

# PROG



## GENESIS



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**THEIR 40 GREATEST SONGS AND  
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"It's got some  
good stuff on it!"  
**Tony Banks on  
the new *Seconds*  
Out reissue**

**VDGG**  
Peter Hammill and Judge  
Smith on the making of  
their historic debut

**NEAL MORSE**  
"Quitting Spock's Beard  
was a big deal. It was  
really tough for me."

**THIRD EAR BAND**  
The crazy story of one  
of the most mythical  
prog bands ever

"I missed Steve on the next album, ...*And Then  
There Were Three...*, as Mike was just finding his  
way as a lead guitarist and Steve might have  
made more of some of those songs."





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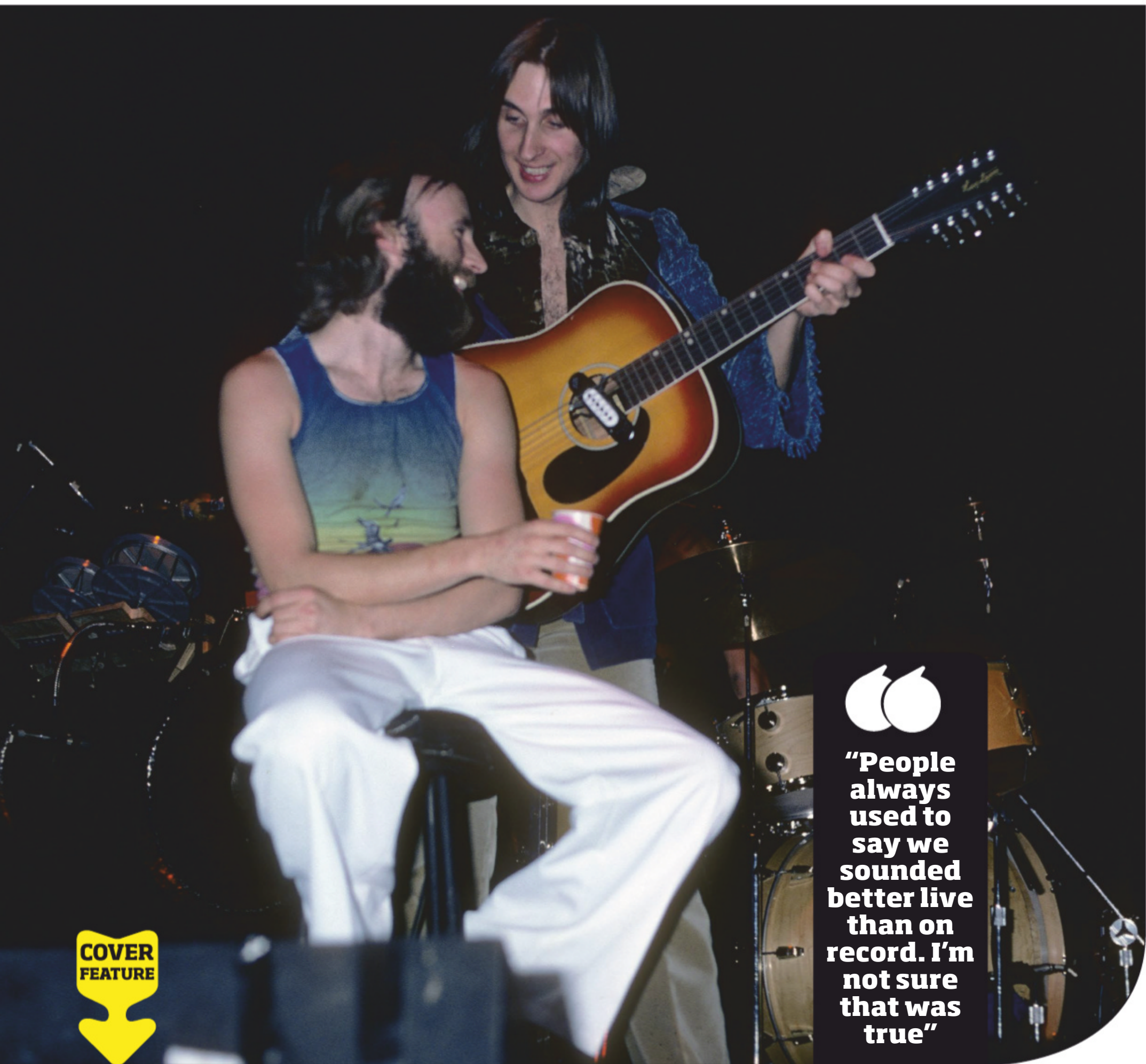




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always  
used to  
say we  
sounded  
better live  
than on  
record. I'm  
not sure  
that was  
true"**

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## PATRICK MORAZ

### 'PATRICK MORAZ' (REMASTERED CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered edition of the 1978 self-titled album by the celebrated keyboard maestro Patrick Moraz. This Esoteric Recordings edition has been re-mastered under the supervision of Patrick Moraz and restores the original album artwork. It also features the bonus track 'Museeka Magika' which dates from the album sessions.



