

THE PROG AWARDS

Nick Mason, Moody Blues, Dream Theater, Marillion and more on prog's biggest night!

JETHRO TULL

Ian Anderson opens up the pages of the band's first ever official book



PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC



HAWKWIND

Brock. Calvert. Stacia.

The myths.
The madness. The memories.
The space rock legends look back over 50 years



FLYING COLORS

Prog supergroup hit all the high notes with their third album

DWEEZIL ZAPPA

On family feuds and his new tribute to his late father

FRUUPP

Lost tapes, lost band members, and how they came up with that name!

BRUCE SOORD

New solo adventures from The Pineapple Thief frontman

"Even today, people talk about Hawkwind fans, but I call them Hawkwind family, because no matter where you go, you meet with them and it's like you've known them all your life."

Stacia

VOYAGER

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THE TEA PARTY

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RUSTIN MAN



LOVE FROM THE PLANET

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"He believed he
was going to save
the world."

**Pamela Townley,
Robert Calvert's
former wife**

Ed's Letter



Hello and welcome to issue 103 of *Prog* magazine. On page 11, reader Paul Farley asks me to repeat what I said onstage at last month's Space Rocks. According to Farley, what I said "was spot on" describing, in his words, "the meaning of progressive music". I'm more than happy to, Paul, although I do so fully aware that there may be some who feel the description takes prog too far away from their own comfort zone, and will vehemently disagree. But, in a nutshell, here goes anyway.

I find it difficult to subscribe to the theory that prog is a sound. The originators of this great music never sounded alike: Genesis sound nothing like King Crimson, for example, Tull nothing like ELP, Pink Floyd nothing like Yes. None, in fact, sound anything like each other. What does unite them is a fearless creativity, a natural musical curiosity and a desire to continue to push away musical barriers. And that is what I believe is at the heart of progressive music. True, there are bands these days with similar styles, but these are unlikely to be what you'd call originators in the genre. Space dictates I can't ramble on forever here about this, but you get my drift. Anyway, I hope that suffices, Mr Farley.

Cover stars Hawkwind fit this mould perfectly, I think. For 50 years they've been charting their own unique course, and the time is right to celebrate them on the front cover. Dave Brock talks of manning the good ship Hawkwind, we look at the fascinating career of the late Robert Calvert, and ex-Hawkwind dancer Stacia Blake gives her first major magazine interview. It's a fascinating read.

We'd like to think that the other bands in this issue also fit with my words above. Jethro Tull, Dweezil Zappa, Flying Colors, Fruupp, Rustin Man, Voyager, The Tea Party and more. It's what keeps making progressive music such a fascinating listen.

Prog on...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



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Hawkwind

Warrior On The Edge Of Time

**CONGRATULATIONS TO HAWKWIND
FOR THEIR 'CLASSIC ALBUM AWARD'
FOR WARRIOR ON THE EDGE OF TIME
AT THE 2019 PROG AWARDS
HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY!**



ALL ABOARD THE SKYLARK
THE NEW ALBUM
25.10.2019

THE CRAZY
WORLD
OF ARTHUR
BROWN

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ARTHUR BROWN
FOR HIS 'VISIONARY AWARD' AT
THE 2019 PROG AWARDS**

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Bloody Well Write

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SWEDE DREAMS

I've just read the latest edition and was delighted to find that the spirit is still flourishing (great stuff on Camel, The Aristocrats, to name but two).

However, I would take slight issue with Dave Everley's review of Opeth's latest [*In Cauda Venenum*]. While agreeing wholeheartedly with the overall assessment, I think that in these dark times of nationalist populism, the decision to record the album in Swedish and provide an English version is a truly progressive move. I'm old enough to remember when the likes of David Bowie and Peter Gabriel (and others) recorded songs in French, German, in a positive attempt to further communication. In an age when the trend is to foment parochialist divisiveness, it is a courageous move to encourage linguistic diversity. I can't speak Swedish, but I'm now trying to learn! (It's a brilliant album, by the way.)

Keep up the great work, folks.

Martin Turley

THEY HAVEN'T DESERTED US

Great to see Camel back on the cover of *Prog* 102. Like every Camel album or gig, even reading about Camel is special.

The interview with Andy Latimer was interesting and how true, indeed, when he says that years ago, it wasn't just about the disc but the sleeve as well. I still like the hard copy of an album, rather than



Prog 102. Don't get the hump if you missed it - you can still get it from our back issues dept!

Camel: new album and tour, please!



PRESS/JONAS AKERLUND

Opeth: multilingual multi-instrumentalists.

a download. Sometimes the modern way isn't the best way!

I am looking forward to receiving the *Moonmadness* DVD and then the double CD after. I have seen Camel many times and it has always been something special. So hopefully one day we will see a new tour and a new album. The current line-up is perfect and with the talent of Pete Jones, there has to be a new album waiting to be recorded.

Also looking forward to the interview with Fruupp in issue 103: an amazing, talented band that were never truly recognised back in the 70s. I often wonder if Stephen Houston hadn't left, would they have gone on to greater things? After all, they all had the talent like Vincent McCusker. Could we see a reformed Fruupp? There is a sudden interest in their music, even if it is 40+ years too late. I remember them



PRESS

TWEET TALK

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HAWKWIND

@HawkwindHQ
Fly free Ginger... Crazy, happy memories of your time with us...
#GingerBaker #Legend
#Anhonour



NICK BEGGS

NICK BEGGS

@NickBeggs
A great weekend in Belgium with Fish On Friday.

GODSTICKS

@Godsticks
Just over a year now since our stripped-back performance celebrating 10 years of @kscope music at the incredible Union Chapel - what a night that was! #Godsticks #GodsticksLive #10YearsOfKscope #UnionChapel #London

LETTER



Back in the 1970s, David Cassidy was my idol, then the Bay City Rollers and many other boy bands. Then in 2002, when I met my second husband, he introduced

me to prog music. Some of it, I must admit, isn't to my liking, but since meeting him I have seen The Flower Kings twice, The Enid, Steve Hackett twice, Yes at Powderham Castle many years ago, Fairport Convention, Todd Rundgren and, one of my favourites,



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



PRESS/JILL FURMANOVSKY

Separated at birth? David Cassidy and Steve Hogarth.

Marillion once last year. We are going again in November to see them in Bath. Steve Hogarth has an amazing voice. A group I haven't seen yet but would love to is IQ: I think Peter

Nicholls has the most amazing voice ever. It just goes to show you can change your taste in music, and, thanks to my husband, I now enjoy listening to some great music. *Beautiful* by Marillion is one of my favourites.

Janet Johnson

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

continually touring supporting bands like Genesis, and had a really good and strong following on the college and uni circuit. So if Fruupp were ever to reform, I'd be first in the queue for tickets.

Colin Warner

PROG ROCK-ET

I was wondering if the Space Rocks show at the Indigo would be mentioned at some stage? An excellent day topped with an amazing show. Amplifier and Voyager were amazing. Anathema with Anna Phoebe were 'out of this world'. Simply outstanding. In addition, the Prog magazine editor, Jerry Ewing, was present and gave some wise words about the evening and was spot on describing, in his words, the meaning of progressive music. If he can remember, any chance of repeating his description, as I think it sums up Prog to a 'T'?

Paul Farley

Remember? You cheeky so and so - ha ha! I can indeed. Read my Editor's Letter on page 8. As for Space Rocks, it's the lead live review on page 116. Enjoy. - Ed.

GETTING SHIRTY

I look forward to the poring over (and the arguments about) the results of the Progressive Music Awards, but surely there is one massive gap in the categories: Best T-shirt Of The Year? A key component of any proggy's wardrobe sadly neglected yet again. That said, there can only be one winner this year with this gorgeous pink and aqua tie-dye number extolling the efforts of Nick Mason's latest venture, and superbly modelled

Nice shirt, Dave, but that's an even better Yes line-up poster, free with Prog issue 40.



COURTESY OF DAVE JOWITT

here by yours truly. A double whammy for Mr Mason I think. I wonder which award would mean more to him?

Dave Jowitt, Flintshire

AMSTERDAMN FINE MUSIC

I wondered if you could do an article on Dutch prog, if you have not done so? As well as Focus, there was Earth And Fire (prog to disco to *Playboy*), Kayak and Shocking Blue, all from back in the day. An overview of the current scene would be nice too.

Mark Simmons

IAMTHEMORNING

@thefmorningband
It's official. First prize for hospitality on this tour goes to @muziekgieterij.
Thank you guys

KAVUS TORABI

@Knifeworld
Magma are playing in London tonight so basically everything else can fuck off.

CRAIG BLUNDELL

@craigblundell
Announcement of the day HAS to go to Minnesota Airport for their paging of "Alison Chains"!! if she exists, amazing, if someone went up to the office to get them to say it, I salute you. Absolutely brilliant

PROG

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INTRO

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



VAN DER GRAAF - LIVE AGAIN!

"I have a mixture of enthusiasm and terror!" says **Peter Hammill** as they prepare for their first live shows in seven years.

► **Van der Graaf Generator** have announced a series of UK dates for May 2020, with more European dates in the pipeline. The group have been dormant since releasing their 13th album *Do Not Disturb* in 2016 and have not played live for seven years.

Vocalist, guitarist and keyboard player Peter Hammill has been particularly active this year, collaborating with Tim Bowness and Isildur's Bane and releasing a solo eight-CD live box set *Not Yet Not Now*, but he sees the revival of Van der Graaf as a separate issue.

"We've been hovering around since *Do Not Disturb* and we meet for band lunches, but for various reasons we've not been in a position to crack on and do something," he tells *Prog*. "And so at our lunch this year we said, 'Well, should we, chaps?' and nobody declined. That's the way it works in Van der Graaf. So we said to our agent, 'How about next

autumn?' and he came back with spring. So it's happening a bit faster than we anticipated."

Drummer Guy Evans is delighted at the prospect of playing live again.

"We've been rather frustrated that we've not been able to continue, although I think that we were due a pause," he says. "But it's been rather a long pause as far as I'm concerned."

As with many of the originators of progressive rock, Van der Graaf celebrated a 50th anniversary this year, in their case the release of their debut album *The Aerosol Grey Machine*. But this

resumption of activities is largely coincidental.

"The honest truth is that if we are going to do anything, playing live or recording, it's in the present rather than with reference to the past," says Hammill. "I'm not saying that we don't acknowledge the past or play stuff from the distant past, but it's the present that drives us on."

When Van der Graaf Generator last played live, their set included two 20-minute-plus epics *A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers* and *Flight*, but this time around they are playing shorter songs to allow them more options to vary the set.

Hammill also says that he views the prospect of playing live again with "a great mixture of enthusiasm and outright terror", and jokes that he is already having disturbing dreams of being onstage or stuck in a tour bus.

"There are just the three of us and each has some quite complicated stuff to hold down," he explains. "There's always been the element of an act of faith in Van der Graaf and we don't rehearse the thing to within an inch of its life, because the fun really is it happening on each night."

He explains how the group determine which songs will need the most work in rehearsals.

"When we have decided what material we are going to do we all go into private study and [keyboard player] Hugh Banton provides us with a spreadsheet of all the tunes, with five columns,



"We were due a pause. But this was rather a long one..."
- Guy Evans

Hammill, Evans,
Banton: talking 'bout
my Generator.



from 'I Am Absolutely Hopeless At This' through to 'I Hope That I Am Reasonably Competent', then we put it all together when we finally get together."

Van der Graaf plan to play some songs from *Do Not Disturb* for the first time during next year's tour, but for them to do this, they will have to be rearranged.

"They are extraordinarily difficult to convert from the recorded versions," Hammill explains. "Apart from anything else, HB and I start each song playing one instrument, then go to another and end up playing a third."

"I'm totally confident," says Evans. "Just get me a stage."

The tour runs as follows: Edinburgh Queen's Hall, May 3, Manchester Bridgewater Hall, May 4, Birmingham Symphony Hall May 6, Bath Forum May 7, London The Palladium May 8. Book your seat now at myticket.co.uk/artists/van-der-graaf-generator. See www.vandergraafgenerator.co.uk for more. **MB**

This month, Intro was compiled by

Mike Barnes
Chris Cope
Jo Kendall
Martin Kielty
Hannah May Kilroy
Dom Lawson
Rhodri Marsden
Natasha Scharf
Sid Smith
Rick Wakeman
Phil Weller

YES' 2020 DELIRIUM

Yes' Album Series 2020 tour turns to *Relayer*; new tracks could be incoming.



Yes have announced seven UK dates in May and June next year. The Album Series 2020 tour will feature highlights from across the group's career and they will play their 1974 album *Relayer* in its entirety.

"Coming to the table with more Album Series concepts is always exciting but never more exciting than *Relayer*," guitarist Steve Howe tells *Prog*. "*Gates Of Delirium* is full tilt, very high energy, and *Sound Chaser* and *To Be Over* haven't been played since the shows with Patrick [Moraz] in the 70s. The complexity of the music is really challenging and Yes always works at its best when it's challenged."

Moraz was one of the guests on 2018's #Yes50 anniversary tour, but these shows will feature the core line-up of Howe, Alan White (drums), Geoff Downes (keyboards), Billy Sherwood (bass guitar), Jon Davison (vocals) and Jay Schellen (drums and percussion). "This line-up has strengths we want to exploit," says Howe.

In the interim Yes will be playing another Cruise To The Edge before disembarking in March for rehearsals, with the possibility of some US warm-up shows. The group have also started working on new material. "We're keeping our mouths shut at the moment, but there's a lot of creativity and it's all lining up," says Howe, who also promises some "special solo things" next year.

Howe is particularly looking forward to playing in the UK. "I'm very proud to walk those boards again," he says. "I think there is a terrific understanding here between the audience and the band."

The tour starts May 27 at Nottingham Royal Concert Hall and continues through: York Barbican 29, Newcastle Sage 30, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall 31, Birmingham Symphony Hall June 2, Manchester Bridgewater Hall 3, London Royal Albert Hall 5. Find out more at www.yesworld.com. **MB**

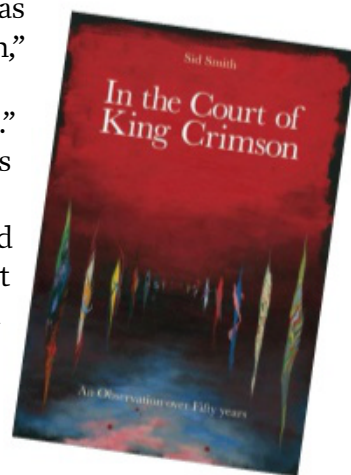
CRIMSON OBSERVATIONS REPUBLISHED

The definitive biography is back - double the size and now "a field guide to King Crimson".

Sid Smith's feted band biography, *In The Court Of King Crimson*, will be republished on November 15 in revised and expanded form with the new subtitle *An Observation Over 50 Years*.

Originally published in 2001, the book has long been out of print, but after being approached by Crimson's Panegyric label, Smith has now taken the story up to 2019 through new interviews with principals. "Everyone has been incredibly helpful and I try to let their voices come through," he tells *Prog*. "I had no editorial guidance and didn't try to meld their opinions into some grand, unified theory of King Crimson."

This new edition includes a track-by-track guide to the band's recordings and an "annotated gigography", and at 600 pages it is twice the length of the original book. "It's like a handbook, a field guide to King Crimson," says Smith. "I think I bring a lot of insight into their world." Pre-order your copy at www.burningshed.com and read our review in next month's issue. **MB**





GENTLE GIANT BOXED

Unburied Treasure holds 30 CDs - and a golden prize for one lucky buyer.

► **Gentle Giant fans** will need to get into training when it comes to lifting the forthcoming *Unburied Treasure* boxed set due for release in December, bulging with 30 discs, including a brand new surround sound mix for the self-titled 1970 debut by Steven Wilson as well as newly remastered versions of their entire studio and live output.

Aimed at the collectors market the £250 big box is limited to 2,000 copies worldwide and comes with a 136-page hardback book chronicling the band's life and times, signed photo, items of memorabilia and no less than a whopping 15 previously unreleased live shows. One reason for including so many live discs that run from 1972 through to the band's demise in 1980 is a recognition of how different the band were when it came to playing gigs, observes vocalist Derek Shulman. "The way we looked at it was that the recording was the sketch but the live show was the painting," he says of the band's habit of creating new medleys and segues. "I'm quite impressed as to how we played as precisely as we did. The group as a live band has a lot of character. You could hear the joy in our ability to pull it off."

When it came to unearthing all the material, Shulman says every member of the band set about raiding cupboards and storerooms to see what they had. "I think our guitarist Gary Green had more than anyone else in the band when it came to the paraphernalia and photos, including the multi-track tapes that Steven Wilson was able to remix from."

While Gary Green has played Gentle Giant music in concert as Three Friends in the past, given the continuing interest in the band hasn't Shulman ever been tempted to get the members back together for one last hurrah? "No. it was a fantastic chapter in my life and while I'm gratified there's so much interest in today I don't think you can't relive and rewind."

One of the 2,000 boxes includes a golden jigsaw piece entitling the lucky recipient to claim special collectors' mirror screenprinted with *The Power And The Glory* artwork. Surely it should have been the Shulberry, the unique three-string instrument invented by the band? "Ha! You know what happened to it? Gary was cold on one occasion so he chopped the original Shulberry up for firewood. True story!" laughs Shulman. **SS**

Find out more at madfish.lnk.to/GGunburiedtreasure.

"The recording was the sketch but the live show was the painting."

INTRO extras

DBA LIVE ALBUM AND RELEASE SHOW

Downes Braide Association have announced a two-CD/DVD boxset out on November 29 titled *Live In England*, via Cherry Red. To celebrate, the band will get loved up with a date at Trading Boundaries (where it was originally recorded) on February 14; coincidentally, sleeve artist Roger Dean will be exhibiting a show, *Gates Of Delirium*, based around the 45th anniversary of Yes' *Relayer* at the same venue from November 1 to December 8. See www.tradingboundaries.com for info.



D97 CARRY ON, SCREEN-ING

US quintet defy adversity and present their digital-age concept album.

► **District 97 fought** their way through a series of setbacks to achieve the release of fourth album *Screens* via Cherry Red on October 4.

It's their first with keyboardist Andrew Lawrence and bassist Tim Seisser, and comes after singer Leslie Hunt had to deal with a throat injury, along with delays associated with the crowdfunding process. But Hunt tells *Prog* the delays weren't too daunting. "I feel like our sound has really evolved," she said. "It's such a strong record that the timing might not be too sensitive. It's already being very well-received."

Most of the follow-up to 2015's *In Vaults* deals with modern society's near-addiction to digital devices, although Hunt emphasises that the perspective is "we've got to deal with this" rather than a lecturing "you've got to work out what's wrong with y'all."

The creative process was kickstarted when Seisser proposed lead single *Sheep*, and represented a moment of evolution as the recent members developed into full contributors.

She describes the material - some of which has been part of their live shows for a while - as wide-ranging, from heavy prog to pop rock, along with theatrical elements and more of a "sludge" vibe than previous works. "We want to expand our audience and I think *Screens* has got what it takes to do it," she says.

District 97 recently completed a run of UK, European and US dates, with more to be announced in due course. For updates, see www.district97.net. **MK**

BBT, LIVE IN YOUR LOUNGE AND ELSEWHERE!

Cadogan Hall concert film arrives in time for Christmas; band roll out Ramblin' Man Fair headline.

► **Big Big Train** will release concert movie *Reflectors Of Light* on December 6 via English Electric Recordings. The 2017 recording has been the subject of delays, but the band's Greg Spawnton says quality is worth waiting for. "It's the record of a moment," he tells *Prog*. "We recorded all three nights at the Cadogan Hall in London, and this is the best recording of each track."

After becoming a Top 40 band with latest album *Grand Tour*, their UK festival ambitions come to fruition next year with a headline spot on the Prog In The Park stage at Ramblin' Man Fair in Maidstone in July. Spawnton says their immediate focus is to "spread the word" of *Grand Tour*, with no new album due until 2021, although other releases are under discussion before then. "We feel we have a lot further to go with *Grand Tour*. It's been a great few years."

BBT conclude their UK tour at Hackney Empire on November 2. See www.bigbigtrain.com. **MK**





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NO-MAN ALBUM FEELS THE LOVE

Two-song disco-prog epic *Love You To Bits* has been 25 years in-the-making.



Wilson and Bowness: in a happy place between Yes and Donna Summer.

PRESS/CARL GLOVER

Steven Wilson and Tim Bowness's No-Man will close a 25-year circle with the release of seventh album *Love You To Bits*, which arrives on November 22 via Caroline International. It's been 11 years since previous record *Schoolyard Ghosts* appeared, but Bowness tells *Prog* the wait could have been even longer.

"We tried a few recording sessions in between 2008 and 2018," he says. "We came up with the core of the first song in 1994. It was going to be the start of the follow-up to our second album, *Flowermouth*." When the duo changed tack, the proposed material no longer worked, and lay mainly dormant through several album cycles until Wilson told Bowness in 2017: "I've just found this on my hard drive – why on Earth aren't we working on it?"

The duo invited a number of colleagues to contribute, including Wilson's keyboardist Adam Holzman, Producers drummer Ash Soan and guitarist David Kollar. In a nod to classic vinyl record work, the album features two tracks – one for each side. "There's a level of concentration that the classic 35 to 40-minute album is ideal for," Bowness argues. "If you think of Yes' *Close To The Edge*, it's 38 minutes long, but there are so many ideas packed in."

He recalls the experience of being "in the studio, trading ideas" as being like their early days. "One of the best things about working with Steven is nothing's out of bounds," he notes, describing *Love You To Bits* as their most complex work to date, even though it may sound like relatively straightforward disco-pop. "We love 60s and 70s singer-songwriters, the experimental prog artists, disco music, soundtrack music, Trevor Horn's production values. We love the ambition of Giorgio Moroder and Donna Summer's *I Feel Love* and *Love To Love You Baby*."

He reports that schedules make touring unlikely in the near future, and that while they haven't considered the idea of remixing the album themselves, they've had offers from other artists. Meanwhile, they are both working on their next solo projects.

"I think *Love You To Bits* might be our most genuinely progressive album to date," he says. "Two long lyrically and musically related pieces that flirt with multiple genres and moods is definitely more Yes than Ed Sheeran!" **MK**

Find out more at www.no-man.co.uk.

"When you work with Steven nothing is out of bounds."

INTRO extras

CALLING ALL BUDDING ROCK SNAPPERS!

Editing software aces Affinity Photo are looking for new photographers who capture the spirit of rock in a competition spread over six months and a series of challenges. Want to take part and win some great Affinity kit, go on an assignment with *Prog* photographer Kevin Nixon and be published on the *Louder* platform? Head over to www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/affinity_new_music to enter for free. Good luck!



Clannad's Pól Brennan (second left): "Let's go out on a high."

CLANNAD PLAY THEIR LAST TOUR

A final tour and anthology box set – *In A Lifetime* – will mark their 50-year career.

Clannad will undertake their farewell tour in 2020, to be accompanied by the release of an 80-track anthology, with both projects named *In A Lifetime*. The band's Pól Brennan confirmed to *Prog* that they're preparing to record a handful of new tracks to be added to the box set.

Unsurprisingly, the death of Padraig Duggan in 2016 contributed to their decision to call it quits after 50 years. "We were thinking about it on the last tour," Brennan said. "The passing of Padraig knocked us all back and we started having that discussion, that perhaps the last tour was the last tour. Towards the end of it, we sat down and we said, 'Let's do this; let's go out on a high, let's call it in.'"

With five decades of material to consider, the anthology contents have not yet been finalised ahead of its release on March 13 via BMG. "It was a very interesting object exercise to go back to the beginning, the first album, all the way up to [2013's] *Nadur*. I'd never listened to the albums in order before!"

The new tracks will feature "somebody very interesting" and Clannad are also working on some "surprises" for the farewell shows, which are likely to be delivered without support acts due to the intended length of performances.

Afterwards the members will continue with their own projects; and, says Brennan, the chance of further Clannad work is not impossible. "But more touring? No," he insists.

Find out more at www.clannad.ie. **MK**

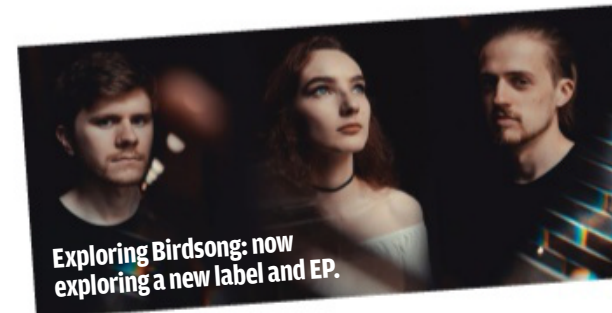
BIRDSONG TRIO BRANCH OUT

The acclaimed new Liverpool band release their debut EP.

Liverpool based, piano-powered trio Exploring Birdsong will release their debut EP, *The Thing With Feathers*, on November 29 via Long Branch Records. It follows the two singles *The Baptism* and *The Downpour*, and their nomination for two Prog Awards this year. "We're extremely proud of this EP," drummer Matt Harrison tells *Prog*. "I feel these songs really encompass what we're about as a band, they're very accessible but also a little bit weird and we can't wait for people to hear them."

Alongside the singles and an a cappella cover of (Don't Fear) *The Reaper*, recorded in Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, the band's stock has risen rapidly, gaining support slots with Sleep Token, Anneke van Giersbergen's VUUR and Godsticks. "It's pretty crazy to have signed for Long Branch [home to acts such as Agent Fresco and Uneven Structure]. We're now labelmates with some of our favourite ever bands and we couldn't thank them enough for believing in us."

The six track EP, inspired by Seamus Heaney's poem *Bye Child* about the abused child Kevin Halfpenny, is available to pre-order now in two different CD/T-shirt bundles. Read more at www.facebook.com/ExploringBirdsong. **POW**



Exploring Birdsong: now exploring a new label and EP.



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FAD GADGETS

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

NW-A100TPS WALKMAN

In 1979, the first Sony Walkman was launched. It was a humble machine that

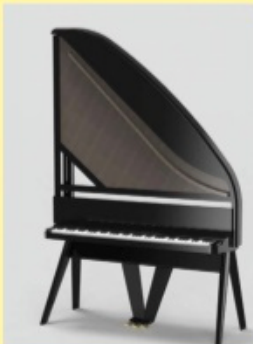
introduced the world to fully portable music and allowed us to isolate ourselves on buses and trains in order to avoid dull conversations. This 40th anniversary model looks just like the original but refrains from any attempt

to revitalise the cassette as a format. Instead, it plays MP3s, but also has a touchscreen with an image of a slowly revolving cassette. All the aesthetic appeal of the Walkman, but less tinny. And there are no orange headphones.

www.bit.ly/SonyWalkman40

STANDING GRAND

Do you have a burning desire to have a grand piano in your home, but can't fulfil your dream because your family deems it more important to use that space for frivolous things like sofas, beds, a kitchen? Well, here's one solution, which is most probably the maddest thing I've seen this year: it's a grand piano that extends upwards.



Future Piano's Standing Grand takes up the same floor space as an upright piano by turning the instrument's body through 90 degrees. Now, how high is your ceiling?

www.bit.ly/standgrand

LOOG MINI

I learned to play the guitar at the grand age of 14 on a battered six-string nylon acoustic. The Loog Mini is way more fun: it has three strings and is designed for

kids between the ages of three and eight. For those whose strumming is a bit more advanced, there's also the Loog Pro and the Pro VI (12-plus), but I prefer the Loog Mini, not least because there's some tip-top footage on the website of Ronnie Wood playing

it to his youngest daughters. Cute!

www.loogguitars.com



(CAKE) ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Can you really stay fit and healthy on tour? Rick has a plan!

I'll admit it: my diet isn't exactly going to plan. I'm trying my best to eat healthily and reduce my portion size as well as not eat between meals (basically achieved by not stopping meals but letting them run into each other). However, my nutritionist (aka my lovely wife) isn't impressed. She's told me all about the importance of staying fit and healthy when you have a heavy workload and busy schedule like mine, and I know I need to take immediate action.

By the time you read this, I'll be on tour in North America, and so in preparation I'm drawing up a strict health regime. I intend to stick to it rigidly so that by the end of this year I'm the sylph-like figure of supreme fitness that I was in 1957, when I was eight. It's a tough ask, I know, but here's the plan:

On tour, I will always have a healthy breakfast, but it will *not* include muesli or other similar crap that tastes like shredded cardboard. For my lunch, I will have a salad with low-fat dressing, although Americans don't seem to go for low-fat anything in restaurants so I may need to bring my own. No dinner on show days, as I can't eat before a show, so instead I'll carry lots of low-calorie, low-fat protein bars to nibble when I'm feeling peckish. There will be no snacks in my hotel room except for unsalted nuts and plenty

of water. In my dressing room, I'll simply have nuts, fruit and a packet of PG Tips. I also intend to go for a walk every morning.

Overall, it's going to be a very healthy, very detoxifying and bloody miserable tour (except for the playing bit of course). It's called the Grumpy Old Rockstar Tour for a reason. With the lifestyle I'm setting myself, I'm going to be extremely moody and probably will need to be approached with caution at all times. Even the friendliest of greetings is likely to get a rude response ending in the word "off".

Will I be able to keep it up, I ask myself? Ah, that's a phrase that has many connotations when you reach 70... Only time will tell, but if I do manage it, then it may well be something I'll thank myself for in the future, in-between prolonged bouts of extreme misery, of course.

For some additional motivation, I checked the odds of success with the online food betting company, Betfed. Here's what I was offered:

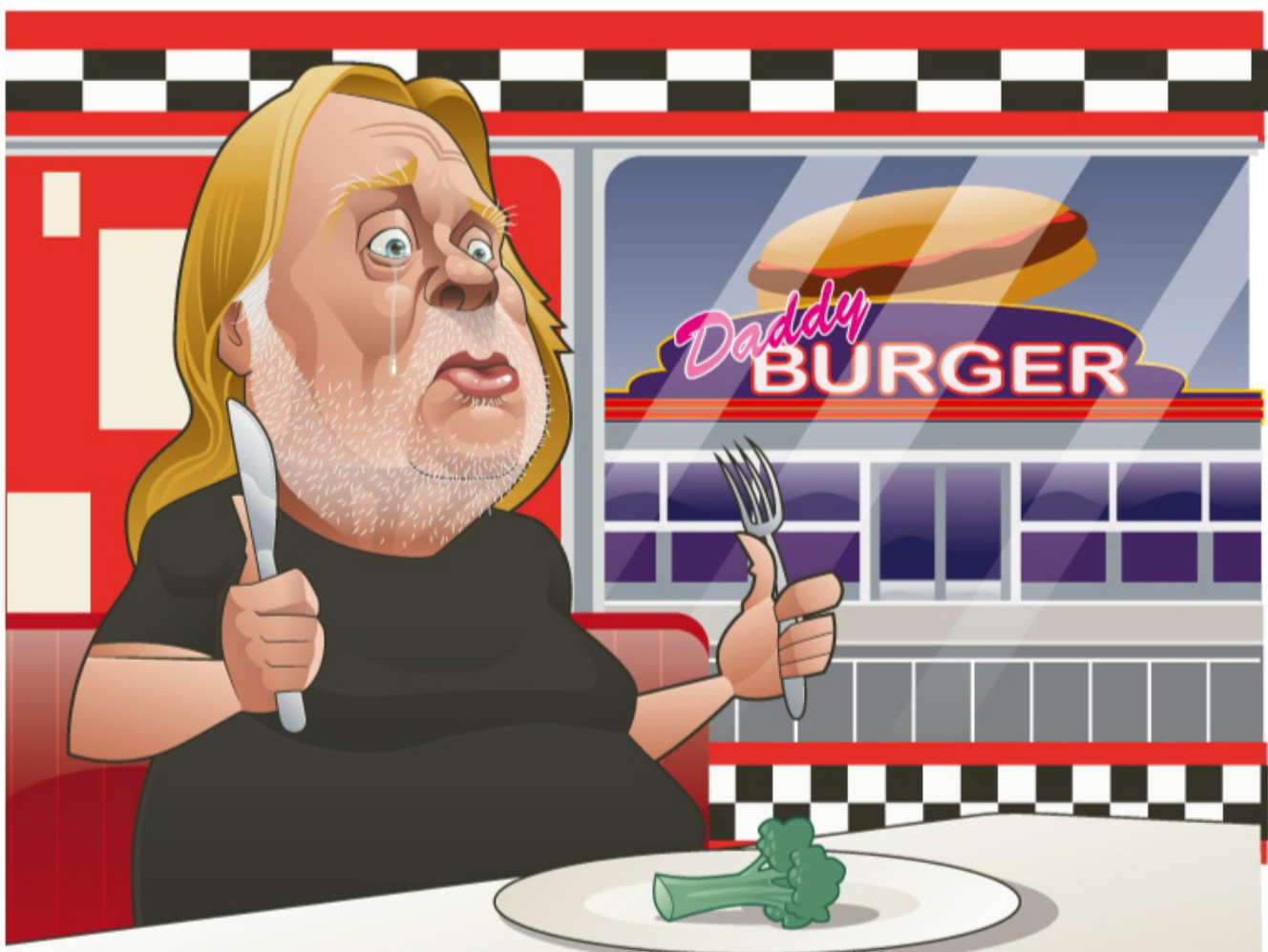
To complete the tour with the planned diet: 5000/1.

To complete 50 percent of the tour with the planned diet: 2000/1.

To complete the tour: even money.

I think I'll save my cash for a delicious low-fat Christmas treat.

"It's called the Grumpy Old Rockstar Tour for a reason..."



JON POLD SYNERGY

Two parts melody and one part musicianship from Danish bassist and vocalist.

THANKS, MARK KING. If it wasn't for the prog-certified Level 42 bassist, there may never been a Jon Pold Synergy.

Jon Pold, the brains behind the Danish prog rockers, was encouraged to ditch an upbringing of classical piano and youth choirs and pick up a four-string instead after seeing slap-happy King perform live as a teenager.

"Watching him playing those songs, something just clicked," Pold reflects. "I locked myself in my bedroom for two years and rehearsed for eight hours a day."

Pold has become an accomplished bassist and vocalist himself since his epiphany as a 16-year-old, and after working as a hired gun he launched his Synergy project with a self-titled EP in 2017.

Citing forward-thinking influences from Peter Gabriel to Return To Forever, the mellifluous Jon Pold Synergy have one foot firmly planted in decades gone by — there's a prominent 80s gloss — but nods to contemporary proggers like Steven Wilson tug the band back into the 21st century.

Their debut album *On* was released in April and is less slap-bass and more key-driven prog than the EP, although a groove still simmers under the surface.

"I don't want to make music difficult just for the sake of being difficult, because if you can make a difficult pattern seem danceable and groovy at the same time, then I feel like I've got something interesting going," Pold says.

He readily admits he is a perfectionist, from the songwriting through the production. He is hands-on, but you feel he would not want it any other way.

"The opening track of the new record, *The Wheel*, is the result of me sitting down at 10 o'clock in the evening and finishing it at six the next morning," Pold says. "I can use 10 hours tweaking an EQ on a specific instrument or listening to specific reverbs. At some time you just need to say, 'Okay, is there anyone else other than me that actually will notice the difference?'"

Pold's buzzing musical brain, meanwhile, is eyeing up a second studio album, with new tracks already earmarked for the record.

Some of the music, he says, will be "harder sounding, more a little bit metal inspired".

"But I'm still not gonna sing like a metal voice," Pold smiles. "My vocal inspiration could be anything from The Beatles to Adrian Belew to Peter Gabriel. I will never be a growler or metal singer."

The music behind Jon Pold Synergy looks set to progress and expand, but the musician's goal, however, remains resolute — to create accessible songs with an experimental edge.

"The details in the arrangements makes all the difference," Pold explains, using the peppy title track on Steven Wilson's *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* as an example.

"That's when it's not just a pop song, it's got way more depth," Pold explains. "That's something to strive for, and I try to do the same. Hopefully I'll continue to develop and get even closer to that recipe and that skill level. That's my end game." **CC**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Jon Pold (lead vocals, bass, Chapman Stick), **Rasmus Krøyer** (backing vocals, guitars), **Mads Klinke** (drums), **Henrik Borlev** (keyboards), **Sara Weeda** (guest vocals)

SOUNDS LIKE

Peter Gabriel, Level 42 and Steven Wilson time-warping back to the 80s

CURRENT RELEASE

On is out now via Thumb Records

WEBSITE

www.jonpold.com



"I don't want to make music difficult just for the sake of being difficult."

Jon Pold Synergy: levelling up.

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

YOUR PROG CHEF: ASH COOK (VALIS ABLAZE)

On the menu: Boundless Cookies

“I grew up in a musical house, but as my father was a chef in the Armed Forces and my mother comes from the spice island of Zanzibar, I was subjected to a lot of culinary experiments too! Our meals were either straight-up African or Indian dishes, but sometimes we’d have an unusual take on classic British dishes with onion bhajis in place of chips, or we’d mix curries with roast dinner elements. It didn’t always work for me!

I got into cooking purely by chance when I was at university. I occasionally cooked for my housemates and, in my final year, I got a part-time job in a kitchen. My wife now endures my kitchen experiments as we both agree that having the same thing over and over again can get boring. It’s really fun to make food with

ingredients you might not normally use.

My father is diabetic so sugary products were scarce when I was growing up; now I lean towards sweet dishes and chocolate is my weakness. I switched to a mostly vegan diet a few years ago so these cookies are vegan and gluten-free, but you really can’t taste the difference.”

Ingredients (makes 10)

For the cookies: ½ tsp sea salt flakes, 32g buckwheat flour, 150g ground hazelnuts, 250ml maple syrup, 160ml vegetable oil. **For the filling:** 250g dark chocolate, 3 tbsp almond butter, 120ml maple syrup, a pinch of sea salt or ground cinnamon.

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4 and line two baking trays with baking or greaseproof paper.

Sift the buckwheat flour and salt flakes into a large bowl and mix to combine. Add the ground hazelnuts and mix again. Next, slowly drizzle in the maple syrup and add the vegetable oil. Mix until the mixture sticks together.

Roll a heaped tablespoon of the mixture into 20 balls and flatten them slightly before placing them on the prepared baking trays. Cook in the oven for 18-20 minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Melt the chocolate in the microwave, then stir in the almond butter and maple syrup until it’s mostly smooth. Turn the cooled cookies upside down and add the filling to half of them. Press the other half down to make a sandwich and leave to cool before eating.

“These cookies are quick to make and extremely satisfying. The darker chocolate gives you a little bitterness and the salt contrasts the sweetness. You can mix things up with different types of chocolate for the filling as well.” **NRS**



MY PROG HERO Inspiring the wider music world...

Visionaries: through Tesseract, Clémentine Delauney [inset] discovered the power of djent.



TESSERACT: PRESS/STEVE BROWN
CLÉMENTINE DELAUNEY: PRESS/ÉMILIE GARCIN

CLÉMENTINE DELAUNEY

Tesseract send the vocalist of Austrian symphonic metallers Visions Of Atlantis to an *altered state*!

“I discovered Tesseract around the release of *Altered State* [in 2013]. I was seeing a lot of my friends sharing the videos and commenting, ‘Oh my God! This is mind-blowing!’ I was hooked in by [former singer] Ashe O’Hara’s voice, the music, the ambience and the melodies. At the time, I was listening to Epica, Dream Theater and Evergrey; I’d never heard of djent before but it felt like I’d opened a magical box. I bought the album and have been following them ever since. Through Tesseract, I then discovered Periphery – they’re my second big djent crush – Monuments and Vildhjarta. I’m in love with Plini and Animals As Leaders, and I adore Leprous and Textures as well.

Altered State is my favourite release of theirs, the level of songwriting and emotion is incredible. It flows so perfectly that it’s difficult to pick out just one favourite track. It’s hard to know how it would have sounded without Ashe, his singing is what made that album so special for me; the way he managed to throw the high notes just suited his voice. Daniel [Tompkins]

has a different style; he’s so versatile and his clear vocals are amazing.

When I’m not singing in Visions Of Atlantis, I’m a gig promoter in Lyon in France and I promoted Tesseract’s 2014 show there. It was amazing to see them live and Daniel [Tompkins]’s got a huge stage presence – he’s the perfect frontman for Tesseract and I’d love to have the opportunity to sing with him.

To be able to sing in a djent band, you have to have such an amazing sense of groove and influences from everywhere, you have to think outside the box. Sometimes I sing off-the-beat and I know this comes from my jazz training and listening to prog.

I’ve always loved progressive music because it has such creativity and transcends boundaries. A few years ago, I did an opera project called Melted Space which flirted with a lot of different genres, but I’d love to be part of a proper prog project, it would be such a challenge.” **NRS**

Wanderers is out now via Napalm. For the latest tour dates, visit the website www.visionsofatlantis.at.

“Daniel Tompkins is the perfect frontman. I’d love to have the opportunity to sing with him.”

PROG IN BRIEF

Nightwish release *Decades: Live In Buenos Aires* in various formats from Blu-ray digibook to three-LP set on December 6 via Nuclear Blast. Filmed in 2018, it marked the band’s 20th anniversary. “I smiled from ear to ear,” says Thomas Holopainen, recalling the show.

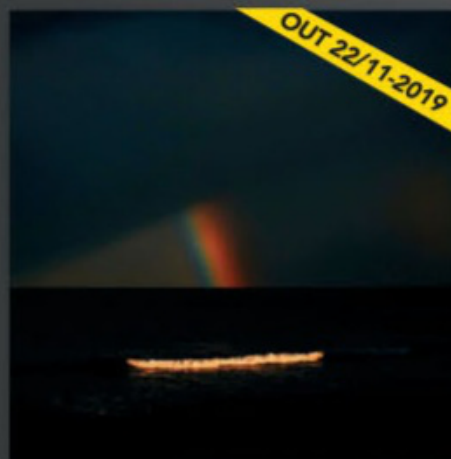


“Florian Fricke lives on in his piano and Moog tracks in the middle of our new project,” say **Popol Vuh Beyond**, a collective featuring Popol vets Frank Fiedler and Guido Hieronymus, plus Biljana Pais. Out now via Bandcamp, the eight-track album is titled *Requiem For Florian*.

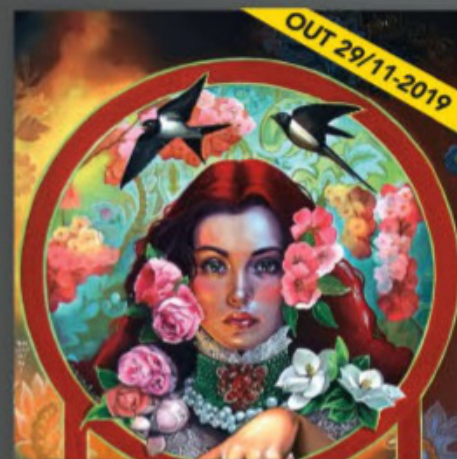
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WATERS**
feat. Mattias Olsson
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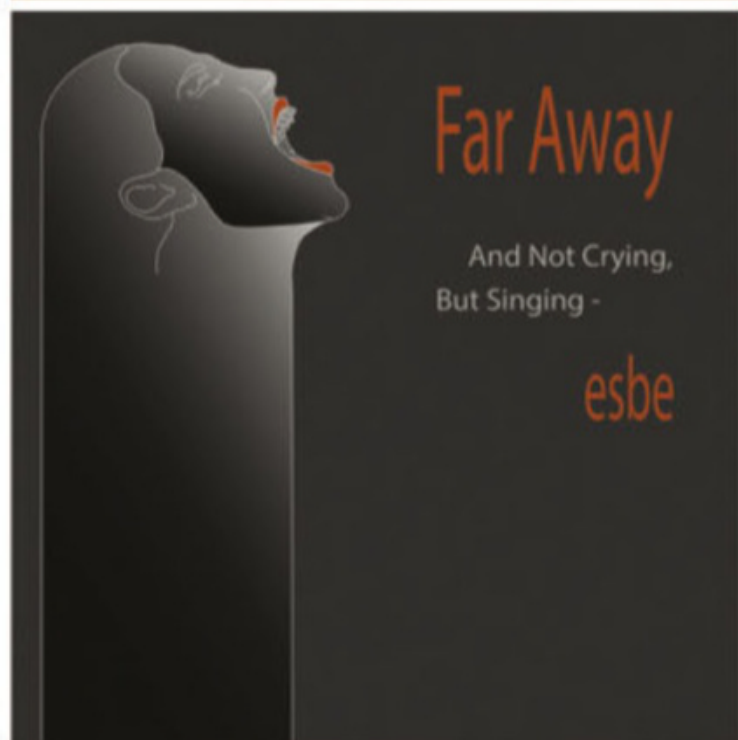
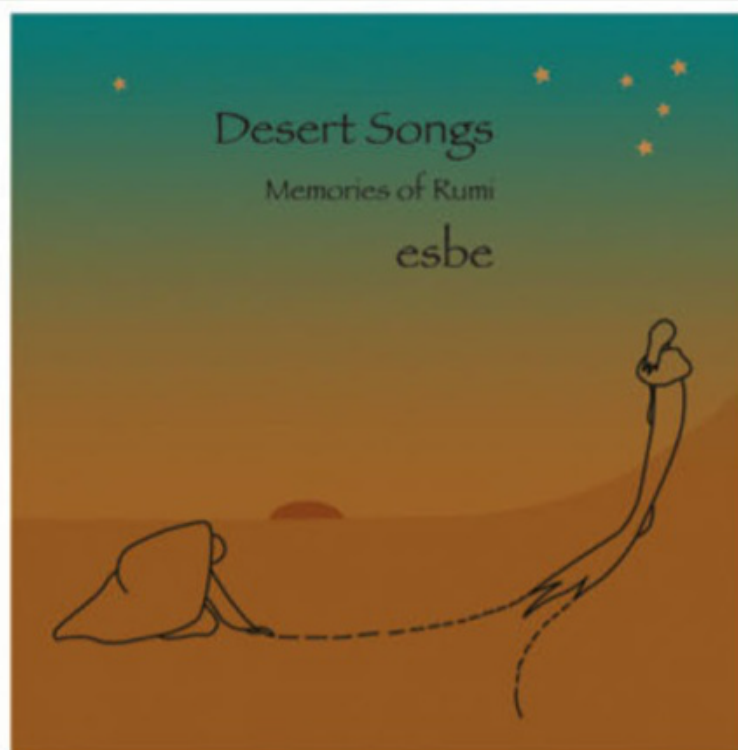
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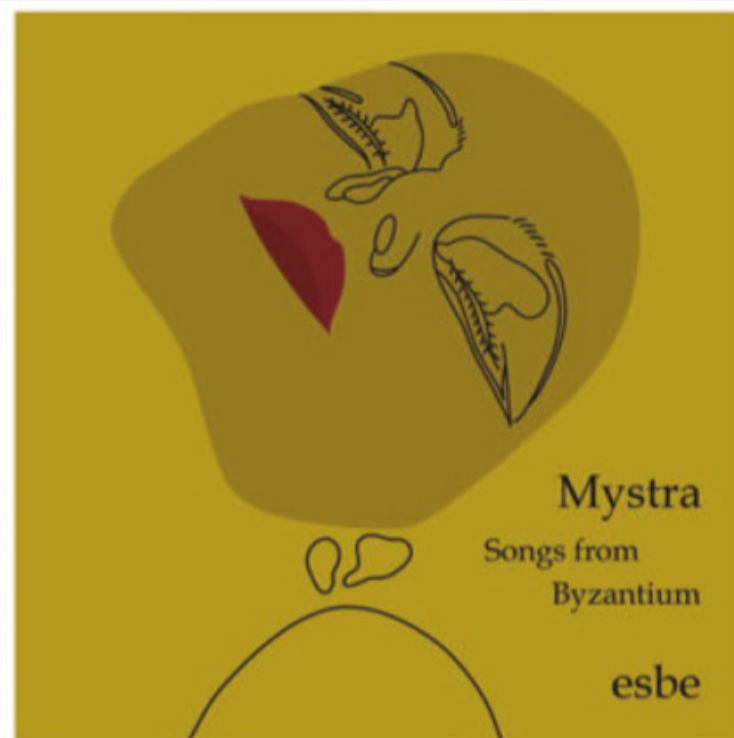


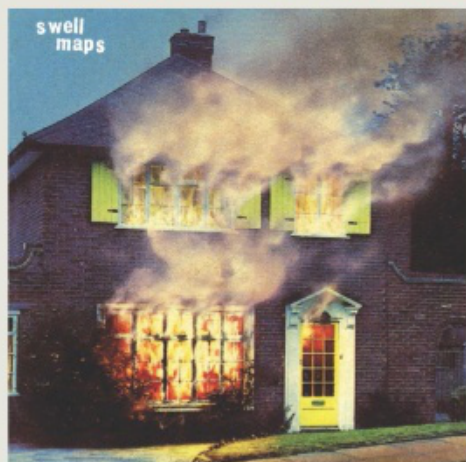
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spellbinding
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Prog

esbemusic.uk





SWELL MAPS

A TRIP TO MARINEVILLE

(RATHER/ROUGH TRADE, 1979)

Here's a funny thing about punk: at the time, it seemed that every band who emerged in 1977 were automatically regarded as part of that movement, irrespective of whether or not they fitted. And Swell Maps certainly did *not* fit neatly into punk.

In fact, the only aspect they had in common with the spit brigade was their DIY attitude. Everything they did musically was radically different to what else was happening. Started in Solihull by Nikki Sudden and Epic Soundtracks (in reality brothers Adrian and Kevin Godfrey), they were joined by Jowe Head (aka Stephen Bird) and Richard Earl (boringly, his real name!) for their 1979 debut album *A Trip To Marineville*, which followed on from two singles (*Read About Seymour* in '77 and *Dresden Style* the following year). However, it was the album that captured what the band were really about.

By their own admission, they had little idea of what they were doing in the studio but what this did was free them from any conventions. Swell Maps broke the rules because they didn't know there were any. In the process, they came up with a truly remarkable album.

Inspired by Faust, Can, Zappa, Beefheart and Stockhausen, the band were prepared to use anything to hand to get the right sounds: a vacuum cleaner and balloons are among the unusual 'instruments' credited on the record. This free form approach fascinates, and has ensured *A Trip To Marineville* never sounds of its time. Sudden's guitar style has a downbeat, sombre quality, while the vocals have an extra-terrestrial and mournful impact that's both affecting yet disturbing. At no point can you ever feel relaxed listening to what's here. Swell Maps are unnerving but that's the point. While many so-called punks were out to foment controversy in order to acquire attention and status, this lot didn't care about perception. They were revelling in being let loose in a studio and finding out what could be achieved.

Listen to *Gunboats*, *Adventuring Into Basketry* and *Harmony In Your Bathroom*. These tracks drip with the kind of avant-garde technique that taps into the spirit of Stockhausen and Krautrock, yet also have a sense of being partially spontaneous. Sometimes you listen to what's being played and wonder where it's all going. But that's the excitement of this trip: it's as much a journey of discovery for the band as it is for us.

Swell Maps recorded a second album in 1980, *Jane From Occupied Europe*, which was reissued in 1989. It carried on the traditions of its predecessor, building further on its impact. The four-piece split up around the time of its original release but the influence of their debut album, intentional or otherwise, can still be felt through much of the post-rock movement. In the best possible sense, they were idiot savants.

MALCOLM DOME



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Bella vita:
Not A Good Sign.

NOT A GOOD SIGN

Pianist **Paolo Botta** reveals why this Italian four-piece are giving 70s prog a modern sound.

Throughout history, Milan has proved fertile ground for all kinds of art. It's from here that Not A Good Sign have emerged and reignited the fires of 70s Italian prog with their brand of thoughtful self-expression.

"We're a band that have one foot in the past and one foot in the present," says pianist Paolo 'Ske' Botta, talking from his home on the outskirts of the city. "We're just as inspired by PFM as we are by Snarky Puppy."

Formed as a more accessible counterpoint to Botta's avant-prog act Yugen, Not A Good Sign settled on a sound that marries British and Italian prog from the 70s with a fresh modernity. Although there's a vibrant affinity within their sound to King Crimson and Gentle Giant – the former especially entrenched within their DNA, filling their music with the kind of exciting oddball-isms that Robert Fripp made his career from – there's a greater, intrinsic bond to the progressive rock of their homeland.

"Italian prog takes a very melodic approach to compositions," says Botta, "It has a really tight bond with classical music in terms of a compositional influence where you'll recognise smaller

fragments of thematic material developing across different sections of a song. Every nuance I can add to a song is more than welcome and that's why I'm so inspired by Banco del Mutuo Soccorso," he adds. He also cites fellow Milan band Area as another big influence on their off-kilter rhythms.

As a band determined to "expand melodic ideas and horizons", Not A Good Sign's well-timed melodic developments helps keep their musical intrigue piqued. From the reverential violins and Van der Graaf Generator's David Jackson's swathing saxophones on last year's *Icebound* to their perpetually evolving ideas, the four-piece's songs are colourfully orchestrated affairs.

"There's no real taboo in this band," says Botta, "there are no instruments or ideas that would be out of context in the music we write. There's even a [rapper] Snoop Dogg sample in one song. As we don't earn any money from our music, it's very important that what we write satisfies all of us, otherwise what's the point?" **POW**

For more info, visit
www.notagoodsign.org.

"We're just as inspired by PFM as we are by Snarky Puppy."

