blackbirds singing in the garden: "That's all the songs you're going to get."

Do you still play today?

I do the odd thing, as much to prove I can keep my hand in. The last time I played a keyboard was back in May, on the Jadis tour.

What do you do instead?

I was always interested in steam engines so I mess around with them. I'm a fireman on a steam train. Basically, I build a bloody big fire in a steam locomotive and make it go. And I drive them too.

Do you miss being in a band?

No. I don't mind getting back and doing the odd show here and there, but it does feel like looking through an old photo album. It's like revisiting a former life. It's quite nice to do that, but I wouldn't want to do it all the time.

Do you see yourself as one of the great keyboard players?

Good lord no. Just a bloke that sits at the back and makes a few nice sounds that hold the whole thing together. ☺



THE TOP 50

29 JEM GODFREY

Although a writer of award-winning pop hits for the likes of Atomic Kitten and Morcheeba, Godfrey's love of progressive music is all too evident in his band Frost*, who have now recorded three studio albums, and featured some of the cream of the modern prog scene.

You say: "Of all modern progsters, no one quite marries melody and technical ability the way Godfrey does. There are fewer moments in modern prog as exciting as the last few minutes of *Milliontown*." – **Jonathan Watkins**

28 JOHN TOUT

The longest-serving keyboard player for classically infused proggers Renaissance, it was Tout's mastery of his instrument that helped colour the band's music during their most effective decade between 1970 and 1980. He returned to the Renaissance fold for a short time in 1999, but sadly passed away in 2015.

You say: "The most underrated keyboardist out there – the main reason Renaissance was such an incredible band." – **David Carswell**

27 STEVE WALSH

Given that he was also one of the band's singers, sometimes Walsh's keyboard work was overlooked in Kansas, but he's there to be heard on all of the group's classic albums. He took over as the sole keyboard player after Kerry Livgren left the band – no mean feat for one of America's greatest prog acts.

You say: "His solo in *Carry On Wayward Son* is a classic, and then there's *The Spider*, which he played all of the keyboards on." – **Tim Chernak**

26 RICHARD BARBIERI

Coming to prominence in art rockers Japan, Barbieri's prog prominence increased tenfold when he joined Porcupine Tree, with whom his intricate soundscapes worked their wonders from 1993 to 2010. He's also worked with Marillion's Steve Hogarth and released his last solo album, *Planets + Persona*, in 2017.

You say: "Atmospheres and electronics which create landscapes for imagination and feelings." – **Philippe Kedinger**

25 MIKE PINDER

Not only was he a founder member of The Moody Blues, but Pinder's delightful keyboard orchestrations informed the band's sound over their impressive run of seven classic albums, from 1967's *Days Of Future Passed* to 1972's *Seventh Sojourn*. He penned most of the band's more progressive compositions too.

You say: "He helped handshake the lush orchestral sounds from classical to prog with his signature Mellotron drones and washes. It shaped their sound for the late 60s and early 70s perfectly. Not showy or frantic. Just deep and delicious." – **Paul Watson**

24 DAVE GREENSLADE

Be it his work with Colosseum or his own 70s progressive rock band Greenslade, or even his epic solo work *The Pentateuch Of The Cosmogony*, Dave Greenslade has established himself as a keyboard player of finesse and panache, time and time again.

You say: "Leaving aside his jazz fusion days with Colosseum, his solo albums showed ability and innovation aplenty – well ahead of his time." – **David Long**

23 NEAL MORSE

One of the foremost proponents of US progressive music in the modern day, Morse has played keyboards in Spock's Beard and the supergroups Transatlantic and Flying Colors, as well as running a hugely successful solo career. He brings a subtle touch on the keyboard to the sometimes lofty ambitions of the projects he works on.

You say: "Whether it's Spock's Beard, Transatlantic, Flying Colors, The Neal Morse Band or solo, the man is a music machine. My favourite on the list – he's overall the best composer, and versatile." – **Frank K. Woolf**

22 JAN HAMMER

The list of credits for Czech-born American keyboard player Jan Hammer is sensational. A member of the original line-up of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, he's worked with Al Di Meola, Jeff Beck, Joni Mitchell, Neal Schon, Tommy Bolin, Stanley Clarke and more. And then there was the huge success of *Miami Vice*. A legend.

You say: "Established the best-use practice for the pitch bend wheel. Could cut heads with some killer guitar players." – **Mark Murray**

21 MARTIN ORFORD

Best known as a member of IQ, for whom he was both a highly skilled keyboard player and a creative songwriter, Orford's position on the list is made all the more incredible when you consider he retired from the music industry in 2008. Two solo albums pay testament to his brilliance, and he still occasionally performs with Jadis.

You say: "I'm a big one for writing skills and Orford made a lot of the great IQ moments what they were. Beyond that, a very competent player and a great musician." – **Ken Baird**

20 JOE ZAWINUL

One of the pioneers of jazz fusion and winner of 28 Best Electric Keyboardist awards from US magazine *Downbeat*, Zawinul was a master of his craft. He'd worked with jazz legends Dinah Washington, Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis before going on to make jazz fusion his own with Weather Report. That he himself has been honoured in composition by the likes of Brian Eno, John McLaughlin, Warren Cuccurullo and Toninho Horta speaks volumes for his impact.

You say: "[Deserves his place] for filling the gap between prog and jazz." – **Adriano Melis**

THE PROG INTERVIEW

PATRICK MORAZ

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, as part of our 50 Greatest Keyboard Players selection, it's **Patrick Moraz**. The Swiss player has spent time in The Moody Blues, Yes and more...

Words: Malcolm Dome

Over a period of 50 years, Patrick Moraz has played a diverse range of styles, yet always with his own inimitable approach to the keyboards. The 70-year-old first got noticed in his native Switzerland as a teenager, when his skill as a jazz musician became apparent. But it was in 1969 that he started to make his mark in the prog world as he formed Mainhorse after moving to England. Five years later, he was part of Refugee, alongside bassist/vocalist Lee Jackson and drummer Brian Davison, which meant that indirectly he was replacing Keith Emerson in a new representation of The Nice!

Subsequent stints with Yes, taking over from Rick Wakeman, and The Moody Blues, superseding Mike Pinder,

cemented his prog reputation. Since then, he has carved out a successful career recording solo albums and film soundtracks, as well as working with other notable musicians. In fact, he's just signed a deal with Cherry Red for the reissue of his entire solo catalogue.

Moraz is without doubt a major figure on the progressive scene, even if sometimes he doesn't seem to get the respect he deserves.

Were you a musical prodigy?

No. Sure, I wrote my first composition at the age of five, but that was just five bars – nothing special. I was lucky to have parents who were actively involved in music.

My dad booked jazz bands into a casino in north Switzerland and I got to see many of them by the time I was four. I began at that age to play the violin, and got my first one directly from Yehudi Menuhin. But because you start young doesn't make you a prodigy.

As a young man you spent time with Salvador Dalí. What did you learn from him?

That was an amazing experience. I had just got a diploma in skin diving when I was asked to instruct his people. Dalí was remarkable. I was one of the few who had the privilege of

being allowed into his studio while he painted, and when he found out I played piano, he got me to give regular concerts for his friends. I think what I learnt from him was to be transcultural

– not to be artistically narrow.



Refugee's 1974 self-titled debut.

You also supported John Coltrane on a European tour in 1965. How challenging was that?

There was no challenge because I was never in competition with him. I was 21 when I got this opportunity and I played an hour every night with my jazz quartet. But it was remarkable to see such a genius up close.

When did you start to get interested in prog rock?

My dad refused to let me listen to any American rock'n'roll when I was growing up. But when I first came over to England in 1964 to work as a chef, I discovered the British rock bands of the time. I enjoyed their pop songs but always thought there should be more to music than that. Then I heard The Nice and Yes and they caught my attention, because for me that's when rock music became really interesting.

“

I have nothing negative to say about Yes or the Moodies, who are among the greatest bands of all time. I count myself fortunate to have been with both.

”

With Refugee, did you feel you were taking a Keith Emerson role?

I never saw myself as taking over from Keith. You know, I still recall a night in 1969 when by accident I ended up at a party in the London hotel where I was staying and jammed for an hour on piano with Keith. That was the night I met Lee and Brian, and we exchanged phone numbers. It was four years later that Lee called and we met up and started Refugee. That was a fantastic band, but we were determined not to become a new version of The Nice because we were doing something different. And I believe the album we did is full of good music and has a brilliant production from John Burns.

The band only lasted for that one album. Why did it end so quickly?

That's simple: it was down to arrogant management. I actually had music composed for a second album. But in those days



Robert Moog (left) with Patrick Moraz.

The multi-talented Moraz.





Yes in 1974, clockwise from left: Chris Squire, Patrick Moraz, Steve Howe, Alan White, Jon Anderson.

I didn't really understand how the music business worked, and then we were told that the budget for our second record would be lower than for the debut, which was ridiculous. So, things were not at all good on that basis. Then I got a call asking me to audition for Yes.

What do you recall about the audition?

I remember Brian Lane, the band's manager, picked me up in his Jaguar and nearly ran me over! He drove me to the rehearsal room in North London where all of their equipment was ready. The keyboards were Vangelis' set-up, which hadn't been played for a couple of weeks [Vangelis had previously tried out to become Rick Wakeman's replacement, but things hadn't worked out], so they were a little out of tune. The guys all turned up one by one



Yes' 1974 Relayer album.

in their expensive cars and then they tested me out. They called the next day to offer me the job, but I wanted to make sure that Lee and Brian were looked after as well. I didn't want to leave them in the lurch with Refugee. We were still committed to doing a few gigs and I was glad to make sure they were done.

What memories do you have of working with Yes on Relayer?

Can you believe that *Sound Chaser* was worked out and recorded during my audition? The band had part of it already composed and played it to me then. Jon Anderson asked if I had any ideas for an intro so I came up with something they really liked, which sparked Alan White and Chris Squire to come up with ideas. Eddy Offord recorded it on the spot and that's what was used on the album. So, this was done before I was officially in the band.

It shocked me. I had done three amazing tours with Yes, which were hugely successful. These included the biggest shows the band had done up to that point. And then one day in November 1976, Jon Anderson politely told me that they wanted me out. What could I do? I just had to accept the decision and go. But it really puzzled me, and felt like it was out of the blue. However, let me emphasise that I regard Jon as a musical genius, and I have nothing but huge admiration for the rest of the band as well. And



The Moody Blues in 1981, clockwise from left: Justin Hayward, Graeme Edge, John Lodge, Ray Thomas, Patrick Moraz.

I used to be driven every day from my home in West London to the studio in Virginia Water, Surrey, which was 40 miles. During that trip, I would play cassettes the band had given me with musical ideas, which I would learn ready to record. Overall, the whole thing was so enjoyable. I loved making the album and am so proud of the music.

How much did getting sacked from the band affect you?

I have the fondest memories of my time with them.

You joined The Moody Blues in 1978, but it took another two years for you to become a full member. Why was that?

When they first asked me to join, the band invited me along as a session man. Which was fine from my viewpoint — I was just happy to be involved with such an amazing band. Then



The Moody Blues' 1981 album Long Distance Voyager.

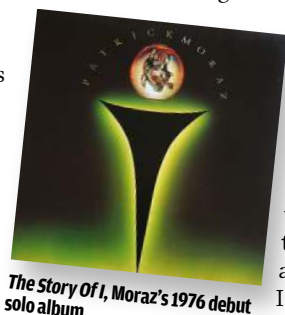
when we recorded the *Long Distance Voyager* album in 1980 [released the next year], I was asked whether I would like to be credited as the orchestral arranger for the record or become a full-time member. That was no contest as I was delighted to be in the band as an equal. So, if you look at the album credits, Pip Williams is down as arranging the strings, when it really was

“I have been lucky enough over many years to work with some of the greatest musicians in the world.”

me who did that. But I have no problem with it at all.

You were with The Moody Blues for 13 years. Did you feel like you helped to bring them into a fresh era?

I do, yes. I have nothing but the greatest respect for what Mike Pinder did with the band. He was truly brilliant. But what I found was that I brought in my own ideas for new sounds and they were readily accepted by the others, which was very gratifying. I loved my time with the Moodies – it was very rewarding on a number of levels. Towards the end, things were expanded with other keyboard players and female singers being brought in. Maybe that wasn't what I would have personally done, but I understood and accepted their reasons for doing this, and I have nothing but the nicest things to say of my time with them.



The Story Of I, Moraz's 1976 debut solo album.

How did you react to not being inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame with either Yes or The Moody Blues?

I really never thought about it. I don't believe that my impact on either band can be decided by whether or not I'm in a hall of fame. What I did with these bands is out there on record and always will be. And I have nothing negative to say about Yes or the Moodies, who are among the greatest bands of all time. I count myself fortunate to have been with both.

Your 1976 solo album *The Story Of I* is regarded as a highlight of your career. How far down the line are you to finishing the proposed script for the movie based on this?

I'm working on this, yes. It's a question of getting the timing right. But the film will definitely happen at some point. And I will expand the story told on the record because I want people to understand it on a higher spiritual plane.

Is this album your finest solo achievement?

I'm not sure I can answer that. But I remember that in '76 it topped a lot of magazine polls as being the best album of that year, so that tells you something. Actually, the *real* title was just *I*. But my label, Charisma, didn't really think it would make a very good title at all. So, they were the people who began to call it *The Story Of I*, and that seems to have stuck. Whatever you call it, I believe I showed what I could creatively achieve.

Do you feel undervalued?

In what way? I've been lucky enough over many years to work with some of the greatest musicians in the world, across a lot of different musical genres. These are the sort of people who don't work with you unless there's respect. So, among my peers, I have no doubt I'm valued. Beyond that, it's not for me to say. But I'm not bothered by such things. ☺

See www.patrickmoraz.net for more information.

THE TOP 50

19 GEDDY LEE

Given that Geddy Lee is actually a bass player, his place in the Top 20 is a testament to his musical dexterity. Lee didn't begin using synthesisers until Rush's fifth album, 1977's *A Farewell To Kings*, after which time he began using synthesisers and bass pedals far more often on stage. The band's use of keyboards hit its height in the 80s with albums such as *Signals*, *Power Windows* and *Hold Your Fire*, and although its use was toned down on later albums, Lee's expertise with the instrument was always more than evident on stage.

You say: "Playing bass, singing and playing keyboards all at the same time... It's easy to do one thing at a time but to do it all, and so proficiently, that's quite something." – Karen DuBlanc

18 DIEGO TEJEIDA

Mexican keyboard wizard Diego Tejeida joined young British prog rockers Haken in 2008, replacing Peter Jones a year after the band formed. He's been an integral part of their sound ever since, helping them rise up through the prog rock ranks over the years. Haken's music has always lent heavily on their prodigious talent, and Tejeida's expertise around his banks of keyboards is one reason for his high showing in this poll, made more impressive given Haken's hard-hitting and often uncompromising sound.

You say: "Hard to distinguish yourself in a prog metal band, and he does just fine." – Kraig Haviland

17 ADAM HOLZMAN

Many will know Holzman as the keyboard player in Steven Wilson's solo band, but he was born into rock royalty. His father is Jac Holzman, the founder of Elektra Records, and the man who signed The Doors and (for the US only) Queen. Hired by Miles Davis to play on 1986's *Tutu* album, Adam stayed with Davis for four years. Alongside Wilson, with whom he's played since 2013's *The Raven That Refused To Sing*, he's also performed with Ray Wilson, Robben Ford, Ray Manzarek, Lenny White and more.

You say: "For me, Holzman is a revelation in terms of his solo work, especially with Steven Wilson. He has a genuine voice and his musical skills seem endless. His album *Truth Decay* was in my Top 5 for the past 12 months." – Emma Leach

16 DAVE STEWART

One wonders how many times Stewart has had to say, "Not that one!" over recent years. But a man with his pedigree really shouldn't need to. The organist in Uriel, where he played alongside Mont Campbell and Steve Hillage, he was then in Egg, Hatfield And The North, National Health and Bruford. He's just released a new studio album, *Star Clocks*, with partner Barbara Gaskin, with whom he got to No.1 in the UK singles chart with their remake of *It's My Party* in 1981.

You say: "He had a tremendous range of styles and great technique, utilised with such good taste and inventiveness that I wonder why he isn't more known. His combination of jazz and rock with the vocabulary of a trained classical musician is awe-inspiring and exceptional." – Geir Hasnes

15 GLEB KOLYADIN

Given that Kolyadin only burst onto the prog scene about five years ago with Marjana Semkina when iamthemorning first rose to prominence, his strong showing here is remarkable: the highest placed musician from the modern prog scene. Kolyadin's orchestrations and piano playing are superb, as anyone who's listened to either iamthemorning or his self-titled solo album will be aware.

You say: "The most exciting young pianist and keyboardist in the genre right now. The only reason he isn't higher in the ranking is because he hasn't reached his full potential yet, which is a terrifying thought because he's already unbelievably good." – Austin Kokel

14 CHICK COREA

Another giant of the jazz fusion world, there are those who say that with *Return To Forever* and albums such as 1976's *Romantic Warrior*, Corea and his band (at that time Al Di Meola, Stanley Clarke and Lenny White) came closest to forging fusion and prog. Like many fusion giants, Corea learned his trade playing with Miles Davis and has worked with nearly all the major jazz players over the past 30 years. He celebrated his 75th birthday in 2016 by performing with over 20 different bands at the Blue Note Jazz Club in New York.

You say: "Corea's music with *Return To Forever* was all about pace – about making landscapes relentlessly slide at lightning-fast speed, producing a feeling of excitement and abyss at the same time." – Laurent de Sutter

13 EDDIE JOBSON

Jobson learned piano aged seven and violin aged eight. Too young to study at the Royal Academy, he played for the band Fat Grapple instead. When they supported Curved Air, it didn't take long for him to move across, aged 17, replacing Darryl Way. Since then Jobson has played with many prog rock greats: Roxy Music, Frank Zappa, UK, Jethro Tull and Yes. He's also run a solo career that began with 1983's *The Green Album*. He worked with former UK member John Wetton for years, and more recently toured with Marc Bonilla in tribute to the late Keith Emerson.

You say: "Roxy Music and its offshoots, Zappa, UK and even a brief uncredited stint in Yes. The Maestro is a true synthesiser genius and can play an electric violin second in joy only to Jean-Luc Ponty! If he could have stayed with one group for his career he would not be a dark horse in this list." – Chris Beckwith

PAVING THE WAY

Who was the first prog keyboard player? Dream Theater's Jordan Rudess has his say...



"It's impossible to say who was the first progressive keyboard player, because the world of classical music was so much more than just one person on one instrument.

"But Mozart (1756-1791) was hugely important. He was viewed as this incredible genius at a very tender age. He was doing things that were amazing people at the time – sitting at the piano and improvising. Then as he began to introduce his compositions, he was really pushing boundaries. He sounds tame today, but what he was doing was definitely cutting edge and radical.

"But you can go back even further, to someone like Bach (1685-1750), who was a huge influence on so many groups. If you listen to Gentle Giant, and that whole thing with counterpoint, that all goes back to Bach.

"For me personally, Prokofiev (1891-1953) was a huge influence. I know he influenced people like Keith Emerson too along with Aaron Copland (1900-1990), and that filters down – Emerson, Lake And Palmer's *Tarkus* was one of the albums that really influenced me when I was younger. It showed me how you could do things differently in rock music. That's why progressive music is always developing – it's got a rich history, but it's also taking that history and continually moving it forward." DEV

Jon Lord

"Jon had a wicked sense of humour..."

The Deep Purple keyboardist was hugely influential on the prog world. Rick Wakeman remembers Lord and the legacy he left behind.

Words: Rick Wakeman **Reported by:** Dave Everley

"I only got to play with him onstage once, which was at the Sunflower Jam charity gig at the Albert Hall in 2011. Vicky, who organises it, said, 'You two can do something together', and you just don't argue with her. We met up in a rehearsal room a few days before the concert and started to think about what we were going to do. We decided he'd deal with the organ and piano and I'd deal with the synth side. Jon had this intro piece, which I loved, and I had this other piece, and we built it from there. After four or five hours, we had this thing that

we knew really worked. My keyboard tech told me it was the most magical moment of his life.

That led us to the idea of doing an album of new material together. We were serious about it. It got to the point where we'd arranged to sit down in a couple of weeks to properly work it all out, when he called me: 'Look, I've been to the doctors and they've told me I've got pancreatic cancer. I feel good, but do you mind if we put things on hold until we get this sorted out?' And sadly that never happened.

Jon was a true gentleman, and he had a wicked sense of humour. At one Deep Purple gig, he

Beyond The Notes:
Jon Lord in
his element.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Jon Lord (left) and Rick Wakeman performing onstage at the Sunflower Jam charity event at the Royal Albert Hall, 2011.



CHRISTIE GOODWIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



introduced the band, and then himself: 'I'm Rick Emerson.' I think one of the hardest decisions he made was leaving Purple. I asked him about it and he said, 'I had to leave because there are so many things I want to do.' I knew what he meant. It was the same for me in Yes.

He was the one who inspired me to remake *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* – he once told me that he didn't want to leave behind something that wasn't what he wanted it to be, and that was what happened with that album for me originally. When I was driving back from his memorial, that's when I made the decision to redo it and put in all the bits I had to leave out. I told my wife, and she said: 'Why do you want to do it?' And I said, 'Because Jon Lord was absolutely right when he said that.' And that's why there's a dedication to him on that album." 🎹



MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Geoff Downes (YES)



"Keith Emerson is the biggest influence on me – I remember seeing The Nice at the Isle Of Wight Festival and being blown away. But my favourite solo is David Sinclair's solo in *Nine Feet Underground* by Caravan. It's quite long – maybe four minutes – and it's not a blowing solo, but it creates this wonderful atmosphere that keeps on developing. And it's very original – it has a lot of fuzzbox and wah-wah that creeps in and out, almost like he's singing it. David is the opposite of Keith – very reserved, sitting down not jumping around like a madman. But he got a magic sound." **DEV**



THE TOP 50

12 KERRY MINNEAR

Although he performed with The Reapers in the 1980s, Kerry Minnear remains synonymous with one band: Gentle Giant. Although every member of the band bar drummer Malcolm Mortimore was a multi-instrumentalist, only Minnear played keyboards, although he also played cello, vibraphone xylophone, recorder, guitar, bass and drums. Not to mention that he also sang, too. Among a list of prodigiously talented musicians, Minnear's achievements stand proud. As the only keyboard-playing member of one of the most musically intricate of all progressive bands, it's little wonder he rates so highly in this list.

You say: "The most melodic, contrapuntal, orchestral and possibly least rock'n'roll keyboardist in prog. He was a genius – just listen to *Cogs In Cogs* or *So Sincere*. He's also a wonderful writer and singer on tunes like *Aspirations* and *Think Of Me With Kindness*. Oh, for God's sake, he's a cellist too!"

– Robin Helsey

11 VANGELIS

It's not so much where you start with Evángelos Odysséas Papathanassiou, more where when do you stop. *Aphrodite's Child*? *Heaven And Hell*? *Chariots Of Fire*? *Jon And Vangelis*? *Blade Runner*? His list of achievements as a keyboardist, pianist, synthesiser player, composer and more is seemingly endless. It has certainly been a stunning career for the 75-year-old Greek musician, yet it is also one that shows no signs of abating – his most recent studio album, 2016's *Rosetta*, is a fine piece of work, inspired by the space exploration of the European Space Agency. He also composed the music for Professor Stephen Hawking's memorial, which was the music played over Hawking's own words as his ashes were interred at Westminster Abbey. How fitting.

You say: "The Greek keyboard god. Not strictly prog, but progressive. One of the all-time best. He deserves to be on this list." – Tony Shore

10 JON LORD

Perhaps the odd man out on this list, but a fantastic keyboard player nonetheless. Deep Purple were unequivocally heavy rock, but Lord's early solo albums like *Gemini Suite* and *Sarabande* showed progressive inclinations. Equally he was the man behind *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*, which is pretty darn prog too. Great friends with Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson, Lord would do Deep Purple's on stage introductions, often finishing with the line, "And I'm Rick Emerson!"

You say: "Simply the power and unique sound of the 'purple' organ that could compliment or 'combat' the guitar head on, and the classical background." – Doug Upton

9 DEREK SHERINIAN

He'd already worked with Buddy Miles, Alice Cooper and KISS before he replaced Kevin Moore in Dream Theater, with whom he spent five years. He's since worked with the likes of Billy Idol, Yngwie Malmsteen, Steve Lukather and Allan Holdsworth, as well as forming Black Country Communion with Joe Bonamassa, Glenn Hughes and Jason Bonham. He also recently reunited with his old Dream Theater pal Mike Portnoy for the prog supergroup Sons Of Apollo. **You Say:** "In terms of aggressive, in-your-face rock keyboardists, it is hard to find a stronger player who is more fun to watch live. He's played with everyone and with good reason, but I like his solo stuff the best personally. It's so over-the-top it makes me giggle."

– Pecknotes Productions

8 GEOFF DOWNES

Having met Trevor Horn while auditioning for Tina Charles' backing band, Downes rose to prominence in The Buggles, whose *Video Killed The Radio Star* was famously the first song played on MTV. The pair joined Yes for their 1980 *Drama* album and tour, before Downes hooked up with John Wetton, Steve Howe and Carl Palmer to form the initially successful Asia. Also a renowned producer who has worked with the likes of Greg Lake and Mike Oldfield, Downes returned to Yes in 2011, as well as remaining a member of Asia.

You Say: "I doubt many readers will include Geoff in their lists, as most people think of the mile-a-minute virtuosos or flamboyant personalities. Geoff is always near the top of my list because he's an excellent orchestrator, often saying more with fewer but the best-fitting notes. A masterful technician and sound designer and a heck of a nice guy!" – Brian O'Sullivan

7 PATRICK MORAZ

Although early in his career the young Swiss-born keyboard player had worked with Stéphane Grappelli and toured with John Coltrane, it was as a member of the prog rock band Refugee, alongside former Nice members Lee Jackson and Brian Davison, that Moraz rose to prominence. He was plucked from Refugee to replace Rick Wakeman in Yes, with whom he recorded *Relayer*, but was out of the band prior to Wakeman's return for *Going For The One*. He then joined The Moody Blues with whom he played between 1978 and 1991 before maintaining an impressive solo career.

You Say: "Technically great, and after a cracking album with the band Refugee, which had some terrific music and ideas, he stepped into the light with Yes and the album *Relayer*. Though short-lived in the prog world, Moraz left us with a great album, the centre piece being the wonderful *Gates Of Delirium*."

– Mike Staggs

Rick Wakeman

"I play with my eyes closed, in a hypnotic trance."

From *Yes* to *King Arthur* and beyond, Rick Wakeman's cape-clad career has been extraordinary. He talks all things keys with *Prog*.

Words: Dave Everley

What's so great about keyboards? Why are they better than guitars or drums?

Because there are so many more things you can do on a keyboard. If you imagine a paint palette with colours on it, we've got pretty much every colour you could want or need. As keyboards have developed, you've got such a multitude of sounds. There pretty much isn't anything you can't do with keyboards these days, which is fantastic.

It wasn't always that way though, right?

Oh no. When keyboards first started, we were the poor relations. You couldn't be heard onstage, so if you were doing a solo, the band had to drop to no volume and the guitarist would sneer across and go, "Oh dear, poor little fella." And then Bob Moog invented the Moog and everything changed. Suddenly you had an instrument that would cut through concrete. It was louder than any guitar. And guitarists suddenly hated us. [Laughs] It was wonderful.

What were the early days like for a keyboard player?

I don't like being old, but I would never have wanted to grow up in any other era with regards to rock music, because I was fortunate enough to come through at the most pioneering time imaginable.

When I started, there weren't even any keyboard stands. I used to buy a chest of drawers, chuck the drawers out and stick 'em in

there. And there was no such thing as presets on sound, so you had to create your own sounds – which I still do this day, by the way. I still change the sound on the instruments. That's really important. There's nothing like standing behind a big bank of keyboards, going, "There's not much I can't do here." It's great!



What did you want to do with the keyboard that nobody else had done before?

I was trying to get them to do things that they couldn't. The limitations back in the old

"When I started, there weren't even any keyboard stands. I used to buy a chest of drawers, chuck the drawers out and stick 'em in there."



The Caped Crusader:
Rick Wakeman.

THE TOP 50

6 MARK KELLY

Kelly was studying electronics and playing with local Essex prog rock band Chemical Alice when Marillion came calling in 1981. He's been with the band ever since, his trademark swirling keyboards very much informing the early Marillion sound. Alongside founder member Steve Rothery, he is Marillion's longest serving member. He's also performed with Travis, Ayreon, DeeExpus and Edison's Children, and is credited as being the man behind the crowdfunding proposal for the band's *Anoraknophobia* album, which inspired Pledge and other business models.

You Say: "A mainstay of Marillion since the debut album and an unsung hero of the band. He has a great touch and a style that is his own yet reminiscent of Banks and Wakeman in particular. A great player and a solid backbone of the Marillion sound." – **Gary Bowyer**

5 JORDAN RUDESS

A Juilliard attendee for piano aged just nine, by his late teens Rudess was more interested in synthesisers and progressive rock. He was offered gigs with both the Dixie Dregs and Dream Theater, initially choosing the former. However, he worked with Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy on his Liquid Tension Experiment side-project, and in 1999 he replaced Derek Sherinian in the prog metal overlords. He's been with them ever since, although he delves into his solo career and has also worked with both Steven Wilson and Ayreon.

You say: "He's my only choice. He continues to create and push new boundaries within the prog universe, implementing new tech and adapting to what's available. Never going stagnant!" – **Brad Gale**

4 RICHARD WRIGHT

Roger Waters and David Gilmour may have dominated the Pink Floyd headlines, but few will argue against the fact that Wright's delightful keyboard sound coloured much of what the band produced. He also wrote some of the band's more memorable pieces of work. He rarely ventured beyond the confines of Floyd, but when he did, it was often more than worthwhile. Famously sacked by

Waters during the making of *The Wall*, David Gilmour brought him back into the fold for 1987's *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*, while *The Endless River* was Gilmour and Nick Mason's final tribute to their late keyboard player.

You Say: "The most underrated keyboard player of all time. The master of serving the music with his playing. Nothing fancy, but always the right choice of notes and chords."

– **Peter Rautell**

3 TONY BANKS

Banks formed Genesis with Charterhouse school pals Peter Gabriel, Mike Rutherford, Anthony Phillips and Chris Stewart in 1967, and remained at the helm of the prog rock giants until they were effectively put into cold storage following a 2007 world tour. He is responsible for many of the band's lengthy epics, and also for bringing a big symphonic edge to their sound. Although his solo career was not as successful as some of his bandmates, he is often seen as the progressive core of the Genesis sound. He recently worked in the classical realm with three well-received works.

You Say: "His keyboards were more upfront and integral to Genesis songs, Steve Hackett and Mike Rutherford not being the flashiest of guitarists."

– **Pierre Shepherd**

2 RICK WAKEMAN

You can talk about the capes, the ambitious live shows on ice and also at remarkable settings like Hampton Court. But this doesn't do proper justice to a man who was never afraid of taking huge risks, not just in staging spectacles, but also in his passion for playing great music. Wakeman's time with Yes helped define prog as we know it, being filled with timeless brilliance, yet he also worked wonders as a hugely in demand session man, with an array of talents from Bowie to Sabbath. He was also a crucial part of The Strawbs earlier in his career, and is currently making a seismic impact with ARW. The man's style is fluent, and underlines a love of many genres, all cohesively brought into focus.

You say: "The king of keyboards. Rick is the guy who made me want to be in a band, and is a source of influence in almost everything I do." – **Matt Smith**

analogue days were huge. Most keyboards could only do one thing, so you had to carry a load around to get them to be able to do everything you wanted to do. I was very lucky, because companies such as Korg and Moog were interested in what we wanted, so they would actually ask us what we were after. We'd work with their technicians, help develop instruments.

Dave Smith of [pioneering synthesiser company] Sequential

Circuits came to meet me in Oakland in the 70s. He had the plans for the Prophet 5 [the first fully programmable polyphonic synthesiser] and he wanted me to get involved at the top end. I was partly responsible for the design of how it looked. Mind you, don't ask me how the bloody thing worked...

Did you end up with lots of free instruments?

I remember meeting the boss 

of Korg in 1980 and he said, "We've got a lot of new instruments, we want to be number one. I want you to take some instruments out on the road." I said, "OK, the only trouble is that I'm going out to South America, what about spare parts if things go wrong?" And he said, "Well, we've not got round to spare parts yet. But I'll solve that problem for you." And he did - he supplied us with three of everything, which was ridiculous given what we ended up carting around. But they were so solidly built. They stood up to being thrown out of aeroplanes.

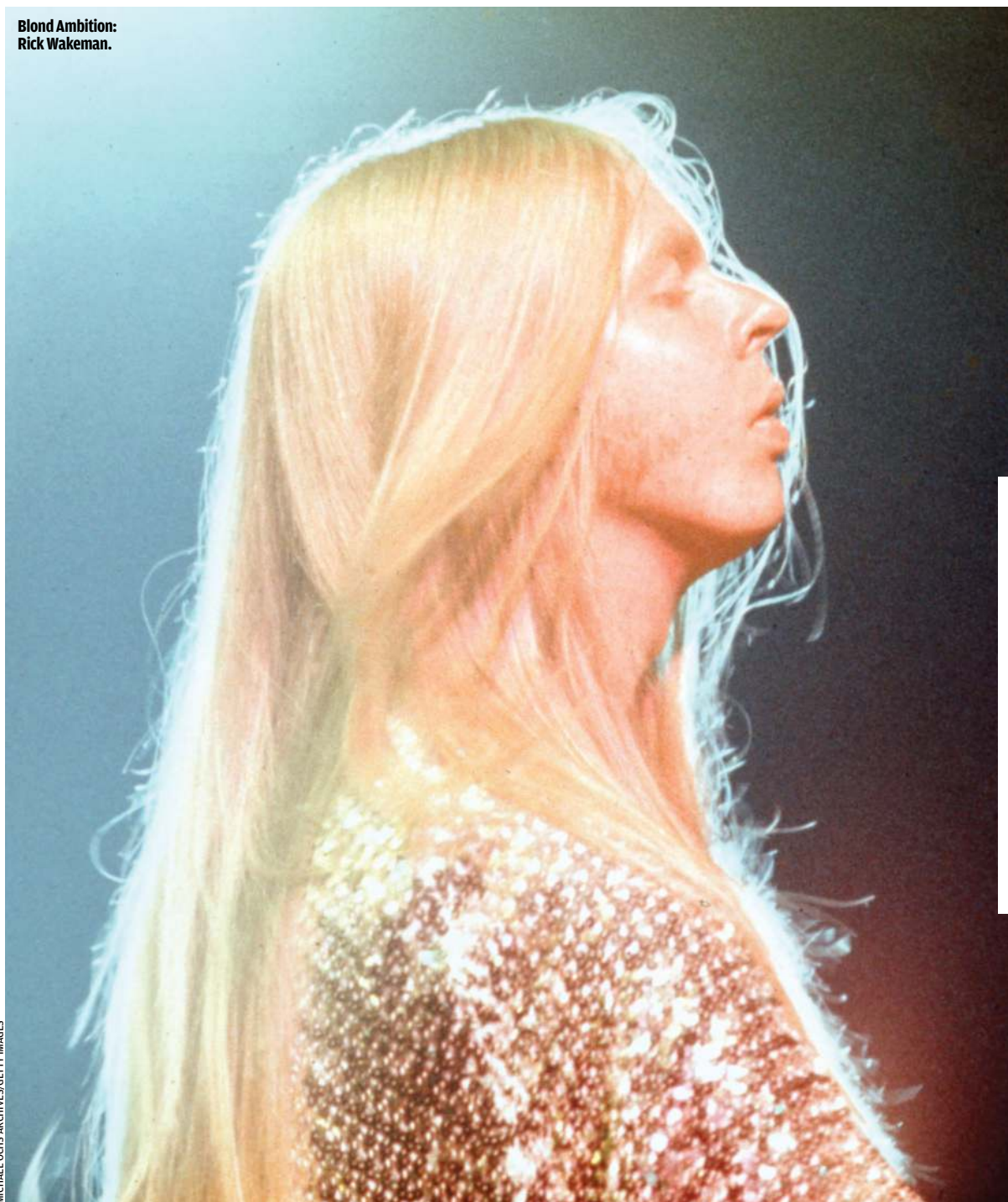
Was every new development a winner?

Oh no, not at all. Companies would come out with new things every few months. Some were great, some were a joke, but even the ones we laughed at at the time have become highly collectible. There was this one called The Wasp, which was a funny little thing - it sounded like a wasp. But it's really collectible now.

Were there rivalries between the great keyboard giants of the 1970s?

Not that I know of. We were all off doing our thing. I think everybody is unique - it's like footballers, everyone has their strengths and their weaknesses. Although the music press did try

Blond Ambition:
Rick Wakeman.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Adam Wakeman



"The organ solo in *Roundabout* by Yes, obviously played by my dad [Rick Wakeman], always made me

want a Hammond Organ. The sound is great - everything in the 1970s and 1980s, synth-wise, had just lost the raw sound of the 1970s. And the solo is limited by the scale of the keyboard. The Hammond only goes up to a certain point - if it been played on a synth, it would have gone even higher, which would have changed the solo.