### 'OUT IN THE SUN' (REMASTERED CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered edition of the 1977 album by the celebrated keyboard maestro Patrick Moraz; "Out in the Sun". This edition has been re-mastered under the supervision of Patrick Moraz and restores the original album artwork. It also features the bonus track 'Batucada XXX' which dates from the album sessions.



## BE BOP DELUXE

### 'FUTURAMA'

(3CD/10DVD LIMITED EDITION DELUXE BOXSET)

- A new re-mastered four disc deluxe expanded boxed set limited edition (comprising 3 CDs and a DVD) of FUTURAMA the legendary 1975 album by BE BOP DELUXE. Newly re-mastered from the original master tapes, it features an additional 36 bonus tracks drawn from a stunning new 5.1 surround sound & stereo mixes from the original multi-track tapes by award winning engineer Stephen W. Tayler, unreleased out-takes, BBC sessions, a lavishly illustrated 68-page book, a facsimile Record Store poster for FUTURAMA, replica track sheets, and postcards and more!
- Release Date 26th April 201 PECLEC42670.

ALSO AVAILABLE:  
(2CD EXPANDED & REMASTERED EDITION)

## ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM



### UK TOUR DATES:

23.07 Railway Hotel, Southend  
24.07 Craufurd Arms, Milton Keynes  
25.07 The Musician, Leicester  
26.07 The Fulford Arms, York  
27.07 Night People, Manchester

- Esoteric Antenna are delighted to announce a new studio album with ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM. Since her celebrated band Purson played its final gig in late 2016, singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Rosalie has been working on a new solo album.
- The album features a full range of musical styles showing off to the full Rosalie's incredible vocal range and playing ability and is sure to delight both old fans of Purson and hopefully many new.
- The self-titled album will be available both in CD and 180g vinyl format.  
www.rosaliecunningham.com  
TAKING PRE-ORDERS NOW

30.07 Eleven, Stoke-On-Trent  
31.07 Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton  
01.08 The Fleece, Bristol  
02.08 The Railway Inn, Winchester  
03.08 The Lexington, London



## MICHAEL McGEAR

### 'McGEAR'

(2CD/10DVD REMASTERED & EXPANDED BOXSET)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered and expanded 3 disc clamshell box set edition of the album, "McGear" by Mike McGear, featuring 2CDs and a DVD. Compiled with the full involvement of Mike (McGear) McCartney, this edition has been newly re-mastered from the original master tapes. It has an additional 21 bonus tracks, including 13 previously unreleased out-takes and tracks alongside singles appearing on CD for the first time. The set also includes a DVD featuring Mike (McGear) McCartney reminiscing at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, an interview with Mike at the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool and the 1974 promotional film for the single 'Leave It'.



## STRAWBS

### 'DEADLINES'

(REMASTERED CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a re-mastered and expanded 3 Disc clamshell box edition of the 1977 album, "Deadlines" by STRAWBS. Includes the band's 1978 appearance on BBC's "Sight & Sound in Concert" as both a CD and a DVD (NTSC / Region Free) for the first time, re-mastered from the original BBC tapes, along with 11 bonus tracks comprising alternate takes and demos from the "Deadlines" sessions.



## TONY PATTERSON & DOUG MELBOURNE

### 'THE DIVIDE' (CD EDITION)

- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of The Divide, the wonderful new studio album by TONY PATTERSON & DOUG MELBOURNE. The Divide is the result of a musical collaboration between singer and multi-instrumentalist Tony Patterson, and keyboardist Doug Melbourne. The album is a collection of ten songs, which, while reflecting their many influences, stands alone as a highly original yet accessible album.



## TANGERINE DREAM 'THE OFFICIAL BOOTLEG SERIES VOLUME THREE' (4CD REMASTERED BOXSET)

- Esoteric Recordings' REACTIVE label is proud to announce the release of the third volume of an official bootleg series by the legendary TANGERINE DREAM. This volume features recordings made at the Ford Auditorium in Detroit, USA in March 1977 and at the Regent Theatre, Sydney, Australia in February 1982 features over four hours of music and features two concerts that were voted as some of the finest bootlegs in existence in a recent poll of fans.



## CLIMAX BLUES BAND

### 'THE ALBUMS 1969-1972' (REMASTERED BOXSET EDITION, 5CD)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of "The Albums 1969 - 1972" by the Climax Blues Band; a 5 CD set comprising the band's first five albums, originally issued on EMI's Parlophone and Harvest labels between 1969 and 1972, namely The Climax Chicago Blues Band, Plays On, A Lot of Bottle, Tightly Knit and Rich Man. This official 5CD clamshell boxed set celebrates the early years of this much loved British band and features each album in a replica card sleeve wallet and includes an illustrated poster.