PRESS/SCARLETT PAGE

PROG IN BRIEF

Is it really 10 years since *We're Here Because We're Here* came out? Well, not quite, but **Anathema** will commemorate their modern progressive classic with a European tour in spring 2020, starting at St Luke's Church in Glasgow on March 6.



Former drummer for The Reasoning, **Jake Bradford-Sharp** returns solo, with an electronic progressive instrumental album, *Remix The Orchestra*, out now. "Orchestras are often seen as 'light and whimsical,'" he says. "I wanted to state their intensity."

QARIAQ

Bristol-based concept artist dips her toe into the sparkling world of post-rock.

“IT WAS AMAZING; I still can’t get my head around it!” Esther CG, aka qariaq, is in awe that she made her live debut at this year’s ArcTanGent Festival. “I’ve been going every year for the last six years and a lot of that scene has really influenced me. As soon as I go into that field, it feels like I’m home.”

Just a few years ago this self-taught former member of the WorldRoots youth choir was too shy to share her experimental bedroom recordings with the outside world, but things have changed. In 2018, she cautiously began uploading audio extracts to social media and they quickly caught the attention of festival bookers and fellow musicians. She’s just released her first EP, *lumber limbs*, which showcases her haunting and often unsettling style through four immersive songs, including the drone-driven *made by walking*, the Plini-esque title track and the upside-down jazz of *follicle full*.

“I wanted one track to be soothing and another where the guitar line is panned so it purposefully sounds really wonky. I wanted people to feel a little thrown off by it,” she reveals. “I used to suffer quite badly with anxiety and some of the physical sensations I would get made me feel unsteady, so I like that music can almost imitate that. I like the idea of being able to change the way someone feels through sound.”

Although *lumber limbs* is produced by Lambhorn conspirator Paul Stallan and includes guest drummers

Ollie Cocup (Stanlaey/My Octopus Mind) and Dan Johnson from Run Logan Run, qariaq is ultimately a solo project. This is reflected in Esther CG’s live set-up of an electric baritone guitar, an African thumb piano (called a kalimba) and a stack of pedals.

“I listen to a lot of artists who experiment with different time signatures and go against the idea of traditional Western songwriting,” she says. “I think Imogen Heap and Jo Quail are amazing, and I saw a really interesting band the other week called DakhaBrakha who are Ukrainian; their complicated rhythms are hauntingly beautiful. I listen to a lot of African rhythm music too.”

Teasing twisted melodies isn’t the musician’s only creative outlet. She has a degree in art and one of her abstract paintings graces the cover of her EP.

“I think there are parallels between my art and my music,” she says. “I want to transport people with the distortion of sounds; I like the element of repetition and the subtlety of details forming a bigger picture. With my artwork, I’m working towards doing larger scale pieces that are ultimately abstract pictures. I like people to tell me what they see in them and I like that element in my music as well.”

It’s still early days for the artist, whose name is taken from the West Greenlandic word for a water bubble in the ice, but with the excitement of her live debut still fresh, qariaq is looking towards the future with more gigs just over the horizon. **NRS**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Esther CG (baritone guitar, kalimba, vocals)

SOUNDS LIKE

Anna von Hausswolff meets Nadine Shah on a crisp autumn morning

CURRENT RELEASE

lumber limbs is out now via Bandcamp

WEBSITE

www.facebook.com/qariaq



“I like the idea of being able to change the way someone feels through sound.”

qariaq wants to make you feel unsteady.



MIND THE GAP

A Prog reader asks if waiting 13 years for an album makes it sound any better?

There's been a right kerfuffle over the arrival of Tool's new album. Whether or not it's any good is almost secondary to the debate about the length of time it's taken to release it. Lengthy breaks between prog albums aren't a new thing though. Check out Peter Gabriel's release schedule: there were ever-increasing gaps between albums until 2002's *Up* and no new material since, bar his cover versions and orchestral meanderings. Many fans also seemed cautious of *Up*'s challenging content which made it feel as if the wait might not have been worthwhile.

Modern technology allows bands to knock out albums even faster than ever but the creative spark still has to be there. That's how Emerson, Lake & Palmer managed four landmark studio albums in as many years. Genesis, Tull, and Floyd also harnessed their creativity on a consistent basis back in prog's golden age. I remember the excitement of getting the early bus to the shops so I could get my hands on the latest new releases. When I got home, I'd play each side over and over while digesting all the details of the gatefold sleeve. There's a marked difference between the thrill of waiting to see your favourite band on TV or radio, and the modern trend towards being able to follow their every move via social media. Back in the late 70s and early 80s, I don't remember any massive promotional campaigns for Genesis' new albums, just the occasional snippets of news in the weekly music rag of choice heightening the anticipation. I can still remember where I was and what I was doing when *Duke* came out. I'm not sure there are many albums I can say that about now.

So what's dulled our enthusiasm towards epic waits? Perhaps the internet is partly to blame. We're so used to a constant barrage of tracks released ahead of an album (we used to call them singles) and leaked album streams that fans have heard most of the record before it's even been released. Even when our favourite proggers do go into the studio, it can sometimes result in patchy output. Take Yes for example: in the last 20 years, aside from all the reissues, we've only had four studio albums that have varied in quality and worth, so you can understand why some fans may be grateful for the lack of new material.

That said, there are still plenty of prog bands who *don't* take 13 years to release a new album. I was delighted to read in *Prog* that IQ have added *Resistance* to their excellent catalogue, and we're lucky enough to live in a time when Haken, Riverside, KOYO and Steven Wilson create wondrous new sounds on a regular basis to keep us hooked. Many of the old guard, such as King Crimson and Marillion, still thrill us with their live shows, which makes me wonder if we really need new music from them? Or can we be satisfied with a stream of remasters, repackages and 5.1 mixes?

I wonder what prog will be like in another 10 or 20 years time? Will we still be waiting for Tool's sixth album?

MIKE AINSOE

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



CHAOS THEORY

Supporting independent bands is the secret to putting on successful gigs, says London promoter **Kunal Singhal**.

"I've missed two of our shows in the last nine years and it was horrendous," says Kunal Singhal. "Some think it's an achievement to have people run an event without you but if I spend months promoting a gig and getting excited about it, I want to be in the crowd for it."

Former prog metal singer Singhal founded Chaos Theory in London in 2010 in response to the way bands were being treated by pay-to-play promoters. His aim was to bring "unusual" music to new audiences and create an excellent experience for artists and their fans. Chaos Theory quickly became a collective with in-house photographers, bloggers, DJs, videographers, and, recently, its own podcast, all of which is aimed at helping to raise artist profiles.

Through his regular themed nights, Singhal found he was reaching more people than he'd thought possible. He even ended up hosting a gig in Kuwait with Jo Quail and guitarist Bella Kardasis.

"I've had all these opportunities I never expected," he enthuses. "I made a lot of sacrifices in the beginning but it's been worth it because the results have been so good."

Although Chaos Theory transcends genres, they've helped numerous prog artists such as Thumpermonkey, Darkher and The Fierce And The Dead. Each line-up is also carefully matched to a suitable London venue.

"It's really important to get every tiny element right," says the organisation's founder. "I'm also really keen to develop bands and promote them beyond our gigs so they're in a stronger position when they're next in London. We just want to connect good people to good music."

Next February, Chaos Theory celebrate 10 Years Of Chaos with an all-dayer at The Dome in Tufnell Park. The line-up includes Alpha Male Tea Party and Memory Of Elephants, but Singhal says he's not about to forget his DIY roots.

"There's new music being born all the time so let's connect with these people, and help them get on the right footing in the scene. A lot of artists

get jaded by bad promoters and I want them to understand there are some great spaces for them to work with." **NRS**

For the latest gig listings, videos and podcasts, visit www.chaostheorymusic.co.uk.

"We just want to connect good people to good music."

PROG IN BRIEF

After a year away, **Touchstone** have lined up a live show on May 9 at The Garage in London, with Paul 'Moo' Moorghen back on bass and vocals. A single, *Stolen Moments*, will be released on December 10, produced by John Mitchell.



Tickets are on sale now for 2020's **Summer's End** festival (October 1-4) where Pallas and Antimatter will headline, with more acts TBC. Meanwhile, **Antimatter's** new live DVD, *An Electric Evening With Antimatter*, featuring a string quartet, is out November 26.

New Hampshire's **Rocking Horse Music Club** will perform live for the first time at Trading Boundaries on Nov 14 and 15. Playing the music of Anthony Phillips and Mike Rutherford, guest vocalist Noel McCalla will appear for songs from *Smallcreep's Day*.

Hawkwind collaborator and author **Michael Moorcock** will release his third album, *Live At The Terminal Café*, with cohorts The Deep Fix on November 11. A "psychedelic country and cajun" affair, Moorcock, 79, sings lead on all tracks and plays harmonica.



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US, THEM & YOU

What got us all
grooving this month...

Official Progressive Albums Chart

The prog top 30 albums

September 2019

Compiled by



- 1 **OPETH** In Cauda Venenum (NUCLEAR BLAST)
- 2 **TOOL** Fear Inoculum (MUSIC FOR NATIONS)
- 3 **MUSE** Simulation Theory (HELIUM 3/WARNER RECORDS)
- 4 **MOON DUO** Stars Are The Light (SACRED BONES)
- 5 **65DAYSOFTSTATIC** Replicr, 2019 (SUPERBALL MUSIC)
- 6 **BRIAN ENO** APOLLO - ATMOSPHERES AND SOUNDTRACKS (UMC)
- 7 **CULT OF LUNA** A Dawn To Fear (METAL BLADE)
- 8 **TARJA** In The Raw (EAR MUSIC)
- 9 **JENNY HVAL** The Practice Of Love (SACRED BONES)
- 10 **WITHIN TEMPTATION** Resist (SPINEFARM)
- 11 **PETER GABRIEL** Flotsam And Jetsam (REAL WORLD)
- 12 **JOHN LODGE** B Yond - The Very Best Of (BMG)
- 13 **MIKE & THE MECHANICS** Out Of The Blue (BMG)
- 14 **DREAM THEATER** Distance Over Time (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 15 **GONG** Love From The Planet Gong (UMC/VIRGIN)
- 16 **FLAMING LIPS** King's Mouth (BELLA UNION)
- 17 **DEVIN TOWNSEND** Empath (INSIDE OUT)
- 18 **JEAN-MICHEL JARRE** Equinoxe Infinity (RCA)
- 19 **RUSH** Hemispheres (UMC/VIRGIN)
- 20 **PERIPHERY IV** - Hail Stan (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 21 **KATE BUSH** The Other Sides (RHINO)
- 22 **YES** Yes 50 Live (RHINO)
- 23 **SIGUR RÓS** Ágætis Byrjun (A Good Beginning) (KRUNK)
- 24 **MOODY BLUES** In Search Of The Lost Chord (UMC)
- 25 **STEELEYE SPAN** Estd 1969 (PARK)
- 26 **MARILLION** Clutching At Straws (PARLOPHONE)
- 27 **TANGERINE DREAM** Phaedra (VIRGIN)
- 28 **TANGERINE DREAM** Stratosfear (VIRGIN)
- 29 **CURVED AIR** Family Album (CHERRY RED/CURVED AIR)
- 30 **COHEED & CAMBRIA** The Unheavenly Creatures (ROADRUNNER)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! SIGNED PENDRAGON BOOK!



Pendragon recently released the hardback book *The First 40 Years*, which charts the band's history, and we have one signed copy to give away.

The 32-page hardback book features artwork from Simon Williams, and is full of photo memories celebrating Pendragon from 1978 to the current day.

The package also includes five CDs, three of which were recorded on the sold-out London date of their 40th Anniversary tour, at 229 The Venue, last November. It includes many rarely played tracks, such as *I Walk The Rope*, *Sister Bluebird*, *Excalibur* and *Dark Summer's Day*, all the way through to recent material like *Faces Of Light* and *Indigo*.

The other two discs will be completely remixed versions of *The World* and *Men Who Climb Mountains*, which bookend the career of the band. Both remixes will feature re-recorded drums from current drummer Jan Vincent Velazco and some updated additional keyboards on *The World* recording.

For your chance to win a signed copy of the book, visit www.bit.ly/PendragonComp and answer the following question:

In which year did Pendragon release their debut album?

- A) 1983
- B) 1984
- C) 1985

For more information on Pendragon and to order the book visit www.pendragon.mu.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This competition will be open from October 25 to November 29. By entering the competition you agree to our competition rules (available at www.futureplc.com/competition-rules). The winner will be selected 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...

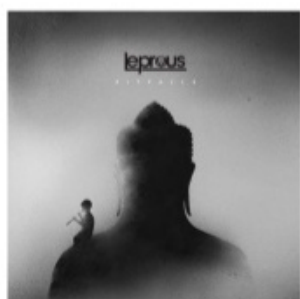
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BRUCE SOORD

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KSCOPE

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LEPROUS

Pitfalls
INSIDEOUT

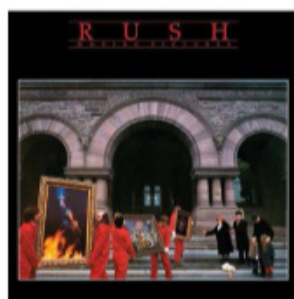
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LINDY-FAY HELLA

Seafarer
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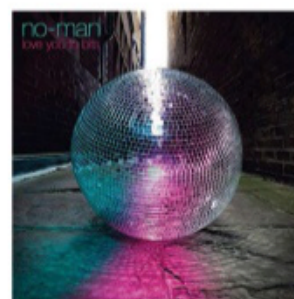
Musician
Al Winter



RUSH

Moving Pictures
ANTHEM

The Writer
Johnny Sharp



NO-MAN

Love You To Bits
CAROLINE

The Reader
Craig Watts



OPETH

In Cauda Venenum
MODERBOLAGET/NUCLEAR BLAST

HOWLING SYCAMORE

Multi-dimensional extreme prog metal that traverses distance and time.

PROG METAL DIEHARDS will be well aware of Jason McMaster. Blessed with an extraordinary multi-octave range and a gritty, soulful tone that could be both tender and terrifying, he is best known for the first Watchtower album, 1985's *Energetic Disassembly*: a seminal benchmark for the entire prog metal genre. Now, in 2019, McMaster has just released his second album with extreme prog crew Howling Sycamore, a collaboration with ex-Ephel Duath maverick Davide Tiso and death metal drumming legend Hannes Grossmann. Arguably even further out there than either Watchtower or Ephel Duath, *Seven Pathways To Annihilation* is a thrilling showcase for the chemistry between three revered virtuosos. Oddly, however, the trio have never actually been in the same room together.

"We have actually never met," McMaster tells *Prog*. "That adds to the mystery of the group, no doubt. When it began, I got an email from Davide out of nowhere. If I remember correctly, he wrote asking if I would be interested in the project. He sent a few of the songs from the first record [2018's *Howling Sycamore*] for me to listen to. I checked it out and was completely floored. So here we are, two records into what has become a strange relationship, creating strange music together. Davide supplies the music and lyrics, and I supply melodies... over insanity."

"I saw Jason in action years before, when Watchtower and Ephel Duath were on the same festival bill in 2004," Tiso adds. "He accepted to sing for the band after listening to some guitar and drums pre-production. I was ecstatic! I feel that Howling Sycamore took on a life of its own that day. His vocal range is simply stunning but what I love the most about his style is the melodic approach that he has. He purposely tries to unsettle the listener with parts that are not that immediate."

Those familiar with Davide Tiso's back catalogue will know that he deals heavily in dissonance, discord and often merciless

darkness and aggression. But Howling Sycamore is a much more multi-dimensional and sonically spacious entity than previous projects, with McMaster's voice a perpetually human but often horrified foreground presence. At times wildly psychedelic, *Seven Pathways To Annihilation* is what happens when demented musicality collides with ancient philosophy.

"On this second album my lyrics are again touching metaphysical topics, in particular shamanic and Buddhist principles," Tiso explains. "This approach is at the very core of what Howling Sycamore is about conceptually. I like to take the listener to that place where I go and hide from the world during meditation. The album title and the whole theme is based on the shamanic principle of destroying my own ego in order to psychically advance. Each of the seven songs in the album are meant to be a pathway toward that."

With no current plans to turn Howling Sycamore into a live band, Tiso, McMaster and Grossmann are obviously content to sustain the distant and mysterious nature of their artistic relationship. With all three fully engaged in various other projects, this unique meeting of minds may eschew the usual routes to glory, but there's no mistaking the sound of mercurial masters at work. And no one is enjoying it more than the band themselves.

"I'm already working on the guitars and structures for the third Howling Sycamore record," notes Tiso. "The material is dense, epic and prog but also showing some elegant restraint!"

"I'm just awaiting the next call to board the ship that takes us on the next journey," McMaster says. "I feel the new record is consistent with the first. I don't know why, but I felt that would be hard to do. I know I wanted to try new things on this one and I hope I achieved that. I just put myself into a trance and become a conduit for what Davide's songs are trying to tell me. I hope our travels continue to surprise even ourselves." **DL**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Davide Tiso (guitars, bass), **Hannes Grossmann** (drums), **Jason McMaster** (vocals)

SOUNDS LIKE

Wild and trippy prog metal experiments with soaring, old school metal vocals

CURRENT RELEASE

Seven Pathways To Annihilation is out now via Prosthetic Records

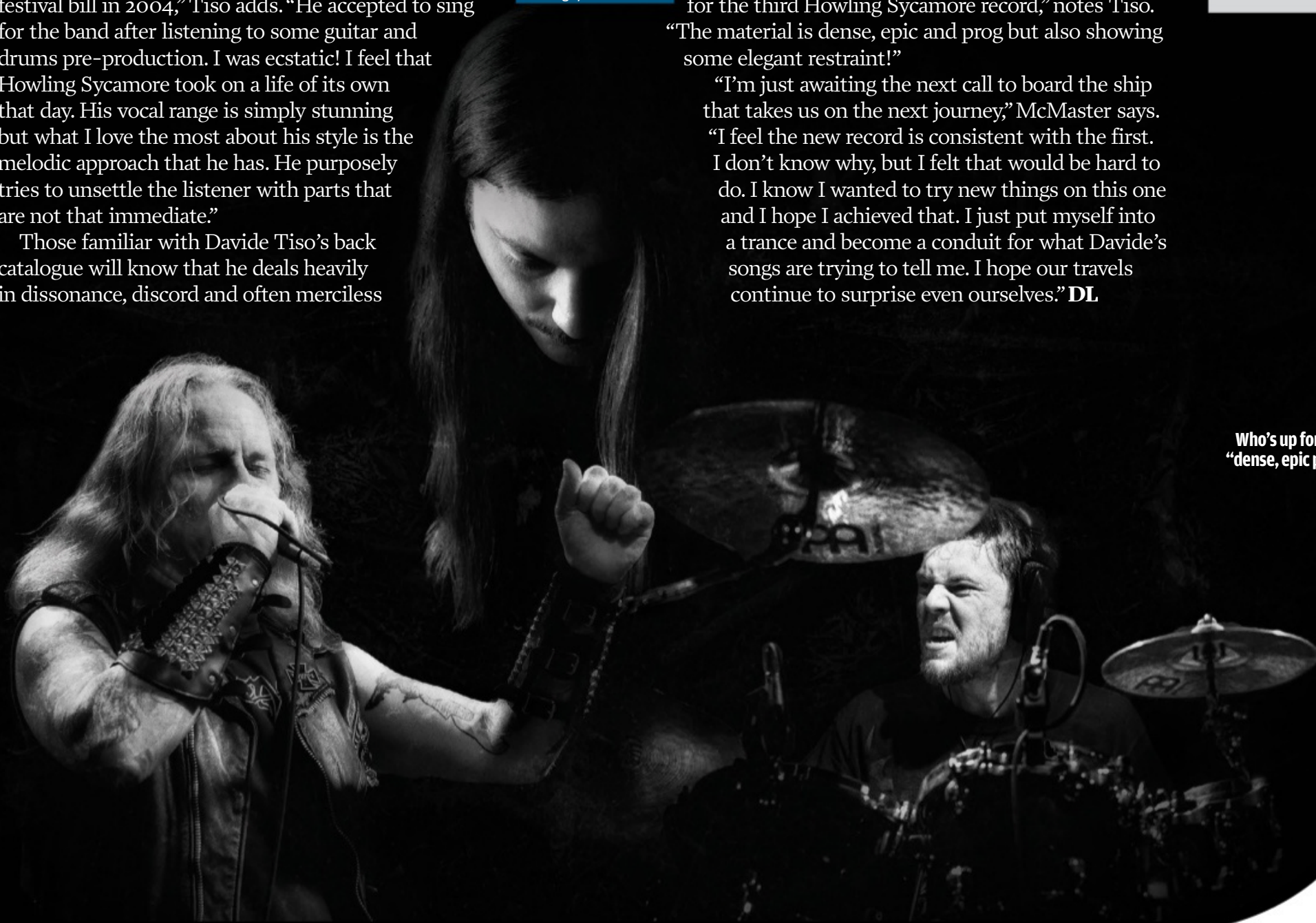
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"The album title and the whole theme is based on the shamanic principle of destroying my own ego in order to psychically advance."

Who's up for some "dense, epic prog"?



LED BIB

Ninth album takes jazz rock mavericks to unexpected territories, with added film.

“A COMMON RESPONSE from people who’ve heard the new album is, ‘I don’t know what I thought the record would sound like, but this is not it,’” laughs US-born drummer and composer Mark Holub, speaking from his home in Vienna about Led Bib’s ninth release, *It’s Morning*. One definition of what makes a band truly progressive is the ability to grow, transform and change over their lifetime. Led Bib certainly fit that bill. Formed in 2003, the band’s fourth album, *Sensible Shoes*, was nominated for the Mercury Prize in 2009, bringing their squalling, hit-and-run brand of improv-based jazz rock to a wide audience.

While winning plaudits and praise has become commonplace for the group, Holub says that with this new album he was keen to aim for something radically different to their previous output.

“Some part of me has gone back to the music of my youth like The Grateful Dead and Pink Floyd, this more song/psychedelic rock thing,” Holub says. “I’d also been thinking a lot about using the improvisational language with the group and trying to do different things with it. Led Bib has a very recognisable soundworld and I wanted to put it into something else and see what we come up with.”

That change involves North Sea Radio Orchestra’s Sharron Fortnam, whose vocals add a shining tonality to the group’s usual brand of kinetic, anarchic intensity. One senses with *It’s Morning* that this was very much a two-way street, wherein quite distinct and different worlds meet and exchange ideas.

“Yes, it was exactly that,” says Holub. “Sharron was keen to do it and she had a lot of ideas for lyrics and it all came together really fast. I imagined in my head a sort of Canterbury thing, which is sort of related to what Led Bib does, and I really wanted a vocalist who wasn’t from the jazz side of things, and her approach and presence really informed the way we did it. It was a very organic process.”

While saxophone players Pete Grogan and Chris Williams continue to provide powerful lines of melodic attack, the instrumental reach and timbral palette of the group’s sound has been extended with the addition of strings and woodwind. A new keyboard player, Elliot Galvin, who came on board during *It’s Morning*’s recording, will be joining them on the tour as well. As far as gigging goes, Holub is aiming for an ambitious audio-visual mix which he hopes will be more akin to an event rather than a regular show.

“We’ve got a specially commissioned film by Dylan Pecora that runs the length of the gig, with VJ Oli Chilton manipulating the movie in real-time improvising along with us,” Holub explains. “So what is a 40-minute album will maybe be 60 or 70 minutes in concert. It’s meant to be an experience. I wanted the album and our live show to be something that takes you somewhere else, something that takes you out of what is not such a great time, and that tries to see some beauty in the world.” **SS**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Mark Holub (drums), **Pete Grogan** (alto and tenor sax), **Chris Williams** (alto sax), **Liran Donin** (bass), **Elliot Galvin** (keyboards, piano), **Sharron Fortnam** (vocals)

SOUNDS LIKE

Third-era Soft Machine brass and keyboard skronk coalescing with a beguiling mixture of soulful vocals, sensuous melodies and brooding atmospherics

CURRENT RELEASE

It’s Morning is out now via RareNoise Records

WEBSITE

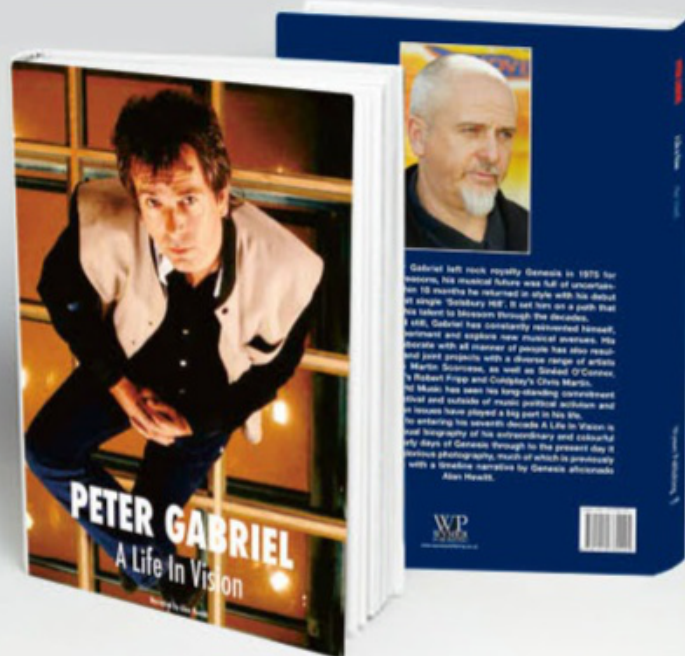
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“We’ve got a specially commissioned film by Dylan Pecora that runs the length of the gig; it’s meant to be an experience.”

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PETER GABRIEL A Life In Vision

When Peter Gabriel left rock royalty Genesis in 1975 for personal reasons, his musical future was full of uncertainty. But within 18 months he returned in style with his debut solo album and a hit single 'Solsbury Hill'. It set him on a path that has allowed his talent to blossom through the decades. Never one to stand still, Gabriel has constantly reinvented himself, never afraid to experiment and explore new musical avenues and collaborate with a diverse range of artists from Kate Bush to Martin Scorsese; Sinéad O'Connor to Robert Fripp and Coldplay's Chris Martin. His passion for World Music has seen his long-standing commitment to the WOMAD Festival and outside of music, political activism and humanitarian issues have played a big part in his life.

A Life In Vision is a chronological, visual biography of his extraordinary and colourful career. From the early days of Genesis through to the present day, it is crammed full of glorious photography, much of which is previously unpublished, along with a timeline narrative by Genesis aficionado Alan Hewitt.

This limited edition hardback book is a wonderful collector's item for any self-confessed Gabriel fan. Housed in a custom-made presentation box with a set of prints — strictly limited to 1000 copies.



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GAVIN TURK

The modernist, avant-garde British artist chooses a soundtrack to match, from the dark side of Floyd to the trout mask of Captain Beefheart. But he's yet to set fire to a guitar, or a million quid...

Words: Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

Imagery credit: Courtesy of the artist

Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* has always seemed to be in my life, I'm not sure how or why. I remember being about six years old and hearing it at home... but my mum and dad weren't massively progressive music-minded. Dad played this loud, mad jazz, Mum liked things like ABBA and Helen Reddy.

Dark Side seemed like it was in everyone's home then, like everyone had a copy of Stephen Hawking's

A Brief History Of Time, but maybe they didn't read it, or understand it properly. The same goes for *Tubular Bells*, everyone seemed to have a copy, but who was listening or understanding it? Anyway, one day, when I was about 11 or 12, I put *Dark Side* on the record player myself and properly listened. And then it was like, 'Oh, wow.' It was a crazy soundscape and very different to what I was listening to at the time, more pop music and ska, which was what was in the charts. We lived in south-west London, which seemed close to everything, but I sort of kept to myself at the time and when I did go out, Camden Lock was the place that attracted me. Camden was the centre for youth culture then, a world away from the suburbs.

The more experimental side of my music listening eased off a bit until I went to art school, first at Chelsea then the Royal College. I got to experience a lot of new-to-me music and **Frank Zappa** and **Captain Beefheart** came into my world together,

with *Hot Rats* and *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*. What impressed me apart from the sound of what he was doing was hearing that Frank had been asked to describe the genre of his music and he'd said, 'It's Frank Zappa music.' That worked for me. That's how I wanted my art to be viewed. 'What art style do you do?' 'Gavin Turk, of course.' It was an important idea just when I was finding myself, my identity. And then I dived into *Trout Mask Replica*. If that's the first Beefheart album

you listen to, well... good luck with that! [Laughs] But again, it was his own style, and yes, it sounded absolutely horrible at the start, but by a few listens it's fantastic.

The art school soundtrack inevitably went down the path of krautrock. **Kraftwerk** had caught my attention making synth pop. Now I appreciated that they wanted to be viewed as art as well and would play galleries and art events, and it chimed with me for a band to do this, as well as liking the music they made. Then I heard *Neu!* by **Neu!**, and I liked what initially sounded quite simple and efficient, very German, but would then reveal itself as something rather complex and layered. I'd tinkered with the idea of being in a band; I was in a funny sort of art school collective called Retarder and we would play parties and things, a huge load of us on all sorts of instruments making a racket. I thought I could be a wooshy-synthy knob-twiddler but I was rubbish. I also tried my hand at DJing and it would be great for a while, everyone dancing and having a good time then I'd start to veer off into what I'd think was pop music – my weird music – and look up from the decks to see everyone looking at me, going, 'Put some Chaka Khan on!' So I'd put some Chaka Khan on and it would go back to normal [laughs]. However, a lot of bands came out of the art school scene then, and a little later, for a short while me and some of my contemporaries [the Young British Artists of the mid-90s] were viewed as part of the pop scene, too. That was quite nice, and fun.

Soundtracks by **Can** is an album I can put on and listen to it all day. This coincides with the dawn of digital streaming, sorry! Thanks to platforms like Spotify, and their 'radio' functions and algorithms, I can be listening to something I know by a band, then it will run on to all this other stuff by that band, sometimes versions of stuff that becomes more familiar to me and other Spotify users than the originals! [Laughs] With *Soundtracks*, *Mother Sky* is the track everyone gravitates to, but I find so much variety with all the other songs, and if I put it on, I can find myself happily listening to all the bandmembers' solo albums too, such as the sort-of funk of Jaki Liebezit, or the weird world of Holger Czukay. They are all such great musicians, there's a lot to enjoy.

I knew about **The KLF** for their pop stuff. Then I heard *Chill Out*. It's relatively little-known and it *does* chill you out [laughs]. It's conceptual, it's ambient with samples – some proggy, like Pink Floyd – and it's art. I have a friend called Gimpo [Alan Goodrick] who was with them [in Scotland] when they burned a million pounds, he filmed [*K Foundation Burn A Million Quid*]. He saw one of the people there try to keep some of the money then they realised they were on camera! [Laughs] Now, Jimmy Cauty makes these miniature scenes [such as *A Riot In A Jam Jar*] and Gimpo goes off with Bill Drummond to do these sightseeing van drives around the M25 with KLF fans.

The ambient theme continues with **Brian Eno's** *Ambient 1: Music For Airports*. I knew about Roxy Music and was always intrigued by the funny-looking balding guy in the make-up that made the weird sounds. *Airports* is tape loops, experimentation. It fits together beautifully. You can lose yourself in it a little. Of course, Brian does art, too. We've met, very briefly, in a gallery. I said, 'Hello Brian!' and he said 'Hello Gavin!' That's my brush with the stars!

Not enough people know about **Sandy Dillon**. She's an American singer-songwriter, quite rock'n'roll to look at, a bit like Mick Jagger in lipstick – and she sounds a little like him too. But she puts so many interesting things in her music; orchestral, folk, jazz, blues, beats. Her vocal changes depending on character; Kate Bush to Captain Beefheart. She pushes her ideas but still makes accessible, catchy music. *Pull The Strings* is the album everyone should hear.

Finally, we end up on **Jimi Hendrix** and *Are You Experienced*. What can I say? He invented so much that we have in music today; psychedelic guitar, funky blues, heavy rock, ambient... this album has it all. It's a tragedy he went so soon. This chat all started so hopeful, now I've ended on a tragedy. Oh well, that's life! [Laughs]

Gavin Turk's *Letting Go* show will be exhibited at Reflex Gallery, Amsterdam, from October 19 - December 6. For more details, visit www.reflexamsterdam.com.

"I thought I could be a wooshy-synthy knob-twiddler, but I was rubbish."





ARTHUR JEFFES

The Penguin Café leader reflects on his progressive education, keeping his father's musical legacy alive and how journeying into the Antarctic shaped his music.

Words: Rob Hughes **Portrait:** Tom Beard

Arthur Jeffes has been leading chamber folk outfit Penguin Café for more than a decade now. Conceived in the spirit of the Penguin Café Orchestra, the similarly minded experimentalists founded in the early 70s by his late father Simon, the band have since issued four captivating albums in their own right. The latest, *Handfuls Of Night*, has its roots in a BBC documentary in which Jeffes was part of a team that attempted to recreate explorer Robert Scott's epic journey across the Antarctic.

Was there a sense of inevitability about continuing your dad's musical legacy?

My dad's music constituted the majority of my musical education. I grew up pretty dyslexic, so when I was very little we had all these instruments around the house and I was allowed to play the piano. Music was my go-to thing. When it came to starting this new generation of Penguin Café, I was comfortable that I'd inherited enough of his sensibility to be able to continue his music and hopefully explore new areas.

What other music shaped you?

My dad and I would listen to certain music during the car drive to school, for six months at a time, like *Crawfish Fiesta* [1980] by Professor Longhair, the New Orleans pianist. It was a case of

learning from the percussion and rhythm section, discussing it and talking it through. So there was this sort of non-formal understanding of music. I knew my dad was kind of a minimalist and that led me to Philip Glass and John Cage. My dad was obsessed with him. He had a telegram from John Cage framed on the wall of his study.

Was prog part of your musical education?

Definitely. I had lots of King Crimson and that led into Quicksilver Messenger Service. They were my absolute go-to band for years from the age of 13 or 14. I'm a big believer in leaving the door as wide open as possible when it comes to exploring new stuff. My manager's dad is Rick Wakeman's

musical director. So just occasionally I'll come across things and go, "I know this!" I used to listen to Yes as a teenager.

How does your approach to music differ from your dad's?

I think I end up probably being a little more cinematic, but we share the same writing process, in that you start with a musical idea, you get into the studio and then it becomes something else. It's like that musique concrète/Pierre Schaeffer thing, where you start carving into the fabric of the sound.

There's a great back story to *Handfuls Of Night*. Can you trace it through to the 2006 BBC documentary, *Blizzard: Race To The Pole*?

Yeah, we were out there for about three months, recreating Scott's expedition. Walking through endless expanses of nothing is a really musical way to spend time, because you end up playing everything in your head. In the absence of sound, you can almost convince your brain that you're hearing stuff. After a month of that I started trying to write new things and realised I was most interested in was creating musical landscapes. It was during that trip when I decided to do music full-time, so when I got home I started doing my Masters in Composition at Goldsmiths.

At what age did you become aware that you had a familial link with Scott?

I guess I had always known. When I was little I would go to Slimbridge [in Gloucestershire], the bird sanctuary, that was started by my great uncle and my grandfather's half-brother, Peter. They had the same mother, but Peter's father was Scott of the Antarctic.

Prior to the Greenland experience, were your sights set on something else?

At university I did archaeology and anthropology, but I'd kept my hand in, musically, the whole time. My dad had always said that, while it was by no means guaranteed, music was a really good career. And if you were lucky it might become part of your life. Then while I was at university my dad died [December 1997], so I came back because there was the studio, the Penguin record label and the publishing stuff. There was a certain amount to be done, so I was surrounded by that. I started doing some music for TV ads and other things, and playing live a bit, but not really committing. So it was that time in Greenland that moved things along.

How did your Polar experience shape the sound of *Handfuls Of Night*?

The core of the record is four pieces that I wrote for a concert for Greenpeace in London last year. They were campaigning to protect the environment around Antarctica, so I got in touch to find out more. There's obviously this literal link between penguins and the Penguin Café Orchestra, so I started writing pieces based on the four species of penguin that live in Antarctica: Gentoo, Adélie, Emperor and Chinstrap. There's a point where you stop dealing with the real thing and wander back into an imaginary version of the Antarctic. That suddenly became a place to locate the album, because you've got this idea of a cinematic, dreamlike world where the penguins are going on adventures and facing challenges. It was about finding the differences between certain penguins that would best lend themselves to being expressed musically. You might get quite frenetic activity on land, for instance, followed by diving into the sea, where they're incredibly graceful underwater. That gives you a really nice transition right there.

What about long-term goals for Penguin Café?

I love doing it and at the moment it works. It's obviously a very fine line to tread, continuing my dad's work and that of his band, all the people who've worked on the thing over the years, so there's a responsibility there. It would be terrible if we were flogging a dead horse, but it feels very creative and respectful.

Handfuls Of Night is out now via Erased Tapes. See www.penguincafe.com for more information.



"I was comfortable that I'd inherited enough of my father's sensibility to be able to continue his music and hopefully explore new areas."

Arthur on the expedition. "Walking through endless expanses of nothing is a really musical way to spend time... you end up playing everything in your head."



It's A Celebration

From Hawkwind to Pink Floyd, Big Big Train to Tesseract – all of the prog stars young and old congregate in their finery for the eighth annual **Progressive Music Awards**. *Prog* provides you with a front row seat to the proceedings...

Words: Malcolm Dome **Images:** Will Ireland

Here's a riddle for you: what do three frontmen, two keyboard players, one guitarist and a drummer have in common? The answer is they all belong to an elite group of people who've been crowned as Prog God, the highest honour at the Progressive Music Awards. This year, a second drummer has joined the ranks: Nick Mason.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Nick Mason's elevation to such rarefied heights is the climax of the eighth Progressive Music Awards. First, let's go back to the start of this annual occasion.

At the beginning of the night, *Prog* finds The Moody Blues' John Lodge stood in awe on the stairs leading down to The UnderGlobe.

"It's my first time here," he says. "Every other time I've been invited I was on the road in America. But this is such an amazing sight that I have to take a photo!" And that's exactly what he does, before mingling with everyone during the champagne reception that begins tonight's festivities. This hour-long occasion gives people a chance to get to know one another, or to reconnect, and emphasises

just how much this is an annual family get-together. Legends mix with new bands, and everyone here is part of the prog community, with no egos involved.

Sadly, the planned performance by The Anchoress just prior to the start of the awards ceremony had to be cancelled at the last minute, on doctor's orders. So following the sumptuous dinner, *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing walks onstage to begin the more formal part of the evening.

Ewing uses his speech to celebrate and commemorate both the magazine's 100th issue and 10th anniversary, thanking those who've been instrumental in this remarkable success story. He then hands over to returning host Al Murray, who presented the awards for the first time last year. It went so well, Murray says, that, as an unashamed fan of the genre, he'd openly admitted on national TV that he was a prog fan. "People want modern comedians to be edgy," he quips. "But I'm not sure they want me to be as edgy as that!"

He then compares prog to "The damp patch behind your sofa. Every so often you have a look to see how it's changed."

Tonight's first award, the Visionary, is presented by Rosalie Cunningham.

The singer and guitarist is known for her work with her previous band, Purson, and recently released her debut, self-titled solo album. She is presenting the award tonight to the incomparable Arthur Brown, who she has met before and found delightful. Of course, Brown can never do things in a conventional manner. So as *Fire* blazes, he dances onto the stage down the centre of the venue, using his speech to celebrate the power of experimental music. Oh, and the fact that his mother was spreading misinformation – about him having

"It's my first time here. Every other time I've been invited I was on the road in America. But this is such an amazing sight that I have to take a photo!"

John Lodge

a doctorate, which people began to believe – long before Donald Trump!

The Album Cover Award goes to Daniel Tompkins for his debut solo release, *Castles*. The Tesseract frontman himself readily admits: "Most of you here don't know who I am. But that's okay. Because we are in a room full of legends."

Switzerland's Cellar Darling get the Video Of The Year award for *Insomnia*. The artwork for the video was created by Costin Chioreanu, who came up with the artwork for all of the music videos from the band's current album, *The Spell*.

Tesseract guitarist James Monteith presents the Chris Squire Virtuoso Award to a man who helped to introduce him to the wonders of progressive music, as he



Jerry Ewing announcing the Outer Limits Award to the assembled throng.



Jon Davison looks dapper, Yes he does, and John Lodge sports a Moody Blues jacket.



Steve Hillage and Mike Howlett are here to watch their peers pick up a few Gongs.



The multi-voiced Rory Bremner arrives to present the Prog God Award to Nick Mason.

DEAN FARDELL



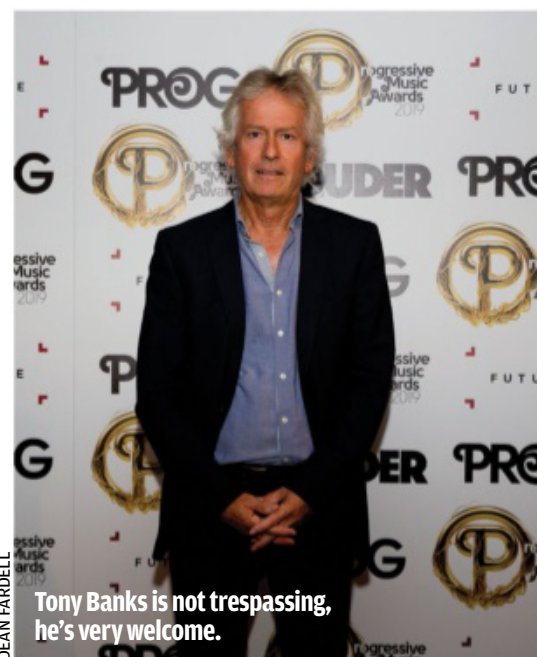
Gary Kemp finding Al Murray most amusing. That much is true.



Roine Stolt: the Flower King is ready to hang out with his prog buds.

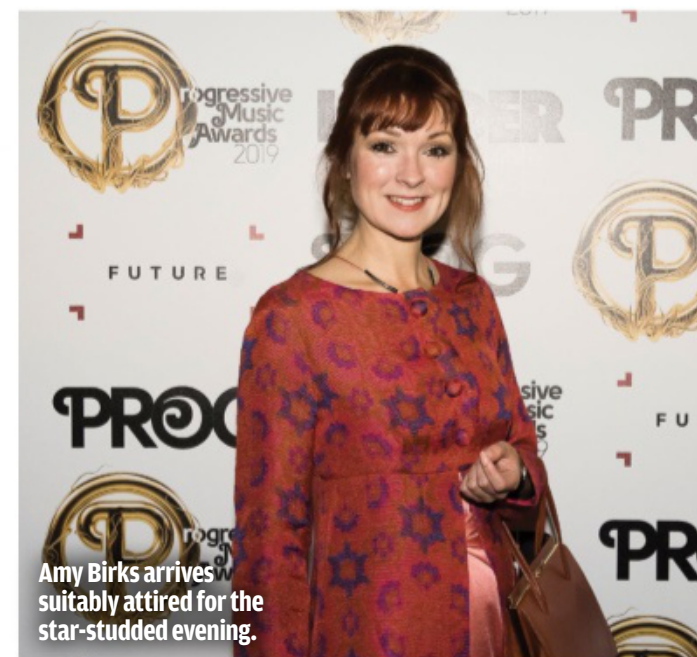


Big Big Train choose to attend.



Tony Banks is not trespassing, he's very welcome.

DEAN FARDELL



Amy Birks arrives suitably attired for the star-studded evening.



Al Murray, Rosalie Cunningham and Arthur Brown share the stage. Only in the crazy world of prog.



Andy Tillison, of The Tangent, Parallel and 90 Degrees, angles for a photo.



It's Prog God Nick Mason, in the flesh, amusing Rory Bremner.



Wang Chung's Jack Hues pushes the Outer Limits.



Daniel Tompkins' Castles won the Album Cover Award, so he's having a great night.



Haken enjoy the spotlight as UK Band Of The Year.



Cellar Darling are so excited to win Video Of The Year for *Insomnia*, they probably won't sleep tonight.



Tony Smith has "been lucky enough to be in the right place". We like to think tonight is no exception.



Prog royalty onstage! Rick Wakeman presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to John Lodge.



Cellist Jo Quail didn't need to pull any strings to win the Limelight Award.





In a dramatic turn of events, Dream Theater crack up our comedic host, Al Murray.

tells us that hearing a Dream Theater album opened up a new musical world. The recipient is guitarist John Petrucci, who says that simply being able to influence others is still humbling.

The Limelight Award goes to avant-garde cellist and composer Jo Quail, and she tells the gathering how delighted she is to have found a home in the progressive world. “I am so pleased she’s got this,” exclaims a happy Amy Birks, who won this award herself with the Beatrix Players in 2017.

Marillion pick up the Reissues Award for the five-disc version of their 1987 album, *Clutching At Straws*. Guitarist Steve Rothery accepts this, pointing out how tough it is to find a new way to present such a classic album,



Dave Brock might look (p)irate, but he’s very happy to receive Hawkwind’s Classic Album Award from Jane Weaver.

but how the band feel they found a way to do it in a manner that pays homage to the music, yet also gives the fans something extra that’s artistically valid.

Rick Wakeman, always a welcome presence at the Prog Awards, presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to John Lodge, and does so in his usual inimitable fashion. Apart from telling everyone how he and the bassist are old and close friends, Wakeman reveals how the latter met his wife Kirsten at a Christmas party more than 50 years ago. “She told John, ‘I’d like to go out with you. But there won’t be any sex for six months.’ So, John said, ‘Okay, I’ll call you in June!’” Lodge himself recalls how he found a Fender Sunburst Precision Bass in a Birmingham music shop way back in the early 1960s, and actually bought it before

he could even play bass. And that instrument has featured on every record he’s subsequently done. A one-instrument man, as well as being married for half a century!

The Event Of The Year goes to the Prog In The Park Stage at Ramblin’ Man Fair. Creative Director Chris Ingham uses the occasion not only to look back at the festival’s success in the past, but also forward to 2020, as he exclusively announces the line-up for the Prog Stage next year. It will be headlined by Big Big Train, joined on the bill by Curved Air, the reunited Pure Reason Revolution, Moon Safari, Lazuli and Blurred Vision. It’s all happening in July 2020.

The newly created Classic Album category has a highly appropriate inaugural winner. In the year they celebrate their golden anniversary, Hawkwind receive this for their 1975 album *Warrior On The Edge Of Time*. Presenter Jane Weaver recalls how much this inspired her, and that it’s not just an iconic record for one era, but transcends generations and genres. “This is a futuristic classic,” she rightly enthuses.

Main Hawk man Dave Brock (who won the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013) takes a moment to acknowledge that Lemmy, who played bass on the record, is sadly no longer with us, before going on to proclaim that the quality and strength of British music can still make a massive impact across the globe.

This is an evening when Big Big Train’s name comes to the fore more than once. As previously mentioned, the band were

“Most of you here don’t know who I am. But that’s okay. Because we’re in a room full of legends.”

Daniel Tompkins

confirmed earlier in the night as the headliners for the Ramblin’ Man Prog Stage. Now, they pick up the award for Album Of The Year for *Grand Tour*. This makes them the only artists to have won an award both in 2018 and 2019, which is further proof of their growing stature.

Jerry Ewing comes back to the stage to present the Outer Limits Award to Jack Hues of Wang Chung. He points out that while the band made their name with an early style that was very much new wave style pop, by 1985’s soundtrack for the movie *To Live And Die In LA* it was clear there was so much more to their talent. Since then, Hues has worked with Tony Banks (on the 1995 album *Strictly Inc*), formed a jazz fusion band and also collaborated with Syd Arthur. Hues is at pains to point out that, as a teenager, he was fascinated and inspired by progressive music, something that has become increasingly obvious in recent years.

The International Band Of The Year goes to Dream Theater, who have been creating music of the highest quality now for three decades. So for the second time tonight, John Petrucci

goes up to receive an award, this time joined by keyboard player Jordan Rudess. The pair are clearly thrilled, as they recall the way in which the band have established themselves as one of the most important prog artists of the modern era, and in doing so framed and fashioned the world of progressive metal.

The Industry VIP award is presented by John Giddings, who is one of the UK’s top booking agents and the man who brought back the Isle Of Wight Festival in 2002. He relates how the recipient Tony Smith has taught him so much, as well as being a nice man — unless you get on the wrong side of him. He also points out that through his management of Genesis, Phil Collins, Tony Banks, Mike + The Mechanics and Nick Mason, Smith has sold an astonishing 500 million records! The man himself explains that he never says much, “And usually it’s ‘Fuck off!’” So he restricts his speech to modestly claiming that, “I was lucky enough to be in the right place.”

As so the field is cleared for the climax of the entire event. The moment when the latest Prog God is anointed. It falls to comedian Rory Bremner to present the accolade to the famed Pink Floyd drummer. As you might expect, his speech is far from strait-laced! At one point he smoothly slips into a Donald Trump impersonation, topically pointing out that his favourite album is *The Wall*, and how he’d like to put *Another Brick In The Wall*!

Moving away from mimicking the American president, Bremner also suggests that Mason should get a Nobel Peace Prize for the way he dealt for so long with Roger Waters and David Gilmour, a comment that elicits a huge wave of laughter across the venue.

At this juncture, a video is screened documenting Mason’s 54-year career to date, spotlighting the major moments, as well as featuring archive footage. Then, the latest prog deity walks onto the stage (maybe as a god he should have descended from Olympus? Oh well...) and during a warmly received speech he thanks all of his Pink Floyd bandmates, before turning his attention to the present and future. Mason explains how he thought his drumming days were over, when he found out that Saucerful Of Secrets weren’t just looking for a drummer, “But a Nick Mason drummer, which made the audition easy!”

And so concludes another hugely enjoyable Prog Awards night. All that remains is for everyone to depart... well, not quite. Such is the warm feeling and relaxed atmosphere that loads of folk decide to stay on for one final drink or three. Even elder statesmen and award winners Brock, Brown and Lodge are loathe to leave.

While it’s true that many in the prog community can probably recall the era before decimalisation, there’s little doubt they *haven’t* forgotten how to have a great time. And it’s heartwarming to see how the greats and legends embrace the younger generation.

The Progressive Music Awards again underlines how healthy the genre is in 2019. And on to 2020... 🎵

See www.progmagazine.com for more on the Progressive Music Awards.



Who came out top at the eighth **Progressive Music Awards**? *Prog* heads backstage to chat to all the winners, and to find out just what they're going to do with their gongs.

Words & Shoes: Fraser Lewry **Images:** Kevin Nixon

And the winner is...

🌀Visionary

(Presented by Rosalie Cunningham)

Arthur Brown

"I put the first gold disc I ever got down the toilet, but I shall keep this one. When I started, I thought my music career would last a couple of years. As soon as you got past the age of about 28, you were too old."

Rosalie Cunningham: "Thanks to people like Arthur, I've set out from the age of 14 thinking I can do it until I'm 80. I love the theatricality, and his voice is incredible."



🌀Album Cover Of The Year

Daniel Tompkins *Castles*

Daniel Tompkins: "This is an unexpected award. I feel privileged and honoured. This means the world to me, because in a world of very legendary progressive artists, I think there are very few younger artists that are stepping through, and hopefully I can hold a light up for other people."



🌀Video Of The Year

Cellar Darling *Insomnia*

Merlin Sutter: "This is crazy. There are people in the room I listened to as a teenager. They're not even real humans."

Anna Murphy: "This has been terrifying. But now we can have some fun!"



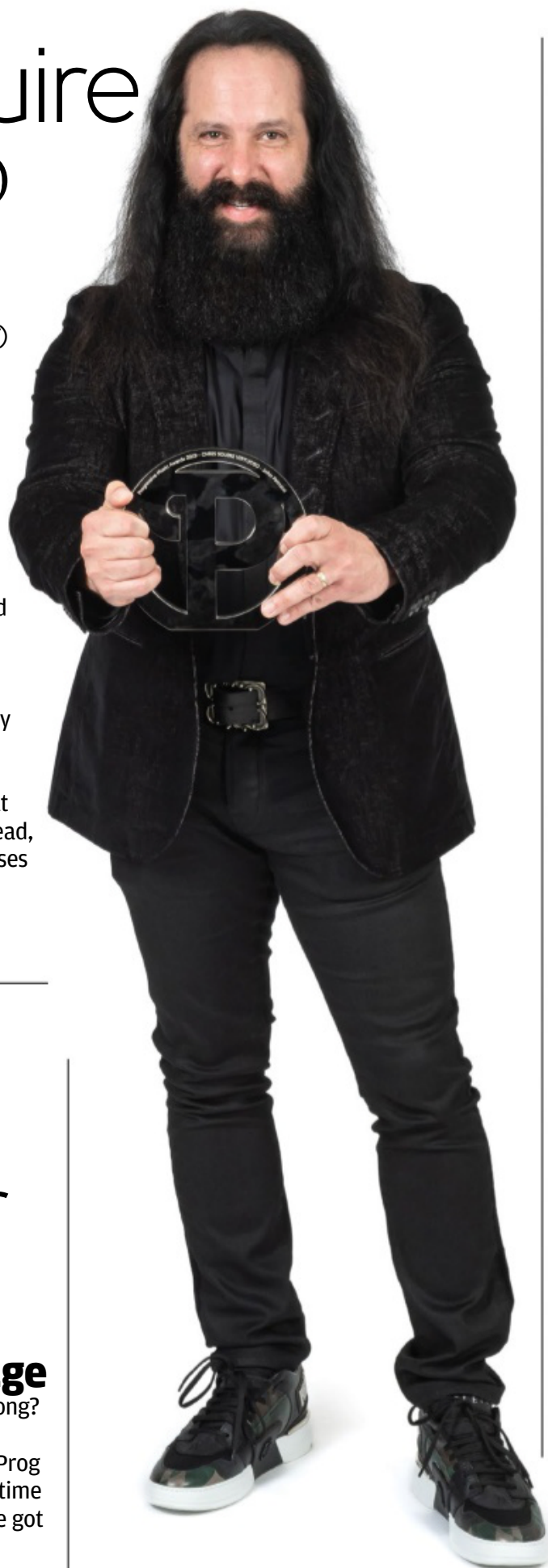
Chris Squire Virtuoso Award

(Presented by James Monteith, Tesseract)

John Petrucci

John Petrucci: "This was a complete surprise. It really freaked me out, to the point where I really don't know what to say. To be in this environment and to be recognised by your peers is awesome."