"I finally bought a Hammond about 10 years ago, and this was the first thing I played on it." **DEV**



to set up rivalries between us. *Sounds* and *Melody Maker* always used to make a play that Keith Emerson and I were great rivals. We used to phone each other and say, "Have you seen what they've written this week?" We thought it was brilliant.

I remember one time in the early 2000s, Keith and I were having lunch together in this place in Berkeley Square in London - we were trying to put an album and a tour together - and we were having a great laugh. This couple passed us, and as they did the guy said, "Excuse me, Mr Emerson, Mr Wakeman,

I'm sorry to bother you, but can I just say how thrilled I am to see that you've made up and you're friends." And I said, "We're not friends." And Keith said, "No, I'm suing him." And the guy looked mortified. He said, "Oh, I'm so sorry," and scuttled away. We just pissed ourselves laughing.

You say you and Keith talked about working together. What would that have been like?

We had a couple of great ideas for the tour. There was going to be a curtain in front of the stage. The show would kick off with *Fanfare For The Common Man*, but when

the curtain opened it would be me playing it. And then it would go into *King Arthur*, and the curtain would open on the other side and it would be Keith playing it. We thought it would be wonderful to start like that. It would freak people out.

You and Keith were the great showmen of the era. Were you deliberately trying to bring the keyboard player out of the shadows?

No, to be honest. It was never manufactured in any way. I do what I feel is right. I suppose I've just always been a bit of an idiot.

Do your capes ever get in the way onstage?

Here's the thing about the capes: people expect them now. I hadn't worn them for years, then in the early oos, I was doing some shows down in South America, and one of the things they actually wrote in my contract was that at every show I would have to wear one of the classic capes. I asked the promoter why, and they said, "Well, prog here is huge with younger people under 30, but they've only ever seen pictures of you in magazines where you're wearing a cape. If they're coming to see you, you must be wearing a cape." I said,

about what you'll have for dinner that night or whether you remembered to pay the gas bill?

[Laughs] Well, that has happened... But I basically go into a sort of a bubble. There are so many different things that can distract you, so I seal myself off mentally. I suppose it's like a hypnotic trance where I'm only aware of the music.

I play most of the time with my eyes closed, and when you open them and sort of semi-come out of the trance, you look down at your hands and go, "What the bloody hell are they doing?!" And that's when you're most



Piano Man: Rick doing what he does best.

SEBASTIAN INFUSO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

"Is that a deal-breaker?" And they said, "It is."

So we went down there, and we were in the dressing room before the show and I told the band, "I'm just going into the next room, and in a minute you can all come in and you can take the mickey out of the cape and have your fun and games." So they came in and saw the cape, and my bass player, Lee Pomeroy, went, "No, it's great!"

We went and did the show, and when we came off, Lee came in and said, "We've had a band meeting. We refuse ever to go onstage with you unless you're wearing cape, because you go to another level. You may not realise it, but the audience go nuts and it lifts you up even further." I suppose it's like an actor playing Henry V — he does it well in rehearsals, but when he puts the costume on on the night, it's something else entirely.

When you're up there playing a solo, what's going through your mind? Are you lost in the moment, or are you thinking

likely to make a mistake. It's really weird.

Is it a good feeling?

I've never taken any drugs in my life, it's the one thing I kept well clear of, but I suppose being in that trance and playing is like that. I can't think that there's a natural high any better than it.

When they finally come to cart you away in a wooden box, what piece of music of yours would you like to be playing as they send you off?

Oh god, bloody hell. Probably *King Arthur*, *The Last Battle* through to the end. It's very personal to me. I wrote it in hospital after I'd had my heart attack. I was in there for nine weeks, and they told me I couldn't play or work: "No, you have to rest." And I went, "Sod that!" And that's when I wrote *The Last Battle*, when I was in hospital. And that why it means a lot to me, because I really thought it could be my last battle. It's as much about me as it is *King Arthur*. ☹

KEYBOARDS BY NUMBERS

The facts and figures behind the list...

TOTAL RECORDS SOLD*

Rick Wright - 250 million

Tony Banks - 160 million

Rick Wakeman - 70 million

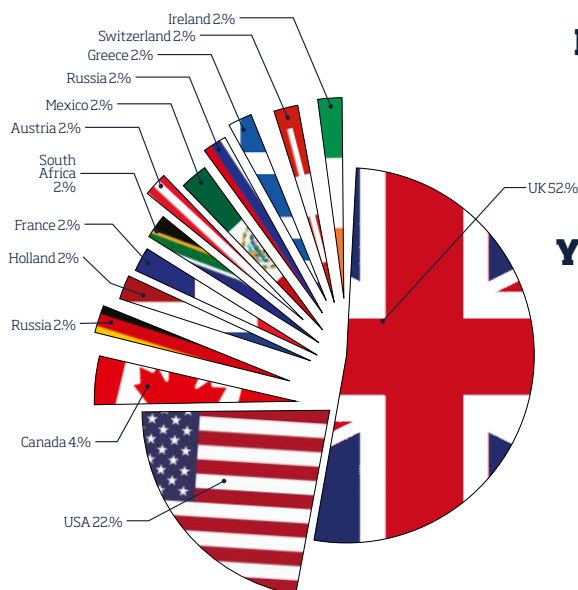
*(all solo and with bands)



42
ALIVE

8
DEAD

KEYBOARDISTS BY COUNTRY



YOUNGEST VS OLDEST

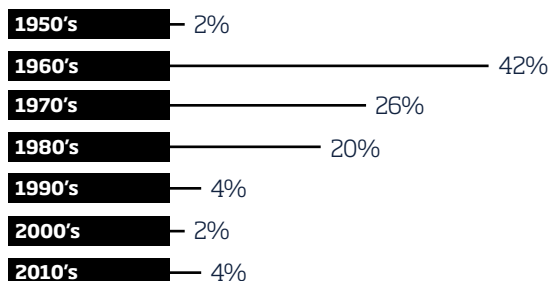


Gleb Kolyadin (29)

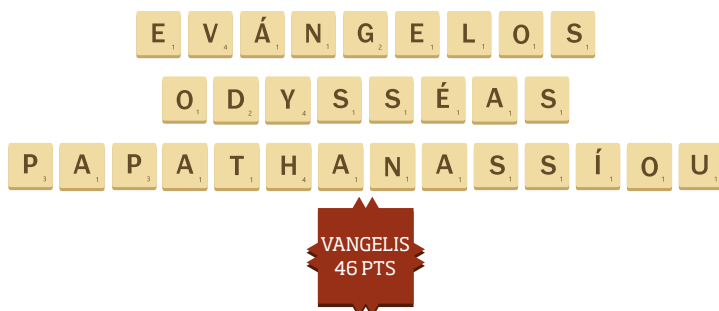


Herbie Hancock (78)

BY DECADE (FIRST APPEARANCE ON ALBUM)



PLAYER WHOSE NAME IS WORTH THE MOST IN SCRABBLE



Keith Emerson

“He was a master of the instrument.”

He created wildly original music, produced new sounds and revolutionised the keyboard player's role. Oh, and he invented progressive rock...

Words: Dave Everley

If the keyboard embodies prog's spirit, then Keith Emerson embodied the keyboard. He wasn't the first musician to place the instrument front and centre in rock music, but he was the one who showed it could be just as innovative and powerful as any guitar. Emerson was a craftsman, artist and showman in one: a genuinely revolutionary figure who helped usher in the progressive rock era – an era that has endured to this day.

“Keith Emerson invented progressive rock,” says Lee Jackson, bassist with Emerson's first great band, The Nice.

musical influences – classical, jazz, rock'n'roll – and turning them into something new.

“He was a complex balance of many styles,” says Keith Wechsler, who first met Emerson in 1994 and became his engineer, producer and keyboard tech.

“He would sometimes write in a classical style, but then he'd also write *Brain Salad Surgery* and *Tarkus* and things that were much more rock.”

Emerson's talents were apparent early on. Lee Jackson first met him in the mid-60s, when both were members of Gary Farr & The T-Bones, a soul-influenced pop band

“Keith didn't want to be known as a rock star - he wanted to be known as a composer.”

“I know, because I was there when he was doing it. We didn't call it that at the time, but that's what it was.”

“Keith was a genius, no doubt about it,” says Yes/Buggles keyboard player Geoff Downes, an avowed fan of Emerson. “He absolutely broke down the barriers not just for what you could do with the keyboards, but how you could do it.”

Whether it was with The Nice, ELP or his solo work, Emerson found a way of merging his

based in Brighton. “You could see it coming with Keith,” says Lee Jackson. “Gary Farr said, ‘Wait until you see my keyboard player. I found him playing in the jazz clubs in Brighton.’ The sheer technique and brilliance of his playing was already there. I thought, ‘I'm gonna latch onto you, lad.’”

Even early on, Emerson was pushing at the boundaries. The T-Bones would play an instrumental set before they were joined by Farr himself. “Keith



HANS J. HOFMANN/ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES



No. 1

KEITH EMERSON

Unquestionably one of the most important keyboard players of the past half century, Emerson first made his reputation in the 1960s, with The Nice, before going on to co-found the celebrated ELP. Subsequently, he showed enormous versatility as a solo musician, and also in collaboration with others as well as composing movie soundtrack music.

His effortless ability to move from rock to jazz and classical motifs helped to inform a spectacular and unrivalled approach to his art. Emerson was as capable of introspection as well as flamboyance, and he brought a keen sense of showmanship to performances, yet this never overshadowed his mastery of the keys, in particular the Hammond organ. His death in March 2016 robbed the world of a visionary.

You say: "For me, Keith Emerson was the taproot that fed and supported all the others who followed. He pushed the boundaries, was amazingly creative and filled huge spaces with awesome dexterity and minimal gear." – **Barbara Gray**

used to play something for Gary and say, 'Why don't we do this as a number,' and Gary would say, 'Nah, it's too avant-garde,' says Jackson. "And it was *Blue Rondo à la Turk*, the Dave Brubeck number."

It was that kind of frustration that led Emerson and Jackson to put together The Nice in 1967. Initially a four-piece featuring guitarist Davy O'List, they were slimmed down to a trio when O'List began missing shows, leaving Emerson's keyboards to do the job of the guitarist.

"Keith called me and Brian [Davison, drummer] in and said, 'How do you fancy carrying on as a three-piece?' We'd done most of the songs in the repertoire. I think he was glad to see the back of having a guitarist."

Emerson's next band, ELP, would bear that out. One of the first genuine supergroups, they were ostensibly a collection of musical equals all pushing back the boundaries of what rock music could do. In reality, their sound was defined



more by Emerson's keyboards than anything else — a mix of rock'n'roll volume, classical grandiosity and technical dazzle.

"There was always jazz or classical music on at home," says Aaron Emerson, Keith's son. "He'd never really listen to his contemporaries, like Yes or Genesis. He listened to a lot of Oscar Peterson, Jimmy Smith."

Those influences fed into ELP. While their music was undoubtedly anchored in rock'n'roll, Emerson was determined to push back the boundaries of what was expected from the form.

Emerson played many instruments during his career, but he was most famous for his association with the Moog — the groundbreaking keyboard created in the 1950s by Robert Moog.

"He had a relationship with the Moog," says Wechsler. "He expanded the ability of what someone could do from the Moog, and that comes from the sound that comes out of it and the character you could develop with it. He was a master of that instrument."

Just as a concert violinist has their coveted violin, so Emerson had his favourite keyboard: a giant modular Moog he played, on and off, for most of his career.

"The world's most dangerous synth," says Wechsler with a laugh. "It weighed 600lbs in



Emerson rehearsing for ELP's show at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal, 1977.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



MY FAVOURITE SOLO

By Neal Morse



"It has to be both the piano and synth solo by Chick Corea on *Romantic Warrior* by Return To Forever. They're

both very soulful. What I admire so much about the jazz players is the way they can go out of the key into some other thing and then just run right back into it, and Chick was a master of that.

"I was really into Return To Forever when they came out — I saw them in LA when I was young, and they were a huge influence. If you listen to the first Spock's Beard album, there's a little piano solo bit in *Go The Way You Go*, that's my four bar tribute to Return To Forever." **DEV**



a road case and it took six people to get it onstage, but it was an iconic part of what Keith came to be known for. When he played the *Lucky Man* solo on it, it would blow the clothing off the crowd."

Emerson wasn't as hung up on the nuts and bolts of the instruments he played compared to many of those he inspired.

"I would not say Keith was the most technical about what was going on inside," says Wechsler. "The internal workings, the programming, the precise dialling of every knob... He could dig in, but his playing was much more emotional and intuitive."

That emotion spilled over into his performances. "He saw Hendrix smashing up his guitar and that's what he wanted to do," says Aaron Emerson. "He wanted to bring the keyboard up at the front of the stage and be the showman."

Emerson had introduced an element of theatre into gigs as far back as The Nice. His party

trick was to jam a knife into his keyboard mid-song, partly for the spectacle but also to wrench new sounds from it. Equally famously, the idea was suggested by Lee Jackson's bass roadie, the future Motörhead frontman Lemmy.

"Keith had these little plastic things you had in your shirt collar that he'd stick in the gap between two keys to form a chord, and it would go [pathetic noise] 'Meep,'" says Jackson. "Lemmy said, 'What you need is a knife,' and he produced this Hitler Youth dagger. So Keith got a plank and scored a keyboard into it and just started practising so he could hit the crack between any keys. And it took off from there."

The man onstage was a world away from the man offstage. "He was completely different," says Aaron Emerson. "He was very quiet and reserved and very gentle. He didn't like going to the big parties. But onstage, something would flip. It was like Clark Kent and Superman."

Emerson's onstage antics would have been a gimmick if he didn't have the skills to back them up. "He had tons of technique and study and craftsmanship, and that had evolved into artistry — you take those tools in your arsenal, and you use them for emotional effect," says Wechsler. "I witnessed Keith playing the *Stones Of Years* part of *Tarkus* hundreds of times, and every time it would be radically different and yet still the same."

Emerson's relationship with his ELP bandmates was famously combustible over the years, both together and apart (a tour with Greg Lake in 2010 was almost abandoned after a backstage fist fight on the first night). While the trio undoubtedly had a set of egos that were the equal of each other, Keith Wechsler insists that Emerson was no dictator, musical or otherwise.

"Of course, he was in bands where he had to do large amounts of the musical talking," he says.



“But he wasn’t the sort of person who had to be solely in charge. In the Keith Emerson Band, it was definitely the partnership with [guitarist] Marc Bonilla that made it work. The duty was definitely shared. It was exhilarating to watch them play.”

Aaron Emerson remembers playing with his father on a handful of occasions, most notably at the Hammersmith Apollo in the 2000s. “I was just standing on the stage, watching him play, and he said, ‘Come on.’ So I got up and had a go. I do remember doing the solo, and after a while he went, ‘Okay, that’s enough...’”

Emerson Sr may have been one of the iconic figures of rock’n’roll, but he wanted to be respected for much more than his work with ELP or The Nice. While he’d always written classical music – either indirectly with his bands or directly as a solo artist – he never felt he’d got the respect

Lucky Man: Emerson in his favoured role as a composer, 1971.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

he deserved for that side of his writing or playing.

“He didn’t want to be known as a rock star – he wanted to be known as a composer,” says Aaron Emerson. “He loved writing scores. He’d write out all the parts for all the different parts of the orchestra. Towards the end, he was taking conducting lessons, and for his

70th birthday he conducted an orchestra.”

Of course, Emerson will forever be inextricably linked to the instrument with which he made his name. A condition with his hands that made it hard to play reportedly played a part in the depression that would eventually lead to his suicide in March 2016. It was a sad end

for a legendary talent, though the music he made and the groundbreaking approach with which he made it live on.

“He originated so much that other people picked up and ran with it,” says his old friend and bandmate Lee Jackson. “But when it came to keyboard players, Keith was right at the top.” 🎹

Face Value: Phil Collins.



GETTY

Have Drums, Will Travel...

To celebrate the release of his new mega compilation album *Plays Well With Others*, **Phil Collins** looks back over some of his most noteworthy collaborations.

Words: Dave Everley

Phil Collins still has the T-shirt that Genesis' touring drummer Chester Thompson gave him on a long-forgotten birthday many years ago. The logo on the front says: 'Plays well with others' – words that still resonate today.

"I thought about it, and it pretty much summed up my life," says Collins. "People kept asking me to be on their records and, nice person that I am, I could never turn them down."

The 67-year-old has repurposed the phrase for the title of a new compilation, which brings together his countless collaborations over the years, from his work with fellow prog regents Brian Eno, Robert Fripp and his old Genesis oppo Peter Gabriel to more mainstream musicians such as Eric Clapton and Robert Plant.

"I suppose listening back to it, the thing that makes me proudest is the



Above: Collins' latest release, *Plays Well With Others*.

breadth of things I've been involved in," says Collins. "It goes from A to Z. Or at least from A to B."

Collins is speaking to *Prog* from Manhattan. Unlike many of his A-list contemporaries, he's not just punctual but actually calls 15 minutes early. We're here to talk about his career as the go-to drummer for rock's A-list, though he starts with an apology.

"I'm afraid I don't have many sex, drugs and rock'n'roll stories for you," he says. "That was always someone else's job."

That's not a problem. Even without Genesis in the mix, Collins' extracurricular musical history is rich and interesting enough on its own.

"I don't have many sex, drugs and rock'n'roll stories for you. That was always someone else's job."

GEORGE HARRISON

Collins was just 18 when he got a call asking if he wanted to appear on a session for The Beatles guitarist's third solo album, *All Things Must Pass*. "I can't remember how it came about, but I just know that Ringo [Starr] and Eric [Clapton] and all these other people were involved," says Collins. "I was fairly cocky at that point, but I was definitely overawed by it all."

Collins was enlisted to play congas on the song *Art Of Dying*, a job he threw himself into – a little too much. After

the initial run-through, his hands were so blistered and bloodied that he couldn't hit the instrument properly during the actual recording.

"I really did give it my all, but my hands were fairly bashed up," he says. "When I listened back to the album, I couldn't hear any congas at all."

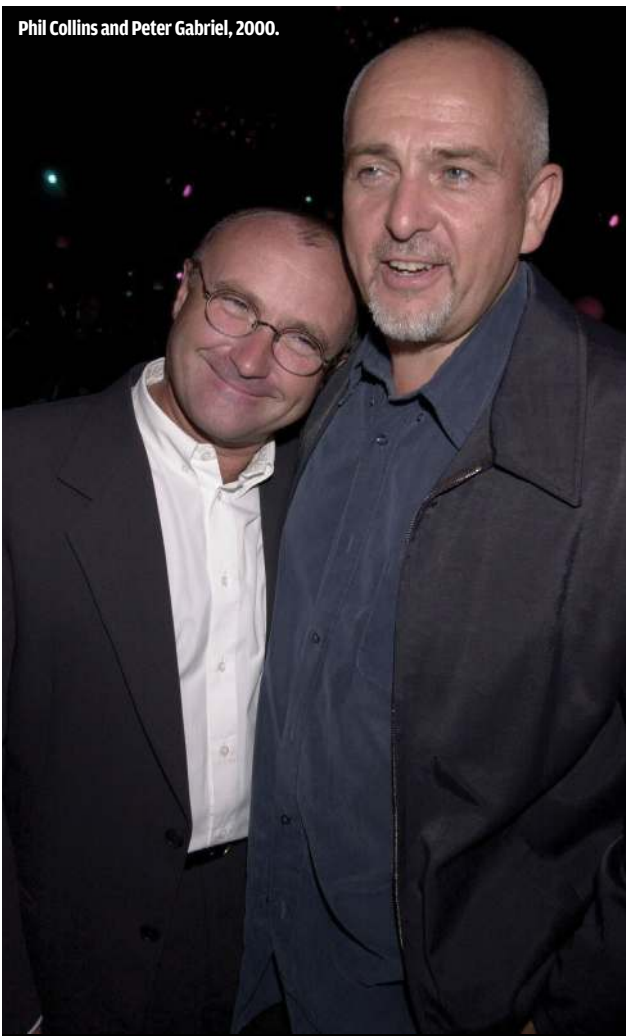
The £15 fee he received for his part in the session was some consolation, but his relationship with Harrison didn't end there.

"I got to know George later on," he says. "He was a very funny man,

very droll. And he loved to play jokes on people."

Collins would be the butt of one of these jokes. In 2001, Harrison sent him a new reissue of *All Things Must Pass*, on which his congas had been restored. "And they sounded bloody awful," says Collins. "I thought, 'Was I really that bad? No wonder they didn't use them!' Then I found out that George had got [percussionist] Ray Cooper to purposely re-record them as badly as possible and sent me that version. I never did get my own back on him."

Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel, 2000.



PETER GABRIEL

“Me and Peter always got on really well,” says Collins of his predecessor as Genesis singer, “so I kind of suggested myself when he was looking for a drummer. I’d just done the early demos for *Face Value* and I was going through a divorce so I needed something to occupy myself with.”

Their unlikely reunion, on Gabriel’s third self-titled album, would produce something even more unlikely: a drum sound that came to define the following decade. “Ah, the old gated reverb,” says Collins. “The sound that built the 80s. It was a pure accident.”

This unique beat — clipped, compressed, direct — made its bow on the album’s opening song, *Intruder*, one of five tracks he played on. According to Collins, he was playing regularly when his drum sound was picked up by the microphone that connected the recording space with the control room.

“Those mics weren’t made for recording music and apparently it came out sounding completely different,” he says. “Peter was in there and he said, ‘What’s that? I like it.’ And he went away and tinkered with it, and the next thing you know, he’s got this new... *thing*.”

Collins’ relationship with Gabriel remains friendly. “We were never rivals,” he said. “I could never be the person he was when I started singing with Genesis. It was hard enough being the person I was.”

Does he ever see a point where Genesis will reunite, in any form, in the future? “Well, you can never say never,” he says. “But there are no plans. We’ve all got our own things going on.”

ROBERT FRIPP

Collins can’t recall exactly where or when he first saw King Crimson, but the feeling he got has stuck with him. “They were absolutely phenomenal,” he says. “Just like nothing else I’d ever seen. This was before progressive rock was even called progressive rock, but it was clear they were doing something that was completely new and fairly astounding. And while everyone else was wearing capes and flouncing about, there he [Robert Fripp] was in his suit, sitting on a stool.”

Despite moving in the same circles, Collins and Crimson mastermind Fripp wouldn’t work together until the early 80s, when the former played drums on

Disengage and *North Star*, two tracks on Fripp’s debut solo album, *Exposure*.

“That was an interesting experience,” says Collins. “Robert doesn’t work like anyone else. He’s very professorial and very focused — there’s no messing around. That’s not to say he’s not a warm person, because he is, but he knows what he wants from himself, and from you. And listening back to *North Star*, I think it’s one of my favourite pieces of music that I’ve ever played on.”

Did Fripp or anyone else ever try to tempt you away from Genesis in the 1970s?

“Not that I can remember,” Collins says. “I don’t think I would have gone anyway, even if they had.”

“We were totally aware of what Yes were doing, and even though we were very different, they were still an influence. Especially Bill Bruford, who sounded like no other rock drummer at the time.”

BRIAN ENO

“Ah, Brian,” says Collins with a laugh. “The mad professor. Except he wasn’t really mad, just had his own way of doing things.”

Their paths crossed when Genesis and Eno were working in the same studio — the former recording what was their greatest prog rock blowout, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, while the latter was working on his second post-Roxy Music album, *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*.

“I wasn’t really a huge fan of Roxy Music, but Brian came along and helped out with some vocal effects on one of our tracks [credited as ‘Enossification’], and I was sent upstairs to play on one of his as a sort of payment in kind,” says Collins.

“For some reason we hit it off. I liked his sense of humour and he must have liked mine, because he asked me back to play on another three albums.”

Those records — *Another Green World*, *Before And After Science* and *Music For Films* — were, as Collins puts it, “a world away from Genesis. It was like painting by numbers, but in a really left-field way. They taught me a lot about making music in completely different ways.”

PETER BANKS

The beginning of Collins’ tenure in Genesis coincided with their transformation into a fully blown progressive rock band, one that was hinted at on 1970’s *Trespass* album. However, they were still playing catch-up with their contemporaries, such as King Crimson and Yes, who were already twisting music into strange and fantastical new shapes.

“We were totally aware of what Yes were doing, and even though we were very different, they were still an influence,” says Collins. “Especially Bill Bruford, who sounded like no other rock drummer at the time. But there wasn’t any rivalry with them. There was plenty of room back then for everybody.”

Collins himself hooked up with former Yes guitarist Peter Banks, lending his talents to four tracks on Banks’ 1973 solo album *Two Sides Of Peter Banks*.

“Peter was a strange man, very quiet, not massively sociable outside of music,” says Collins. “But he was a very impressive musician, and overlooked. He was definitely one of the founding fathers of the whole progressive rock thing.”

JOHN MARTYN

If the musical partnership between Collins and hellraising singer-songwriter John Martyn was unlikely, their long-standing friendship was even more so.

"John was a character," says Collins. "A great man to be around, and he liked his booze. I did a little, but I was a bit too straightforward to do it on the same scale."

The pair first worked together on Martyn's nocturnal 1980 album, *Grace And Danger*. At the time, both men were going through respective marriage break-ups.

"Oh, it was the Divorced Rock Stars Club," laughs Collins. "He actually moved into my house at one point. You can imagine what that was like for both of us. John definitely knew how to put his problems behind him, put it like that. He didn't exactly *not* live up to his reputation, but he was always focused on the music."

In fact, the two musicians got on so well that Collins returned to produce the follow-up to *Grace And Danger*, 1981's *Glorious Fool*.

"John was one of a kind," says Collins. "He's somebody I really miss. George Harrison too."



Eric Clapton and Phil Collins in the studio, 1989.

ERIC CLAPTON

"Eric played on the George Harrison album that I wasn't on," says Collins, "but I only met him years later through John Martyn."

I remember one time, the three of us were sitting in this pub somewhere in the country, just plotting and drinking. I'm not sure people knew who we were. Or if they did, they kept quiet."

Collins and Clapton first worked together on Martyn's *Glorious Fool*, which featured a guest appearance from the former Cream and Derek

And The Dominos guitarist on *Couldn't Love You More*. Four years later, the pair hooked up again when Collins produced Clapton's *Behind The Sun* album.

"I really liked working with Eric," says Collins. "And we recorded a lot of it in Montserrat, at Air Studios. The budgets were decent, those were the times, but it wasn't a bunch of rich rock musicians living the life of Riley. We were there to work, especially Eric. We stayed in nice hotels, but there wasn't any messing around from anyone."



Robert Plant and Phil Collins at Greenwich Village's Be Bop Club in New York, 1983.

ROBERT PLANT

Collins was an early adopter when it came to Led Zeppelin. "I was there at one of their first London gigs, at the Marquee in 1968," he says. "They were truly phenomenal. Especially John Bonham. There was no one who was doing what he did. But I didn't get to know them because we were both off in our different worlds back then."

It would be well over a decade before Collins got a chance to work with any members of Zeppelin, by which time the band had disbanded in the wake of John Bonham's death. "I got a call from Robert [Plant], who I didn't know, asking if I fancied playing on this solo album he was

putting out," he recalls. "So I jumped at the chance. He was in quite a strange place. I don't think he was running away from Zeppelin, but I don't think he really knew what he wanted to do. I think he just wanted to have a good time."

Collins appeared on Plant's first two solo albums, *Pictures At Eleven* and *The Principle Of Moments*, as well as playing with the singer's band on a US tour in support of the latter. It was this association that led him to being drumming with Zeppelin during their ill-fated reunion at the American Live Aid in 1985. "Yes, that gig," he says wryly. "Was it as bad as everybody says? Well, I've been involved in better gigs..."

BRAND X

If *Plays Well With Others* shows anything, it's the sheer breadth of Collins' output, from prog to blue-eyed soul.

But many connoisseurs of his imperial years in the 70s and early 80s point to Brand X, the jazz rock group put together by bass supremo Percy Jones.

"Brand X allowed me to branch out and do things I could have never got away with in Genesis," he says. "With Genesis, things were very structured and ordered. With Brand X, things were... not looser, but that bit freer."

Collins was a fan of the great jazz fusion bands of the era. Ask him who he wishes he'd had a chance to play with and he replies instantly: "Joe Zawinul from The Weather Report. He could do incredible things on the keyboard. No one sounded like him."

With that, our time is up. "I suppose I've done well out of it all," he says. "People kept asking me to come and work with them, so I must have been doing something right." ☺

Plays Well With Others is out on September 28 via Rhino. For more information, see www.philcollins.com.

ONE DAY ALL THIS COULD BE YOURS

Brexit. Pollution. Social injustice. The rise of the right. Modern life might be rubbish, but it doesn't half inspire some great music. Just ask **Mike Vennart**, who's back with a creative call to arms, and opinions on everything from drugs and drums to dark times and dream pigs.

Words: Emma Johnston **Portraits:** Steve Gullick

Fear was a much simpler emotion during childhood. Monsters under the bed, fanged *Doctor Who* aliens and, in early adolescent years, the bloodthirsty creatures lurking in the darkest corners of Stephen King's imagination offered a thrill of fantastical danger, offset by the warm comfort and safety of the family home, and parental assurances that there were no such thing as ghosts.

But in adulthood, the rising sense of uncontrollable terror so many of us feel on a daily basis comes not from fictional ghouls but from the chaos, violence and cruelty meted out on the *News At Ten*, or under the avuncular guidance of David Attenborough as he forces us to face up to the damage that we as a species have done to the planet we call home.

It's the big issues that have been keeping Mike Vennart awake, and that have informed much of his new album *To Cure A Blizzard Upon A Plastic Sea*, a stunningly evocative follow-up to 2015's solo debut *The Demon Joke*. It's crammed with the dense, heavy, progressive melodicism that has been his trademark ever since the earliest days of his previous band Oceansize.

"*To Cure A Blizzard* was what the album was called for a long time, and that came from the track *Robots In Disguise*," he explains. "That is primarily about dehumanisation and how the Brexit mentality has enabled the general public to think it's okay to look down your nose at people who are living in poverty, people who are downtrodden, or people who are fleeing a war zone. It's okay to have no sympathy for them. The idea being that you can shield your kids from all these horrendous things and just keep them indoors and they don't have to worry about these sorts of things. The flipside of that is that living in a cocoon sends you fucking crazy as well. Seclusion can protect, but it can also totally destroy."

The second half of the album title is taken from the song *Immortal Soldiers*, inspired by watching his six-year-old son playing with his *Star Wars* action figures, and coming to the chilling realisation that, in their imaginary battles, they will die a thousand times, but in real life will outlive us all.

"I'm just fucking surrounded by plastic," he notes. "And the older I get,

I'm just incredibly phobic of plastic now. It's weird, it's just everywhere, and it's going to outlive us all by thousands of fucking years."

None of this will come as too much of a surprise to those who follow Vennart on social media, where, among excitable tweets about his love of Iron Maiden and whipping up interest in his new tour, he rages against social injustice, benefit cuts for those most in need, and the rise of the far right. Just recently he was appalled to witness a man at a Roger Waters gig in Manchester who insisted on doing the Nazi salute all the way through the show, wordlessly and aggressively daring those around him to confront his actions.

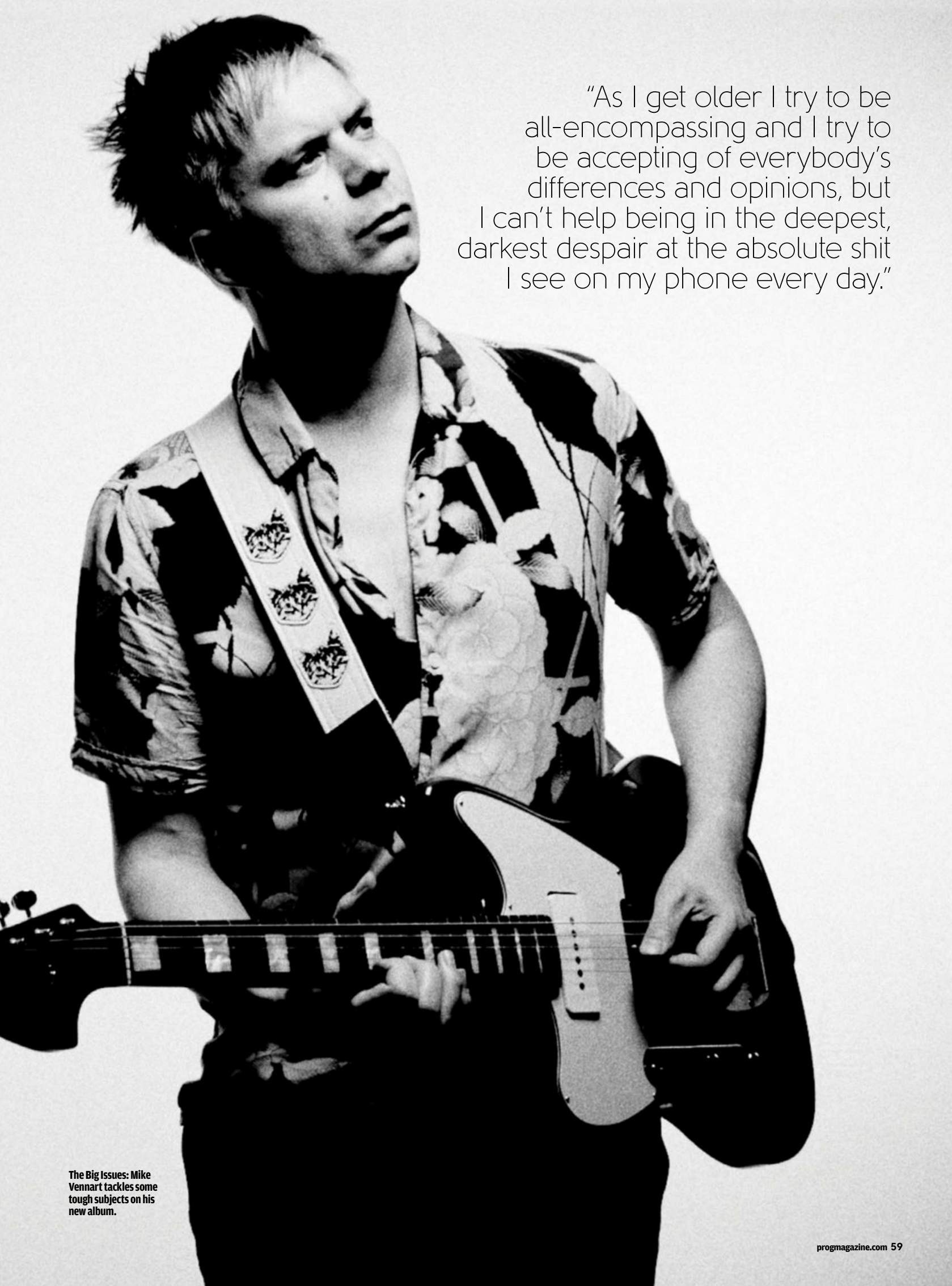
But even without too-close-for-comfort examples like this, the constant stream of 24-hour bad news, of a world circling the drain, had already become too much to handle. So high was the anxiety that he developed a nervous twitch, and found he was obsessing over things, replaying events in his head from 10, 20, 30 years ago, with more layers being added with every new bulletin.

"As I get older I try to be all-encompassing and I try to be accepting of everybody's differences and opinions, but I can't help being in the deepest, darkest despair at the absolute shit I see on my phone every day," he says. "All day every day it's fucking bad news and it's lies, fucking he-said-she-said Chinese whispers. It's fake news, but why can't we get to the bottom of what is fucking real and what isn't? Even when something is proven to be real or something is debunked, the lie is always there and it's bigger than anything. It drives me fucking insane."

"It's driven me to the point where I've had to start taking antidepressants, because however awful this shit is that's happening, I've got shit to do, I've got relationships to maintain, I've got a kid to bring up and I've got a wife to adore. I can't be letting this shit get in the way, but it was."

Elsewhere, there's a song written from the perspective of a suckling piglet destined for the dinner table. "One night me and Simon [Neil, Biffy Clyro frontman] went out in Germany and we were served



A black and white photograph of Mike Vennart, a young man with short, dark hair, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a short-sleeved shirt with a bold, tropical floral pattern. He is holding a dark-colored electric guitar with a light-colored pickguard. The guitar strap is light-colored and features three circular patches. The background is a plain, light color.

"As I get older I try to be all-encompassing and I try to be accepting of everybody's differences and opinions, but I can't help being in the deepest, darkest despair at the absolute shit I see on my phone every day."

The Big Issues: Mike Vennart tackles some tough subjects on his new album.

Vennart takes a close look at society's dark heart on ...*Plastic Sea*.



suckling piglet. To this day I have recurring nightmares that I'm being served this live piglet, and it's looking me in the eye, saying, 'Please don't, please don't...'

Then there are ruminations on "getting old and not really wanting to take class A drugs any more, but your mates who are a bit older than you haven't got the memo, so you're having to hang around with people that are absolutely off their heads on coke".