## PROCOL HARUM

### 'BROKEN BARRICADES'

(3CD REMASTERED & EXPANDED BOXSET EDITION)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a re-mastered and expanded 3 CD clamshell box edition of the classic 1971 album by PROCOL HARUM; "Broken Barricades". This edition features 36 bonus tracks (32 of which are previously unreleased) and a lavishly illustrated booklet featuring material from Gary Brooker's personal archive.



## RENAISSANCE

### 'LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL' (3CD BOXSET)

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered and expanded 3CD clamshell box edition of the classic live album, "Live at Carnegie Hall" by RENAISSANCE. This expanded edition has been newly re-mastered from the original master tapes and features six lengthy bonus tracks, including the very rare live performance of 'Kiev', recorded at the concerts and issued as the B-side to a rare promotional single by Sire Records in the USA only. Previously unreleased on CD, this sought after performance has been added to this new release, along with the band's entire 60 minute performance for the BBC Radio One In Concert programme.



A portrait of Nad Sylvan, a man with long, wavy, light-colored hair and a dark shirt, looking directly at the camera. He is in a dark, cluttered room with a window in the background showing a bright sky. The room is filled with various objects, including a large wooden wheel, a desk with books, and a small table with a bottle.

# Nad Sylvan The Regal Bastard

In Stores 5th July 2019

With 'The Regal Bastard' **Nad Sylvan** reaches the climactic conclusion to his impressive Vampirate trilogy.

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# PATTERN-SEEKING ANIMALS

A savanna landscape at dusk or dawn, with a starry sky. In the foreground, there is a lion, an ostrich, an elephant, a giraffe, and a cheetah sitting on a rock.

The self-titled debut album – in Stores 5th July 2019

The brand-new group featuring the talents of current & former Spock's Beard members **Ted Leonard, Jimmy Keegan & Dave Meros**, as well as long-time contributing songwriter / producer **John Boegehold.**

Ltd. CD Digipak / Gatefold 2LP + CD / Digital Album





"I learned an incredible amount from that time. We were part of that whole underground world and it was a really broad church. That was wonderful."

**Peter Hammill**





# Ed's Letter



**W**elcome to the latest issue of *Prog Magazine*. Always one of my favourite issues of the year because it's the one where we announce this year's Progressive Music Awards and unveil the nominations. As always, it's been a right royal pain in the arse for the Editorial team, to whittle down what were epic lists of potential nominees to a final list of 10. Especially in the Album Of The Year category, which makes you realise just how many really good prog albums have been released in the past 12 months. Please do head over to [www.loudersound.com/progawards](http://www.loudersound.com/progawards) and cast your vote!

Talking of votes, this issue we asked you to tell us what your favourite Genesis songs were for our cover story. And boy did you – our biggest reader vote ever. Thank you. Some of it came as no surprise at all, but there are still enough eyebrow-raising moments to get you debating for some time to come, I'm sure. You can find the results on page 38.

An apology: we failed to credit two small quotes used in our ABWH cover story in *Prog* 97. These both came from the well-respected Innerviews website ([www.innerviews.org](http://www.innerviews.org)). It is not magazine policy not to credit quotes where used and we apologise for failing to do so this time.

And so, please join us and get involved in the 2019 Progressive Music Awards, and I'm sure you'll let us know your thoughts on the Genesis cover feature too. Enjoy...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



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**FRIDAY 19TH JULY**

*The* **Darkness**

the **WILPHEARTS**



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BAD TOUCH

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**Black Stone Cherry**

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**Cheap Trick**

THE  
**TEMPERANCE**  
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**UGLY KID JOE**

**WAYWARD SOULS**

RAVENEYE

**OUTLAW COUNTRY**

**KENNY**  
**WAYNE SHEPHERD**  
BAND



ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

JESSE DAYTON THE PLOTT HOUNDS

OTIS WILLE AND THE BANDITS

**PROG**  
IN THE PARK

**ana.thema**

RIVERSIDE

PAIN OF SALVATION KOYO

VOLA SCARDUST

**SUNDAY 21ST JULY**

**FOREIGNER**

SPECIAL GUESTS

**AIRBOURNE**

**CHRIS ROBINSON**  
**BROTHERHOOD**

**INGLORIOUS**

*Living Colour*

AUSTIN GOLD

**BLUES**  
STAGE

**BETH HART**

**EVERLAST**

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SUBJECT TO LICENCE



# Bloody Well Write

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## SOME YOU WIN...

There are a lot of things I love about getting my *Prog* mag in the mail.

First off, it's just beautiful to look at. But the main thing for me is discovering new music. The writer that I've come to rely on most for this is Julian Marszalek. I knew there was something going on with him when I looked at his top 10 list a few months ago. His was the only list where I didn't recognise most of the names on it. I started listening to his top few and couldn't stop 'til I heard every band in the list. Then, a couple of months later, I get completely blown away by his feature story on the Polish scene [*Prog* 96]. Wow, there were some real gems in there that are soon to be part of my permanent collection. Needless to say, I now scan every *Prog* mag for anything written by Julian. Thanks, *Prog* mag.