James Monteith: "The first time I heard John play was when I listened to the *Images And Words* album. I was initially blown away by his technique: the speed picking, the smooth legato, and his really nice note choices. But a lot of it is about challenging convention, not just playing brilliantly. It's about taking the rules that exist for music, turning them on their head, and making new rules. Only a few geniuses can do that, and John is one of them."



Limelight

Sponsored by 

Jo Quail

Jo Quail: "It's just crazy. Even getting a nomination was such a privilege, and then to actually win it has blown my mind. I thought I was the wild card in there, and I just feel so welcomed by this community."



Reissue Of The Year

Marillion

Clutching At Straws Deluxe Edition

Steve Rothery: "We're doing something right. With reissues it's the second or third time you're selling people the same music, so it's very important that you make it as good as it can be. There's nothing left in the vault, and it's the ultimate version of the record."



Event Of The Year

Ramblin' Man Fair - Prog In The Park Stage

Chris Ingham: "Why has this taken so long? Last year's was a line-up put together in a front room, and for every hour of the Prog stage, that tent was full. We put a lot of time and effort into curating it, and I think we got it right. Everyone seemed to enjoy it."



Classic Album

(Presented by Jane Weaver)

Sponsored by 

Hawkwind

Warrior On The Edge Of Time

Dave Brock: "It's a strange old thing. You've got to remember that when we actually did *Warrior On The Edge Of Time* there were other members of the band there, some of whom are dead now. It's a long time ago, but it's a great honour."

Jane Weaver: "I love the production, and the fact that it's a mixture of genres: it's progressively experimental, but there's also that mix of Krautrock, motorik and kosmische. All the things I like!"





Outer Limits

(Presented by Jerry Ewing)

Jack Hues

Jack Hues: "This is very appropriate. I have a deep interest in Outer Limit things, such as extraterrestrials, and who wrote Shakespeare's plays, which is appropriate because we're at The Globe. I grew up listening to prog, and it really informed my tastes. But we were signed to an American label in Los Angeles, so I've always felt like a bit of an exile, and getting this award does actually feel like an acknowledgement from the home crowd."



Album Of The Year

Sponsored by **CHERRY RED RECORDS**

Big Big Train *Grand Tour*

Greg Spawton: "We love coming to this event. There's the great and the good, and then there's us. But we're very honoured. We have a very loyal fanbase in the Passengers, and they're very supportive of us. I think that's got a lot to do with it. It's a long old road to develop a progressive rock band in this current age, but we're working hard, we're making music people seem to like, we're playing more gigs. And we're going to the US."

Nick D'Virgilio: "Finally. I'm glad to have my band actually come to the US, so I don't have to travel over here (I love travelling over here). I think it's testament to how open-minded those people can be."



Lifetime Achievement

(Presented by Rick Wakeman)

John Lodge

John Lodge: "This is a great honour. When we started out, we were trying to fathom out what music was. There was AM music, and I knew I wanted to do something else with The Moodies, and we did that. We did something completely different. We travelled a different road, and there's something really exciting about doing something that no one's ever done before. And that's what progressive rock is all about. There's no formula."



Industry VIP

(Presented by John Giddings)

Tony Smith

Tony Smith: "I can't say a lot. It's great to be recognised I guess, but it's really down to the artists I work with. All I do is help them fulfil their dreams. At the end of the day it's a team effort, and it's all about building teams and making sure that everyone's on the ball."



International Band Of The Year

Sponsored by **Sweetwater Studios**

Dream Theater

John Petrucci: "We're a band from America, where prog wasn't really taken seriously, so to get this recognition in this arena is amazing for us. I met Nick Mason!"

Jordan Rudess: "I met Tony Banks for the first time! In a room like this, with all these heroes, it really means something. Progressive rock is my favourite genre, and it opened up my life. I was going to be a classical pianist until I discovered prog, and the road changed."



UK Artist Of The Year

Sponsored by **INSIDEOUT**

Haken

Richard Henshall: "This is amazing. We've been working at this for more than 10 years. So to finally get to a point where we're getting some recognition for it feels great. Our last two tours have been the biggest tours that we have ever played, so we're massively privileged and grateful for the fans who have come out to see us."

Ross Jennings: "We're just three guys from Sutton. This must be some kind of accident, or a clerical error. We're just happy to be here, and to be amongst these legends."



"There was a point – with the Floyd exhibition – at which everything seemed to be about the past. So it's quite nice to actually be here, but with a band, and still working."

Nick Mason



Prog God

(Presented by Rory Bremner)

Nick Mason

Nick Mason: "I think it's particularly nice to win this because there was a point – with the Floyd exhibition – at which everything seemed to be about the past. So it's quite nice to actually be here, but with a band, and still working."



What will you do with your award?

Spoiler: not all gongs are going in the trophy cabinets.

Arthur Brown: "I have a drain that's missing a grate, and this is the right kind of shape."

Daniel Tompkins: "I have a cabinet where I keep all my trophies of war, and this will take pride of place."

Anna Murphy: "Some of us don't even have homes, so Ivo [Henzi, guitarist] will get it. We can go and visit, like tourists."

John Petrucci: "There's a section of my house where I keep awards and things, where I display things I'm proud of, and this will go in there."

Jo Quail: "It's going to live in my music room. If you work on your own you can go through periods of real self-doubt. So this will remind me that I've done something right at some point."

Steve Rothery: "I think this is our third Prog Award. It'll go in the studio with the others."

John Lodge: "It's going right on top of my piano."

Chris Ingham (Ramblin' Man): "It's going to go in the bog. I earned this."

Dave Brock: "We've got a studio in an old milking shed. It's like an eccentric museum, with posters from all around the world, and plaques for the guys who are dead. It'll find a home in there."

Nick D'Virgilio: "You know what? Greg started this band many, many years ago, way before I joined, and way before David [Longden, singer] joined. So he deserves to have this on his mantel."

Jack Hues: "I gave my mother all my gold records, but I'm going to hang on to this one. I will use it to start a trophy cabinet."

Jordan Rudess: "It's going to go in Dream Theater Headquarters."

Tony Smith: "Put it with the others."

Ross Jennings: "We're going to play frisbee with it."

Nick Mason: "I have a motor racing trophy cabinet, but this doesn't belong in there. But I'm rebuilding a studio at the moment, so this could go in there."

"I do this because it's fun."

It's been 50 years since **Hawkwind** first skyrocketed into our lives, and **Dave Brock** is still steering the space rock ship with their 32nd album, *All Aboard The Skylark*. From punk to drugs, money woes to legal battles and the epic 50th anniversary tour that lies ahead, it's been quite the adventure for this "bunch of eccentrics".

Words: Dave Everley **Portrait:** Guy Harrop

On July 20 1969, the Apollo Lunar Module Eagle touched down on the surface of the Moon. It was the most momentous event in modern history, simultaneously unifying and euphoric. Suddenly, humanity was no longer shackled by its earthbound chains. Space travel was a reality. Why stop at the Moon? Why not Mars? Or Saturn? Or some other planet beyond the fringes of this galaxy?

A little over a month later, on August 29, 1969, a group of misfits, freaks, poets, pagans and interdimensional visionaries calling themselves Group X launched their own Moon shot. The scene was decidedly less futuristic: rather than Cape Canaveral Air Force Station on the Florida coast, it happened the All Saints Hall, in Notting Hill, West London. And it certainly didn't

have the technological might of NASA behind it, nor the world's eyes on it.

But it was the beginning of a fantastic journey nonetheless. By the end of the year Group X had mutated into Hawkwind Zoo, and then again into Hawkwind, the name by which these founding fathers of space rock would become renowned. Humankind has never made it further than the Moon. Yet 50 years after they achieved lift-off, Hawkwind continue to explore the far reaches of, if not the galaxy, then at least the musical universe.

Today, the sole remaining charter member of that original group of sonic pioneers is looking back on his band's earliest days with a fond eye. "There really wasn't a plan," says Dave Brock, guitarist, vocalist, keyboard player and captain of the good ship Hawkwind for the last half-century. "It was just a band of eccentrics. It evolved with all

these different characters on board. You sail off to different ports, some people get off, new people get on. You just steer it the best you can."

The image of Hawkwind as a ship — on sea or in space — is one that the 78-year-old frontman keeps returning to. It's an apt metaphor. During their 50-year career, Hawkwind have alternately ridden the tides to stranger shores and been battered by crippling storms, some of them of their own making, all the time Brock steering them to either glory or safety depending on what was required.

The ship analogy extends to Hawkwind's 32nd album, *All Aboard The Skylark*. The title is a nod to both the novels of pre-WWII sci-fi author EE 'Doc' Smith, whose Skylark series dealt in grandiose, galaxy-spanning battles between good and evil decades before *Star Wars*, and also to the



Captain Brock is as laidback as they come.

old tourist boats of the 40s and 50s that sailed in and out of British seaside towns. “A lot of them were called The Skylark,” says Brock. He booms like an old sea dog for emphasis: “All aboard The Skylark!”

Brock is talking to *Prog* at the farm in Devon that he shares with his wife, Kris. He’s lived here since the 70s, happy to get away from the “noise and pollution and chaos” of London. Kris is in the room while he talks, occasionally interjecting in a muffled but distinct Geordie accent.

All Aboard The Skylark extends Hawkwind’s late-career purple patch, one that began with 2016’s *The Machine Stops* and continued into the following year’s *Into The Woods*. Like those two records, *All Aboard The Skylark* takes the original Hawkwind space rock template as its launchpad, neatly bringing their whole journey full-circle.

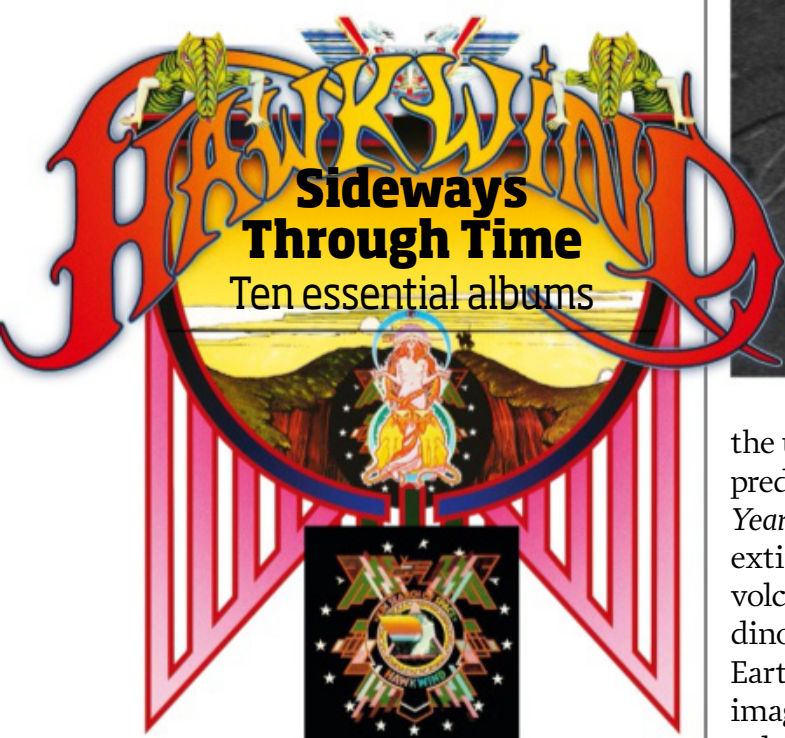
The album doesn’t quite take the form the band originally intended. It was envisaged as being a full-blown concept album that covered what Brock calls “the five ages of annihilation of life on Earth”. The plan was to put out that album next year, with a live album recorded on their recent orchestral tour arriving this year, but problems with the latter meant Brock and the band decided to bring their plans forward. “Yeah, we need to get a record out,” says Brock with a ‘what you gonna do?’ blitheness. “So we had to get on with it and release some of the stuff now.”

It might have been jury-rigged together from spare parts but it retains

“It evolved with all these different characters on board. You sail off to different ports, some people get off, new people get on. You just steer it the best you can.”



BARRIE WENTZELL



In Search Of Space (1971)

After the folk blues and barbarian psychedelia of their debut, this is where Hawkwind really achieve lift-off. Clad in an astonishing Barney Bubbles-designed sleeve,

ISOS showcases their mantric, anti-authoritarian space rock sound on *You Shouldn’t Do That*, while *Master Of The Universe* is their first sci-fi classic and one of Brock’s greatest riffs. Elsewhere, *We Took The Wrong Step Years Ago* is an eco anthem that sounds increasingly prescient. **JB**

the uneasy, apocalyptic air of its predecessors. The hypnagogic *65 Million Years Ago* paints a vivid picture of the extinction-level asteroid impact and volcanic eruption that wiped out the dinosaurs and three-quarters of life on Earth, and *Last Man On Earth* conjures images of a lone astronaut leaving a dying planet behind as he seeks a new home beyond the stars. “The cover is the spaceship, The Skylark, which has found another planet and crashed on it,” explains Brock of the latter. “There is a little man on there – the spaceman – which is like being found again.”

But the sci-fi themes mask a very real concern with the perilous state of the Earth as it stands right now. For a lifelong eco-activist like Dave Brock, humanity’s treatment of our home

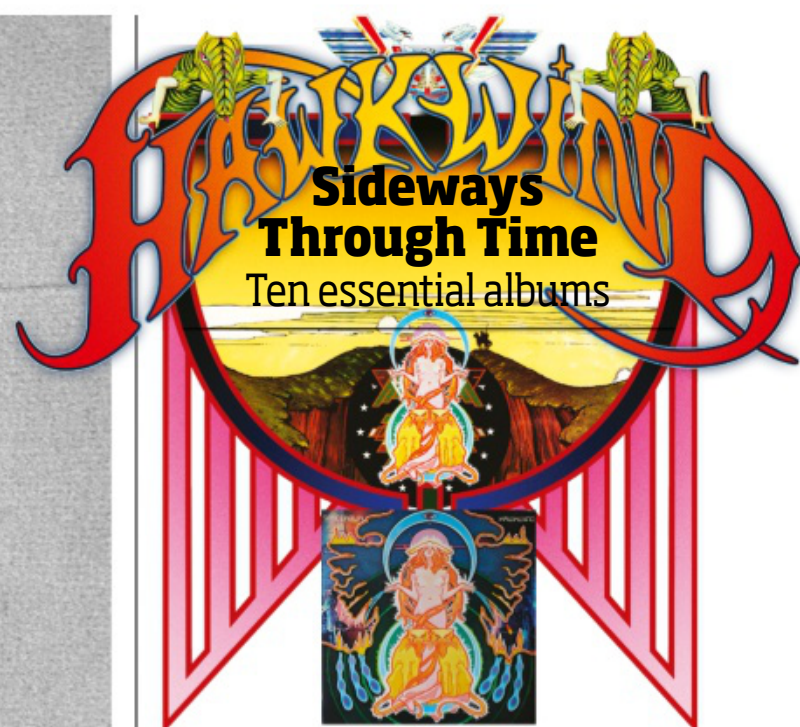
planet is equally baffling and enraging. “You think, ‘Fucking hell, human beings are so destructive,’” he says, sighing. “Burning the forests to grow more grass to feed more cattle to make people more obese. It’s the whole structure of society. People need to stand up to what’s going on in the world.”

A *All Aboard The Skylark* is just one half of the Hawkwind story right now. In November, they kick off a tour to mark their 50th anniversary, culminating in a prestigious show at London’s Royal Albert Hall. Brock is typically phlegmatic about the whole idea of these unlikely frontiersmen reaching their half-century.

“It’s just a number, innit?” he says with a shrug. “Being a musician, you



Studio daze: Hawkwind rehearsing in 1973.



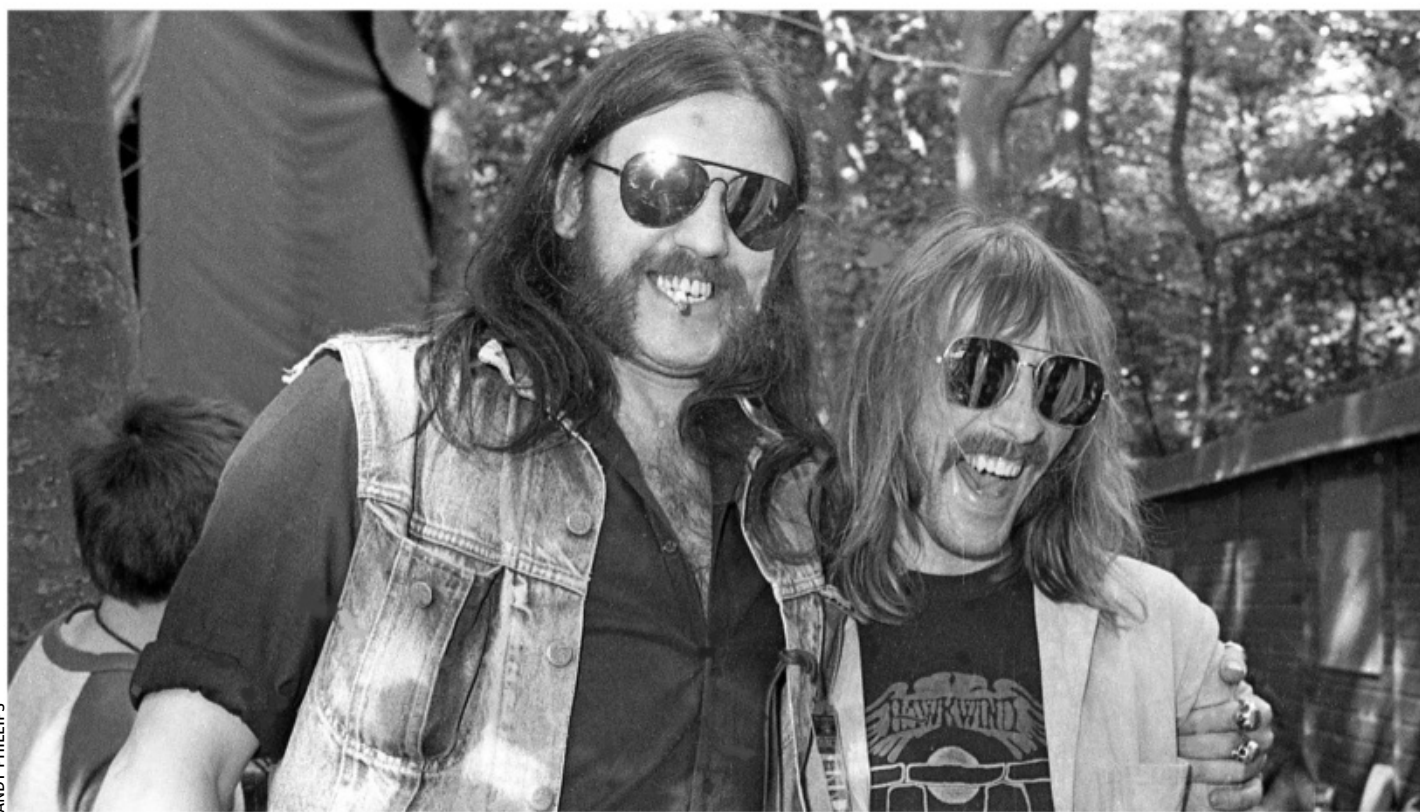
Space Ritual (1973)

The greatest live album ever? Quite possibly – it's certainly unlike anything else released then or now. Recorded on the tour of the same name, drawing heavily on the previous year's *Doremi Fasol Latido*, and housed in another wonderful fold-out sleeve, it's an intense 88 minutes of body-pummelling riffs, otherworldly electronics and sci-fi poetry, a headlong plunge into the pitch-black void. Highlights include *Born To Go*'s frantic statement of intent, the cosmic boogie of *Orgone Accumulator* and the chilling fatalism of *Sonic Attack*. **JB**

don't think, 'Well, this is my 49th year, next year will be my 50th.' You just get on with it. There's no point thinking about that stuff before it arrives, 'cos you'll just rush through life.'

The beginnings of Hawkwind have been well-documented, from that epochal gig at the All Saints Hall a month after the Moon landings, where they did nothing but jam out a near-unrecognisable 20-minute version of The Byrds' *Eight Miles High*, to the run of groundbreaking albums that built their reputation in the early 70s. Has it all been mythologised or was it really as buccaneering as it seems from a distance of 50 years?

"It's a different era. It's like watching a *Carry On* film: 'Crikey, did they really do that?'" says Brock. "There



ANDY PHILLIPS

No hard feelings: the late, great Lemmy with Brock in 1985.

was a lot of camaraderie in the band back then. It was a bunch of eccentrics. And there was a lot more places to play. Free places. There was free music everywhere." He adopts a theatrical, 'dear boy' tone. "Happenings', they were called."

There must have been downsides? "The downsides were that we didn't get paid for a very long time," he replies. "I kept a diary of the dates we played,

and we seemed to be working every day but we had nothing to show for it."

He doesn't sound rueful when he says this, mainly because Hawkwind have weathered countless tidal shifts over the last 50 years. When the band emerged, they may have shared a spirit of adventure with the prog giants of the early 70s – and played the occasional show with a young Genesis – but that's as far as their links with that

movement goes. “We didn’t know any of those bands,” says Brock. “We were in a different scene. The underground. We were an *alternative* band.”

In reality, Hawkwind had more in common with the punk movement, which emerged half a decade later. Sex Pistols frontman John Lydon famously claimed to have roadied for the band, though Brock has insisted he can’t remember if that was true or not. But there was certainly a shared intent, if not a sound.

“We were playing that sort of music that they played – energetic, fast, relentless music,” says Brock. “But then so were a lot of other bands at the time – Can and Kraftwerk, Gong, all those bands were doing similar stuff. Good rhythms, big spacey music, just relentless.”

Punk wasn’t the only time this group of outsiders found the rest of the world playing catch-up with them. A decade after punk, the acid house movement plugged into Hawkwind’s spiral-eyed astral travelling, its more open-minded practitioners adopting the band as unofficial elder statesmen of drug-fuelled noise (ironically, given his band’s own reputation, Brock says today that he hasn’t touched LSD since the 70s: “You grow out of it. You can’t keep on taking loads of drugs or you end up a physical wreck”).

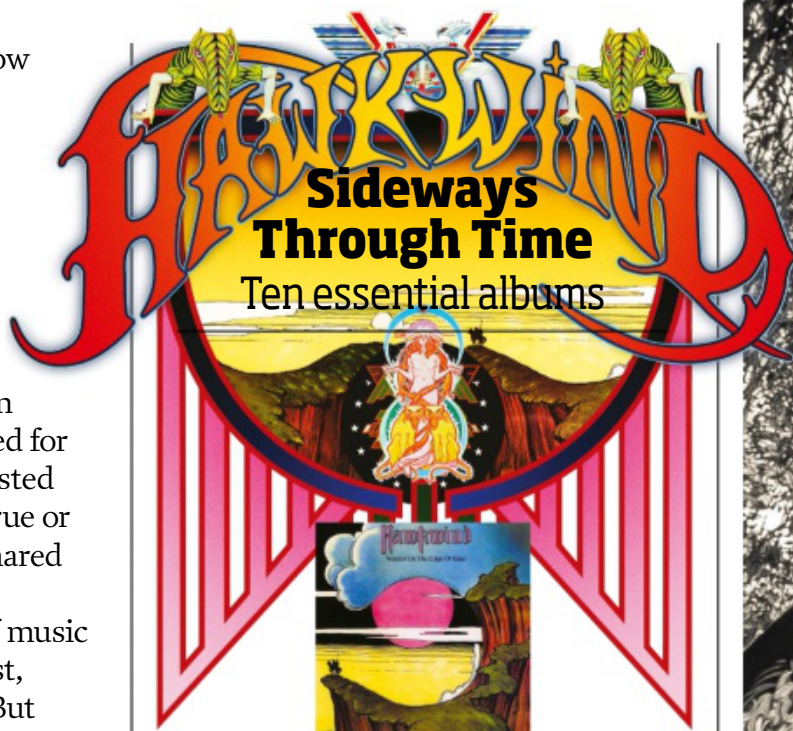
But it hasn’t always been smooth sailing. There has been more than one bitter legal battle, the most recent of which found Brock’s former bandmate-turned-nemesis Nik Turner trying to reclaim the rights to the name of the band he co-founded. “It wore us down,” says Brock over the tussle. “People who had loads of money, trying to grab our name, they kept going, kept going, hoping we’d give up. But we didn’t. We won in the end.”

Today, Turner is the Great Unmentionable. Brock doesn’t refer to him by name. Asked what the biggest mistake he’s made in the last 50 years, and he merely says: “We had some people in the band who nobody liked, but we put up with them anyway. And then you drop them off at the port and they do nothing but spread poison. But that’s the way you go.”

It’s the only moment of rancour during our conversation. But Brock’s blithe demeanour masks the fact that captaining Hawkwind hasn’t always been easy. It’s not necessarily a role that he unequivocally enjoys.

“Not really, no,” he says. “There’s a lot of responsibility. All you can do is try to steer the ship. To tell you the truth, we couldn’t have done it without Kris. She’s been involved for a long time.”

The two met when she was working at Newcastle City Hall. She came



Warrior On The Edge Of Time (1975)

Recent recipient of Prog’s inaugural Classic Album Award, *Warrior...* sees Hawkwind deploy the full armoury of progressive rock – Mellotron, synth, violin, flute etc – to produce a brain-frying sword and sorcery spectacular, loosely based on Michael Moorcock’s *The Eternal Champion* novels. *Assault And Battery*, *The Golden Void* and *Magnu* are heavy-duty classics and future staples of their live sets, while *Opa-Loka* is a good illustration of why some critics considered Hawkwind a British equivalent to Krautrock. **JB**



Brock hanging with Dame Vera Lynn at an anti-heroin concert in London, August 1985.



aboard the ship in the late 70s as a dancer. Today, they seem inseparable. “We get on wonderfully,” says Brock fondly. “We do have our little arguments, as everybody does. But we’re a good pair, aren’t we?” Somewhere in the background, Kris makes an affirmative noise.

When Dave Brock’s parents were still alive, they would come to the farm and listen while the band rehearsed in the milking shed. “They were jolly proud,” says Brock, with no small hint of pride himself. “They’d sit outside, watching the dancers going through their performances. They loved it.”

That’s not to say that they were completely convinced about their son’s choice of vocation. “My mum used to say to me, ‘David, I think you ought to get a proper job.’ She was still saying that in the 80s.”

He never did get a “proper job”. Hawkwind have successfully kept real life at bay for 50 years. But neither have they truly had the stellar success of contemporaries such as Pink Floyd. Does he ever look at Roger Waters and co and think, ‘Why them and not us?’



ROSS JENNINGS

“What, do you mean, ‘Why don’t we have more money?’” he says, laughing. “No, not really. I’m sure everybody in the band would love to have properties by the sea in Hawaii, but it would change everything. When you earn a lot of money you become complacent. In the past we’ve done quite well, and there was a complacency to it. People didn’t want to rehearse so much, or they’d want to go on holiday. Nah, if I had a lot of money, I’d just use it for animal charities, set a few things up.”

The beach houses on tropical islands may not have ever materialised, but what Hawkwind lack in material wealth, they make up for in longevity. After all this time, it would be easy to see Dave Brock as being bigger than Hawkwind, but he shoots down the suggestion instantly. “No, I’m not. Richard [Chadwick, drummer] has been here for 30 years. It’s unified. Niall [Hone, bass] has been here for 10. It’s unified. It’s like a football team.” He laughs like the Arsenal supporter he is. “Well, like some football teams.”

In 24 hours, Brock and Kris will meet with a set designer to talk about the upcoming 50th anniversary shows, though details remain deliberately

vague. “We’ve got something planned,” he says evasively.

What is more certain is that Dave Brock, captain of the good ship Hawkwind for the last half century, has no plans to pull into port for good in the foreseeable future.

“I do this because it’s fun. Not for money, not for anything else. The sun’s

“My mum used to say to me, ‘David, I think you ought to get a proper job.’ She was still saying that in the 80s.”

shining, I’m about to go in the studio, play a bit of music, muck around. This isn’t a job, it’s a pleasurable experience.”

And with that, the captain’s off, ready to once more steer his ship through waters both smooth and choppy, the destination, as ever, unknown. ☺

All Aboard The Skylark is out now via Cherry Red. For more on Hawkwind and their tour dates, visit www.hawkwind.com.



Quark, Strangeness And Charm (1977)

With Robert Calvert firmly at the conceptual controls, this is Hawkwind’s smartest album, casting a satirical eye over everything from cloning and quantum physics to Middle Eastern terrorism and nuclear apocalypse.

After the hazy stoner funk of 1976’s *Astounding Sounds, Amazing Music*, and a subsequent split in the ranks, *Quark...* is bracingly up to date, tracks such as *Spirit Of The Age* and *Damnation Alley* sounding taut, polished and chromium-plated. **JB**

Sun Icarus Flew Too Near The

He was the maverick genius who conceived the Space Ritual and embodied Hawkwind's progressive spirit in the 70s. But **Robert Calvert** played with fire for the sake of his art, as we discover in this edited extract from *Hawkwind: Days Of The Underground*.

Words: Joe Banks **Portrait:** Barry Plummer

It's October 1977, and Robert Calvert – sci-fi poet, frontman extraordinaire and self-declared “hypo-maniac” – is running down the middle of a road in Paris. He's dressed in full military fatigues and is shouting at a car to stop. The car contains Calvert's bandmates in Hawkwind, and is about to become stuck in a traffic jam. As startled passers-by look on, Calvert catches up with the car and tries to wrench its doors open – but they're locked. He shouts at its occupants to let him in, but they all ignore him. When the traffic clears, the car drives off, leaving Calvert stranded in a sea of honking vehicles.

This isn't the end of Calvert's tenure with Hawkwind, but it's where the line between playing a role and being taken over by it cracks wide open. He's used the band as a canvas for expressing his own dreams and obsessions, developing a rich mythology for the band that resonates to this day. He depicts them as starfaring saviours of the earth and heralds of a new type of science-fiction music – but a combination of mental health problems and creative passion means Calvert lives constantly on the edge between fantasy and reality.

Born in South Africa in 1945, Calvert grows up in the English seaside resort of Margate. In his youth, he writes poetry and sings for local bands, all the time planning to join the RAF and

fulfil his ambition of becoming a fighter pilot – unfortunately, a defective ear rules him out of flying planes. Instead, he becomes increasingly fascinated by the artistic possibilities of counter-cultural London. The underground



Hawklords / 25 Years On (1978)

Hawkwind split in March 1978, but Brock and Calvert were soon heading up a new band that built on the legacy of the last one.

Hawklords (also referred to as *25 Years On*) is the hidden gem in Hawkwind's back catalogue, an album of starkly arranged dystopian pop that exudes humanity, both angry and compassionate – in many ways, a classic new wave record. *Psi Power* is arguably their finest piece of songwriting, with *Free Fall* and *25 Years* not far behind. **JB**

magazine *Friends* publishes his writing, and with the help of his old friend Nik Turner, he moves into the heart of the alternative society – Ladbroke Grove.

Calvert checks out Turner's band, intrigued by his friend's description of them as playing 'space rock', and it's not long before he's performing onstage with Hawkwind. On May 26, 1971, he introduces their set at the Seven Sisters Club in London with a reading of his poem, *Co-Pilots Of Spaceship Earth*. Its words act as a manifesto for the band's increasingly millenarian musical vision: the world teeters on the brink of destruction and only the void offers salvation.

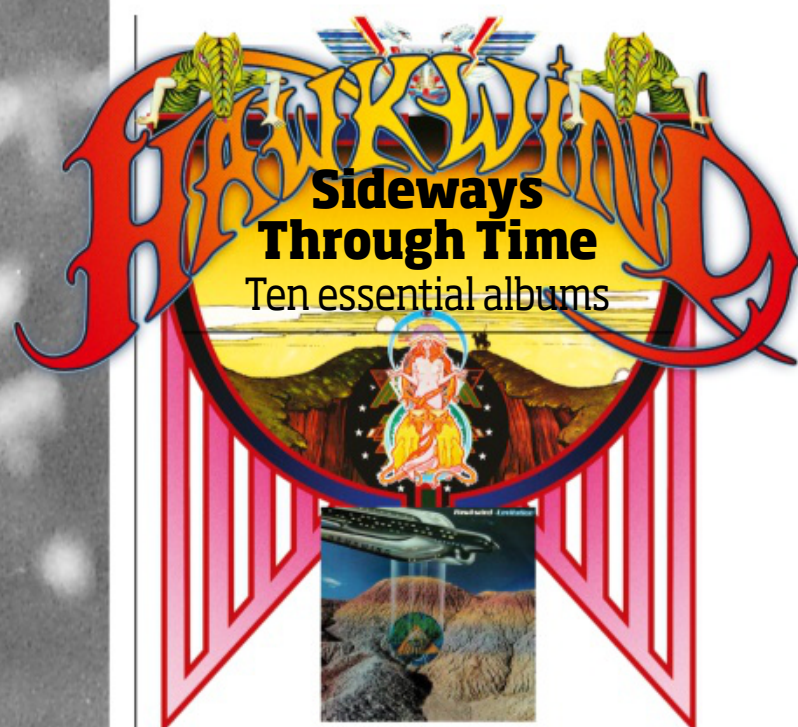
Calvert's sci-fi oratory injects an air of menacing theatricality into Hawkwind's propulsive, cosmic psychedelia, and he becomes an official member in October 1971.

But he's already been busy conceptualising on their behalf, the most obvious fruits being *The Hawkwind Log* booklet that comes with their second album, *In Search Of Space*, where he imagines the band as 'ancient astronauts' returning to Earth to save the planet from itself. This vision of Hawkwind as galactic superheroes will have an enormous influence on both their public (and media) perception and the direction the band go in.

But the biggest impact that Calvert has on Hawkwind is his co-writing of their 1972 single, *Silver Machine*. A secret ode to his bicycle, which he doesn't even appear on – his original vocal is overdubbed with Lemmy's imperious bellow – it changes the band's fortunes forever when it becomes a global hit, suddenly pitching them into rock's premier league. It also gives them the financial muscle to realise an



Robert Calvert:
1945-1988.



Levitation (1980)

Having reverted to being Hawkwind, the band that make *Levitation* are almost unrecognisable from its late-70s incarnation – Calvert’s rock theatre is gone, and in its place is the instrumental firepower of Huw Lloyd-Langton, Tim Blake, and bizarrely, Ginger Baker. It’s a tougher, more guitar-oriented sound for a new decade, and one they’ll pursue throughout it. The title track is a crunching but catchy riff monster, while *Who’s Gonna Win The War?* is a sobering evocation of nuclear devastation. **JB**

immersive multimedia live show that Calvert has been planning ever since climbing aboard the ship: the Space Ritual. “The basic idea is that a team of starfarers are in a state of suspended animation... the opera is a presentation of the dreams they’re having in deep space,” he explains. “It’s a mythological approach to what’s happening today... Rocket ships and interplanetary travel are a parallel with the heroic voyages of man in earlier times.”

The shows are unlike anything seen before on the UK gig circuit, a seamless meld of brain-melting music and visuals punctuated by atmospheric spoken-word interludes from Calvert. The most renowned of these is the Michael Moorcock-penned *Sonic Attack*, a blackly comic take on WWII public information films updated for the nuclear age, with Calvert’s icy voice full of contempt for the people he’s supposedly warning. Its ending – Calvert urging ‘Do not panic! Think only of yourself!’ over a throbbing beat – is Hawkwind at their most terrifying.

Moorcock – the science-fiction and fantasy writer who also sometimes appears with Hawkwind – has an early insight into Calvert’s propensity for role-playing when it’s announced that *The Final Programme*, a novel featuring Moorcock’s debonair anti-hero Jerry Cornelius, is to be made into a film. Calvert doorsteps Moorcock, and says, “What do you think?” As Moorcock remembers, “When I didn’t immediately reply, 

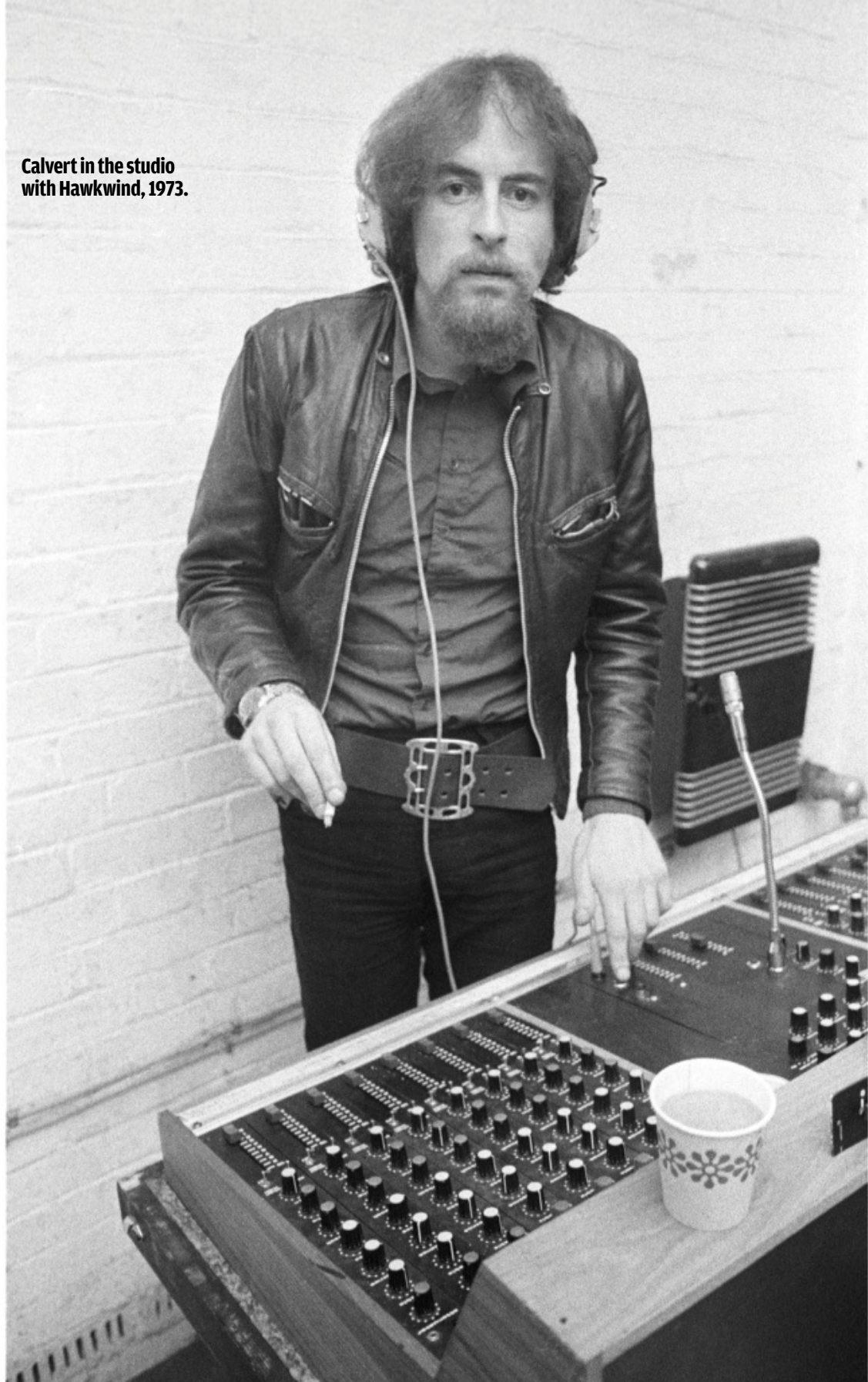
he enlightened me. 'I'm him,' he said. 'I am Jerry Cornelius.'

As the momentum behind Hawkwind builds, Calvert begins to take on more of a frontman role, culminating in their show at Wembley Empire Pool (now Arena) in May 1973. Declaiming nihilistic poetry to a 10,000-strong crowd, his performance becomes increasingly frenzied. As Lemmy later recalls, "[Calvert] came on stage wearing a witch's hat and a long black cape, carrying a sword. Then halfway through the second song, he attacked me with the sword! It was the biggest gig we ever played in our lives, and he was attacking me with a fucking sword – what's wrong with this picture, you know?"

Throughout this period, Calvert is subject to regular hospitalisation for manic depression, though the treatment is not always successful. Doug Smith, Hawkwind's manager at the time, remembers, "Robert had been sectioned to Roehampton Hospital, and in the next room was Spike Milligan, and of course, those 28 days made him worse!" Ultimately, Calvert is wary of anything that might rob him of what he considers to be the wellspring of his creativity.

However, there's more trouble on the horizon when Hawkwind release the Calvert co-write *Urban Guerilla*, their follow-up single to *Silver Machine*, in August 1973. Trying to get radio play with a song that includes the lyrics 'I'm

Calvert in the studio with Hawkwind, 1973.



BARRIE WENTZELL



Choose Your Masques (1982)

The last Hawkwind album to be released on a major label, ...Masques captures a band still pushing the envelope in combining supercharged guitars with state of the art technology. While the early 80s saw them partially aligned with Britain's NWOBHM, much of the music here – especially the pounding, hypnotic title track – anticipates the industrial and electronic rock sounds of the late 80s onwards. Other highlights include the unnerving *Dream Worker* and the melancholic *Solitary Mind Games*. **JB**

society's destructor, I'm a petrol bomb constructor' was always going to be a challenge, but when the IRA commences a mainland bombing campaign, it's quickly withdrawn. While the song is intended to be satirical, part of the problem is the absolute conviction with which Calvert inhabits the first-person – he sounds like he really means it. Terrorism will exercise an increasingly dangerous hold on Calvert's imagination over the next few years...

Soon after *Urban Guerilla* is released, Calvert takes a two-year sabbatical from Hawkwind to concentrate on his own music. May 1974 sees the release of the brilliantly strange tragicomic concept album *Captain Lockheed And The Starfighters*, which is based on the Luftwaffe's ill-fated roll-out of the Lockheed F-104G Starfighter, the so-called 'widow maker' that claimed the lives of more than 100 pilots. Combining spoken-word skits with songs that range from gonzoid garage rock to primitive electro-punk, and featuring all of his bandmates, many fans regard *Lockheed* as a Hawkwind

album by proxy. Unfortunately, plans for a theatrical production fall through.

Calvert releases his second solo album in September 1975, the Brian Eno-produced *Lucky Leif And The Longships*, but it's not long before he returns to the mothership, reinvigorated: "I think I'm going to become England's answer to Iggy Pop, I really do, a *Raw Power* type Iggy," he predicts. He quickly takes Hawkwind's conceptual reins once again, steering the band in a more progressive direction, with a greater emphasis on Calvert's clever, satirical lyrics. Foreshadowing what's to come, he says, "It's not a real world we're living in, it's a science-fiction one and rock will reflect that, because rock music is this generation's literature."

Yet it's Calvert's magnetic stage performances that really grab the attention. Reviewing an open air gig at Cardiff Castle in July 1976, underground firebrand Mick Farren paints an evocative picture of him: "In black leather jodhpurs, riding boots, head scarf and flying helmet, he comes on like a cross between Biggles and

BARRY PLUMMER



Calvert making astounding sounds and amazing music on tour.



"[Calvert] came on stage wearing a witch's hat and a long black cape, carrying a sword. Then halfway through the second song, he attacked me with the sword! It was the biggest gig we ever played in our lives, and he was attacking me with a fucking sword."

Lemmy

Lawrence of Arabia with definite S&M undertones." Completing the image, Calvert menaces the audience with a dummy Sten gun. At other shows, he appears in frock coat and top hat with a severed head under his arm for the song *Steppenwolf*, and during *Hassan I Sahba* he performs with a sabre in each hand, slashing at unseen enemies before plunging both blades into the stage.

In June 1977, Hawkwind release *Quark, Strangeness And Charm*, perhaps the definitive Calvert-era album. Showcasing a streamlined, new wave prog sound, tracks such as *Spirit Of The Age* and *Damnation Alley* are wonderful examples of Calvert's facility for startling imagery and sci-fi inspired black humour – the former's opening line of 'I would have liked you to have been deep frozen too' is surely one of the best beginnings to any album. Calvert is also keen to take on punk at its own game, declaring that, "Hawkwind is an experimental group at a time when rock music is very conventional; very conservative... Hawkwind is more than just entertainment. It's a serious band."

While they might not sell as many records as in their *Silver Machine* heyday, Hawkwind are still one of the country's most exciting live acts, and Calvert is the kinetic centre of their shows. There's a real physicality to his performances that goes beyond mere showmanship. He certainly isn't the first frontman to channel private demons on the public stage, but he



Electric Tepee (1992)

The entertaining fantasy metal of *The Chronicle Of The Black Sword* (1985) notwithstanding, the rest of the 1980s saw Hawkwind release a series of frustratingly patchy albums. But the early 90s techno/rave scene reinvigorated them, as did their consolidation to a power trio of just Brock, bassist Alan Davey and drummer Richard Chadwick. *Electric Tepee* reflects this new-found energy, particularly the hard riffing and sequenced propulsion of tracks such as *LSD* and *The Secret Agent*. **JB**



Hawklords in 1978, L-R: Robert Calvert, Harvey Bainbridge, Martin Griffin, Steve Swindells, Dave Brock.

allows his characters to take over in a way that other ‘theatrical’ performers such as David Bowie or Peter Gabriel never do. Ultimately, it comes at a cost to his mental health – and during a tour of France in October, the psychic thunder and lightning in his head rage out of control.

Suffering from insomnia and hooked on books about guerrilla warfare, Calvert becomes convinced that the heads of various terrorist organisations are in the audience at the Palais Des Sportes in Paris. When tour manager Jeff Dexter tries to calm him down after the show, Calvert attacks him with a sword. The band are used to his sometimes demanding behaviour, but judging this to be a full-on psychotic episode, they elect to cancel the rest

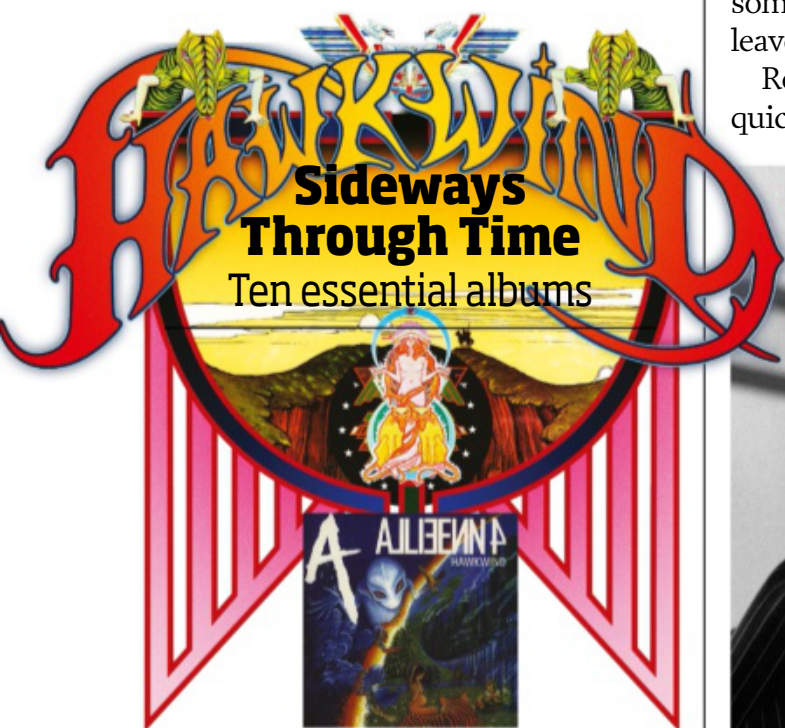
“Robert had been sectioned to Roehampton Hospital, and in the next room was Spike Milligan, and of course, those 28 days made him worse!”

Doug Smith

of the tour – and leave France without Calvert. However, the singer discovers them mid-escape and gives chase... Looking back on the incident, bassist at the time Adrian Shaw is contrite: “It was tragedy and farce, but not something I’m proud of. You don’t leave sick friends behind.”

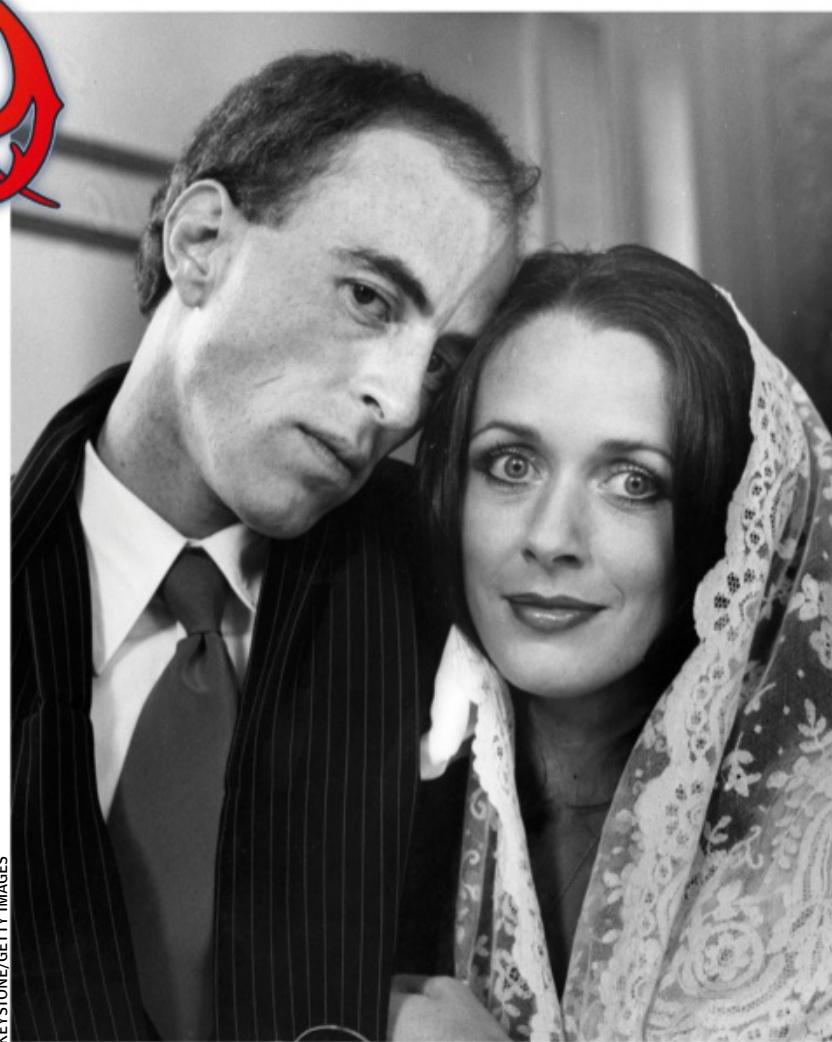
Remarkably, Calvert and the band quickly patch things back together, but

Robert Calvert and Pamela Townley on their wedding day at Caxton Hall, 1977.



Alien 4 (1995)

It Is The Business Of The Future To Be Dangerous (1993) pushed further into electronic trance territory, but there was a worry that the band was beginning to lack focus live. Enter new frontman Ron Tree, who brought an element of rock theatre to Hawkwind once again. This extra-terrestrial themed album, his first with the band, was also more song-focused, though the likes of *Alien (I Am)* and *Beam Me Up* remain strange and disorientating in the best possible way. **JB**





Gissa backie! Calvert with Noel Redding in June 1976.



The Machine Stops (2016)

The late 90s and 00s saw a plethora of live albums and guest singers, but relatively few studio recordings. However, Hawkwind have gone through a major resurgence over the past 10 years, with *The Machine Stops* – a concept album based on the E.M. Forster novella – being the pick of their recent releases. *Synchronised Blue* and *A Solitary Man* are great melodic rockers; *Hexagone* is an odd but affecting ballad. **JB**

there are other cracks in the line-up, and by the end of a difficult US tour in March 1978, Hawkwind are no more. Yet within months, Dave Brock and Calvert are back together again as Hawklords, and go on to produce a self-titled album of Orwellian avant pop, including career highlight tracks such as *Psi Power* and *Free Fall*, Calvert's gift for lyrical role-playing undiminished. But it proves to be a last hurrah – tired of band politics and financially broke, Calvert leaves the Hawkship for good at the start of 1979.