It's not all darkness though: Vennart is a funny and engaging man. Who else, after all, would come up with a doomed-to-be-mispronounced song title like *Diamond Ballgag*?

and wore a leather jacket and was into heavy metal. I literally had no mates. I can remember the first time I heard [Nirvana's] *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. I was sat in the toilet cubicle, listening to the radio on my Walkman on my own because I didn't have any friends. I couldn't ever go around telling anyone I wanted to be a singer.

"So when I moved to Manchester when I was 18, I just found you could be absolutely anyone you wanted to be. And there are venues of every size – for every style of band, there's somewhere to play. I just love it. I can't imagine living anywhere else. I've been all over the world

"When I moved to Manchester when I was 18, I just found you could be absolutely anyone you wanted to be. I've been all over the world and seriously, I don't need anything else. It's just got it all."

His adopted hometown of Manchester is a subject of adoration on the album. After the bombing at the Ariana Grande concert in 2017, the nation couldn't help but be floored by the wonderful resilience and compassion displayed by the city's residents, but Vennart had long been planning to pay tribute to the place, particularly in the surprisingly baggy vibe of *Spider Bones*.

"I've just got a lot of pride for it," he says. "I grew up in a suburb of Leeds. If you weren't wearing a tracksuit or if you weren't into football, you were just an outcast. I was the only kid in my school that had long hair

and seriously, I don't need anything else. It's just got it all."

As with *The Demon Joke*, *To Cure A Blizzard...* was written and recorded during downtime from his day job as live guitarist for Biffy Clyro, and once again features the talents of former Oceansize comrades Richard 'Gambler' Ingram (keyboards) and Steve Durose (guitar), with the latter also playing an invaluable role in producing the record.

"The drum sounds that Steve managed to conjure, they are things I didn't even think were possible," says Vennart. "In the past, we've gone for a big rock, almost metal drum sound. This time it was, 'Let's make it sound like Fleetwood Mac, or David Bowie. Let's make it sound really, really 70s and then counteract that with some big rock action.' I was just delighted with what Steve managed to pull out of the bag – it was really different."

We do live in dark times. But as long as there are creative souls questioning the status quo, standing up against injustice and calling the powers that be to account, there's hope, humour and a sense of solidarity to be found. *To Cure A Blizzard Upon A Plastic Sea* is a call to topple plastic armies both literal and figurative, and its importance to its creator can be summed up by his final word on the record: "I haven't been that excited making an album since the second Oceansize album."

The monsters under the bed are real. It's time to chase them out. 

To Cure A Blizzard Upon A Plastic Sea is out now via Medium Format. See www.vennart.com for more information.



ON THE SIDE

A catch-up with **Mike Vennart's** other musical ventures.

OCEANSIZE

The truly unique, much-loved progressive rock band stood alone in terms of style right up until their split in 2011. Don't expect a reunion any time soon.

"We still get a lot of offers, but not enough money for Gambler [Richard Ingram] on his own. Not one fee has been enough for Gambler's pocket singly. I would have considered it, but Gambler's like, 'No chance.' He's not daft!"

BIFFY CLYRO

Vennart and Gambler are both touring members of the hugely successful Scottish rock band, with whom they formed a friendship

as labelmates in the early stages of their careers.

"One of the things I was really encouraged by when I was doing this album was how eclectic most Biffy albums are. When I was worried about not all the songs fitting together, I looked at *Opposites*, their double album [released in 2013], and realised there's some fast, thrashing, riffy stuff on there, there's ambient stuff, and then there's a mariachi song on it.

"All these different elements of the band can live together and they'll still sound like that band and it's okay. I took a lot of comfort from that."

BRITISH THEATRE

A more electronic project from Vennart and Gambler, British Theatre released their first album *Mastery* in 2016. A new full-length release is on the cards.

"The second BT record is in the works, and we're setting ourselves certain parameters this time. Last time we knocked ourselves out with the technology and that made for a pretty varied record. This time we're gonna hopefully bring some cohesion to it by sticking to certain rules of thumb. We're planning on not using computers – hardware toys only. Synths and drum machines. But we haven't written a fucking note of it yet." **EJ**

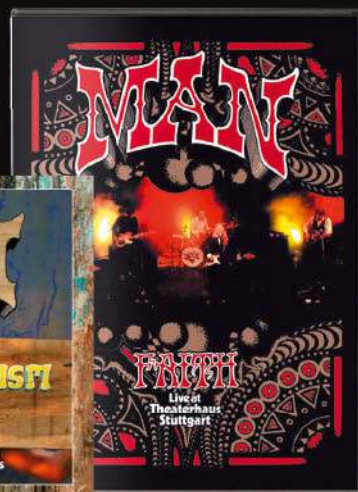
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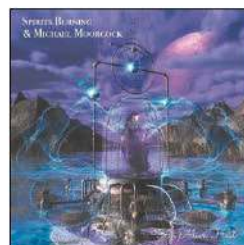
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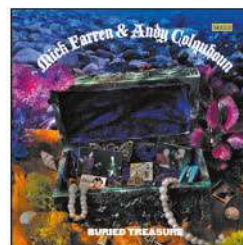


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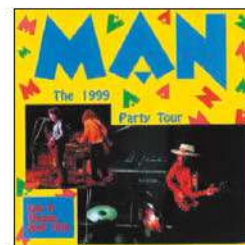


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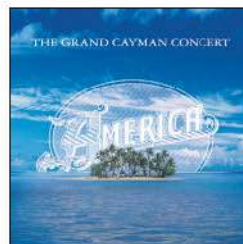


Rick Wakeman

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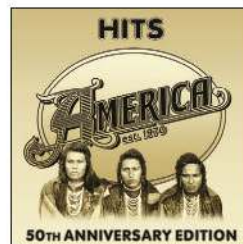


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PLEDGE MUSIC

GONZO

YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT

Hawkwind's latest foray into the unknown is a reworking of their classics with orchestral arrangements... but will it sink or soar?

Words: Johnny Sharp
Images: Ross Jennings

Dave Brock is sat at home at his Devon farm, wondering if Hawkwind's latest creative diversion will be greeted as a stroke of maverick genius or a baffling wrong turn. *Road To Utopia* is a reworking of nine vintage Hawkwind numbers with various brassy and bucolic arrangements by noted friend of The Wombles, Katie Melua mentor and all-round pop polymath Mike Batt. Ever wondered what songs such as *Quark*, *Strangeness And Charm* or *Psi Power* would sound like with mariachi trumpets on them? No? Well, you're about to find out anyway.

For some, the result might be sacrilegious. For others, though, it'll be exactly the kind of unorthodox, slightly WTF move that makes you love Hawkwind all the more.

And the meeting of minds that spawned it all took place at that renowned celeb-spotting mecca, the US Embassy in London's Grosvenor Square. On any given morning you can find all walks of life queuing up cheek-by-jowl at a highly un-rock'n'roll hour of the morning to attend their 'interview' for an American visa. And during the hours you spend waiting, you never know who you'll end up chatting to.

"I looked round, and there was Mike Batt and Katie Melua queuing behind us," Brock recalls.

This was back in 2007, Brock's wife and Hawkwind manager Kris Tait reminds him, but Batt and Brock stayed in touch, and an unlikely collaboration has now borne fruit. After Hawkwind began rearranging

some of their back catalogue to play acoustic sets before their main shows, the idea of more adventurous arrangements began to develop. Batt came on board, and that was when Brock realised that he was signing up for an experience far removed from his usual studio practises.

"Mike's worked with a lot of famous stars and he's a clever guy," the 77-year-old explains, "but it was a bit of a different experience for us working with him. We should have known because Kris said, 'Did you know he did *Eve Of Destruction* with Lemmy [when Batt was conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in 1998] a few years back?' Apparently Lemmy said, 'I did my vocals and I thought that was it,' and then Mike said, 'Can you do 'em again?'" and Lemmy said, 'Why? I've already done it!' But Mike is a stickler for *getting things right!*"

This was a challenging concept for Hawkwind, not a band known for their adherence to military discipline or rigid song structures.

"It was like two extremes meeting," Brock says. "We were working with musicians who have to have everything sight read, and that's totally different from us because I can't read music – never have. We all play by ear, whereas Mike writes it all down on a score. One time Magnus [Martin] was playing this lovely guitar bit at the beginning and Mike shouts, 'Oh, come on! You're two bars out!' For fuck's sake, we can be 10 bars out – if we're into it, we just carry on!"

Nonetheless, the result is some pretty interesting reworkings of the Hawkwind back catalogue.

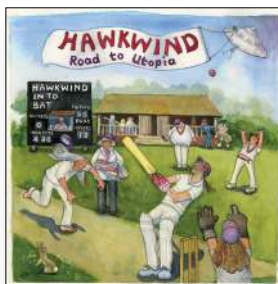
They take the insistent, apocalyptic drone of *The Watcher* as it's often played on stage (which was already some way removed from the Lemmy-fronted 1972 original) and introduce bluesy guitar to prowl and growl around the central bass groove, adding

an extra sense of menace. It's a touch that comes courtesy of a mutual friend of Batt and Brock, no less a star guest than Eric Clapton.

"We've known each other for years," Brock explains. "When I used to go busking down Portobello Road, he had an apartment in Notting Hill Gate and I'd pop round for cups of tea.

We got back in touch when someone from his management was asking the story of how we met for someone's biography. I was already playing quite bluesy harmonica and guitar on that track, so we asked him and he said, 'Yeah, I'd love to.' If we can get someone like that on our record," he laughs, "who knows what's next?"

Soothing strings and woodwind seduce on *We Took The Wrong Step Years Ago*, despite the absence of the sonic swirl that surrounds it on 1971's *In Search Of Space*. But as the song continues, the vocal begins to sound increasingly forlorn, as if smiling ruefully at the naïve idealism of the original.



Batt's Entertainment: Hawkwind's new album *Road To Utopia*.

"One time Magnus Martin was playing this lovely guitar bit at the beginning and Mike Batt shouts, 'Oh, come on! You're two bars out!' For fuck's sake, we can be 10 bars out - if we're into it, we just carry on!"



Hawkwind, clockwise from left: Niall Hone, Richard Chadwick, Magnus Martin, Dave Brock.

"Yeah, when Mike got hold of that one he actually put a bit of [Vaughan Williams'] *The Lark Ascending* on it, I believe, and changed it into a bit of a classical piece, which is really nice..."

It makes you listen to a very familiar song in a slightly different way.

Similarly, Brock and Batt's reworking of *The Age Of The Micro Man* (one of three numbers from Brock and Robert Calvert's 1978 Hawkwind side project) turns into a more fully realised version of the brief reverie we heard 40 years ago. It's slowed down to funeral pace, and the epic piano and space rock undertow of the original are stripped back and replaced by mournful cello and whirring clocks. Later on, drowsy sax evokes the paranoid trippiness of *Dark Side Of The Moon*-era Pink Floyd.

The vocal sounds older and more resigned, which suits this tale of an 'insect man who pushes buttons and takes back the can'. Then added to that is a new spoken-word monologue wherein an officious voice suggests "humanity needs to be... cleansed, I think", adding an extra layer of sinister, mechanised dystopia to the whole affair.

"When we originally wrote it," Brock explains, "we had in mind this recurring scene in the Fritz Lang movie *Metropolis*, where they're moving the clock hands round. We were going to do a whole show based around that story, and the theme of people going to work and doing the same old thing day after day. In the end, that inspired the new version of this song. I also got a mate of mine to play all this lovely jazz saxophone over it, but Mike was like, 'I don't like that, we can't have that!' [Laughs] So he only used a bit of it, which is a shame — but that's life. Next time!"

Statements like that suggest Brock relinquished creative control over this project to a greater degree than he usually would, and he admits he sometimes bowed to Batt's superior experience as an arranger.

"We did the bulk of it remotely," he says. "We'd have these very long phone calls where he'd sit at a piano and I'd sit with my guitar, and we'd play pieces to each other. 'This is my arrangement, Dave, and the violin does this...' he'd say, and play all the different parts on piano, and meanwhile I'd say, 'I've got this part here — go on, Mike, put your fairy dust over this.'"

More often than not, it works. *Down Through The Night*'s orchestral sweep at first creates an anxious, highly strung accompaniment to some tentative, scratchy acoustic footsteps. Then an ebullient brass section blasts out of the depths to lift the central riff, before some ringing guitar histrionics propel us into a maelstrom of heavy, cacophonous noise. It then disintegrates into the cosmos before

a backdrop of what sound like Monty Python comedy clips. Curious.

And if some tracks divide opinion and don't appeal to every Hawkwind-friendly ear out there, you still have to hand it to the band for refusing to take the safe option.

"If you were an artist, you wouldn't paint the same pictures with the same colours every time, would you? It's the same with playing live. You have to keep changing or you become a tribute to yourself. We did a gig in Jodrell Bank not so long ago with a Pink Floyd tribute band and apparently Floyd had given them the okay to use their original backing tracks — I couldn't believe it! They played everything exactly the same as on the records and I thought, 'What's the point?' Fair enough, play the same numbers, but not all the same every time. We always play everything different. I don't even listen to the originals any more — they're different songs now."

One thing that's noticeable is that all the tracks on *Road To Utopia* are from the 1970s — is that the era of the band Brock is fondest of?

"Well, at that time I was writing a lot of stuff with Bob Calvert," he says, "and between me and him we came up with some quite wonderful things together. He really brought something unique to the band, certainly lyrically."

It's just gone 30 years since Calvert, Hawkwind's resident poet and all-round agent provocateur, passed away, and meanwhile, another core member of the group, guitarist Huw Lloyd Langton, went to meet his Master of the Universe in 2012. What does Brock think they would make of this unusual creative detour?

"They'd love it! Seriously, they loved to do something a bit different like this. If only we could get some of those guys from back then playing this stuff — imagine Lemmy playing with Eric! Guess they'll just have to form their band in the sky, won't they?"

Brock speaks warmly of his ex-bandmates, with the notable exception of Nik Turner, whom he's vowed never to reconcile with, due to his attempts to tout the Hawkwind name around America and, in Brock's view, 'ruin the band's credibility'. He's saying nothing further this time to suggest anything's changed on that front. Either way, here we are, barely a year away from the 50th anniversary of Hawkwind's formation, and the guitarist and now only part-time frontman is the last founder member remaining. But he's not considering the final curtain any time soon...

"I'm always aghast when anybody suggests we'll go beyond the next gig. Then Kris says, 'Okay, next year we're playing the blah blah festival in Sweden,' and I'm like, 'Oh for fuck's



"If you were an artist, you wouldn't paint the same pictures with the same colours every time, would you? It's the same with playing live. You have to keep changing or you become a tribute to yourself."



Mike Batt: reworking Hawkwind's classics.



The veteran space rockers are adding a new string to their bow with *Road To Utopia*.

sake!’ But if I can hang on through, who knows how long we can go on for...”

It’s certainly no mean tenure, especially given the well-documented recreational habits the band have indulged in over the years. Does the head Hawk still dabble?

“Yeah, but the best way to think is that a little is better than too much. I have a vegan diet and that helps a lot. Meat is probably the worst thing considering the crap stuff they put into animals, and I don’t drink milk. So there you go – I hope that’s a lesson to you, young man! [Laughs]

“But seriously, I think you can take everything within reason. I don’t drink that much but I like a fine wine, and I like to smoke my odd bit of marijuana. I think Tim Leary did that actually before he died – he rolled a grass joint on his death bed, didn’t he? I’m thinking, ‘Well, that can’t be too bad!’”

The first priority for Brock and the boys now, though, is to get their act together for a string of autumn dates billed *In Search Of Utopia: Infinity And Beyond*, rolling out the new album live with Mike Batt and a full orchestra. More surprises, it seems, are in store.

“Mike’s written a score for it,” Brock reports, “but there are a couple of new tracks people haven’t heard, and Dibs [Bassist/frontman Mr Dibs announced he was departing Hawkwind in August via Facebook after this interview took place.] is doing a couple of poems.

“There are going to be a few pieces that are really quite unusual, with the orchestra and Mike’s arrangements. And we’ll be playing some electronic stuff through that. There are parts that are pretty weird and experimental. I even wanted to get the audience to be the choral society, doing backing vocals. If we can make it all work, it could be pretty interesting.”

Nonetheless, it’s clear that the band remain outside their comfort zone.

“Oh yeah, I tell yer, we’re all viewing it with trepidation after the experience of making this record. But we’ll be good boys and knuckle down – Mike will be there with his stick, saying, ‘Look here, you’re one bar out!’”

Joking aside, though, there seems to be a genuine apprehension on Brock’s part regarding what the Hawkwind faithful will make of it all. But he does at least have some reassuring words for those who prefer their space rock the way it used to be.

“I dunno what response it’s gonna get, but I will tell you that the next album we do will be totally different to this – back to big, heavy, three chords.”

Until then, though, strap yourselves in for another long, strange trip. ☺

Road To Utopia is out now via Cherry Red. See www.hawkwind.com for more.

SILVER LININGS

Losing singer Dan Tompkins could have spelled the end for Indian quintet **Skyharbor**, but with new vocalist Eric Emery, they're taking the opportunity to push their progressive metal into the mainstream.

Words: Eleanor Goodman

Images: Argon Photography

Skyharbor were right in the middle of their crowdfunding campaign for second album *Guiding Lights* when they got the news: their singer, Daniel Tompkins, was rejoining his old band, Tesseract. While he pledged to carry on with both bands, guitarist and bandleader Keshav Dhar knew there would be logistical difficulties and braced himself for the worst.

"It didn't feel good," he remembers today, talking over Skype from his home in New Delhi, India. "We were finally pitching ourselves as a band that means business,

and not just Dan Tompkins' side project, and then this happened. But I knew exactly what was going on in his life because we're very close friends. Obviously Skyharbor weren't making money, and he needed something to give him security to provide for his family."

They tried to make it work, with the understanding that Tesseract would take priority, but Skyharbor ended up cancelling some commitments and turning down shows. When Tompkins pulled out of Scandinavian dates in early 2015 for a last-minute chance to play in an igloo in Lapland with Tesseract,



leaving them to play instrumental sets, it became clear the arrangement wasn't ideal. Tompkins bowed out.

"Afterwards he basically emailed everybody saying it was unfair to us, it wasn't going to be healthy for the band going forwards, and it made sense that we look for someone else," says Dhar. "Which is what we were doing not just with him, but our old drummer Anup Sastry as well, because he was in Intervals and Jeff Loomis. It was a nightmare. You can only say no to so many things before the offers stop coming."

Thankfully, Skyharbor quickly found new singer Eric Emery, based in the States. The vocalist had trained as an engineer with Johnny K (Disturbed, Plain White T's) and worked on a Grammy-winning gospel record. In a sort of djent game of Chinese whispers, he was recommended by Australian producer Forrester Savell (who had mixed *Guiding Lights*), who knew about him through then-Periphery bassist Adam 'Nolly' Getgood, who had seen him covering Karnivool on YouTube.

With Emery and drummer Aditya Ashok now in the ranks, the band are poised to release their stunning third album, *Sunshine Dust*. It takes the prog metal of their former records and adds more hooks, pushing into accessible territory without compromising on the technical riffs or the sense of hopeful exuberance that make them great.

"I'm really proud of it," smiles Dhar. I think it's a pretty eclectic mix of all the directions we've trod water in over the past years, but with definite intent and purpose this time. We're pleased as punch."

The seeds for *Sunshine Dust* were sown four years ago, towards the end of the writing process for *Guiding Lights*. A concept album of sorts, touching on Tompkins' experiences as a father, it felt like one long cinematic piece of music, so the band were selective about their material and shelved anything that was "a little more experimental or weird or unsafe". When Tompkins had left and the new members were in place in June 2015, they began building on this foundation in earnest.

But a new singer brought new challenges. When Tompkins wrote with Skyharbor, he would take the music and "go to town" on it, recording a near-finished part. Emery, a fan of alternative bands such as Tool and Incubus, took a different approach. He preferred to mumble a rough melody into his phone, ask for feedback and collaborate on it. Eventually, though, the guys found a middle ground and settled into a rhythm.

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Eric Emery

"I can see where he comes from, because in that scene, their thought process is basically that if you can play the chord progression on an acoustic and just sing your melody, the song should be able to stand on its own," says Dhar. "But we come from a prog background, and what we like to do is pay attention to all the minutiae. So even when we're demoing, we like to go in depth with all the little details. It took time to get used to each other's way of working, but it was never disharmonious."

By early 2017, their third record was finished, but the band were still without

a label or funding. They were reluctant to put their hand out for money again so soon after *Guiding Lights*, so decided to go it alone, mixing it in-house and getting the artwork ready. When they landed a dream support slot with Deftones, it seemed like the perfect moment to unleash their creation on the world. But then they started having second thoughts.

"We were *this* close to uploading the tracks and making it live, and we had an emergency meeting," reveals Dhar. "We asked ourselves, 'Are we really happy with what we're doing?' And the answer was: not really. We were burned out on the material, having done it all ourselves, and having no objective perspective. We were also asking ourselves what our endgame was. If it's all about the money then sure, we can put it out now. But if this is about something bigger, like if we really wanna break into the American market, we're not gonna be able to do it by ourselves."

Around then, they started speaking to the guys who would become their management, Jay Tavernese and Lewis Cosby from Empire Reign. Cosby used to play bass in American alt-rock band 10 Years and, under their guidance, Skyharbor signed with Good Fight/eOne. The label offered to fly the band anywhere to re-record their music with a producer, so they chose Savell and went out to Melbourne, Australia last November.

"It felt a little unnerving at first, like, are they just taking a dump on all this effort we've put in? I felt a stab of rejection," Dhar says. "But once that passed, it was great. I didn't have to think about whether I'd done a good or a bad job, I could just be the songwriter or guitar player and let this headache be handled by someone else. It was a huge relief."

It was the first time the quintet had worked in the same place, rather than remotely. They recorded for a month, rising at 6am every morning for a swim and some breakfast, before hooking up with Savell. He and co-producer Luke Williams, drummer with Dead Letter Circus, would listen to the songs and dissect them, taking parts from verses and rearranging them over choruses.

Skyharbor: the new-look band are taking their first real steps outside of Prog Town.



"It was pretty horrifying at first!" exclaims Dhar. "But we looked at each other and shut up, stepped out and let them do their thing. When we walked back in and heard what they had in mind, it was great."

For Emery, a self-confessed "night owl" who wasn't a fan of tracking his vocals at 11am, it was the best moment of the sessions. "I loved it," he says. "I know it's hard for some of the guys because they were watching their babies get destroyed, but I like to see where songs go. A lot of songwriters are so married to their initial idea that they hinder the potential of the song."

While Skyharbor's previous records were lyrically introspective, *Sunshine Dust* looks at the world around it. Dhar has been troubled by the social unrest that's rippled through India since a new government came to power in 2014, splitting society along religious lines. While he tries to remain apolitical, he's rattled by the "violence and dark suspicion" he's observed around him.

"We're seeing people literally get killed over suspicion of carrying beef in their lunchbox," he tells us. "Every now and then, you'll see there's a Muslim guy on a train who's going somewhere, and the train suddenly gets boarded by a gang of Hindu guys. They ask him what he's got in his lunchbox, and regardless, even if it's just lamb or something, they beat him to death. This mob lynching has got worse and worse and worse."

They also noticed turbulence in the US, with shootings reported in many cities they played. When Emery started penning the words, there was a lot of "Trump stuff" going on, and it turned into an "existential look at where we are". Some songs are open-ended, while others have specific meanings — single *Dim* is a political song that references lying leaders. Meanwhile, the closing title track offers a bleak yet hopeful outlook.

"The imagery in my mind while I was writing this album was post-apocalyptic chaos," explains Emery. "All this bad stuff has happened, a metaphorical nuclear bomb has gone off, and then in the aftermath there's a moment where everything's sort of calm and peaceful. You can look around and go, 'There's

a purity to this, and maybe there's some hope.' So, the *Sunshine Dust* is literally the dust particles of the debris sparkling in the sun. It's about finding your own inner strength."

While the likes of Dream Theater continue to rep prog metal in the mainstream, followed by rising tech metal figureheads like Tesseract and Periphery, Skyharbor

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Eric Emery

concede that it's difficult to make a living in this niche space these days.

"It could be because the djent thing is kind of on its way out," Dhar muses. "When it was fresh, every conversation about new bands on the block was about Tesseract and Periphery, and the same goes for Animals As Leaders. But now these bands are veterans, it's possible that things have cooled down. I also feel that the way a band could explode in the 90s and early 2000s isn't really a thing any more. It's a much slower and more gradual process now."

With *Sunshine Dust*, Skyharbor hope to break genre boundaries and broaden their appeal. Thanks to the new parts they've written, the melodies Emery has championed and Savell's critical eye, they have a record that could expose them to bigger and increasingly diverse crowds.

"I think it's a significant step into a more mainstream world," says Emery. "We love prog and being associated with it, but we feel

there's something more there. Dan's approach seemed to be supporting the music more, but I want to be a singer out front, singing awesome hooks that people are gonna be chanting in their car. It's opening doors for us, and we're talking to a lot of bands we wouldn't have been able to if we'd stayed in Prog Town."

That Deftones tour last March/April was a huge coup for the band, followed by a North American outing with kawaii metallers Babymetal in May. It's all fuel for their mission to conquer the US market. Currently Emery — who has just left Cleveland to open a studio in LA — lives there, along with guitarist Devesh Dayal. Dhar is in New Delhi, while bassist Krishna Jhaveri and drummer Aditya Ashok are from Mumbai. They make it work with the help of WhatsApp, Dropbox and planned rehearsals, but admit that the time zone differences can be frustrating.

"I'm okay not being able to rehearse, but for me it definitely affects the songwriting," notes Emery. "We noticed the difference when we went through that production phase in Australia, being able to sit in the room. The ideas that were flowing out would have taken three months to come up with on the computer separately."

Now the Indian contingent have three-year US visas in their pockets, they're eyeing up the potential of relocating if things go well enough. "A lot of it boils down to finances," says Dhar. "It costs about £1,000 for one person to fly from India to the States — that's nuts. So when you've got three people to fly, that's £3,000 before you've even reached your destination. It would make things a lot easier if we were all based there."

Tompkins' departure could have spelled the end for Skyharbor, but instead they're soaring into a bright new future of limitless potential. They've found that ray of light cutting through the dust particles.

"Stuff's been happening so fast lately," marvels Emery. "It's cool to take the next step and see what happens. My goal is to get the band as popular as we can be." 📀

Sunshine Dust is available now via eOne. See www.skyharborband.com for more information.

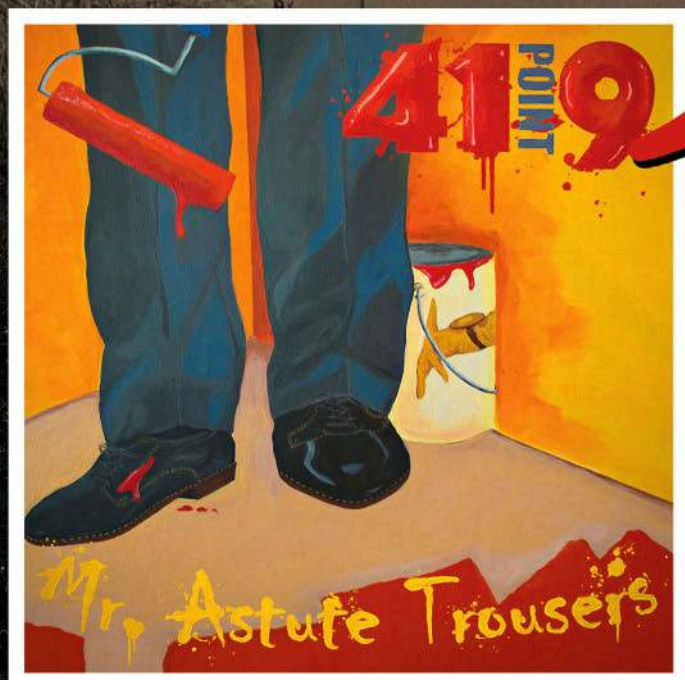
Skyharbor with new
singer Eric Emery
(second from left).



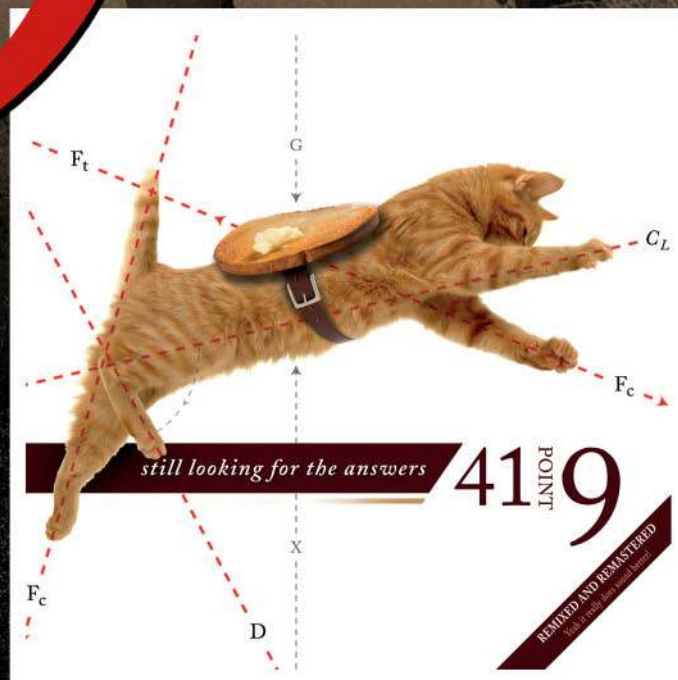
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The Pineapple Thief are back with album number 12, one that perfectly encapsulates their style. **Bruce Soord** and **Gavin Harrison** talk dark lyrics, 'cyber jamming' and battling demons...

Words: Polly Glass **Images:** James Cumpsty

If your first impression of Bruce Soord was his lyrics, you'd expect a deeply troubled man. For nearly 20 years he's specialised in beautiful angst, painting soul-searching vignettes that tap into some of the darkest recesses of human strife. At times this has been informed by personal experience, as seen in the introverted aggro of his earliest works, as well as the pain of losing a child in 2006's *Little Man*.

To actually meet him, however, is to meet a different person: an upbeat leading light in alternative music (both as a musician and multi-channel mixer with Opeth, Anathema and Gong among his credits) and the happily married father of twins. A pretty happy guy, essentially.

"I still love every day, I savour every moment!" he beams from his Yeovil studio, in cheerfully accentless tones. "But I think it was when the label emailed me and said, 'We need the lyrics,' and I had them on pieces of paper, and I read over them and was like, 'Oh my God, this is pretty bleak even for me.'"

So... are you okay?

"Yeah people do ask me that a lot," he grins, slightly guiltily. "'How's your family? How's your wife?' We're fine, we're fine! But I guess it's just looking at the world around me. I haven't turned into this nihilistic kind of 'we're doomed' guy. I don't think that. I still think humanity is wonderful."

Soord is in a good mood. Looking relaxed and magnificently tanned, he's just opened his preferred end-of-day poison, a bottle of Duvel beer, and is ready to talk about *Dissolution*, his 12th album with The Pineapple Thief. It's gone down very well, combining the hooky, contemporary-sounding tune focus of 2014's 'poppier' *Magnolia* with the gnarlier, more sprawling impact of his classic prog and rock influences. With tunes ranging from sharp four-minute hits to the 11-plus minutes of *White Mist*, it's perhaps the most complete representation of all the band's epochs, from the atmospheric, twisty prog of 1999 debut *Abducting The Unicorn* through to the present.

And Soord appears no worse off for the remote, internet-based process that led to its creation. Not that the irony of making an album about the destructive effects of social media and 24/7 communication – via WhatsApp, Skype and the like – is lost on him.

"It's a bit of a contradiction isn't it!" he laughs. "Personally I took a step back and unplugged my connections and replugged them in just for the people who mattered."

Still, in the wake of recent headlines – when we speak, Facebook overlord Mark Zuckerberg has recently lost almost \$17bn in an hour – the album's thematic focus feels pleasingly topical.

"I think in centuries to come, the period we're going through now will be recognised as a momentous time, not in a good way," he says. "I think people are realising that it's gone too far."

Family and friends aside (his wife is expecting their third child in October), the people he's cared about staying connected with are the other musicians that complete The Pineapple Thief. There's bassist Jon Sykes, who Soord has known since he was 18, long-time keyboardist Steve Kitch, collaborating guitarist Darran Charles (also of heavy progressive types Godsticks) and drummer Gavin Harrison.

It's difficult to be immersed in the progosphere without coming across Harrison. The goatee-ed sticksman from Middlesex has become one of the most in-demand drummers on the scene. Following years of work as a sideman to various megastars, he gradually moved into a new niche: giving established progressive acts a new lease of life. First it was Porcupine Tree (his arrival, for 2002's *In Absentia*, saw them effectively 'break out'), then King Crimson – with whom he's on tour when we talk over the phone for this piece – and most recently The Pineapple Thief.

Following an introduction via their mutual label Kscope, Harrison was effectively 'parachuted' in to help finish arrangements for 2016 album *Your Wilderness*. This time, now an official member of the band, he was involved with songwriting from the beginning, laying down drum parts from his own Tardis-like studio in London. Even 'cyber jamming' ideas, as they did, it still felt like an organic team effort, compared with earlier records for which Bruce would demo up tracks very thoroughly before showing them to the rest of the band.

"We batted it back and forth like that, and that was the big difference," Soord reasons. "People automatically think, 'Oh my God that's such a sterile environment, creating this album with some kind of formula,' but it wasn't like that at all. It was like being in a sweaty rehearsal room, but 200 miles apart!"

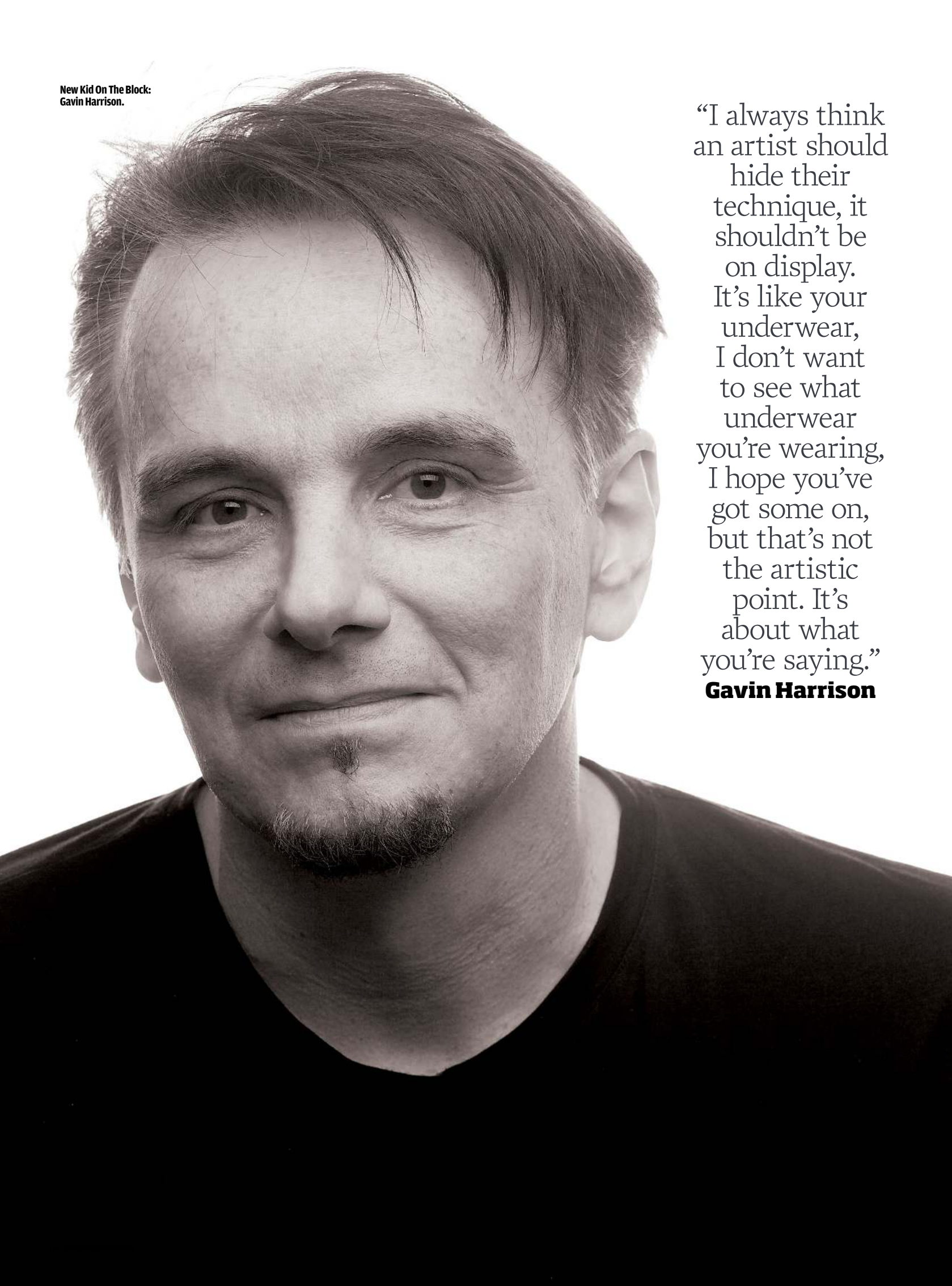
"I haven't
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Bruce Soord

It's The End Of The World As We Know It...