**Rick Rees**



**Prog mag: a thing of beauty.**

## ...SOME YOU LOSE

It is with regret that I inform you of my decision to cancel my subscription. I've become very disappointed with the content of the magazine, which appears now to be leaning too heavily on artist interviews. Which for me personally makes, in some cases, very uninteresting reading, particularly when you feature artists such as Paddy McAloon who has no connection with the (yes, I know it's a broad church) prog genre despite how you present it — The Outer Limits.

More 'features' — i.e. album artwork or great debut prog albums, best- or even poor-selling prog albums (and so on) would make far more interesting reading

**Trouble at sea?**



PRESS/ PAMEL JOZWAK

**Pure Phase Ensemble 5 kicking off our well-received Polish feature by Julian Marszalek.**

for everyone. Instead of pages and pages of dull interviews, which in some cases have little or no connection with progressive music whatsoever, whichever way you dress it up.

I'm sorry to say this but it all boils down to lazy journalism and as a result lack of respect for many readers who, like myself, would be far happier if a little more imagination was used when putting the magazine together. After all, if it wasn't for musicians using their imagination there'd be no prog music. Thank you.

**Alan A**

## (P)IRATE CUSTOMER

When issue 97 arrived in my mailbox here in the US, the first thing I read was 'Prog On The High Seas'. Nick Shilton did a fine job describing his 2019 Cruise To The Edge experience. Since this was my fifth time, I had a slightly different view. In three words: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. The Good: the talent. The artists were all open, friendly, approachable and professional. Special kudos to Steve Hackett, Thijs Van

Leer, and Casey McPherson. The Bad: the sound crew. They caused horrible soundcheck delays and gaffs. Ask many of the bands in the Colony Club and In Continuum on the Pacifica Theatre stage. Finally, the Ugly: the promoters. They never told us about the Fish cancellation, never gave us a complete schedule, never sought out our opinion about which bands we want to see, and the apology for the horrible boarding delay was a bottle of generic water in our cabins. Am I put off? Nah, have already signed up for 2020. Prog hope springs eternal.

**Mike Riley**  
Chicago, IL, USA

## A MAGNIFICENT TALE

I have been a fan of the remarkable French progressive band Magma and its composer, drummer and ringmaster Christian Vander since the 70s. But how I came across this eclectic music is even stranger: I discovered it in a Cornish café next to a pitch and putt course!

The Golf Café in Falmouth was a large, ocean-facing breeze block cube with huge plate-glass windows on three sides.

## TWEET TALK

Follow us on [twitter.com/progmagazineUK](https://twitter.com/progmagazineUK)

### ALAN REED

@3hobbits

Thanks to everyone @TrinityLiveUK2 for a great gig. Great to see you all clapping along, and hope you enjoyed the new songs

\*\* Alan Reed will return with 'Grey Sky Thinking', due October 2019 \*\*



ALAN REED

### MARJANA SEMKINA

@marjanasemkina

I just talked @kscopemusic into making the initial run of digipaks for the new album that doesn't have plastic. Because environment it's a drop in the ocean but it's something!

### MATT STEVENS

@mattstevensloop

Gutted @theborderline is closing. Was hoping to do our 10 years of @tfatd show there next year. It was a venue I always wanted to headline. Had some good times there.





Being completely unaware of Talk Talk's debut album, I fired up YouTube and gave it a listen after reading the Mark Hollis tribute in Prog 97. God, they were good. For my money, this must be one of the best synth pop albums ever. Heads and shoulders above the dreadful Human League and Depeche



perceptive enough to write of their 'gothic, celestial majesty'... a man deserving of a cigar, indeed.

*Nils Erik Grande, Norway*

*This issue's star letter wins a goodie bag from The Merch Desk at [www.themerchdesk.com](http://www.themerchdesk.com).*

It was set on a rise beside a crazy golf set-up and a nine-hole putting green.

Inside, half of the space was taken up with the café and the rest was a record store comprising thousands of LPs stuffed into plywood racks or metal stands. The pop and prog stuff was at the front with general titles spread down the main walkway of the record area leading to a cramped room at the back lit with spotlights and packed with jazz albums.

It was run by Derek, a grey-haired jazz buff who had a small counter in the main aisle and constantly played the most challenging music from a deck behind him, the whole unexpected area providing an extraordinary antithesis to the Formica-topped tables and bright seaside paraphernalia packing the adjoining café. For a time it was also a favourite pit-stop for local Mods on their two-stroke Vespas.

Anyway, when I pulled the cover of Magma's *Mëkanik Dëstruktiv Kömmandöh* out of the rack I was struck by the stark gold symbol on the front and the bizarre text on the back and inside of this gold and brown gatefold sleeve. I asked to hear a track and was, as they say, blown away.

Did I say a track? Well, as any Magma fan knows, this was one long, sprawling operatic piece spread over two sides and was like nothing I'd heard before — a mix of jazz, soul, gospel, rock and choral music; a space opera sung in a made-up language in a style I later learned was called Zeuhl music. The nearest thing I could connect to it was Prokofiev's cantata *Alexander Nevsky* and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. I've listened to Magma's music ever since, even catching shows at London's Bloomsbury Theatre in 1988 and 1989 organised by snooker master Steve Davis.