In 1988, at the age of just 43, Robert Calvert died from a heart attack. He was one of rock music's great talents – a spellbinding frontman, visionary writer, and much imitated singer. Stacia Blake calls him, “An incredible person, a genius,” and Michael Moorcock says, “He was a brilliant rock'n'roll performer and might have been Bowie's equal given a bit more self-confidence.”

The last words go to Pamela Townley, Calvert's second wife: “He believed he was going to save the world. He believed he was an extraordinary person in our midst, and we needed to take advantage of him. But he was flying too high, like Icarus... That was exactly how he felt, constantly being burnt, and one day he would be consumed by it.”

Hawkwind: Days Of The Underground – Radical Escapism In The Age Of Paranoia by Joe Banks will be published by Strange Attractor Press. See www.strangeattractor.co.uk for more.

THE PROG INTERVIEW

STACIA BLAKE

The *Prog* Interview is just that: every month we're going to get inside the minds of one of the biggest names in music. This issue, it's **Stacia Blake**. Known simply as Stacia, she found fame in the prog world when she joined Hawkwind as a performance artist and dancer in the 70s. She's currently working on her autobiography and a new album, but much of her life and the details of her time in Hawkwind have always remained somewhat mysterious. Until now...

Words: Rob Hughes

"My story has been written itself," Stacia Blake tells *Prog*. "It's been written by people who've never met me or spoken to me. Then when I say something people say, 'Oh, that can't be true, because I've read it somewhere else.' And I go, 'Well I was there!'"

There are many stories about Stacia, Hawkwind's dancer and performance artist during their golden era of the early 1970s. According to some reports, she joined the band at the behest of lyricist Robert Calvert. Other

accounts state that she first saw Hawkwind at the Isle Of Wight Festival, that she made her live debut with them at Glastonbury in '71, that she was romantically involved with Nik Turner and had once been booted out of ballet school for being too tall. Her Wikipedia entry still lists Ireland as her place of birth. None of these things are true.

The second-hand mythology surrounding Stacia is partly down to her wariness of the music press. An intensely private person, she kept a low profile during her downtime with Hawkwind, preferring, for the most part, to

shun interviews. After parting company with the band in 1975, she relocated to Germany with her husband Roy Dyke (of Ashton, Gardner & Dyke fame) and more or less disappeared from public view. Stacia eventually settled in Ireland, studied at various art colleges in the 90s and has since exhibited her work in Asia and across Europe.

For diehard Hawkwind fans – whom she calls "Hawkwind family" – she remains an iconic figure, the statuesque presence whose interpretive moves (either semi-naked or nude) formed an essential part of the band's audio-visual experience. "We were all a vital part of the live show," she says today, pushing back her mane of grey hair. "It was all about free expression."

It was, too, a challenging role for a woman in the male-dominated music business of the 70s, with all its attendant chauvinism and fixed perceptions. "It wasn't an easy time to be a woman in the industry," Stacia reflects. "Some people, and I won't mention any names, would've looked down on me because they didn't feel I was part of the music thing. They thought I was just a spare part, if you like."

Now aged 66, Stacia remains cautious when it comes to doing press. Our interview has been a couple of months in the planning and, apart from lining up a chat with BBC radio, is the only one she's agreed to for the time being. The whole experience, she says, makes her feel self-conscious. *Prog* meets her at Dublin airport, where she's just flown in from watching Joan Baez in Glasgow the previous night. As tends to be the case wherever she goes, Stacia met up with a bunch of Hawkwind fans during her stay in Scotland, producing a Loch Ness Monster plush toy that one of them had her given her as a gift. We find a table at an airport eatery, sit down with a couple of veggie wraps and begin to unpick fact from fiction...

“

Even today, people talk about Hawkwind fans, but I call them Hawkwind family, because, no matter where you go, you meet with them and it's like you've known them all your life.

”

You live in Ireland now, but where were you born?

I was born in Devon, in Exeter, and lived there until I was 17, when I started touring. My father was an English Protestant and my mum was a very warm, Irish Catholic woman. She was very active with Oxfam, collecting funds for years, and collecting funds for Macondo, a centre started by my auntie in Uganda to feed children with AIDS. She also supported the campaign to free Nelson Mandela and visited prisoners in Exeter for years. She supported charities; too many to mention.

What were your earliest ambitions?

The first thing I wanted was £1,000 in my bank account. And to make a record and be in a film. That was what I wanted at eight or nine years of age. The money

Stacia at Kozfest in July 2019, her first live performance in 44 years.



COURTESY OF LYNN SIMS PLEDGER

PETER MAZEL/PHOTOSHOT/VALON



Painted lady: Stacia
lives for her art.

was the most important thing, because it represented freedom.

Were you always a free spirit?

Definitely. I didn't really plan anything, I just had those ideals. I wrote to Omar Sharif after I'd seen *Doctor Zhivago* [1965] and told him everything that I wanted to do with my life – to act and everything else. I didn't get a reply for a year, then all of a sudden I got a letter and a photo from Egypt. He just said yes, you *can* do all those things, but do your schooling first. It was so kindly written.

So your main goal was to be an actress?

I wanted to be a performer. I was always dancing around the place

Nik. I'm the kind of person who will talk to anybody. I find people interesting, I don't care if they're men or women. But at that time, people were inclined to put a slant on everything. If a woman made conversation with a man, then people automatically presumed there was something there.

I believe that the first time you appeared on stage with Hawkwind was in Redruth...

That is true – the Flamingo Ballroom [April 15, 1971]. I hitched down to the Flamingo to see them play and asked them if I could dance. Being typical males, they said, "Yes, if you take all your clothes off and paint your body." I don't think they really thought

Carrera with us on Space Ritual too. They were two great talents. We were all as important as each other, in my mind. We were all cogs in the machine.

Did you ever have any stage direction beforehand?

What I did was totally up to me. A lot of it was interpretive dance, which was just going with the music. There were no set sequences. I had my robot routine, which always cropped up. It was basically a robot who's given a pill and comes to life, then at the end of the sequence the pill starts to wear off and he begins to turn back into a robot and becomes frantic, because he doesn't want to return.

people who worked in the police department when we were in the States.

Which members of Hawkwind were you particularly close to?

Lemmy and I seemed to connect from the first time we met, which is probably due to the fact that we were born two days apart. He was born on December 24 and I'm on the 26th. So we connected from the beginning. We were close. We used to get on each other's nerves sometimes, like everybody does, and the same goes for the rest of the band. Anybody who says it was all plain sailing is lying. You can't live that closely with so many people without having times when you don't particularly want to see each other. Though it was never the case with Lemmy that I never wanted to see him. For Lemmy and I, Hawkwind wasn't a job, it was like family. That's why he was so devastated when he got fired.

What were his best qualities?

He was one of the most caring people I've ever met. If he wasn't going to do something good for somebody, he definitely wasn't going to do something bad. He was a caring, loving gentleman.

I'm guessing his death in 2015 must have hit you pretty hard?

Yeah, it did. I was all but ready to go myself when I heard that. I was devastated. My personal messages went crazy for weeks, with guys in bits. We were all heartbroken. For weeks I chatted with the Hawkwind family. The grief was overwhelming.

What do you recall of Hawkwind at Glastonbury in 1971?

All I remember was riding around on a Harley-Davidson wearing only a pair of white underpants and a little Pink Fairies badge on it. That's my main memory. I have no idea who was driving the Harley!

Did you notice Hawkwind's audience change at all after *Silver Machine* had been a hit?

I suppose we started attracting a lot of younger people after *Silver Machine*, but essentially it was the same, before and after. The kind of music that Hawkwind played appealed to a certain kind of person. So they



Hawkwind backstage in Bristol, April 1972, with Stacia (front left) and Lemmy (second from right).

and putting on little plays with my mates. We'd sort of hang up sheets and stuff to make a little theatre, then put on plays for the neighbourhood.

Can you clear up the story about how you met Hawkwind in 1970?

I met Nik [Turner] at the Isle Of Wight Festival, we got chatting and he told me all about the band and said that they were playing there. But I never went to see them at the inflatable [Canvas City, an inflatable tent], so that's a myth. I then zoned out with my friends and didn't see him again until I turned up at a gig in Exeter. I went along to see Nik, basically, more so than to see the band. I found him an interesting person. It's also not true that I fancied

that I'd do it, but I said, "Yeah, OK." I suppose it was some kind of a dare from the guys, but for me it wasn't a problem at all. That's the way I was born.

What it was like to be in the centre of that intense multi-media live show with Hawkwind on the Space Ritual tour?

It's so difficult to put something like that into words, because you're so in the moment. It was awesome, obviously. We were really lucky to have [fellow dancers] Miss Renee and Tony

Did you study dance at all?

No. I was totally self-taught, an autodidact.

What was it like hanging out with an all-male band like Hawkwind?

It was good, but it could also be very difficult. It could be very lonely at times, being the only woman. A lot of the times the guys would go off to a party or whatever and I'd be at the hotel on my own. I used to just go out and meet people, everyday people. I made friends with teachers and florists and

A letterhead designed by Barney in 1973 for Stacia to respond to fan mail.





Dutch courage: Stacia in Amsterdam in 1972.

were basically all freaks and misfits, like the rest of us. Even today, people talk about Hawkwind fans, but I call them Hawkwind family, because no matter where you go, you meet with them and it's like you've known them all your life. It's only twice that I've had any problems with fans. The first one was when somebody tried to strangle me on stage in St. Louis. And there was a recent meeting with some people who recognised me in the street, which I had problems with. I won't go into details about that. But I'm a very trusting person, so that experience set me back a little bit.

“

If a woman had a conversation with a man, then people automatically presumed there was something there.

”

What happened with the guy who attacked you in St. Louis?

I think the roadie spotted him first. When I ran off stage, somebody had grabbed him by then. I've thought about it so much over the years and I wonder did he really mean to hurt me. Or was he just out of his head and over enthusiastic? Maybe he just wanted to give me a kiss or a hug. I like to think that was the case.

It's an obvious question, but were there many drugs involved when you were performing?

[Laughing] No, of course not! Absolutely not [still laughing].

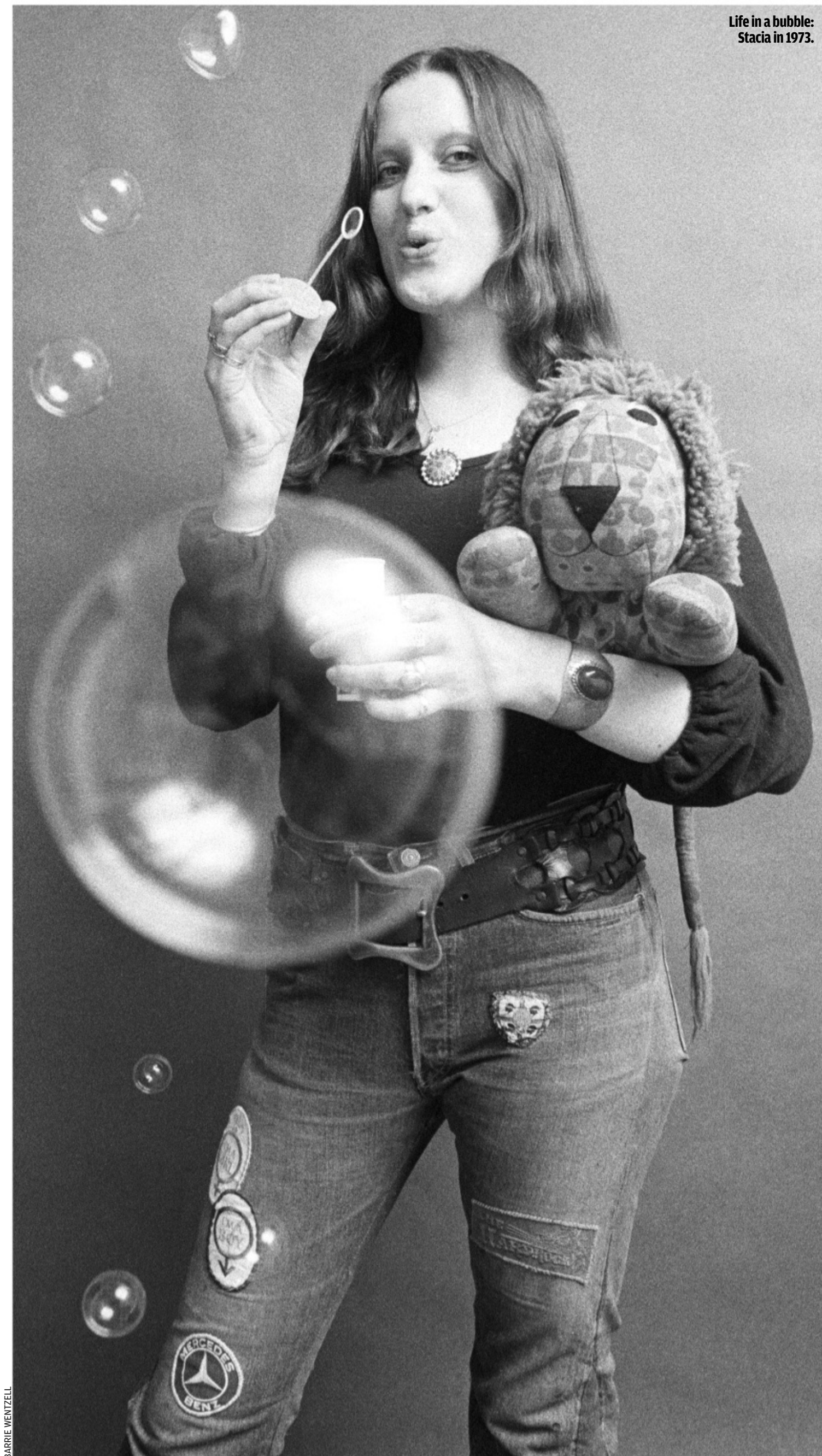
Did drugs enhance the experience for you?

It's difficult to say, looking back. I suppose it did. It would've



GUSBERT HANERKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Life in a bubble:
Stacia in 1973.



BARRIE WENTZELL

happened the same without them as well, definitely. But of course you're right when you say that it enhanced everything.

You were involved with Arthur 'Killer' Kane of the New York Dolls at one point. How did you get together?

We met in the Rainbow Rooms at the Biba building [November 26, 1973], when the Dolls were playing there. Arthur was a very special person, like Lemmy. A real gentleman. I still love the man. We weren't together very much, just when they were in London and whenever we played the States. On my 21st birthday [December 1973] I went to New York and spent it with him there. We went to Max's Kansas City, amongst other places.

There's also a story about you performing at a press launch for Alice Cooper at Chessington Zoo in 1972...

I just upstaged a stripper, that's all [laughing]. I wasn't *being* a stripper, I was trying to make a statement, but it was totally misconstrued.

What kind of statement?

I don't know how to put it into words. We're all women or men or whatever and our bodies are beautiful and sacred. And just to see a woman there, stripping, I had to get out there and do something for the other side, if you like, the alternative scene. I hate it when people say that I was a stripper or that I danced topless and stuff like that. I was never a stripper and I never danced topless. I wore costumes where my breasts were bare, but I never considered myself a topless dancer. There was never anything sleazy about my performances, they were interpretive dance. I think some men and women felt threatened by a woman appearing nude.

Hawkwind famously played a gig at Wandsworth Prison in February 1973...

Of all the bands that you would imagine playing in a prison, it's amazing that they would choose a bunch of totally open, drug-using freaks to do a show. Not only that, but to allow a dancer in as well. A lot of people probably think that it was sleazy, because I was dancing with them – and that the prisoners

would've been sleazy too – but that wasn't the case at all. Everyone treated me with total respect. There was one prisoner in particular who just wanted me to send him some books. People in prison have done whatever they've done, but they need some kind of caring, someone to reach out to them. And I think that's what we were for them. It was a very positive experience.

Why did you leave Hawkwind?
I can't answer that question. You'd have to ask the others.

But you left of your own accord?
[She gives a look that indicates no.] As I say, it's maybe best to talk to the band about that. People always ask, "Why did you leave?" and I never say I left. I always say, "When I was no longer with them." Did I miss it? No, I just got on with my life. You dust yourself off, get up and get on with it. Two weeks after not being with Hawkwind any more, I was working in a supermarket, at a cash desk in Swiss Cottage.

You married Roy Dyke around that time. How did you spend the rest of the 70s?

We got married the day after the Reading festival and a year later we had our beautiful daughter. Then we had some visitors from Germany, who wanted Roy to join a band in Hamburg. So we went over to live there. What did I do? Let me think. I scrubbed toilets, I worked in pubs as a cleaner, I worked in kitchens, in factories, in kindergartens – doing the same thing, cleaning and cooking, whatever I had to do to keep my family and Roy and myself going. Then in 1983 I opened my own business, doing nail extensions. I also did some backing tracks on an album for a Dutch guy called Jan Ten Hoopen. And I did some extra work on one of the first videos for an Italian musician called Milva [singer and actress Maria Ilva Biolcati].

When did you start producing art?
I've always been artistic. In the 80s I would've been painting, as well as running the business. So I just painted for my own pleasure. I wanted to get out of Germany. I'd separated from Roy and remarried. Then my second husband and I sold up everything and moved over to Ireland. And



Stacia, performing onstage with Hawkwind.

JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

I went to art college. First of all I did a tenure at Senior art college [Limerick] to do my portfolio, then I chose to go to Crawford [in Cork]. It was a terrible experience.

“ I asked Hawkwind if I could dance. Being typical males, they said, ‘Yes, if you take all your clothes off and paint your body.’ I don’t think they really thought I’d do it, but I said, ‘Yeah, OK.’ ”

They gave me a really hard time, criticising me and telling me that I had no talent. I then went to Finland on an Erasmus exchange, which was amazing. The most important thing for me, in terms of my artwork, is something that I started doing in 2006, called *Piece Work*. It's in memory of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I started working with a circle, so everything I do consists of circles, each one representing a victim of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I've travelled to Japan three times to exhibit it there and also in Germany, Finland, Ireland and Northern Ireland. That's what my main work is now. The Hawkwind thing, Miss Stacia, is a separate project. We've brought out limited editions of T-shirts and posters with a design that Barney Bubbles created as a letterhead for me in the 70s. It's a beautiful design.

What else do you have going on?
We thought we'd have a go at doing an album, collaborating with different musicians to see what we can come up with. I can't really tell you any more about that at this stage, apart from the fact that one of the bands on there will be Visceral Noise Department [a heavy Glaswegian four-piece].

Is the album likely to consist of original songs?

At the moment it's all open. I'm going to collaborate with Visceral Noise Department to write, then there are some other musicians who I haven't met yet. So there will probably be new songs and covers. Also there's the Lemmy Foundation, a charity that we're trying to form, which will help heroin addicts. When Lemmy died, I wanted to do something in his memory, so I decided I was going to start this charity. That's what the album will be for, to raise funds for it. The love of his life died of a heroin overdose.

Will that interfere with your painting at all?

I'm not really painting at the moment. Right now I'm working on my autobiography. It's all over the place – I hop from being 10 years old to being 17 to being 60. I'm severely dyslexic, so I don't write in the usual narrative way. I remember this, I remember that. If it was chronological, it just wouldn't be me! ☺

Stacia's debut album is pencilled in for release at the end of the year. To order signed posters, T-shirts and postcards, based on Barney Bubbles' original design, visit www.missstacia.bigcartel.com.

If we're being bravely candid, there's a raft of progressive acts who remain entwined and chained to the sole drive of recreating past progressive glories, content at trying to blindly recreate the wistful, unsurpassable highs that 70s acts such as Genesis or Pink Floyd achieved. That may be their prerogative but there's often a sense that they're wasting their talent in a dubious and futile attempt at replication.

At the other end of the spectrum are those contemporary bands that determinedly avoid such temptations, and whose music is decent enough but who are never destined to perform in venues larger than pubs. It's rare, then, that a band will stumble forcibly into the genre who possess an internal, innovative artistic desire that makes them stand out from the cluster of wannabes. The Tea Club are one of those few acts in recent years who have the musical audacity and potential to become major players.

The band have been releasing albums and EPs since 2003, and although they'd managed to build a steady fanbase, there was a sense that it wasn't until they released their fourth album, 2015's *Grappling* – an expansive and stimulating recording – that the prog fraternity really started to take notice.

"It seemed like all the reviews for that album were positive," says vocalist and guitarist Dan McGowan, who helms the project with his brother Pat, also on guitar and vocals. "I really didn't think anyone was going to get that album, and I was kind of surprised because we deliberately went out of our way to make something as crazy as it could be. We did get

some momentum and I think it made some of the prog guys take us a little more seriously."

A tour with Thank You Scientist and Moon Tooth in 2016 followed, and the band have spent the last two years writing and recording their latest album, *If/When*. The delay in completing the album was due to a combination of what they describe as increasingly hectic private lives and a desire to ensure that this album was a further step in their natural development.

"My favourite art and music is when things just happen organically," says Dan. "We've always wanted to be organic and have the songs write themselves and listen to what the creative process is trying to tell us. We've been very fortunate in that we have been able to make music that way. We try to be honest and come from a pure place artistically."

The band have certainly achieved that aim, as the album contains a brave mixture of styles that still manage to retain a beguiling cohesion. There are moments of fragility, such as the infectious *If I Mean When* and the lilting *The Way You Call*, both of which have the tenderness of a Nick Drake or Neil Young ballad. That's not to say they don't possess originality, but they are a brave statement for The Tea Club. Were there any concerns about recording and releasing such acoustic guitar led tracks?

"Well, *The Way You Call* is quite a vulnerable song," says Dan. "It was a scary thing but vulnerability is one of the most evocative things about music. I think the skill Pat and I have is that we have this intuition and we go for it. We're not afraid to follow where it



Tea's



**"We have every intention of promoting this album to people who think that prog rock is absolutely the worst thing to ever happen to music."
Dan McGowan**



The Tea Club have brewed a fine album in *If/When*.

Up!

It's all in the family for **The Tea Club**, who went from making their music "as crazy as it could be" to becoming one of the spearheads of modern prog. Brothers **Pat** and **Dan McGowan** talk self-doubt, bravely blending styles, and winning over the prog haters.

Words: Rich Wilson

“At the risk of sounding too ‘out there’, this is the most spiritually written album we have recorded.”
Dan McGowan



The Tea Club, L-R: Patrick McGowan, Jamie Wolff, Dan McGowan, Dan Monda, Joe Dorsey.

takes us. I can't believe it took us to the place it did. At the risk of sounding too 'out there', this is the most spiritually written album we've recorded. It's kind of a cliché to think that the songs are coming from beyond you, but I really feel that the songs just fell into our laps. The best moments came from someplace else."

"That was kind of a creed that we agreed on early on in the process, which was when things felt good, we should just leave them alone and not overcook it," interjects Pat. "The producer that we were working with, Jeff Aderman, was a really big deal in helping guide us through that process. Not that we haven't done that in the past, and I love all the albums we've made, but this one was just different. Dan wrote *If I Mean When* in like an hour. When I came home after Dan had written it, he showed it to me and I was like, 'Dude, this has five chords.' [laughs] 'Can we have a song that has five chords?' But it's so good, and it just hit me right in the chest. We even wrote a few different versions of *If I Mean When*. There was even a seven-minute long prog version. But I lost a lot of sleep over the making of this album."

Listening to the album, it's tricky to conceive that anyone – including the bandmembers themselves – could fail to appreciate the well-balanced and lavish nature of the recording. Seemingly though,

there were concerns that the minor change in direction had led them to become victims of narcissism, unable to appreciate that their perceived masterpiece was actually a dud.

"There were some moments when I had a lot of self-doubt," continues Pat. "You know, is this one of those stories where the band tried to reinvent themselves and made something that was just *awful*? We take the band and our music really seriously and it's like an extension of ourselves. I wrote a song about my son and it's a very intimate song, and part of me was afraid that everyone was going to laugh at me. I had this feeling in my soul that we had really tapped into something with this album and I was nervous because I didn't want to mess it up. At the other extreme was the worry that we were going to disappoint all of our fans. I was afraid that they would accuse us of pretending to be an indie band. We love the people who support us and I don't want to disappoint them. But throughout the process I also felt that it was good and that we should hang in there."

Those yearning for a longer progressive track will find it in the 27 minutes of *Creature*. So how did the band even start writing such a complex piece?

"I was looking back at some of the prog epics and really paying attention to what was going on and repeating themes, which we had

never really done," explains Dan. "When I was younger, I would listen to tracks when the melody would repeat and think that they only did it because they ran out of ideas. But then I realised that, when the themes came back, it was just so beautiful. It's all about getting a strong melody and making the most of it. You know, try it in a different key or put it on top of something else and see if it works. So in this track, there were enough happy accidents to make me think that we stumbled on to some cool stuff. It certainly wasn't us being clever and having everything planned out. We're really not that smart."

The band are set to tour the US alongside Bent Knee and Thank You Scientist, and are also to appear at Rosfest in 2020 in an attempt to introduce *If/When* to a fresh audience. Rightly, they're also not short of confidence that this recording can assist them in appealing to audiences across genres.

"We have every intention of promoting this album to people who think that prog rock is absolutely the worst thing to ever happen to music," states Dan. "I don't care. I'm going to be ruthless and say, 'Just listen to it, man. Just check it out and tell me that you don't like it...'" 🎧

If/When is out now and is self-released. Visit www.theteaclub.net for more information.

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Life's A Long Song

With the first official oral history of **Jethro Tull** about to hit shelves, Ian Anderson regales *Prog* with the memories and tales told within *The Ballad Of Jethro Tull*, from tattered coats to codpieces to sailing through punk – and even winning some of their fans over – and how a 50-year anniversary doesn't mean retirement.

Words: Mike Barnes **Portrait:** Stuart Wood



“I warned the publishers right from the word go that it’s not going to be full of sex and drugs and rock’n’roll, and people vilifying each other or describing the length of their todger,” says Ian Anderson of the new band biog, *The Ballad Of Jethro Tull*. “We are incredibly boring people.”

But *The Ballad Of Jethro Tull* is anything but boring. At 224 pages and with many never-before-seen photographs – “we climbed into our attics and delved in our cellars,” Anderson informs us – it’s relatively light on text, but then it’s full of surprising and fascinating nuggets of information that help colour in the history of this most singular of bands.

Anderson’s view is that after 50 years of making music, the time was right to assemble an official Jethro Tull book, and he is happy to expand upon some of the issues that are brought to light. Sometime *Prog* journalist and author Mark Blake interviewed bandmembers and associates past and presented the results as an oral history – although former guitarist Martin Barre declined to participate and his entries are all archival.



JETHRO TULL/GLENN CORMICK ARCHIVE/BRIAN WARD

Above: 1968 promo shot of band as old men for debut album *This Was*.

Top: the new book, *The Ballad Of Jethro Tull*.

Some of the views in the book are quite candidly expressed, and although the project was “overseen” by Anderson, as he says, “I didn’t edit anything of the contributions from the other guys. I thought it was ethically important not to tamper with what they said.”

But Anderson is pleased that, some differences aside, everyone has been respectful of each other, while, as the driving force in the band, both in songwriting and engaging with the business side, he both takes credit for ideas and admits fault for the way he handled some situations. “Any bad moments are things that they have put behind them,” he explains. “We didn’t want to create an impression that that was a major part of the band culture.”

Did participating in the book and reading the comments of others give him any new perspectives on the group?

“[There were] lots of elements of good humour and reinforcing that family spirit, that at its best existed in the band,” he replies. “More so than in other notoriously stressful band relationships like The Who and The Kinks or even Yes, who fragmented badly and to this day are forever apart.”

What sticks with the reader is that although Jethro Tull enjoyed commercial success from the outset, the way they presented themselves was unconventional and at times wilfully so, but that only appeared to endear them more to their audience. On the cover photo of *This Was*, their 1968 debut, Anderson decided that the young group should be portrayed “as we will all end up” and so were made up to look like a group of grizzled sexagenarian farm labourers surrounded by dogs – one of whom bit bass guitarist Glenn Cornick.

“I didn’t edit anything of the contributions from the other guys. I thought it was ethically important not to tamper with what they said.”

So convincing was their disguise that keyboard player John Evan notes that before he joined the band, he was attending a live show and heard an audience member remark to a friend about Anderson, “I’ve heard that this guy’s in his 50s.”

As a frontman back in the late 60s, with his scruffy hair and beard, overcoat and manky old plimsolls, Anderson looked like the sort of person who might come over and demand spare change



Jon Anderson: have
flute, will prog.

with menace. But the coat was actually of great significance. Anderson had “a deteriorating relationship” with his father, who disapproved of him leaving home in autumn 1967 to try to make it a musician.

“He threw this overcoat at me and the last thing he said was, ‘You had better take this; it’s going to be a cold winter,’” Anderson recalls. “And because he had given it to me in this moment of compassion and concern, it was the parting gift I didn’t want to be parted from, so I took it almost like a mascot, a tenuous link with my somewhat estranged people, until it disappeared from a dressing room in 1969.”

As the 70s unfolded, Anderson came across like a minstrel figure, a modern troubadour commenting on the foibles of society from its fringes. It was an image he pursued to the hilt by going onstage sporting tights and a codpiece in 1974. What prompted this move?

“People had made some comments about my stage performance as having a kind of balletic level of athleticism and movement, and so I thought I would take that a bit further,” he explains. “Later on, Michael Jackson had a little flirtation with the codpiece. Unfortunately he didn’t seem to wear it well in my opinion,” he adds with a chuckle.

And although on 1972’s *Thick As A Brick* Anderson describes a group of soldiers with “their jockstraps pinching”, it is revealed that as his was made by a costumier at the Royal Ballet he had no such problems.

“They were expensive, but very beautifully made, and above all they were practical,” he says. “They were things you could move around in onstage and there lay the expertise – if they are made for dancing you really need room for movement.”

The book includes insights into the way that the music was arranged, with, on one occasion, Anderson explaining to Barre about the guitar chords at the start of *Aqualung*: “Think of it as being like Beethoven’s *Fifth*.” That album’s references to organised religion did not go down well in the Bible-belt states of the USA, where it was burned in public demonstrations.

“The odd thing of course, is that among the clergy I probably had as many fans as I did detractors,” Anderson says. “But in Franco’s Spain at the time, a couple of things were bleeped out.”

But into the mid-70s, Jethro Tull found huge commercial success in the States, for reasons that no one can quite explain. Their shows veered from hard rock bombast to prog complexity to folk music from times past, spiced up with much comic tomfoolery, that peaked with the appearance of

1974: Anderson gets athletic onstage, sporting his designer codpiece.

JETHRO TULL ARCHIVE/PROMO



a pantomime zebra that produced striped turds.

And all this came off the back of *Thick As A Brick*, whose accompanying spoof parochial newspaper distilled

Below: the new book boasts unseen images.



an eccentric British Monty Python-esque humour that was perplexing even to some Brits steeped in that tradition, while many found it musically contrived.

“[The newspaper] was a hard one to swing by Chrysalis Records,” Anderson recalls. “But we pushed it through and it was a huge part of the album’s success, particularly in America, where they found such quaint English surrealist humour interestingly confusing and demanding to grapple with.”

When punk broke in the UK, Jethro Tull were one of the groups who simply sailed through it all. Anderson bucked all contemporary streetwise fashion trends by dressing in rural garb on the cover of 1977’s *Songs From The Wood*. But despite the punks distancing themselves from what had gone before, things were not always what they seemed. At a festival in Switzerland, Anderson was approached by a lanky young man who had brought some albums along to be signed for his mother. He admitted he was also a fan and announced himself as Joey Ramone.

“There were a number of bands in America that you wouldn’t associate with being Jethro Tull fans,” Anderson says. “When they were younger some of them would have been open to ideas before they found their particular musical style.”

“Jethro Tull was far from being a prototype punk band, but with the anger and the sneering, we did have a bit more of an edgy side to us compared with, say, Yes. You wouldn’t have thought that Jon Anderson was someone likely to nick your wallet in the bus queue.”

Into the 80s, developments in technology began to reshape the musical landscape, and for many bands of Jethro Tull’s vintage using the sounds *de jour* whilst keeping your identity was a tricky business. From *A* in 1980 until *Under Wraps* in 1984, in a break from their previous style, Jethro Tull explored the possibilities of synths and drum machines in a way that divided fans. Reading between the lines, did Anderson maybe feel an obligation to engage with this new technology?

“It wasn’t a question of feeling obliged to do it – keeping up with the new Joneses – it was out of an interest in what that technology might release creatively for me,” he replies. “But I guess that by ’84 I’d kind of thought I’d taken it as far as it can go and by ’87 with *Crest Of A Knave* I thought that it’s there and can always be part of my life, but it’s not something that I want to hear in the forefront.

“I’m a simple soul and ultimately electric guitars, flutes, Hammond organs... these are very fundamental



Tull bucked fashion trends in the cover shoot for *Songs From The Wood*.

interview, and took our instruments with us and played something. They were over the moon.

“Oddly, of course, when Unplugged was officially born weeks or months later we were never invited to come back,” he adds, laughing.

Anderson has assessed that the typical prog rock musician is characterised by having a low boredom threshold, pushing forward, always wanting to do something new. Although he admits that he writes rather less these days, does he feel that this still applies?

“I’m a simple soul and ultimately electric guitars, flutes, Hammond organs... these are very fundamental noises and they are the stuff of which rock music is made.”

“It certainly applies to me as a lyric writer, because I’m not interested in trying to write songs I’ve written before, or to do specific topics that I’ve done before.

“Every day, and I mean this absolutely literally, I read *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Independent* – without telling you which one I prefer – and the *Evening Standard* [and watch] CNN and Sky News. I trawl through the world’s news, and it throws up lots of interesting areas, which can exercise the mind in a literary context.”

The Ballad Of Jethro Tull may be a celebration of the band’s long journey, but it is in no way envisaged as a full stop.

“To be still out touring and performing at my age is a dream come true,” Anderson enthuses. “There were a few injuries upon the way and some things that act upon me, like playing at Jerez in 37 degrees, but being able to do it at all is a great pleasure. We are lucky in the creative arts generally. We don’t have to retire and we have no intention of hanging up our boots.”

The Ballad Of Jethro Tull is out in November via Rocket 88 Books. Head to www.jethrotull.com for more information.



JETHRO TULL/GLENN CORMICK ARCHIVE/BRIAN WARD

noises and they are the stuff of which rock music is made.”

So much so, that unbeknown to many, Tull were the first band on MTV to play an “Unplugged” set, in 1987.

“MTV was relatively new at the time and you have to remember that it got

Original promo shot from 1968.

quite common with some radio stations in the USA that you would go in with your instruments and play a couple of songs,” Anderson explains. “You would just be sitting around a microphone, nothing sophisticated. So we walked into MTV to do an

Daddy's boy: Dweezil wants to keep his father's spirit alive.





DWEEZIL

And The Time Machine

As **Dweezil Zappa** dives deep into the DNA of his father Frank's classic album *Hot Rats*, he tells *Prog* about the nightmarish challenge of playing the record on guitar, why he won't play the comedy songs, and the fight for the right to perform the Zappa catalogue.

Words: David West **Images:** Jeffery Dean

"My goal was always to focus on his work as a composer, as a guitarist, as a bandleader, and show the depth and the variety in the music."

1 969 was a momentous year for Frank Zappa. On September 5, he and his wife Gail celebrated the birth of their son Dweezil. Then, on October 10, Zappa released his second solo album, a fearsome blend of instrumental jazz rock fusion called *Hot Rats*.

Fifty years later, Dweezil is bringing the album back to life, playing the full record on tour with the band that he likes to call his "rocking teenage combo". In honour of his father, Dweezil aims to produce a DNA-accurate audio presentation of *Hot Rats* onstage.

"It's just a really cool-sounding recording," says the guitarist. "Part of what we do when we go out is that we take into consideration the actual sound that was used on the recordings and try to recreate that the best that we can, so it really has a time machine quality."

As much as he's building a musical time machine every night, Dweezil doesn't have the same instrumentation in his group as the band that his father used to make *Hot Rats*, which means Dweezil's guitar has an awful lot of musical real estate to cover. Even before the first Zappa Plays Zappa tour in 2006, Dweezil had spent years working to absorb his father's music and intimidating virtuosity.

"The goal was always to learn the composed music and be able to play things on guitar that weren't meant for guitar," says Dweezil. "That's where the technical side of things really came into play, because the biggest challenge with a lot of my dad's music is there are a lot of intervals of fourths and, on the guitar, those are very difficult to plan out on the fretboard. It makes the picking with the right hand really messed up as well as the left-hand fingering, so you add complex rhythms into difficult-to-reach intervals, and then you basically have a nightmare on your hands."

In the late 60s when *Hot Rats* arrived, the first wave of fusion was on the rise, with Miles Davis' *In A Silent Way* and The Tony Williams Lifetime leading the charge. Zappa brought in Don 'Sugarcane' Harris to play electric violin on *Hot Rats*, which is easy to read as a precursor to Jerry Goodman and Jean Luc-



Ponty's role in Mahavishnu Orchestra shortly thereafter, and the album taps into that spirit of throwing jazz improvisation into a rock context. For Dweezil, this has meant getting to grips with his father's approach to improvising.

"Because *Hot Rats* is such a well-known album, when I'm going to be playing solos, I don't want it to take a total left turn and have it not feel like it is part of the overall landscape," he says. "This is another one of those things where I have to spend a lot of time to learn more of my dad's musical vocabulary, his tendencies that he would go for in solos. I'm not necessarily going to play note-for-note solos, but I'm going to play things that are based on things that he would have played knowing what I know about his playing."

In the modern era of three-minute, three-chord pop songs, *Hot Rats* is a reminder of a time when audiences embraced artists who were willing to push the envelope. While Dweezil believes that long-time fans of his father's music will embrace *Hot Rats Live*, he wants to reach out beyond the boundaries of dedicated Zappa devotees.

"Being that we're wanting to have this music reach a new audience as well, the idea of a largely instrumental album being the core of the show, some could say that would be risky because some people just don't have the patience for instrumental music," says Dweezil. "But I think the music and the melodies are strong. I mean, a song like *Peaches En Regalia* is really a master composition, it really is an amazing piece of music."

Frank Zappa often seemed to take a mischievous delight in being provocative and outrageous with his music, but Dweezil is keen to keep the spotlight on his prodigious talent as a composer. He's not too keen on performing the more comedic side of his father's output.

"One of the reasons I started doing the whole tour to begin with was that it started to appear that my dad's music was being relegated to the novelty music category because the stuff that did get on the radio generally were songs with a comedic narrative," says Dweezil. "*Valley Girl*, *Don't Eat The Yellow Snow*, *Dancin' Fool* or *Cosmik Debris*, that little handful of songs, if that's all that you've ever heard you start to get the impression that's the only stuff that my dad ever wrote. That, in actual fact, is a very small percentage of the music. My goal was always to focus on his work as a composer, as a guitarist, as a bandleader, and show the depth and the variety in the music."

So don't expect to hear Dweezil play anything as lewd as *Jewish Princess* anytime soon. "There are probably some songs that you would generally try to avoid in the world climate," he confirms. "There are things that my dad didn't even play that much onstage, so it's not like there are people clamouring to hear some of those songs. I'd rather focus on the stuff that showcases him as a composer or a guitarist and bandleader than something that could have potentially some shock value with the lyrics."

Dweezil's live shows have been known to run for more than two hours, so *Hot Rats* won't fill the whole concert on the upcoming tour, allowing the band to explore deeper and further into the Zappa catalogue. And, true to the spirit of Frank, no two nights will ever be the same.

where everything is done to a grid, things are being flown in off tape or computer, and the lighting cues are all set to go with the same thing that's happening with the click track that the musicians are playing to and there is no improvisation."

All those years spent studying his father's music and Frank's approach to creativity live in the moment all pay off in those two to three hours onstage. "When you're a musician who has spent a lot of time to develop a vocabulary and a technical level of skill where in the same way that you would have a good and interesting conversation with somebody, that's the kind of feeling that the music is creating onstage," says Dweezil. "When you're playing with musicians and ideas are going back and forth and you're really in it and listening, that

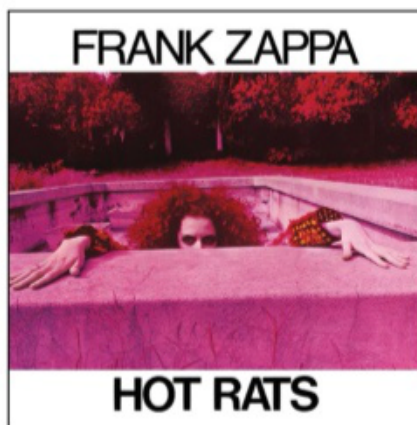
Just as with Frank's shows, no two performances will be the same.

"Anybody that plays the music is able to play the music without having the licences that the ZFT has tried to make. They've tried to create a world where nobody can play the music without a licence and that's not how the law works."

"That's the genius of the arrangements," says Dweezil. "My dad created compositions that could be played night after night but they are going to be different every time because of the improvisational sections. That's why he was so heavily bootlegged. You can hear a song like *Inca Roads*, and every time you hear it, it's going to be different because the solo section will change, and it will be a whole different performance."

As his father was justly famous for doing, Dweezil wants to give each audience a singular, one-off experience that will never be replicated or repeated. "It's magical in the sense that you're hearing something that is unique in that moment in time and it will never be played exactly that way again," he says, "which is different than modern concert production

is the most fun that you can have as a musician. Then you have the challenge of the difficult composed parts that you have to execute and that's really what makes playing my dad's music the most fun, but it's also the hardest thing ever because you have two different disciplines that you have to really be excellent at."



Travelling the world meeting fans of his father's music, Dweezil often asks them what record first pulled them into the Zappa universe. Sometimes, it's one of

the better-known, more accessible works like *Apostrophe (?)* or *Over-Nite Sensation*, but that's not always the case.

"Other times somebody will get into the music based on a really strange album that most people wouldn't even listen to all the way through, like



Thing-Fish for example,” says Dweezil. “When somebody gets into it based on *Thing-Fish* and then likes the rest of the catalogue, you can tell that that person is into a whole other kind of level of detail within the music. I have a friend of mine whose favourite record is *Burnt Weeny Sandwich*. You just wonder, how did this music come to be made? Some stuff seems more apparent where the ideas come from and then some of the arrangements seem a little more obtuse. When I’m learning the music, I’m always fascinated by the huge range, the depth and the variety, because my dad didn’t have a formula, he didn’t repeat himself. That’s the thing that’s always so impressive to me. I think that’s what the fans like too, that there’s so much variety and we try to put that into an entire show.”

The current tour is going out under the name Dweezil Zappa: Hot Rats Live, but the guitarist has faced a long struggle to keep using his family name in his professional life. After his mother Gail died in 2015, control of the Zappa Family Trust (ZFT) passed to Dweezil’s siblings Ahmet and Diva, leading to a lengthy legal dispute over the use of Frank’s name. In response, Dweezil dropped the Zappa Plays Zappa moniker and named his 2016 venture 50 Years Of Frank: Dweezil Zappa Plays Whatever the F@%k He Wants – The Cease And Desist Tour. Happily, things seem to have settled down somewhat.

“It’s now just under my own name, which is totally fine by me,” says Dweezil, “but it seems like a totally unnecessary exercise that was brought on by the ZFT, the whole name change thing. Ultimately, anybody that plays the music is able to play the music without having the licences that the ZFT has tried to make. They’ve tried to create a world where nobody can play the music without a licence and that’s not how the law works. That’s why things get confusing for a lot of people.”

Dweezil says it’s just simpler and clearer to use his own name. “Before, part of the name implied there were two Zappas involved,” he says about Zappa Plays Zappa. “Somehow it gets confusing when it’s just my name because people are not sure whether or not I’m going to be playing stuff other than my dad’s music. It seems strange that you have to overexplain things to people, but that somehow is the world we live in. ‘Okay, I’m going to play *Hot Rats*,’ and then people will be still saying, ‘But are you going to play any of your dad’s music?’ That’s what happens.” 📢

Dweezil Zappa: *Hot Rats Live* tours the UK in December. For more information, visit www.dweezilzappa.com.

Four years after his solo debut, **Bruce Soord** is back with his second album, *All This Will Be Yours*. The Pineapple Thief frontman was inspired by the birth of his daughter last year, but the music isn't without its dark side...

Words: Philip Wilding **Images:** Steve Brown

Bruce Soord is late. Approximately three years late. Some time after the release of his self-titled debut in the autumn of 2015 and this year's *All This Will Be Yours*, Soord had promised the Kscope label a second solo album.

"I just wanted the cash," he laughs. "I did remember thinking, 'Shit, I'd better get this album finished because the label paid me for it years ago.' I was very late and I'd spent all the money as well! Luckily, they didn't send the men in suits down to find me, not that I imagine Kscope have many men in suits..."

Soord is home in Yeovil after what must have felt like a life-changing 12 months or so: a new and unexpected baby, an Indian summer of success for his band The Pineapple Thief, and a new solo album to promote too. Soord, for all the brooding melancholia in his music, not least his latest record, is a charming, occasionally chirpy interviewee, landed happily in life, even among the chaos of a new baby and a band on the rise, plateauing some 20 years after he first made music under The Pineapple Thief name.

"Musically speaking," he says, "I just feel so much more mature as a songwriter and artist. A lot of that has had to do with *Magnolia* [The Pineapple Thief's 2014 album] – the world changed for me in how seriously I take my craft and the business of being an artist, and that's what I've worked on for the last four years and that's paid off. I've become a much better mixing engineer too, and my songwriting, playing, my voice has become a much more usable instrument. I listen back to the early stuff and I'm like, 'Oh god, I sound like I'm nine years old.'"

"And then you've got the life stuff: I've got 12-year-old twins, and then we had a bit of a surprise with the baby girl,

The Pineapple Thief frontman is looking remarkably well, considering he lives with a tiny Sleep Thief.

Robin, who was born last October. When my wife, Liz, found out that she was pregnant, we were like, 'You're kidding me?!' We'd just started off-loading our kids to secondary school and relaxing and another turned up! But when she was born, it was the kick up the ass that we needed; we were getting into sleeping in, drinking too much, so I was quite surprised how much it reinvigorated me, it gave me a lust for life again."

Which might explain why Robin was the seeding and starting point for Soord's long-awaited second solo album. Three months after her birth, and after a brief but fruitful series of sessions working up new Pineapple Thief material with drummer Gavin Harrison, Soord wrote his first song for the album, *The Secrets I Know*; occasionally writing and recording with Robin sleeping in the studio next to him.

"It's not extraordinary," says Soord, "but it's still a big deal and it shakes things up and suddenly I'm in the studio with this newborn baby asleep, right, what shall I write about? I've still got a little playpen in the studio, which is fine as long as I don't record anything, otherwise I get rattles and shakers and screams and all sorts of noise in the background. That might be the next album..."

All This Will Be Yours is an elegiac, brittle and beautiful record. It has echoes, naturally, of the day job with The Pineapple Thief, but is also reminiscent in parts of Steven Wilson when he began to push the artistic envelope with his solo work. There is sonorous melody, there are passages of what sound like regret; there is even, pleasingly, little dashes of dance and trip hop. It's a glorious racket that fades and rallies and then drops away again, undulating on thrumming acoustic guitars, splashes of piano and gentle, percussive loops. That said, Soord couldn't quite stomach the record once he'd finished it.



“I blame The Pineapple Thief!”



“Now we’re such a collaborative band, I think that writing relationship has given us this late run of success, so I’m now really happy with giving away control.”



“You should wake up happy and positive and love every moment you’ve got. I’m nowhere near as angry as I was. In my 20s I was awful, I’m glad I came out the other end.”

“I blame The Pineapple Thief!” There’s that laugh again. “When I did the first solo album, I was still very much The Pineapple Thief. But now we’re such a collaborative band, I think that writing relationship has given us this late run of success, so I’m now really happy with giving away control, which wasn’t always the case. With the solo record I was on my own in the studio. Which can sometimes be a horrible thing, you and your ideas, no one to bounce off, I remember finishing it and saying to my wife, ‘I don’t know if this album is any good or not, I don’t know if I like it or not.’”

Though what Soord did know was that, unlike The Pineapple Thief, he knew exactly where he wanted his second solo album to go, sonically, lyrically and thematically. He talks about The Pineapple Thief throwing all their ideas together and letting their songs grow organically. Swapping ideas and how cutting the feedback from his bandmates can be: “Steve [Kitch], our keyboard player, is the most brutal, which I like, even if I hate him sometimes! So when it comes back it’s honest and I know in my heart that what’s been said is true.”

Soord, engaging, upbeat and self-deprecating, is hard to square with the man behind the music he makes. Let’s not forget, his latest record started with the celebration of a new life and his band are in the midst of an upward spiral, having played a headline show at London’s Shepherd’s Bush Empire last year, and are starting their first North American tour this October — and Soord has helped build the band from the ground up. When this writer first interviewed The Pineapple Thief in 2010, which was pretty much Soord in all but name, he had to rush back to the office and his regular job after our interview. In the evening, he’d hurry home again and straight into the studio.

“In hindsight, I have no idea how I did it,” he says, “I’d shoot back after work and be in the studio until late at night and it did put a lot of pressure on my family. I probably sacrificed a lot of time I should have spent with them, so when it got to the point of where I needed to follow my passion, and thought I could make the leap, my wife was like, ‘Yes please, I’ll support you.’ Since then things have gone well. I feel so lucky that I’m making a living.

“You and I talked about us finally headlining the Shepherd’s Bush Empire last year, and we had a joke as a band about it. Years ago we supported Blackfield [in 2011] at the Empire, and we came off and we were like, our plan is to sell out the Empire. We didn’t quite sell it out last time, it was full though and we’re going back next year, but it was packed out. When we found ourselves in the dressing room as headliners, it was like, ‘Shit, we did it.’ None of us saw that coming. You think that we started in 1999 and think how many bands have that real creative launch after their 10th album, you know.”

Which makes the melancholia of *All This Will Be Yours* all the more extraordinary. Soord, or an approximation thereof, blinking wearily in to each day’s new light before turning wretchedly away, a description that makes him chuckle.

“It is melancholic though, I’ve always been that way,” he says, sounding not in the least bit melancholic at all. “I must

You can lose the melancholic expression, Bruce, you’re fooling precisely no one.

just channel all my melancholia into the music and then I’m left with happiness.

“I think as I get older you’re very much more conscious of what’s happening in the world, especially if you’ve got kids growing up. But I was conscious not to go: I’ve had a baby and made a record, because that’s not what it’s about. It was more: I’ve got this new daughter and I’m looking at the world and thinking, ‘What in God’s name is happening?’

“On the title track of the album I sing about pushing past 158. That’s the house two doors down from us — it’s a very notorious drug house. Channel 5 wanted to do a documentary on it. It’s just so sad to see these young kids hooked on heroin. As much as the rest of the neighbours want to get rid of it, I just feel overwhelmingly sad, so that informed the whole record, juxtaposing my fear of what’s going on in the world to bringing in this new child.

“That said, the one positive of reaching 46 is that you care less about things; you’re more positive about the time you do have. On *The Secrets I Know*, I sing about the new day lighting up my baby’s eyes and I think that’s what I need to do: you should wake up happy and positive and love every moment you’ve got. I’m nowhere near as angry as I was. In my 20s I was awful, I’m glad I came out the other end.”

That said, Soord and his album leaves the listener with a tangible sense of sorrow and longing wrapped up in a lyric that places the protagonist looking back from beyond the grave at his wife and family mourning his loss at his funeral. As understanding and patient as his partner must be, what must she have made of *One Day I Will Leave You*?

“I was writing that and thinking, ‘Can I really sing this?’ Even for me it was melancholic but cathartic too. I was looking at Robin, and she personifies happiness and loves everything about life, and then I was thinking, ‘This bloody life’, and you have this image of your loved ones being at your funeral, this front row of tragedy and pain, and I thought, ‘That’s what I’m going to write even though it’s fucking depressing.’

“I also take some light from it. I’m spending time now with my kids and my wife; everything we do will stay with them when I’ve gone, all those memories, as the lyric says, all these perfect moments bound into one, that’s what will happen after I’ve gone, I’ll be with them in that regard, in that way, that’s unquestionable. So I sang it and I thought, ‘God, that was quite intense.’”

Before we hang up, we talk about middle age; how you reach a point in your life and realise there’s more time behind you than what’s left in front of you, how contemplative it can all become. For his part, Soord welcomes the years. As he puts it, without the wealth of age and experience, there would be no second solo album.

“Life is bound to change the way that you approach what you want to share with people,” he says, “You can’t help by be shaped by the things you’ve done because, ultimately, they’re the things you are.”

All This Will Be Yours is out now via Kscope.
See www.brucesoord.com for more information.



Fred Deakin

He was one half of experimental dance duo Lemon Jelly and has just released his sci-fi themed new solo work that he's also bringing to the stage. The evidence is certainly there, but now we have to ask:

How prog are Fred Deakin and Lemon Jelly? Words: Johnny Sharp

When you present the world with a “science fiction space opera” set in a future where humans are emigrating to Mars to escape ecological disaster, it’s no major surprise to find the prog universe embracing you as a fellow traveller. And naturally, we responded warmly to Fred Deakin’s new album *The Lasters*, which he’s currently bringing to the stage as a costumed-up, visually enhanced musical drama.