Bruce Soord: cheerier
than he looks...



A black and white portrait of Gavin Harrison, a man with dark hair and a goatee, wearing a dark t-shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is plain white.

New Kid On The Block:
Gavin Harrison.

“I always think an artist should hide their technique, it shouldn’t be on display. It’s like your underwear, I don’t want to see what underwear you’re wearing, I hope you’ve got some on, but that’s not the artistic point. It’s about what you’re saying.”

Gavin Harrison

For Harrison this arrangement felt completely natural. It's how all the Porcupine Tree records he was part of were made, and how he does most of his recording these days.

"Even with The Pineapple Thief we could've afforded to go in a studio and do it all together," he says. "But you do get used to the idea of having no pressure, so if you want to spend three days working on a drum track, that's fine. You haven't wasted anyone's time, you haven't wasted anyone's money. It's a different story when all of the band members are sitting in an expensive studio in London and racking up thousands a day — there's much more pressure."

If Soord is the warm, chattering face of The Pineapple Thief — flitting between artistic confidence and decidedly British self-deprecation — Harrison is something of a straight-faced counterpart. As an interviewee, he's not unlike Steven Wilson. Serious but willingly talkative, he speaks clearly in full sentences, and with his uncompromising dedication to music, you can see how the pair got on well in Porcupine Tree.

"There has to be an amount of privacy, I suppose, to a certain degree," he says thoughtfully of the recording process. "It's a bit like taking all your clothes off in public: you're revealing a quite intimate part of yourself when you're recording and trying to express yourself in a very meaningful way. You've got to strip off all your excess things."

"You've got to get to a place that you might not feel comfortable with," he continues. "You're going to make an idiot out of yourself sometimes and you don't want everyone standing around while you're doing it. I don't feel that way personally on the drums, because I've come from a time where I used to do lots of sessions in studios with quite an audience. The very first Porcupine Tree album I did was like that actually; all the band, all the record company, and the engineers, and the management were all in the control room."

A naturally "coordinated kid", Harrison went to ballet school as a six-year-old (before discovering the drums) and watched his jazz trumpeter father play sessions at the BBC. Since then he's strived to produce unique drum parts, whether it's for a complex pattern or a standard 4/4 tempo, as shown on the dextrous yet restrained fills and rhythms on *Dissolution*. It lends itself well to the mix of oddball edges, melodic euphoria and biting progressive moodiness in highlights like *Try As I Might* and *Threatening War*.

"Before, in The Pineapple Thief, it [the drums] was there to serve a purpose," says Soord, "it wasn't really there to be creative. It was more about holding down a beat. I think Gavin's approach to drumming is so much more considered and so musical."

"The way he uses *all* his drum kit, his toms and these tiny cut-down cymbals, no one else really sounds like that," Soord continues. "It just inspires you to do stuff... and our bass player Jon, as soon as he heard it, all of a sudden he sounded like a better bass player. It made me realise actually how good Jon is because he was there playing and interacting with all these really delicate elements that Gavin brought in."

A multi-instrumentalist, as well as a drummer, he also plays a vintage wurlitzer on the middle section of one track, *Far Below*. Not that Harrison seeks to overwhelm with virtuosity, he says.

"I always think an artist should hide their technique, it shouldn't be on display," Harrison reasons. "It's like your underwear, I don't want to see what underwear you're wearing. I hope you've got some on, but that's not the artistic point. It about what you're saying."

Obviously you're using technique to express your point, but it's not the main thing."

When he joined, Soord said that Harrison (together with guitarist Charles) gave the band "a new lease of life". Did they seem like they were a band in need of a gear change, or help?

"I'd heard a couple of songs on a podcast and thought they were good," Harrison says. "When Bruce contacted me I was very open to the idea and happy to do it. But I wasn't making a deliberate effort to change the sound of that band; that's how they reacted to my sound. So it became a new-sounding group."

While Harrison's CV can be heard in *Dissolution* (the Porcupine Tree side especially), the full album embraces wider progressive terrain. The aforementioned *White Mist* in particular indicates a return to Soord's proggiest roots. As a child he lapped up records by Pink Floyd, Supertramp and the Alan Parsons Project, the influence of which has transferred to his present-day appreciation of more psychedelic jams. There were certain cornerstones of classic prog that didn't sit so easily, though...

"I remember when my mates were listening to Yes and they lent me *Close To The Edge*, and I thought, 'Oh God, what is this?!' I hated it," Soord remembers. "And after the fifth time, I was like, 'Alright, it sounds okay now, I'll keep playing it,' and I must've had to keep

playing 20 times till I could understand it and get into it. So even though I love that period of Yes now, at the time I found it really quite impenetrable. I was always more into the more melodic side of stuff, which is obviously why people like Floyd and Supertramp were up there."

In the late 80s and 90s he turned to the grungy likes of Nirvana, before swerving through the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Living Colour, Radiohead, early Biffy Clyro in the 00s and many others. Picking up tones and tricks along the way, it's made for a "weird mix", but one that's resonated with scores of fans. Not that there hasn't been some resistance along the way.

"If someone [on social media] wants to take a shot at you, you have to take it," he says, harking back to the lyrical themes of *Dissolution*. "You've got to have a really thick skin. And in the mid-period of The Pineapple Thief I didn't have a particularly thick skin. I used to get really upset and couldn't sleep 'cos I'd be thinking about these things that people were saying. It doesn't bother me now... okay, maybe a tiny, tiny bit, but in my old age I think I've conquered that."

For all the home studio perfectionism of *Dissolution*, the live show promises to be a lively affair: "No shoegazing!" Soord chuckles. "And I'll be sticking my guitar in the air and running around..."

As a unit they seem more confidently placed for touring compared with earlier tours — during which Soord, crippled by stage fright, would get drunk every night to get through it all. He concedes he's since had to "clean up" his act.

Have you overcome those demons now?

"I have put those demons to rest," he nods. "It took a long time. I think a lot of it is to do with having a band that is so good and to know that I can step onstage and it's gonna be great. Whereas in the old days I'd be so terrified of the whole process. But now that we've got to where we are..."

He pauses and smiles, slightly disbelieving: "It's only when you ask me questions like this that I think about how far we've come, especially over the last four years, that I realise that I have overcome my stage fright. Which is good. I'm pleased!" 🍷



The Pineapple Thief, L-R: Steve Kitch, Gavin Harrison, Bruce Soord, Jon Sykes.

Dissolution is out now via Kscope. The Pineapple Thief tour comes to the UK on October 4, 5 and 6. See www.pineapplethief.com for more information.

Allowing Himself: Giancarlo Erra
(centre) with Nosound.



LET IT BE...

With a new sound, attitude and way of writing, **Giancarlo Erra** has taken a huge leap forward on the latest **Nosound** album. The multi-talented musician reveals all about the record, the nature of progressive music, and finding the freedom to follow his muse.

Words: Rob Hughes **Images:** Caroline Traitler

Giancarlo Erra freely admits that he sometimes has a hard time with the term 'prog'. As the creative general of Nosound, the Italian five-piece who've charted a course through post-rock, electronica, ambient music and emotionally shattering alt-rock over the last decade or so, Erra is at pains to stress that the traditional precepts of prog should allow for more fluidity.

"If someone is expecting to hear prog in the classic definition of it then they really will be disappointed with us," he says. "I just hope it's progressive in the true meaning of the word, in that it should *progress*. It often seems to be the most retro and conservative genre when it should be the most forward-thinking."

Nosound's recorded output goes some way to backing up this statement. Each album has offered a stylistic variation on its immediate predecessor, be it via shifting accents of tone, texture or noise – and usually all three. Latest effort *Allow Yourself*, conceived at Erra's own Bench Music studio in his adopted home of Norfolk (with a little extra recording back in his native Rome) is no exception. In fact, it's probably the band's biggest departure thus far. Gone are the soaring guitars and digital effects, replaced instead by a new-found sense of experimentation.

Erra calls it "a radical change in direction. Just after our previous album was released, [2016's] *Scintilla*, I was already feeling like I wanted to move on to something else. I realised I'd just been limiting myself in terms of what I wanted to write. There's an effort needed in saying, 'What do I want to do? I want more electronics, I want more acoustic, I don't want guitars.' You have to free yourself to just do whatever you want. I think that really was a big change for me."

This meant that Erra travelled deeper and further into electronica as the primary source of *Allow Yourself*, whose title alludes to giving himself permission to break with past modes of working.

"It was very difficult," he explains of the process, "but it all started to come together in the end. It arrived at just the right moment too, because three years ago I started studying piano and singing more deeply. Then came the overall realisation that

I really needed to change inside, needed to help myself alter my palette of instruments. So I ditched everything that was computer-based – no plug-ins or any of that stuff – and used only real instruments, like acoustic piano and analogue electronics. I forced myself to make something different from anything I'd done before."

As it turns out, Erra is only partly right. *Allow Yourself* is indeed a conceptual left-turn, but the core elements that have made Nosound such an enticing proposition down the years – sweeping soundscapes, clever melodic patterns, mutable moods and atmospheres – are still very much in situ.

On a musical level, the album is a blood brother of Sigur Rós or Radiohead. Indeed, if we're talking in terms of career

that album that's classic. It's to do with the production and the fact he used jazz musicians. It sounds like Radiohead playing jazz. It's one of my favourite albums of all time."

Allow Yourself serves as an illustration of just how far Nosound have come. It began as a one-man operation in Rome in 2002. Erra was soon joined by bassist Alessandro Luci, who helped flesh out his instrumental ideas on a bunch of demos. The pair issued the first official Nosound release, *Sol29*, three years later, with Erra bringing to the fore his talents as songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, arranger, producer and engineer. The expansion into a quintet was a necessity when it came time to present Erra's songs in a live format. This carried over into 2008's *Lightdark*, which featured all five members.

The line-up has been in flux ever since, with one member tending to move on after each album. The aftermath of *Allow Yourself* is no exception, only this time it's Luci – Erra's longest-serving colleague – who has decided to seek pastures new. Given the nature of Nosound, Erra isn't really surprised.

"It's kind of normal in a band

where I'm doing everything and the others come aboard in the later stages," he reasons. "The energy keeps rising in the band. In our early days it was all a bit more perfectly staged, more Floyd-ish, while the new set-up is more raw, sparer and more direct."

This may well account for the heightened sensations of *Allow Yourself*. Listening to his haunting vocals on pieces like *Growing In Me* and *My Drug*, you could be forgiven for assuming that Erra has been through some kind of terrible emotional crisis of late. But he insists the new songs actually signal an upturn in attitude.

"My music is always more about emotions and feelings than it is about social matters," he says. "It's more of a personal thing. What I like a lot about the new album is that it's possibly more intense than the previous ones, but without the melancholy. Before, I think it was all a bit too self-indulgent, so this time I wanted to get out of this shell that I'd built for myself."

"I'm not really a good emotional communicator," he continues. "I can

“Prog often seems to be the most retro and conservative genre when it should be the most forward-thinking.”

trajectory, *Allow Yourself* feels like Nosound's *Kid A* moment.

"The interesting thing about *Kid A* is that, as a long-time Radiohead fan, I didn't really like it when it was released," recalls Erra. "I was against the change to begin with, but about five years ago I started to like it. Suddenly I found the beauty in what I'd considered disturbing or unlikeable before. I'm guessing that some people may feel the same about *Allow Yourself*, especially those familiar with what we've done previously."

Aside from Radiohead, Erra cites fellow moodists The National and Portishead as key signposts to the new album. Perhaps rather less apparent, on the surface at least, is the influence of David Bowie's final album, 2016's *Blackstar*.

"I was really surprised at how someone as big as Bowie, and with such a long career, could make that kind of record," he explains. "I know he was always experimenting, but *Blackstar* was just so ahead of its time. To me, I think it won't even become modern for another 10 years. There's something magical about

communicate feelings just with music, but I'm very bad at trying to do that in other ways. So there are some places in the album where I'm saying, 'Okay, this is the way it is, but I know I can do more.' Or, 'When I do more, I will succeed in that.'"

This renewed confidence may well have something to do with the fact that *Allow Yourself* is a showcase for Erra's finest vocals to date. He attributes this to taking on a singing coach four years ago, the result being that he's now able to express himself in a whole other way than he thought possible.

"I just wanted the challenge," he says. "It really changed my perspective a lot."

The current band consists of Erra, Luci's replacement Orazio Fabbri, guitarist Paolo Vigliarolo, keyboard player Marco Berni and drummer Ciro Iavarone. Given that Nosound represents such a personal artistic vision, how does Erra reconcile that in the studio with his bandmates?

“Most of this album started off as me on just piano and vocals, then the others start having more of an input when it comes to production and arrangement,” he offers. “On this occasion I told them to do something different than usual, something completely crazy, even if they didn’t think it would work. Just do it. The stuff was weird, but then they really

started to enjoy it and got the point. They liked to be pushed.”

In addition to *Allow Yourself*, which Nosound will unveil at a special launch gig in Rome at the end of October, Erra has also been busy with a solo endeavour, due next February.

“This one was born at the same time as the new Nosound album,” he reveals, “because it was all part of this process of allowing myself to do it. I really wanted to do something like Nils Frahm or Olivier Messiaen — that kind of modern, minimalist, contemporary soundtrack thing. It’s an all-instrumental work with piano and electronics and a Danish string quartet. So it’s very experimental and I’m really proud of it. It’s the kind of music I love the most and it’ll be for a docu-film that will probably end up on Netflix or something. I’m really excited about it because it’s like a new direction for me.”

In the meantime, those awaiting Erra's next instalment under his *Memories Of Machines* banner, the art-rock project he shares with No-Man's Tim Bowness, shouldn't hold their breath. It doesn't look like there'll be a follow-up to 2011's

Warm Winter coming any time soon, though it's not for lack of willing.

"Tim is waiting, but first I'll be remixing *Warm Winter* [which includes top-drawer guests such as Robert Fripp, Steven Wilson and Peter Hammill], which we've bought back from the old record label. I've already started the process of working on it and I hope we'll get the reissue with extra tracks in 5.1 sound. Then from now until early next year I'll be busy with my own solo album and Nosound. Tim and I are talking about doing some more music together, but it all depends on our other projects. It's not easy!"

Right now, however, Erra is completely absorbed in Nosound, and determined to follow his own vision of what constitutes progressive music. *Allow Yourself*, he says, feels like a bold new beginning for both him and the band.

"It's the first Nosound album that isn't about regretting the past. It's to do with enjoying the present and building for the future. It's like I'm liberating myself in a way and just going forward." 

Allow Yourself is out now via Kscope. See www.nosound.net for more information.



The band's new album marks a new direction and a new attitude: "It's to do with enjoying the present," says Erra.

"I ditched everything that was computer-based – no plug-ins or any of that stuff – and used only real instruments, like acoustic piano and analogue electronics. I forced myself to make something different from anything I'd done before."

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The Game Is (Almost) Over

A number of factors including grief and health problems may have delayed **Fish's** final release, but now he's planning to bulk it up to a double album due next year. *Prog* finds out all the details...

Words: Rich Wilson **Images:** Kai R Joachim

Musical retirement may be an unavoidable and necessary part of life, but for those who've had four decades' immersion in an artist's music and lyrics, the thought of a 'final album' comes with an overwhelming sadness. For Fish, that album is the long touted *Weltschmerz* which, if his best laid plans come to fruition, would be a recording already released and providing one bookend of his back catalogue. Indeed, last December's live expedition was billed as a *Weltschmerz & Clutching At Straws* Tour, the only problem being that Fish and his band hadn't written a note of the new album. It was, as he explains, becoming a worryingly long goodbye.

"Yeah, last year I was really worried about it," he admits. "There's been so much that's happened in the last two years. My dad died in May 2016 and six months later, I kind of woke up in the garden and went, 'Where have the last six months gone?' I also had health problems and I just couldn't get my head into writing. I was just in a state of perpetual recovery. It was really only around February this year that Steve [Vantis, bassist] and I had that one spark that just set the control room ablaze. Finally, things just started to come together. I mean, this is tagged as my last album. I just want to do what I want to do and it's like a 'damn the torpedoes' kind of vibe. I'm just going to feel the whole thing through. Whatever it demands will be done."

Certainly, there was a slight but nagging doubt that writer's block might blight this final album. But as Fish hinted at, once a firm direction for the album had been formed, ideas

began to speedily morph into tracks. Within six weeks, the duo had four songs written in demo form, with two of them expanding to around 15 minutes each. With another two lengthy epics also in development, Fish began to consider a double album. Yet, with the original intention for the album to be recorded and released by September, that would only add unnecessary pressure to his schedule.

"When I nominated it for a double album, I realised it would really screw things up as I knew I would never be able to get a double written," he recalls. "Around March, I then got a call from [cover artist] Mark Wilkinson. He told me that he had some issues that he had to deal with and he knew there was no way he was going to be able to get this artwork ready for September."

"Mark and I had been talking for the year previously about how we wanted to put together a great packaging layout, similar if not better to *A Feast Of Consequences*. I basically turned around to him and said, 'Look, you've worked on every project that I've ever been involved with since 1982 and there is no way I'm going into my last album without you.' There was just no way I was going to use another artist. So I thought, 'Fuck it. Let's find the silver in the dark cloud and put the album back to May 2019.' I mean, when Mark declared that he was unavailable for six weeks, I could have put my head under a pillow and had a good sob but I thought, 'Let's find a way round it.' There's always a solution to everything."

For Fish, there's a need for the lyrics to dictate the album's flow, or as he calls them, "rock flicks moments", where he can effectively draft a short story, then worry





The Last Hurrah:
Fish prepares for
his final album.

"The one thing that has been quite strange on this album is that I have kind of gone back to writing in the same way that we did between 1982 and 1985."

about how that can translate on to a musical backdrop. It's often been a tricky process and Fish's original plan was to transport the band to his Haddington home studio and filter ideas through a process of jams. Logistically, that proved difficult. Long-term guitarist Robin Boulton was on tour with Howard Jones, and as Fish puts it, keyboard player John Beck "wasn't answering his phone". That left the singer to nurture the relationship with Vantsis, leading to the revisiting of a songwriting technique that dates back to the early days of Marillion.

"Yeah, that's the one thing that has been quite strange on this album because I have kind of gone back to writing in the same way that we did between 1982 and 1985," he laughs. "It's that kind of vibe. We're taking bits and putting bits together, but it's the right bits. It's like when I was in Marillion and they used to trust me. I could say that I thought one bit works well with another bit, or that I needed a section to go from one piece to another. It's all about letting the drama and the dynamic basically rule it with a very strong lyric."

Anyone who has followed Fish's career closely or viewed some of the interviews which accompany the recent reissues of Marillion's 80s back catalogue may spot an irony here. The singer has been outspoken about the band's writing technique of piecing together tracks with, as he saw it, "sticky tape". It's a method that has served Marillion well and forms a core part of their writing sessions today. For Fish, to return to that method appears to be a dramatic turnaround.

"Well yes but that's because I came to loathe it," he suggests forcibly. "As I said before, back in the *Script...* and *Fugazi* days, I think that

they trusted me and there were a lot of ideas around that we could sift through. *Clutching At Straws* was when we moved into songwriting. It was interesting because when we moved into writing the album that was supposed to come after *Clutching At Straws*, suddenly I was getting presented with loads of bits. But they didn't make sense. It was like having different scenes from different movies and trying to construct a story amongst it, you know? Now with Steve, he trusts me and trusts my vision on the lyrical side in the same way that the guys used to do in the old days.

"When you listen to a song we've just completed, *Waverley Steps*, there's definitely a throwback to that period and it reminds me of *Fugazi* in the way the tempos move," he continues. "It was like, 'This is the story, this is what I need to put across and I need so many bars to go through the storyline into the next section.' It really was like making movies for people's ears. That's what has been commanding all the songs."

Literally translated from German, "weltschmerz" refers to a sense of world-weariness, world pain and ennui. Even based solely on that definition, it's obvious that this farewell album will possess an overriding sense of darkness. Yet the singer was keen to avoid any clichés and determined that the lyrics would have a depth far removed from some of the more obvious protest songs that have been a musical mainstay for decades.

"I got the idea for the album title over two years ago, when I was watching the news and becoming more aware of people's feelings," he explains. "There was a lot of sadness and world-weariness. It wasn't an apathy, it was just that people were feeling browbeaten. The last thing I wanted to do was talk about corporations, kings and queens or corrupt governments. That's been done so many times, right the way back to Queensrÿche in the 80s. I feel that I'm good at writing lyrics dealing with people, observations of people and observations of things that are happening

Seas Of Change:
Fish ponders the
next chapter...



around me. I thought, ‘Why don’t I take the whole lyrical idea and focus it on people?’ So, it’s become a collection of songs, in the third person, that are all about people dealing with the world they live in.”

At face value, those subject matters may sound impenetrably gloomy. *Waverley Steps* delves into male suicide, *C Song* is written from the perspective of someone diagnosed with cancer and *Market Garden* discusses dementia. There are also songs about self-harming and a Syrian refugee. This is by no means easy listening, but then Fish has

“The approach I’m taking is something like the movie *American Beauty*. That deals with some really dark subject matters, but it’s done in such a beautiful way. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

always covered similar subjects in a researched and cerebral manner. After all, Marillion’s *Punch And Judy* and his solo track *Family Business* covered domestic violence, and the likes of *He Knows You Know* openly referenced drug misuse. Yet for all the preconceptions that could be made about this new material, this is far from being a depressing collection.

“The subject matters are really heavy,” admits Fish. “But the approach I’m taking is something like the movie *American Beauty*. That deals with some really dark subject matters, but it’s done in such a beautiful way. That’s what I’m trying to do. I’m not trying to

bring people down. There is a melancholy to it but it’s a beautiful melancholy. I took a whip to my own back as well, in that I gave myself a challenge to have a reference to a plant or something to do with a garden in every song. That’s all to do with being in the garden for six months after my dad died.”

The delay in writing the material has led to another masterplan. Fish was persuaded to enter the digital world and Spotify, with his solo albums being placed on the latter recently. The current September tour is premiering songs from *Weltschmerz*, with an EP and

downloads of a handful of new album tracks being released simultaneously. Tracks set to be included are the lavish *Waverley Steps*, *Little Man What Now* and *Man With A Stick*.

“When I started to sit back and think about it, I felt that I could really approach this in a completely different way. So rather than the old-fashioned fanfare of ‘here’s the album’, let’s release a bunch of downloads first. On tour, we’re going to be playing around 40 to 50 minutes of *Weltschmerz* along with the *Clutching At Straws* material, which we intended to do the previous year. I was aware that the fans needed to hear it otherwise there

will be some very awkward silences. So, we’ve recorded about 30 to 40 minutes of music already and then in January, February and March 2019, we’ll record the rest of the material, ready for the album release next May. Next year, it’s the 30th anniversary of *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, which we’ll tour with *Weltschmerz* at the end of the year. Then in 2020, that will be the farewell tour.”

From speaking to Fish it’s evident that he intends for this album to be a career peak, yet he feels pressure free to enjoy this final writing and recording process. If there was ever any doubt that he’d do anything else, Fish is departing the recording studio with an eloquent, musical swagger rather than a nervous whimper.

“I really want to make it special. I’ve got Dave Jackson from Van der Graaf Generator coming down to play sax on it and that’s going to be a real teenage dream for me,” he says with excitement. “We’ve got string sections. We’re putting real brass onto *Waverley Steps*. This isn’t getting made for the money. No: I have to make this something really, really special. I want it to be a recording I can be proud of. When I left Marillion, *Clutching At Straws* was the best album I did with them. It was my favourite album. One of the problems I’ve always had is that people have always asked, ‘What would have happened next?’ That is the way I want to leave my solo career. I want to write an album where people are going to ask what would have happened next. Which is always the end to a good film...” 

Weltschmerz is due for release next year.
For more information visit fishmusic.scot.



LET THERE BE

Flight

With their aptly named ninth album *Great Escape*, **Crippled Black Phoenix** are exorcising demons and shaking off the stresses of the past.

Words: Dom Lawson **Images:** Marton Bodnar

The last time that Crippled Black Phoenix released a new album, band founder and chief songwriter Justin Greaves was still reeling.

Having weathered the climax of an acrimonious falling out with certain now firmly ex-band members, not to mention an ongoing battle with depression, he was emotionally exhausted and not in the brightest mood. As a result, *Bronze* was an almost remorselessly angry affair: not exactly an anomaly in the CBP catalogue, but one unusually bereft of light, hope and love. Fast forward to 2018 and Greaves is in a much better frame of mind and the results – the ninth full-length CBP album, *Great Escape* – are spectacular. As he tells *Prog*, exorcising those demons was the key to ushering in a confident and cautiously positive new dawn.

“Take all of our other albums out of the equation for a minute, and all the bullshit that went with it, there were various things about *Bronze* that I either needed to get out of my system, whether musically or creatively or emotionally,” says Greaves. “So it was more of a straightforward album. But if I hadn’t made *that* album, I don’t think *Great Escape* would be what it is. Maybe this is a new beginning. I don’t

think about this stuff, to be honest, but when you get asked about it and you start reflecting on these things, you start delving a bit deeper into your own psyche and the reasons why you do things, and you think, ‘Yeah, maybe that’s right...’”

While bigger, brighter and more dynamic than its predecessors, *Great Escape* still dwells in the brooding, wildly atmospheric sonic world that Greaves has nurtured over the last 13 years. The album’s title neatly summarises the emotions expressed through these songs: whether shrugging off the stresses of past battles or imagining a solution to the division and chaos engulfing the planet at the moment, it’s an album that seems to yearn for better times.

“Yeah, I think that’s true. Going into this album, it all came from being in a place where I was so fed up with everything and I just wanted everything to be okay, with no more stress and no more drama, and that’s just on a personal level,” Greaves notes. “Then you look at the outside world and you think, ‘Oh, Christ...’ So when you get a spark of an idea like that, maybe what comes out is more genuine as a result.

“I think the optimism comes from a place of resignation. When you just hold up your hands to everything and say, ‘Oh,

sod it!’ that’s when creativity really comes to the surface, I guess.”

No one could credibly accuse CBP of ever having been tethered to one musical style or idea, but it’s undeniable that *Great Escape* covers a lot more emotional and textural ground than anything they have previously released. As its title suggests, underpinning it all are notions of escape, liberation and release. *To You I Give* is an epic, stately squall of tender, personal surrender; *Madman* is a dark, electro-rock study of explosive rage; *Nebulas* offers succour to the animal liberation movement.

None of it could accurately be described as cheery, and the spectre of mortality looms over parts like a storm cloud, but the overriding sentiment that emerges from the album is one of cautious optimism: that somehow, there is always a road that leads away from humanity’s madness. 



“There’s always an element of optimism and hope in everything we’ve ever done, but now it’s more like, ‘There’s got to be another way,’ you know?”

"You've hit the nail on the head. There's always an element of optimism and hope in everything we've ever done, but now it's more like, 'There's got to be another way,' you know?" Greaves states. "I guess some people regard escapism as something a lot darker and some will see it as a positive thing — there are a lot of elements to it. There's the social element of dropping out of society and finding another way to live your life, to be righteous in your own way. Then there are other things, like trying to help animals, for instance. Then there's pure escapism. Music is escapism. We wouldn't have been able to make *Great Escape* if music wasn't good therapy to escape from real life. So that's a pretty positive thing."

Having conclusively wrestled back control of the band he started back in 2004, Greaves repeatedly praises his current bandmates and notes the atmosphere of unity and mutual appreciation that has emerged between them. In addition to inspiring CBP to new creative heights, this most fruitful time in their evolution seems to have given their leader a sense of optimism about his own emotional journey. For Greaves, a happy band is bringing some much needed peace to his life.

"Yeah, that's definitely how it feels, although it's still very tough being a band these days," he notes. "But I wouldn't still be doing this if I didn't get some kind of solace or some kind of satisfaction from it. I've never been one to hold down a job if I'm really unhappy at that job, no matter how much it pays or how much I benefit from it. I see success as being happy, living your life with your own values and ethics and keeping your integrity intact. In that sense, yeah, I do find peace in what we do."

Part of the joy of listening to Crippled Black Phoenix is that they have always been striving for great

ensemble performances, rather than merely bashing out Greaves' songs to order. There are times when it's unclear who is playing what, which leads to a strong sense that everyone is working toward the same goal, with deservedly thrilling results.

If there's a star of this show, singer/guitarist Daniel Ångheide tops the nominees list — his understated but hugely evocative vocals provide *Great Escape*'s vulnerable, human heart, and his importance to CBP is something Greaves is eager to hail.

"Daniel's one of the good guys in the world," he nods. "He doesn't have a bad bone in his body, but what comes with that is a lack of self-belief. He told me that when he first did the vocals for us, on *White Light Generator* [2014], he was really scared. He didn't need to be scared because he's such a talented guy and he did a great job and it all made sense. The whole vocal thing, with Daniel and Belinda [Kordic, CBP co-vocalist and Greaves' partner in Se Delan] is so much better now, and how it was supposed to be from the start. All these years later, it's finally making sense."

As positivity spreads through Greaves' creative world, there is still one major obstacle that Crippled Black Phoenix will inevitably have to negotiate as they release *Great Escape* into the wild. Despite having retained a great deal of support from his days in the metal underground and being increasingly embraced by the prog world, this is still a band that instinctively shy away from being categorised or subsumed by some overarching subgenre or scene. As Greaves notes with a wry chuckle, the solution to this puzzle is simply to play more gigs and to reach as many potential converts as possible. Unfortunately, this multinational crew have certain uncomfortable logistics to deal with.

"I always complain that we should be busier and we should play more gigs, but it's difficult because we're all in different places and it's difficult to get everyone together and get the time away from work and all that stuff. It comes down to the *moolah*, you know?"

"We're a difficult band logistically, we're an expensive band to get on the road and we're not teenagers any more. The average age of this band is embarrassingly high! [Laughs] So we've got needs now, which you don't have when you're young. But I want to be busier and I wish we could tour more. I do feel it's always pretty tough and an uphill battle to get out there, but once I'm out there I could just keep on going... although I do really miss my cats!"

From the ominous, sardonic overture of *You Brought It Upon Yourself* to the absurdly dramatic and moving two-part, 20-minute title track that brings it to a grandiloquent close, *Great Escape* aims to offer sustenance and solace in an age of fractious chaos. More importantly, perhaps, it suggests that Crippled Black Phoenix are only just beginning to produce their best work. You may struggle to get Justin Greaves to declare that all is well in the world, but it's obvious that he is very much in love with his band and the music they make. Don't you just love it when a plan (finally) comes together?

"Now we've got the right people playing the music, people who have the right temperament and they *understand* it," he concludes. "So now we can play songs that we've never been able to play before, so that's really enjoyable. We've got a big tour planned for next year, so as well as the new album material, I'm hoping we can bring in some songs that we've never played live. If we can pull that off, I'll be really happy... because we've been playing the same old miserable stuff for so long!" 📍

Great Escape is out now via Season Of Mist. See www.crippledblackphoenix.co.uk for more information.



"Going into this album, it all came from being in a place where I was so fed up with everything and I just wanted everything to be okay, with no more stress and no more drama, and that's just on a personal level."

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“The band who tried to survive”:
Riverside as a trio in 2018.





Through The Other Side

The death of **Riverside**'s guitarist could have ended the band. Instead, they're back with a new sound on an album about grief, hope and survival. Mainman **Mariusz Duda** tells *Prog* why they kept going, and how *Wasteland* marks the start of an exciting new chapter.

Words: Dannii Leivers **Images:** Oskar Szramka

Prog last caught up with Polish proggers Riverside almost two years ago, during one of the most tumultuous periods of their career. The band were reeling from the death of their guitarist Piotr Grudziński nine months before, a complete shock that left them contemplating their future.

Back then, they had just completed *Eye Of The Soundscape*, a collection of ambient, instrumental deep cuts that had allowed them to play around with electronic influences. It was a move in keeping with their progressive mindset and willingness to push the boundaries of their own sound. Yet it was also the first album they had recorded without Grudziński, and as such, it also felt like a diversion rather than a new direction; a plaster placed over an open wound while the band battled their pain and figured out what the hell they were going to do next.

"Piotr's death was the end of the world for us. We're a different band now but we're still Riverside. We miss him but we also need to move on."

Now, vocalist, bassist, main composer and bandleader Mariusz Duda is speaking to us from a very different place. After Grudziński's death he immediately threw himself into work. Holing up in the Warsaw studio he calls a second home, just a seven-minute walk from his house, he recorded three albums on the trot. Two were with his side project Lunatic Soul – 2017's *Fractured* and 2018's *Under The Fragmented Sky* – and the third and most recent was Riverside's seventh studio record, *Wasteland*.

It's the latter album we're here to talk about today, as well as the band's decision to soldier on as a trio and what it was like to record music without Grudziński for the first time.

"I had a chance to get used to it because I was in the studio all the time," says Duda. "*Wasteland* was like the third album in a row during one year for me. I was doing this constantly. The harder thing was when we had to finish *Eye Of The Soundscape* – that was really hard. Piotr's death was the end of the world for us. We're a different band now but we're still Riverside. We lost one voice but the main core stayed the same. We miss him but we also need to move on."

Did they consider breaking up the band at any point?



"Yes," Duda replies. "When Piotr died I thought maybe it's time to say: 'This is the end of Riverside. I should focus on Lunatic Soul and albums under my own name.' But after a few months I realised I'd put so much energy and my private life into this. I think we still have lots of ideas and music to play."

"It was hard when we tweeted a picture of the three of us and someone put the icon with the tear. It's not really helpful when someone always tries to remind us: 'I'm so sorry for what happened.' We know what happened and that was the end of the world. We don't want to talk about the fact we lost our friend – we just want to talk about how to survive and how to move on. *Wasteland* is a new chapter for us."

Duda identifies himself as a storyteller whose lyrics create "thematical" rather than concept albums. For instance, on 2013's *Shrine Of New Generation Slaves* he explored modern slavery, while 2015's *Love, Fear And The Time Machine* focused on "love and memories". On *Wasteland*, he's channelled the earth-shattering pain that engulfed him and his bandmates after Grudziński's death, as well as drawing inspiration from Cormac McCarthy's 2006 novel *The Road* and the *Fallout* videogame series, to create lyrical imagery of a decayed and crumbling post-apocalyptic world.

It represents a band rebuilding their lives from ground zero. The first line of album opener *The Day After* contemplates fate and the fragility of life: 'What if it's not meant to be? What if someone has made a mistake?'

"I usually try to write stories that are connected with my life but *Wasteland* is a reflection about where we are right now as a band," says Duda. "That's what's going on with all these post-apocalyptic stories – I imagined people who survived after the end of the world and they're just trying to move on in spite of the circumstances. But reading the lyrics and listening to the music, I think people will hear other things and read between the lines."

"For some people it will be the album about the death of our guitar player. For other people it will be the album about refugees, war and politics. For others it will be the story about the band who tried to survive."

Riverside's last two releases – *Eye Of The Soundscape* and *Love, Fear And The Time Machine* – were both ambient wanderings through the lighter, more watercolour

textures that exist in the Riverside palette. Unsurprisingly, following the most challenging months of their career, a dose of heaviness has found its way back into the band's music. Although Duda is keen to spotlight each tumbling facet of the band's sound on *Wasteland*, more metallic leanings can be heard in the crunchy riffs of *Acid Rain* and *Vale Of Tears* that are reminiscent of the group's early work.

"For some people it will be the album about the death of our guitar player. For other people it will be about refugees, war and politics. For others it will be the story about the band who tried to survive."

"For me, Riverside is kind of divided: the old Riverside and the new Riverside," Duda explains. "The old Riverside is connected with our first four albums: full of great ideas, but the production and sound were, let's be honest, too underground for me. With *Shrine Of New Generation Slaves*, I think we started to sound better. With this one I just wanted to keep this production as good as *Love, Fear And The Time Machine* and *Shrine Of New Generation Slaves*, but also add something from the previous decade, a touch of this underground sound."

"I think what's really special now is the guitar," he continues. "I connected the sound of distorted bass with the sound of distorted guitar and thanks to that, we achieved something rusty and also really original. Something between metal, stoner rock and prog rock."

"If someone wanted to know my main inspiration, I would say Peter Gabriel, because he always had a very nice connection between the rhythm and the melodies. For me it's always connected with emotions and hearts first and foremost, and this is much more progressive than bands who sound similar to Pink Floyd, for instance. In *Wasteland* we've recorded a really progressive album, but in the wider sense. When someone asks what's prog for me, I always say it's pushing boundaries, and we pushed a lot of boundaries this time."

Although Riverside brought in their close friend Maciej Meller to play guitar during their recent live shows, in the studio, Duda and his bandmates – keyboardist Michał Łapaj and drummer Piotr Kozieradzki – retreated back to

being a trio, with Duda taking over the bulk of guitar responsibilities himself. It's an arrangement that's unlikely to change any time soon, with the band reluctant to replace Grudziński on a permanent basis.

"For now it works," says Duda firmly. "When Genesis became a trio, Chester Thompson and Daryl Stuermer joined the band and that was the live version of Genesis. It was the same situation with John Wesley

and Porcupine Tree. For now we don't think we need to hire a guitar player if the music is good and the emotions are well balanced. And it's not because I want to be the leader and play on everything. I'd love to bring Riverside back as a quartet but it takes time and it will happen naturally."