The late 60s/early 70s were an age when record company reps would still visit unique, out-of-the-way outlets like

this, often providing more examples of off-kilter vinyl magic for those clients looking for something more challenging than the pop tunes of the day. For this bizarre bazaar was where I found music and labels both current and obscure offering jazz, classical, rock, prog, pop, folk, foreign, easy listening and humour, including such gems as the fledgling recordings of Simon and Garfunkel when they sounded like the Everly Brothers and were known as Tom and Jerry, an album including their 1957 single *Hey, Schoolgirl*.

It was where I first heard John Coltrane's epic composition *A Love Supreme* and

many of the great Vertigo acts of the day, such as the irreplaceable Gentle Giant, Nucleus, Ian Carr, Colosseum, Uriah Heep, Manfred Mann and Alex Harvey. I also found Peter Hammill through VdGG's remarkable *The Aerosol Grey Machine* and Dave Stewart's masterful three-piece *Egg*, which led

me to the Canterbury scene, National Health and many other lesser-known but outstanding groups of musicians.

Sadly, this haven for a wealth of vinyl was demolished in the 80s to make way for a block of flats. But I owe its existence, and the diverse tastes of its owner, a huge debt in expanding my musical knowledge over successive decades. I wonder, have any of your readers experienced similarly unlikely introductions to previously unknown music that ends up staying with them for many years?

*Brian Thomas*



PRESS/JEAN-BAPTISTE MILLOT

**Magma's marvellous main man, Christian Vander.**

**GREG SPAWTON**  
@bigbigtrain  
Bluebells at Joan's Acre Wood today.



**KAVUS TORABI**

@Knifeworld

The response to the new Gong album, *The Universe Also Collapses*, has been really overwhelming. I don't know whether to have a blub or take my dog out for a walk.

*\*grabs lead, ball and 'poop bags'*

# PROG

Future PLC, 1-10 Praed Mews, Paddington, London, W2 1QY

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## Editorial

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Deputy Editor **Hannah May Kilroy**  
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## Contributors

Olivier Zoltar Badin (OZB), Joe Banks (JB), Mike Barnes (MB), Chris Cope (CC), Isere Lloyd-Davis (ILD), Daryl Easlea (DE), Briony Edwards (BE), Dave Everley (DEV), Ian Fortnam (IF), Pete Fowler (PF), Polly Glass (PG), Eleanor Goodman (EG), Rob Hughes (RH), Stephen Humphries (SH), Will Ireland (WI), Emma Johnston (EJ), David Keevill (DK), Dom Lawson (DL), Fraser Lewry (FL), Dannii Lievers (DIL), Dave Ling (DML), Roger Lotring (RL), Alex Lynham (AL), Gary Mackenzie (GMM), Rachel Mann (RM), Rhodri Marsden (RHM), Clay Marshall (CM), Julian Marszalek (JM), Giulia Mascheroni (GMA), Chris McGarel (CMG), Greg Moffitt (GM), Grant Moon (GRM), Ben Myers (BM), Kris Needs (KN), Kevin Nixon (KNI), Matt Parker (MP), Steve Pilkington (SP), Alison Reijman (AR), Chris Roberts (CR), Paul Sexton (PS), Johnny Sharp (JS), Nick Shilton (NS), Sid Smith (SS), Joseph Stannard (JSS), Rick Wakeman (RW), Phil Weller (POW), David West (DW), Philip Wilding (PW), Lois Wilson (LW), Rich Wilson (RW), Holly Wright (HW)

## Cover image

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## Advertising

Media packs are available on request  
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**  
[clare.dove@futurenet.com](mailto:clare.dove@futurenet.com)

Advertising Manager **Kate Colgan**  
[kate.colgan@futurenet.com](mailto:kate.colgan@futurenet.com)

Account Manager **Jason Harwood**  
[jason.harwood@futurenet.com](mailto:jason.harwood@futurenet.com)

Account Director **Helen Hughes**  
[helen.hughes@futurenet.com](mailto:helen.hughes@futurenet.com)

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Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**  
[licensing@futurenet.com](mailto:licensing@futurenet.com)

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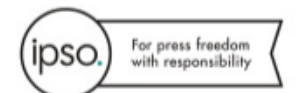
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Tel: +44 (0)1225 442 244



# INTRO

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

## VOTING OPENS FOR THE 2019 PROGRESSIVE MUSIC AWARDS

*Prog Magazine's annual extravaganza returns to London.*

► **THE PROGRESSIVE MUSIC** Awards are back at London's Underglobe, beneath Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, on September 12. The event, now in its eighth year, acknowledges the very best progressive artists, releases, events and musicians from the last 12 months.

Previous Award winners Dream Theater and Steve Hackett lead the nominations with three apiece, followed by a host of acts with two, including King Crimson, Devin Townsend, The Pineapple Thief, Marillion, Big Big Train, Gong, Mostly Autumn, Thumpermonkey and more.