But on closer inspection it turns out this is somehow the same Fred Deakin who was one half of Lemon Jelly, the loungey dance duo that gave us *The Staunton Lick* and *Nice Weather For Ducks*, fond of sampling twee TV dialogue and languid folk and jazz licks. A man with a background at the more mischievous end of the club scene who once actively attempted to induce mass weeping on dancefloors. That provoked us to ask the question: Just how prog are Fred Deakin and Lemon Jelly?

“I’d like to think I’ve always made a kind of progressive art pop – you can still hear that now, I think.”



New album, *The Lasters*.

In terms of his musical evolution, Deakin would probably say “not particularly”. The West Londoner grew up in the era of early 80s post-punk, as established pop templates were torn up and artfully – or anarchically – deconstructed.

“I was lucky enough to see the likes of The Raincoats and Swell Maps in my teens,” Deakin says. “I loved XTC, 23 Skidoo and A Certain Ratio – not massively prog really...”

Then again, what was post-punk if not a form of progressive pop?

“Yeah, I agree, and some great dance music evolved out of that 80s guitar

thing – danceable music with a bit of artfulness,” he says. “I’d like to think I’ve always made a kind of progressive art pop – you can still hear that now, I think.”

It was the physical products as much as the music that captivated young Deakin. “I lived in a record shop for most of my teenage years,” he explains. “And what I was particularly inspired by was the sleeves. The wall of 7-inch singles at Rough Trade – that was the chapel, where you went to worship.”

He’d tape live gigs on a Walkman and then design sleeves for them, and after decamping to college in Edinburgh in 1984, he’d create inventive posters and flyers as he began DJing at increasingly unorthodox and eclectic club nights.

His most infamous project was involvement in the club night Misery, based around the hipster-baiting ethos of offering a truly rubbish time for all.

“We’d send out flyers asking people to pay a pound extra to get in – and they queued up demanding to do just that! We made people do the ironing because no one likes housework but someone’s got to do it. We had an A&E corner for fake wounds – it went on and on.”

Among the stunts they pulled was placing onions around the venue to make people cry.

“I was inspired by Reggie Perrin’s Grot shop. A lot of people didn’t understand, but 200 regulars found their tribe,” he says.

After returning to London in 1994 to study graphic design, Deakin continued to DJ and specialise in the kind of club nights that challenged people’s notions of cool and uncool, good and bad music.

Cheese was one such example, borne of Deakin’s fascination with lost jewels of easy listening – and those tarred by the brush of overfamiliarity.

Lemon Jelly in 2003. Wilma and Betty just out of shot, clearly.



Lord knows what
homework this
professor sets...





“We would play the theme from *It’s A Knockout* – a tune called *Bean Bag* by Herb Alpert. If you don’t think that’s a joyful piece of music, I don’t know where you’re coming from.”

Subsequent London club night Impotent Fury featured a ‘wheel of fortune’ which would be spun every 30 minutes to decide which genre would be played for the next half-hour.

“The good thing about the internet is that it has made people re-evaluate almost everything,” Deakin says. “But 20 years ago there would be people who said ‘all easy listening is shit’ or ‘all prog is shit’, and they were wrong. Or they might say all country or all pop is rubbish. It was a plea for tolerance.”

By that point, Deakin and old childhood acquaintance Nick Franglen were making records of their own as Lemon Jelly, an act that seemed to elude categorisation from their first releases, 1998’s *The Bath* EP and their 2000 debut album, *Lemonjelly.ky*. Loungecore? Trip-hop? Downtempo? Chill-out? Either way, a distinct penchant for acoustic sounds, vintage voices and analogue warmth was clearly at work there.

“Although we had beats and synthesisers, we understood the value of guitars and strings to bring emotion into a track. It was always all about making people feel something.”

One obviously prog-leaning aspect to their music was a natural tendency towards longer songs – six to nine minutes being their natural habitat. “Yeah, we liked to create a mood,” Deakin agrees. “The whole Philip Glass notion of repeating but slowly changing something. We were hopefully exploring it from a more cerebral and relaxed space.”

A subtle signpost to what Deakin would get up to later came with the concept that ended up running through Lemon Jelly’s Mercury and Brit-nominated 2002 album, *Lost Horizons*.

“We didn’t set out to make a concept record, but the theme [about travel and the relationship between urban and rural living] developed mid-record. It all came together quite naturally.”

Lost Horizons also proved to be a peak for Lemon Jelly in terms of visuals, with a six-panel, illustrated gatefold sleeve reflecting a key theme within the record, with panels in daylight where the countryside looks lush and inviting, and at night where the city’s bright lights beckon us in.

“I still get weekly requests for the poster to be reprinted,” Deakin admits. “People really connect with it.”

When it came to live shows, Deakin showed more signs of a progressive mindset, requesting fans to show up in certain clothes or colours, and arranging interactive events. “We wouldn’t have support bands,” he says. “We’d have game shows or treasure hunts – all sorts of crazy stuff.”

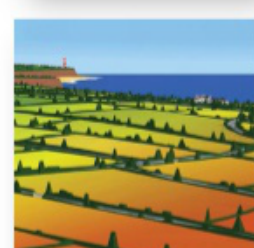
Lemon Jelly’s final album, 2005’s ‘64-’95, reflected Deakin’s desire to channel the full diversity of his musical tastes, ranging from the years in the title. Then his contribution to *The Triptych* series of compilation albums in 2007 (hailed by *The Guardian* as “the greatest mixtape ever”) was a further reflection of his “very Catholic tastes”. Among the featured artists were Todd Rundgren, Supertramp, Pentangle and Spirit, juxtaposed with techno, jazz, soul, grime and pretty much everything else you can imagine.

Since then, Deakin has continued DJing and ran his graphic design

“We liked to create a mood. The whole Philip Glass notion of repeating but slowly changing something. We were hopefully exploring it from a more cerebral and relaxed space.”

Definitely a member of the extended prog family.

Lemon Jelly albums, top to bottom: 2000’s *Lemonjelly.ky*, 2002’s *Lost Horizons* and 2005’s ‘64-’95.



company Airside until 2012. He is now Professor of Interactive Digital Arts at London’s University of the Arts. But evidently there are still musical itches he wants to scratch, and three years ago he began to bring together the ideas for *The Lasters*.

“I was looking for a new challenge,” he admits. “The ‘concept’ album has come back in vogue, but often I felt they weren’t really concept albums – they’re thematically linked bunches of songs.”

“I was inspired by stuff like *War Of The Worlds* – a classic album with the actual HG Wells story in it – and Harry Nilsson’s *The Point!* As a kid I saw the stage show of that in London [in 1977] when Mickey Dolenz and Davy Jones of The Monkees performed it. I remember that really fondly.”

Being a lifelong sci-fi fan (“I did my masters dissertation on Philip K Dick”) he managed to marry futuristic themes with topical issues such as climate change and technology’s apparent role in both humanity’s problems and potential solutions to save it.

“The starting point for me was the image of a mother watching her daughter from a satellite, unable to reach out to her, and the daughter feeling abandoned – it all evolved from there.”

The Lasters is based “at the century’s end”, as “rising oceans and radiation” are driving us to employ the kind of technology that is blamed for such problems to help us emigrate to Mars.



PRESS

Fred Deakin, seeing stars.

Meanwhile, the conflict between the interplanetary migrants and the “true earthers”, determined to bring Earth back to basics, is symbolised by a wife fleeing Earth while her stubbornly luddite husband and loyalty-torn daughter stay here.

Do we detect echoes of Brexit causing rifts between friends and family back here in UK circa 2019?

“Yeah, I guess I subconsciously tapped into what’s going on – the notion of humanity split into two tribes that can’t stand each other,” Deakin says. “But the family dysfunction was also used as a metaphor for climate emergency. And there’s also a plea for reconciliation and forgiveness towards the end.”

The musical backing for all this is based around much more traditional song-based stylings and organic instrumentation than were often found on Lemon Jelly’s records, with Ash’s

Charlotte Hatherley, singer Abi Sinclair and even debut vocal performances from Deakin himself bringing the story to life.

“That was another massive mountain to climb for me,” he admits. “I’d never sung before. But I’m a big fan of those traditional song elements. I actually love the guitar solo [of which there are some striking examples on *The Lasters*] as a means of emotional expression. I think the guitar is second only to the voice as a means of human expression.”

Unlike a lot of concept albums that create a woolly and often impenetrable narrative, *The Lasters* has a Radio 4 play feel to the dialogue, augmenting the songs’ role in driving the story forward.

The tale peaks with a mixture of humour and poignancy in *Just Our Best*, where warring parents apologise for the mess they’ve made for their offspring, and indeed to each other with startling lines such as, ‘*When I nailed your jacket to the table... when I told you that your hair looked awful... that time I put the dogshit in your bagel... we were only trying to do our best.*’

The album was crowdfunded and released in September, and Deakin has also been keen to bring it further to life visually, first with an ornate (and none-more-prog) triple gatefold sleeve design featuring scenes from the story rendered as if in stained glass windows, along with augmented reality visuals.

For recent live shows to promote the album, the four main characters have adopted costumes which, while not quite approaching Gabriel-esque levels of theatricality, reflect the very prog-friendly idea that the performers channel the stories being told in more than just the songs themselves.

“I think there’s an opportunity to create a more immersive, interactive experience in a live show. Have we moved on since *The Wall*? Has there been anything more immersive than that?”

Answers on a triple gatefold, prog purists, but if those are the standards he’s aiming for, he’s surely as welcome as anyone in these pages.

“I want music to be an accessible, immersive, interactive experience,” he says.

“Everyone’s welcome... as long as you don’t mind the onions on the floor.” 🍷

The Lasters is out now via Kickstarter. Head over to www.kickstarter.com/projects/freddeakin/the-lasters for more information.



YOUR SHOUT!

From lounge-dance to full-blown concept albums. It rather begs the question: how prog are Lemon Jelly and Fred Deakin?

“Prog? Not really. They share something of the psychedelic sensibility of The Orb, maybe Underworld’s mellow moments (and share those acts’ strong visual aesthetic) and an absurdist streak à la Flaming Lips. I can see why they might have a bit of crossover appeal with our audience.”

Andy Morton

“Who? They must be prog... so obscure I’ve never heard of them.”

Brian Tait

“Yes, trippy trance prog. Lemon Jelly are allowed to pass.”

Chris Bembridge

“100% unfamiliar with them, can we get back to acts people have heard of? I still say OMD or The Stranglers should be in this question!”

Jason Richards

“Always loved their tunes, Lemon Jelly struck me as very original at the time. I didn’t know they were still going if they are.”

Tim Burness

“Is prog trance a thing? If so, Lemon Jelly would slot in nicely. Great first two albums and the only people ever to put Angmering into a song.”

Phil White

“Lemon Jelly were/are utter genius. Every track is stuffed full of subtlety, humour, catchiness and utter charm. The packaging added to the delight.”

Colin Dent

“If Public Service Broadcasting and Nordic Giants have been embraced into the community then so should Lemon Jelly. I am sure they have been an influence somewhere. Spoken word spliced into experimental electronica, huge themes of space and elements, as well as a great sense of humour. And even a concept album to boot. Normally part of the chill out crowd, but a band/artist the broad-minded prog fan would love.”

Paul Leader

“Lemon Jelly... I’ve always thought they were a bit proggy.”

Alison McAuliffe

“A cracking blend of sampling, electronics and live instrumentation. Saw them live twice... and definitely influenced me musically.”

Ben Harris-Hayes

“Lemon Jelly - as unsatisfying as the foodstuff. Something listened to once - ooh, that’s nice. Erm, OK, bored now. Boards Of Canada much better and most of Plaid infinitely so.”

Marina Organ

“What I have heard they are a bit prog but lightweight. Not something I shall listen to again.”

Paul Swanton

“*The Staunton Lick* is my happy song. Can’t help but be happy when listening to it.”

Lee Stevens

“Lemon Jelly lost its flavour after a few spins. Fluke, on the other hand...”

Mini Kingman

FLYING COLORS

The US supergroup are back! Five years after their last record, **Flying Colors** have released their third album, *Third Degree*. **Casey McPherson**, **Neal Morse** and **Mike Portnoy** talk expanding their sound, the setbacks of supergroupdom and their rigorous songwriting process.

Words: Nick Shilton **Images:** Jim Arbogast

Some things are worth the wait. The American supergroup that features a who's who of prog, with the bandmembers' CVs boasting everyone from Dream Theater to Spock's Beard, have finally released their appositely titled *Third Degree*, and it is a superb listen from start to finish. The first single released from the album, *More*, bears a significant Muse influence, but the album features arguably the band's most diverse material to date, from the glorious, uplifting ballad *You Are Not Alone* to the jazzy *Geronimo* and the jaunty *Love Letter*. For keyboardist Neal Morse, it shows a significant evolution in the band's sound.

"Our first album was more pop-oriented," he explains. "*Third Degree* is a little more intense and has some soaring, intense, darker melodic sensibilities. But *Love Letter* brings a bouncing Beach Boys lightness and *Last Train Home* takes you on a different journey as well. The juxtaposition of the light and dark is maybe a little more extreme this time, which is great."

Drummer Mike Portnoy sees things a little differently: "The songs are in a similar direction as the first two albums – we've just expanded on it a little more. We're more mature as people and also more familiar with each other and the process."

From Portnoy's perspective, the key change within the band is how the dynamic has developed.

"When we made the first album [*Flying Colors*] in 2011, it was like a blind date," he says. "Neal and I had worked together, and Steve Morse [guitarist] and Dave LaRue [bassist] had worked together, but it was the first time the five of us had all worked together. The first album was an experiment. The second album was a reaction to that experiment, because we had played some shows together. But here we are, eight years after the first album and we now have eight years' familiarity of dealing with each other, writing music and spending time together."

Portnoy describes Flying Colors generally, and *Third Degree* specifically, as "a giant melting pot. You have extremes from dark songs like *More* to poppy Beach Boys/Beatles ones like *Love Letter*. And then there are prog epics like *Crawl* and really soaring, melodic, emotional songs like *You Are Not Alone*. Any one song does not really give the full picture of what this band is about."

Indeed, after releasing *More* as the debut single, the band were keen to show off other material from the album to showcase its variety.

"We knew coming out of the gate with *More* was going to give one impression, so we followed up with *You Are Not Alone* just to show there is a huge balance on this album,"



“The whole idea of putting these five people together was these five specific people. That’s the beauty of Flying Colors.”

Mike Portnoy



As supergroups go, this one is pretty super. L-R: Steve Morse, Neal Morse, Casey McPherson, Dave LaRue, Mike Portnoy.

Portnoy continues. “You really need to experience the whole album to get the true range of the band.”

Geronimo and *Love Letter* in particular broaden the Flying Colors sonic palette, and the band are unapologetic about potentially challenging their audience. “We always just write and play from the heart,” says Morse. “Paul McCartney always said, ‘The first thing you have to do is try to create something that really pleases you. Then you hope and trust that other people are going to love it as well.’”

“I just hope and trust Mike likes it!” vocalist Casey McPherson interjects.

“And if I don’t, believe me, you’ll know!” Portnoy laughs. “And we’ll keep working on it ‘til we all do.”

“Our first album was more pop-oriented. *Third Degree* is a little more intense and has some really soaring, darker melodic sensibilities.”

Neal Morse



Portnoy, McPherson and Morse: full of bright ideas.

“That gives me a lot of confidence,” McPherson muses. “Mike really helps me to feel comfortable throwing in off-the-wall creative ideas. Because I don’t have to wonder if we’re going to regret it later.”

According to Morse, Portnoy’s enthusiasm frequently carries the day. “Mike tends to know very early on what’s working and what isn’t. We’ve all learned to lean on that and trust him when we’re confused.”

What is undeniable is the accessibility of *Third Degree*. Portnoy sells the album as featuring “plenty of ear candy”, which Morse in turn contends is largely organic.

“The original concept of Flying Colors was to make something that was more song-oriented,” he explains, “but which still had progressive elements and a high degree of musicality. When we were looking at singers we considered

different rock singers with high ranges. Then Mike threw Casey’s hat in the ring. I thought having him would be cool because it’d be really soulful and a little more modern. He brings this vibe to Flying Colors that’s really unique.”

Indeed, much of the band’s distinctiveness derives from their singer, whose emotionally charged voice is a highlight of *Third Degree*. “Vocally I worked a bit differently this time; I sang through a vintage vocal chain to give it a more 70s feel,” McPherson explains. “Also lyrically, there’s a lot of tragedy and hope in this record, which I really love. *The Loss Inside* is about that depth of feeling where you are grieving and there seems to be no end in sight. Then *Crawl* talks about how going through the hard stuff is part of learning how to enjoy the beautiful stuff and how we get there. And *You Are Not Alone* encompasses

a lot of that too. I tend to focus on the dark stuff a lot! But Neal always helps me see the light to some degree.”

Third Degree’s writing sessions first took place in December 2016.

According to Portnoy, while McPherson and both Neal and guitarist Steve Morse (unrelated) present vast numbers of writing ideas, Flying Colors operate very democratically, and subject each song to an exhaustive review process during its writing and arrangement. “Neal, Casey and Steve come in with a million ideas, but none of them end up unchanged. Once we do end up with the final song, it’s taken a while to get there.”

The band emerged from their initial writing session with seven songs, but felt that they needed more material. It took a further two

years before conflicting schedules eased to allow reconvening chez Portnoy. There, the quintet reviewed what they had previously written, and to their collective surprise, chose not to revise those songs.

“Since Flying Colors very actively changes things when we get together generally, I had assumed that when we got back together at Mike’s house and listened through we’d do that. Get a coffee, lose a chorus; take a conference call, lose a song!” Morse jokes. “I was shocked when we listened to the older stuff and everyone was like, ‘That’s cool. Let’s move on.’”

Instead, focus shifted to composing three further songs, namely album opener *The Loss Inside*, centrepiece *Last Train Home* and bonus track *Waiting For The Sun*.



Having originally intended to cap the album at an hour, the band assembled almost 80 minutes of material. “We accepted it was going to have to be longer than 60 minutes because everybody had favourites,” Portnoy explains.

The nine-minute *Waiting For The Sun* wasn’t yet fully realised, and to allow more time for its development it was moved to the bonus disc, where it features alongside five different versions of songs on the main album.

The elephant in the room is that five-year gap between their second album, *Second Nature*, and *Third Degree*. While all five members of the band juggle myriad bands, it’s Steve Morse’s commitments to Deep Purple that place the greatest restriction on the time available for Flying Colors.

“It’s hard for Steve to know his availability six months in advance,” Portnoy says. “We

started making this record in December 2016 and intended a quicker turnaround. When we felt we were a few songs short, we just put everything back on the shelf. And lo and behold, it took two more years before we could complete the writing process.

“None of us would choose for that to be the case in the future. We wish we could do more than just nine or 10 shows per cycle. But that’s just the reality of our situation as it is now. Maybe in the future, if time opens up, if Deep Purple ever finally retire, all five of us would love to be more active, not only in terms of studio records but also in terms of touring.”

Flying Colors have had an unchanged line-up since the beginning. And while there have

in Tennessee, and they are currently on tour in the States. Four European dates are scheduled for December before the band conclude a short touring cycle for *Third Degree* on Cruise To The Edge in March 2020.

McPherson, Morse and Portnoy all admit some frustration about the paucity of Flying Colors live shows. “We wish it were different,” Portnoy sighs. “But these shows wouldn’t be happening at all if Steve hadn’t so kindly offered himself on Deep Purple’s days off in certain cities where we could make it happen. Even these 10 shows we’re doing were incredibly difficult to pull off. It’s disappointing because we know there are fans all around the world that would love to see this band play live.”



been scheduling challenges and limitations, Portnoy is adamant that he would not change the personnel. He reveals to *Prog* that, on occasion, when Deep Purple obligations have rendered the guitarist unavailable, Steve has suggested they should recruit a substitute — but Portnoy has refused.

“This is the line-up,” Portnoy states stridently. “It’s not like we’re a full-time band. The whole idea of putting these five people together was these five specific people. That’s the beauty of Flying Colors. I honestly think that if any of the five of us were unable to do it, I wouldn’t see the point in doing the band.”

With crammed individual diaries, once again Flying Colors’ live appearances to promote *Third Degree* are limited. At the end of August the band performed their first full show in five years at Neal Morse’s Morsefest

As on their two previous tours, the band plan to film a live DVD, which may offer some solace to those who don’t have the opportunity to attend a show.

While no concrete plans exist for the band beyond March next year and it’s never likely to represent a full-time commitment for any of its members, all concerned are determined that Flying Colors will continue.

“I do this band because I love it and it’s special to all of us,” says McPherson. “We recognise the chemistry that you can’t manufacture. Because it’s not our main bread and butter we really appreciate every single show, every single day we write together. It’s not work. So for that, I’m very grateful.” ☺

Third Degree is out now via Music Theories. Visit www.flyingcolorsmusic.com for more information.

Everything Is Possible

Ex-Talk Talk and .O.rang player **Paul Webb** has finally returned as **Rustin Man**. He discusses his unique way of recording, how he found his own voice, and how the legacy of Talk Talk and Mark Hollis lives on.

Words: Joe Banks **Images:** Lawrence Watson

Seventeen years might seem like a long gap between albums, but time moves differently when you're in a world of your own.

Since the release of 2002's *Out Of Season*, the first Rustin Man album (in collaboration with Portishead's Beth Gibbons), Paul Webb has found a way of working where music has stopped being a discrete job and instead become part of the fabric of his everyday life. The family home — “a barn in a field in the middle of nowhere,” according to Webb — has been transformed into a cunningly concealed studio space, where instruments are disguised as desks and ornaments, and mic leads worm their way into every room. “I’ve built a place where everything is possible,” he tells *Prog*. “I can try anything, it doesn’t matter. It’s just about feeling at ease and exploring.”

Webb has a history of musical adventurism. In the 1990s, he was one half of .O.Rang, an experimental duo who produced an exotic fusion of post-rock and Fourth World maximalism, and whose albums are ripe for rediscovery. But it’s his role as the bass player in Talk Talk for which Webb is most renowned, participating in the band’s incredible journey from the melancholic synth pop of *The Party’s Over* to the deconstructed art rock of *Spirit Of Eden*. Under the visionary leadership of Mark Hollis, Talk Talk developed a unique approach to playing and recording, stripping songs back to their very essence and creating a sense of space in their music, inviting the listener’s imagination to roam at will in a three-dimensional sonic landscape.

Drift Code, the new Rustin Man album, is inspired by similar principles. While the songwriting is more traditional than those last

two Talk Talk records, there’s nevertheless the same sense of a whole world having been created, one that’s been utterly unaffected by the vagaries of our turbulent modern age. For Webb, “Music is a utility — it’s about taking someone to a place they haven’t been to before.” *Drift Code* sounds timeless, its nods to various periods in musical history less retro styling and more about returning to a source of artistic truth. Whether it’s the pastoral darkness of *Vanishing Heart*, the Vaudeville blues of *Judgement Train*, the Canterbury-esque swing of *Our Tomorrows*, or the sinister cabaret of *Light The Light*, the moods and textures these songs evoke feel incredibly vital and alive.

It’s remarkable that Webb has managed to capture this feeling given the album’s lengthy gestation, but it has much to do with his method of recording. Rather than complete one song then move onto the next, Webb has deliberately taken a more painterly approach, building up his sound palette layer by layer. Working from basic demos and the percussion tracks laid down by ex-Talk Talk drummer Lee Harris (Webb’s partner in .O.Rang), he recorded the bass parts for all the songs, then the guitars, then the keys, et cetera.

“The interesting thing was that returning to track one again was like hearing it as a fresh track. I hadn’t lived with it for months, so you have a different perspective on it,” says Webb. “You go back to the song and wonder, has it improved? I carried on doing that, until you wake up one morning, listen to a track and think, that’s finished.”

Webb continues, “The amazing thing about this record, when I look at the time it took and at what I recorded, is how for instance I never changed the guitar parts — all I did was edit them and create space for something else. There’s no instrument that I wasted time on doing. The guitar part that was recorded is what’s on the track.”

Rather than getting bogged down in details, it was the sense of distance created by working over an extended period of time



Talk Talk, L-R: Lee Harris, Mark Hollis and Paul Webb in November 1984.

A close-up portrait of Paul Webb, a man with dark hair, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark jacket over a dark t-shirt. The background is a textured wall with vertical red and black stripes.

Paul Webb: now with
vocals front and centre.

“

***In The Court Of The Crimson
King* was a big reference
point for Talk Talk.**

”



Exploring his world,
layer by layer.

“
**The world does feel different
without Mark here. The
outpouring of love for him
and the band, that
was overwhelming.**
”

that allowed Webb to trust his instincts. “It became not me. It’s not about me as a guitarist, it’s just a guitarist playing on the record. It’s not even me playing it anymore.”

Another key part of the recording process involved Webb finding his voice. While he had sung in both Talk Talk and .O.Rang, this is the first time that his vocals have taken centre stage. It’s an apposite image, because Webb approached each song as an actor portraying a character – once again, accessing a ‘truthful’ performance by disassociating himself from the process. The results are tremendous, a more weathered take on the Robert Wyatt school of English soul, which begs the question: why hasn’t he sung properly before?

“You know what, I think I’m just a late developer!” Webb says. “It’s just taken me all this time to find my feet. This is the first time I’ve written songs for my voice.”

While the songs on *Drift Code* all pack an emotional punch, Webb emphasises that he is playing various characters throughout: “That’s what sees me through it. I’ve experimented with singing on a personal level, but it feels claustrophobic to me. Earnestness is a very hard thing to portray when you’re singing. Mark and Beth have it,

they’re both pouring their heart out. But for me, it’s more about Tom Waits and David Bowie, it’s about storytelling. It’s the same as going to the theatre and seeing a really strong performance – but when the actors walk off stage, they’re back in their lives again. I think of it like that.”

Just a few weeks after the release of *Drift Code* came the news of Mark Hollis’ death. “I was very saddened and very shocked,” says Webb. “The world does feel different without him here. The outpouring of love for him and the band, that was overwhelming.” Hollis’ total retreat from the music industry to spend more time with his family seemed a bold and perplexing move to many, but made sense to Webb: “Knowing him, I’m not surprised at what he did; he always had control of his life and how he wanted to live it. He was so passionate about music, so intense – but it was something that took it out of him as well. He’d done what he’d set out to do. I think he knew when to stop.”

Webb remembers, “He was like a mentor, he inspired me to go on and do what I did. He’d play me records like Miles Davis’ *Sketches Of Spain* and Van Morrison’s *Astral Weeks*, and just tell me what he loved about them. Mark liked Traffic, Can, Weather Report, and he was also into King Crimson,

as was I... all that Mellotron. In *The Court Of The Crimson King* was a big reference point for Talk Talk.”

Webb finds it difficult to define exactly why Talk Talk have become such an influential band, but still remembers how special *Spirit Of Eden* felt to him: “From the minute I heard the demos from Mark, Tim and Lee, I absolutely loved it; there was such a feeling of space in it. When the mix was finished, it felt like the best thing we’d ever done. I was so confident that everybody outside the studio would think the same. I was shocked that it wasn’t received that well when it was released. The record company definitely didn’t like it.”

Hopefully, it won’t take so long for *Drift Code* to find its audience, with plans underway for Rustin Man to play live. “It’s early days, but I’d love to do it. It’ll be quite funny fronting a band, that’ll be a new one.” Webb also reveals that a total of 18 songs were worked on during the *Drift Code* sessions, with the album tracks being the first to have “gone over the finishing line”. He’s currently working on completing the remaining nine. So there won’t be such a big gap until the next album?

“Oh no, I’m in the fast lane now!” 🌀

Drift Code is out now via Domino. See www.rustinman.com for more information.

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Voyager, L-R: Alex Canion,
Ashley Doodkorte, Simone
Dow, Daniel Estrin, Scott Kay.

Prog joins **Daniel Estrin** and **Simone Dow** of Aussie proggers **Voyager** backstage at Space Rocks in London to discuss the band's surprising new label signing, how ABBA were prog, and how their new seventh album *Colours In The Sun* is somehow their poppiest, heaviest and darkest release yet.

Words: Dave Ling **Images:** Carving A Giant Photography

We Have **Lift off!**



Daniel Estrin and Simone Dow are seated in a brightly lit dressing room within the bowels of London's O2 Arena satellite venue the Indigo. A keytar leans against the wall. On a stage nearby an audience listen as *The Sky At Night* presenter Chris Lintott and award-winning author Lucy Hawking, daughter of the late national treasure Stephen, conduct a scholarly debate over black holes and the mysteries of the universe.

The occasion, of course, is Space Rocks (read our review on page 116). Voyager's Estrin and Dow are honoured to be a part of this fine event, though the sharing of their band's name with a pair of robotic probes sent to study the outer reaches of the Solar System in 1977 is purely coincidental.

"In fact, the band was originally going to be called Orion," reveals singer Estrin. "We're not sci-fi geeks, but we do like to think that our music takes the listener on a musical voyage."

Formed in Perth, Western Australia, at the tail end of the last century, Voyager are routinely labelled as prog or tech metal, though they've long since outgrown such descriptions,

"There's a lot of prog snobbery around. 'You're not prog because of so-and-so.' That's just stupid."

Daniel Estrin

tinting their music with a palette of vivid and diverse sounds. Coined in the press release for the quintet's seventh album, *Colours In The Sun*, the term "epic electro progressive power pop metal" is a bit of a mouthful, though it covers a lot of bases and provides a useful summary of what Voyager do.

"Somebody recently called us synthwave prog and to me that's cool — and quite a bit simpler," Estrin chuckles. "If you don't like synths from the 1980s then you're probably not going to like us. And we see ourselves as progressive in the sense that there's a lot of odd time signatures. There's a lot of interesting stuff bubbling away underneath which might not at first be

too apparent because the songs can be quite poppy. I always say that Voyager has two layers — pop on top and prog on the bottom."

The singer's commitment to both pop music and the 1980s is readily apparent via a half-shaved hairstyle in the style The Human League's Phil Oakey. Neither is he ashamed of talking in the most glowing terms of pure-pop acts of the past.

"ABBA were brilliant," Estrin announces with glee. "This might be controversial to say but I think of them as a true progressive band because they made very difficult music sound extremely straightforward. I would never dream of comparing ourselves to ABBA, but our album has songs that appear quite simple, though if you break them down I can assure you that they aren't."

Throw in some Duran Duran, Tears For Fears and German band Modern Talking on the one hand and groups such as Tesseract and Leprous on the other, plus old-schoolers Yes, Genesis and Steve Hillage, and you'll get a fairly decent handle of where Voyager come from. Which is all well and good, of course, but how do the band slam

all of this stuff down into their own sound without allowing the listener to hear the joins?

"I wish I knew, I guess it just comes naturally," Estrin replies. "I can tell you that we never, ever say: 'Let's do a Duran Duran track with some heavy guitars.' That would be contrived."

Presentation-wise as well as musically, Voyager present a sense of cheer that's difficult to dislike. The video for the new album's song *Water Over The Bridge*, which begins with Dow and her six-string colleague Scott Kay gurning and cranking out its pneumatic riff on a walkabout around the city centre of Perth, is typically light-hearted. When asked whether most prog bands take themselves too seriously the pair nod in enthusiastic agreement.

"One hundred per cent," smiles Estrin. "C'mon, at the end of the day it's just entertainment. That's why Devin Townsend is always so brilliant live. Also, there's a lot of prog snobbery around, too. 'You're not prog because of so-and-so.' That's just stupid."

Unsurprisingly, given the enthusiasm with which this viewpoint is offered, Voyager have had their share of haters.

"Oh, I love haters – I want more of them!" the frontman guffaws. "I knew that when we signed to Season Of Mist, which is traditionally an extreme metal label, it would go extremely well for us or very badly. What I hoped for was more hateful YouTube comments. There just wasn't enough vitriol."

"Be careful what you wish for," chuckles Dow with a nervous eye roll.

Upon its release back in 2017, Voyager told *Prog* that their last album, *Ghost Mile*, was the band's most daring work to date, though with *Colours In The Sun* they've gone even further still.

Estrin: "It's our poppiest yet heaviest album, but also our darkest. I know that sounds quite strange..."

"...Until you hear it," agrees Dow helpfully. "But it's weird."

"It has some elements that we've not used before," the singer continues. "For instance, there's a drone section."

"We flirted with that on the last album with songs like *Ascension*,"

explains Dow, "but this time we really took the ball and ran with it."

"But it still has that whole synthwave, proggy element going on," Estrin stresses. "That's something that's been pervasive over our last few albums."

What helps enormously is that the group's current line-up – completed by bassist Alex Canion and drummer Ashley Doodkorte – has been consistent since 2011.

"We've become intuitive with one another; for the most part there's an understanding of what will and won't work even before we try it," enthuses Estrin. "I know that if I come up with a catchy chorus the rhythm section will add something nice and chunky underneath it. It helps that lot of these ideas were simmering around my head shortly after *Ghost Mile* was finished."

"We have a solid vision for the sound and the band," adds Dow. "That's a massive benefit of having had the same line-up for so long. It's like speaking a common language, though often words are not even necessary."

This sense of continuity extends to the retention of the creative partners used for the last two records,

**Voyager: on
a natural high.**



Matt Templeman handling the mix and Simon Struthers looking after the mastering.

“With a good backroom team like that, why change anything?” reasons Estrin. “And of course, those guys are improving as engineers just as the band grows as musicians and performers.”

Which isn’t to say that gremlins were conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, an early mix had to be vetoed.

“Matt was going for more of a raw, rock sound and it just didn’t work,” explains Estrin. “We all decided that it just wasn’t for us. It needed to be much more organic.”

“What was his quote, ‘Marshalls just don’t work with Voyager?’” Dow chuckles.

“Yeah,” the singer nods. “A lot of breathing space is required for layered music like ours. The chunky, proggy stuff only works with the synths placed over the top of that, but when instruments start competing for frequencies then it can be a problem.”

As a result, *Colours In The Sun* sounds modern, fresh and vibrant though the band claim its contemporary ambience is a happy coincidence.

“If you don’t like synths from the 1980s then you’re probably not going to like us.”

Daniel Estrin

“We never had a plan to make a record like that,” comments Dow. “That’s just what came out of the five of us being in a room together.”

It’s also a very uplifting piece of work.

“That’s an interesting comment, do you think so?” responds Estrin quizzically. “Our live show is very uplifting, but the album has some melancholic moments. I’d like to think that we’re upbeat but there’s also an underlying dark flipside to what we do.”

Until the slightly controversial signing with Season Of Mist, Voyager hadn’t enjoyed too much luck with record labels, hopping from one to the next and self-releasing their last couple of albums. However, having appeared at this summer’s Bloodstock and

Ramblin’ Man Fair they have nothing but good things to say of their dealings with the French company.

“I come from a black metal background and Season Of Mist have always had a reputation for being avant-garde,” Estrin muses. “I think it’s pretty gutsy of them to sign us.”

It’s been a long, hard journey for Voyager, with many thousands of air miles flown, and sticking to the Space Rocks theme it’s hard to ignore the feeling that something very special indeed has been placed onto the launch pad, with blue touch paper about to be lit. Many others might have made a far bigger thing of 2019 marking their 20th anniversary, but Daniel isn’t shouting it from the rooftops.

“What I really want is for people to discover us naturally and then go back and examine this huge back catalogue of ours,” he concludes. “Listen to that early stuff we did and we’ve become a completely different animal. That makes me very proud indeed.”

Colours In The Sun is out November 1 via Season Of Mist. See www.voyagerau.com for more information.



What the Fruupp?

From playing alongside Genesis and Queen to missed opportunities aplenty and an unlikely musical resurrection thanks to a modern rapper – *Prog* delves into the story behind Belfast proggers **Fruupp**.

Words: Malcolm Dome

They took their name from the remaining letters on a sheet of Letraset. They played on the same bills as ELO, Hawkwind, Genesis, Supertramp and Queen. But they were derailed from the big time by the lure of religion, and they lost the master tape for what could have been their breakthrough album in a fire. And, strangely, it was a Brooklyn rapper who brought the band to people's attention in the 21st century. Welcome to weird world of Fruupp.

The Northern Irish band were formed in 1971 by guitarist and vocalist Vincent McCusker, who was joined by Stephen Houston on keyboards, oboe and vocals, Peter Farrelly on lead vocals, flute and bass, and Martin Foye on drums. Less than two weeks after making their live debut on June 23, 1971

“We had long been inspired by what Genesis used to do: using surreal stories to link together songs onstage. We began to do it for Fruupp’s live performances.”

supporting Rory Gallagher at the Ulster Hall in Belfast, Fruupp relocated to London.

“If you wanted to play progressive music, there was no real chance to do it in Ireland back then,” recalls Paul Charles, who not only managed the band, but also wrote lyrics, and was their booking agent, roadie and sound engineer. “I was already living in London, and knew people who ran some of the clubs like The Marquee. So I got them quite a few gigs.

“The Fruupp guys all crashed in my flat back then, which was very cramped. It was amusing when I had to get up to go to work, and had to step over the bodies of the four bandmembers, who had been up partying all night.”

In March 1973, Fruupp recorded a four-song demo in a West London studio; this led to a record deal.

“I played the tape to so many different labels,” remembers Charles, “but it was Robin Blanchflower, who was A&R director at Dawn, who really enjoyed what Fruupp were doing. There was one track, *Decision*, which he particularly loved, and that sealed the deal.”

Dawn was the new progressive arm of Pye Records, and their enthusiasm appealed to the fledgling band.

“The fact that Pye had The Kinks on their roster was enough to persuade us to sign on the dotted line. There was interest from elsewhere, but we were happy with what Dawn were offering.”

Fruupp recorded their debut album, *Future Legends*, at Escape Studios in Kent, but soon hit a significant snag.

“There was a Stephen Houston song called *On A Clear Day*, which was based around Holst’s *The Planets Suite*. But at the last minute his estate refused to give us permission to use it,” Charles says. “So we had to abandon this and substitute *Graveyard Epistle* instead.

“We also didn’t much like the production [from Denis Taylor]. Whenever one of the band questioned the way anything sounded, he’d just say, ‘It’ll all work out in the mix’. We were naive enough to believe him. But of course it wasn’t okay.”

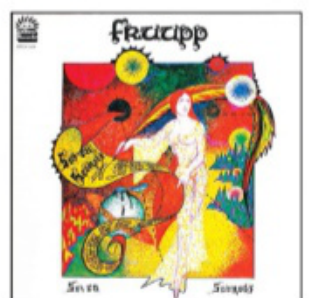
The album came out in October 1973, and sold decently. It might have done even better if *Decision*, the stand-out track, had been put out as a single. The light Celtic variations and melodic musical complexity could easily have charmed the chart.

“No progressive band wanted to be seen to release singles,” Charles explains. “It was all about albums, so there was no single put out from *Future Legends*. So we built up a strong following on the road, which in those days was what eventually got any band to the point of selling a lot of records.

“Genesis were a prime example of the way this worked,” he continues. “And we did a lot



1973's *Future Legends*.



1974's *Seven Secrets*.

Fruupp in 1975, with Stephen Houston's replacement John Mason second left.



1974's *The Prince Of Heaven's Eyes*.



CHERRY RED/PROMO

of shows opening for them. We got paid very little for these dates – only £5-10 – but given how big their audience was, we thought it was going to do us a lot of good.”

In April 1974, the band released their second album, *Seven Secrets*, which had again been recorded at Escape Studios, this time with David Lewis as producer. Once more, record sales were solid, and on the subsequent tour, Fruupp played free concerts at Phoenix Park in Dublin on June 29 and Nutts’ Corner in Belfast on June 30, in front of thousands of fans. There was definitely a feeling that the band were edging towards a major breakthrough into the big time.

For third album *The Prince Of Heaven's Eyes*, Fruupp took a decisive step into the fully conceptual world.

“We’d long been inspired by what Genesis used to do: using surreal stories to link together songs onstage,” Charles explains. “That was such a good idea I began to do it for Fruupp’s live performances. This worked so well that we then decided to take it a step further and start with a story around which all of the songs would be based. So I wrote a tale called *The Prince Of Heaven's Eyes*, which was about Mud Flanigan, a person who travels around Ireland looking for the end of the rainbow.”

Recording took place at Morgan Studio in North West London, with the band producing themselves. It was released in November 1974, preceded by Fruupp’s first ever single, *Prince Of Darkness*. Things seemed to moving in the band’s favour. They attracted the attention of Seymour Stein, who ran Sire Records in the States. He had already signed Barclay James

Harvest and Renaissance and was regarded as one of the most dynamic figures on the US music scene.

“Seymour heard *The Prince Of Heaven's Eyes* and loved it. He became a big fan of the band and wanted to sign them to an American deal. Pye were happy with this, and we booked a show at Farnborough Tech College on February 1, 1975, so Seymour could see us and the deal would be sealed.”

But fate now pulled the proverbial rug from under the band, and ensured their shot at fame missed the target. In early January, Houston told the band that he was leaving.

“Stephen had become religious and wanted to quit. But he told us that he’d stay on until a suitable replacement could be found. That was fair enough. But that’s not what happened.”

On January 19, after Fruupp did a gig at The Greyhound in Croydon, he disappeared, taking some of the band’s equipment and leaving a letter telling them that he wasn’t coming back. The equipment was subsequently recovered, yet it meant Fruupp had no choice but to do the crucial Farnborough date as a badly under-rehearsed trio. And Stein promptly withdrew his offer.

“Fruupp never did get the chance to play in America,” sighs Charles.

With the arrival of John Mason as Houston’s replacement, the band brushed aside the huge disappointment of losing the Sire deal, and recorded fourth album *Modern Maquerades* with Ian McDonald as producer, working at Island Studios, Basing Street.

“The production on the previous album had been really good, with the band and Roger Quedstedt, the studio’s in-house engineer, doing

1975's *Modern Masquerades*.



Fruupp, L-R: Peter Farrelly, Stephen Houston, Vincent McCusker, Martin Foye.



CHERRY RED/PROMO

a fine job. But Dawn felt if we could work with a proper producer, one as much involved with the music as the sound of the album, then it would help us.

“Ian was great and so supportive of the band with the label people. We were all fans of his through King Crimson, and he turned out to be wonderful for Fruupp. He really pushed Dawn into giving us as much back-up as possible.”

The album came out in November 1975. The band toured the UK for two months from early December, and then began to assemble material for a new album. To be titled *Doctor Wilde’s Twilight Adventure*, it was conceptual, based again around a story written by Charles.

“The story was called *Flight Of The Dove*, and was to use the music of the *1812 Overture*,” he explains. “We had all of the songs written and demoed. And this sounded like it would be brilliant.”

However, the band never got the chance to do the album properly.

“By the start of ’76, this thing called punk had taken a real hold on the music scene. Unless you had already been successful and made your mark, then you had no chance. And Fruupp weren’t at that level. There was a band meeting, and I told them that we had missed the boat and that I didn’t want to continue as their manager.

“The guys did carry on a for a little while, did a few gigs and talked to some potential managers. But eventually they all drifted back to Ireland and the band broke up.”

Charles knows that somewhere there’s a tape of the demos recorded for the abandoned fifth album: “I know I have it somewhere. And I’m sure I will come across it one day. The songs deserve to be heard.”

But there is no chance of anyone ever getting to hear a live recording done on December 6, 1975 at Friars in Aylesbury.

“This was done for a planned live album. But it was destroyed in a fire at my home in South London. I was lucky to get out alive, and have to thank Vincent — who was living there with his partner at the time — because without his intervention and help, there was no way I’d have made it out.

“But the live tape was totally lost. It was a massive loss, because the recording was superb, and might have boosted Fruupp’s reputation.”

Astonishingly, 30 years after the band’s demise, they returned to the spotlight, when Brooklyn rapper Talib Kweli did his own version of *Sheba’s Song* from *Modern Masquerades*. Retitled *Soon The New Day*, it was featured on his 2007 album *Eardrum*, which got to No.2 in the US chart.

“I have no idea how someone like him got to hear a song written by John Mason and

“No progressive band wanted to be seen to release singles. It was all about albums, so there was no single put out from *Future Legends*.”

myself. But his people have been totally fair with us. They not only gave us co-writing credits, but have ensured we get all the money due to us from sales and publishing.

“I think it’s fair to say that we’ve made more money from the Talib Keweli track than everything else the band ever did combined!”

Looking back, Charles feels Fruupp have never been given due respect for their talent and creativity.

“The combination of the people in this band was very special. If only we’d had a proper producer like Ian McDonald for the first album, I think we’d have upped our game and that might have gotten Fruupp a lot further.

“We also suffered from lack of investment in the band by the label. There was little understanding from them of what it would take to get a progressive band like this to the next level.”

Back to that comment at the start about the origin of the band’s name... is that *really* true?

“As daft as it sounds, yes — it’s all down to Letraset!”

Fruupp: Wise As Wisdom: The Dawn Albums 1973-1975 is out now via Cherry Red/Esoteric. See www.cherryred.co.uk for more information.



JOHNNY NUNEZ/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

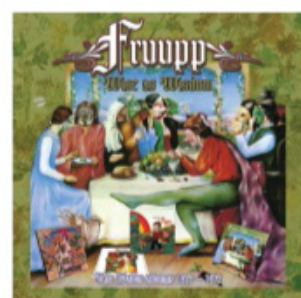
Talib Kweli hoisting the prog flag in 2007.

Stephen Houston (keys, oboe and backing vocals) and Peter Farrelly (lead vocals, bass guitar and flute).



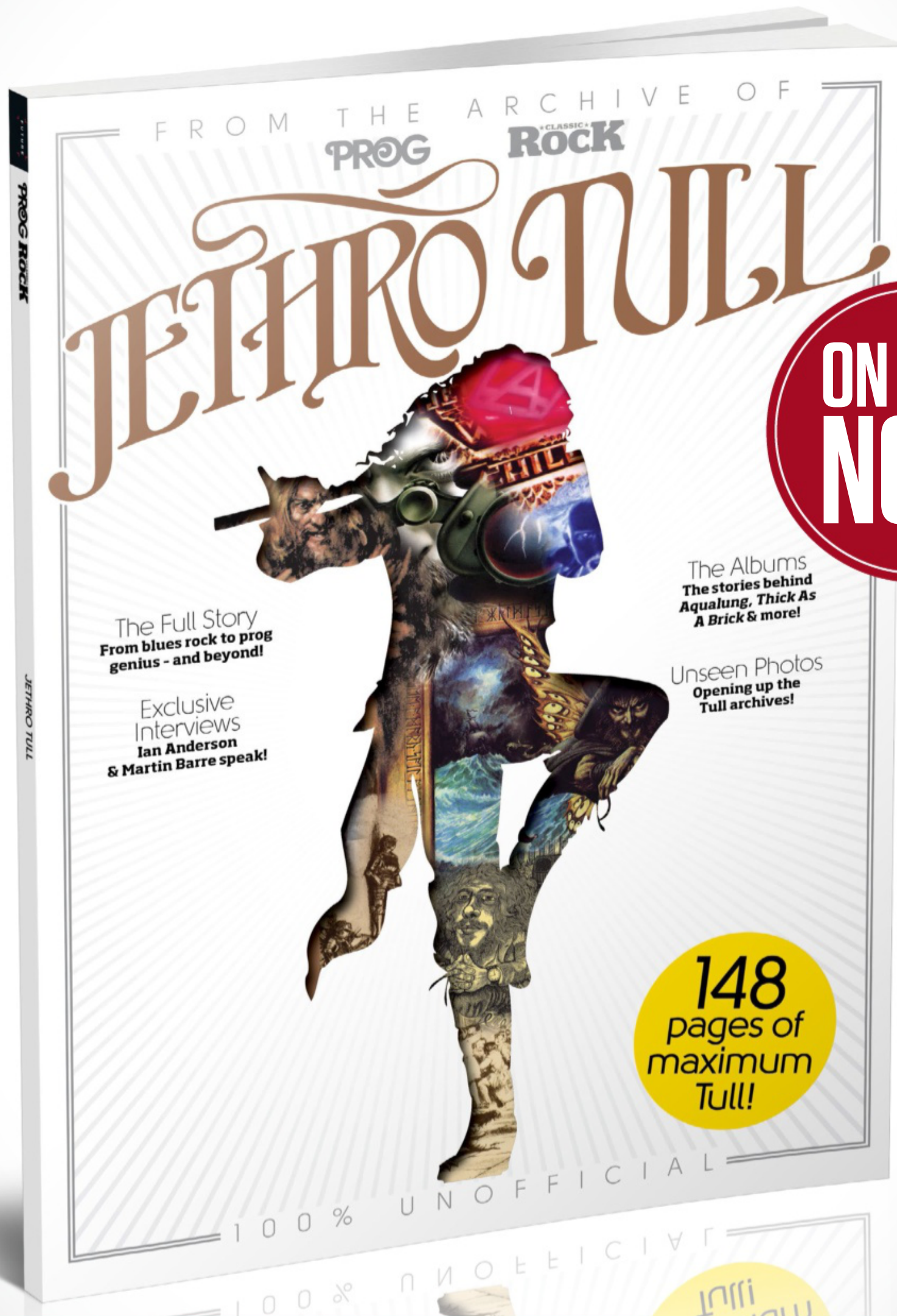
FRUUPP PROMO COURTESY OF PAUL CHARLES

Fruupp: *Wise As Wisdom* is out now.



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New spins...

LEPROUS

On the edge of breaking through to mainstream prog audiences, and powered by their singer's struggle with mental health, on their sixth record the Norwegians have pushed through their metallic boundaries to deliver something that even *they* didn't expect to create.

Words: Fraser Lewry **Illustration:** Stephen Kelly

When Leprous launched the publicity campaign for sixth album *Pitfalls*, band leader Einar Solberg wasn't shy about what was coming. "It's the album no one is expecting from Leprous," he said. "When you think you know where it's headed, you'll realise you're wrong."

The good news is they haven't made a polka album, or tried their hands at catstep (it's a genre, honest, go look it up), and the other good news is they're treading a path that's borne fruit for others: from Opeth to Ulver, Katatonia and Anathema, the fan of modern progressive music is able to enjoy a growing army of acts whose focus has shifted over the years towards something less rigid. They're bands who've drifted away from their metallic roots, taking a chance on more interesting sonics. They're bands who've picked up ideas and sounds from Radiohead, and Massive Attack, and Depeche Mode, and Hans Zimmer. And they're bands for whom the spirit of adventure is very much alive.

With *Pitfalls*, the difference is that Leprous have adventured further than almost anyone. It's an album that often doesn't feel like a rock album at all. An album where guitar frequently takes a back seat to ambience and atmosphere. An album that starts slowly, and gently, almost imperceptibly, and gathers momentum and volume. An album where Solberg's extraordinary voice is very much front-and-centre. It's an operatic tour-de-force, full of tension and ferment, sitting at the centre of a very complicated vocal Venn diagram, sharing space with fellow dramatists Matt Bellamy, Antony Hegarty, Justin Hawkins and James Blake. It's not for everyone. When this writer played the album to some colleagues, it seemed as if his voice wasn't for *anyone*.

It's a well-worn cliché, but *Pitfalls* is an album that genuinely rewards patience. It feels almost shapeless on first listen, a loose collection of wobbling trip-hop rhythms and Hollywood strings, a sensory cousin to Ulver's

Pitfalls

INSIDEOUT



An album of craft, ambition and fearlessness.

The Assassination Of Julius Caesar but without either the immediacy or the songwriting chops. But persevere and the album slowly shifts into focus, revealing the taut, emotional theatre at its heart. Opener *Below* gets the ball rolling with creaking keyboard and muted dubstep rumble, with Solberg's voice upfront and vulnerable. 'Every single fear I'm hiding, every little childhood memory, I bury', he sings, signalling from the off that this isn't going to be the most forgiving journey. And then, 80 seconds in, the song explodes. The voice soars, the strings sweep in, the drums thunder, and it sounds as if the album has reached a zenith, before violin quietly signals the finish.

"The album has been written through one of my toughest years, where I struggled with depression and anxiety," said Solberg earlier this year. "They say that writing music is

therapeutic, but I would say that it's an understatement. For me *Pitfalls* is the result of 18 months of learning how to get through the dark tunnel. The music has been my torch."

It sounds like it. Every lyric boils with self-examination, but the end result feels cathartic rather than self-pitying, even at its darkest. On *I Lose Hope*, which could almost be a Scissor Sisters song, Solberg sings, 'At my peak, I don't wake,' juxtaposing grim sentiment over a rolling disco rhythm. *Observe The Train*, with its spooky 'Breathe in, breathe out' refrain, is fraught with tension, but is catapulted skywards by an extraordinarily uplifting chorus. *By My Throne* is the first song to be driven by guitar, with stuttering riffs that give way to a trance backbone. 'Wrong direction, wrong direction,' Solberg sings, in the manner of someone furiously berating themselves for something that almost certainly matters less than they think. It's another track that pulls jubilation from the teeth of despair, switching from downcast to upbeat with triumphant shifts of gear. The trick is repeated on *Alleviate*, which features the peculiar, icy rhythms of *Visions Of China*-era Japan, and a vocal that shifts from aching to exultant. *At The Bottom* starts slowly, padded electronic beats giving way to something that feels like one of Matt Bellamy's mini rock operas, with juddering, thundering riffs. *Distant Bells* is in the same vein, while the closing pair of *Foreigner* and the 11-minute *The Sky Is Red* are propelled along by an almost violent energy, the pace quickening and the tubes glowing red.