The tracks on *Wasteland* are interlinked by poignancy, sadness and an air of finality. However, among that darkness, rich, bright solos spiral defiantly upwards, coupled with a sense of hope that permeates bluer skies. In the lead-up to the album's release, Duda teased that it would be an "epic, multidimensional, poetic and very deep album. Perhaps of the once-in-a-lifetime kind."

Indeed, there's a real sense that the band have turned a corner, emerging from a long, black tunnel into the light. Ultimately, this represents a line in the sand for them. It's the album they needed to make in order to move on, and one that gazes wistfully back while looking resolutely forward. How does it feel starting a new chapter? Overwhelming? Nerve-wracking?

"No, it's good," says Duda. "This is the end of mourning, the end of sad things. We've started a new life and we feel lots of strength within and support from our fans. We feel excited about the new chapter."

"I know people will still look at us like, 'Oh my God, Riverside ended with the death of Piotr – why would they want to continue under the Riverside name?' Well, the main core has stayed the same, we are Riverside and we haven't said our last word yet. With *Wasteland* and our future albums, we'll prove that. I'm excited for the things that are waiting for us." 🎸

Wasteland is out on September 28 via InsideOut. See www.riversideband.pl/en for more information.



Riverside. L-R: Piotr Kozieradzki,
Mariusz Duda, Michał Łapaj.



After exploring personal turmoil on **Coheed And Cambria's** last release, frontman **Claudio Sanchez** is now relaxed, revitalised and ready to take us back into his Amory Wars universe.

Words: Philip Wilding

Claudio Sanchez was only getting a cup of coffee. "Oh, this never happens," says the unstintingly civil Coheed And Cambria singer and guitarist down the line from Nyack, 45 minutes north of New York City. He's visiting his family in the town he grew up in, and Coheed's reputation has preceded him, not least to the barista behind the coffee counter.

"He and his girl walked down the aisle to *Here To Mars*, and he wanted a photo. I mean, that never happens to us."

Here To Mars is certainly an incongruous choice. As oblique a love song as Sanchez has ever written, it washed up in the aftermath of 2015's *The Color Before The Sun*, arguably Coheed's most introspective and down-at-heel album. Written around the themes of first-time fatherhood and the proposition of finding your place in the world, it's easily Sanchez's most personal album. It also swore off the idea of a concept (no mention of the band's long-standing Amory Wars universe – about which Sanchez has also penned a comic book series – no tales set behind an alien sun), and allegories and metaphors were kept to a minimum. *The Color...* was set very much in the here and now.

"I always knew when writing *The Color...* that I was going to return to the Amory Wars," says Sanchez. "For me, that album was really a statement for me becoming a dad: I knew I would never have those feelings again the way I did."

"I decided that every Coheed record has some sort of numeric value to it, so, you know, *Second Stage...*, ...*Silent Earth*: 3, everything has some sort of place in the mythology of the story that surrounds the band. And so this time around I wanted to figure out a clever way to make this part five and that's sort of why I broke it up into a pentalogy."

"Axis is the son of these two characters, Creature and Sister Spider. He has a very relevant position in the Amory Wars universe and we don't really give it up in the first record. We know he's coming, we just don't know how. But this story is the first one, it's introducing us to a new cast of characters, their goals, their mission, their love interests and that's pretty much it. We're fitting in the foundations on this record as to who we're going to follow in the next few stories."

Why do you think the Amory Wars remains such a pivotal part of your make-up?

"I think it's just my choice: I want to tell that story. I was thinking about this. Most singers or songwriters are coming from an autobiographical standpoint, primarily, and I just don't choose to tell my story in that genre. I chose a sci-fi, fantasy genre. Initially it was just because I was insecure as a frontman way back when. Now I've just become so comfortable with it, I find it to be more fun because I'm allowed to take these things and try to form them into these other bodies of work. It's really fun for me."

Going back into space clearly suits the singer. When the *Color...* album was

"Most singers or songwriters are coming from an autobiographical standpoint, and I just don't choose to tell my story in that genre. I chose a sci-fi, fantasy genre."

"We might have a second child, I don't know, but that's the first time I am ever going to experience that metamorphosis: me as an individual turning into a father. I wanted to attribute those feelings and emotions in song without the cover of a concept. I always knew I wasn't going to abandon the Amory Wars in any way. I have such a good time living in that mythology and writing songs with those characters, I couldn't see myself leaving it."

And while Sanchez might have returned to his place among the stars, upcoming ninth album *Vaxis – Act I: The Unheavenly Creatures* is a whole other Amory War universe to discover. It's also the first part of a 'pentalogy' of albums, which makes *Vaxis...* the first of five albums to take us on an elongated arc somewhere beyond the sun.

released, Sanchez was beset by self-doubt. To understand the existential battering he was undergoing at the time, you only have to listen to the lyrics to a song like *You Got Spirit, Kid*: 'You're number one/Go on living that farce/Cos nobody gives a fuck who you are...'

Fast forward to the summer of 2017. We were sitting backstage at the Koko venue in north London. The band were playing two nights, performing their third studio album, *Good Apollo, I'm Burning Star IV, Volume One: From Fear Through The Eyes Of Madness*. Sanchez's son Atlas and partner Chondra were sat across the room from us. And if *Prog* saw a better live show in 2017 than we've forgotten it. That night Sanchez talked about creating a piece of music bigger than him or Coheed And Cambria, the great high ground





Unheavenly Creatures: Coheed
And Cambria are back, and
looking to the stars once again.

War & Peace



Coheed And Cambria, L-R: Josh Eppard, Travis Steyer, Claudio Sanchez, Zach Cooper

reached by artists like Pink Floyd, career-defining moments that somehow transcend genre and even the band themselves.

"I remember that conversation," says Sanchez, "and I think this is us definitely scratching the surface of that. I think this record is part of a bigger picture. I think we're really going to experiment more going forward and really try to make that statement come true by creating this five-part piece. I think this is the right direction to go in."

He has said that working on this record reminded him of being younger, of starting out as a band again. What did he mean?

"I think it's probably the way I approached it, the fact I had so much time to work on

to relax. And that's why I think I felt like being younger, and when I listen to it, it reminds me of those older records, not because that's what I was striving for, but that's what happens when I'm given the time. It allows me to sort of experiment and try to live with things a little longer.

"Take a song like *The Dark Sentencer* — that wasn't easy to write. I have four versions of that song and I almost abandoned it until finally I could see the forest through the trees. Any other situation, I probably would have said, 'You know what, there's not time to work on this,' and moved on. But this time, I had the time, I made sure I wasn't doing anything, that I wasn't going to rush into being Claudio

of Coheed And Cambria. I was stepping around that creative burnout. I took myself out of the equation."

Was it hard

to insinuate his way back into that world? It's been over three years since *The Color Before The Sun* and longer still since he travelled through the Amory Wars universe.

"Yeah, I didn't know what to expect when I started working on it," says Sanchez. "The first song was *The Pavilion (A Long Way Back)*, and that song was right out of the ashes of *The Color Before The*

Sun. I mean, this was in February 2016, so, no concept, I had no idea what the story was going to be. I just kept writing as an exercise and things were coming and some things were sticking and some weren't. It wasn't until I found *Old Flames* and then out of that song came *Unheavenly Creatures*, and then those two songs really helped me understand: 'Okay, now I see the concept, now I see some of the characters.' But for the most part I wasn't sure. I think the last song we did was *The Gutter*. That wasn't done until January this year, and we were in the studio a month later."

And where next for Vaxis, Creature and Sister Spider? Sanchez isn't saying, though he will admit to already having the concepts and titles of the next four records.

"I know where I have to go — now it's how I get there. But, you know, all records have a tricky curve, they're all kinda hard because they're coming from a personal spot. This one was just as difficult as *The Color...*, but in a different way. The struggle here was where in the story I wanted to put this thing — was there even a place? Every record's going to have its hurdle."

And then Sanchez pauses and looks heavenward to find and follow his star. 



Vaxis — Act I: The Unheavenly Creatures is out on October 5 via Roadrunner. For more information, see www.coheedandcambria.com.

"I think we're really going to experiment more going forward."

it," says Sanchez, "I think when we did *The Second Stage Turbine Blade* [2002], there was no schedule, and even for *In Keeping Secrets...* a year later I didn't feel the pressure of being a professional entertainer. But that sort of leaks into your consciousness when you're creating this stuff cos you're like, 'Record's done, time to do the next one.'

"With this one, I wanted to take some time off. I didn't want to go back on the road or into the studio, I didn't want to force the construct of being who I am — I just wanted

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RHYTHMIC MELODIES

Canterbury prog legends **Soft Machine** may be celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, but with a new album and tour in tow, they certainly aren't slowing down. **John Etheridge** and **Theo Travis** discuss the band's legacy, and future...

The Man Who Waved At Trains: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Geoff Dennison

When *Prog* catches up with Soft Machine guitarist John Etheridge, he's only just returned from the band's tour in Japan. You might expect him to be resting up and feeling the effects of jet lag, but in fact the 70-year-old player is in the pink after his early morning dip at an outdoor swimming pool in London.

"I go for a swim most mornings at the outside men's pond in Hampstead Heath which is rather special. I always try to swim every morning even in the winter when it's minus two degrees," he laughs.

Diving in head first is something Etheridge has been doing for most of his professional career. When Allan Holdsworth quit the group in 1975, Etheridge had no problem auditioning. "I thought of all the people who were known on the scene at the time and I felt eminently suitable for the job. It was challenging but I was keen: Soft Machine was the band for me."

Plunging into Soft Machine has never been for the faint-hearted. William Burroughs' 1961 novel from which Daevid Allen, Kevin Ayers, Robert Wyatt and Mike Ratledge took their collective name in 1966, was famed for its 'cut-up technique' whereby sentences and paragraphs were shredded and then reassembled to produce startling juxtapositions and unsettling literary images. Were you to construct a mixtape taken from the band's recorded output, you'd have a similarly contrasting and divergent collection on your hands.

By the time Soft Machine's 1968 debut album was released, Daevid Allen was long gone. Yet the record resulted in the establishment of a labyrinthine musical institution that formed the cornerstone of the Canterbury Scene. With each subsequent album all the way through to 1981's *Land Of Cockayne*, which was in effect a Karl Jenkins solo album in all but name, a different core

line-up was often augmented by heavyweight guests. The 'cut-up technique' adopted from this approach to personnel creates some severe and sometimes schizophrenic differences in sound and style, their musical adventures variously encompassing quirky psych pop, experimentally inclined electro-acoustic explorations and sombre-faced excursions into fusion, while carving themselves a distinctive profile on the electric intersection between rock and jazz.

When Etheridge joined he recorded two albums: 1976's *Softs*, the last to feature founder Mike Ratledge, and *Alive & Well: Recorded In Paris*, released in 1978. Although there was a fleeting reunion in the 1980s, Soft Machine were seemingly dead. Yet when the opportunity came to join forces with ex-Softs Hugh Hopper, Elton Dean and John Marshall as Soft Machine Legacy in 2004, such was his enthusiasm for the music that Etheridge had no hesitation in diving in once again. 

"WHEN I FIRST
JOINED IT WAS
A FEUDAL
DEMOCRACY OF
THE WORST KIND."

John Etheridge

Soft Machine, L-R:
Roy Babbington, John
Etheridge, Theo Travis,
John Marshall.



"I remember one of the first gigs I ever did with Soft Machine Legacy," says Etheridge. I didn't know Hugh or Elton that well, or the etiquette involved. I was soloing and Elton moved over to the keyboards as he used to when he was in Softs but I didn't want any accompaniment so I shouted, 'No!' across the stage. When we came off Hugh said, 'Well you've done it now. You are really in the bad books.' Of course in free jazz, you don't shout no at someone, ever.

"I went to Elton and said, 'I'm really sorry, mate. I've been leading bands so long I just forgot that this isn't my band and I can't shout no at you.' He said, 'No you can't!' I apologised profusely and told him, 'You play the piano whenever you want to play.' And he said, 'It doesn't matter, John. It's still done! You can apologise all you want but you're still in the book,'" Etheridge continues, roaring with laughter at the memory.

After Elton Dean's death in 2006, Theo Travis was recruited. A world-class saxophonist and flautist, in addition to running his own band, he has worked extensively with King Crimson's Robert Fripp, and is a member of Steven Wilson's live and studio group, not to mention his stints in Gong and working with Hatfield & The North's Richard Sinclair. This all made him a natural choice. Another long-standing admirer of the group in all its incarnations, Travis was keen to add his talents to the overall sound.

"Soft Machine has always been a forward-looking band and when people join, they bring what they bring and the music changes. That's why they've been recruited in the first place. They aren't there to copy what someone's done in the past. They want people to come and add and contribute in order to take it forward and that's how it has always been."

sometimes appeared, whether it be the tape loops or the cosmic delays on the Fender Rhodes. I've been doing those kinds of things live and I was keen to incorporate that."

Does he ever feel burdened by the weight of fan expectation? "With any band that's got a history like this, there will be people who maybe aren't aware of what's been going on for the last 40 years. So there'll always be questions like, 'What's going on with Mike Ratledge?' Or a question about Robert Wyatt here and there. But it was like that in 1972 when John Marshall first joined. Some fans would always be talking about the earlier period. We just tend to get on with it. This is the set and this is what we're doing."

The 'Legacy' part of the name was formally dropped in 2015, but in practice, promoters in Europe had been calling them plain old Soft Machine for some time, explains Travis. "Elton Dean wanted to call the group Soft

Soft Machine:
"A proper democracy."



It's a fact that despite the often inspired nature of the music produced by the different line-ups throughout the band's history, the personal interactions between the players was often troubled by seething resentment, grudges and bad blood. Robert Wyatt was kicked out of the band he founded by Mike Ratledge and Hugh Hopper. Elton Dean quit when drummer Phil Howard was sacked. Yet when Soft Machine Legacy formed, people like John Marshall and Hugh Hopper, previously not the easiest of friends first time around in the 1970s, somehow found themselves getting on famously. "It's about testosterone and hormones and male competition when you're a young man but then you get past that. The band became a healing process if you like," observes Etheridge.

However, Travis, who doubles on Fender Rhodes piano in the group, does admit to wanting to revisit some older material on the new album. Given his work with looping technology, it's perhaps no surprise that it was at his urging that *Out-Bloody-Rageous* from 1970's *Third* and 1975's *The Man Who Waved At Trains*, which originally appeared on *Bundles*, both Ratledge-composed tunes, were included in the running order.

"When we were recording as Soft Machine Legacy we always had a link to the past repertoire and even though this is a Soft Machine album, we thought, 'Why not revisit that material?'" he says. "Although I'm not of a generation that was involved in that first time around, I liked the whole slightly ethereal, less jazz/rock elements that

Machine anyway, although Hugh Hopper was less keen. For us it was less of a big deal than you think it would be, but when you do gigs as Soft Machine, people are very excited that they are seeing the band. Going out as Legacy, although the players might be the same, there's no affinity with the name. People feel emotionally affected by the fact that it's Soft Machine."

Recording the new album *Hidden Details* in December 2017 was an incredibly relaxed affair at Jon Hiseman's Temple Studios, says Travis, although Hiseman's subsequent and unexpected death in June this year lends a certain poignancy to the sessions. Travis, Etheridge and Marshall had last worked with Hiseman in 2006, recording *Steam*, and like everyone who knew him, they were shocked

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Theo Travis

throughout add to the discursive nature of the band's music. Babbington joined Soft Machine in 1973 but first appeared on 1971's *Fourth*, guesting on double bass, a role he was asked to reprise on 1972's *Fifth*, which coincidentally was Marshall's first outing as a member. The empathy between their playing adds to the depth and richness within the group.

Of Marshall's playing, Etheridge observes, "He has that movement within the time that makes him John Marshall and not just 'a drummer' who nails it, bang-bang-bang. He's looking for give and take, always looking for relationships within the music."

In respect of Babbington, Etheridge buzzes with excitement recounting the time he saw Soft Machine as a member of the audience at London's Rainbow in February 1975, when they were supporting Larry Coryell's Eleventh House. "Roy's solo was absolutely stunning – the best solo of the night. Completely

mutterings and resentments because nothing was clear. But with us, it is a democracy, a proper democracy. It's never happened before in Soft Machine."

For both Etheridge and Travis, the title track *Hidden Details* is perhaps the highlight of the new album. "When we did it, it was clear to everyone that it was really strong and it had to be the one that opened the album. It represents what we do. It's edgy, it's big, it's a little bit angular. It connects to the *Bundles*-era stuff but there are also some other shades on it as well. That track feels very representative of what this band is. We'll often start gigs with it now," says Travis, who at 54 is the youngest in the current line-up.

Despite the fact that his colleagues are all in their 70s now, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of their manager and Moonjune Records boss, Leonardo Pavlovic, Soft Machine have a full itinerary for their 50th

PRESS



Cogs In The Machine:
recording the new
album at Jon
Hiseman's studio.

at his passing. "I was shattered when I heard he'd died," admits Etheridge.

Travis agrees, citing the ex-Colosseum drummer's presence as a decisive factor in how well *Hidden Details* has turned out. "Jon was totally on it during those sessions with everything under control. The fact that we recorded an entire double album's worth of music this time with a couple of extra tracks is a testament to his skills," he sighs.

Laying down a mix of composed pieces and improvisations, the band recorded live in the studio. With only a couple of minor overdubs and fixes added afterward, there's a tangible freshness in the sound and performances.

While Travis and Etheridge carry the principal soloing, the interactions from bassist Roy Babbington and drummer John Marshall

improvised, it was so well constructed and put together. When Roy joined the Legacy I was very keen on him to use the Fender six-string bass he'd been using back then but it had no bottom end. So now he plays such a deep bass, such a deep sound that's so fundamental."

Etheridge points out that the current band has never been happier or more comfortable in their own skin. A key ingredient to that all-important recipe for happiness is everyone having an equal say in what goes on.

"When I first joined, it was a feudal democracy of the worst kind. Mike Ratledge was on his way out I quickly discovered, and ostensibly everything was group decisions but they weren't really. Karl had taken over and he'd become the band leader but not officially. So there were always these stirrings and

anniversary, with extensive dates in the UK and America, and are looking forward to more work and recording again.

For John Etheridge, being in this group with this line-up throws up some deeply personal emotions that connect him to the young man he was then and the mature musician he is today. "Perhaps it's to do with the magic of the name or the feeling or atmosphere that comes with the name? I don't know, but I can play in a way that I don't play with anybody else and I enjoy it very much. With this band, there's a licence to play, and people want you to play the very best you can." 🎸

Hidden Details is out now via Moonjune Records. See www.john-etheridge.com and www.theotravis.com for more information.

New spins...

COHEED AND CAMBRIA

The first part of Coheed's new Amory Wars pentalogy looks into the lives of two lovers, their unborn son and what the future might hold for them all. Just your usual prog sci-fi love story then...

Words: Dom Lawson **Illustration:** Scott Balmer

It's not hard to see how Coheed And Cambria's career might pan out from here. The strange thing about Claudio Sanchez's prolific crew is how they have managed to attract two almost entirely separate audiences. When the band first emerged with *The Second Stage Turbine Blade* in 2002, the word 'prog' was conspicuous by its absence from all but the most perceptive reviews. As a result, the first wave of admirers came primarily from the alternative rock and emo scenes. The prog world caught up fairly swiftly and now, as the New Yorkers release their ninth full-length album, Coheed And Cambria are more popular than ever, with both audiences intact and still growing.

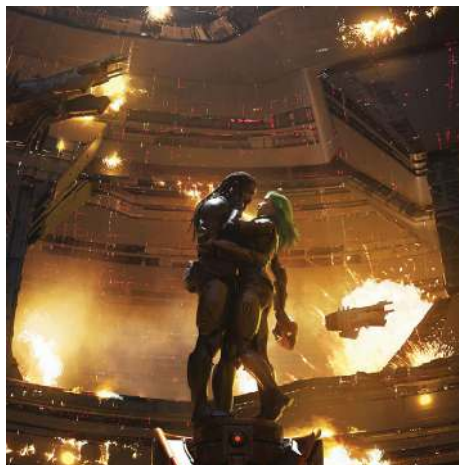
Lyrically, Coheed And Cambria have been as proggy as they come from day one. *The Unheavenly Creatures* sees the band return to Sanchez's elaborate and increasingly epic *The Amory Wars* comic book saga, after briefly abandoning it for 2015's *The Color Before The Sun*. This time we're once again plunged into the Amory Wars world and the bewildering, slightly unfathomable world of Heaven's Fence, the Supreme Tri-Mage and numerous other characters and scenarios that only the most devoted fans will have followed closely.

For those who want the complete, immersive experience, a special edition box set of the album will boast an exclusive novella written by Sanchez and his wife Chondra Echert. For everyone else, turning a blind eye to the frontman's trademark density of detail will by no means spoil the fun, because with 15 tracks and 78 minutes of music, *The Unheavenly Creatures* has more than enough substance to keep us gripped.

As ever, the key to its allure lies almost entirely in Sanchez's unerring ability to write incisive, bittersweet rock songs with giant hooks and only occasional detours into more adventurous territory. Therein lies the only real downside to this record: from a prog fan's perspective, it's hard not to wish that Coheed would take a few more risks, indulge

Vaxis - Act I: The Unheavenly Creatures

ROADRUNNER



They're a tremendous prog rock band when they put their minds to it.

in a tangential leap or two or be a little less beholden to the big melodic finish. Something as generously proportioned as seven-minute opener *The Dark Sentencer* arrives undeniably blessed with twists and turns, but in terms of building on the band's sturdy canon and expanding their sonic universe, it barely strays from a blueprint that was established as far back as their second album, *In Keeping Secrets Of Silent Earth: 3*, some 15 years ago.

These days, Coheed are much better at expressing and pacing their best ideas. Songs such as *Love Protocol* (which confirms beyond doubt that Sanchez is a big fan of The Police) and the dreamy *Night-Time Walkers* are absurdly radio-friendly and polished to within an inch of their lives, but with plenty of textural flourishes and delicate

embellishments adding bite to the overriding sweetness. Similarly, the closing *Lucky Stars* uses simplicity as a disguise, striking a balance between twinkly-eyed, folksy accessibility and the low-key eccentricity that has underpinned most of Coheed's finest moments. It's one of the finest songs Sanchez has ever written, with a chorus so overwhelmingly sweet that you may expect to hear your own teeth clattering onto the floor to the sound of Sanchez's beautifully understated vocal.

We can demand complex prog epics as much as we like, but the truth is that it's basically impossible to maintain any kind of critical detachment when one of those irresistible choruses erupts. Whether in the middle of *Queen Of The Dark*'s uneasy sprawl or plastered all over the weirdly jaunty *It Walks Among Us*, when Coheed hit chorus mode, the world instantly seems a better place. Sanchez seems to have tapped directly into the universal wellspring of all positivity, and even in the midst of darker moments like the hazily menacing *Black Sunday*, Coheed's music always seems to be aspiring, ultimately, to an uplifting conclusion. For that alone, they deserve to be cherished.

The only real misfire here, *The Pavilion (A Long Way Back)* starts as a dead spit for Tears For Fears' *Everybody Wants To Rule The World* before morphing into a slightly overwrought chunk of affable post-grunge, replete with melodramatic strings. For all its ambition, it seems lazy and a tiny bit cynical, particularly when placed next to the vastly more absorbing likes of *The Gutter*: effectively a miniature rock opera that provides the album's most thrilling moment of self-indulgence. Maybe the band's instinctive pop sensibilities are non-negotiable at this point, but they really are a tremendous prog rock band when they put their minds to it.

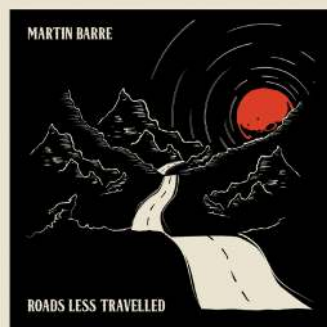
The Unheavenly Creatures is undoubtedly one of Coheed And Cambria's finest records. It's just that they could almost certainly make an even better one. The saga continues.



MARTIN BARRE

Roads Less Travelled CLEOPATRA

Ex-Tull axeman still looking for adventure.



Prog has its fair share of guitar heroes. The likes of Steve Howe, Robert Fripp and Steve Hackett have all been rightly lauded. Martin Barre has arguably received fewer plaudits. Connoisseurs, however, have long known that any guitarist who could handle the batshit arrangements of Ian Anderson in *Thick As A Brick* mode deserves some

You're transported by harmonic richness and melodic skill.

props. In some ways, a guitarist's guitarist (his fans include Mark Knopfler and Steve Vai), Barre's solo work reveals his considerable gifts as a songwriter as much as his axe skills.

Roads Less Travelled, Barre's seventh solo album, both builds on and departs from 2015's *Back To Steel*. The continuity is found in Barre's mastery of hard rock. It's shown especially on the Whitesnake-worthy (*This is My*) *Driving Song*, as well as the groovy title track, where vocalist Dan Crisp sits back beautifully on the riffage. It's fantastically catchy fist-pumping rock. However, where *Back To Steel* acted as a retrospective over a 50-year career and included some covers of old favourites, *Roads Less Travelled* shows the 70-something Barre still looking forward.

Barre always had the gift of placing his virtuosity at the service of the song. In addition to Crisp, *Roads Less Travelled* features vocals from Becca Lansford and Alex Hart. Whether serving up power chords or exquisite folk-inspired progressions, Barre wants the singer to be heard. Mind you, his licks on medieval folk instrumental *Trinity* are breathtaking. They combine both harmonic richness and melodic skill – the listener is transported away to tales of lost castles and gallant knights, and it all leaves you in no doubt of the incalculable contribution Barre made to Tull's sound.

Even on more straightforward jazz blues grooves like *And The Band Plays On*, Barre's guitar takes a road less travelled – his soloing doesn't seek to dominate but weaves carefully in and out of a smart rhythm section and organ playing. He just wants this tale of ballroom dancing (that's right!) to take centre stage.

A severe critic might suggest that a track like *Badcore Blues* – with its Ry Cooder-esque slides and its refrains of 'I'm in too deep' – run a little too close to blues by numbers, but that would be quibbling. There is so much on this album – from the energetic fusion of rock and folk in opener *Lone Wolf* through to the beautiful *You Are An Angel* – to inspire and delight fans, old and new.

Barre allegedly claimed that he'd never had a guitar lesson in his life. Rather, he wanted to find his own style and vision of playing. *Roads Less Travelled* makes the listener glad he followed his distinctive path.

RACHEL MANN

ALLY THE FIDDLE

Up GENTLE ART OF MUSIC

Violin-driven prog metal/fusion collision from Germany, with a quality guest list.

The premise of *Ally The Fiddle* is simple: virtuoso violinist Ally Storch fronts the German sextet for this album of progressive metal meets fusion. A couple of unusual twists involve the band featuring two guitarists but eschewing a keyboardist, while also numbering both Simon Tumielewicz on bass and Rouven Haliti on Chapman Stick. *Up* is a bumpy listen. In places it's exhilarating, with flashes of innovation, such as on instrumentals *The Bass Thing* and *Aphotic Zone*, where Storch's electric six-string violin weaves around the guitars of Robert Klawonn and Eric Langbecker. Storch's own



heavily accented vocals might not be to every taste – imagine a Teutonic version of Renaissance's Annie Haslam. That aside, there's much talent on show and the band cover Joe Satriani's *Surfing With The Alien* with panache. Numerous guest musicians contribute, most prominently Aristocrats/The Sea Within drummer Marco Minnemann, who solos on *The Path*, and Storch's fellow violinist, the mighty Jerry Goodman of Mahavishnu Orchestra, on album highlight *Try To Stop Me*. Not an unqualified success, then, but *Ally The Fiddle* have plenty of potential. **NS**

BEAK>

>>> INVADA/TEMPORARY RESIDENCE

Third album of brilliantly disturbing krautrock from Portishead offshoot.

By their own admission, there's an essential 'wrongness' at the heart of what BEAK> do. It can sometimes make their music feel disorientating, yet they use dissonance not to challenge listeners, but as a way of scratching at the digital lacquer of modern music to reveal the picture hidden underneath. BEAK> may have started as a way for Portishead founder Geoff Barrow to let off creative steam, but >>> is a serious work of dystopian art rock in its own right, one that gets under the skin and keeps digging. Take opening instrumental *The Brazilian*: fluting arpeggios and cosmic washes



of synth are trampled on by stark drums and a stuttering post-punk bass riff, creating a groove that seems to grip and repel at the same time. Adding ghostly harmony vocals into the mix, as on *Brean Down*, only adds to this sense of uncanny slippage, like an old recording of Can bleeding into a Sonic Youth track. The upbeat electro glam of *King Of The Castle* and propulsive analogue boogie of *RSI* would certainly pass muster at the robot disco, but technology is never used as an avatar of the future here, just a reminder of its inevitable obsolescence. **JB**

BIRDPEN

There's Something Wrong With Everything JAR

There's *nothing* wrong with the Southampton alt-proggers' dreamily groovy fifth.

It would be a mistake, you'd think, to get cornered by Birdpen at a dinner party. Thankfully, the duo – made up of Dave Pen of Archive, and Mike Bird – spend a lot more time working on their music than they did their band name. The results are a splendid mix of psych rock, electronics and a doomy ambience, which makes you think they might get a bit maudlin after a drink or two. It's a glorious sound they make, though, and *There's Something Wrong With Everything* is beautiful in the way that sheets of dense rain and black clouds can be beautiful when



framed against a vista of rugged countryside. Theirs is the soundtrack to the comedown after an especially spangled bank holiday weekend, spacey and strangely welcoming, even if their lyrics tend to want to bite.

There are touches of Syd Barrett-era Pink Floyd, a dash of Can, even some downbeat folksy notes on the especially good *Natural Rewards*. Kudos must also go to the dark majesty of the brooding title track, and the hollowed out *Good News*, which sounds like it could have been a latter-day Replacements out-take – and that is very much meant as a compliment. **PW**

BLURRYCLOUD

Pedesis SELF-RELEASED

Heavy but haunting music with symphonic flourishes from Pennsylvania.

The second album from Jack DeMaio's BlurryCloud is another collection of elegantly arranged post-rock, math-rock and prog instrumentals. BlurryCloud seem to be part of a growing movement of home studio-based projects that reach their audiences through outlets like Bandcamp, and DeMaio is aided in his endeavours by a squad of fellow Bandcampers, including Richard Blumenthal on piano, guitarists Greg Chalabi, Adam Rafowitz and Roberto Granados, and vocalist Kyle Schaefer. Blumenthal in particular does good work and the piano in *And Breathe*



sounds like a wonderfully creepy circus theme song. *The Flower Bone* begins with a densely layered landscape of guitars, then switches gears with a swirling, stuttering breakdown before the guitars stomp back in. The haunting *A Lilac Husk*, the only song with a vocal, boasts impressive dynamics, testament to DeMaio's knack for throwing symphonic gestures into his compositions. *Fleur De Lune* has guitar fireworks aplenty from Rafowitz and Chalabi, underpinned by the heavy but pleasingly articulate drumming of James Knoerl. Overall, this is well worth seeking out. **DW**

CAVE

Allways DRAG CITY

Utopian post-rock grooves from Chicagooan quintet.

The title of CAVE's fourth album says it all: it's a signpost with multiple arrows, and we're invited to follow each one simultaneously. The psychedelic post-rock of previous outings has transformed into a vibrant strand of pan-global avant-disco where forward motion is everything. The result is that *Allways* feels like a more confident and organic piece of work, the sound of a band hitting its stride. *The Juan* is suffused with Afro-rock sunshine, wandering bass and big snares against swooping new age keys. As with the rest of the album, it conjures up a seamless Fourth



World meeting between the metronomic soundscapes of Can, Fela Kuti and Tortoise, but in a way that isn't trying to be self-consciously postmodern. *San Yago* is rhythmically dense and lush with detail, its Morse code guitar riff fleshed out with bubbling acid synths and wordless chanting. The hot sax and organ of *Dusty* has more of an urban tropical flavour, while *Beaux* is funky, sparse wah-wah vamping against a head-nodder of a groove. It's easy to overanalyse, but sometimes you just have to surrender to the beat. This is Utopian music for troubled times, a celebration of simply being alive. **JB**

DAMANEK

In Flight GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Second album from Guy Manning's multinational band soars to greater heights.

To describe Damanek as a 'supergroup' may stretch credulity at first sight. After all, none of the four principal protagonists - multi-instrumentalist Guy Manning, bassist Dan Mash, saxophonist Marek Arnold and keyboardist Sean Timms (also of Southern Empire) - sit atop the prog pyramid. However, this excellent successor to the band's debut album substantiates the case for that 'supergroup' tag to be applied. Fewer than 18 months after the release of Damanek debut album *On Track*, *In Flight* belies the alacrity with which it has emerged. Indeed, it's an even stronger and more



consistent release than its predecessor. Prog snobs may turn their noses up at some of the catchy, jazzy material included here - *Skyboat* rocks like a turbocharged Supertramp and *The Crawler* has a chorus to seduce mainstream rock audiences. But Damanek have plenty of prog chops to showcase too, most obviously on the three-part, 30-minute epic *Big Eastern*, while Manning's topical lyrics are as thought-provoking as ever. On this evidence, Timms has had a hand in two of the year's best prog albums, and the forthcoming Damanek/Southern Empire tour will be unmissable. **MS**

GLASS HAMMER

Chrononaut SOUND RESOURCES/ARION

US group go back to the future, prog-style.



Chrononaut may be the perfect antidote to all those weighty, po-faced concept albums that take themselves oh so very seriously. The protagonist of the story behind the music is Tom, the obsessed prog fan first introduced on Glass Hammer's 2000 album *Chronometree*. He returns here, as utterly devoted to prog rock as ever, but disillusioned that his own band The Elf King haven't received the rapturous acclaim he believes



The sound has plenty of substance, and the brass section enriches the sonic palette.



they so richly deserve. So, Tom decides to travel back in time to the 1970s, convinced that he will finally find success in the golden era of progressive rock.

The playful tone of *Chrononaut* is a great contrast to Glass Hammer's last release, the much darker *Valkyrie* from 2016, which was all about the horrors of war. The lighter mood hasn't led to any dulling of the group's compositional skills, though. As much as it is a sequel to *Chronometree*, the album feels like it could be a cheery counterpoint to Tim Bowness' *Lost In The Ghost Light*, about an ageing rocker reflecting on glories long past.

If there's one common thread in prog forums, it's a harking back to the days when prog bands ruled the airwaves and packed arenas, so it's all too easy to relate to Tom's sense that he lives in the wrong decade and is a man out of time. The album manages to sound both accessible and yet firmly rooted in progressive rock. *Twilight Of The Godz* has a touch of Floyd's moodiness and a bluesy, Gilmour-esque guitar solo, but then there are catchy pop hooks in *A Hole In The Sky*.

Lead vocals are shared between bassist Steve Babb, Susie Bogdanowicz, Discipline's Matthew Parmenter and Patton Locke, which helps bring the different voices in the story to life. Bogdanowicz in particular shines in 1980 *Something* and the atmospheric ballad *Melancholy Holiday*.

The production and arrangements are both impressive. Everything is clean and clear in the mix but there's still plenty of substance to the sound, and the presence of a brass section on *Roll For Initiative* and *Blinding Light* enriches their sonic palettes. The latter has a hint of soul and 60s flower power pop thanks to the brass section and the infectiousness of the chorus melody, but then that's balanced by the marvellous and very prog Mellotron solo.

There's a lot of music to digest here and as much as *Chrononaut* pokes a little fun at the way prog fans often cling to the past, this is an album that will reward repeated listens long into the future.

DAVID WEST

HAKEN

Vector INSIDEOUT

Darker and more metallic fifth studio album messes with our heads.



As they prepared to drop this new long-player on us, Haken gave us a few pre-release clues about what to expect. But did they really tell us much? One word they used to describe their new material was 'darker'. Fair enough, but how often do you hear of a rock band promising their next record would be 'lighter, full of laughs!'

Hails of metallic riff bullets alongside an intriguing lyrical tale.

Their suggestion that we'd be hearing some heavier sounds on *Vector* was also fairly standard pre-release rhetoric. But it has been borne out in the finished product with some aplomb. Most importantly, it manages to pull off the delicate trick of blending hooks both melodic and visceral with heart-stopping hails of metallic riff bullets, dizzying instrumental and rhythmic complexity, alongside an intriguing lyrical tale.

Naturally, we're greeted with the calm before the proverbial storm, courtesy of *Clear's* sweeping, hymn-like orchestral opener. But make sure you're sitting uncomfortably, because *The Good Doctor* then crashes through the cathedral window with a thrashy, synth-scrawled riff salvo, as if a wasp has just flown in and can only flit around in disorientated panic.

A thumping bassline then introduces the story of a rogue medic playing dangerous brain games with an unresponsive patient. The initial blast of chaos then reappears, coagulated into a winning hook as Ross Jennings belts out an almost emo-esque chorus. The same trick is then repeated on *Puzzle Box*, which initially seems to do what it says in the title, full of breeze-block riffs tied up in a time signature so impenetrable, it's like you're trying to dance a quickstep with someone determined to tread on you every third, eighth or 11th step. It then hits its stride with anthemic snatches of booming power metal.