"As usual, it was a tough process to whittle down what starts as a long list for every category into a shortlist of 10 nominees," says *Prog Magazine* Editor Jerry Ewing. "The Album Of The Year alone had us agonising over who made the final list, such is the quality of progressive albums released in the last 12 months."

Previous years have welcomed a star-studded cast of guests, including Peter Gabriel, Jon Anderson, Steve Hackett, Carl Palmer and Marillion, who've all been awarded distinctive *Prog* gongs.

This year, there will be eight categories in which you, the *Prog* readers, can make your voices heard. These include Video Of The Year, Album Of The Year, Best International Band/Artist, Best UK Band/Artist and Limelight, which showcases the best up-and-coming bands chosen from this magazine's section of the same name.

Elsewhere, Pink Floyd alumni Roger Waters and Nick Mason are both nominated in the Event Of The Year category, alongside former winners

Marillion. Who will win this year's coveted accolade? It's down to you to decide.

Could Big Big Train, 2018's winners of Album Cover Of The Year, win UK Band/Artist Of The Year? Or will they be pipped to the post by King Crimson? Or even Haken? The choice is yours!

In addition to the reader-voted categories, there are a further seven awards, which are chosen by prog insiders. These include the Outer Limits, Chris Squire Virtuoso and Industry VIP. This year there's also a new award for Classic Album.

"It's a special year for us," adds Ewing. "The magazine is 10 years old this year, and we'll have released 100 issues by the time the Awards comes around. We thought it would be nice to

start honouring some of the prog world not just for their own individual prowess, but for some of the most amazing albums that have been made in the history of music. As always, the magazine staff always get very excited when the issue to announce the nominees is printed. This year is no exception.

The double anniversary means we want to make certain this year is one that no one forgets."

We will be announcing the host, live entertainment and the mighty Prog God over the next few issues and we'll also be bringing you live coverage of the event on the night via the *Prog Magazine* website. Keep your eyes peeled for *Prog's* souvenir issue as well, which goes on sale on October 25.

Now head over the page to find the full list of the nominees in the reader-voted categories and then head over to [www.loudersound.com/progawards](http://www.loudersound.com/progawards) and cast your votes!

**NRS**



Al Murray,  
last year's host.



**This month, Intro  
was compiled by**

Jeremy Allen  
Daryl Easlea  
Jerry Ewing  
Hannah May Kilroy  
Dom Lawson  
Alex Lynham  
Rhodri Marsden  
Natasha Scharf  
Phil Weller  
David West

# Progressive Music Awards 2018

Bill Bruford making  
a rare appearance in  
honour of Steve Howe.



Steven Wilson  
and Trevor Horn.



Al Murray, Peter Hammill  
and Jakko Jakszyk.



**"The magazine is  
10 years old this  
year, and we'll  
have released  
100 issues.  
The double  
anniversary  
means we want  
to make certain  
this year is  
one that no  
one forgets."**

**Prog Editor  
Jerry Ewing**

Steve Howe:  
Prog God!



Geoff Downes, our  
live entertainment.



Claudia Brücken.







rogressive  
Music  
Awards  
2019

# The Nominations

Make sure your vote counts.

Vote online at: [www.loudersound.com/progawards](http://www.loudersound.com/progawards)

## LIMELIGHT

(Last year's winner: Midas Fall)

Coldbones  
Exploring Birdsong  
Frequency Drift  
Gwenno  
Lost Crowns  
Jo Quail  
Quantum Pig  
The Paradox Twin  
Valis Ablaze  
Wheel

## EVENT OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: Space Rocks)

A New Day Festival  
Camel Royal Albert Hall Show  
King Crimson London Palladium Shows  
Marillion Weekends  
Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets Tour  
Prognosis Festival  
Ramblin' Man Fair Prog Stage  
RosFest  
Roger Waters Hyde Park  
Summer's End

## VIDEO OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner:

**Orphaned Land - *Like Orpheus***)

Antimatter - *The Third Arm*  
Cellar Darling - *Insomnia*  
Daniel Tompkins - *Limitless*  
Devin Townsend - *Spirits Will Collide*  
Exploring Birdsong - *The Baptism*  
King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard - *Fishing For Fishies*  
O.R.k. - *Black Blooms*  
Rikard Sjöblom's Gungfly - *They Fade*  
Soen - *Lotus*  
Voyager - *Brightstar*

## ALBUM COVER OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: Big Big Train - ***The Second Brightest Star***)

Dream Theater - *Distance Over Time*  
Duke 72 - *The Mid Shires Herald*  
Hawkwind - *Road To Utopia*  
Jean-Michel Jarre - *Equinoxe Infinity*  
Andy Mackay - *3Psalms*  
O.R.k. - *Ramagehead*  
Pond - *Tasmania*  
Regal Worm - *Pig Views*  
The Claypool Lennon Delirium - *South Of Reality*  
Daniel Tompkins - *Castles*