Pitfalls packs such an emotional wallop you almost fear for the health of its instigator, but it also feels joyous. The arrangements are sublime, the performances infallible. It's an album of craft, and ambition, and absolute fearlessness. It's an album of anguish and deep, deep devastation, but it's also an album of hope, redemption and light. It's an album that changes and matures with every listen. And it's an absolutely stunning achievement.





ALCEST

Spiritual Instinct NUCLEAR BLAST

Post-everything pioneers artfully stick to the script.



All credit is due for having effectively coined an entire subgenre, but Alcest haven't always been an easy band to love. By the time founder and creative force Neige's crew arrived at 2014's *Shelter* album, the black metal elements that partly defined their original sound had been entirely excised, resulting in a credible but slightly dull attempt at a dreamy, quasi-ambient shoegaze record. Shorn of black metal's underlying heaviness, Alcest suddenly sounded a bit wet and weedy.



Strives to be a definitive statement - and pulls it off.



Thankfully, guitars made an enthusiastic comeback on 2016's *Kodama*, which felt like a shrewd upgrade for Alcest's seminal blueprint, as opposed to more of the shark-jumping vagueness of its predecessor. Whether or not Neige reverted to a more familiar formula out of desire or desperation seems irrelevant at this point, because two years on, *Spiritual Instinct* is a clear-cut return to top form. A more ferocious and strident take on *Kodama*'s enhanced blackgaze blueprint, with a host of insidious, melancholy melodies and moments of unashamed accessibility, the sixth Alcest album strives to be a definitive statement and just about pulls it off.

Opener *Les Jardins De Minuit* instantly feels like a mature encapsulation of this band's greatest moments to date. Those spidery shoegaze guitar lines are much in evidence, but there's a beefiness and swagger to the song's noisier moments that suggests that Neige is now more than comfortable being Mr Blackgaze and just wants to show everyone else who the boss really is. Similarly, *Protection* is as powerful a song as Neige has ever penned, with a soaring core melody and an irresistible sense of pendulous percussive swing.

For those who remember when the shoegaze movement was new, *Sapphire* ticks all the nostalgic boxes, with shades of Slowdive, Pale Saints and all those fey, arty cats who muddled the sonic waters with such brio back in the day. After all those years of evolution and experimentation, it's moderately surprising to hear something so straightforward on an Alcest record, but it's testament to Neige's songwriting nous that it fits perfectly here and is beautifully counterbalanced by *L'Île Des Morts*: nine minutes of hazy riff worship and loping, post-rock rumble with a truly glorious final crescendo. Next, *Le Miroir* revels in ghostly dynamics, with twinkling, spectral keys and a compelling slow build towards another dense storm of resonant (six-)strings. Concluding with the morose but elegant title track, which welds gleaming but slender hooks to another sublime exercise in ebb'n'flow, *Spiritual Instinct* may not be groundbreaking, but it does repackaging the essence of Alcest's appeal with confidence and verve.

DOM LAWSON

LEE ABRAHAM

Comatose F2

The multi-talented musician revives the prog on album seven.

Since his 2004 record *View From The Bridge* the multi-talented Lee Abraham has earned respect and affection on the UK prog circuit, and his recent return to Galahad seems to have had a galvanising effect on him. After the AOR breeziness of 2017's *Colours*, Abraham's seventh solo album is packed with drama and substance. *Comatose* is one 47 minute-long track, a full-on concept album taking us into the mind of a man pulled from a car wreck and teetering between life and death as medics fight to save him. There's a necessarily literal streak here (the opening rhythm is



a heart monitor; lyrics such as 'The road was wet and I was tired' abound), but as the character's reflections on his life deepen, the music evolves from ominous boilerplate prog metal chug into something more varied and compelling, with

choral effects, hooks and twists and turns. Riversea's Marc Atkinson provides a strong vocal, Credo's Gerald Mulligan supplies sterling drumwork and pianist Rob Arnold adds mood and melody. Abraham himself is at the top of his guitar game on what is surely his best-sounding album to date. **GRM**

JAN AKKERMAN

Close Beauty MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT

Guitar hero trapped in an elevator.

Eight years on from *Minor Details*, his last studio record, ex-Focus guitar maestro Jan Akkerman returns with *Close Beauty*. There's a range of musical styles on offer, but it's a frustratingly inconsistent experience. The album begins with Akkerman throwing out a lot of Latin guitar shapes. *Spiritual Privacy* (*Sunset Tango*) is an impressive display of his speed and virtuosity, while *Reunion* and the title track continue the Latin theme with their clean, strong melodic lines. These provide the early high points of the album, after which too much of the rest of the material consists of smooth



jazz-fusion elevator muzak that sounds like Kenny G with a guitar. *French Pride* sees Akkerman inexplicably deciding to resurrect the awful flanged guitar tone he used on his arrangement of the jazz standard *Bag's Groove* from 1968's *Talent For Sale*.

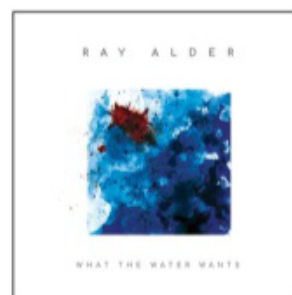
Similarly, *Fromage* is lumbered with a dreadfully dated synth sound, and *Meanwhile In St. Tropez* and *Tommy's Anniversary* offer bland fusion-by-numbers. Akkerman pulls the album back from the brink at the finish line, however, closing with the decent jazz-funk groove of *Good Body Every Evening*. Patchy. **DW**

RAY ALDER

What The Water Wants INSIDEOUT

Excellent solo turn from the Fates Warning frontman.

Ray Alder's first solo album is a welcome reminder of a time when progressive metal bands were more interested in songcraft than technical self-indulgence. Musically, it's not a far cry from Fates Warning. The sound is firmly rooted in classic progressive metal, unlike Alder's two Engine albums, which tapped into more aggressive industrial metal. The vocalist collaborated with two guitarists for the writing and recording - Tony Hernando from Lords Of Black, whose power metal riffs beef up *Shine*, and Mike Abdow who's toured with Fates Warning and clearly speaks that



language fluently. His extended solo in *The Killing Floor* is particularly impressive. The songwriting is full of dramatic shifts in intensity and tone, contrasting elegant melodic lines with headbanging riffs. Alder is also on top form, his range and tone

akin to that of Steve Perry, and he really excels on the ballads *Under Dark Skies* and *The Road*. At the heavier end of the album, Alder also proves he can still belt it out on tracks like *Wait* and *What The Water Wanted*. *What The Water Wants* is less overtly prog than Fates Warning, but the songs are great, and Alder smashes it. **DW**

ARP

Ensemble - Live MEXICAN SUMMER

Your vibrant cosmic synth-jazz odyssey awaits.

As Arp, New York's Alexis Georgopoulos' 2018 release *Zebra* demonstrated a happy knack of pulling together strands of funk, down-tempo jazz, ambient minimalism and radiant electronica to form an immersive and rather pleasant chill-out album. By taking that mix of signature sounds as well as a couple of pieces from *Zebra* into a live setting, it's proved to be a successful and highly engaging experiment. With saxophonist David Lackner's yearning, expressive sax, trilling analogue synths, spacey cascades of plangent electric piano, absorbing elastic bass, drifting cymbals



and a verdant undergrowth of tuned and mallet percussion, the overall project possesses a humid exoticism. In this environment the jazzy inflections that were hinted at on *Zebra* are given a fuller voice that brings to mind the early electric

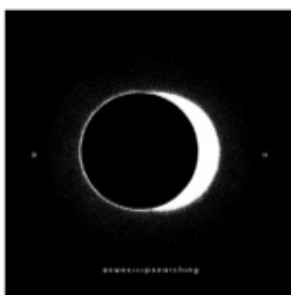
modal explorations of Joe Henderson, Miles Davis, Joe Zawinul, et al. Though still a calm space, the interactions of the group, the ensemble of the title, lend pieces like *Eos* and the Jon Hassell-like *Fourth World* constructions of *Voices* and *Ozu* a welcome backbone to something that might otherwise be rather too supine for its own good. **SS**

ASWEKEEPPSEARCHING

Rooh SELF-RELEASED

Genre-blending Indian post-rockers shine with third LP.

Aswekeepsearching, from Gujarat, India, are a band that combine traditional instrumentation and Hindi lyrics with some of the instrumental trappings and experimentation of the post-rock and prog genres. *Rooh*, meaning 'soul', is their third studio LP, and their first to be released after a swathe of high-profile support slots and appearances at Dunk! and Pelagic festivals. There's a decent variety to the tracks on the LP – some, like the snappy *Green And Blue*, or anthemic title track, are terser, more straightforward affairs, while opener *Chasing Light*, or the Mono-like *Aas*



Paas are straight from the post-rock playbook. The thing that really sets apart the songs on *Rooh* are Uddipan Sarmah's fantastic vocals. Just when you start to fear that a section or riff will drag, his earnest, evocative voice is there to bring focus back.

Ultimately, aswekeepsearching are at their strongest when they play the more accessible end of their range, as their instrumentals are solid but not always quite catchy enough to stand up without vocals. That said, vocals are unusual enough in post-rock circles that having them at all, let alone this excellent, elevates *Rooh*. **AL**

MARTIN BARRE

MLB Celebrates 50 Years Of Jethro Tull CLEOPATRA

One studio and one live CD of Tull's back catalogue revisited.

Some may wonder about the point of rehashing this band's history without its main component, Ian Anderson. But this album works precisely because, by moving away from Tull's particular aesthetic and taking a different approach to the songs, guitarist Barre re-emphasises his former bandmate's skills as a writer and his own as a guitarist and arranger. On the live CD he has his work cut out on *Sea Lion* from *War Child*, which originally included flute, accordion and strings. But although this guitar-heavy version inevitably loses out a bit on colour, Barre's playing shines:



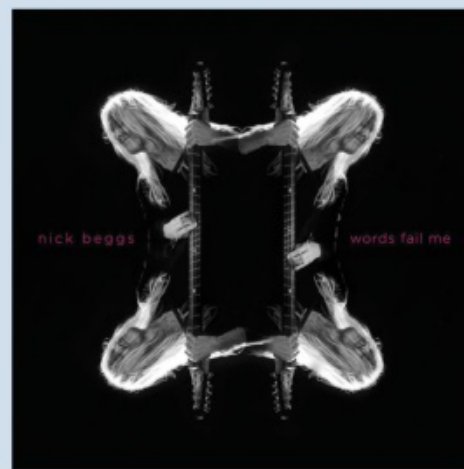
it's clean, incisive and full of energy and excitement. The band, with Dan Crisp on lead vocals, emphasise the rock element with a muscular version of *A Song For Jeffrey*, and *A New Day Yesterday* is presented here as a heavy blues song. Equally

compelling is the studio CD, comprising largely acoustic reinterpretations with Alex Hart and Becca Langsford on vocals. *Locomotive Breath*, with Barre on mandolin, feels more poignant and compassionate than the original, and the highlight of the collection is a gorgeous, stripped-down version of *Life's A Long Song*. **MB**

NICK BEGGS

Words Fail Me CHERRY RED

Beggs Sticks a new album to us, in a bundle with two reissues.



The Chapman Stick is one of those instruments that has, in all fairness, captured the imagination of musicians more than it has music fans over the years. As a leading practitioner, Nick Beggs is firmly in the former camp, and on this new album of instrumental covers, he's aiming to show the "versatility of the Chapman Stick". As part of a three-CD package, he's also reissuing his 2002 and 2004 solo albums *Stick Insect* and *The Maverick Helmsman*.

You have to admire the mischief in playing a song by The Muppets.

Their appeal of this package will largely depend on how pleasing to the ear you find the Chapman Stick itself. To this writer's ears, there's often a synthetic quality to its sound that's a little insipid and anaemic, lacking organic edge. Maybe that's why Beggs' covers of well-known melodies such as Elton John's *Blue Eyes* and John Barry's *Midnight Cowboy* theme, although sensitively played, sound too close to call-on-hold muzak for your correspondent's comfort.

It seems to work better when the chosen melodies are less familiar. His reading of Jaco Pastorius' *Portrait Of Tracy* evokes a sublimely wistful mood, while Japan's neglected gem *Night Porter* is revived as a gorgeously weary waltz. His take on the Italian folk standard *Tarantella* dances just the right side of twee, and you have to admire Beggs' sense of mischief to play *Rainbow Connection* from *The Muppet Movie*, to successfully remind us that at heart, it's a timelessly beautiful tune.

A broader palette of sounds is to be found on Beggs' earlier albums. The title track of *The Maverick Helmsman* weaves a pretty tapestry of melodies together, as does *When We First Met* from the same album, while *The Vigil* is offset by lap steel-like shimmers and haunting female backing vocals.

2002's *Stick Insect* was an even more diverse affair – to the extent that it sounds like a vehicle for Beggs to showcase the Chapman Stick in as wide a variety of settings as possible. The instrument's harp-like qualities light up *Science Fiction*, further aided by an angelic backing vocal choir. The jazzier chords of *Look At Us* then impressively conjure up a movie soundtrack feel, thanks to a loungey tempo, stabs of brass and a smoky electric organ sound. The urgent, bubbling techno and widescreen orchestral strokes of *The Last Bitch In Hellville* haven't aged quite as well, but the mournful electronica and itchy breakbeats behind *Glass Slippers* back up the impression that there are intriguing and promising musical avenues that Beggs and his Stick have thus far only taken a couple of playful steps down.

JOHNNY SHARP

BENT KNEE

You Know What They Mean INSIDEOUT

Brilliant, breathtaking and back on form.



They say you can tell a lot about the true character of a person from the way they handle adversity. Bent Knee's progress from being a hot property in their Boston base to becoming a widely respected, must-see act on an altogether much larger stage after the release of their third album, *Say So* in 2016 has been nothing but impressive.

Imbued with punky velocity and gritty emotional detonation.

However, 2018 was not so kind. First, drummer Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth broke an ankle coming off stage in San Francisco, leaving his bandmates to carry on touring without him. Secondly, and potentially far more serious, after Wallace-Ailsworth had rejoined the group, their tour bus crashed in icy conditions between Salt Lake City and Denver. Though thankfully only badly shaken, these two examples of adversity very much in action, have, the band say, pulled them to feel much closer as a unit and has given them a renewed sense of purpose.

If 2017's *Land Animal* was to these ears a little cooler to the touch than their previous output, *You Know What They Mean* finds them back on scorching form. That clarity of purpose and increased focus arising from their recent trauma is clearly discernible across the 13 tracks. Imbued with a punky velocity, the writing feels less circuitous and more forthright than before in terms of its ability to gut-punch and fly into a gritty, sharp-edged emotional detonation.

Stripped back to the point of being raw, *Bird Song* feels etched and stark. A masterclass in thoughtful production and creative ambiguity, on *Give Us The Gold* Courtney Swain's exquisite and frequently volatile singing is framed by orchestral strikes, sultry organ, distorted shards of horn-like guitar. That tight grasp and control of dynamics have always been one of their key strengths.

The onslaught of *Bone Rage* and the sweltering *Catch Light* abruptly gives way to vertiginous silence, leaving the listener treading the air, not unlike the hopelessly optimistic but hapless Wile E Coyote. Happily, by the time the drop comes, the band sweep you along to the next giddy point of departure. Given that all of the players are second to none in terms of their instrumental firepower, there's little to nothing in the way of soloing. When a break does occur, it's usually carefully and inventively integrated into the overall structure.

Opening with a live collage and a dirty, distorted note, the album finally rests up with the ravishing tones of *It Happens*. By the time the reverb on the twinkling keyboard fades away you're left in no doubt that you've just encountered one of the finest albums of the year.

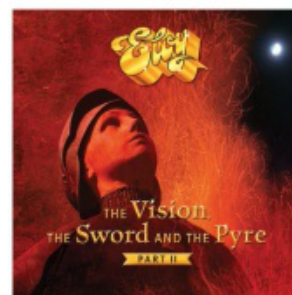
SID SMITH

ELOY

The Vision, The Sword & The Pyre (Part II) ARTIST STATION

Concluding instalment of German veterans' Joan of Arc concept.

There's a lot to be said for a concept album telling a good story, and hats off to German progressive stalwart Frank Bornemann for taking no half measures when tackling the tale of Joan of Arc. So much so that it's taken two long-playing instalments for Bornemann to do it. This and 2017's *Part 1* represent, he says, "an authentic and complete illustration of the events". When you're telling a story in song, though, the former won't work without the latter. And here, Bornemann's determination to maintain the narrative seems stronger than the drive to create



an engaging musical accompaniment. The opening salvo of *An Instant Of Relief* and *Between Hope Doubts Fear And Uncertainty* offers punchy, dramatic rock hooks, while *Paris* and *Armistice Or War* have a promising locomotion.

But Bornemann's voice sounds weak and melodically limited, and although strings sometimes add atmospheric strokes, too many of the tunes seem to chug along, mere afterthoughts whose chief purpose is to facilitate the next step in the story. It's a rock opera, sure, but one where the fat lady never gets to sing. **JS**

MITCHEL EMMS

Vertigo At History's Edge SELF-RELEASED

Powerful solo debut from former frontman of The Treatment.

Up until this point in his career, Mitchel Emms has been best known for appearing on *The Voice* and fronting AC/DC-like rockers The Treatment, which makes the scope and breadth of his solo debut all the more surprising and impressive. Taking a cue from Steven Wilson and Elbow, Emms' sound touches on post-rock, prog, and a little pop (dare we say there's the teensiest Coldplay influence?). He layers the sounds to create dips and swells in true post-rock fashion, but he understands the importance of hooks and melodies far more than your standard shoegaze



band playing the same chord for 10 minutes while switching effects pedals. The singer plays or programmes everything himself, so it's very much a studio project, although songs like the lighters-in-the-air anthem *The Rain* cry out to be played live,

so hopefully Emms can assemble a band to tour this record. Other highlights include the gorgeous *Message From The Water* and *Season Of Regret*. It's a heartfelt, honest record where the quality of the writing matches the intensity of the emotions, and Emms emerges as a potent new voice in prog. **DW**

ESP PROJECT

The Rising SUNN CREATIVE

Very steady as she goes.

Album number three from guitarist and keyboard player Tony Lowe's ESP Project is a slick listen that draws on the melancholy of *Wish You Were Here* that Pink Floyd melded with a symphonic prog sensibility. While the drums of Greg Pringle sound a little on the thin side, the production is otherwise strong, albeit with a distinctly modern sheen that threatens to polish all the human touches off the music. The mix is led by the keyboards and Pete Clark's bass, with guitar mainly used to add texture. Lowe is clearly most comfortable composing for a steady mid-tempo,



which allows plenty of room for vocalist Damian Child, but greater variety on that front could add stronger contours to the musical landscape. The longer tunes can feel plodding, and there's not much to distinguish one song from the next

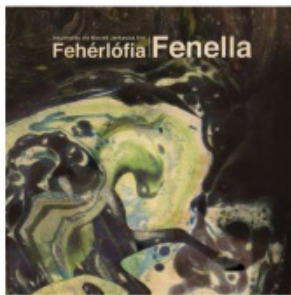
in terms of mood and arrangements. Child hits some impressive notes in the neo-proggy *On Lunar Tides*, and has an entertaining turn of phrase, singing about 'Origami lives unfolding' in *A Million Heartbeats*, and 'Deja view outside his window' in *Flowers In Snow*. But the overall effect is a trifle too measured. **DW**

FENELLA

Fehérlófia FIRE

Jane Weaver side project produces cosmic soundtrack to Hungarian animation.

Fehérlófia (*Son Of The White Mare*) is a mind-blowingly psychedelic animated film from 1981 that draws on ancient folklore, and is by turns mystical, disturbing and erotic. As such, it's perfect fodder for cosmic popician Jane Weaver, who's come together with long-term bandmates Peter Philipson and Raz Ullah as Fenella to compose a new soundtrack for the film as part of Fire Records' reimagined score series. In many ways, this is a continuation of Weaver's *Loops In The Secret Society*, released earlier this year, a fantastical soundscape of melodic kosmische, all reverbed drones,



pulsating sub-bass and Weaver's ecstatic exhalations. It's not formless though - *Bright Curse* is melancholy synth pop with plenty of audio generator-style whooshing, while *Shard Of Glass* and *The Spectacle* are lovely space age electro-ballads.

It's mainly beatless - the entwining synth lines of *Truly Seduced* cry out for a trance techno remix - though there's chiming guitar and drums on *Strength In Air*, which is very Durutti Column. By the throbbing arpeggios of the climactic, Tangerine Dream-esque *Gilded Griffin*, it feels like we're heading towards some kind of singularity. **JB**

HASSE FRÖBERG & MUSICAL COMPANION

Parallel Life GLASSVILLE

Flower Kings guitarist embarks on crazed prog adventure.

It takes a certain amount of bravery to start an album with a 21-minute, multi-part song, and no small amount of faith in the listener's attention span. For Hasse Fröberg, however, this is familiar, well-charted territory. 2015's *HFMC* saw him leaping from genre to genre with lunatic abandon, often within the space of a few bars, and new album *Parallel Life* adventures even further. Take that title track opener. It explores all sorts of traditional prog rock geography, from Yes (no surprise there) to Emerson, Lake & Palmer and Genesis, from fluid stretches of keyboard wobble to



stuttering riff, then confounds expectations by throwing in bits that could be Boston or Ben Folds. It flips mood and timbre frequently, often without warning, and it should be a mess. It isn't. Everywhere you listen, the ambition is matched

by the output. The arrangements are smart and laser-focused. The songwriting is strong enough that the devilish changes of direction don't let the momentum flounder, and the whole thing is played with enormous affection for the source material and a great deal of glee. Serious prog isn't often as much fun as this. **FL**

STEVE HACKETT

Genesis Revisited Band & Orchestra: Live INSIDEOUT

Last year's symphonic triumph on CD and Blu-ray.

A lucky minority of people reading this will have been present at London's Royal Festival Hall last October when the 42-piece Heart Of England orchestra added symphonic sparkle to Steve Hackett's Genesis Revisited set. But in case you imagined it wouldn't make much difference, this recording shows otherwise. Not only are the dynamics so much more defined than we're accustomed to from the ultra-compressed fare of most rock gigs, but the orchestra helps to tease out hitherto buried details of the songs. The crescendous moments of *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight* are huge,



thunderous fanfares, while Hackett's jazz soloings and the angular instrumental interludes make for a captivating contrast. *The Musical Box* benefits from subtle layers of extra backing vocals and musical accompaniment that bring

forth new shades to the sound. Nad Sylvan puts his familiar-yet-different vocal stamp on the songs, but the sweep of strings, tingles of timpani and explosions of brass offer something else - Genesis in three dimensions. Sure, you probably had to be there to feel it all in full, but this is a pretty tidy next-best-thing. **JS**

FLYING COLORS

Third Degree MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT

The supergroup five-piece reach new heights.



If Tower Records still existed in this day and age, they'd need to open a section titled 'Mike Portnoy supergroups' just to house all of the prolific drummer's output since departing Dream Theater. What's even more impressive than Portnoy's inexhaustible work rate is the consistency of the end results.



Beautifully arranged classic rock filtered through a prog prism.



Album number three from Flying Colors continues the drummer's winning streak, revealing a band able to explore different directions and styles without ever losing their core musical identity. There's less of the over-the-top, non-stop bombast prevalent in Neal Morse's solo career and Portnoy plays for the songs, rather than showing off his talent for odd-time signatures, which no doubt everyone fully appreciates by this point in time.

The Loss Inside gets the record off to a cracking start, with a headlong sense of momentum, a guitar riff that's almost grungy, and singer Casey McPherson reaching up into the top end of his range to evoke a little Chris Cornell. Add to that spirited soloing from Steve Morse on guitar and Neal Morse on organ and it's a beast of a tune. *More* finds McPherson airing his insecurities, singing '*I wish you liked me*,' channelling the spirit and even a little of the sound of Thom Yorke, but musically speaking it's got more meat on the bones than Radiohead, particularly with the expansive instrumental mid-section. *Cadence*, *Guardian* and *Last Train Home* are all beautifully arranged examples of classic rock filtered through a progressive prism.

The strings of *Cadence* lend that song a symphonic rock feel, while bassist Dave LaRue takes a nimble solo in *Guardian*. LaRue's bassline leads the way into *Geronimo*, which sees the band trying their hands at funk as Steve Morse gets to throw out some Nile Rodgers licks. They're not going to out-groove Funkadelic anytime soon, but it broadens the group's palette and the vocal harmonies in the verses feel like a knowing nod to Sly And The Family Stone before the choruses see the band revert back to rocking out.

You Are Not Alone is the album's big ballad, putting the spotlight on McPherson's impassioned performance and featuring a tasteful solo from Steve Morse. It's the most conventional track on the album, light on prog but heavy on melodrama. By contrast, *Love Letter* is a cheerful and bouncy slice of 60s power pop, with an absolute earworm of a hook and Beach Boys-style vocal harmonies combining to produce an overall effect that's simply gorgeous. They close out the album with *Crawl*, returning to symphonic prog for a powerful finish.

DAVID WEST

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LINDY-FAY HELLA

Seafarer VÂN

Evocative debut album by the Wardruna vocalist.

Norwegian band Wardruna tap back dramatically into that country's history and connection with the sea, and Hella continues that theme on the title track here, which evokes spray caught in harbour lights with the sea stretching into the darkness beyond, full of romance and danger. But *Seafarer's* peculiar character comes from it being originally conceived as an a cappella project, with instrumentation added later, and on this song Hella sings over shuffling percussion and a small choir. Herbrand Larsen provides synths, guitar and programming, and Ingolf Hella



Torgersen adds percussion. The guest musicians were asked to only join in as appropriate, which gives us some subtle, nuanced settings for Hella's sinuous vocal lines. A gamelan chimes in the background on *Two Suns*, and bouzouki and flute play over the low

keyboard chord changes of *Bottle Of Sorrow*. The most haunting aspect of *Seafarer* is that it feels both ancient and modern with what seem like shamanic incantations on *Nåke Du Finn I Skogen* - which invites comparisons to Dead Can Dance - while on *Horizon* keys evoke an accordion, and Hella's wordless voice drifts above to spectacular effect. **MB**

KROKOFANT

Q RUNE GRAMMOFON

Fiery fourth album by the now five-piece Norwegian jazz prog combo.

Tom Hasslan, guitarist and main composer of Krokofant, was keen to stop the band becoming stale and formulaic, and so drafted in Ståle Storløkken from Supersilent and Motorsycho on keyboards, and bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, who has played in The Thing and Scorch Trio. His strategy worked. The ensemble come off the blocks at full tilt on *Q - Part 1*, with Axel Skaland dropping and swapping beats around in a astonishing, high speed drum groove, which leads into fast, unison, almost be-bop ensemble passages. After guitar and organ solos, there is a speedy freeform duet



between Skaland and saxophonist Jørgen Mathisen. Then staccato guitar chords pull everything together as Skaland accelerates into a blur of snare and cymbals before the piece reaches its conclusion. After 13-and-a-half minutes of such

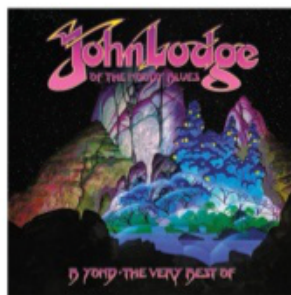
intensity, sensitive listeners may be left feeling rather breathless. Elsewhere, there are sections redolent of Jaga Jazzist at their most melodic, agitated Zappaesque passages, and some of the barking sax lines and keyboard swells evoke Van der Graaf. This expanded line-up is set to continue. It should do - they have something very special. **MB**

JOHN LODGE

B Yond - The Very Best Of BMG

Modernised retrospective from Moody Blues' bassist and singer.

John Lodge might not have the same profile as Justin Hayward in terms of being the face of The Moody Blues, but he's written many of their most well-known songs, some of which appear on this compilation alongside solo tracks. However, this isn't a standard 'best of' collection - instead, it features remixes, re-recordings and live versions by his 10,000 Light Years Band, which aim to bring the material up to date. But don't worry, we're not talking "there's always been a dubstep element to my music" - all the songs here are treated with due reverence. The hard riffing



I'm Just A Singer (In A Rock And Roll Band) is a reminder that The Moody Blues could rock just as hard as any of their contemporaries, with Lodge's vocal in particular bringing a gutsy edge here - and the same goes for

driving psych classic *Ride My See-Saw*. Elsewhere, Lodge's ear for melody is positively Beatles-esque on *Summer Breeze*, *Summer Song* and *Street Café*. But the highlight of this collection is the very credible version of *Legend Of A Mind*, recorded here as a tribute to Lodge's former bandmate Ray Thomas. **JB**

HAWKWIND

All Aboard the Skylark/Acoustic Daze CHERRY RED

Fifty years celebrated with new grooves and a trip down memory lane.



Prog's 50th anniversaries are coming thick and fast. One of the most welcome and most surprising - given their wild acid-drizzled past - is Hawkwind's. They remain one of the definitive outsider bands, as legendary for the years of disputes, personnel changes, and excess use of narcotics as their defining contribution to space rock. With 30-odd studio albums already to their name, *All Aboard The Skylark* shows the original psychedelic-punk-crusty masters crossing their 50 year in rude health. Released alongside *Acoustic Daze* - unplugged takes on some of the band's most beloved tracks - *Skylark* is immense fun and a satisfying return to their space rock roots.



It's hard not start crazy-dancing like it's 1973.



Skylark pretty much has it all. The album begins with *Flesh Fondue*, a characteristically gruesome-funny tale of space aliens feasting on the flesh of those they colonise. Last remaining original member Dave Brock serves up a typical slice of tripped-out guitar and laconic vocals, while Richard Chadwick clatters out a drum groove. This is followed up with *Nets Of Space*, which takes the album ever further towards the territory the Hawks so memorably defined on albums such as *In Search Of Space*.

However, it is the following trinity of tracks that truly conjure the days when the Hawks might be found playing from the back of a truck in a field in Somerset. *Last Man On Earth* oozes psychedelic cool, while *We Are Not Dead... Only Sleeping* is a reminder of the Hawks' gift for trippy jazz. The title track is the stuff of acid dreams, that soars so deliciously it's hard not to start crazy-dancing like it's 1973. Equally irresistible is the nine-minute *The Fantasy Of Faldum*, based on a Herman Hesse fairy tale. As Brock sings, 'Everything passes away in time, everything grows old,' it's difficult not to hear it as a wistful comment on the band's future.

Accompanying acoustic bonus disc *Acoustic Daze* is reminder of how - behind the swirling keys, ramped-up guitars and special effects - classic Hawkwind could write a damn fine tune. Tracks such as *Psi Power* and *Down Through The Night* genuinely hold their own in these stripped-back arrangements. It is a fitting tribute to 50 years of often underappreciated songwriting.

If *Skylark* doesn't break new ground, who cares? At this point, it's clear that Hawkwind don't need to. The great news is that Brock's musical vision is unimpaired, and the rest of the band work seamlessly to deliver it. If the album's title (taken from kids' cartoon series *Noah And Nelly*) conjures images of the 70s, this music makes you ready to travel back in time.

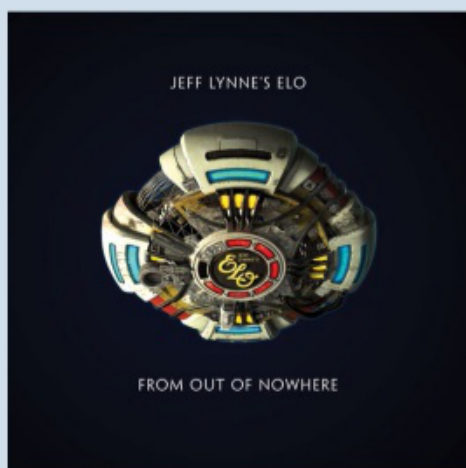
RACHEL MANN



JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

From Out Of Nowhere COLUMBIA

The follow-up to *Alone In The Universe*. Guess what it sounds like?



There's something incredibly comforting about the Electric Light Orchestra. For the middle-aged among us, they're one of those bands who have always been there, despite all the personnel/name rights shenanigans and the commercial tides and critical brickbats. Their all-time great catalogue of orchestral pop is always somewhere in the background, soundtracking happy times. Watching Jeff Lynne lead his superb live band out at Hyde Park back in 2014 was a thrill, with the gig seemingly putting them back in the wider audience's mind. Released a year later, *Alone In The Universe* was the band's first selection of original material for 14 years and the first credited to Jeff Lynne's ELO. It went platinum in the UK, the band played Wembley in 2017, and ELO were back.

Spacious snare, jangly guitars... and that time-proof voice.

From Out Of Nowhere sees Lynne airing his pleasing set of unmistakeable trademarks — that spacious snare drum, the compressed jangly guitars, Beatles-y chords/harmonies and, of course, that time-proof voice. ELO's 14th album finds them on familiar ground. We say 'them', but once again Lynne plays almost everything himself here. The only other credited performers are Steve Jay (Lynne's engineer at his LA home studio, Bungalow Palace) on tambourines and shakers and long-time compadre Richard Tandy, who plays a rip-roaring piano solo on the good-time rocker *One More Time*.

The similarly upbeat and retro *Sci-Fi Woman* has an irresistible chorus and, maybe the best song on here, *Time Of Our Lives* expressed Lynne's joy at that huge Wembley concert. 'Sixty thousand mobile phones were shining in the dark that night,' he sings, interpolating *Telephone Line* when reporting on that hit's rapturous reception. It's actually nice to hear him revel in this latest flush of success.

Elsewhere, a mid-tempo feel prevails on the none-more-ELO title track, *Help Yourself* and *Down Came The Rain*. The catchy, radio-friendly *All My Love* dispenses with the signature drum sound in favour of a modern dance beat that works well, and doo-wop pastiche *Goin' Out On Me* could be *Tears On My Pillow* as seen through Lynne's 70s rock lens. *I'm Losing You* and album closer *Songbird* are the ballads that he almost seems able to cut by the yard.

Look, we all know the deal. We're far from the proggy climes of 1974's *Eldorado* and there's probably nothing here to rank alongside the golden-era catalogue, but *From Out Of Nowhere* sounds like ELO, more so than *Alone In The Universe*. You still only need to hear the first bar, even the first drum beat, to know who this is, and for many of us that is soothingly back to somewhere.

GRANT MOON

MARCONI UNION

Dead Air JUST MUSIC

Traces of humanity abound on enigmatic Manchester trio's beat-free tenth album.

Marconi Union have built a reputation for making a certain type of refined, organic electronica over the past 17 years, but they cut straight to the chase here on opening track *A.M.I.D.*, aka *Ambient Music Is Dead*. As MU's Richard Talbot explains, "The discussions we were having were very much about how the term 'ambient music' has largely become meaningless." It's a fair point, with a proliferation of bland instrumental music seemingly content to drift aimlessly by, deadening the atmosphere rather than enhancing it. It's a fine line that ambient has always walked, but



MU stay on the right side on *Dead Air*, producing a deep listening experience full of subtle engagements. *A.M.I.D.* itself starts as a vaporous drone before a resonant bass line overlaid with piano injects a human element into the synthetic cloud. Similarly,

breath bursts and processed voices break through the pristine electronic soundscapes on a number of occasions — the title track could almost be 10cc's *I'm Not In Love* heard as a distant radio transmission. Elsewhere, *Permafrost* and *Fractured* suggest something gently coming back to life, its purpose renewed. **JB**

JAMES MCARTHUR AND THE HEAD GARDENERS

Intergalactic Sailor MOORLAND

Artisan pastoral pop evokes a gentler vision of Albion.

The world might feel like it's about to fall on our heads at any moment, but here's James McArthur and The Head Gardeners — who on this album include Joel and Liam Magill from Syd Arthur — to deliver some much-needed aural salve. The vibe throughout is mellow but upbeat, the sonic palette is based around McArthur's folky acoustic picking and hushed vocals. It's bucolic, Sunday morning chill-out music, which emanates intimacy and, yes, cosiness. There's flashbacks to childhood too, the ticking melodic guitar of *Heavy Sleeper* recalling Freddie Phillips and



Camberwick Green, music for Windy Miller to have a crafty doobie to. And on tracks such as *Drain The River* and *Defending The Fort*, McArthur evokes a vision of Britain as an enduring Arcadian landscape, nurturing and protecting its inhabitants.

It's perhaps no coincidence then that the album was partly recorded at East Wickham Farm, the nearly 400-year-old building on the edge of Kent that was Kate Bush's childhood home. The best track is *Hard Landings*, which injects some groove via hand drums, bubbling bass and a subtle swell of strings. **JB**

OCEANICA

OneDark PROGRESSIVE GEARS

Enochian Theory frontman plots next chapter.

Oceanica is the new project from Enochian Theory frontman Ben Harris-Hayes, with *OneDark* the first instalment in an intended 'triptych' of albums he will release. Although he has had some help from collaborators, it's essentially a solo work, being engineered, recorded, produced and mixed by Harris-Hayes himself. For a first solo release, it's certainly impressive, though it has to be said that Harris-Hayes' vocals, as you'd expect, are the most developed thing on the album. With Enochian Theory breaking up after a long hiatus and creative deadlock, it can be assumed that



OneDark represents the purest version of the Brightonian's current creative vision as a songwriter. The multi-part harmonies on *Amounting to Nothing* and *8* are simply electric, but the guitar parts by comparison can feel a little by-the-numbers.

Some of the most interesting moments are when he really moves outside his comfort zone, such as the brilliant electronic dance number *Got A Feeling*, or the industrial *Towards the Sun*. Though it's a far cry from Enochian Theory, fans of Harris-Hayes as a songwriter will find a lot to like, as well as some new surprises. **AL**

STUCKFISH

The Watcher SONIC PORTRAIT

Rising Northern prog rockers keep it old-school on album two.

Northumberland-based singer Philip Stuckey and guitarist Ade Fisher formed Stuckfish in 2017, and last year's debut album *Calling* was a really solid rock album with a melodic centre, metallic edges and a proggy story. The tale of 'a magical family line at a time of great change' is continued on follow-up *The Watcher*, an album that could have been made in 1982, in a good way. The line-up is completed by drummer Micky Kerrigan, bassist Danny Stephenson and keyboardist Alan Gibson, who adds texture and prog nuance to *Run* and moody piano work to the title track.



Fisher's guitar work is lyrical and song-centric throughout, from Marillion-esque opener *The Bridge* to dramatic tune *The Mirror* and closing opus *Fallen Angels*. A suitably old-school singer, Stuckey commits to the story with a rock-operatic performance

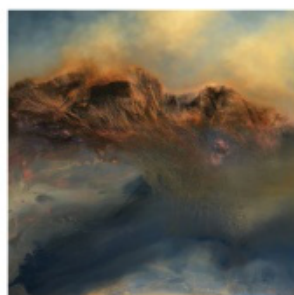
ripe with harmonies and catchy melodies. Geoff Tate's Queensrÿche comes to mind, as do Lifehouse, Magnum, even Iron Maiden. After a few minutes of a chugging NWOBHM riff, *Silvanir* cries out for more proggy spice and, boom, the band switch into a tasty 7/8 groove, like they really know what they're doing. Ones to watch. **GRM**

SUNN O)))

Pyroclasts SOUTHERN LORD

"More meditative" sister album to 2018's mighty *Life Metal*.

When faced with describing Sunn O)))'s massive, drone-based music it's difficult not to resort to fanciful natural similes like storms, the motion of tectonic plates, lava flows, or, indeed, a bombardment of eponymous volcanic fragments. *Pyroclasts* was recorded in the same sessions, produced by Steve Albini, that yielded *Life Metal*, but these four pieces were adjuncts to the main process in that Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson, accompanied by cellist Hildur Guðnadóttir, keyboard player Tim Midyett and guitarist Tos



Nieuwenhuizen, would warm up or wind down by playing together for around 12 minutes. But it's anything but second-rate. Albini is renowned for working quickly, which meant that rather than layering the compositions in the studio, the musicians tended to

play live, and the listener really gets the feel of the players listening and reacting to one another. And although the pieces on *Pyroclasts* don't have the compositional structure of those on its predecessor, these are complex creations full of intricate, ever-changing detail, like the internal dynamics in a weather system or within the sea. **MB**

TELEPATH

Mental Mutations APOLLON

Norse polymath explores the dark side of synth.

Not content with mastering both refined, left-brain art rock with White Willow and wonky, progged-up pop with The Opium Cartel, Jacob Holm-Lupo has now turned his attention to the world of eerie occult rock and turbocharged modular synthesisers. *Mental Mutations* is a riot from start to finish, its creator's obvious love of these nostalgic but weirdly ageless sounds radiating through every fuzzed-up riff and spiralling Moog solo. Songs like lumbering epic *No More Wishes* and the gruff, propulsive *Race Into The Wasteland* belong firmly to the post-Sabbath school of extravagant

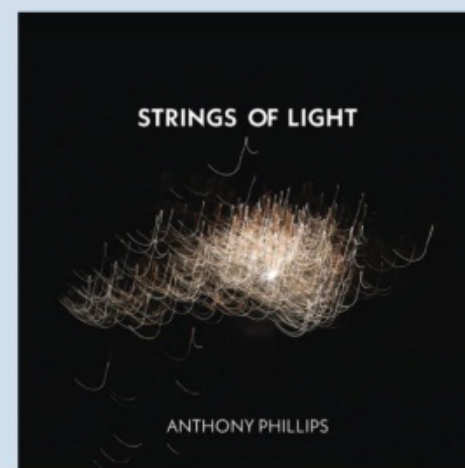


prog-tinged doom, replete with dense rushes of rippling Hammond and rootsy lead breaks. But it's Holm-Lupo's use of synths that lifts this above the vast majority of post-Ghost spooky rock. Tracks like the glitchy but ethereal *Tyrellian* and the hissing, industrial cut-up scree of *Bad Machine* salute Goblin and John Carpenter, while the shape-shifting sprawl of *Escape From The Witch House* brings man and machine together in an explosion of wild psych-metal. The closing *The Dark Blood Of Fate* is the heaviest of the lot: part thudding funeral march, part blissful Mellotron miasma. **DL**

ANTHONY PHILLIPS

Strings Of Light ESOTERIC ANTENNA

Original Genesis guitarist takes his rarest instruments and shines.



Anyone ancient enough to remember the earliest Genesis gigs may recall two chairs always positioned stage right; one for Mike Rutherford, the other for lead guitarist Anthony Phillips, who loved sculpting the 12-string guitar textures that glazed the *Trespass* era. Unhappy with Genesis' solidifying musical direction but also citing stage fright and health issues, Phillips left in June 1970, studying classical guitar at London's Guildhall after hearing Jean Sibelius convinced him to up his game.

Glistens like delicate mosaics of finely-cut diamonds.

With Rutherford's support, Phillips returned with 1977's *The Geese And The Ghost*, further albums including *Sides*, and '83's *Invisible Men* his requisite stab at prog pop mainstream (his *Private Parts & Pieces* volumes indulged instrumental explorations). By 2005's *Field Day*, Phillips had arrived at a more intimately personal instrumental style, graced by sensitive virtuosity and uncanny melodic sensibility.

Still unconvinced his skills did the material justice, although he's collaborated with Andrew Skeet amid composing TV and film music, it took years for Phillips to consider *Strings Of Light* ready to shine. It was worth the wait.

Phillips created the album of his dreams on priceless rare guitars listed next to each of the 24 pieces, revisiting the acoustic layers he loved 50 years ago, without a band in the way (disc three emphasising the point in 5.1 Surround Sound). Glistening like delicate mosaics of finely-cut diamonds, *Winter Lights* and *Pilgrimage Of Grace* shimmer with gossamer luminescence as he weaves micro-melodies into flickering blankets of beauty, melancholy and joy. *Restless Heart* and *Days Gone By* echo *Yellow Princess*-era John Fahey, that huge influence on prog's first guitarists who also revered Sibelius. But where Fahey reflected America's arcane sweep, Phillips remains in thrall to old England, as homaged on 1999's *English Pastoral*, continued here on *Diamond Meadows* and *Still Rain*. If medieval courtliness underpins *Fleur-De-Lys*, *Castle Ruins* and chamber poignancy of *Caprice In Three*, *Trespass* spectres echo through the translucent ripples of *Mystery Tale* and *Shoreline*.

Phillips saves his peak masterworks for the home stretch, *Grand Tour* starting as cut-glass reflection before upping gears to mountain glory, 10-minute closer *Life Story* a deep space reverie enhanced by cello-like drone.

Just as he escaped encroaching fancy dress aspects that threatened his music's purity nearly half a century ago, Phillips has made a remarkable modern classic that raises the bar for progressive guitar albums, even prog itself.

A welcome respite from cloddish modern chest-beating, music is rarely allowed to be so beautiful.

KRIS NEEDS

BRUCE SOORD

All This Will Be Yours KSCOPE

Life, death, fatherhood – it's all here on Soord's superior second solo LP.



Bruce Soord's second solo album comes four years after his self-titled debut, and just 12 months after *Dissolution* became The Pineapple Thief's first UK Top 40 entry. There's inevitable crossover between his two musical incarnations, but *All This Will Be Yours* puts clear blue water between them. Under his own name, Soord dials down the overdrive and amps up the melancholy further, his brittle, emotional voice resting on delicately insistent acoustic guitars and glacial electronic textures.

Soord articulates and mollifies our own thoughts and fears.

Once again he finds inspiration in his hometown of Yeovil, Somerset, and the recent birth of his third child. The finest piece on the album, the bitter title track reflects on a walk with her through their austerity-stricken local area. Pushing past a local drug den at Number 158 and the *'Incarcerated humans contemplating just what's left to do,'* Soord asks: *'Have we come too far to fall upon our knees?'* A rare, desperate slide guitar solo and wailing police sirens (recorded locally) ram the bleak picture home.

Another highlight, the minimal *You Hear The Voices* builds into a crescendo of analogue synths, filtered and layered, with the tune collapsing into thrilling dissonance. A gentle xylophone adds to the tense pulse of *Our Gravest Threat Apart* along with guitar harmonics and huge, echoing keyboard textures. In this splintering UK there's broader social context to the line: *'We are a beautiful force together, our greatest threat apart/We know nothing is forever, but it's too soon to come apart.'*

This theme of impermanence, of mortality, recurs throughout, from the opener *The Secrets I Know* (*'Move forward at all costs, I'm already mourning your loss'*) to the consoling yet devastating goodbye, *One Day I Will Leave You*. By comparison lead track *The Solitary Path Of A Convicted Man* is a catchy number. Complete with subtle marimba and the cheeky clack of processed maracas, its relatively linear structure is a welcome breather from the album's gloomy, minor-key feel.

If Soord's writing and performance remain top-flight, his production and engineering skills power up by the record. *All This Will Be Yours* is a masterclass in modern sound work and timbre. His precision of, say, the tear-jerking *Time Does Not Exist*, overly maudlin *Cut The Flowers* and loping *One Misstep* hark back to one of his heroes, Alan Parsons. Credit's also due to fellow Pineapple Thief Steve Kitch for his sensitive mastering job.

Ruminating on his own circumstances, Soord articulates and mollifies our own thoughts and fears about life, death, and the world's entropic slide towards ruin. *All This Will Be Yours* proves again that he's got the heart of a poet and ears of gold.

GRANT MOON

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA

Mesmeranto ESOTERIC ANTENNA

Manchester duo's brave grief cycle beauty.

Grief is particularly tough to deal with in song without falling flat or over-egging it, but Chrissy Mostyn channels her own journey born from experience beautifully on this second album by The Blackheart Orchestra, whose only other member is multi-instrumentalist Rick Pilkington. Every note is charged with tangible emotion as Chrissy delivers 14 songs composed and recorded over 18 months in the UK, Denmark and Germany that run for an hour and start with losing a friend on the starkly-powerful *Ennikur*. She continues to wrap her appealingly fragile upper register quaver around mainly piano-



garnished slowies such as *All Of Me*, sepulchral *More* and haunted *Left To Right*; the last two displaying Kate Bush flavours in vocal style, the overdubbed harmonies and soft-focus keyboards. The pair aren't afraid to use space or even dip into 80s Euro disco on *Drown Me*

Out and Eurovision on the chorus of *Try*. Such playfulness keeps them human, making the poignant double-headed punch-line of cello-draped *Violet* and monumental *Another Lifetime* all the more effective. Ultimately, the duo are to be congratulated for coating this eternally difficult subject so sensitively, evocatively and, most of all, sweetly. **KN**

THE CURATOR

Twenty-Six/12 CROMERZONE

Grandiose musings as Norfolk goes prog folk.

This is more restrained and reflective than Alistair Murphy's cult "Norfolk prog" album *Where The Stars Will Give Way To The Morning*, perhaps because he's forsaken guitars for a baby grand piano, which is the star of this show. Known as The Curator because he is one, at Cromer Museum, Murphy's fiercely meditative ballads call to mind Peter Hammill, most notably on 26-minute finale *The Light Of Setting Suns*, which he says he began drafting versions of as far back as 1977. The string arrangements, helmed by No-Man graduate Steve Bingham, who guests throughout, drape the edifice in



neo-classical stylings as The Curator half-sings, half-speaks an adaptation of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. It's impressive, if more than a little stifling. The album's first half balances it with shorter, relatively more pop (albeit downbeat) numbers, which fall somewhere

between blues and avant-rock, although the lashings of sax and Bingham's violin occasionally suggest something closer to Sade. Diana Hare guests and duets on vocals, and there's an earnest cover of late Texan Christian-rocker Larry Norman's *I Hope I'll See You In Heaven*. Much intensity here, if somewhat solemn and suffocating. **CR**

THE DARK ELEMENT

Songs The Night Sings FRONTIERS

Sparkling second album from ex-'wish star.

Both blessed and cursed by a brief but eventful stint as singer with Nightwish, Anette Olzon could easily have abandoned symphonic metal in a fit of artistic pique. Thus far, her current band The Dark Element have done plenty to prove that she remains a worthy contributor to the genre, that pure but oddly traditional voice of hers sounding much more at home amid brisk and bright pop-tinged anthems than plonked in the middle of her previous band's overbearing opulence. As with 2017's self-titled debut, *Songs The Night Sings* errs on the side of simplicity, albeit with all the usual high production values



and faux-orchestral trimmings that this kind of music demands. From deceptively intricate opener *Not Your Monster* onwards, it's obvious that in guitarist Jani Liimatainen Olzon has found the perfect creative foil: these are songs that get the balance between balls-

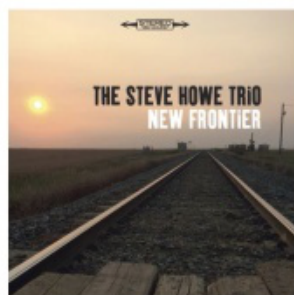
out heaviness, singalong sparkle and finessed experimenting absolutely right. The best of them – the urgent, 80s-saluting *Silence Between The Words*; the pacey, futuristic melodrama of *The Pallbearer Walks Alone* – showcase both what a genuinely great singer Olzon is and how TDE are conducting their own subtly revolutionary symphony. **DL**

THE STEVE HOWE TRIO

New Frontier ESOTERIC

Third album in the Yes guitarist's jazz/fusion odyssey.

Steve Howe has said that when Yes were all throwing ideas into the pot back in the early 70s, he was occasionally told that some of his ideas were too jazzy for the band. But with the Steve Howe Trio he can indulge those proclivities to his heart's content. Howe is joined here by his son Dylan on drums and keyboard player Ross Stanley, and what immediately captures the ear is that without a bass guitar there is a lot of space, so that one can really hear the mechanics of the music in action: in the harmonies, the counterpoint lines and the rhythmic



push and pull. And although *Zodiac* and *Showdown* have certainly got that swing, overall this is far from straight-up jazz, with elements of funk and R&B woven in, while *Gilded Splinter* – one of the three tracks co-written

with Bill Bruford – has complex sections reminiscent of Yes placed around song-like guitar melodies. *New Frontier* is melodically strong and brilliantly played, but the musicians favour telling flourishes rather than grandstanding solos and what comes across most strongly is their shared joy in playing together. **MB**

VOYAGER

Colours In The Sun SEASON OF MIST

Synth-wielding Australian prog metallers blend the hooky and the heavy.

It's been 20 years since they formed in Perth, but on this seventh album, *Voyager* sound like they're ready to become a belated overnight success. Their blend of bludgeoning riffs, sparkling synths, shuddering prog tempo-jumbles and booming choruses has never sounded more potent. Opening track *Colours* doesn't mess about, launching straight into a stadium-sized chorus before the juddering uncertainty of the verse and edgy riff volleys elsewhere suggest more circumspect emotions are at work. They rock just as hard and heavy



on *Reconnected*, on the back of pummelling thrash and epically emotive melodic strokes. Yet this is by no means a simplistic or predictable listen. They go admirably off-piste in texture with the synth pop openings of *Brightstar* and the sparkling electronica-

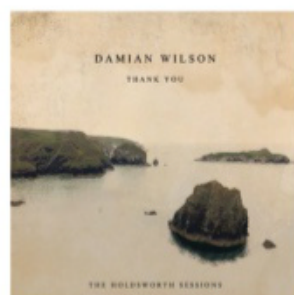
decorating *Now Or Never*, like Depeche Mode if they developed a penchant for hyperactive time-signatures. Even when you think their urge to complicate rhythms is about to tie a song in knots, they seem to emerge with a winning hook. All of which makes you think that *Voyager's* journey may only just be starting. **JS**

DAMIAN WILSON

Thank You COMMUNE

An intimate and reflective EP from the ex-Threshold frontman.