Veil is even better, full of breathtaking Sturm und Drang as a harmony-soaked chorus juxtaposes emotive melody with teeth-rattling power.

Haken can also use more subtle tools to draw us in. *Host* benefits from a gorgeously despondent horn accompaniment as the hapless patient of the deadly doc's experiments sees his end looming large: 'I've been left here to die... I'm waiting for the earth to be my host,' he gently confesses.

But he's not going to get off that lightly, judging by the final track, *A Cell Divides*. The sense of rising panic hits a prog metal fever pitch, culminating in a chorus destined to be sung back at Haken by countless future crowds, as the patient realises he's being 'twisted out of form by unnatural selection' in 'a horrifying violation of a human form'. Actually, come to think of it, that really is quite dark, isn't it?

JOHNNY SHARP

DEAD LETTER CIRCUS

Dead Letter Circus RISE/BMG

Aussies continue to rise, but fail to excite.

When it takes a band four albums to release a self-titled record, it usually means they've finally found their identity and they're ready to tell the world. It's Dead Letter Circus' time to go all eponymous on us, with singer Kim Benzie proclaiming that the band have "reached a point of a collective mind state" in their career. It's hard to tell if he was just spinning a well-worn story ahead of the album's release, but what's clear is that *Dead Letter Circus* feels like the band's most cohesive record yet, its 10 songs tight and tenacious. But while it packs a punch, the album



will struggle to pique the interest of prog purists. Its left-turns are found in the jagged riffs and explorative soundscapes, but they're frustratingly shy. Tracks such as *The Real You* show why the band have toured with 30 Seconds To Mars, with Benzie's hooky vocals soaring above slabs of well-crafted, contemporary alt-rock. Amid the arena-friendly pomp there's a handful of dalliances, like the almost-djent riff in *Home* or the distortion-into-electronica finale to *Say It Won't Be Long*. Dead Letter Circus are getting bigger, but are they getting better? Prog fans won't be so sure. **CC**

ESBE

Mystra - Songs From Byzantium MMC/NAXOS

Spellbinding stories from a lost world.

Esbe has already been compared to Kate Bush and Cocteau Twins' Elizabeth Fraser, partly because she has a tendency to get swept away in emotional euphoria and, at times, sing in tongues - phonetic syllables rather than words. *Le Mystère Des Voix Bulgares* is an acknowledged influence, while there's also something of the dreamlike reveries of Enya about Esbe's enraptured flow. A Royal Academy of Music graduate and winner of the Julian Bream prize for guitar from North London, her Middle Eastern origins infuse *Mystra's* meanderings with a rare blend of colours and moods.



Like its predecessor *Desert Songs*, it travels away from the here and now. Fuelled by musings on the lost capital of Byzantium and its culture and philosophies, it's a gently arresting brew of classical, samples and, riding romantically across it all, Esbe's eloquent

voice - or rather (multiple harmony) voices. The whole album is cinematic but not at all inaccessible, her sound exuding enigma and developing its own momentum. Some may find songs about the dreams of the Emperor Constantine pretentious, but perhaps a little more mysticism is exactly what our post-truth planet needs to embrace right now. **CR**

EXIT NORTH

Book Of Romance And Dust SELF-RELEASED

Anglo-Swedish aesthetes' unputdownable first chapter.

When Thomas Feiner sang guest vocals on Steve Jansen's solo album *Slope*, it was clear that his rich, deep tones were perfect for the kind of pensive, profound music Jansen makes. Now they've combined with Feiner's Swedish compatriots Ulf Jansen and Charles Storm to form Exit North, whose debut is every bit as melancholy as long-term fans of Jansen would hope. With each member a multi-instrumentalist, it's a layered set of songs that find the sweet spot between challenging originality and a warm core that speaks to you rather than at you. Former Anywhen man Feiner's



voice is subterranean: next to him, Scott Walker and Leonard Cohen are Pinky and Perky. He's no slouch on the trumpet either. Yet musicians of Jansen's experience know how to make every gesture count, never over-egging the pudding. Perhaps the nine-minute *Losing* is faintly indulgent, but even there, the spaces between notes are articulate. More compact tracks such as *Passenger's Wake* and *Lessons In Doubt* gnaw into your soul, as does *Rain Tree Crow*, marrying the pathos of Tindersticks with the refractions of Talk Talk. This book of love and longing is bruised and beautiful. **CR**

GÖSTA BERLINGS SAGA

Et Ex INSIDEOUT

Swedish instrumentalists' mind-boggling debut for InsideOut.

When you dispense with the natural attention magnet that is a singer, you've got to work harder to grab people by the lugs, and now that this Stockholm quartet have signed to InsideOut, they might just get the attention their uniquely cinematic musical visions deserve. In the past they've employed everything from a French horn to a musical saw as sonic tools, and we're not entirely sure what's in the mix here, but *Square 5's* squelchy opening bars sound like Tangerine Dream reimagining Bowie's *Low* album for the soundtrack of a 1974 documentary about futurist



architecture. Then Capercaillie Lammergeyer Cassowary & Repeat channels early Kraftwerk's soft electro throb until a sort of distorted brass band riff barges in. On the relatively rare occasions that they employ a sound as commonplace as a guitar, it's not the shredding or squiddling you expect from prog players but the angular, abrasive stuff we hear on *The Shortcomings Of Efficiency*, carving notes haphazardly all over a dystopian synthscape before the track explodes in a fireball of indistinct, punky vocal snarling. So it turns out they do sing after all. Who knew? JS

GYDA

Evolution FIGUREIGHT

Icelandic artist makes with the mellow cello.

After leaving Icelandic experimentalists múm early in their career, Gyða Valtýsdóttir focused on her cello studies. She's since worked with a host of names, from The Kronos Quartet to the Dessner brothers from The National. Her 2016 solo debut included radical interpretations of Schubert, Schumann and others, and won multiple awards in her homeland, so it's no surprise that *Evolution* aims high and smacks of class. If it seems too precious on first listen, patience is rewarded with subtle emanations of gossamer emotion so delicate that they border on the spectral. Her high vocal



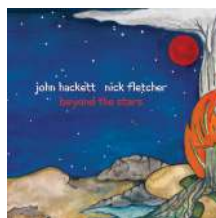
weaves among blurred, twilight forests of strings and electronic purrs, with that cello often providing the gateway in (or out). While it might seem lazy to compare an Icelandic woman to Björk, there is a sonic link, with mood more important than melody. There are flickers of Laurie Anderson too. The album was recorded in New York and LA and the artist was at first confused by how effortlessly it came into being. So understated is it that a degree more effort is required to find its heart beneath all the meditation-class shimmering and iridescence, but if you peer long enough, it's there. CR

JOHN HACKETT & NICK FLETCHER

Beyond The Stars ESOTERIC ANTENNA

Stellar soloing and strong songs.

John Hackett recounts that when he'd decided to quit university, he received a phone call from Mike Rutherford inviting him to record flute on Anthony Phillips' classic album *The Geese And The Ghost*. That happy convergence in 1974 helped Hackett decide to pursue music, although it wasn't until he was 50, in 2005, that he released his debut rock album. Since then he's made up for lost time, releasing a series of well-received and increasingly confident records, and with long-term collaborator Nick Fletcher to the fore, this feels like his strongest work yet. The material moves



between jangling, hook-laden soft rock anthems and more reflective, pastoral ingredients. There's also room for occasional jazz rock forays. *A Time In Place* dances on choppy time signatures, enabling Fletcher's guitar to ripple outwards, evoking the legato technique Allan Holdsworth made his own. Smart and incisive, *The Spyglass* launches into cross-cutting rhythms over which Hackett spits out vocals, sounding not unlike Peter Gabriel. Indeed, the track wouldn't sound out of place on *The Lamb...*, adding an extra frisson to Fletcher's forceful, melodic soloing. SS



PROGRESSIVE METAL

Dom Lawson buckles up for a delve into the darker, heavier side.

Not content with bossing the symphonic metal scene in Epica, Mark Jansen seems to be hell-bent on making his cinematic death metal project **Mayan** a seriously big deal too. *Dhyana* (Nuclear Blast) is colossal on every level: from its explosive orchestral interjections to the pristine, hi-def thud of the production, this is progressive, operatic metal designed to level stadiums. The growled vocals may unnerve more sensitive listeners, but this is so gloriously, unashamedly over the top that if you've ever wanted to know what it feels like to be in an episode of *Game Of Thrones*, crank *Dhyana* up to ceiling-cracking volume and prepare to feel seriously epic.



Extreme prog stalwarts **Into Eternity** have finally re-emerged with *The Sirens* (self-released), the Canadians' first album since recruiting new vocalist Amanda Kiernan. While still firmly rooted at the extreme end of prog metal, densely melodic songs like *Fringes Of Psychosis* are a great showcase for Kiernan's wildly versatile range. It's clear that her bandmates are revelling in the experience too, as they repeatedly spin on a structural dime, from surging,



Savatage-like pomp to blistering, deathly fury.

Revered masters of progressive funeral doom **Pantheist** excel themselves on long-awaited fifth album *Seeking Infinity* (Melancholic Realm). Unlike many of their snail's-pace peers, Kostas Panagiotou's crew are no slaves to repetition. Languorous epics like *Control And Fire* are underpinned by the unmistakable, shattered-knee crawl of those doom riffs, but continual detours into more refined, elegiac realms make this an endlessly fascinating and heart-rending journey toward oblivion's embrace.



Always worth checking out for their Victorian laudanum junkie shtick alone, **A Forest Of Stars**



have conjured another mind-bending feast of psychedelic black metal indulgence on their fifth full-length, *Grave Mounds And Grave Mistakes* (Prophecy). Worth hearing for the genre-crunching insanity of the 11-minute *Scripturally Transmitted Disease* alone, it's a work of sustained, heroic madness.

Back on more familiar ground, Australia's **Sum Of Us** offer a subtly

distinctive take on prog-tinged alternative rock, more closely linked to left-field post-hardcore than anything overtly metallic. Their *Sharp Turns In Dark Tunnels* EP (self-released) brims with promise and will delight fans of Black Peaks and Coheed And Cambria.



Finally, and only if you're feeling brave, British black metal stalwarts **Anaal Nathrakh** have made an album partly inspired by World War I poetry, the horror of the trenches and some distinctly chilling parallels with the modern age. *A New Kind Of Horror* (Metal Blade) is vastly more inventive than most records this extreme, and Dave Hunt's excoriating screams and ripping falsetto make for a startling focal point. The fact that the anti-war ethos behind songs like *Obscene As Cancer* and *Forward!* is both righteous and wise makes the whole bewildering cacophony both timely and irresistible.



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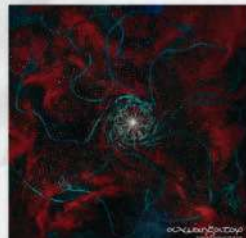
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IT BITES

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Unheard live recordings from the celebrated prog-poppers.

There are few more underrated bands than It Bites, the Cumbrians whose fate was sealed by a genre-challenging sound, combustible personalities and a grossly misrepresentative hit in *Calling All The Heroes*. This five-disc live set follows their arc from seven early songs performed at the Marquee Club in July 1986 to a swansong at the Hammersmith Odeon in April 1990, where a brace from an unrecorded fourth album is previewed. There's also a spellbinding display at the Astoria in the summer of '88 while promoting the Steve Hillage-produced *Once Around*



The World. Welding the accessibility of pop to prog's technoflash via a series of mesmerising arrangements, It Bites still sound fresh and original, the guitar playing of Francis Dunnery positively extraordinary during *You'll Never Go To Heaven*, *Plastic Dreamer*, *Old Man And The Angel* and *Midnight*. These recordings withstand the test of time. Hearing It Bites again on such vibrant form is, with hindsight, quite sad. At the Marquee, the resounding silence that greets Dunnery's enquiry, "Any singles buyers in the audience?" perhaps tells their story in microcosm. **DML**

KIKAGAKU MOYO

Masana Temples GURUGURU BRAIN

Japanese outriders' scintillating fourth takes on a psychedelic jazz hue from Lisbon.

Kikagaku Moyo's last album, 2016's exceptional *House In The Tall Grass*, came wrapped in a warm fug of folksy psychedelia, with traces of Eastern classical music and early-70s kosmische. This equally wonderful follow-up finds the quintet expanding outwards, both in a literal sense – having moved out of their communal home in Tokyo, the band journeyed to Lisbon to record with jazz musician Bruno Pernadas as producer – and a musical one. The epic *Dripping Sun* is a perfect illustration of that, with hushed folk merely a brief interlude in an unstoppable psych funk jam that



pushes and pulls in various directions. The dreamy quality of twin vocalists Tomo Katsurada and Go Kurosawa (who also double up on guitar and drums respectively) heightens the trippy sensation of much of *Masana Temples*. *Majupose* is trancey, hitching itself to a Can-like rhythm and punctuated by samples of a child's voice. There's also a debt to Acid Mothers Temple, most obvious amid the space rock grooves of *Gatherings*, with its distorted guitars and free-form approach. Meanwhile, Ryu Kurosawa's sitar drones flag their inspiration from the boundless possibilities of another era. **RH**

KINGCROW

The Persistence SENSORY

Persistence pays off on Italian proggers' moody seventh.

You may have caught this Roman sextet supporting Pain Of Salvation on their recent UK dates or on previous POS tours, and this new album deserves to give them another profile boost. When you're confronted with the initial staccato riff volley of opening track *Drenched*, you feel like you're in familiar, if slightly generic, prog metal territory. But after that it's the wider framework of the song that starts to captivate you, as a sumptuous orchestral sweep and Diego Marchesi's soaring melodramatic vocal draw a more majestic cloak over proceedings. Elsewhere, Diego Cafolla's



stuttering power chords are knotty stepping stones for broader anthemic strokes, with keyboard washes, major to minor piano chords and ghostly vocal harmonies evoking some of symphonic rock's favourite tricks. Their love of trip-hop's widescreen noir atmospherics can be heard in the fuzzy vocals of the title track and the trickles of despondent keyboards that lend dramatic light and shade throughout the album. At heart, though, these boys are rockers, as *Every Broken Piece Of Me* proves as it works itself up from melancholy moodiness into an angry, thumping metallic frenzy. **JS**

RIVERSIDE

Wasteland INSIDEOUT

Facing the future, the Poles reconvene for album seven.



Riverside's last album, 2016's *Eye Of The Soundscape*, provided a glimmer of light in their annus horribilis. Emerging nine months after the sudden death of guitarist Piotr Grudziński, it was a hybrid of old and new songs that put the band's electronic and ambient leanings front and centre. It served two purposes: to prove to fans and band alike that they still had a future in the wake of such a devastating tragedy, and to show that the future might sound very different to their past.

The former notion still stands, but the latter proved a red herring. The Polish band's seventh album is a retreat of sorts



An emotional sucker punch, but one that provides hope.



to their regular sound, albeit a darker take on it. But at the same time it's the sound of a band who have been through the darkest times imaginable and come out the other side, stronger and more determined to embrace what they have.

There's a post-apocalyptic concept at the heart of *Wasteland*, albeit one that's more *The Road* than *Mad Max* – an all-too-real story of very human terror. Its nine songs are loaded with bleak imagery of global warming and senseless war, from the fallout shelters and 'gardens of Eden burning above' of doom-laden intro piece *The Day After* to the sound of gunfire and cries of death on *Guardian Angel*. Scratch the surface and you'll find a reservoir of anger – an anger that's aimed at the stupidity of humanity and at a world that's cruelly robbed them of a friend.

Musically, *Wasteland* is no less turbulent. Across its nine tracks, frontman and songwriter Mariusz Duda strikes a balance between cohesion and surprise. *Vale Of Tears* is carried on a bullish, quasi-industrial riff that suddenly gives way to a pastoral chorus. The ominous *Acid Rain* transforms completely halfway through, its churning atmosphere giving way to a billowing and expansive second half. The twisting eight-minute title track combines a spaghetti western twang with subtly stirring harmonies.

The album – and the story – ends with one of the most remarkable songs Riverside have written, and one that finally unlocks *Wasteland*. *The Night Before* is a plaintive, Ludovico Einaudi-styled piano ballad whose stark simplicity masks a torrent of emotion. 'The former world shall not return,' whispers Duda at one point, 'but we'll survive intact again.'

In the context of the story, he's singing it as a parent to a child, but the true intent slowly dawns: it's about Riverside themselves. It's an emotional sucker punch that lays you out flat, but provides a flash of hope at the same time – for us and for them. After all they've been through, no one can begrudge them that.

DAVE EVERLEY

SHINEBACK

Dial BAD ELEPHANT

Former Tinyfish men exit a "sonic maze" for soaring prog nirvana.



Five years ago, Simon Godfrey and his co-writer Robert Ramsay sidestepped Tinyfish's uncertain, tinnitus-threatened future with Shineback. Their debut, *Rise Up Forgotten, Return Destroyed*, revealed an unlikely smorgasbord of elements including rock, pop and EDM, though its tale of a character called Dora who undertakes a journey into her



Continues Godfrey's quest to keep his audience on its toes.



own dream world, encountering dark revelations buried in her subconscious, was suitably prog-tastic.

Album number two sees the pair reuniting with several of the guest performers from that debut, including the ubiquitous Dec Burke of Frost*, The Fierce And The Dead's Matt Stevens, Touchstone/DeeExpus drummer Henry Rogers and Hywel Benett of the Dec Burke Band. Its newcomers include the Valdez duo of Joe Cardillo and Tom Hyatt, and We Are Kin's keyboardist Daniel Zambas.

Dial isn't founded on a storyline or concept, though the theme of communication is a thread that links its 11 songs. Musically speaking, however, it's as nonconformist as the debut. But let's backtrack a moment. In 2015 Godfrey began work on a second Shineback album, only to realise that the five songs he had prepped were direct throwbacks to the material on *Rise Up Forgotten, Return Destroyed*. Instead, he belatedly reworked them into EP form for last year's *Minotaur*, a record that its creator admits helped the reactivation of Shineback by exiting "the sonic maze" that trapped him.

There's no doubt that *Dial* continues Godfrey's quest to keep his audience on its toes. *Lies And Consequences* is a deft, poppy number, daubed in pulsating synth and powered by a hypnotic beat. *I Love You From Memory* begins in a more understated manner, before layer upon layer is added and, finally, the air is gradually released for a delicious finale.

Godfrey tapped John Wyndham's 1956 sci-fi novella of the same name as inspiration for *Consider Her Ways*, and its soaring guitar solo, performed by Dec Burke, ranks among the record's most satisfying moments. Ditto the haunting nine-minute title track and Tom Slatter's stylish fretwork that underpins spoken-word piece *Here I Am*, voiced by Robert Ramsay. Also look out for the delightfully airy *Me Vs Me*, the altogether heavier roar of *Let Her Sleep* (sung by Echolyn's Ray Weston) and, best of all, a 13-minute swansong entitled *Kill Devil Hills*, built around an astonishing guitar duel with Karl Eisenhart of Pennsylvania's Pinnacle that Godfrey swears was captured in a single take.

Dial might not be textbook prog rock, but it is a clever, engaging and thoroughly enjoyable record that gets better with each repeated spin.

DAVE LING

LES BIG BYRD

Iran Iraq IKEA PNKSLM

Whooshing, Scandi space rock delivered on album two - despite some hiccups.

Staking a claim for album title of the year - *Iran Iraq IKEA* comes from a slogan that singer Jocke Åhlund saw printed on a tie in Berlin - this second album from the Swedes has taken some time to get here. The initial idea had been to make good on their 2014 debut, *They Worshipped Cats*, by reuniting with sometime co-writer Anton Newcombe of The Brian Jonestown Massacre, on whose label that album was released. However, things took a turn for the worse when they also decided to bring in extra help in the shape of Pete 'Sonic Boom' Kember, formerly of Spacemen



3. Newcombe and Kember simply didn't get on, leaving Åhlund and his bandmates to do it themselves instead. Thankfully, Les Big Byrd have trusted their instincts, delivering an album of synth-packed space rock with a terrific sense of propulsion throughout.

The standout track is *I Tried So Hard*, which rushes along like Hookworms at their exhilarating best, while *A Little More Numb* (featuring Kember) feels like the brighter cousin of Spiritualized's *I Think I'm In Love*. Eon and Mannen Utanföör edge towards middle ground pop, but otherwise there's plenty for prog fans to savour here. **RH**

MONUMENTS

Phronesis CENTURY MEDIA

Tech metal survivors take it up a notch.

Out of the first wave of djent bands, Monuments are perhaps one of the lesser-known survivors, but with a line-up that boasts ex-Periphery member Chris Barretto on vocals and John Browne on guitar, they're pretty close to a supergroup right off the bat, even before you consider that Anup Sastry, formerly of Skyharbor, played drums on *Phronesis*. In terms of instrumentation, Monuments' high points are the lightning-fast melodic flourishes of lead guitar. Appearing on top of their most kinetic riffs, these cyclical flourishes of tapping can be found on *A.W.O.L*, *Mirror Image* and



Stygian Blue. These tracks all showcase the other highlight of the album: Chris Barretto's excellent vocals. Although he has a powerful scream and growl, as evidenced on *Leviathan* and *Jukai*, it's in his clean singing that he really shines. The

only criticism that can be levelled at *Phronesis* is that it's still relatively by-the-numbers tech metal, although executed very well. For fans of the genre, it's a winner, but it's unlikely to draw in many new listeners. Still, *Phronesis* is an intense, powerful listen, and the band are hell-bent on putting everything into every note. **AL**

MUELLER ROEDELIOUS

Imagori II GROENLAND

Second collaboration from krautrock pioneer and Gotan Project founder.

For students of early electronic music, Hans-Joachim Roedelius requires little introduction. Suffice to say, his work in Cluster and Harmonia helped define the electronica, ambient and new age genres. Now in his 80s, Roedelius remains fascinated by the possibilities of sound. Enter Christoph H Müller, who first came to prominence in Gotan Project. *Imagori II* continues their exploration of the fusion zone between the organic and the synthetic, creating sound worlds that both pulse with life and glimmer inscrutably. Each song is driven by the push and pull between acoustic sources such



as piano, melodica and the human voice, and the digital processing that locates them in a modern electronic music context. For instance, the African thumb piano of *Okapi* competes with twittering synth lines, a pixellated simulacrum

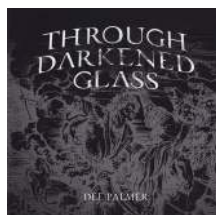
of the savannah, while the Rhodes and breathy vocal of Katrin Hahner on *Fractured Being* act as ghosts in the machine. The environmental ambient of *Pentagramm* conjures intimations of strange frequencies in the ether, and *Monkey Talk* is a sonic metaphor for our oversaturated times, the air humming with endless online chatter. **JB**

DEE PALMER

Through Darkened Glass SELF-RELEASED

Exquisitely crafted solo set from Ex-Tull alumnus.

Asked why she was only now getting round to releasing her first solo album featuring her own material, Palmer answered: "I think it's about time now, before the time does run out, that I got down to try and validate having 'musician' written in my passport." Of course, as anyone who has listened to anything by Jethro Tull since their debut recording 50 years ago knows full well, Dee Palmer has nothing to prove. Her work in providing subtle and skilled arrangements and orchestrations within the group she was a full-time member of from 1977 to 1979 added vital colour and texture.



Here that ability is turned to her own compositions to brilliant effect. Awash with a luscious romanticism, chamber orchestra and choral voices are beautifully scored and integrated into the rock-orientated material. *Urban Apocalypse* and *Black Orpheans*, the

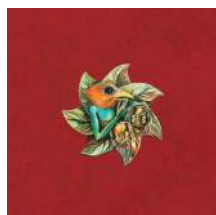
former replete with a Martin Barre guest spot, could seamlessly fit into a Tull album. While Palmer's voice is fragile in places, it's blessed with a tender quality that perfectly suits the material. Poignant and heartfelt, pieces such as *Forever Albion*, filled with sweeping strings and weeping woodwind, are surprisingly powerful. **SS**

PHIDEAUX

Infernal BLOODFISH

Thrilling third and final part of this eco-terror concept trilogy.

Phideaux Xavier (pray you never get asked to announce his name over a PA – people might think you've just started coughing) makes music as startling as the name his parents graced him with. This double album is the final part of a trilogy of releases that began in 2006 with *The Great Leap*. That was quickly followed up a year later with *Doomsday Afternoon*, which called on a dozen players from the Los Angeles Philharmonic Audience, among others, to help Phideaux get his message across. Time has done nothing to blunt his endeavour, ambition or



scope. This double-disc, 19-track set continues his self-proclaimed 'eco-terror tale', and very good it is too. Yes, it's epic, overblown and possibly overlong. Nevertheless, it conjures up images of Alice Cooper at his conceptual apex, Queensrÿche at their most

obscure, and is lavish and overwrought to just the right degree. In *Dissonance We Play* could feature in a West End musical (and might yet), which is true of a few of the numbers featured here. Meanwhile, the 14-minute *From Hydrogen To Love* is pure pomp and circumstance, and it's as appealingly overblown as its title implies. **PW**

PIJN

Loss HOLY ROAR

Visceral first LP from Mancunian experimentalists.

The buzz around the cello-driven Pijn has been building for some time, and *Loss*, their debut LP, finds them making their first major statement. A cut such as *Distress* recalls the powerhouse post-metal dynamism of Russian Circles, with the production perfectly bringing out the nuances in the metallic instrumentation. For its middle eight it veers strongly into King Crimson territory, with the band indulging in an extended build-up and cathartic release. On tracks like *Detach*, meanwhile, Pijn could scarcely be more mellow. Pensive in pace and evocative in mood, the song



is a piano-led dirge with the main melody carried alternately by sedate vocals in the vein of Mike Vennart and by a string section. This oscillation between full-on cuts like the snarling *Unspoken* and more stripped-back and restrained songs

such as the gorgeous, aching *Blanch* repeats throughout the album, at least in its dynamic make-up. Indeed, some tracks, like 10-minute mini epic *Blush*, effortlessly encapsulate both tendencies of the band. In terms of theme, that of loss in all its forms, as well as its atmospherics, *Loss* stays intense for its full running length. **AL**

THUMPERMONKEY

Make Me Young, Etc ROCKSMOS

Art rock awkward squad go the whole prog hog.



The extent of Thumpermonkey's evolution is clear in the opening *Veldt*. It begins with a serene but unsettling overture, frontman Michael Woodman's plaintive croon painting warped and hazy pictures as the music slowly builds into an angular mini symphony, replete with crashing doom metal riffs and droning, dissonant keys.



The band are ready to step into the light and blow some minds.



Where something like fan favourite *Wheezyboy* (from 2014's *Sleep Furiously*) was all about syncopation, oddball time signatures and jerky polyrhythms, *Veldt* is all richness, depth and finesse. More importantly, perhaps, it's an absolutely stunning way to kick off *Make Me Young, Etc*. *Crane fly* is a more straightforward affair, a brooding slow-burner that reaches an uneasy climax when Woodman sings, 'When you let him come upstairs, he'll write his name in burning letters 10 foot high on the wall,' sounding genuinely freaked out.

By the time *Figstorm* drifts into view, pointedly hinging on the singer's voice and some plaintive and vulnerable piano, it's obvious that Thumpermonkey's creative growth has transported them away from the noise rock tendencies that typified their earlier music. After the evocative sparkle of one-minute interlude *Buttersun*, more piano ushers in *Deckchair For Your Ghost*, a feast of Robert Wyatt-esque restraint and melodic eccentricity with several drop dead brilliant lyrics that match the visual power of the surrounding squall, not least, 'Long mindless tentacles of heat stretch from the sun, germinating some nameless desire...' – an accurate description of this year's British summer, perhaps?

A whopping 10 minutes long and easily the most ambitious thing Thumpermonkey have produced to date, *Make Me Young, Etc*'s title track is where this band push the prog fader into the red. Borderline orchestral in its intricate depth, it boasts so many twists and turns that it's almost too much to take in on first listen. At times it sounds like an underwater Gentle Giant, at others it's like Joe Jackson fronting mid-70s Van der Graaf. Either way, it's an audacious and utterly absorbing statement from a band that have always seemed to revel in their shadowy, underground status, but that here sound ready to step into the light and blow some minds.

The album ends with *TempeTerra*, another woozy, piano-led stumble through Woodman's skewed imagination, via 'Scattering mylar embers' and 'the melted cryosphere'. Quite what it all means is anyone's guess, but as another deeply wonky crescendo fades to black, Woodman's parting shot seems to say it all: 'So stop trying to fill your scrapbook/Take a look at where we are.' Wise words from a truly unique and increasingly powerful band.

DOM LAWSON

VOIVOD

The Wake CENTURY MEDIA

Veteran Canadians' 14th goes to *The Outer Limits* and beyond.



The fact that there's a new Voivod album in 2018 is a minor miracle. It's been 35 years since the critically acclaimed Quebec band's formation and 13 since the death of their visionary guitarist and main songwriter, Denis 'Piggy' D'Amour. 2013's *Target Earth* was a heroic, if inconsistent, return. Then-new guitarist Dan 'Chewy' Mongrain built on Piggy's legacy, splicing his own twisted harmonic genes with the Voivod DNA. *Post Society* in 2016 revealed a more evolved, distinct compositional style on an EP that can now be seen as a stepping stone to *The Wake*.



A step up from anything they've released since 1993.



With only two founding members left (drummer Michel 'Away' Langevin and vocalist Denis 'Snake' Bélanger) and 30 years adrift from their creative zenith, Voivod have now created an album that stands on a par with their best work.

Lead single *Obsolete Beings* continues the tradition of spacey, otherworldly intros before settling into that signature prog-thrash groove. So far, so good. So what? Chewy starts to channel his hero Allan Holdsworth, that's what: a blistering display of legato fusion soloing segues into a false ending adorned with acoustic guitar arpeggios. This is already a divergence and a step up from anything they have released since 1993. The sonic experiment continues.

As a classically trained violinist, Piggy built Voivod's signature style from the avant-garde. That influence has now reached its logical conclusion. *The End Of Dormancy* fuses *The Rite Of Spring* with a martial rhythm that could be Gustav Holst's *Mars, The Bringer Of War* (filtered through King Crimson, no doubt). Mongrain reveals that second single *Always Moving* is directly inspired by Stravinsky, lurching between primal staccato strings and the frantic riffing that betrays the band's hardcore punk roots.

For the most part, *The Wake* follows the blueprint of Voivod's mid-era prog metal albums *Nothingface* (1989) and *The Outer Limits* (1993). Fans will recognise a reworking of a section from *Jack Luminous* in a couple of tracks.

Lyrical, this is typical dystopian futuristic concept fare. This time around a catastrophic global event results in near-extinction and a 'ravaged race' struggling to survive. The closing epic, *Sonic Mycelium*, brings the tale to its climax while meshing together musical motifs from the preceding seven tracks in a mini Concerto For Sci-fi Prog Thrash Orchestra. Acknowledging beyond doubt the debt to iconoclastic 20th-century composers, the song culminates in a dissonant arrangement for string quartet.

Roll over Bartók and tell Shostakovich the news — Voivod are back at their uncompromising, progressive best.

CHRIS MCGAREL

SANGUINE HUM

Now We Have Power BAD ELEPHANT

"He's not the new Messiah, he's a very confused scientist..."

Three's a charm, and never more so than in Sanguine Hum's latest, beautifully languid sci-fi concept album, *Now We Have Power*. Following on from 2013's acclaimed *The Weight Of The World* and 2015's *Now We Have Light*, to say they'd made good on the promise of *The Weight Of The World* would be to understate it somewhat. Recording and writing *Now We Have Power* sounds like it was an altogether knottier position to get right (they also work at roughly the same pace as Def Leppard in their pomp), but the end results — 14 songs of dense, florid splashes of rich melody and



songs that wrap around you like smoke — are worth the wait. Whether it's the quietly sparkling *Devachan Don*, which rises and falls on a slowly circling piano riff before exploding into life; brief piano sketches (*Retreat*); the jazzy, Zappa-like ring of *Pen? Paper!*

Pen! Paper!; or the undulating, chiming *Skydive*, there's not a moment wasted in the continuing adventures of ...*Light*'s genius inventor. The idea of the album as a single piece is now as antiquated as top hats (I'm referring to people who didn't attend Eton), but make time for this, dim the lights, put a chair against the door and drift happily away. **PW**

SHINING

Animal SPINEFARM

Norwegian jazz metal weirdos get their rock out.

When you consider that Shining began life as an acoustic, left-field jazz ensemble before morphing into purveyors of unhinged, Crimson-covering jazz metal, their unpredictability has plainly been a major selling point. Quite how fans of the skronk of old will react to *Animal*'s alternative rock sound is open to debate, but this honest and determined bid to court a mainstream audience somehow still feels like an act of subversion. Full of succinct, propulsive anthems, all driven by alt-metal riffs and bereft of Jørgen Munkeby's trademark sax squeals, *Animal* will undoubtedly alienate



much of the Norwegians' underground fan base. On closer inspection, however, songs like *Everything Dies* and *Smash It Up!* offer a smarter, snottier and, yes, slightly weirder take on post-millennial radio rock. Both the Muse-tinged *Fight Song* and the

explosive title track sound like potential hits, but the songs' arrangements are perverse and peppered with grandiose, textural flourishes. Ballad *Hole In The Sky* exists in a realm many light years away from the band's *Blackjazz* era, but it's a curveball that hits the target. Munkeby and his henchmen sound thrilled by this tangential leap. **DL**

WAYNE SHORTER

Emanon BLUE NOTE

Triple-album triumph for 85-year-old Weather Report veteran.

Having recently achieved 85 years on the planet, it seems fitting that quicksilver saxophonist Wayne Shorter should celebrate the occasion by releasing a triple-album set featuring a sci-fi concept, a chamber orchestra, his regular quartet and an accompanying 48-page graphic novel, co-written with celebrated DC Comics artist Randy DuBurke. If this seems like overreaching, remember that Shorter, inextricably intertwined with Miles Davis and Weather Report, is quoted as saying: "To me, jazz means, 'I dare you.'" The combined package is ample evidence that this octogenarian



isn't interested in taking things easy. With Shorter's darting, poetic choices and the quartet fully integrated into the Orpheus Ensemble's nimble and tightly woven orchestrated settings, the pairing sounds lean and contemporary. The remaining discs capture

Shorter's quartet live in London. Their startling and precipitous interactions become breathtaking essays in empathy, intensity and surrendering to the moment. Moving between plangent tenderness and bold insistence, Shorter possesses the vitality of a player half his age. It's Wayne's world and we're lucky that we get to share it with him. **SS**

SLEEPYARD

Winter Crickets GLOBAL RECORDING ARTISTS

Scandi-noir that locates the warmth.

Stavanger-based Norwegians Sleepyard began as a “psychedelic pop band” in the 1990s, but as their fifth full album arrives, it’s safe to say they’ve become something more ambient, implicit and suggestive. They’ve collaborated in the past with Bowie pianist Mike Garson and Spacemen 3’s Sonic Boom, while Judy Dyble and Henry Cow’s flautist Geoff Leigh guest on this album. It’s their own confidence that shines, though, as *Winter Crickets* displays the backbone necessary to swell gradually, entering quietly then growing into itself in key moments. They’ve been inspired by the



seasons before, yet this chooses to examine winter’s mystique instead of its bleak chilliness. The album murmurs, floats and finds moods within moods. And while the title track builds from a piano part that’s Satie meets Gabriel Yared, *Summer Crickets* doesn’t do anything so obvious as provide an opposite. Forlorn harmonica sighs across another suspenseful, restrained soundscape. When vocals do drop in, they tread lightly. The gentle pop breeze of *(Always) In The Back Of My Mind* is allowed to skip not stomp, and *Red Lightning* haunts as it hovers. Cozy up by the fireplace with this. **CR**

THE NECKS

Body RER MEGACORP

They sing the body electric.

It’s no surprise that this Australian trio, who have released over 20 albums since their formation in 1987, cite Miles Davis’ *In A Silent Way* as an influence. There’s more than a hint of that album’s hovering presence in this absorbing single-track record. Just short of an hour and consisting of four distinct movements, the band bring their legendary Zen-like focus to bear upon a series of simple melodic and rhythmic figures that are initially suspended in a heat haze of insistent ride cymbal, shimmering piano and smoky organ. Throughout this 16-minute intro, a series of



drifting squalls coalesce into densely layered anticipation. When it comes, the whipcrack snare signals a gear shift that ushers in a chordal frenzy of strafing electric guitar that’s both glorious and headbangingly explosive. This unexpected motorik surge throws up an intriguing contest between the metronomic certainties of the piece’s structure on the one hand and the abandonment to chaos on the other. More direct than the nebulous character of previous releases, *Body* may broaden the band’s appeal without compromising their commitment to improvisation. **SS**

VOLA

Applause Of A Distant Crowd MASCOAT

Thrilling new horizons from the Danish-Swedish quartet.