## INTERNATIONAL BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: PFM)

Banco del Mutuo Soccorso  
Coheed And Cambria  
Dream Theater  
Glass Hammer  
Hexvessel  
Motorpsycho  
Rikard Sjöblom's Gungfly  
Riverside  
Soen  
Voivod

## REISSUE OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: Alan Parsons

**Project - *Eye In The Sky 35th Anniversary Box***)

Barclay James Harvest - *Barclay James Harvest*  
Be Bop Deluxe - *Sunburst Finish*  
Steve Hackett - *Broken Skies - Outspread Wings (1984-2006)*  
IQ - *Ever 25th Anniversary*  
Mansun - *Six*  
Marillion - *Clutching At Straws*  
Popol Vuh - *The Essential Album Collection Vol 1*  
Rush - *Hemispheres*  
Van der Graaf Generator - *The Aerosol Grey Machine*  
Yes - *The Steven Wilson Remixes*

## ALBUM OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: Steven Wilson - ***To The Bone***)

Big Big Train - *Grand Tour*  
Dream Theater - *Distance Over Time*  
Glass Hammer - *Chrononaut*  
Gong - *The Universe Also Collapses*  
Steve Hackett - *At The Edge Of Light*  
Haken - *Vector*  
Mostly Autumn - *White Rainbow*  
The Pineapple Thief - *Dissolution*  
Thumpermonkey - *Make Me Young, Etc...*  
Devin Townsend - *Empath*

## UK BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner: Steven Wilson)

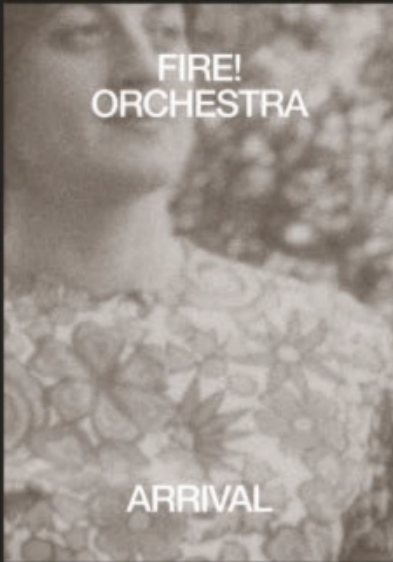
Big Big Train  
Fairport Convention  
Gong  
Steve Hackett  
Haken  
King Crimson  
Mostly Autumn  
The Pineapple Thief  
The Tangent  
Thumpermonkey





**Elephant9** *Psychedelic Backfire I*  
2LP / CD

You won't get your "jazz" much more groovin', rockin' and progressive than Elephant9 on a stage. Here the explosive trio led by keyboard whizz Ståle Storlekken is captured live on an intimate club scene in Oslo in front of an enthusiastic audience.



**Fire! Orchestra** *Arrival*  
2LP / CD

With their fifth album this 14 members strong Mats Gustafsson led ensemble have upped the ante when it comes to progressive, contemporary jazz. Includes five new originals and achingly beautiful cover versions of Robbie Bashos' "Blue Crystal Fire" and "At Last I Am Free" by Bernard Edwards and Nile Rogers. Essential!



**Hedvig Mollestad Trio** *Smells Funny*  
LP / CD

"Blow by Blow-era Jeff Beck and Mahavishnu-prime John McLaughlin with more death-metal in the riffing and spiritual Coltrane in the improvising."  
-ROLLING STONE

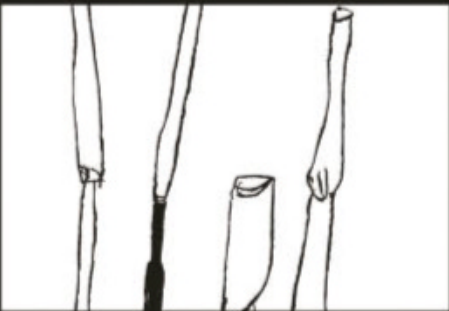
"If you want to know what Hendrix might have done beyond 27, listen to this."  
-CLASSIC ROCK

NEW FROM RUNE GRAMMOFON



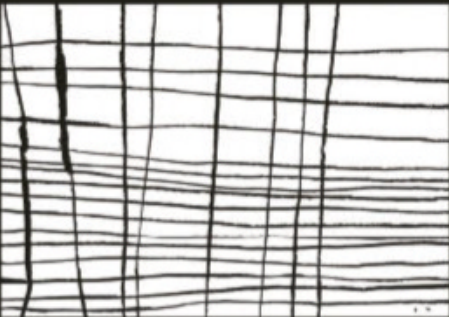
**Elephant9 with Reine Fiske** *Psychedelic Backfire II*  
2LP / CD

Featuring guitarist Reine Fiske (Dungen and Träd, Gräs & Stenar), taken from the same live recordings as Psychedelic Backfire I.