This stripped-back EP is the latest solo release from Headspace/Thresholder Damian Wilson and it sees him once again working with long-time collaborator Andrew Holdsworth, who helped realise the sparse instrumentation and click-track-free organic feel of the record. The opener, title track *Thank You* exemplifies the sound of the release, with delicate violin and cello juxtaposed against an arpeggiated piano accompaniment as Damian describes the boat he lived on, *Mistral*. Somewhat dramatically, the boat sank on the way to this year's Cropredy



festival, forcing Damian to dive down into it to retrieve his first guitar, which most of this material was written on. The slow build of ballad *Until I'm With You* has the melodic sense of R.E.M., while *Can You Hear Me?*, written by his childhood friend Nick

Woodbridge, is an interesting change of pace, with a different, yearning feel and a powerful backstory as Woodbridge disappeared several years ago. As you'd expect, Wilson's vocals are fantastic throughout, pursuing the mellower direction he's gone with Adam Wakeman lately rather than full-throttle prog'n'roll. **AL**

THE FLOWER KINGS

Waiting For Miracles INSIDEOUT

A rose by any other name: Stolt stuns again.



It's been a mildly bewildering few years for Flower Kings loyalists, with main man Roine Stolt taking various sabbaticals, guesting with A-listers, saying he was done with being in a group, hedging his bets by touring as The Flower Kings Revisited, then returning like a prodigal son to the fold and releasing this album under the band's more usual name. So it's the Swedish outfit's 13th, or 14th if last year's as Roine Stolt's The Flower Kings counts. Which it probably should. Whatever tweaks are made to the moniker, a Stolt-led album is a guarantee of a certain style, sound and substance. His excoats with Transatlantic, Steve Hackett and Jon Anderson (the 2016 Anderson/Stolt album *Invention Of Knowledge* is a thing of wonder) have only further improved his perfect grasp of what makes a long-form prog track hold attention and avoid waffle. It'd be a lie to declare his detours have expanded his horizons: *Waiting For Miracles* does what he always does, and very well. Yet he retains the knack of knowing when a movement, or a solo, has gone on for just the right time, and when the next shift should come in. If you're a fan of his own old-school heroes – Genesis, Yes, Floyd, even Procol Harum – this is high-grade methadone.



Homages its heritage, while pulling three-point turns.



That's not meant to damn the former teen prodigy's music with faint praise. The album's lush and fluid enough to stand on its own terms. Recorded in Benny from Abba's Stockholm studio (or one of them), it feels relaxed and confident enough to not stress over whether we're in realms of ground-breaking iconoclasm. The sense of effortless ease lends it great charm, and sometimes you want comfy slippers, not pinching fashion statements. And while homaging prog's heritage, this pulls off enough three-point turns to keep you guessing. Its themes, touching on America's social crises and global greed and hypocrisy, are both evergreen and current.

Ablly assisted by co-vocalist Hasse Fröberg, keyboardist Zach Kamins (who sprinkles in knowing winks to Tony Banks) and the strong and stable rhythm section of Jonas Reingold and Mirko DeMaio, Stolt seems at home delivering guitar solos of graceful touch, flawless without feeling sterile. *Black Flag* is a master class in marrying melody and momentum, while *Miracles For America* has brief cheeky nods to Yes and even The Nice before gliding into a smooth cruise through time-honoured tropes and finding that most crucial of prog necessities – the affecting outro, the gratifying resolution. *Vertigo* spins and sways with both melancholy and propulsion. Roine Stolt's garden is blooming afresh.

CHRIS ROBERTS

GONG

Love From The Planet Gong: The Virgin Years 1973 - 75 UMG

Long-promised box set exceeds expectations.



The history of the Radio Gnome trilogy on CD has been especially disputatious with band members crying foul at the French label BYG's use of unauthorised and indifferent stereo masters over the years. This wonderful boxed set, brimming with outtakes, previously unreleased material, new mixes and remasters, finally delivers on what is the definitive word on this period in Gong's evolution.

Gong took ideas and gave them a physical form in the real world.

Previously, if you wanted to hear the very best version of *Flying Teapot* then Virgin's original vinyl pressing was the only way to go. Now, with access to the original stereo masters, this new edition rescues the glissando guitar from its background obscurity, returning it to its position as a transcendent jumping-off point on the title track. That's just one of many notable differences that sets this above any previously available CD release. Sonic improvements abound. The three quad mixes of *You* add yet more revelatory audio detail. Suffice to say that the comprehensive restoration undertaken by engineer Simon Heyworth – who was there with Gong first time around – and signed off by the band, make these editions of their four studio albums absolutely indispensable.

Bassist Mike Howlett has revisited the live tapes included in the set. Carefully restored, while hardcore collectors will be familiar with some of the content, the concerts spread across eight of the 11 CDs here, five of which are previously unreleased, sound fresh and bracing. The sense of care extends to the hardback book. Its engaging and revealing narrative is relayed through the voices of the individual members.

At their core, Gong were always about taking an idea and giving it physical form in the real world. Daevid Allen, though talented, knowing he couldn't get very far on his strumming alone, eagerly recruited a disparate band who could extrapolate his mixture of parodic Eastern-flecked nursery rhyme melodies and Om-centric repetitions into a crowd-friendly form. Together they gradually assembled a tangle of scratchy tunes, lo-fi ethereal sonics, and a jokey opus all about consciousness-raising into something that resonated with a larger audience. The unlikely vehicle for this blend of music and mysticism was a flying teapot peopled by pot-head pixies, a Dadaist blowback to Allen's pre-hippie Beat Generation connections, adding the right splash of whimsy required to make his grand trilogy about spiritual enlightenment palatable to the great-coated crowds of the time and today. That there's still a Gong going strong, albeit with a different line-up, that's every bit as vital as years covered here is surely a testament to the potent momentum of Allen's original vision.

SID SMITH

CYNIC

Traced In Air, Remixed SEASON OF MIST

Floridian prog metal ingenues polish their shiniest prizes.

Originally released in 2008, Cynic's second album arrived after 15 years of creative silence. The band's debut album *Focus* emerged from death metal's progressive wing in 1993; an inspired blend of technical extremity, jazz chords and dream pop haze, it immediately set them apart from their more brutish peers. But *Traced In Air* was something else entirely. Firmly entrenched in art rock and left-field melody, it was a comeback that redefined the band and placed them at the heart of heavy music's progressive renaissance. Since then, Cynic have refused to pander to expectations, releasing the strange but immersive *Carbon-Based Anatomy* EP in 2011 and the deeply peculiar but fascinating *Kindly Bent To Free Us* in 2014. But it is *Traced In Air* that continues to be Cynic's most adored creation and while you may question the worth of remixing albums from only a decade ago, this will certainly do while we wait for more new material.

Audio nerds will doubtless have a lovely time poring over the new



versions of these beautiful but defiantly odd songs and working out where the differences lie between this and the original. In truth, *Traced In Air Remixed* isn't a wholesale reimagining, but it does offer enhanced levels of punch, sparkle

and depth to what was already an exquisitely detailed and enigmatic piece of work. You can hear it in rumbling overture *Nunc Fluens*, as Sean Reinert's cascading percussion builds to the expected swirling crescendo, but with much clarity and sonic separation between instruments. Again, revered gem *Evolutionary Sleeper* simply sounds fuller, richer in colour and sharper in attack, Paul Masvidal's vocoder-filtered voice included.

But let's not get bogged down in technical minutiae. *Traced In Air* is one of the finest prog metal albums of this century's first decade, remixed or not. That said, Paul Masvidal's greatest cultural contribution is still his guitar work on the theme tune for US sitcom *3rd Rock From The Sun*. Just saying. **DL**

EPICA

Design Your Universe NUCLEAR BLAST

Dutch symphonic metallers' Mayan philosophy and quantum physics-inspired opus.

Ten years ago, Epica released the album that would change their career. *Design Your Universe* was a voyage of self-discovery inspired by Mayan philosophy and quantum physics that was written as the band emerged from a difficult period. The departure of co-founder Ad Sluijter, a family bereavement, and singer Simone Simons' own health battles – she had suffered from recurrent MRSA infections ahead of their tour with Symphony X – threw Epica's future into doubt. Yet the Dutch six-piece pulled out all the stops with a recording that scored their first No. 1 in the Dutch Alternative Top 30 and further raised their profile.

From the Hans Zimmer-esque orchestration of dual openers *Samadhi - Prelude* and *Resign To Surrender*, it was clear everything was turned up to 11. They'd long received comparisons to Nightwish and Within Temptation, but where their 2003 debut *The Phantom Agony* was derivative of the early 00s symphonic metal movement, the grandiose *Design Your Universe* saw them harness a much bolder and more



unique sound. They built on the classical structure of their previous releases with bigger strings and more prominent chorale sections – including a burst of Gregorian chanting on *Martyr Of The Free Word* – that contrasted beautifully with their trademark washes of progressive,

power and death metal. There are gothic elements reminiscent of leader Mark Jansen's work with Floor Jansen on *After Forever* (*Burn To A Cinder*), and a sultry duet with Sonata Arctica's Tony Kakko (*White Waters*) that really highlights Simons' reinvigorated vocals – she'd been working with coach Amanda Somerville who also sings harmonies here.

Expanded from a 13-track album to a whopping 19 tracks, the gold edition has more space and brightness thanks to new mixes by The Gentle Storm's Joost van den Broek. Five newly-recorded acoustic reworkings bring Epica's progressive aspects forward with touches of flamenco, jazz and musical theatre. It's hard to disagree with Simons when she sings, 'We're so much stronger than before.' **NRS**

ANNIE HASLAM

Annie In Wonderland ESOTERIC

Remastered 1977 solo debut: curiouser and curiouser.

As Renaissance made tentative inroads away from folk prog and into their own scatty notion of New Wave, Annie Haslam conjured up her solo debut, which almost accidentally turned out weirder than anything Renaissance did. Presumably putting her partner Roy Wood in charge of production, some writing and most playing (he tackles something in the region of 20 instruments, from balalaikas to African drums) was a pop-aimed gambit. The man with the multi-coloured hair would surely use his Wizzard and The Move experience to craft an accessible vehicle for Haslam's helium-high voice to drive. Yet what transpired was that Wood went gleefully out on a limb, encouraging the singer to stab at a mix of fanciful, lightly psychedelic Wood songs and standard crooner ballads.

So it's part Wonderland, part blunderland. With Wood's ear entirely dominant – he even painted the Lewis Carroll-spoofing sleeve – the pair delve into curious concoctions such as the eight-minute *Honioco*, where you can hear



Wood enjoying forming an impish rhythm section with himself before it devolves into berserk Burundi chants and drums, and the six-minute *Rockalise*, which fuses Haslam's highest notes to a deranged mash-up of operatics and skiffle. (It's not quite as great as that sounds.)

But just as you've stretched your synapses to get a handle on those, you're snapped back to a scampi-and-chips social club as Annie ill-advisedly tackles *Nature Boy*, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *If I Loved You* and the Dvorak-spawned melody *Going Home*. The couple must have loved the songs, and fine songs they are. There will be those who consider her distinctive tones a delightfully different take on these well-worn tunes. And then there are those of us who think the idea – interesting on paper – turns out to be a terrible fit on vinyl, like asking Jon Anderson to sing *Three Coins In The Fountain*. Some sets of pipes work better in rarefied air than when tested down on Earth. As a Mad Hatter's grand folly though, this is a must-hear. **CR**

BERT JANSCH

Avocet EARTH

Very limited edition vinyl reissue for an album that's definitely not for the birds...

When Pentangle folded in 1973 Bert Jansch retreated to a farm in West Wales, returning afresh to music two years later and making three superb solo albums in a row. While these featured numerous musicians and some highly accessible songs, 1979's *Avocet* was quite the curate's egg. Recorded in Sweet Silence Studios in Copenhagen, this all-instrumental concept album featured just two other players – Jansch's former Pentangle mucker, double bassist Danny Thompson, and erstwhile Dando Shaft multi-instrumentalist Martin Jenkins. The results are challenging and beautiful.

The 18-minute title track comes in distinct sections, blending early music modalities with folk. Jenkins' violins and airy flutes add to the record's avian theme. Odd time signatures and unpredictable rhythms are thrillingly explored, baroque themes fledge and fly by, and Thompson's shifting bass moves things along. *Lapwing* is a palate cleanser by comparison, a minor-key piano piece that's simple and bittersweet, but *Bittern* ramps things up – wah-wah electric



guitar textures add to its bluesy/folky movement, with Thompson adding punctuation with some gorgeous glissando lines. The beautiful violin/guitar line of *Kingfisher* is wistful, *Osprey*'s 5/8 rhythm is beautifully evocative, Jenkins' mandocello twang adds so much tone to

Kittiwake, an optimistic tune that dips and soars like the titular gull. Through it all, Jansch's fingerstyle is preternaturally assured and skilful. It all feels so adventurous, so experimental, so free – three top-flight musicians inspired and playing in and for the moment.

With just 500 copies pressed, this 40th anniversary issue is rarer than, ahem, hens' teeth. Remastered from the original tapes, it's printed on white vinyl and comes with three downloadable bonus tracks – recently unearthed live recordings in Italy in 1977, playing truncated versions of *Bittern*, *Kingfisher* and *Avocet*. Liner notes from biographer Colin Harper are informative, while a brief new interview with Danny Thompson is fun, but this extraordinary music soars above it all. **GRM**

MARILLION

Afraid Of Sunlight RHINO

In two deluxe editions, this 1995 gem sees the light of day once more.



After deluxe editions of *Misplaced Childhood*, *Clutching At Straws* and *Brave*, Warner's repackaging of Marillion's EMI catalogue continues with this standout title. By 1995 the band's relationship with the label had soured and they would soon move on, but they still owed EMI one more album (and £500k), so over an uncharacteristically short period of a few months Marillion holed up in their own, newly kitted-out Racket Club studio and (in their words) 'knocked out' *Afraid Of Sunlight*.

Its themes - toxic fame, self-destruction, hubris - shine anew.

And what a knockout it is. Out of its mid-90s cultural context the timelessness of its themes of toxic fame, self-destruction and Icarian hubris shine anew. There's so much content here. It's anthemic in parts (the widescreen title track; opener *Gazpacho* with its references to OJ Simpson and Mike Tyson) and quirky in others (ersatz Beach Boys tribute *Cannibal Surf Babe*; Phil Spector homage *Beyond You*). The big, hit ballad *Beautiful* is gorgeous, the lilting *Afraid Of Sunrise* wears its 13/8 time signature lightly, and – up there with the finest songs in the Marillion catalogue – *Out Of This World* is just that. Telling the story of Donald Campbell's fatal Bluebird crash in 1967, it's a hauntingly atmospheric meditation on the lengths Man will go to for extreme achievement.

King is a tough look at fame's poison chalice, inspired by Elvis and Kurt Cobain, who took his own life the year before the album's release. There's a fiery, frantic Steve Rothery solo here, and the album ends with a dissonant *A Day In The Life*-style climax that shows drummer Ian Mosley at his most primal. Indeed, the whole band perform as if emboldened by the acclaim for *Brave* the year before, and the sheer sound of the album is a thing of beauty.

Despite label disinterest the album hit No. 18 in the UK chart, and *Beautiful* grazed the Top 30. The band played a lively 1995 show in Rotterdam as part of the supporting tour, and that's included in both packages, the five-LP set and four-CD box with Blu-ray. Both of these feature a solid 2019 remix from the band's latter-day producer Michael Hunter, but the CD box includes *Sunlight* producer Mike Meegan's superb original mix. The Blu-ray holds the band's fun and revealing new 45-minute chat about the album, three hi-res audio mixes and bonus tracks, early versions and outtakes. With titles such as *Deep Purple Vibe* and *Watery Guitar*, these'll make you appreciate producer Meegan's craft all the more. According to the band he did much to help them knock out *Afraid Of Sunlight*, and make it the shining success it still is.

GRANT MOON



★ CLASSIC ★

ROCK

HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK'N'ROLL





JOE MEEK, PLUS VARIOUS ARTISTS

I Hear A New World: The Pioneers Of Electronic Music, An Outer Space Music Fantasy CHERRY RED

Linking Meek, the Radiophonic Workshop and studios in Paris, Berlin and Milan.

At first glance, this collection's connection seems precarious. Meek's is the only concept album; the rest are tracks that encompass the manipulation of everyday sounds (such as taps dripping) and music generated exclusively by electronic means.

Recorded two years before *Telstar*, his ode to a satellite, *I Hear A New World* is a true space oddity, with choruses sung by chipmunk voices of 'Globbets', backed by skiffle band The Blue Men, then reverbed, compressed and presented in stereo. Although the *Laughing Gnome* novelty pop element may cause fits of laughter in the listener, on tracks such as *Magnetic Field* the inventiveness of the Ouija board-obsessed Meek runs rife. Included are the original album from 1960, and 1991's restoration by RPM.

Meanwhile, in a faraway galaxy, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop allowed Daphne Oram, Delia Derbyshire and others to create sound effects for radio and TV. *Amphitryon 38*, which sounds like an eerie wind through a giant



drainpipe, was the first wholly electronic score in BBC history and the jaunty *Timebeat* by 'Ray Cathode' is the work of Maddalena Fagandini and producer George Martin (still some way from *Strawberry Fields*).

By the time our spaceship lands on disc three, the sonic

landscape takes a sinister turn. We're in R3 *Late Junction* territory and *The Innocents - Savage Noises* is as terrifying as its title suggests. Positioned between Planet Pop and Planet Horror is the work of Tom Dissevelt and Kid Baltan at Philips Research Labs in Eindhoven. Their *Syncopation* has a similar space-age keyboard to *Telstar* and *Whirling* (*Sonic Re-entry*) is obviously influenced by space travel (the pair were said to be the BBC's first choice for the *Doctor Who* theme). *Drifting* (*Moon Maid*) from the mid-50s has effects that reached as far as the *Joe 90 Theme* and Hawkwind's *In Search of Space*.

A fascinating set, it (eventually) succeeds in connecting generations of sonic space travellers. **CE**

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Strain, Crack And Break: The Nurse With Wound List FINDERS KEEPERS

Revolutionary sounds from 70s France selected by Nurse With Wound.

The Nurse With Wound list is legendary in both avant music and record collecting circles. When NWW released their debut album of industrial psychedelia in 1979, they included on the back a list of 291 bands and artists to create a context for the uncompromising music they were making – based on years of record hunting in continental Europe, many of the names were incredibly obscure at the time, and some are still rumoured to be just a figment of NWW's imagination.

But now, Andy Votel's Finders Keepers label and NWW's Steven Stapleton have committed to a series of country-specific compilations to throw some light on exactly which songs were being alluded to on that list. First up is France – as Votel puts it, "Where the Seine meets the insane, the space cadets that found Mars in Marseilles."

It's fair to say that in the Anglo-American-focused 70s, France barely registered as a musical force beyond Jean-Michel Jarre, Sacha Distel and a couple of disco tracks – even Magma



were strictly cult. Yet in a country still gripped by revolutionary zeal, experimentation in the margins was rife, with new strains of avant and progressive rock rubbing up against musique concrète and free jazz. It's why Magma – who aren't featured on this collection, but whose

influence is apparent – had to invent the term 'Zeuhl' to describe this new music.

A strong sense of the dramatic permeates many of these tracks – Jacques Thollot's *Cécile* sounds like a poltergeist rifling through an attic, the drones and wails of Philipp Besombes' *La Plage* could be from *Berberian Sound Studio*, and Etron Fou Leloublan's *Les Désastreux Voyage Du Piteux Python* is a carnivalesque performance piece. But there's astonishing music here too: the supernatural chanson mambo of Mahjun's *Les Enfants Sauvages*; the taut, spy movie funk of Lard Free's *Warinobaril*; the ethnographic jazz rock of Horrific Child's *Freyeur*; and most impressive of all, the driving, 16-minute cosmic skronk of Red Noise's *Sarcelles C'est L'Aveni*. **JB**

RUSH

Clockwork Angels Tour RHINO

More evidence of Rush's general brilliance arrives on 10 sides of vinyl.



The wound is still raw. Grown men (and possibly even some grown women) are still randomly bursting into tears. There will never be any Rush gigs ever again (well, *probably* not) and no amount of lavish vinyl reissues can take away the pain. On the plus side, *Clockwork Angels Tour* sounds absolutely mind-blowing on vinyl and if you listen to it at a sufficiently wall-cracking volume, you might be able to convince yourself that you really are air drumming like a lunatic as Geddy, Alex and Neil do their authoritative thing mere yards away. At this point, it's all we've got.



Huge, warm, vibrant, dazzling... as ever.



Originally released in 2013, this full-blown account of Rush's 2012 US tour in support of the immaculate *Clockwork Angels* is just one of several impeccable live sets released by the Canadian legends during their imperious final phase. Whether fans regard it as one of the best will be entirely down to how they regard 80s albums such as *Hold Your Fire*, *Signals* and *Grace Under Pressure*. The show's first string of songs draws heavily from them, but the sound of Rush in 2012 was wholly distinct from those anaemic, synth-driven 80s years. The result is that there is a muscularity and casual modernity to everything from triumphant opener *Subdivisions* to a sublime *The Analog Kid*, while later deep cuts like *Bravado* and fiery instrumental *Where's My Thing?* (both from 1991's *Roll The Bones*) breathlessly point the way toward the heavier, spikier sound of *Clockwork Angels*, which dominates the middle part of the show, albeit enhanced by the lush backing of the Clockwork Angels String Ensemble. As ever with Rush live records, it all sounds huge, warm and vibrant and the musicianship is consistently dazzling. Are they *really* not going to do any more gigs?

If there is a downside to this vinyl rebirth, it's that with five discs required to cover its generous proportions, *Clockwork Angels Tour* is going to have you on your feet every 20 minutes for the best part of three hours. But when the rewards are as thunderous and life-affirming as the run of classics that brings this extravaganza to a close, it would be churlish to complain about a few extra burned calories. *YYZ*, *The Spirit Of Radio*, *Tom Sawyer*, a decent chunk of *2112*... you know the drill, let's face it. A few surprises lurk at the end – a brace of *Power Windows* bangers and *The Pass* (from 1989's *Presto*) – but taken in its entirety, this will mainly serve to remind us that Rush were in a class of precisely one.

DOM LAWSON



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LONG DISTANCE CALLING

STUMMFILM - Live from Hamburg/A Seats And Sounds Show

INSIDEOUT

Take a pew for the post-rockers' first live release, on film.

The Kulturkirche Altona, a neo-gothic church built in 1873, is a piece of ornate beauty ensconced in the German city of Hamburg. The stonework rises from the ground up, imposing over the congregation like a cathedral. A fitting space, then, for Long Distance Calling's grand, prog-tinged instrumental post-rock. The Germans performed there in early 2019 in a 'seats and sounds' tour, and recorded the atmospheric, absorbing two-hour set. Don't expect any guitarists flying on zip lines or pyro melting off eyebrows in the front row; this is four men – and a cellist



and percussionist/electronic alchemist – on stage, playing music. But don't they do it well. Opener *Into The Black Wide Open* snaps with a pounding drum intro, snare cracking through the rafters, before ending up sounding like latter-day Porcupine Tree having

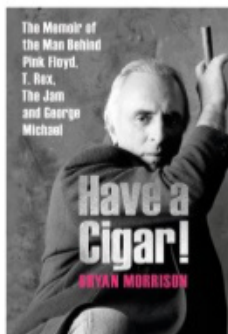
a fling with a post-rock mistress, while *In The Clouds* briefly down-picks into Metallica territory. Long Distance Calling are suckers for drawn-out, well-mapped musings, so two hours could be a chore, but when the cello emerges and the light and dark shades swoop into play, the beauty shines through. **CC**

BRYAN MORRISON

Have A Cigar! The Memoir Of The Man Behind Pink Floyd, T. Rex, The Jam & George Michael QUILLER

Late impresario's vivid, uproarious autobiography with plenty of prog.

After rising from East End poverty to work his way up to become one of the late 60s' foremost manager-booking agents turned publishers, Bryan Morrison wrote his memoir to coincide with his 50th birthday in 1991, then withdrew it when he didn't approve of his publisher's edit. Now seeing print thanks to his son Jamie, it's a frequently cornflakes-spluttering romp through very different times, when old school cigar-chomping agents ruled the music business Morrison helped reshape for modern times. Although it's Floyd who'll attract



prog fans, any major band will have benefited from moves Morrison made as Floyd's manager on the cusp of their ascension (the Syd Barrett memories are priceless and shocking). There are brushes with the Krays, Bee Gees-related death threats, the rise of Marc Bolan, The Jam and Wham, and many

escapades that could never happen in today's sanitised world. Sadly, after turning polo into a popular sport, Morrison never awoke from his coma after a 2006 accident and died in 2008. At last, he has this engrossing monument to his achievements. **KN**

PROGNOSIS

Definition: The Short Stories by Phil Weller SELF-RELEASED

A fictional expansion of the Brit band's universe.

After decades of being seen as the weak sibling of the novel, the short story has recently undergone a renaissance. Phil Weller's decision to write short stories may be a smart one, then. *Definition: The Short Stories* not only represents the leader of Manchester prog metallers Prognosis' first collection, but each story is inspired by a track on their latest album. Weller creates intriguing tales of outsiders and charlatans – a mysterious car crash survivor, a bullied child, and a hubristic king – which sometimes stick closely to *Definition's* original tracks and sometimes riffs off them.



There are some high-concept ideas, not least in *Melting Winter*, where Weller reimagines Orwell's 1984 published in the world in which it is set. It has some fine twists, but inevitably pales against the source material. The book is at its strongest when it's at its most human, as in *Consequences*, which

explores rough justice and revenge. There is an abundance of ideas, from parables about aliens to tales about humanity's future. Weller is on to something, and soon other proggers may attempt to marry word and music in equally fresh ways. **RM**

JETHRO TULL

The Ballad Of Jethro Tull ROCKET 88

Thick-as-a-brick oral history is a plushly packaged treat.



Billed as their first ever official illustrated history, *The Ballad Of Jethro Tull* is a sumptuously presented hardback volume packed with striking, often unseen photography as befits a band who at the height of their success were as much about visual as musical entertainment. As this book reminds us, Tull were absolutely massive in the first half of the 70s, second only to Led Zeppelin as a live attraction in the US – and their commitment to putting on a show was a major factor in their popularity. But as to why their music was so popular... that seems to be a harder story to tell.



Great anecdotes, quirky details... but analysis-free.



Part of the reason for this is because *The Ballad...* is constructed purely as an oral history. Compiled by writer Mark Blake, who also conducted many of the interviews, it's essentially a rolling tapestry of quotations from band members and management – which makes for some great anecdotes and lots of quirky detail, but means that there's zero authorial insight or analysis. While many fans may like this approach, trusting them to interpret the text at face value, it's sometimes frustrating that certain topics aren't dug into deeper.

Ian Anderson is of course the driving force behind both the band and this book, and so his voice and perspective is the dominant narrative here (Martin Barre is noticeably absent). Anderson is a man with a reputation for being, in his own words, a gentlemanly autocrat, but he also emerges as a highly intelligent and highly motivated artist, an explosive performer determined to prove himself yet entirely uninterested in the more hedonistic aspects of the rock'n'roll lifestyle: "20,000 [people] at Madison Square Garden is enough human company" is a key quote. Clues as to where Tull's often extraordinary music came from are harder to define – Anderson admits that early exposure to Yes, King Crimson and The Nice gave him the confidence to be more adventurous, but Tull remain strangely insulated from the contemporary rock scene.

However, this is by no means an overly earnest book, with the surreal circus of Tull on tour providing numerous war stories: escaping from the police under a blanket in the back of a station wagon after a riot at Red Rocks; forcing a near-naked Terry Ellis to go on stage with signs around his neck to explain *Thick As A Brick* to Japanese audiences; being pissed on by the crowd at Shea Stadium...

The Ballad Of Jethro Tull is a beautifully packaged treat for long-time Tull fans, but may prove a little opaque for those not already familiar with the band's history.

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Take a bow

SPACE ROCKS

VENUE INDIGO AT THE O2, LONDON
DATE 21/09/2019

It's during *A Natural Disaster* when Anathema's Vincent Cavanagh asks the audience to hold up their glowing mobile phones. He wants to recreate the starry cover of live album *Universal*, and the twinkling effect is made all the more breathtaking by the various spacecraft on display around the auditorium. As hundreds of lights illuminate the crowd, we're stunned into silence by Lee Douglas' velvety vocals and mournful violin from special guest Anna Phoebe. This isn't just any headline slot, this is Space Rocks 2019.

Now in its second year, the Prog Award-winning festival of science and culture has found a welcoming audience among fans of experimental sounds. Anathema are one of four progressive acts performing alongside a programme of TED-style talks from a stellar cast, including astronaut Tim Peake, science author (and daughter of the late physicist Stephen) Lucy Hawking, rocket scientist Kate Underhill, and sci-fi actors Dominique Tipper (*The Expanse*) and Jason Isaacs (*Star Trek: Discovery*). Diversity and climate change are recurrent themes with plenty of opportunities for all ages to learn something new. There are also bonus space talks in the Space Lounge, as well as the chance to buy chunks of

meteorite and bag essential mouse mats and posters from the European Space Agency.

Former Trans-Siberian Orchestra violinist **Anna Phoebe** provides a musical interlude during the second session of seminars. She's premiering *Between Worlds: There Is No Planet B*, a haunting trip hop-influenced piece inspired by a keynote ESA speech on climate change and environmental destruction. There are a few technical problems but these are almost forgotten once the musician's trademark electric violin soars over the electronic backing track, harmonising beautifully with Anil Sebastian's vocal harmonies. The duo are decked out in astronaut-inspired copper foil couture, and behind them is a film edited from the ESA's Earth Observation archives, which includes satellite imagery of Greenland's melting ice caps. Such current and heavy topics deserve to be accompanied by powerful music and, although the performance still feels a little like a work in progress, the violinist has plans to expand the piece into a work for a choir next year.

The evening's entertainment begins with **Voyager**, who rip straight into the explosive *Hyperventilating*. The Aussies' heavy riffs and huge choruses are just what's needed to launch the day's final session into the cosmos, and the sci-fi fans are clearly having the time of their lives onstage. There's a pick'n'mix selection from their last few albums

"Now in its second year, the Prog Award-winning festival of science and culture has found a welcoming audience among fans of experimental sounds."



Anathema: true stars.

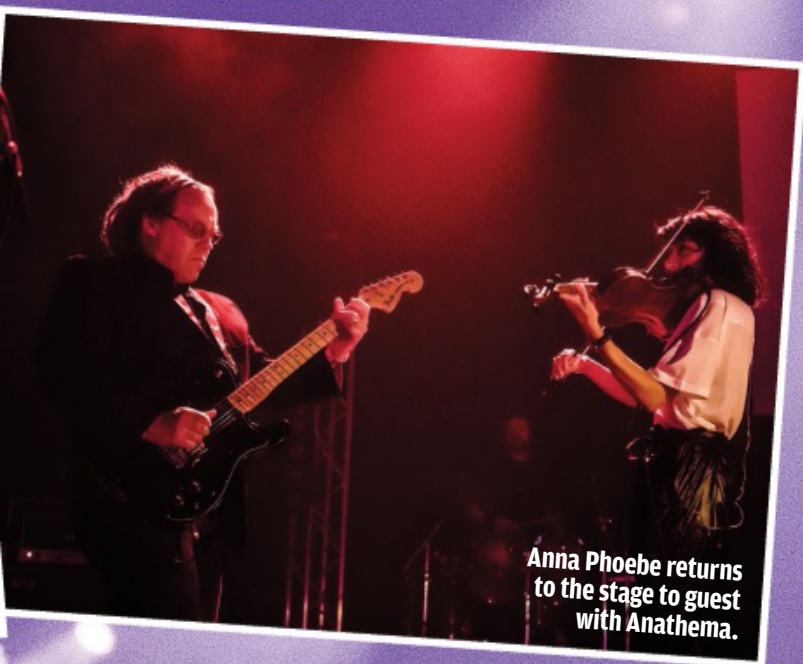
that showcases their hi-octane prog sound perfectly. *Ascension's* catchy melodies segue into the 80s vibrance of *Brightstar*, and by the time the anthemic *Colours* closes the set, the audience are fully warmed up and cheering for more.

Despite all the space tech displayed in the room, Sel Belamir's pedal board could still be the most complicated gizmo here. **Amplifier** are stripped down to a three-piece tonight – guitarist Steve Durose couldn't make this one-off show – so they focus on their more chilled-out material. They're not short of appropriately themed tunes to choose from either. Laidback opener *Departure Lounge*, from 2009's *Eternity* EP, proffers a different side of the band and this peaks with the cosmic explosion that is *Supernova*. There's excitement when the audience hear the opening notes of oldie *UFOs* too. The closing track is taken from their eponymous debut, but could be on the creepy soundtrack to a cult space flick. The only disappointment is that it's over so soon.

Anathema pull out all the stops for *The Space Between Us*, their final gig of the year before they begin work on their next album. Not only do they return to a six-piece, with Jamie Cavanagh back on bass, but they've teamed up with multimedia artist Kristina



Amplifier: cosmic trio.



Anna Phoebe returns to the stage to guest with Anathema.

Pulejkova for some breathtaking visuals created from previously unseen ESA footage. The stunning imagery complements their dreamy sounds and Anna Phoebe even makes a guest appearance on a couple of songs, including a powerful rendition of *Day One* from Hans Zimmer's *Interstellar* soundtrack. It could have been composed for them as it works so well with their 'greatest hits' set, which includes a punchy rendition of *Can't Let Go* with dual drums from Daniel Cardoso and John Douglas.

Distant Satellites is pure perfection, *Untouchable Parts 1 And 2* are given a new poignancy with a video tribute to Helen Sharman, Britain's first cosmonaut, and their cover of Pink Floyd's *Keep Talking* provides a final swirl of space rock before the buzzing crowd files out to the strains of Bowie's *Life On Mars*.

Space Rocks 2019 will definitely be a very tough act to follow.

NATASHA SCHARF

WILL IRELAND



Lee Douglas: out of this world.



Anathema's Vincent Cavanagh: untouchable.



Voyager's Daniel Estrin: keytar hero.



Voyager's Simone Dow kicks the show into high gear.

FLYING COLORS

VENUE	VENTURA THEATRE, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA
DATE	05/09/2019

For a band that don't play often, Flying Colors certainly can play. Since forming in 2012, the prog supergroup have performed live just two dozen times prior to arriving in Ventura, a quaint, oceanside town located an hour northwest of Los Angeles (where, at the Wiltern theatre the night before, guitarist Steve Morse helped Deep Purple continue their long farewell). The band's infrequent performances due to their members' commitments with numerous other projects is humorously acknowledged by drummer Mike Portnoy soon after the show kicks off. "Welcome to the rarest of all sightings — rarer than Sasquatch, rarer than a UFO!" he quips.

The Ventura concert marks Flying Colors' lone West Coast appearance of 2019 and, along with a London show in mid-December, is one of just nine they scheduled this year in support of their recently released new album, *Third Degree*. But despite such scarcity, the band show no signs of rust during their 13-song, 100-minute set, which features knockout performances by Steve and his longtime Dixie Dregs bandmate, bassist Dave LaRue.

That's not to take anything away from the efforts of Portnoy, keyboardist Neal Morse and vocalist Casey McPherson, but LaRue's driving bass serves as a locomotive that powers

show opener *Blue Ocean*, encore finale *Mask Machine* and everything in between impressively. Steve, meanwhile, delivers one scintillating solo after another, somehow managing to be tasteful and fluid yet also aggressive.

Admittedly, it's a bit awkward seeing Neal relegated to a keyboard riser at the back left of the stage,

given that he's one of the genre's great frontmen. His effortless charisma is still on full display, however, as he leads frequent clap-alongs, smiles perpetually and appears to be having more fun than any soon-to-be-60-year-old rightfully should.

In addition to his frequent sharing of lead vocal duties with McPherson and his nonstop three-part harmonising with McPherson and Portnoy, Neal manages to sneak in a fun, mad scientist-worthy keyboard solo during the bouncy, playful new track, *More*. The song also features stop-on-a-dime tandem playing by Steve and LaRue, but sadly, none of the blacklight effects from the song's memorable music video.

The crowd sing along loudly during the chorus of *Kayla*, which sees McPherson — whose choice of wardrobe might be best described as convict beatnik — join Steve for an uplifting harmonised guitar solo. Afterwards, McPherson greets the audience for the first time, acknowledging attendees from as far away as Korea and Chile (to which Portnoy deadpans, "I came from Pennsylvania — does that count for anything?").



A rare performance that needs to be savoured.

He then introduces the evening's most chilling performance, new track *You Are Not Alone*, inspired by the devastation wreaked by 2017's Hurricane Harvey. The haunting video footage that accompanies the song — which shows McPherson admirably volunteering in Houston at a time when the city was more than one-third underwater — looks like outtakes from a Hollywood disaster movie, but drives home the song's message in poignant fashion. Another classy, pitch-perfect solo by Steve serves as the proverbial cherry on top.

Other highlights include the irresistible melodicism of *A Place In Your World*, the accessible yet deceptively complex *Forever In A Daze* and the borderline power-pop of *The Storm*, which gives Steve another chance to dazzle with the purity of his tone. It's McPherson, however, who steals the spotlight on the plaintive *Peaceful Harbor*, as he leads



"Dave LaRue's driving bass serves as a locomotive that powers show opener *Blue Ocean*, encore finale *Mask Machine* and everything in between impressively."



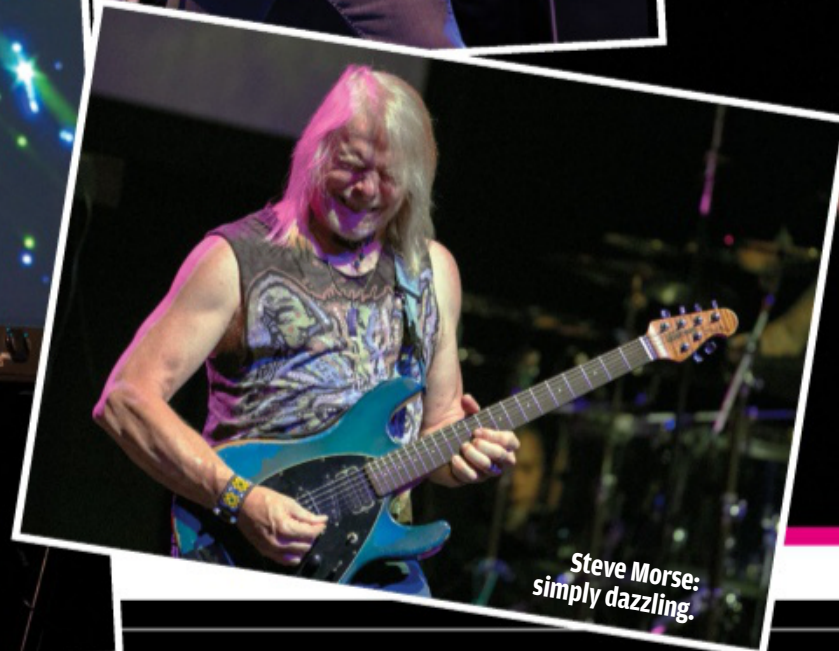
Dave LaRue: Flying Colors' lynchpin.



Mike Portnoy: looking fresh as a daisy after his commute from Pennsylvania.



Neal Morse gives it his all... then a little bit More.



Steve Morse: simply dazzling.

GOD IS AN ASTRONAUT

VENUE	UNDERGROUND ARTS, PHILADELPHIA
DATE	13/09/2019

Irish post-rockers God Is An Astronaut always deliver fascinating instrumental odes to the human condition. Their eighth LP, 2018's *Epitaph*, is perhaps their greatest statement yet, and tonight's gig

is in celebration of that record. Delivering a 90-minute visual and aural spectacle, their set is an almost faultless triumph.

Unsurprisingly, they start with the title track. Its lone piano notes establish a suspenseful ether before guttural guitar chords, crushing cymbals and more touching dissonance cover every inch of the venue in heartache. It makes quite an

impression, and more *Epitaph* selections — *Mortal Coil*, *Séance Room* and *Medea* — appear to further demonstrate just how devastating the band's latest venture is.

Between the newer gems, there's less of a career overview than you'd expect. They represent their 2002 debut, *The End Of The Beginning*, with its title track, and also play four compositions from 2005's

highly praised *All Is Violent*, *All Is Bright* before closing out with *Centralia* and the title track of 2015's *Helios/Erebus*, and every one of them is a wonderful inclusion, but a wider spread across the whole catalogue would've been better.

The group rarely fail to match their sounds with apropos sights, and tonight smoke and fog permeate every note —



MATT QUINA

the crowd in a three-part harmony of the song's wordless vocal refrain. It doesn't quite rival the transcendence of his bandmates' shoot-for-the-stars moments in classics such as Dream Theater's *The Spirit Carries On* and Transatlantic's *We All Need Some Light*, but the moon isn't a bad consolation prize.

CLAY MARSHALL

Casey McPherson has earned his stripes in this supergroup.

often obscuring the players - and their chaotically synchronised lights capture the mood of the music. At times, the hues even match the not-displayed original artwork, such as when flashing blues cover the crowd as *Frozen Twilight* radiates relatively mellow introspection.

Although the majority of the mixing is solid, there are a few instances of

muddled tones and exaggerated feedback making it difficult to tolerate and discern certain pieces. Likewise, frontman Torsten Kinsella's vocals are occasionally too quiet. Granted, he doesn't sing so much as expressively murmur and offer commentary between some songs, but it'd still be nice to hear it all better.

Gripes aside, *God Is An Astronaut* infuse the night with all of the arresting aural and visual splendour that makes them so special. They excel at not only at enveloping the crowd in their own characteristic take on the genre, but also in exemplifying what makes post-rock such a powerfully poetic genre.

JORDAN BLUM

LIFESIGNS

VENUE	TRADING BOUNDARIES, EAST SUSSEX
DATE	30/08/2019

“When we first played here, the audience comprised a man and a dog!” muses Lifesigns’ John Young. Tonight, underneath the venue’s billowing satins and silks, it’s a full house, a far cry from that first lonely night in East Sussex back in 2014 - though the band have been regular visitors here since then.

Kicking off their latest UK mini tour, it’s apparent that their recent break has worked wonders, as energy levels onstage are running high. Much of that energy emanates from the band’s co-founder, drummer Martin ‘Frosty’ Beedle, who’s immediately and visibly in the zone as he attacks the opening staccato beats above the swirling synth of *Lighthouse*’s intro. The return to the set of the opening track of their eponymous 2013 debut album is long overdue, its climactic closing passage a meeting place for rumbling bass, soaring guitar, seagulls and crashing waves.

Beedle and animated bass player Jon Poole are a steady foundation on which Young’s rich keyboard lines and warm, clear vocals, together with the cultured, fluid guitar of ‘newbie’ guitarist Dave Bainbridge, can build wonderfully. The sound’s exquisitely balanced by the band’s fifth member, sound engineer Steve Rispin.

Lifesigns deliver a stream of favourites tonight. Stand-outs include the haunting *Voice In My Head*; Young’s broadside to radio mediocrity, *Touch*; the ever-uplifting *Cardington*; radio-friendly *Chasing Rainbows* and the very prophetic though happy appraisal of Armageddon, *At The End Of The World* from the first album together with customary closer, *Carousel*, during which early technical gremlins are quickly rectified.

The confidence, virtuosity and vigour with which this foursome now play brings fresh, undiscovered insights into their music, especially with the arrival of Bainbridge, who has taken the band to a higher level of performance, mainly due to his intuitive rapport with Young.

The encore, the hauntingly moving *The Last One Home*, written by Young, originally appeared on Qango’s only album, *Live In The Hood*. This ethereally beautiful ballad, hallmarked by Bainbridge’s spinetingling guitar solo, will be on the next Lifesigns album.

It’s fair to say that, judging by tonight’s reaction, few bands command affection and admiration in such equal measures as Lifesigns.

Young reveals that Lifesigns was a result of a bet made in a pub when he was challenged to create some fresh, original prog music. With the band increasingly the entry point for many non- or ex-proggers, he’s long overdue a jackpot return on that wager.

ALISON REIJMAN

IQ

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	07/09/2019

You can tell that tonight is an album launch event. The queue for merchandise stretches to the back of the Assembly Hall's foyer and spills into the car park. IQ took delivery of their new opus three days ago, and early adopters are lining up to bag the new double album weeks before general release.

The album's title is emblazoned in triptych on the video screens behind the stage:

Resistance. Atmospheric intro music plays and the band begin with the Tool-like *Alampandria*, which saw its debut at Night Of The Prog in July. It's a short and sweet appetiser.

Bela Lugosi lights up the screens and leads us into the familiar *From the Outside In*. What music they make indeed. Peter Nicholls dons a blindfold and *Sleepless Incidental* from *Subterranea* makes a welcome return to the setlist, followed by the lengthy church organ-driven *Sacred Sound*. So far it's mostly been crowd-pleasing classic

IQ: time to premiere some new tracks.

Shallow Bay's haunting piano-led first half builds, thanks to Paul Cook's irresistible drumming, to a sumptuous guitar solo from Michael Holmes. This has "instant classic" written all over it.

Nicholls introduces *Stay Down* in a variety of accents, settling on a Ray Winstone "Stay dahn!" It's another slow-burner until the heavy and ecstatic denouement. IQ certainly aren't mellowing with age – a trait that was obvious from 2009's metallic *Frequency* album, represented tonight by the dystopian sci-fi theatre of *Ryker Skies*.

We return to *Resistance* with *For Another Lifetime*. Keyboardist Neil Durant is helped out by Holmes on synth as they create an unsettling horror soundtrack

that could be described as the sound a squeezebox might make being sucked into a black hole. This is all very weird but enjoyable, and soon the track morphs into more traditional territory.

Holmes crosses the stage mid-song and plants his head into Nicholls' chest, who in turn plants a kiss on him. It's

genuinely touching and also an affirmation that the new material is going down a storm with the albeit partisan crowd. They can grant themselves a brief moment of relief and self-congratulation.

Peter Nicholls' serial killer monologue *The Road Of Bones* is as chilling as ever. The gorgeous *Until the End* is a respite from the intensity, giving Holmes a brief spell on classical guitar. *Subterranea* and *Awake and Nervous* are uptempo singalong encores. This is a party of sorts, after all.

Old and new rubbed shoulders tonight, and on the basis of the 40 minutes of fresh material, IQ are only getting better.

A happy audience file out. *Prog* is home in time to put disc one in the player and relive the night.

CHRIS MCGAREL

"On the basis of the 40 minutes of fresh material, IQ are only getting better."



Mike Holmes lets rip with sumptuous solos.



IQ: the smart choice for discerning prog fans.



Nicholls delivers the new tracks and for the fans, resistance is futile.



Peter Nicholls wants you to "STAY DAAHHHN!"

VOYAGER

VENUE	229 THE VENUE, LONDON
DATE	22/09/2019
SUPPORT	COLDBONES, SHATTERED SKIES

Considering the fact that it's a Sunday night and also that they opened proceedings at the Space Rocks event in London the day before, Australian proggers Voyager have still managed to pull in a pretty good crowd. The audience tonight are mainly on the younger side, but a smattering of older prog fans suggests that the Perth quintet are beginning to make inroads to an audience who can be wary of new music they're not familiar with at best, and downright dismissive at worst.

This is evident when young prog metallers Shattered Skies take to the stage and open with *The End And The Rebirth*. The kids at the front are having the time of their lives as singer Gerry Brown throws himself into *15 Minutes* and *Arisen* with gusto, but the older members of the audience skulk warily in the darker recesses at the back.

Quite what they make of Coldbones, one dreads to think. The post-rock trio operate with the intensity of a hardcore band, with guitarist Jordan Gilbert grimacing and doubled up as they wring every last drop of emotion from the likes of *Lost* and *Space*. Despite the onstage intensity, there's certainly a finesse to the band's instrumental rock, married with an agreeable depth, that leaves a lasting impression. And Coldbones make an increasingly good case for where post-rock and progressive rock should meet.

With their new seventh album *Colour Of The Sun* about to be released on Season Of Mist, there's a sense that Voyager are on the cusp of achieving something pretty momentous. They've always been a fun and engaging live presence, but right now everything seems to be coalescing to perfection.

It helps that they deliver a set with bona fide bangers like opener *Hyperventilating*, recent single *Brightstar* and *Ascension* from 2017's *Ghost Mile*, all big, djenty riffs with 80s pop choruses, but it's what's happening underneath that sets the Australians firmly in Prog's world. Shifting rhythms and pulsating time changes underpin the guitar chops of Simone Dow and Scott Kay, while drummer Ashley Doodkorte is a blur of hair and arms.

Over all of this, frontman Daniel Estrin leads proceedings, adding lush keyboard sounds from his trusty keytar, and his powerful voice carrying the bigger songs with melody and precision, all delivered with a big, toothy grin.

Because another facet that sets Voyager apart and makes them memorable is the enormous sense of fun they bring to the stage, something that all too often seems to have gotten lost in the progressive world. And if anything's going to help pull in a younger demographic, then surely that's the approach that's needed. Somehow you sense that much bigger stages beckon in their near future.

JERRY EWING

JUSTIN HAYWARD

VENUE	DE LA WARR PAVILION, BEXHILL ON SEA
DATE	18/09/2019

Following a recent appearance in nearby Hastings by The Music Of The Moody Blues tribute act, the healthy turn-out for Hayward underlines the strong south coast appetite for the most mellifluous songbook in prog.

At 72, the lustrously coiffed, cravat-sporting Hayward wears a white shirt with just a hint of ruffle at the shoulder. His stage backdrop – rugged castle on sea-strafted promontory – further enhances the romantic, elemental thrust of his most prized musical moments.

Part psychedelic survivor, part Pre-Raphaelite minstrel, Hayward presents a set suitably spangled with crowd-pleasing favourites. The big numbers, from extra-curricular work with John Lodge (*Blue Guitar*) and Jeff Wayne's *War Of The World's* (the ever wondrous *Forever Autumn*), sit, elegant and snug, alongside Moody Blues classics (*Nights In White Satin*, *Never Comes The Day* and *I Know You're Out There Somewhere*).

But it is the artful manner in which the songs are presented, plus Hayward's deprecating and colourful between-song monologues, that really add to his considerable legacy. Favouring a drummerless three-piece, harmony supplying aggregation to accompany him – Mike Dawes, young guitar wizard and support

act in his own right, Julie Ragins, keys, and Karmen Gould on flute – Hayward presides, on a series of meticulously plucked acoustics, ferried onstage by a guitar tech.

An electric axe is strapped on only in the performance's final stages – for a still-charged and earnestly delivered *Question*. As a contrast to the full production of a Moody Blues concert

Mike Dawes, Karmen Gould and Julie Ragins provide all the accompaniment Hayward needs.



"Part psychedelic survivor, part Pre-Raphaelite minstrel, Hayward presents a set suitably spangled with crowd-pleasing favourites."

the minimal, decorous makeover is telling, highlighting the sensitive detail and tender intimacy in these songs.

Introducing the 2013 solo beauty *The Western Sky*, Hayward recalls how, combined with the music of Buddy Holly and The Everly Brothers, the inspirational Wiltshire landscape outside his childhood bedroom window helped shaped his musical vision. The tongue-in-cheek acid-saturated *On The Threshold Of A Dream* oddity *Are You Sitting Comfortably?* was one of several he

recalls writing in the broom cupboard of the West Hampstead Decca Studio under the effect of various substances with Moodies flute player Ray Thomas.

"We spent most of our first seven years recording in that broom cupboard," he recalls wryly.