Copenhagen’s VOLA are a tricky proposition to categorise as they blend electronica and gentle piano melodies, or contrast djent guitar blasts against the clean, emotive vocals of Asger Mygind. *Applause Of A Distant Crowd* is just their second album but their songwriting is mature and their approach shows one possible avenue for taking progressive music into the future. The record’s theme addresses society’s relationship with social media and how that impacts on how we interact with one another. ‘I photographed my latest meal in black and white,’ sings Mygind in the



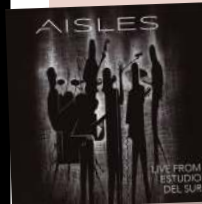
title track. Their heavy side asserts itself in the onslaught of *Smartfriend*, a highlight guaranteed to set a mosh pit ablaze, and again in the riffage of *Alien Shivers*, a tune that switches between crushing intensity and ethereal openness. Mygind’s delivery feels surprisingly intimate on *Vertigo* as he almost breathes into the listener’s ear. The atmospheric *Ruby Pool* is led by a gorgeous piano line from Martin Werner while *We Are Thin Air* is prog you can bang your head to. Not a band content with recreating the genre’s past, VOLA are one of prog’s hottest young prospects. **DW**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the Prog sofa for the ones that nearly got away...



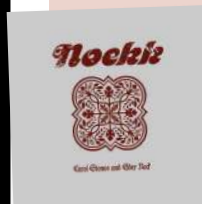
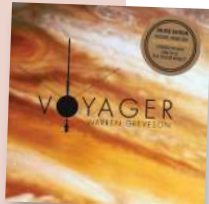
Björk, Billie Holiday and The Anchoress come to mind while listening to Kitty Whitelaw’s exquisite vocals on *Siren* (Antigen), the debut album from **Sealionwoman**, her duo with double bassist and knob-twiddler Tye McGivern. It’s Mercury Prize bait, this – haunting, monolithic soundscapes with roots in *Selkie*, their two-handed theatrical show inspired by Scottish folklore. The performance art element and McGivern’s broad-minded experiments make for an album whose atmosphere is dreich but never dull.



To warmer climes, and Chilean proggers **Aisles** offer up new EP *Live From Estudio Del Sur* (Presagio), featuring in-studio performances of songs from their latest and finest studio album *Hawaii*, and *4.45 and The Yearning*. These neo anthems glide smoothly through melodic and metallic moments,

Sebastián Vergara’s vocals both sweet and operatic as ever. For the full effect, watch the high-quality films of these sessions on Aisles’ YouTube site, where fingers fly, brows furrow, and beards impress.

Another multimedia curio comes from British composer **Warren Greveson**, whose new album *Voyager* (Market Square) was fuelled by his enduring fascination for that 40-year space mission. As you might expect given the subject, space-aged synths evoke Vangelis, Wakeman and Jarre on pieces with solid-gold prog titles like *Journey To Jupiter* and *Around Ganymede*. It’s all accomplished, pleasant stuff, best explored alongside its absorbing 70-minute companion film, *Hello From Planet Earth*.



German duo **Noekk** are usually tagged as doom-meisters, but their new seven-inch single, *Carol Stones And Elder Rock* (Prophecy), suggests a change of focus may be in store on their upcoming new album. The lilting acoustics of *Pan, Loss* and *A Vision* are like shafts of sylvan light here, but there’s crunch and menace in the smouldering *Archaic Tune*, so maybe we’re not out of their dark woods just yet.

Norway’s **Manes** are back with *Slow Motion Death Sequence* (Debemur Morti), a masterclass in how to blend electro and metal textures together (a trick that eludes many mid-level bands in the genre). It’s beautifully produced, packed with good songs, and has the blackest of hearts. ‘Running in circles... it’s all for the worst,’ sings Asgeir Hatlen, who, as ever, gives good broken.



Their compatriot Eirik Søfteland was runner-up on Norway’s version of *Pop Idol* in 2013, but don’t hold that against him. His new project **Sipher** mark their debut with *Atlas* (Apollon), drawing on Queen-style classic rock, lighter prog metal and symphonic rock. It’s catchy and crafted if pretty conventional stuff, with Søfteland a capable and likeable presence as a full-throated singer and big-armed drummer.

Lastly, guitarist Robert Jürjendal’s **Five Seasons** ensemble return with an immaculate self-titled album on Albany Records. It’s a beautiful, beguiling set with a Renaissance/early classical sensibility, woven with vibraphone, French horn, lulling acoustic guitars and Sara Fiil’s crystal-clear soprano. Gluck meets Hackett, perhaps?



ANATHEMA

Internal Landscapes 2008 - 2018 KSCOPE

Anathema's musical story... well, a decade of it anyway.



Nobody reading *Prog* will need to be told that Anathema have become one of the most important progressive bands of the 21st century. But just occasionally, it's good to be reminded of their artistic wealth and worth. This 13-track collection taken from six albums guides us through haunting and inspirational compositions that reflect the way in which Anathema have grown and expanded as a creative force. There's no chronological flow, but that doesn't matter.

Everything is a high point - this collection has no filler at all.

What you get instead is a feel for the way this band have been prepared to take on board so many differing influences, and in doing so, how they've reinforced their individuality.

It begins with the track *Anathema*, which possesses a lonely devilment. The two-part *Untouchables* has a cinematic scope, taking you on a journey from introspective keyboard and vocal infections to a broader canvas, where the guitar styling has an almost orchestral vision.

Talking of orchestration, the reimagining of *J'ai Fait Une Promesse* (first recorded for 1993's *Serenades*) is elegant, with the clever use of orchestral arrangements immeasurably adding to the focus of the song. When you compare this version (from 2011's *Falling Deeper*) to the heavier original, it makes the '93 recording seem primitive and lacking.

Anathema also revisit the past for *Are You There?* This was on the 2003 album *A Natural Disaster*, but was given an acoustic sheen in 2008 for *Hindsight*, an album that, like 2011 album *Falling Deeper*, saw the band delving into their back catalogue to give songs a fresh approach. And this track clearly benefits.

Of course, everything here – which was all carefully selected by the band themselves – is a high point. This compilation has no filler at all, so it seems almost churlish to suggest that there's anything that stands out. However, *Thin Air* is a stunning example of the Anathema art, building from a near quiescent introduction into a boiling ferment of emotions. And closer *Internal Landscapes* is an incredibly dramatic piece, which begins with a narrative from Joe Geraci (a friend of Daniel Cavanagh) about his genuine experience of dying for a few minutes. Then Vincent Cavanagh and Lee Douglas vocally combine in a remarkably spiritual song that at once comes to terms with personal loss, yet also unfurls the pain of such bereavement. This is close to being a folk song in construction, but the musical presentation is altogether more fiery.

This album represents what Anathema have achieved in the last decade. It's far from career-spanning, and there's much more to come, but it's a superb snapshot.

MALCOLM DOME

AYREON

Into The Electric Castle MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT

Lucassen takes his sci-fi epic to infinity and beyond.

The imagination of Arjen Lucassen has long been a wonder to behold. Since 1995's first Ayreon release, *The Final Experiment*, he's delivered a quite ravishing feast of musical riches. This 20th-anniversary remastering of *Into The Electric Castle* is welcome, not only as a reminder of the sheer wildness of Lucassen's mind, but also of his musical accomplishments.

This reissue, remastered by Lucassen himself, brings out ...*Electric Castle's* technicolour madness in its lurid and spectacular detail. Lucassen admits that after the relative failure of *Actual Fantasy*, the second Ayreon album, he wanted to launch every weapon in the prog armoury at ...*Electric Castle*. The remaster is fresh, bright production only underlines this. It brings into hi-def not only Lucassen's virtuosic playing, but also vocals from some of prog's brightest talents, including Fish, Anneke van Giersbergen and Sharon den Adel.

It's a thrill to be reminded of *Electric Castle's* grasp of metal, folk, space rock and electronica. *The Two Gates* has



refrains worthy of AOR-masters Journey, while 11-minute masterpiece *Isis And Osiris*, with Fish's passionate vocals, blends progressions worthy of Yes, Rush and Marillion. *Cosmic Fusion* has growls that Mikael Åkerfeldt wouldn't disavow. This is proper 90s European prog, unfettered and confident.

It's not just the bangers that Lucassen has cleaned up: simpler tracks such as *Valley Of The Queens* are given just as much texture. Perhaps this remix's finest moments are found when Lucassen brings out the harmonic possibilities of the layered voices on tracks like *The Mirror Maze*. It's a psychedelic treat for the ears.

The *Into The Electric Castle* box set comes in a glorious 3D-sculptured cover, and includes 5.1 remixes alongside vinyl and instrumental goodies. It's a labour of love, of which Lucassen says, "I did my best to make the listener feel like they are a part of the whole experience, as if they had physically entered this 'new dimension'."

He does that, and then some. **RM**

BLACKFIELD

Open Mind: The Best Of Blackfield KSCOPE

Melancholic masters Wilson and Geffen get reflective on first retrospective.

Steven Wilson was honing his skills in pop music writing long before his peppy solo effort *To The Bone* last year, which slogged it out with Ed Sheeran and Elvis at the top of the UK album chart and saw the prog icon briefly indulge in his love of ABBA.

Blackfield, Wilson's collaboration with Israeli singer-songwriter Aviv Geffen, never quite reached those heady heights of breakfast TV sofas or chart summits, but it did give Wilson the opportunity to purge himself of three-minute verse/chorus songs while his main band Porcupine Tree roughed it out with meandering forays and bolshy chunk.

Curated by Wilson and Geffen themselves, *Open Mind* is a look back at Blackfield's five albums, spanning 2004 to 2017. Opener *Blackfield* is an apt barometer of what's in store over the 15 tracks, with the acoustic instrumentation sparse yet warm, melancholic yet rousing. Wilson's vocals slide over the chorus' strains in a masterclass of songwriting, hooking you in without feeling overblown.



The duo decided against taking things chronologically, with 2017's *Family Man* following, a Porcupine Tree-lite rocker. Elsewhere there's the folk-speckled *Open Mind* and *Once*, which pivots on indie guitar attack. *1,000 People*, meanwhile, features

Wilson's stark vocals biting into your conscience. '*A thousand people yell, shouting my name, but I wanna die in this moment, I wanna die*,' he rues.

It's easy to focus on Wilson, but Blackfield is just as much Geffen's, if not more, especially after a shift in power in the late 2000s. His track *October* is one of the compilation's gems, with lavish orchestration catapulting it into film soundtrack realms.

When contrasted with Wilson's more kaleidoscopic work, Blackfield can feel a little plodding, with *Faking* sounding like an indie rock throwaway. But that's part of the deal. Melancholic at their very heart, Blackfield still manage to make light from the deepest, darkest pits of human nature, and we wouldn't have it any other way. **CC**

PHIL COLLINS

Plays Well With Others RHINO

Four-disc round-up finds earlier collaborations hitting the spot, naturally.

The energy generated from the amount of support directed by audiences towards Phil Collins when he took over from Peter Gabriel in Genesis could have powered a city. Always accessible and eager to help folks out, even by the time he was fronting the band, Collins had already become a contender for progressive music's Zelig. Popping up in all sorts of unexpected places, it was a trend that snowballed as his stock went global.

Moving quickly from guest spots with singer-songwriters, jazz rock fusioners, ambient auteurs and folk legends, his ascent reached giddy heights of Live Aid Atlantic-hopping, producing pop divas, grooving with R&B artistes and indulging in matey hobnobbing with rock royalty, including Clapton, Plant and a Beatle or two.

It all meant that wherever you looked or listened, Phil Collins was there. Factor in a solo career selling gazillions of units and it's little wonder that his near-ubiquitousness eroded much of the goodwill accrued during



his irresistible rise to the top. Regardless, the breadth of his ubiquity, only some of which is represented on this four-disc set, remains remarkable.

Sadly, the formulaic sleekness of his later songwriting and production, when applied to the work of

others, brings a glossy commerciality but dulls any interest. The grander the gig the blander the fare is the rule here. The nearer you get to pop propaganda events such as The Party At The Palace, highlighted on disc four, the more things fall into empty gestures and bigwig big-band backslapping.

If it's a choice between the rough and the smooth then the former triumphs over the latter, and the first two discs overflow with his infectious energy and push. Brand X's aptly named *Nuclear Burn* showcases his fluid, graceful style. An unshowy technique that's always in service of the music, his work is stellar. If you ever wanted a textbook demonstration of why Collins is one of the very best drummers to have graced stage and studio, look no further. **SS**

GREENSLADE

Spyglass Guest ESOTERIC

Greenslade's most successful album, plus previously unreleased live sessions.

Released in 1974 and the only one of Greenslade's albums to chart, *Spyglass Guest* might not be burdened with the overweening ambition of a *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, but for fans of virtuoso musicianship allied to decent songwriting, there's much to enjoy.

There was certainly no doubting the band's pedigree, with keyboardist Dave Greenslade and bassist Tony Reeves both coming from Colosseum, and Andrew McCulloch having drummed on King Crimson's *Lizard*. But perhaps Greenslade's most intriguing asset was second keyboardist and singer Dave Lawson, who had previously been with the lesser known but excellent Samurai, and would go on to play the ARP synth in *Star Wars*' cantina scene and arrange the strings on Kate Bush's *Cloudbusting*. Lawson brought both a playfulness and an edge to the band's double-keyboard line-up that stopped them from tipping over into muso worthiness.

Lawson's compositions on *Spyglass Guest* stand out by dint of their contrasting dynamics. *Little Red Fry Up*



is woozy jazz rock with creepy stereo vocals to match its farmyard horror lyric, and it also features a piercingly bluesy guitar solo for the first time on a Greenslade album. The close harmony vocals of *Rainbow* could be 10cc after a night on the tiles, while Lawson sounds

like a whisky-soaked Jon Anderson on the woman-done-me-wrong Rhodes confection of *Red Light*.

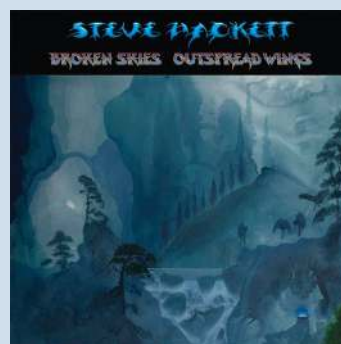
Despite his protestations to the contrary, Dave Greenslade's songs tend to be more recognisably 'progressive' - in fact, *Spirit Of The Dance* is practically a blueprint for the bouncy harlequin fripperies of certain neo-prog bands. *Joie De Vivre* starts churchy but builds to an uplifting conclusion, while the band let rip on *Melancholic Race* in a flurry of synth and organ chops.

For existing fans, the second disc of BBC live sessions from 1974 is a treat, and shows what great players these guys were. Highlights include a gut-busting version of *Sundance* from their debut album, and an extended, bass-jamming take of *Melancholic Race*. **JB**

STEVE HACKETT

Broken Skies - Outspread Wings (1984-2006) INSIDEOUT

The dips, peaks and fascinating contours of a 22-year journey.



Listening to the work of an artist whose catalogue spans several decades is always a fascinating undertaking. Taking the long view, certain albums stand apart, acquiring distinct characteristics wherein transitional points in the musical process are perceived. Of course, some of these contours on the artistic journey would have been evident at the time while others are only now clearly discernible with the benefit of hindsight. If the period covered by 2015's *Premonitions* boxed set, detailing Hackett's tenure with the



He fashions notes with nuanced depth to devastating effect.



Charisma label, represents something of a reliably classic era for him, this latest collection enters a new chapter, where the ground is decidedly more uneven in places.

Infused with an exoticism generated by the inclusion of Brazilian percussion, 1984's *Till We Have Faces* demonstrates a willingness to push his material away from more obvious paths. As a vocalist, Hackett sounds stronger and more dynamic than ever before, injecting an emotive urgency on the cross-cultural pop-orientated adventures of *A Doll That's Made In Japan*, while *Matilda Smith-Williams Home For The Aged* bristles with the kind of percussive energy Paul Simon would co-opt on *Rhythm Of The Saints* six years later.

Hackett's open ears and open-mindedness occasionally let him down. Recorded in 1986 off the back of his GTR venture with Steve Howe but not released until 1990, *Feedback 86's* production is quintessential big-boom 80s, wherein drums are not so much played as detonated. Yet even the full-throated emoting from Bonnie Tyler and Manfred Mann's Chris Thompson can't enliven the dreary *Layla* knock-off *Cassandra* or the punch-drunk anthem *Prizefighters*. In the accompanying booklet, Hackett judges it to be "Well worth a listen", and while GTR fans may revel in the 2018 reworking of the MTV-friendly *When The Heart Rules The Mind*, the reek of misplaced AOR opportunism remains offputting.

From 1993's *Guitar Noir* through to the powerful 2006 release *Wild Orchids*, Hackett sounds like he's in control and on a mission. His ability to take a single note and fashion it into an expression of nuanced depths and meaning has always been one of his great strengths as an instrumentalist, a capacity he uses to devastating effect. At the other end of the spectrum, he's never afraid to pepper his work with a sense of humour that often pricks any inclinations to pomposity.

Though remastered and featuring selected surround-sound mixes and in-concert video, the paucity of in-depth alternative studio tracks, early sketches or out-takes that one expects from today's big boxes strikes a jarring chord in an otherwise exemplary collection.

SID SMITH



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RENAISSANCE

Prologue ESOTERIC

Remastered early album recalls roads not taken.

Prologue felt – and still feels – like the Renaissance debut album, even though it was technically their third. They'd formed at the tail end of the 1960s with ex-Yardbirds Keith Relf and Jim McCarty introducing what they called "the classical element", but by 1972 the personnel – literally under new management – had changed radically. Annie Haslam's voice and John Tout's keyboards were nudged forth, leading to the folk pomp sound with which they're most associated.

Yet here they've not quite located that niche: the material's written by McCarty or member-on-sabbatical Michael Dunford, with lyrics by Betty Thatcher, the band's wordsmith (from a distance) for many more years.

As such, it's a transitional work, with the outfit tentatively moving away from conventional rock tropes, though reluctant to abandon them altogether. Rob Hendry's electric guitar parts are very much present behind Haslam's sky-high vocals, which Renaissance hadn't fully committed to yet. In fact, on *Kiev*



she doesn't sing lead, the boys in the band moving that along with an incongruous (for this group) muscle.

On more light-footed material, we discern the distinctive evolution they soon embraced. *Spare Some Love*, the single version of which (never on CD before)

is included as a bonus track, bundles along with an acoustic guitar doing sufficient heavy lifting, and *Sounds Of The Sea* waves Haslam through as she embarks on her unapologetic lofty tones. From this ocean view, the first sparks of *Ashes Are Burning* – the subsequent album, which greatly boosted their profile – can be sighted.

The presciently titled *Prologue* has a unique charm, as if teasing a different path the ensemble might have taken. Until, that is, you come to the 11-minute finale *Rajah Khan*, a one-off that fuses raga-referencing sitar-like sounds and a squalling synth solo by Curved Air's Francis Monkman. It's a child of psychedelia that's a misfit regarding Renaissance's past or future and, a captivating puzzle, remains so. **CR**

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown CHERRY RED

Still Crazy after all these years – although a little cooled off.

Fifty years ago, as rioting radicals torched the capital cities of Europe, *Fire* swept to the top of the charts. An unintended anthem of destruction, it caught the mood of desire to burn the old order. Its creators, The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, were leaders of the underground scene at UFO happenings with Pink Floyd, Mick Farren & The Deviants and Soft Machine. As evidenced by their debut album, now re-released in a deluxe, three-CD package, the group were more artistic and adventurous than most.

Despite the success of *Fire*, the Crazies' recorded output was comparatively slight. This box set is something of a 'same meat, different gravy' event, and has the original album on CD and LP, in stereo and mono mixes, with new artwork and an essay.

The first few songs on CD one comprise the *Fire* suite. Brown's impressively terrifying operatic shrieks are intensified by the scorching keyboard of Vincent Crane. The rest is a hotchpotch that often entertains



but seldom gels as a complete work. Highlights are the spine-tingling, magisterial blues wailing of *I Put A Spell On You* and the quirky *Spontaneous Apple Creation*, a sonic windfall from Syd Barrett. A squawking rendition of James Brown's *I've Got Money*

owes more to Captain Beefheart than the Grandmaster of Funk.

Richer pickings can be found on CD three's newly unearthed BBC sessions, plus a clutch of pre-Track recordings. *Baby You Know What You're Doing* is a Geno Washington-style stomper, but the pick of the bunch is *Don't Tell Me*, a garage classic with fuzz guitar that hits the spot. For added authenticity, dig the daddio introductions by presenter Brian Matthew: "For all you cool customers tuned our way."

Also here are both sides of 1967 single *Devil's Grip/Give Him A Flower*. The latter, meant as a droll retort to the beautiful people, ended up as a singalong crowd favourite. Once again, the God of Hellfire's tongue-in-cheek spirit seemed lost on the audience. **CE**

IQ

Ever - 2018 Remix, 25th Anniversary Collector's Edition GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Neo-prog stalwarts' 1993 rebirth overhauled with live CD and extras.



If the neo-prog movement had a darkest hour, it probably came at some point in the early 1990s. Even the best and brightest of the class of '83 had found their major label deals going sour, radio and TV exposure had fallen off and rock was cutting its hair and getting grungy or discovering ill-fitting dance beats.

For IQ, the period with PJ Menel as frontman hadn't produced the commercial or creative breakthrough they had

An emotional core endures, enhanced by Mike Holmes' remix.

hoped for, and although original vocalist Pete Nicholls had rejoined in his place, Nicholls later recalled, "We'd reconvened the band as a group of friends, as much as anything."

On a purely personal level, too, there were no shortage of setbacks. In the years leading up to the creation of their 1993 album *Ever*, bassist Les 'Ledge' Marshall died suddenly, and both Nicholls' and guitarist Mike Holmes' fathers passed away. So it's little wonder that *Ever* had a melancholic feel running through it. Yet it's this emotional core of the record that endures as we revisit it 25 years later, and Mike Holmes' new remix enhances its resonance further.

Little touches make a big difference, such as the doomy vocal sample that introduces the second section of *Fading Senses* being brought out of the mix, while the sharp crack of the snare drum throughout the original album is no longer so obtrusive.

The first and last tracks still make great bookends, and an embryonic version of one section of aptly titled opener *The Darkest Hour* is added on here as *Lost In Paradise*, replete with samples of bleak news broadcasts and radio dialogue. *Came Down* remains a beautiful ending to the record as Nicholls asks, "When we set adrift half-forgotten lives, will the madness still be there?" The alternative solo from Holmes on the bonus version of it equals, if not improves on, that of the original.

The second CD contains a crisply recorded, robustly performed live rendition of the album in full, with Holmes' guitar sounding particularly sprightly, and then disc three provides a Beatles *Anthology*-style array of extra artefacts. Some are lo-fi recordings of rehearsals, some just demo ideas, but they do illuminate the development path of key elements such as the hypnotic central riffs to *Fading Senses* and *Further Away*.

Meanwhile, other morsels, from the insistent keyboard riff of *Echo Song* to the undulating synth figures and croaky, vulnerable vocal of *Waltzy Song*, suggest the band had plenty more material in reserve as they set about helping to reverse their fortunes, and those of prog in general.

JOHNNY SHARP

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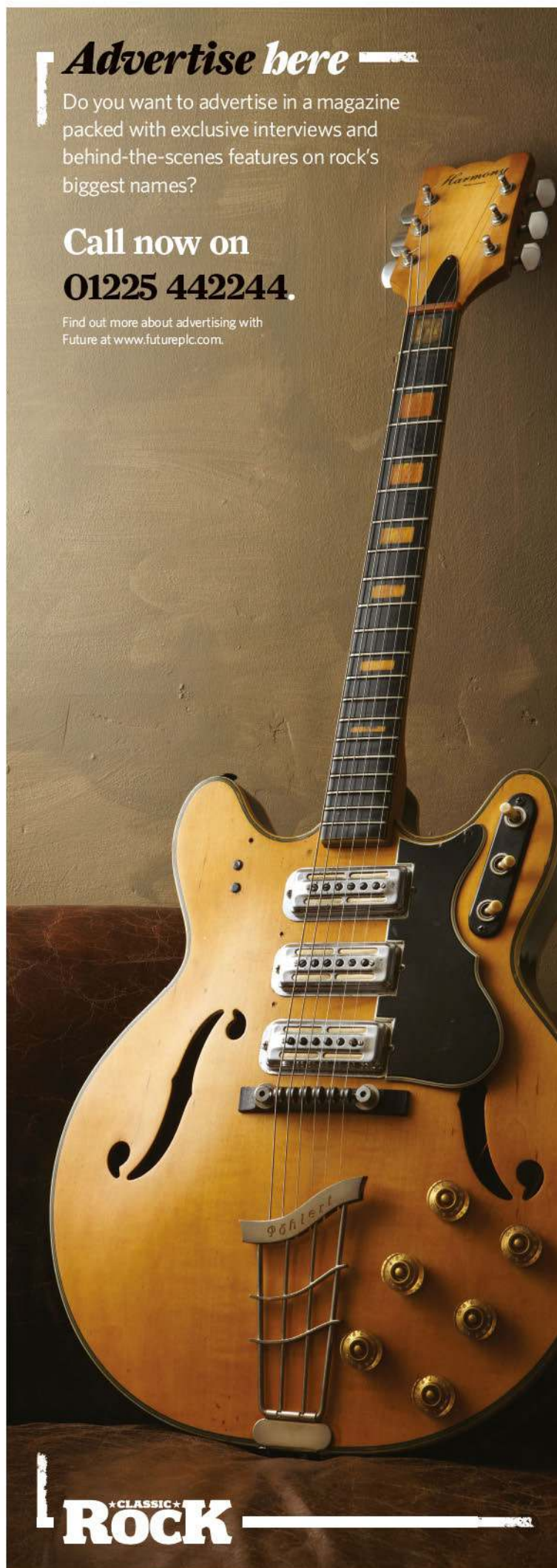
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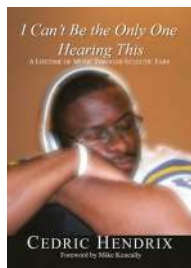
CLASSIC
Rock

CEDRIC HENDRIX

I Can't Be The Only One Hearing This GLOBAL PUBLISHING GROUP

A lifelong love affair with prog, best directed to those not in the know yet.

“A lifetime of music ears” is the subtitle of Cedric Hendrix’s musical travelogue. A St Louis policeman and contributor to website Progloidytes, Hendrix’s book reads rather like a blog as he runs down the artists, albums and record stores that have provided the soundtrack to his life. As much as he positions himself as a champion of the esoteric, his choices rarely hail from the furthest reaches of the musical spectrum. His idols include King Crimson, Frank Zappa and Radiohead – hardly struggling unknowns – and his section



on jazz is devoted to Miles Davis. “I demand more out of music, because I’m listening harder,” writes Hendrix, but often his observations state the obvious – but maybe that’s because he’s preaching to the choir with *Prog*, and this book should land in less musically savvy hands. The American perspective on British artists can

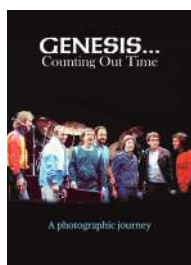
occasionally produce surprising results, particularly the idea that anyone might conceivably take offence at the lyrics of XTC’s *Dear God*. Hendrix’s passion for his subject is clear, even if he can be guilty of hyperbole when extolling the wonders of his heroes. **DW**

GENESIS

Counting Out Time - A Photographic Journey WYMER PUBLISHING

When limited luxury editions go awry.

Full disclosure: *Prog* hasn’t been sent the full luxury package of the 500-edition 128-page, A4 book that would include a block-foiled presentation slipcase and a set of seven art prints. Consequently, the rather slim volume seems a little underwhelming when you cop the price tag of £59.99. A nice cardboard case and some prints probably wouldn’t get this item near that mark though. We don’t want to knock independence – there can often be more love and detail when a fan has created something as opposed to a bigger operation. But even with a rudimentary editorial eye, there



are problems aesthetically with *Counting Out Time* that having more expertise would have ironed out. Choice of font, font size, layout design, grid use (or lack of it), obtrusive page furniture, captions, photo choice, photo resolution, cheap framing devices, use of newspaper tear sheets... it suggests the creators might not have

the handle on 21st-century desktop publishing that could have delivered this with a richness and splendour that fitted the brief. However, if this was tagged at £15-£20 and termed ‘80s retro style with a few holes in the journey’s story’, it would be a goer. **JK**

RICHARD THOMPSON

A Winding Road - A Ramble With Richard Thompson

DIRECTED BY EDMOND DERAEDT/SELF-RELEASED

Indie doc on the folkist guitar hero is a curate’s egg.

Filmed in 2015 on tour in America with his Electric Trio, *A Winding Road* chronicles life on the road for British folk guitarist and songwriter Richard Thompson. Described as a ‘kaleidoscopic film experience’, the documentary highlights the less glamorous aspects of touring, with candid interviews with Thompson and band (bassist Taras Prodaniuk and drummer Michael Jerome Moore). A brief performance clip shows Thompson in fine form on *For Shame Of Doing Wrong*, but in a mundane turn, the interviewer



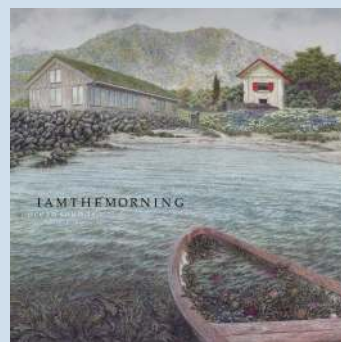
asks what Thompson had for breakfast that morning. Later, Thompson confesses that he wouldn’t know what to do if forced to retire – at the time of the film he’s 66. The problem with this documentary is its experimental style. After a while, the jarring special effects feel like filler. Why is there so little live footage, and why aren’t the interviews

more in-depth? In pushing style over content, viewers are left with more questions than answers. This is not a Richard Thompson 101, but a curious, if flawed, insight into the world of a hard-working musician. **HB**

IAMTHEMORNING

Ocean Sounds KSCOPE

Russian masters seek splendid isolation in their first film.



One of the telling moments in this terrific studio film happens very near the start. Just before *iamthemorning* launch into the opener, *Inside*, singer Marjana Semkina plays with the control desk at the remote recording studio where the film is shot. She smiles with delight and taps various sliders with the enthusiasm of the ingénue, rather than the international star she is. It’s a reminder that, for all the success and plaudits she and pianist Gleb Kolyadin have received, *iamthemorning* have not lost sight of the joy of making music. This joy spreads through the whole film.



It reveals the band’s intensity, focus and musical ambition.



If film is one of the trickiest art forms – directors can concoct any number of fictions with artful cuts – it can also be an exposing medium. In that regard, *Ocean Sounds* reveals the intensity, focus and musical ambition of *iamthemorning*. Their choice of setting – a studio on the remote Norwegian island of Giske – is telling. The film captures how Giske is an ever-changing landscape, full of sound and wonder. It might be a metaphor for *iamthemorning* themselves.

The approach to filmmaking is simple: stick the live band in a room and let the magic unfold. It could be a recipe for dullness. Rather, it reveals the alchemy that makes *iamthemorning* more than the sum of their parts. Semkina, alone at the mic, commands the room, while Kolyadin, whether at the grand or electric piano, exudes mastery. His profile is magnificent, and as fierce as a general who knows that every detail of the plan matters. The supporting cast of string players, bassists and drummers are – at the risk of ruining the metaphor – his and Semkina’s troops to deploy.

Lest you think that this film is all moody smouldering and meaningful glances, *Ocean Sounds* holds more than a few surprises. We see Kolyadin in kick-back mode, improvising wittily at the piano to general laughter, and witness Semkina pulling silly faces at windows.

Set-wise, this film is a dream. It’s a best-of that covers their first three albums, including the fabulous tracks *To Human Misery*, *K.O.S.* and *Os Lunatum*. There’s a special bonus on the Blu-ray: an unplugged version of *Blue Sea*, the first track written for the new album. In its simple interplay between Semkina’s guitar and Kolyadin’s keys, we see how this duo work. Behind the clever arrangements of the fully worked tracks lies careful and searching songwriting.

Of the session, Semkina says, “It was the most inspiring place for us to work in, surrounded by the sea, mountains, wild flowers and gorgeous Norwegian sunsets.”

It bodes well for the forthcoming album.

RACHEL MANN

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Take a bow

CAMEL

VENUE THE BRIDGEWATER HALL, MANCHESTER
DATE 07/09/2018

Towards the end of an exhilarating evening, an obviously emotional Andy Latimer says, "It's good to be back home." The huge crowd roar back their love with a deafening cheer. It's been a long, hot summer for Camel as they've taken 1976's *Moonmadness* across the continent, and this first night back in Blighty is a triumphant homecoming.

The Bridgewater Hall – specially built to house Manchester's Hallé Orchestra and the BBC Phil – is a bold choice of venue, even for a band who've never been afraid of musical complexity and sonic riches. Some bands – with huge reputations – have come here and been intimidated by a hall with pin-sharp, classical acoustics. With Camel, there is no need to worry. If this venue is more used to Brahms and Listz, after this performance, Camel can claim the Bridgewater for their own.

The first set is, of course, all about *Moonmadness*. If *The Snow Goose* – which the band played live so magnificently in 2013 – has exquisite beauty, *Moonmadness* is a cosmic prog

great. The sense of expectation as *Aristillus* is pumped out as an intro is palpable, before Camel casually amble onstage to a wall of applause. After a smile, a wave of the hand, Latimer straps on a Gibson Les Paul and – with a brief tap of the sticks from drummer Denis Clement – they're off.

Moonmadness is as cosmic and spacey as they come. Yet, who knew Camel – like the interstellar pilots in the novel *Dune* – could also fold time? The album's 40 minutes are over in a trippy heartbeat. While there are some balance issues near the start – Latimer nods for more guitar in the mix – Camel deliver an overwhelming wall of sound. Highlights include the serpentine *Song Within A Song*, a massively rocked-up *Another Night* and, of course, *Lunar Sea*. For many in the crowd, this performance verges on religious ecstasy – air drumming and air guitar abound – and when the keys of *Lunar Sea* kick in, even the most reserved are roaring.



"The huge crowd roar back their love with a deafening cheer."

As *Moonmadness* finishes, the standing ovation goes on and on. Latimer tries to speak to thank the crowd, but they won't let him. When he finally gets his chance, he simply says, "Well, that was *Moonmadness*." It sure was, and we'd all have it over again.

After the break, it takes a little while for the intensity to re-build. Opener *Unevensong* is searing, but its jazzier inflections don't quite match the memory of what we've witnessed in Set One. What does become very clear in Set Two is the brilliance of Camel new boy, multi-instrumentalist Pete Jones. Having proven his prog credentials with his solo project *Tiger Moth Tales*, his warm baritone voice creates perfect harmonies with bassist Colin Bass and Latimer's vulnerable tenor. He brings real sensitivity to *Hymn To Her*, but it is a sax wig-out on *Rajaz* that dazzles. As Latimer leads an audience clap-along, Jones' solo soars and evolves for nearly five minutes. The subsequent standing ovation is spontaneous and rapturous.

Camel's leader Andy Latimer.



Camel have plenty of "mutual support and respect".

This is an evening of little moments as much as soaring bombast. There is delight on Latimer's face as he throws his finger-drying talc in the air, creating plumes of space dust. When he raises his fist at the end of closer *Long Goodbyes*, it's a statement of defiance and joy. After a summer in which he has negotiated a hernia and near-pneumonia, the man clearly understands what moments like these mean.

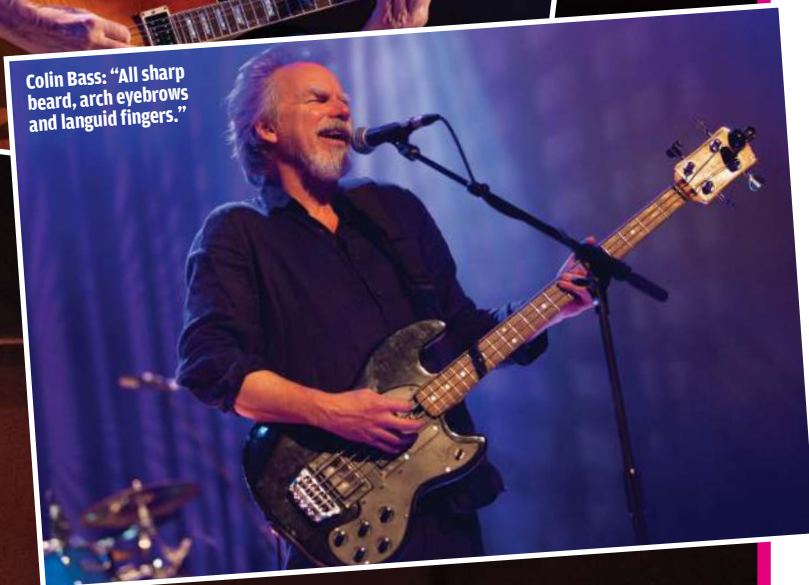
As for Latimer's playing, it's as exceptional as ever; there's surely no one in any form of rock who possesses a sweeter tone. More than ever he seems happy to throw the spotlight on Bass, Clement and Jones, but his playing only matures. For the encore, the band play *Lady Fantasy*, a showcase both for Latimer's underestimated riffing and his acute grip of melody. When he lifts his guitar high at the end, he does so as master of all he surveys.

Yet this is truly a corporate effort. Camel's precision is brain-mangling, and the finger-popping time-shifts and mood changes are taken with barely a glance. Colin Bass — all sharp beard, arch eyebrows and languid fingers — is a tremendous match for Latimer. When the band return onstage for the encore, they guide each other on, their hands on each other's shoulders. It's a sign of mutual support and respect. Who knows how much longer Latimer will want to go out on the road, but performances like this show are rare in any era. Treasure them while you can.

RACHEL MANN



The exceptional
Andy Latimer.



Colin Bass: "All sharp
beard, arch eyebrows
and languid fingers."



Super sticksman
Denis Clement.



Camel perform with
"brain-mangling"
precision.



"An evening of little
moments as much as
soaring bombast."



"Brilliant" Camel
new boy Pete Jones.

YES FEATURING ANDERSON RABIN WAKEMAN

VENUE	WHISKY A GO GO, LOS ANGELES
DATE	26/08/2018

Who would have thought all these years later that we'd be seeing Quintessential Yes: The 50th Anniversary Tour featuring legends Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman? But that's exactly what transpires on a beautiful summer night on the Sunset Strip in West Hollywood at the small yet legendary Whisky A Go Go club.

Tickets to tonight's show are only \$2, the same price they were when Yes first came to America back in 1971. Fans lined up along a sidewalk that stretched up a huge hill, hoping to score a ticket on the day of the concert. Thousands waited in line for hours, but only hundreds were able to get in the door. It was a spectacle. The madness didn't end there, though, as a crazy show would soon unfold.

The first of the ARW trio to appear onstage are guitarist Trevor Rabin and keyboard maestro Rick Wakeman, and the set starts with the Rabin-led instrumental *Cinema* – and it's one hell of a start. When the two-minute jam ends, singer Jon Anderson makes his way to the stage and they play another offering from the 80s, *Hold On*. The harmonies of Anderson, Rabin and bassist Lee Pomeroy are a delight.

For those who have doubts if 73-year-old Anderson still has 'it', he does. He sounds superb and his vocal range is intact. What makes the man such a special talent isn't his vocal ability alone, though – it's the connection he shows to the words he sings. He's a showman, and the energy displayed comes deep from within his heart and soul.

The set features a great mixture of both the 70s and 80s eras of Yes, enough to leave fans satisfied no matter which they prefer. *I've Seen All Good People*, *And You And I*, *Perpetual Change*, *Roundabout* and *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* are all crowd-pleasers. *Heart Of The Sunrise*,

All Smiles: the Yes men celebrate their anniversary in style.

the longest jam from the album *Fragile*, is a highlight. The interplay between Rabin and Wakeman is incredible: the intricacy of Rabin's riffs and Wakeman's synthesiser sends the crowd into a hard rock frenzy.

Wakeman, garbed in his sparkling red wizard-like robe, is still as fluid as ever on the keys. During *Rhythm Of Love* he puts his own stamp on the song by adding a two-minute keyboard solo, soaring up and down the Minimoog.

Rabin left Yes 35 years ago to have a successful career scoring Hollywood blockbuster films, but his return to the touring stage is smooth and rocking – he plays with a great balance of elegance and intensity. The man is now in his early 60s, but he still looks at ease with a guitar in his hand. While each member of the band is wonderful to watch, this is Rabin's

show. Countless solos are performed and executed at a high level, with a wide variety of different guitar tones used. His name deserves to be mentioned whenever there are discussions about the best guitarists of all time.

All in all, this is a special show with an insanely talented and famous line-up. If you see these men, you won't be disappointed – you'll leave the venue with a sense of awe and amazement, wanting to go and see them again.

Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman are quintessential Yes, quintessential prog. Here's hoping their legacies continue to unfold for a while longer.

TREVOR WOODS



"This is a special show with an insanely talented and famous line-up."

GORDON GILTRAP

VENUE	MUSIC AT GALLERY 1, FRODSHAM
DATE	09/09/2018

There's often a feeling that people dismiss Gordon Giltrap as some sort of folk minstrel who deals in quiet passages of music that are okay but lack real impact. Wrong! What he does

certainly has a folk element, but it's distinctively individual. That's because nobody else sounds like this man, as he proves tonight.

This concert comes at the end of a day that was, in essence, a workshop, wherein people have the opportunity to meet the master and get tuition from him, based around his 2017 composition *Ania's Dream*. The climax of the occasion is this

intimate performance, in the imposing setting of the Castle Park Arts Centre.

This sort of location suits Giltrap's music because he's at his best when getting up close and personal with the audience. And the occasion is also very cathartic for him, following the recent death of his son. He reaches deep into his soul to bring a fresh dimension to well-known pieces of music, and

everybody feels connected to the way he brings through his extensive artistry.

At times it's almost as if Giltrap is rediscovering his own work, which is the sign of a creative person who is never content merely to repeat himself, however familiar the tunes might be. And Giltrap is such a master of the art of acoustic guitar playing that he takes us on a wide-ranging journey through various





Jon Anderson: jazz hands, prog voice.



Rick Wakeman: Cloak And Swagger.



The packed Whisky A Go Go.



Trevor Rabin: guitar great.

STEPHANIE CABRAL

CALIGULA'S HORSE

VENUE	HOWLER, MELBOURNE
DATE	16/08/2018
SUPPORT	JAMES NORBERT IVANYI, OPUS OF A MACHINE

It's a cold Melbourne winter's evening and it's a school night, but that doesn't stop a horde of "incorrigible prog snobs" (as pegged by Caligula's Horse frontman Jim Grey) showing up early to catch a band with strong links to the headliner, both in terms of sound and personnel.

The 400-capacity venue is close to full when Brisbane's Opus Of A Machine hit the stage. The sound is huge, the drums particularly enormous. In fact, to be a little picky, they probably have a little too much presence in the mix, drowning out a little of the subtlety and complexity that former Caligula's Horse guitarist Zac Greensill brings to his parts.

While Opus are a fine choice as an opener on this very special C-Horse tour, the two bands' sounds occupy a similar stylistic and sonic space, and it's a great move to split the two up with something completely different. That said, the progged-up instrumental guitar histrionics of Melburnian James Norbert Ivanyi still have enormous appeal to fans of the bands that bookend his set. Ivanyi's complex but catchy compositions touch upon jazz and fusion territory, as well as late-80s neoclassical shred, and blend them seamlessly with modern instrumental prog.

What a great privilege this is, to witness Caligula's Horse, a world-class band, playing their magnificent fourth album *In Contact* in full, in track order, end to end. This is only ever likely to happen three times: in Brisbane, Sydney and here in Melbourne. It's a very special night, and both band and sold-out crowd can feel it. The sense of occasion isn't lost on either.

From those distinctive opening three accents of *Dream The Dead* to arguably the album's finest cut *Songs For No One* (which features some joyous audience participation) to Grey's riveting spoken-word piece *Inertia And The Weapon Of The Wall*, right through to the titanic closer, the "harrowing but cathartic" *Graves*, this album is a work of modern conceptual prog rock art. And when played live like this it reaches a grandiose new level.

The band revel in the moment and lap up the deserved adulation from the crowd. *In Contact* features a little over an hour's worth of music, but the band are far from done. They slam out three more favourites as requested by fans on their Facebook page.

After *Marigold* and *Dragonfly*, they're joined onstage by members of Opus Of A Machine for the celebration that is *Turntail*.

ROD WHITFIELD

emotions, holding everyone in rapt attention throughout.

Moreover, while he obviously takes his craft very seriously, there's a humour about Giltrap that occasionally lightens the mood. He's never afraid to send himself up when he feels the time has come to brighten the performance.

With a vast catalogue from which to choose, this time he decides to

concentrate on more recent material, which makes sense given that *Ania's Dream* is the centrepiece for the day. Yet despite being able to see him in such an intimate setting, his technique and flexibility on the guitar remain astounding. The flight of those fingers is almost numbing, and yet there isn't - and never has been - anything flashy about his approach.

Giltrap is also joined for part of the evening by Paul Brett, another fine guitarist, albeit more in the blues vein. The differing styles of the pair complement one another well, adding a fresh frisson to proceedings.

Giltrap always sets the highest standards for himself. Tonight he more than meets such personal demands.

MALCOLM DOME

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL

VENUE	CATTON PARK, DERBYSHIRE
DATE	10-12/08/2018

Over the past 17 years, Catton Park's Bloodstock Festival has evolved from a one-day indoor event to a multi-stage, three-day extravaganza by appealing to a niche group of extreme metalheads. However, the festival's 2018 instalment does more than its fair share of catering to those with a more avant-garde taste, happily providing a cavalcade of prog metal heavy-hitters over the weekend.

First up are South Africans **Deity's Muse**, who open Bloodstock's Sophie Lancaster stage by mixing straightforward, grooving rock'n'roll with undeniable technical prowess. Despite a minuscule turnout, the power trio make for an engaging early morning warm-up thanks to the catchy expertise of anthems like *I'm The Observer*.

With Gojira set to headline the Dio stage, the second day is Bloodstock's apex from a prog perspective. Danes **VOLA** shine bright during their Sophie Lancaster slot, uniting the cleanliness of Leprous with the guttural riffing of Meshuggah. The harmonic beauty of songs from debut album *Inmazes* is perfectly recreated live, spelling out a bright future for the quintet as they prepare for record number two.

Voyager possess a similarly melodic methodology, but arguably soar to greater heights thanks to the visible chemistry of the battle-hardened band members and the time-tested strength of underground hits such as *Hyperventilating*.

For tech-death titans **Gojira**, tonight is make or break, so the Frenchmen proceed to perform as if their lives depend on it. The sheer power of moshpit-starting scorchers like *Backbone* is complemented by the beauty of the LED backdrop, which displays the stunning artwork of the group's Duplantier brothers.

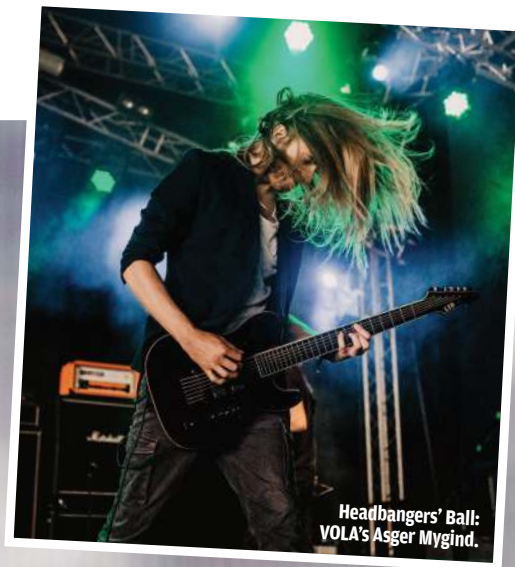
Orphaned Land close the Sophie Lancaster stage immediately after, providing 80 minutes of eclectic Israeli folk metal that enchants and fascinates just as much as it pummels and destroys.

Nightwish are the very final act of what has been an impeccable weekend, delivering a finale packed with classically inclined orchestral metal. Frontwoman Floor Jansen is impossibly perfect at what she does, hitting every note effortlessly in a display of unyielding enthusiasm. All the same, the icons still struggle against the competition of their fellow headliners, with their harmonic stylings unable to match the sheer intensity of Gojira, nor the party-hard mastery of Friday's heavy metal headliners Judas Priest.

MATT MILLS



"Nightwish frontwoman Floor Jansen is impossibly perfect at what she does, hitting every note effortlessly in a display of unyielding enthusiasm."



Headbangers' Ball: VOLA's Asger Mygind.

Nightwish's Floor Jansen: a real force of nature.



Roarsome: Gojira's Joe Duplantier.



Voyager's Daniel Estrin captivates the crowd.

ZIMPEL/ZIOLEK

VENUE CAFE OTO, LONDON
DATE 07/09/2018

It's difficult to pinpoint the precise moment that it happens, but the feeling that time has stood still to become an utterly meaningless concept becomes both overwhelming and apparent tonight. With Kuba Ziołek remaining in a sedentary position as the *apreggios* and strums from his guitar are looped and then treated further through the phalanx of pedals in front of him, his partner Wacław Zimpel is blowing up an intense yet subtle storm on his clarinet. And right now, this is all that matters.

The appearance of Zimpel/Ziołek on these shores is the next step of a musical rebirth that's currently happening in Poland. A generation born just prior to and also after the fall of Communism is now expressing itself in a new musical language that owes little or no debt to the 12-bar tradition that underpinned so much western music. Unencumbered by major label interference or compromise, these conditions have created a fecund environment that is producing what is arguably some of the most inventive and exciting music operating under the progressive, psychedelic and underground banners anywhere in Europe.

Successful musicians in their own right – the restless Kuba Ziołek has recorded under the Stara Rzeki banner as well as heading up the numerous Alameda projects among others, while Wacław Zimpel's career has seen him produce the excellent jazz-inflected minimalism of the solo album *Lines* and work on the hypnotic Indo-Polish project Saagara – their collaboration is certainly a meeting of colossal talent that brings together their individual achievements to create a whole new entity.

With their debut eponymous album making justified waves through feverish word of mouth and an End Of The Road festival performance at the insistence of Radio 3's Late Junction show, it comes as little surprise that Zimpel/Ziołek's debut London headlining performance is sold out. Rewarding the faith of their audience, the duo deliver a beguiling 45 minutes of progressive music that blends folk, psychedelia, jazz, drone rock, electronics and modern classical without giving nods to one particular set of influences.

The 13-minute *Memory Dome* sees Zimpel/Ziołek taking the audience on an excursion that becomes less a trek on a well-worn path and more a magical mystery tour. As Ziołek's intricate guitar playing is looped and treated to meet with Zimpel's clarinet and minimalist keyboard phrasing, there's an undeniable transcendence to a higher plain. Elsewhere, *Wrens'* rhythms slowly reveal themselves to add to music that's warm, empathetic and inclusive.

With the applause comes the realization that something special has just occurred. As a wise man once noted, this is the start of a beautiful friendship.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

GOBLIN

VENUE THE UNION CHAPEL, LONDON
DATE 17/08/2018

It's been 40 years since film director Dario Argento appointed fellow Italian horror maestro Claudio Simonetti and his band Goblin to score the cult film *Suspria*.

To celebrate the highly venerated classic movie's anniversary, Simonetti and his black-clad musicians are performing the infamous film music score live, in front of a seated audience in a church.

The Union Chapel's perfectly preserved gothic revival architecture is an ideal setting for Goblin's ghoulish tunes. Atmospherically lit up with dark red spotlights and the flicker of candlelight, the renovated, award-winning venue has become a trendy holy haven for alternative music enthusiasts.

As the bustling crowd of goths, proggers and horror buffs squeeze into the last remaining seats on the pews in a full house of God, you almost forget the location's primary Anglican function. However, we're quickly reminded that there's no bar – this is strictly a tea-and-biscuits kind of place.

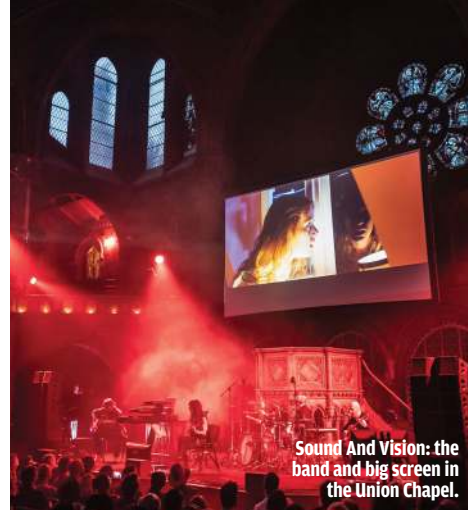
After a false start due to a minor technical issue with the projector, much to Simonetti's amusement, the quintet launch into the chilling notes of *Suspria*'s iconic theme tune, with the film projected on the gigantic screen above the band begins.

In true Italian cinematographic style, the first few minutes of the feature set the theme and we're propelled into Argento's 1977's horror in vivid colour, with dramatic zooming and panning shots.

The repetitive creeping of bells and celesta acts as a forewarning for scenes of shock and gore. Argento's use of lighting is visual



"Goblin's timing alongside the film images is tight, each macabre note hit with accuracy and skill."



Sound And Vision: the band and big screen in the Union Chapel.

poetry throughout, enhanced by the music's interchanging menacing and enchanting melodies. It's spellbinding.

Prior to the show, Simonetti had warned the crowd that his voice was a little raspy as he was suffering from a cold, yet it actually enhances the terrifying murmurs and shrieks in his gloomy vocals.

As the musicians discreetly navigate the stage in darkness, creating a cacophony of tweaking mandolin, pounding drums and taunting bass, Goblin's timing alongside the film images is tight, each macabre note hit with accuracy and skill.

While the Union Chapel roars with laughter at some of the mediocre acting and outdated dialogue in *Suspria*, the most famous scenes – such as the stained glass hanging, the dog attack and the room of barbed wire – are brought to life by the live band's performance, noticeably evoking feelings of nervousness among the crowd.

Released four years after Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* appeared in the iconic and hair-raising soundtrack to *The Exorcist*, Goblin's *Suspria* album remains a pillar of the prog and occult rock genres, as well as a highly respected film score among horror enthusiasts.

ISERE LLOYD-DAVIS

Red Lights, Silver Screen: Goblin soundtrack Dario Argento's classic in style.



PLINI

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	19/08/2018
SUPPORT	JAKUB ZYTECKI, TOSKA

Sunday night gigs are always a dicey proposition, but the long line to enter the venue, and the rammed crowd inside, suggest that instrumental guitar music is very much in vogue right now. Just a year ago Plini was playing London's Borderline, so word has obviously got out about the Australian guitarist.

The venue is already full for the first support act, Polish guitar whizz Jakub Zytecki. He has a bright, clean tone and there's a hint of melancholy to tracks like *Letters* and *Yesterday*, but despite Zytecki's abundant chops, the melodies are always at the forefront of the songs. The crowd clearly love him.

Matters take a turn towards the dark side for Toska, by far the most intense act on the bill. The Brighton three-piece craft songs of such sufficiently epic scope that they only manage to fit four tracks into their set, all of them from their forthcoming album *Fire By The Silos*. The band really throw themselves into the performance, with drummer Ben Minal grimacing as he batters his kit, while guitarist Rabea Massaad headbangs away in the heavy moments, of which there are plenty.

Abomasum begins with a tom-tom ostinato under a weaving guitar melody, but it climaxes with a crushing coda. *Congress* is all syncopated riffage, with the band locked together tight, and *When Genghis Wakes* is tremendous, dropping down to leave Dave Hollingworth's bass carrying the pulse before they explode with rapid-fire sonic bursts. Toska will be on the road in November – something to mark in the calendar.

Plini is a very unassuming guitar hero. He has a dry, self-deprecating sense of humour and there are no rock star theatrics in his set. Jakub Zytecki returns to the stage in Plini's band, alongside Chris Allison on drums and Simon Grove on bass. Occasionally they're joined by pianist Luke Martin and John Waugh on sax.

If Zytecki's guitar sound is clean and bright then Plini's is polished to a sheen, and at times the music sounds excessively smooth, rather like the Kenny G of shred guitar. Waugh's languid playing in *Handmade Cities* and *Flâneur* only heightens the comparison. At times it sounds like elevator music from an 80s fusion-themed hotel, and tracks such as *Cascade* and *Selenium Forest* want for a memorable melody.

There's no shortage of clever musicianship – everyone takes their turn to solo in *Other Things*, while Plini and Zytecki trade off in *Away*

– but it can feel a little too clinical at times. A frequent criticism of fusion in the 80s and 90s was that it was all technique with no soul, and that spectre haunts the room tonight. Despite this, Plini's fans remain entranced.

DAVID WEST

"There's no shortage of clever musicianship in Plini's set, but it can feel a little too clinical at times."

Rising star: Plini delivers a polished prog performance.

KEVIN NIXON



OH SEES

VENUE	THE FORUM, LONDON
DATE	03/09/2018
SUPPORT	BEAK>

The contrast in the performance style of tonight's two bands couldn't be greater. BEAK> look like they're in their rehearsal studio, with bassist Billy Fuller commanding centre stage in a chair. But as soon as they start to play, the temperature in the hall drops by several degrees, the uneasy drone and jerky anti-groove of *The Brazilian* being nothing less than coldwave prog. *Brean Down* is

similarly moody as hell, its nervy rhythm full of creeping dread.

Not that BEAK> themselves appear particularly doom-laden, winding up the audience and each other in between songs. Yet for all their couldn't-give-a-fuck insouciance, they're a tightly focused playing unit with a fine grasp of dynamic tension – witness how they build *Allé Sauvage* from a wild synth arpeggio into an epic of wonky electronica. They end with the marching, gothic bass mantra of *Wulfstan II*, a heart-pounding conclusion to the set.

If BEAK> are a chilly blast of controlled power then Oh Sees are

unbridled raw energy. Their double-drummer engine room, beating the skins in uncanny unison, is an amazing sight, but it's the wired posturing of John Dwyer that constantly grabs the attention. Seemingly intent on turning the band's high-octane garage psych into a crazed form of martial art, he plays his guitar high against his chest, wringing torrents of interstellar noise out of its body. He advances with it like a bayonet, he gurns like a gargoyle, and at one point appears to set fire to his pedal board. This is a man possessed.

The band don't attempt to reproduce the organ-enhanced heavy prog sounds

of latest album *Smote Reverser*, but the desire to push their music to the limit is still everything, the furious riffage of *The Dream* and *Encrypted Bounce* stretching out into stranger territory. And the new material gets an equally enthusiastic reception, fans clapping along with the mesmeric, Can-like verse of *Sentient Oona* before it explodes into a battery of crescendos.

Oh Sees and BEAK> might seem like a rather odd pairing on paper, but both bands play with the visceral conviction of the genuinely unique, making tonight's show a thrilling experience.

JOE BANKS

GREEN MAN FESTIVAL

VENUE	GLANUSK PARK ESTATE, CRICKHOWELL
DATE	16-19/08/18

While the Green Man festival is one of those exceptional gatherings where the location is every bit as crucial a part of the line-up as the acts playing, its notorious microclimate also has considerable influence on how enjoyable the event is. And for only the second time this decade, this magical gathering in the southernmost tip of the Brecon Beacons is spared rain and is bathed in sunshine throughout the weekend.

Working in tandem with the stunning environs is an approach to musical curating that simply enhances the experience – not least because this is music that frequently opens and cleanses the third eye, and it has an occasional bucolic bent.

Since breaking through with 2014's *The Silver Globe* album and its 2017 follow-up *Modern Kosmology*, **Jane Weaver** has moved up from the modest setting of the Walled Garden to the more prestigious Far Out stage. Her krautrock-tinged material encapsulates the loveliness of the event, most notably on the undulating *The Architect* and the pulses of *I Need A Connection*.

Cate Le Bon elicits similar feelings on the Mountain Stage, especially with the quirky *I Can't Help You* and a duet with John Grant on *I Think I Know*.

Back at the Far Out stage, Chilean psych trio **Föllakzoid** make a total hash of their set when guitarist Domingo García-Huidobro throws a hissy fit, along with his guitar and amps, and then storms off mid-set. There are no such problems for **The KVB**, though, whose throbs and electro-psychedelia go from strength to strength.

The first psychedelic generation is gloriously evoked by **The Brian Jonestown Massacre**'s mesmeric closing headline set at the Far Out stage. Likewise **The Black Angels**, and their readings from 2017's *Death Song* hit home the hardest.

Sadly, **Public Service Broadcasting** and **King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard** share the ability to milk slight ideas dry. In the case of the former, it's peppering ersatz krautrock with BBC samples, while the latter dispense with anything resembling melody to shadow simple riffs and then syllabically sing over them with nursery rhyme lyrics, all while jamming interminably.

But if one band define the spirit of Green Man then it's **Snapped Ankles**. Having emerged from London's warehouse scene, the group's woodland and hirsute aesthetic, coupled with their ability to breathe new life into familiar kosmische styling, transforms the Walled Garden into a post-midnight rave up. There's a reassurance to be had as the gathered partygoers lose their minds to the climactic *Jonny Guitar Calling Gosta Berlin*.

Watching it all unfold in these enchanting surroundings reinforces just how special this festival is.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL

VENUE	FERNHILL FARM, BRISTOL
DATE	16-18/08/2018

This year's ArcTanGent Festival sees the main stage headlined on Thursday by Northern Irish instrumentalists **And So I Watch You From Afar**, who play their stunning new album *The Endless Shimmering* in full. First, however, there are returning bands to see. Chief among these are **Alpha Male Tea Party**, firing a stunning parting shot at the end of their *Health* tour cycle, and **Rolo Tomassi**, who play a storming set in support of their critically acclaimed *Time Will Die And Love Will Bury It* album.

When **And So I Watch You From Afar** do finally take the stage, it's a fantastic performance. The main stage has gone up in size this year, but the band don't seem fazed. The highlight is naturally the maelstrom-like *A Slow Unfolding Of Wings*, but earlier tracks *Gang* and *Big Thinks Do Remarkable* are a breathless rush, punctuated with crowdsurfers.

On the Friday there's an excellent run of bands, including Prog magazine favourite **Mike Vennart** showcasing his new album *To Cure A Blizzard Upon A Plastic Sea* in all its eccentric glory. Hot on his heels, Chicago's **Pelican** deliver a paint-strippingly heavy set that can even be heard from the other side of the site. Their riffs are monolithic, and the show, their first in the United Kingdom for almost two years, is truly spellbinding.

The one-two punch of **Anathema** and **Leprous** puts a proggy full-stop to the



Alcest get heads banging with a post-rock riot.

evening. For the former, it's the post-rocky *Can't Let Go* from latest record *The Optimist* that goes over best, while for Leprous it's the anthemic *From The Flame* that proves the highlight.

Giraffes? Giraffes! pick up this energy and run with it. The two-piece, arguably the inspiration for many bands that have graced ArcTanGent over the years, are playing their first UK show ever, and it's to an adoring crowd of thousands. By the time they get to the climax of *When The Catholic Girls Go Camping*, *The Nicotine Vampires Rule Supreme*, the audience are singing the riffs, and they've delivered undoubtedly the standout festival performance.

A short time later, math supergroup trio **GUG** tear through a mad, brilliant performance that sees the return to the stage of Dan Beesley, who had to step away from the guitar due to illness.

Then, on the main stage, **Myrkur** deliver a powerful and mesmerising set of their operatic, doomy prog.

After that, it's left to post-rock titans **Alcest** to rip the roof off the place, and **Shellac** to close the festival with a brilliantly wiry, confrontational performance that serves as a perfect reminder of why they're bona fide legends.

ALEXANDER LYNHAM



"Shellac close the festival with a brilliantly wiry, confrontational performance."

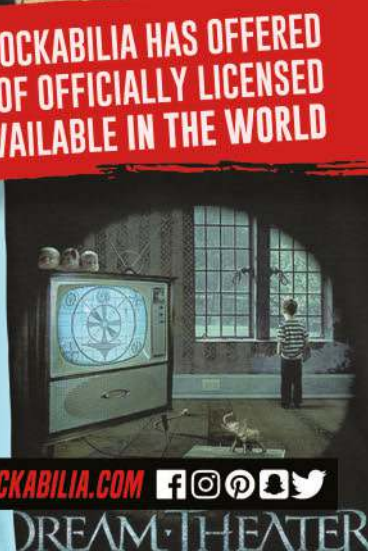


Myrkur: a spellbinding set from Amalie Bruun.

Anathema's Lee Douglas.

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& BILL EVANS**
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MOSTLY AUTUMN

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SAT. 15 DECEMBER 2018

IQ

SAT. 12 JANUARY 2019

KAYAK

SAT. 26 JANUARY 2019

**TIGER MOTH TALES
& RED BAZAR**

FRI. 15 MARCH 2019

HAKEN

THIS WINTER MACHINE

VENUE	TALKING HEADS, SOUTHAMPTON
DATE	26/08/2018
SUPPORT	SERVANTS OF SCIENCE

There's a niche market in modern prog for bands who juxtapose the tranquillity of instruments like keyboards and acoustic guitars with the upbeat energy of grooving percussion. And as they take to the stage to perform their ironically titled debut album *The Swan Song* in full, Servants Of Science can add themselves to that select group, alongside names such as Nordic Giants, Messenger and Exploring Birdsong.

The group may not be the most enthralling concept visually – the band members often remain firm-footed, while bassist Andy Bay stays hidden behind frontman Neil Beards – but their modern pop- and indie-flavoured take on the melancholia of Pink Floyd and David Bowie makes their set an undeniable success. The showcase hits its apex with tracks such as *Peripheral* and the stomping *Kaleidoscope*, which add sombre, symphonic undertones that increase the emotional drama of the evening.

Musically, the eclecticism of Servants Of Science makes them excel just as much as tonight's headliners This Winter Machine. While the opening act make for an enveloping union of old and new, their successors place themselves firmly into the former category by creating vintage prog rock that's heavily reminiscent of Rush and King Crimson, with one or two splashes of Dream Theater.

There are echoes of the old guard of experimental music peppered throughout the band's lengthy songs: Al Wynter's soft vocalisations harbour memories of Peter Gabriel and Greg Lake, while the band's intricate guitars and keys emulate Steve Hackett and Jordan Rudess respectively.

Despite still riding on the acclaim of their debut album *The Man Who Never Was*, the six-piece implement the intriguing tactic of performing the entirety of their upcoming sophomore release, *A Tower Of Clocks*. The idea of filling the vast majority of a 90-minute performance with material that attendees have never heard before is definitely an eyebrow-raising one. However, an invested Southampton crowd, as well as the band's adherence to the experimental and melodic elements that made *The Man Who Never Was* a success, lays any qualms to rest.

Wynter's lyricism is also a key ingredient in This Winter Machine's success tonight, with the LGBT-inspired *Delta* and the more venomous *Hunt* revolving around real-world themes that the audience seem to fully identify with.

Overall, both of tonight's bands shine brightly, but for vastly different reasons: Servants Of Science bring a cross-generation uniqueness to the table, while This Winter Machine cater to the nostalgia of prog rock's yesteryears and use their headline slot to create an all-encompassing, relatable journey.

MATT MILLS

RESONATE FESTIVAL

VENUE	ISLINGTON O2 ACADEMY, LONDON
DATE	08/09/2018

Six distinctly contrasting bands are up against a very tight venue curfew at the second festival fundraiser under the Resonate/Resonance banner, organised by The Gift's main man, Mike Morton. However, despite the easy-to-reach central London location, the impressive line-up attracts an enthusiastic but criminally modest-sized crowd.

According to frontman John Dexter Jones, openers **Jump** are no more a prog band than they are a cat. However, they unfailingly know how to work a crowd. Animate, articulate and amusing, the Bangor Bard leads the folk rock-infused stalwarts through a roistering set that includes new numbers: the nostalgic, wistful *The Heroes We'd Be* and full-on rant *Breaking Point*.

Verbal Delirium are fast becoming UK festival favourites, their passionate Greek prog melding classical influences with searing flashes of edgy theatrical tension. This plays out in the brooding *Fear*, which is full of unexpected tempo twists, and *The Decayed Reflection*, a tempestuous musical and lyrical meditation. The climax comes when frontman Jargon's expressive voice hits uncharted, ethereal heights on the unreleased *Children Of Water*.

Glasgow's **Comedy Of Errors** are prog's Everyman – a band to whom everyone can relate. Though not showy by nature, Joe Cairney's solid stage presence belies his hallmark high-register pipes and offers a focal point. Both *House Of The Mind* and *In A Lifetime* pulsate with intensity and feeling. The only downside is the sound system stymying some of their more intricate musical nuances.

"Lifesigns are as gracious, smiley and stunningly melodic as always, signing off tonight's festivities on a high note."



Sometime during the mid-point interval and soundchecks, the sound is surreptitiously cranked up. When **The Gift** begin part two, it's not just the sound that's louder: they're also engaged in a lurid Battle of the Jackets. Morton and guitarists Leroy James and David Lloyd all arrive on stage garishly attired, more befitting a soul combo, but this doesn't detract from a particularly upbeat, entertaining set. Gabriele Baldocchi unleashes a mighty keytar solo among the unfolding drama of *At Sea/Tuesday's Child*, and makes *Long Time Dead* come alive through some jazzy keyboards.

They may not be prog, but **Son Of Man**

are all about high-energy, bluesy

rock, George Jones carrying the torch for his late father Micky Jones right down to his characteristic cherry red Gibson SG. *Spunk Rock* and *Bananas* are timely reminders of the Man heritage, the band also blasting through a selection from their eponymous debut album in compelling, classic style.

There's less than an hour left on the clock when headliners **Lifesigns** finally hit the stage. Gracious, smiley and stunningly melodic as always, they only have time for four songs from

Cardington, including the uplifting title track. Fittingly, they sign off tonight's festivities on a high note, Dave Bainbridge's exquisite, spine-tingling guitar solo elevating the aptly titled ballad *Last One Home*.

ALISON REIJMAN

Four Play: Lifesigns fit a quartet of Cardington tracks into their set.



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AFFINITY
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Where's home?

Nottinghamshire. I'm happy to be a Nottingham boy.

Your first prog memory?

My parents playing [The Beatles'] *Sgt. Pepper* and *Strawberry Fields Forever* at home.

First prog gig?

Genesis' *Six Of The Best* concert in Milton Keynes, October 1982. It was freezing and wet. I bought two jacket potatoes to keep me warm and when they lost their heat I ate them.

The first prog record you bought?

When I was 10 my dad bought me [Pink Floyd's] *The Dark Side Of The Moon* on cassette, and not long after I bought myself [The Who's] *Who's Next*. To me, that had a progressive quality to it.



Favourite piece of technology?

My DAW [digital audio workstation]. I use Pro Tools and Logic Pro X, and I love it. I've got [BBT bassist Greg Spawton's wife] Kathy's old iPhone, but if I go out I don't even take it with me.



Are there any guilty pleasures in your music collection?

4-2-4: *The El Records Compendium Of Soccer*. I can't see the point in releasing something like that, but there it is, in my collection.

What would your Mastermind specialist subject be?

I've been told I have an encyclopedic knowledge of music, so maybe that. But I've let a lot of it go – it's really not important to know who played bass on ABC's *The Lexicon Of Love*...

Your biggest prog extravagance?

I recently bought a fantastic flight case for all my gig stuff – my green man mask, flute stuff, lyric books. It's very handy and it also represents that we're ready to start playing live shows further afield.



LORRAINE POOLE

Big Big Train's David Longdon

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

Your favourite venue?

I've loved all the venues we've played, but Loreley was incredible [for *Night Of The Prog*].

Outside prog, what are you into?

Reading, cooking, long walks in the countryside, travelling to historic places. I've got a very close circle of friends who I cherish, so I make sure I make time for them too.

Who is your prog hero?

Some people might debate whether he's prog, but David Bowie. And Peter Hammill – he's a man of vision. His commitment to his art is wonderful.

The last album you bought?

LUMP, a collaboration between Laura Marling, who I really like, and Mike Lindsay of Tunng.

What was the last gig you went to?

This year's Cropredy. Prior to that, Stone Free, and prior to that, Jeff Beck. I like listening to music and

I like to go and see bands, and I'll travel to do it.

Ever had a prog date?

I have, yes. [Long, awkward pause] I was invited out and I went and nobody died and it was great. [Longer, even more awkward pause] I need to be very discreet here...

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?

Greg. We've been through thick and thin together, and initially there wasn't much thick. He's got a great sense of humour so there's a lot of laughter, we spark lots of ideas. We each bear witness to the other.

“Two songs typify prog for me: *21st Century Schizoid Man* and *Supper's Ready*.”



What's the most important prog song for you?

Two songs typify the genre for me: [King Crimson's] *21st Century Schizoid Man* – album one, track one. What a statement of intent. And [Genesis'] *Supper's Ready* – it's just so well written.

Which prog album always gets you in a good mood?



Dark Side Of The Moon has those strong childhood associations and has stayed with me. That final coda is so uplifting. And It Bites' *Once Around The World* – a good Saturday night record!

Who's the best artist you've seen?

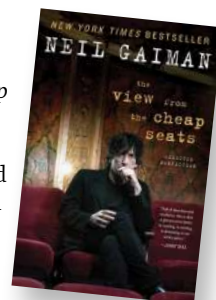
In terms of spectacle, Peter Gabriel on his *Growing Up Live* tour [2003]. I saw his show at Wembley – it was sensational.

What's your favourite prog album cover?

The Dark Side Of The Moon. It's such a great, timeless graphic image. It represents the pinnacle of Pink Floyd but the image lives beyond the album.

Recommend us a proggy read.

Neil Gaiman's *The View From The Cheap Seats* is a selection of his speeches, articles, lectures and letters. It's wise, full of insight, and very funny in places. He comes across as very personable and human.



What are you up to at the moment?

I solemnly swear I am up to no good! Writing my contributions for the next Big Big Train album, and writing songs with Judy Dyble – we're going to make an album. I've also been practising for my performance with the Downes Braide Association at their show at Trading Boundaries [September 28]. After all that's done, I might finally get round to making my own solo record.

See www.bigbigtrain.com for more.

phideaux

Infernal

2 LP/2 CD available now

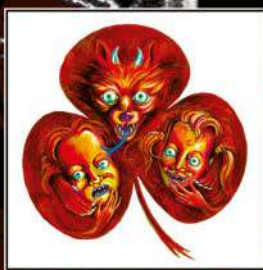
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