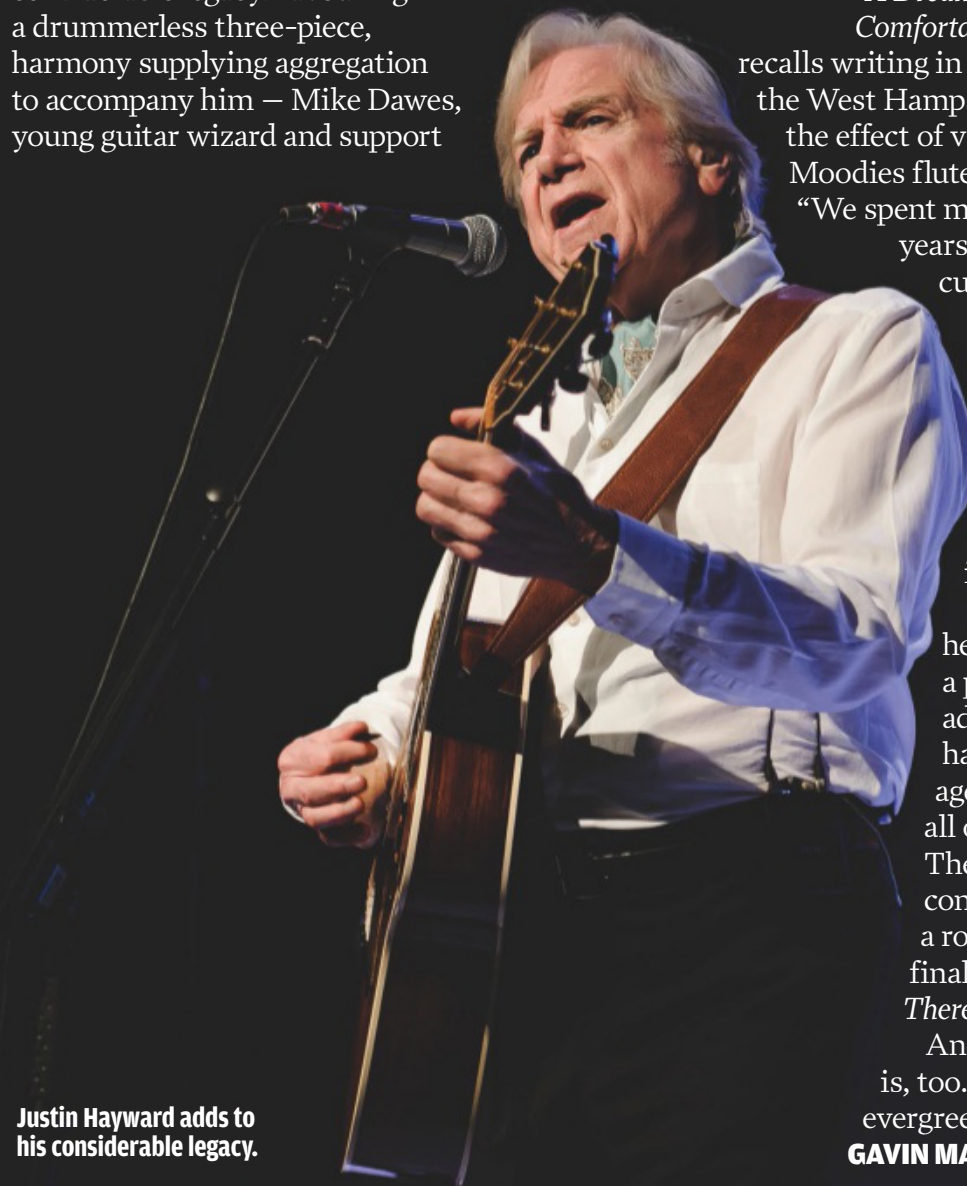
To aid memory, and set the scene, he summons a lifesize cardboard cut out of his former self to the stage, a waggish allusion to the ghost of his past which he says is always hovering.

It is a haunting which he handles lightly, from a past which he honours admirably. Sure, the voice has roughened a little with age, but the quality, from all onstage, is hard to fault. The clear-eyed, searching continuity endures on a rousing and affirmative finale of *I Know You're Out There Somewhere*.

And it's good to know he is, too. File under seasonal evergreen, still blooming.

GAVIN MARTIN

Justin Hayward adds to his considerable legacy.



VOLA

VENUE	BOSTON MUSIC ROOM, LONDON	DATE	07/09/2019
SUPPORT	ARCH ECHO, SÜMER		

VOLA kick off their UK tour with a sold-out show and the house is already busy when opening act Sümer take the stage. A late addition to the bill, Sümer's triple-guitar line-up enables the band to move between huge, enveloping washes of sound and bruising bursts of heaviness. *Pinch, Cut* blends odd measures with knotty riffage, and the instrumental #9 is moodily atmospheric. They close with the excellent, spaced-out vibe of *End Of Sense* to loud acclaim, and given that it's been five years since their last album, it's high time this hugely exciting band got back in the studio.

Arch Echo are not what you would expect from a band hailing from Nashville — there's no country twang in their frantic instrumental prog fusion. You know a band attract a serious muso fanbase when they sell books of guitar tabs at the merch table and Arch Echo certainly have impressive chops. From *Daybreak* through *Immediate Results* and *Color Wheel*, they go flat-out. The quintet are clearly having a blast with their 'Look ma, no hands!' exuberance, but they run the risk of their non-stop shred-fest becoming overwhelming. Guitarist Adam Rafowitz trades cascading solos with keyboardist Joey Izzo in *Hip Dipper*, the crowd love the manic *Afterburger*, and the Nashvillians promise a return visit soon.

Where a great many bands marching under the progressive banner pursue



a sound that was codified in the late 60s and early 70s, Denmark's VOLA have eyes and ears on the future, offering a collage of melodic vocals, electronics, and djent guitar breakdowns. The music is full of shifts in dynamics, tone and mood, often within a single song, amply demonstrated in *Smartfriend*. *Ghosts* is an anthem waiting for an arena, with a huge hook

from keyboardist Martin Werner. Similarly, *Starburn*, from 2015's *Imazes*, can be thuddingly heavy but there's a melody that grabs your ears and burrows into your brain. There are odd measures and creative syncopation in *Black*



Box, a throwback to the *Monsters* EP from 2011, but VOLA eschew shredding in favour of crafting powerful songs. They wisely ease off the accelerator with the wistful ballad *Vertigo* and the laidback groove of *Ruby Pool*, which features a rare guitar solo from frontman Asger Mygind. It's back to full power with *Your Mind Is A Helpless Dreamer*, but Mygind commands the stage with a light touch, always relaxed and upbeat. They encore with *Gutter Moon*, wherein Mygind's vocal melody glides over the riff to create space in the denser passages, and the epic *Stray The Skies*.

VOLA's assertively contemporary sound may confound the more traditional-minded denizens of the prog world, but the excitement surrounding this quartet seems only to be growing stronger.

DAVID WEST

"VOLA's music is full of shifts in dynamics, tone and mood, often within a single song."



ESOTERICA

VENUE	THE BLACK HEART, LONDON
DATE	20/09/2019

Fun fact: Esoterica were interviewed for the first ever issue of *Prog* magazine, way back in March 2009. It was early days for the band then and they were yet to release an album, but we had already been ensnared by their knotty, industrial, Tool-tinged sound. During that conversation, frontman Tobias Keast lamented, "If we were from America we'd be a much bigger band," and looking back now, maybe he had a point. Despite

scoring themselves high-profile support slots with HIM and Marilyn Manson and winning plaudits from Robert Plant, it never translated into massive international success. The last time the band's original line-up played a headline show in London was a 10-year anniversary show in 2015, although were still technically on a hiatus that started in 2013. And while Keast continued to play their music at shows under the name EsO, other than that, the camp has been silent.

So no one is more surprised than the band themselves to be facing a completely sold-out room tonight. As the first electronic stabs of opener *Birds In*

A Hurricane from 2012's *Nothing Left To Lose* buzz and whirr, bassist Laura Conway and guitarist Cloud Cerberus share a look of disbelief and a typically barefoot Keast mounts the speakers to survey the scene. "It's been a while," he bellows with disbelief.

There's an enormous amount of goodwill in the room and the crowd shout and punch the air joyously to *Don't Rely On Anyone*, but there's no doubt that songs like *Watch The Drive*, where Keast most channels the unhurried rhythm of Maynard Keenan, have a crunchy 90s tang that hasn't aged as well. On the other hand, a cover of New Order's *True Faith*,

a sublime rendition of *Fill Me With Love*, and *Silence*, a cover of the 90s trance tune that ended up being their biggest hit, fare much better. The setlist takes in three album's worth of material but it's also the band's official launch party for new single *Gone*, a punchy number that's infectious but doesn't have the same heft as their more progressive material. As an emotional *Miranda And The Tempest* brings things to a close, it's hard to tell whether this is simply a nostalgia trip or the start of a brand new era for the band, but right now they're quite rightly basking in the moment.

DANNI LEIVERS

FAUST

VENUE	STUDIO 9294, LONDON
DATE	14/09/2019
SUPPORT	CAMERA, DATASHOCK

The level of excitement in front of the mixing desk is bordering on the uncontrollable. As the insistent and instantly familiar one-note riff and elemental percussive pounding of *It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl* become apparent, certain sections of the audience are making their joy utterly explicit.

"Oh my God!" exclaims one chap, sweat pouring down his incredulous face. "Can you believe it? Two of the members of the original FaUSt are actually playing this tonight!"

And with that, his head begins to resemble a woodpecker making its way through a particularly bounteous tree. As his body begins to shake and convulse in time with the music, it's tempting to see if he's attached to a defibrillator. He's not the only one, as suddenly the collective movement in front of the stage becomes palpably more primordial. The only thing missing is a fire in the middle of the venue to dance around. And while FaUSt carry a reputation for pyrotechnic displays with a questionable regard for Health and Safety, there's none of that this evening.

But the reaction isn't too surprising. Of all the bands to have emerged from the fecund breeding ground of Germany's underground scene of the 70s, FaUSt are held in particular high regard among the faithful thanks to a stance that defies the very notion of compromise. Moreover, since re-grouping in the early 90s around the core of vocalist/bassist Jean-Hervé Péron and drummer Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier, the pair have been augmented by a revolving cast of guest players but the aesthetic remains the same: to push as far as out there can go.

This they do with varying degrees of success this evening. While there's no denying the eradication of boundaries, how far one is willing to travel with them is debatable. In some ways, FaUSt recall *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Celebrated for its groundbreaking approach and classic sketches, it becomes a little too easy to forget the misses and so it proves with FaUSt. So while they go interstellar with a truly kosmische reading of *Krautrock*, the well-intentioned concerns of *Listen To The Fish* feel dated thanks to over-earnest lyrics. Yet for all that, it's not hard to be beguiled by the use of a cement mixer as a percussive instrument or the deployment of a sander on cymbals fed through a phalanx of effects.

It's entirely apposite that they're later joined by the members of support bands Camera and Datashock. As evidenced by the former's set of beats-driven space rock centred around the minimal yet effective rhythms of Michael Drummer, their lineage can be traced back to Neu!'s motorik drive. Yet much like latter's ability to literally breakdown barriers between performer and audience by joining the crowd to explore unconventional sound, both mirror FaUSt's ideas that will continue long after they're gone.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

IAMTHEMORNING

VENUE	COURTYARD THEATRE, LONDON
DATE	01/10/2019

It's showtime at London's bafflingly named Courtyard Theatre — it's not in a courtyard, and isn't really a theatre — and sweat is running down the walls. It's an odd choice of venue for Iamthemorning, the rising stars of chamber prog: a black, subterranean box in London's hipster district with a stage that doesn't comfortably accommodate the bandmembers and air conditioning that neither conditions nor airs.

Singer Marjana Semkina doesn't seem to be too bothered by the cramped working conditions, and is on sparkling form. Dressed all in white, as if for a wedding or human sacrifice, she gleefully delivers the band's songs of death and misery and electro-convulsive therapy with a voice of seraphic beauty. The cheery presentation is completely at odds with the bleakness of the material, but it's a spectacularly effective juxtaposition, like being slowly bludgeoned to death by someone who stops every few minutes to gently tend your wounds and check that you're okay. Semkina is also mischievously funny, whether it's mocking the darkness of her own material, lamenting entire towns who fail to appreciate her humour — Reichenbach in Germany, that's you — or peering into the darkness, blinded by the spotlights, trying to figure out if there's actually an audience in place.



"Dressed all in white, as if for a wedding or human sacrifice, Marjana Semkina gleefully delivers the band's songs of death and misery."

The set opens with *Scotland*, which lacks the blistering highs of the studio version, but this configuration of Iamthemorning is a stripped-back one, with percussionist Evan Carson and cellist Mikhail Ignatov providing subtle but solid support to Semkina and her regular sparring partner, pianist Gleb Kolyadin. They are joined a couple of songs in by acoustic guitarist Charlie Cawood, who emerges from the back of the stage and carefully picks his way into position.

All the musicians add personality to the songs, whether it's Ignatov's deftly plucked pizzicato at the end of *Touching II*, or the dramatic tumble of chords that give emphasis to the pivotal 'I drop the match in' line as a delightfully wonky *Matches* climaxes. Kolyadin is at the heart of it all, with *Lilies* a tour-de-force, the high-speed piano flurries as much a feat of musical athleticism as they are a florid backbone to Semkina's vocal. The tracks from *The Bell* are the highlight, with the lilting *Ghost Of A Story* a genuinely lovely moment.

5/4 gives the audience a chance to contribute some perfectly choreographed hand claps, and *K.O.S.* ends the evening on a spell-binding note. "Thank you for the standing ovation that I couldn't actually see," says Semkina, once again peering hopefully into the black. The band encore with *Romance* ("We do not do love songs, and never will," clarifies Semkina) and an exquisite *Os Lunatum*. There's another ovation and then they're gone, perhaps to scout a more suitable venue for the next London show.

FRASER LEWRY



Marjana Semkina lights up the darkness.

EUROBLAST

VENUE	ESSIGFABRIK, COLOGNE, GERMANY
DATE	27-29/09/2019

THURSDAY

For 15 years, Euroblast has been one of the continent's most adored tech-metal extravaganzas. The not-so-enviable task of kicking things off on the Thursday pre-show falls on **Toundra**. With Euroblast officially starting tomorrow, the energised Spanish post-rockers have been brought in this evening as a warm-up. And what an amazing job they do. The four-piece retain their genre's penchant for climactic riffs, but cut out all filler. The result is a postmodern party that could be the progressive world's answer to AC/DC.

FRIDAY

Euroblast proper commences with **Klone**, whose melodic art rock is so powerful and heartstring-tugging that their set outdoes anything due to follow for the rest of the weekend. Still, **Uneven Structure** are able to hold their own later on. With crystal-clear sound mixing and a light show as gorgeous and chaotic as a Jackson Pollock painting, they prove a bombastic spectacle.

Dead Letter Circus aren't as visually captivating as others who have graced the main stage today – although guitarist Clint Vincent and singer Kim Benzie are clearly both in high spirits. Happily, the trade-off is a jaw-

MARVIN RUPPERT



Dead Letter Circus hit perfection.

dropping musical experience where every note is flawlessly struck.



"Between the Buried And Me are the centrepiece of the entire festival, bombarding Euroblast with two sets."

SATURDAY

One of Saturday's biggest highlights are **VOLA**. While they have the stomping jive of radio-friendly hard rock heroes, their unpredictable compositions and time signatures have 'prog' written all over them. **Rendezvous Point** occupy a similar soundscape; unfortunately, they aren't as characterful, leaving them as an afterthought. **Sleep Token**, on the other hand, are supremely memorable. Everything from the

elaborate masks and costumes to the enigmatic fusion of gospel and metal resonates, and will continue to do so for a very long time.

Between the Buried And Me are the centrepiece of the entire festival, bombarding Euroblast with two sets and almost two and a half hours of technical prog metal. Whenever Tommy Rogers can scramble away from his keyboard to focus solely on being a frontman, his band are overwhelming in the very best way.

Between The Buried And Me pull double duty.



QUINTENQUIST



Sleep Token: no split opinions here, they're ace.

Arch Echo get the unenviable task of performing between BTBAM's two immense showcases. What makes them excel in this slot is their specialising in danceable instrumental jams. It's a more jovial

experience than the twinned slices of destruction it's sandwiched between.

SUNDAY

The HAARP Machine

are catastrophically awful. For some reason, founder and ex-guitarist Al Mu'min has decided that he wants to be the vocalist. The problem is that he can't sing, to the point where he is openly mocked by the audience.

The only consolation to this dumpster fire (apart from the schadenfreude) is the session musicians behind him doing a respectable – if not remarkable – job.

Voyager are a sumptuous palate-cleanser. Sure, the Aussies' 80s-inspired melodicism can sometimes feel cheesy, but every Euroblast attendee has the time of their lives with it. Dancing and singalongs are regular occurrences during their set, as the band seem to be having just as much fun, jumping and running wherever they can.

It's a joyous end to what has, at times, been a weekend of blindingly intense heavy prog.

MATT MILLS

Klone perform a set that no one - ironically, given their name - can match.



Uneven Structure: happily, not a load of Pollocks.



ANDRE SYMANN

QUINTENQUIST

JANIK FREGIN

SLEEP TOKEN

VENUE	THE UNDERWORLD, LONDON
DATE	03/10/2019
SUPPORT	EXPLORING BIRDSONG

A rare sighting of Liverpool's Exploring Birdsong in the country's capital is always well worth checking out. Tonight they are supporting incognito curios Sleep Token. It's difficult to know what to make of a band who hide their identity behind the masks; Ghost are the obvious example and it doesn't seem to do them any harm. In the prog world, more recently, we've had The Osiris Club, but they ditched the masks with the release of their second album.

Bring masked doesn't seem to hold Sleep Token back. The Underworld is rammed to the rafters and reports suggest that the band's forthcoming gig at Islington Assembly Hall in January has sold out within minutes. The perception until now has been that Sleep Token are some kind of metal band (more on that later), so your correspondent awaits Exploring Birdsong with a distinct worry about how their melodic, piano-led prog and Lynsey Ward's mesmerically sweet vocals will go down with the packed venue.

The answer arrives at the end of *The River*, which is greeted with politely warm applause and nervously happy grins from the four musicians on stage (tonight the trio are augmented by a female keyboard player and vocalist). The band omit the Prog Award-nominated *The Baptism* and we don't get their gorgeous cover of Blue Oyster Cult's (*Don't Fear*) *The Reaper*, but *Turntail*, *Bear The Weight* and *The Downpour* are all delivered with a growing confidence and even more rapturous reception. In the end, you'd have to say everyone is happy and it's good to see Exploring Birdsong ably handling what could have been a frosty crowd. It bodes well for the forthcoming release of their debut EP, *The Thing With Feathers*, which the band are releasing on Long Branch Records next month.

Sleep Token may be perceived as a metal band of sorts, but that's not really reflected in the audience. Sure, there are some metal fans here, but there's also a smattering of math rock fans, some non-denominational music fans - a really varied bunch. Sonically too, the band don't give off much of a metal vibe. It's only heavy in places, the rest of the time weaving between left-field pop, indie and something more esoteric.

The difficulty in pinpointing their sound revolves around singer Vessel, who starts off sounding like Jeff Buckley, but later someone likens him to pop singer James Blake. Prog is pretty convinced that later in the band's set he sounds like post-progger Martin Grech and by the climax of the performance people are pinpointing Coldplay's Chris Martin as a vocal similarity.

A curious mix, then. Sleep Token's gimmick might grab the early headlines, but in the long term you can't help but feel that Exploring Birdsong's inherent quality will see them home.

JERRY EWING

THE REASONING

VENUE	ROBIN 2, BILSTON	DATE	01/10/2019
SUPPORT	JUMP, CIRCU5, THIS WINTER MACHINE		

There's a moment when, as The Reasoning's intro tape to the opening swirl of *Awakening* begins to segue with the band onstage, vocalists Andrew Demczuk and Emilee Moyce seem to momentarily freeze in the spotlight. This is wholly understandable when you consider that neither have performed live with the band before, and, indeed, Moyce has actually never performed live on stage at all. In the merest fleeting moment, both bassist Matt Cohen and guitarist Keith Hawkins step up alongside them, a show of support to say, 'Everything's going to be alright,' and, nerves settled, The Reasoning's last hurrah is underway.

The Reasoning imploded nearly five years ago, the resultant cancelled tour meaning they never got the chance to say a proper farewell. Tonight, band leader Cohen gets his chance to do just that. The very nature of the bust-up means new singers, but long-time drummer Jake Bradford-Sharpe and guitarist Hawkins are back, while Athen Ayren adds delightful keyboard colour and former Panic Room guitarist Paul Davies adds extra bite. When Anne-Marie Helder appears later, along with special guests Sarah Dean and Dave Foster, it enforces the old Karnataka connection from which both bands sprang, and is a delight to behold.

It's an emotional night, obviously, but what really shines through is the quality of many of the band's songs. *Awakening* is a killer opening track, but equally the likes of *Diamonds And Leather*, *Breaking The 4th Wall* (tonight delivered acoustically) and *Chasing Rainbows* really are great songs. They encore with an epic *Dark Angel* and a rousing

Aching Hunger, the audience singalong resounding emotionally around the venue.

Earlier tonight This Winter Machine opened proceedings. While it's easy to understand why so many prog fans take to their melodic prog, they offer little visually to back up the music.

Circu5 are a little more eclectic, new guitarist Paul Clark thrashing away on a Flying V seemingly at odds with the band's quirky art rock. They deliver a great cover of Blue Oyster Cult's *Career Of Evil* and a delightful version of Tin Spirits' *Summer Now*, featuring as they do, that band's Mark Kilminster

on bass.

Jump will be celebrating their 30th anniversary next year, as frontman John Dexter Jones points out. When they deliver a set as good as tonight, you wonder why the band aren't bigger than they are.

But the evening really is all about one band. The Reasoning might not have scaled the heights they probably deserved to, and tonight brings a closure which may be shrouded in a certain melancholy, but ultimately the night resounds with triumph rather than adversity. It really is a fitting end for such a fine band.

JERRY EWING

This Winter Machine: sadly no sight for sore eyes.



Circu5 are in town, and they're not clowning around.



Jump: how high? This high...



Emilee Moyce gets a show of support from Matt Cohen.



"The Reasoning might not have scaled the heights they probably deserved to, but ultimately the night resounds with triumph rather than adversity."

The Reasoning: a last, bittersweet hurrah.



KEVIN NIXON

MAGMA

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
STARDATE	04/10/2019

Whether it's down to their inclusion on the Roadburn line-up five years ago at the behest of Opeth's Mikael Åkerfeldt or just because music this far out on a limb will always remain timeless, Magma's return to the UK has attracted a broad, all-ages crowd. Seasoned fanatics (including Steve Davis, obviously) rub shoulders with metallers, stoner rockers and 20-somethings in the aptly ornate venue. But no matter how au fait you think you are when it comes to Magma, you can never be sure quite where they're going to take you.

Tonight is something of a 'greatest hits' set, but so sprawling yet so immersive is the universe they've created that even on familiar ground you'll find new details to remap your bearings and rewire your senses. Theirs is a world a few degrees off tilt from our own, one that you need to shift your centre of consciousness, like staring into a stereogram to fully embrace, before it reveals itself in full, revelatory 3D.

When Magma do appear, the response is rapturous, all of us fully signed-up residents



with no return ticket. The band themselves span generations too, the core members – band founder and drummer/vocalist Christian Vander, and vocalists Hervé Akin, Stella Vander and Isabelle Feuillebois – flanked by a relatively new crop of musicians, all engaged in what seems to be an act of perpetual regeneration.

There's also something inherently ecstatic about Magma's music. Their mad-scientist cross-pollination of prog and jazz draws from the celestial futurism of Miles Davis circa *Bitches Brew* and Sun Ra Arkestra, but also carries the same strain of whimsical yet lysergic Gallic sci-fi that runs through René Laloux's bizarre animated movie, *Fantastic*

Planet and Moebius' wild, world-building graphic novels. The result is something that sounds like an ode to an intergalactic emperor, or a musical, but on Mars. The opening *Theusz Hamtaahk* starts off on a vocal chant courtesy of Akin, proceeds through disorientated dramatic sequences like it's soundtracking a surreal, urban chase scene, all driven by Christian's intricate, ever-shifting drum rhythms to ever higher states of lunacy, Stella's vocals at various points even mimicking a Theramin. The three main vocalists take up different positions onstage, facing each other then lined up in the corner like backing singers, as if they were antennae tuning into the clearest, interstellar frequency.

Christian Vander's own vocals are still a gloriously rich vibrato, guiding us through *Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandöh*, wherein that groove-laden pulse rises up like a sequence of DNA being reactivated, and a closing *De Futura*, with its tempo-stretching bassline like a particularly thorough alien probe, helps to make two hours seem like both no time at all and the entire span of cosmic existence.

JONATHAN SELZER

"Two hours seems like both no time at all and the entire span of cosmic existence."

Magma rewire our senses.



TEETH OF THE SEA

VENUE	OSLO, LONDON
DATE	05/09/2019

Teeth Of The Sea are a band more defined by what they're not rather than what they are. Given the judicious selection of ingredients that goes into their nourishing aural stew, there's a temptation to pin them down. But as with the best concoctions, the most rewarding are those where the elements react to and work with each other. This is a heady brew where heavy metal guitar shredding coalesces with throbbing techno pulses,

mechanoid beats and trumpets that could be heralding the breaking on the seventh seal. And for all that, tonight Teeth Of The Sea sound and feel like the 21st century.

Part of their charm is that they're eager for the crowd to not just listen to the music but to experience it. This is music that grabs and holds and will not let go. The low-end blips that swell in sound and intensity on a ramped up reading of *Field Punishment* are so powerful that it's possible to feel hair move without touching it. And as Teeth Of The Sea methodically and incrementally increase the pressure to hit the stomach, there's a communal moment to be had as those on

the receiving end of their attack share nods and smiles of acknowledgement not unlike ravers surfing their first wave.

Crucially for a band performing what is essentially instrumental music, Teeth Of The Sea are adept storytellers without having to utter a word. Theirs is a narrative that relies on the ebb and flow of the music they're performing. From the grand synth sweeps and the treated trumpet blasts of the yet-to-be-released opener *Barry* through to *I'd Rather, Jack* and beyond, the trio meticulously put the boiling frog theory into practice. The result is a journey that starts with the smallest of tentative steps that turn into

giant strides without noticing that this rise in purpose is actually happening.

Witness the muscular *Hiraeth* that transcends its recorded origins to stomp with clout. Likewise the overhauled *Responder*; such is its power and strength that any thoughts of resistance simply accept surrender. And there's a surprise to be had not hearing "Ave Imperator, morituri te salutant!" to *Gladiators Ready*.

Despite the caveat of pining for the re-introduction of live percussion for added boost, Teeth Of The Sea are nonetheless a progressive band in the truest sense that define the here and now.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

EMMA RUTH RUNDLE

VENUE	THE DOME, LONDON
DATE	29/10/2019
SUPPORT	JO QUAIL

“This song is a work in progress,” says Jo Quail introducing *Reya Pavan*, although to be fair, such is the organic nature of her music that every track tonight sounds as though it’s evolving in real time. For anyone tuned to the left side of the sonic dial, the cellist and recent Prog Award winner is a regular live presence, supporting artists from Anna von Hausswolff and Myrkur to shamanic pagan troupe Heilung and transcendental art metal penitents Amenra. It’s a broad recognition of her talent, but she’s also now becoming something of a talisman, her work tapping into a richly resonant continuum that unifies every artist she plays with in a similar understanding of frequencies outside of everyday consciousness.

Quail’s instrument looks like it’s been carved from an alien pelvic bone, and it’s mined for an unearthly degree of wonder. *Reya Pavan* itself is woven slowly from discrete strands, cavernous, industrial beats sampled from impacts against the cello’s neck reverberating against stealthily exploratory strings that veer into jarring excursions. Her loop station is used to even more mesmerising effect on *Mandrel Cantus*. Fledgling pulses and plucked chords grow ever more intricate around woozy strings until the piece blossoms as if you’re witnessing a process of nature coming to patient yet revelatory fruition. Between songs, she talks about her music as an attempt to express dualities, and her fusion of the experimental and the elemental holds a packed Dome in a reverential thrall throughout.

Like her support, Emma Ruth Rundle has a knack for zeroing in on the smallest of details and amplifying them into states of humble rapture. Having cut her teeth in post-rock bands Marriages and Red Sparowes, the power of her own performances has grown progressively by word of mouth, to the point where she’s can silence a room the moment she walks onstage, everyone here attuned to the fragile power at her command. Backed now by a full band featuring members of former touring partners Jaye Jayle and Wovenhand, the stark nature of her early performances has been traded for a more expansive sheen, the opalescent guitar tones evaporating as they’re wedded to the rolling beat and mantric rhythm of Emma’s vocals. And it’s still her voice that takes centre stage: vulnerable, defiant and kneaded to the finest of timbers, it’s the sound of harboured wounds exposed in order to heal. *Control*’s tale of addiction ignites its lush cadences into a charged cathartic surge, and her signature track, *Marked For Death* offers self-admonishment and absolution in equal measure. A closing, a capella *Real Big Sky* is time-stopping elixir that finds the broadest horizons in the most distilled of emotional expression.

JONATHAN SELZER

THE FLAMING LIPS

VENUE	BRIXTON ACADEMY, LONDON
DATE	07/09/2019

The rush to the senses verges on the overwhelming. Cannons on either side of the stage are blasting streams of glittering ticker tape into the Brixton Academy as dozens of huge, multi-coloured balloons are bouncing around the stalls. Rapt audience members alternate between knocking them around randomly and trying to send them into the balcony. The lights on the LED-adorned curtains draped behind and above the stage explode in a miasma of fluorescent patterns and colours to stunning effect. And at the centre of it all is the gleeful figure of singer Wayne Coyne, as he fires one set of party streamers after another into a throng that is, to a man and woman, grinning from ear to ear.

And this is just *Race For The Prize*, the opening number.

At first glance, it seems like a backward step for The Flaming Lips to revisit *The Soft Bulletin* again, not least after it was performed in full at Alexandra Palace in 2011, but here it is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Arguably the last profound psychedelic statement of the last century, the album’s existential and metaphysical themes of mortality and seizing life for all that it’s worth in the face of overwhelming odds are just as relevant now as they were in 1999.

Among the controlled chaos, it’s worth noting the difference in The Flaming Lips of then to the band of now. Twenty years ago found a trio creating a down-home presentation using fake blood, cameras on microphones that projected close-up images of Wayne Coyne’s face and a variety of glove puppets onto the modest screen behind the band. Fast forward to now and Coyne, multi-instrumentalist Steven Drozd and bassist Michael Ivins are augmented by two drummers, a guitarist and keyboard player, and a hi-tech lightshow that shows just how far they’ve come.

Which is just well. Because if a band is dealing with death, as The Flaming Lip do on a creamily extended *Feeling Yourself Disintegrate*, it sure helps to accentuate the

good that can be done before the Reaper’s inevitable arrival. This positivity is highlighted on *What Is The Light?* and with its coda stretched like an elastic band, the opportunity arises for some deep introspection.

As with real life, absurdity is at the core of The Flaming Lips’ performance. How else to explain the sight of Coyne riding a model unicorn through the crowd during – what else? – *There*



The Flaming Lips didn't get the 'less is more' memo.

Should Be Unicorns, while the closing *Do You Realize??* is an affirmation of the band’s oeuvre.

The chief benefit of exposure to The Flaming Lips is joyful mental re-calibration, which is exactly what’s required from the psychedelic experience. And tonight they deliver just that.

JULIAN MARSZALEK



“As with real life, absurdity is at the core of The Flaming Lips’ performance.”

Everyone was having a lovely time until Pennywise showed up...

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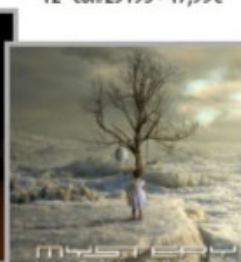
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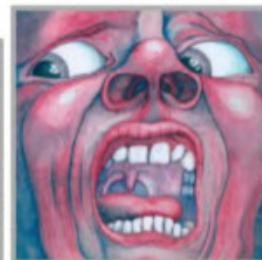
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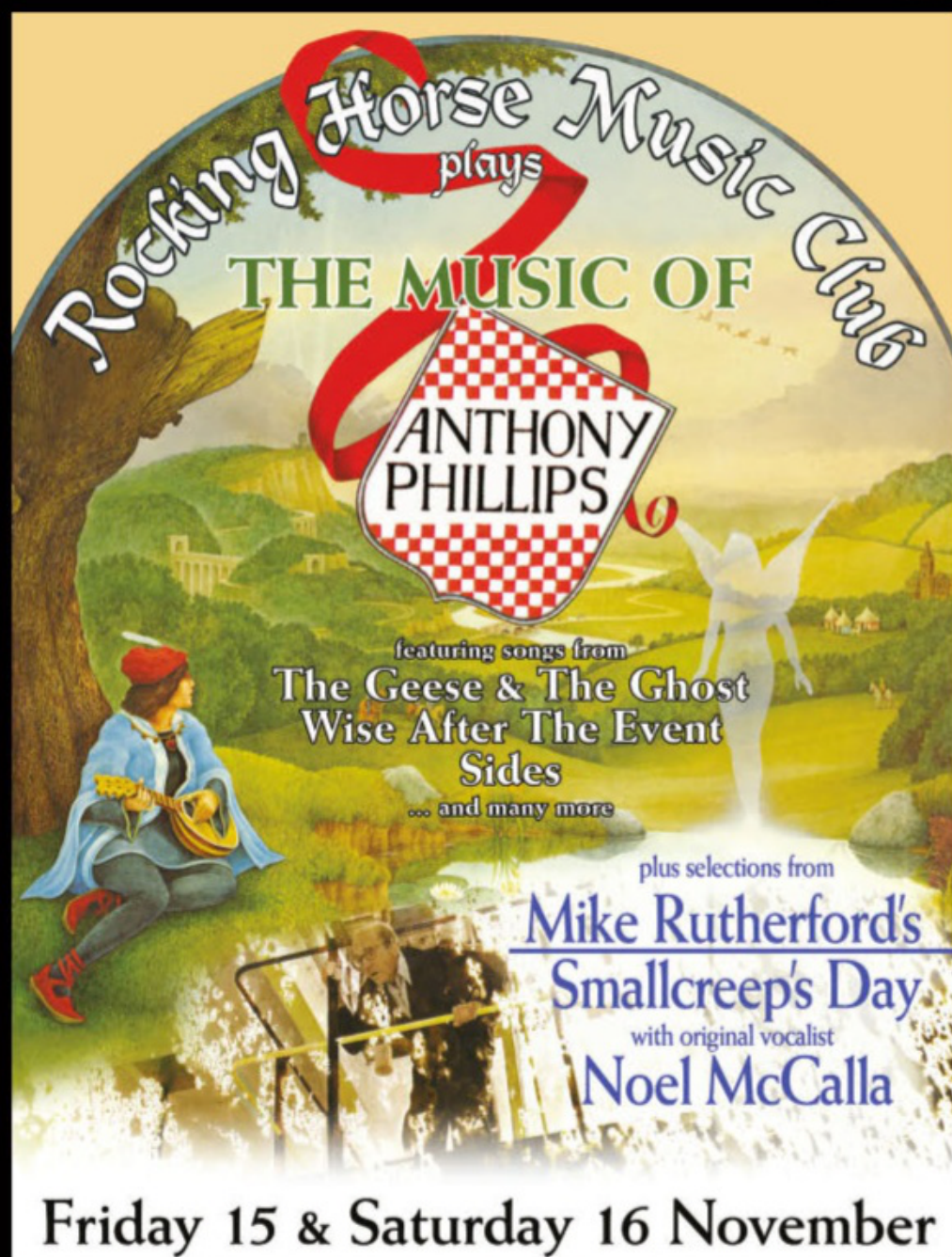
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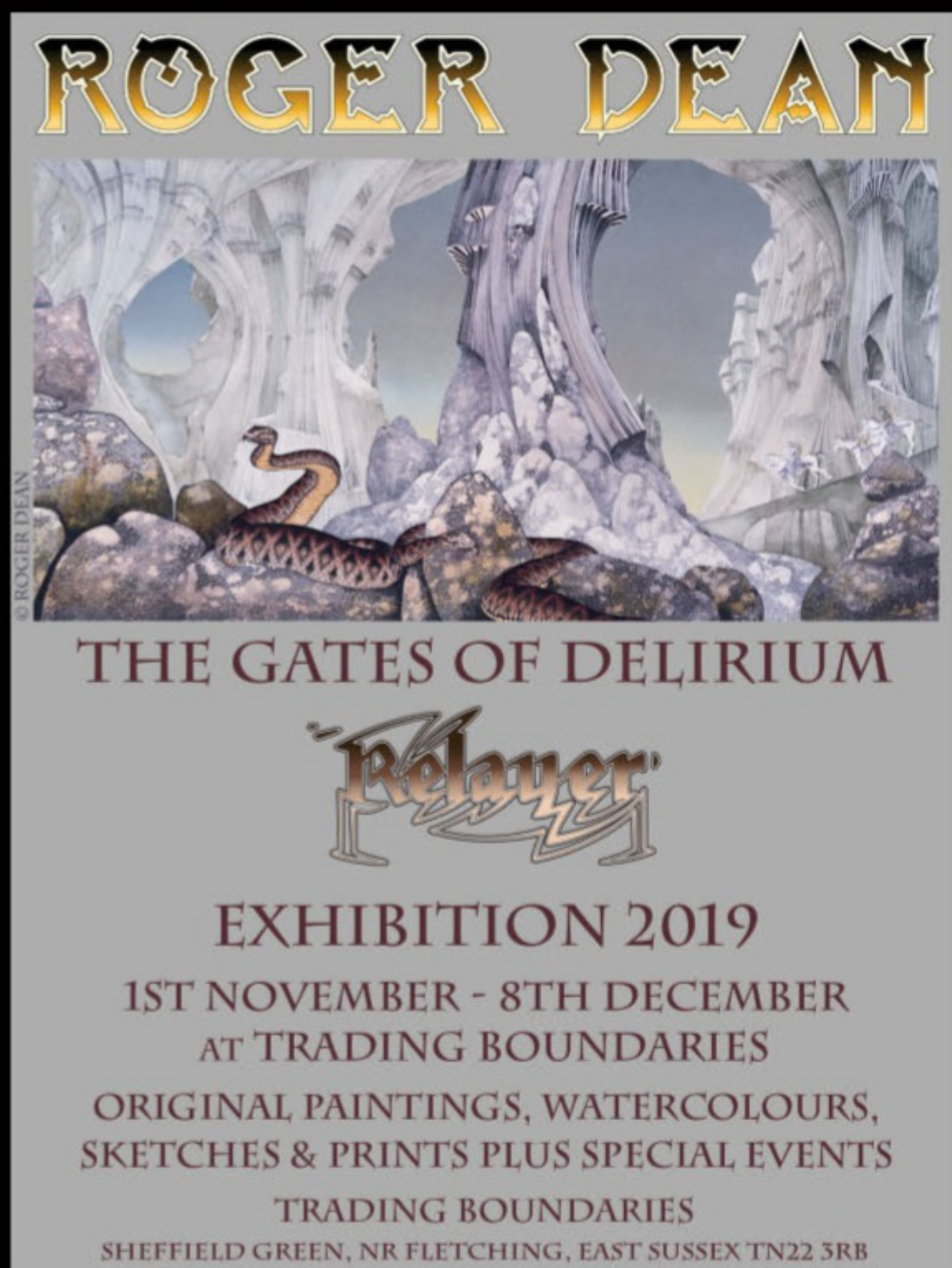
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PROG

Where's home?

Chesham in Hertfordshire, just north of London.

Earliest prog memory?

In 2004 I was a metal fan teaching guitar, and one of my bass students came in with Dream Theater's *Images And Words* saying, "I want to learn *this!*" It was way beyond both our limits, but that's when I started paying real attention to prog.

First album you bought?

Dream Theater's *Train Of Thought* was their new one at the time, so I bought that and went on a binge of their music.



And the last?

Emperor Norton by Emperor Norton, a band from York. They play proper, guitar-led prog, like Yes if you dialled down the classical influences and turned up the guitars. Fun.

First prog gig?

Dream Theater at Wembley Arena with Symphony X [2007]. Soon after that I saw Alan Reed, ex of Pallas, at The Peel in Kingston.

Latest prog gig?

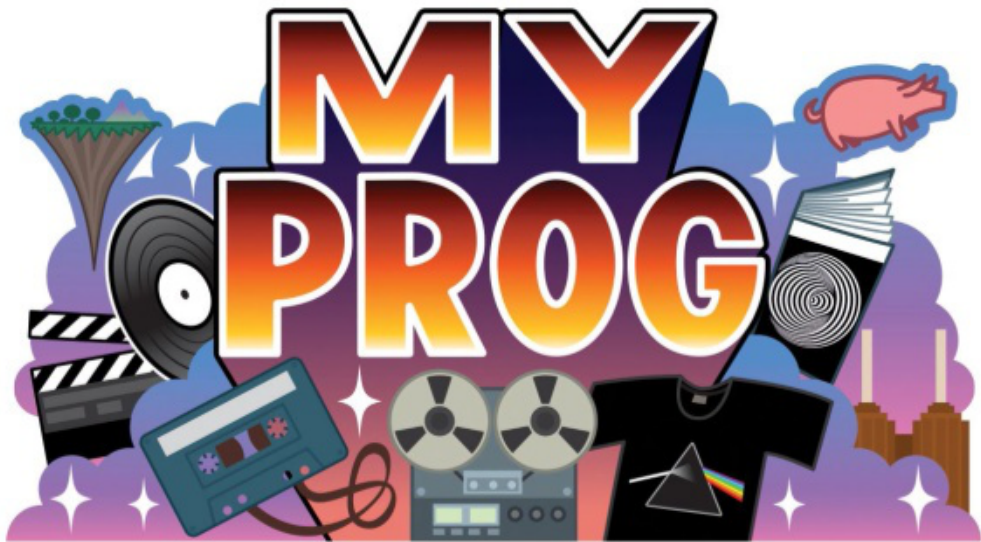
In March I played The Fiddler's Elbow in London with Circus and IT, who are a left-wing prog band – very political but with good tunes too.



Your latest prog discovery?

A Manchester band called Mothertongue. They're not traditional prog, but there's a big hint of 90s

rock and Britpop in there with lots of silly stuff, changes and



Tom Slatter

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

singalong choruses. Their first album, *Unsongs*, starts with a great song called *King Of The Tyrant Lizards*.

Guilty musical pleasure?

I'm a big fan of Meat Loaf, Jim Steinman's a genius. And Sondheim, particularly *Sweeney Todd*. I don't feel guilty at all though!

Mastermind specialist subject?

Professional wrestling, both the current stuff and the late 90s stuff when it was *really* popular.

Favourite prog venue?

They keep on closing them! I have happy memories of The Peel and The Borderline and my new favourite is The Fiddler's

Elbow. They're putting on lots of interesting new bands.

Your prog hero?

Matt Stevens of The Fierce And The Dead. A nice bloke with a real work ethic, he's grown a popular band in the proper old-fashioned grassroots way. And we can both bore people at length about [extreme metal band] Carcass!

Outside of music, what else are you into?

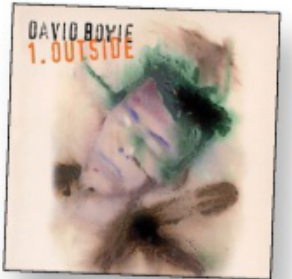
I'm a real comedy nerd. I enjoy listening to podcasts, such as Richard Herring's *As It Occurs To Me*, and I go to see live stand-up as often as I can. My wife and I actually went to the Edinburgh Festival as part of our honeymoon!

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?

I'm a music nerd and have no interest in socialising! Having said that, the whole Bad Elephant label family are always good for a curry – David Elephant [Elliott, label head], Simon Godfrey, Rob Ramsay...

Most important piece of prog music?

The whole of David Bowie's *Outside* epitomises what prog is to me. It's just so weird, from the concept to the way it was created.



Prog muso you'd most like to work with?

I'd really like to do a songwriting session with Jon Hunt. His song *Making Tea Is Freedom* is a prog epic, if Paul Weller was into prog.

Which prog album do you put on to get you in a good mood?

Red by King Crimson. There is just something about the energy of it.

The best prog gig you ever saw?

I saw the Stabbing A Dead Horse tour at The Lexington [in 2012]. Knifeworld, Trojan Horse and The Fierce And The Dead – that was a proper smash in the face...

Recommend us a good proggy read.

I'm a big sci-fi and fantasy guy. I'm really enjoying *The Expanse* series, the books the Netflix show is based on. That and anything by Robin Hobb, like *Assassin's Apprentice*.



Your favourite prog album cover?

Anything by [artist] Dave McKean, like Dream Theater's *Scenes From A Memory*.

What are you up to at the moment?

Demon is out now and I'm trying to tell the world about it. For the first time in 10 years all the songs I've written have been recorded, so I need to write new stuff and figure out what's next.

Demon is out now via Bad Elephant. See www.tomslatter.co.uk for more information.

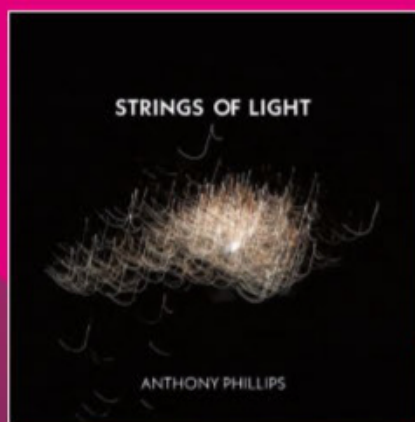


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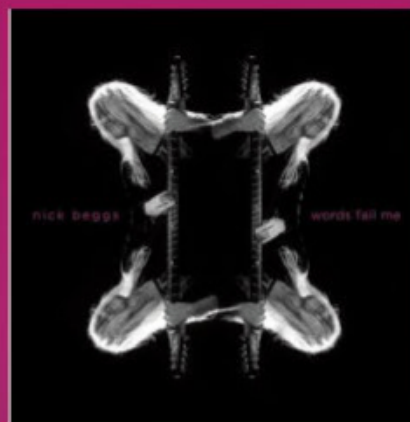
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THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA

'MESMERANTO' (CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of the excellent new studio album by the award-winning The Blackheart Orchestra. The two-piece group features Chrissy Mostyn and Rick Pilkington and they are well known for creating music that is as emotionally deep as it is memorable. Mesmeranto is a 60 minute piece of music split into 14 songs, rather like 14 chapters of a book or 14 scenes in a film. The plot is life and how we fear it, cherish it, cling to it and ultimately prepare for the end of it. Signed copies available!



NICK BEGGS

'WORDS FAIL ME' (3CD DIGIPAK)

- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of the new album by acclaimed musician Nick Beggs, "Words Fail Me". Noted for his virtuosity as both a bass guitarist and player of the Chapman Stick instrument, Nick reveals all facets of this unique instrument on his new album. Accompanying "Words Fail Me" in this set are two reissues of Nick's earlier work on the Chapman Stick. "Stick Insect" was originally released as a mail order only album in 2002 and has been out of print for some years, whilst "The Maverick Helmsman" was issued in 2004 along the same lines. "Words Fail Me" is a wonderful collection of music and is a mesmerising listening experience by a supremely talented and creative musician.



THE STEVE HOWE TRIO

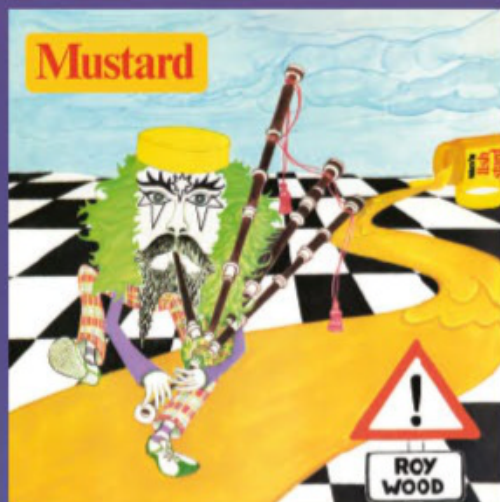
'NEW FRONTIER' (CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Antenna are delighted to announce a new studio album by the Steve Howe Trio, New Frontier. This excellent new studio album from the trio founded by the celebrated Yes guitarist Steve Howe also featured Dylan Howe on drums and Ross Stanley on organ. New Frontier is a fine work showcasing the instrumental talents of the three musicians and reflecting the jazz / fusion side of Steve Howe's musical personality.
- Release Date 27th September 2019 EANTCD1077

Also Available

'NEW FRONTIER' (180 GRAM VINYL EDITION)

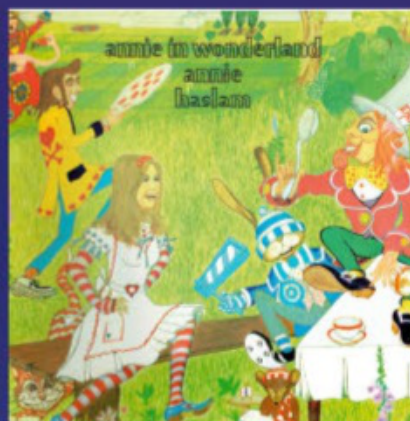
- Release Date 27th September 2019 EANTLP1077



ROY WOOD

'MUSTARD' (REMASTERED & EXPANDED CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered edition of the legendary 1975 album MUSTARD by ROY WOOD.
- Unavailable on CD for many years, this welcome Esoteric Recordings edition has been newly re-mastered and includes seven bonus tracks drawn from singles released between May 1975 and August 1976, including two released under the WIZZARD moniker. The release also restores the original artwork and features a new essay.



ANNIE HASLAM

'ANNIE IN WONDERLAND' (REMASTERED CD EDITION)

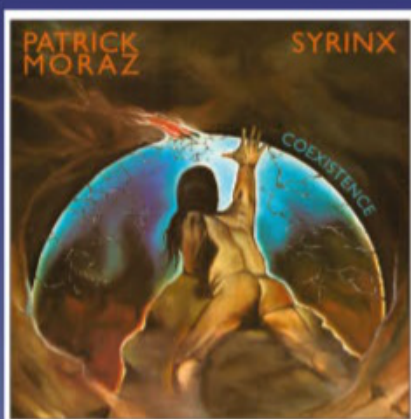
- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered edition of the 1977 debut solo album by the celebrated vocalist with Renaissance, ANNIE HASLAM. Unavailable on CD for some years, this edition restores the original album artwork and features an essay with a new exclusive interview with Annie Haslam.
- Release Date 27th September 2019 QECLEC2688



RENAISSANCE

'TOUR 2011 LIVE IN CONCERT' (2CD/1DVD DIGIPAK EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a 3 Disc digipack edition of the live set TOUR 2011 by the legendary RENAISSANCE. The band's live set saw Renaissance perform two of their classic albums live in their entirety, namely TURN OF THE CARDS and SCHEHERAZADE & OTHER STORIES. Sadly, this live document would be the band's final release to feature Michael Dunford, who tragically passed away in November 2012.
- Release Date 27th September 2019 ECLEC32692



PATRICK MORAZ & SYRINX

'ALCHEMY'

(REMASTERED CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered edition of the 1980 album COEXISTENCE by the celebrated keyboard maestro Patrick Moraz and Syrnix.
- This Esoteric Recordings edition has been re-mastered under the supervision of Patrick Moraz and restores the original album artwork. It also features alternate version of 'Boonoonoonoonoonoes' and 'Jam on Chain Reaction' as bonus tracks, both of which date from the album sessions.

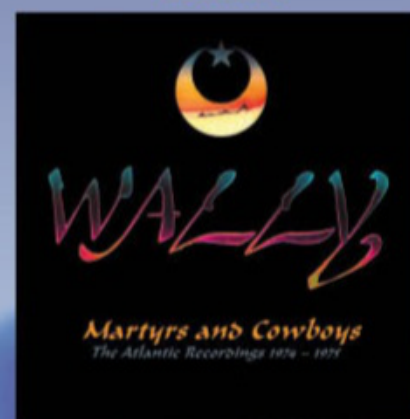


GREENSLADE

'SUNDANCE – A COLLECTION 1973-1975' (REMASTERED CD)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered edition collection by the legendary band GREENSLADE.
- This collection gathers together the highlights of the four Greenslade albums originally issued by Warner Records between 1973 and 1975 and includes the rare live version of 'Feathered Friends' recorded at the Reading Festival in August 1973.
- Sundance – A Collection also features an illustrated booklet with essay.

WALLY



'MARTYRS AND COWBOYS – THE ATLANTIC RECORDINGS 1974-1975' (2CD REMASTERED ANTHOLOGY)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered 2 CD anthology featuring all the recordings made for Atlantic Records by the band WALLY. This anthology includes two rare B-sides of singles ('The Life You're Living' and 'Right by Me') both appearing on CD for the first time. MARTYS & COWBOYS also includes an illustrated booklet with a new essay featuring exclusive interviews with band members Roy Webber and Paul Middleton.
- Release Date 27th September 2019 QECLEC22691

PANEGYRIC & DGM proudly present the 50th anniversary editions of
IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING

3CD/Blu-Ray edition featuring

Blu-Ray:

- All new 2019 5.1 surround sound, stereo & instrumental mixes of the original album by Steven Wilson, approved by Robert Fripp.
- The original master edition of the original mix of the album.
- A complete alternate album of studio takes & mixes by Steven Wilson & David Singleton.
- A further album's worth of additional material, single masters & more. All music on Blu-Ray is presented in 24/96 High-Resolution audio.

CDs:

- 3CDs feature the new album mix in stereo & instrumental versions (CD1), an expanded version of the alternate album (CD2) & the Original Master Edition of the 1969 album mix with additional tracks (CD3).
- Presented in two mini gatefold style sleeves with a 24 page booklet featuring previously unseen studio photos & new sleevenotes by King Crimson biographer Sid Smith, housed in a rigid slipcase.
- All material on the CD/BD set will also feature on the King Crimson Complete 1969 Sessions boxed set, the eighth in a series of King Crimson boxed editions, to be released Spring 2020.

Vinyl:

- 2LP set pressed on 200gram super-heavyweight vinyl for maximum audio fidelity.
- LP1 features the 2019 stereo mix. LP2 features the alternate album also drawn from 2019 mixes with tracklisting configured for vinyl.
- All artwork based on new scans of the original paintings, as meticulously restored for the limited edition full sized, signed prints.

Prints:

- Limited edition silk screen prints of the front (200) & interior (100) album sleeve images, signed by Robert Fripp, individually numbered & reproduced at the full 20"x40" size of the original paintings available from: www.hypergallery.com

www.dgmlive.com

www.burningshed.com



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