Let's Put  
It to  
Music

20 YEARS  
OF RUNE GRAMMOFON



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Book with 7"

"RG feels like a dream vision of a record label—fuelled by passion, irreverent in tone yet serious in execution, somehow miraculously buffered from corporate industry expectations. The sound and visuals here cover two decades of inspiration and unpredictability, but they also bristle with creative possibilities for a long time to come."  
-ELEPHANT

"As well as being a piece of guaranteed coffee table eye-candy for music lovers, the book promises an insight into the fascinating process of bringing a record and its cover to life."  
-CREATIVE REVIEW

"A singular visual language that's as distinctive as Hipgnosis' 1970s surreal juxtapositions, or the brooding portraiture gracing ECM Records' output."  
-PROG

[www.runegrammofon.com](http://www.runegrammofon.com)  
[www.cargorecords.co.uk](http://www.cargorecords.co.uk)



## STEVE AND KAVUS' UTOPIAN SOUNDS

Snooker champion-cum-DJ and Gong vocalist announce experimental album.

An interesting alternative:  
The Utopia Strong's Steve Davis,  
Kavus Torabi and Michael J York.



AL OVERDRIVE

Steve Davis and Kavus Torabi have teamed up with Guapo's Michael J York for a project called The Utopia Strong. And they release their self-titled debut on September 13 via Rocket Recordings.

"Because we love hanging out, we thought, wouldn't it be nice to make some music together? Mike recorded it, although we didn't know he was doing it to begin with, and when we listened back to it all we went, 'This is amazing!' We thought we could make it into something relevant instead of just three blokes messing around," Davis tells *Prog*. "We've had so much fun making this album. The funny thing is as the tracks unfolded, we kept on saying, 'I'd buy this! This is great!'"

The nine-track is mostly instrumental and contains the snooker star's debut recordings on modular synthesiser. It also includes vocals from Mediæval Bæbes leader Katharine Blake, who lends her ethereal tones to *Moonchild*.

"It's a wonderful track. When Katharine opens her mouth, beauty just flows out," adds Davis, "The album is very psychedelic but also very welcoming and has a really good flow to it; it's not a hard listen. Some people have said it harks back to krautrock-style bands like Cluster. [But] at no time during making it has there been any conscious effort to make it sound like anything else. One track [*Brain Surgeons*] has turned into quite a banging dance tune and [Kavus and I] have slotted it into our DJ sets. On some nights it got the best reaction of any track we'd played. People were trying to Shazam it and nothing was coming up!"

The project name acknowledges the strength of the trio's friendship and combines it with the otherworldly sounds they create together. And Davis is quick to point out that this has brought out the very best of their creativity.

"We've had a really good interactive process to make the improvisations into album tracks. It's been an eye-opener to watch it all unfold and it's been great watching [Mike and

Kavus] at work, and they've taken on board some of the things I've said too."

The Utopia Strong will perform a series of improvised sets to coincide with the album launch. One of these will be with Teeth Of The Sea at London's Oslo on September 5.

"It's just going to be so fun," says Davis. **NRS**

For more, visit [www.rocketrecordings.com](http://www.rocketrecordings.com).

"As the tracks unfolded, we kept on saying, 'I'd buy this! This is great!'"

INTRO  
extras

### TOOL TEASE NEW ALBUM

After a 13-year wait, Tool have announced that their long-awaited fifth album will be released on August 30. Although the title and track listing of *10,000 Days* follow-up are yet to be revealed, the US four-piece previewed two new tracks, *Descending* and *Invincible*, live on stage in May. Tool are currently on tour and are confirmed to play at Download Festival in the UK on June 16.

## IAMTHEMORNING RING IN NEW SONGS

Russian duo step back in time for their "creepy" fourth studio album.

Victorian history, culture and art are the main sources of lyrical inspiration behind iamthemorning's forthcoming recording *The Bell*, which is out on Kscope on August 2.

"It all started with my obsession with the Pre-Raphaelites [artistic movement]. I began digging further into the background of what was happening at the time, how those artists lived and what they were inspired by, and a whole new world unravelled!" reveals vocalist Marjana Semkina.

The album is named after the coffin bells that were used to help prevent premature burial, and some macabre themes lurk among its 10 tracks. Also included is a new version of *Blue Sea*, which originally appeared on last year's *Ocean Sounds* Blu-ray.

"The album is about people being buried alive and wax models being melted down," says Semkina. "There's one song [*Six Feet*] about a man who got tired of his wife and buried her alive. I invited a friend to sing with me on it but he told me that his own wife wouldn't appreciate that!"

"It's more theatrical than our previous albums," she adds. "Sometimes there's a gentle ballad and, all of a sudden, it'll turn into a circus-like performance with an accordion, bells and different percussion. The album flows naturally into two separate parts so it's like a play with an intermission."

Iamthemorning support Riverside in Germany in September, and will return to the UK later in the year. For more, visit [www.iamthemorning.com](http://www.iamthemorning.com). **NRS**



Victorian gothic tales:  
iamthemorning's Marjana  
Semkina and Gleb Kolyadin.

## DWEEZIL ZAPPA TO TOUR 'RATS

US guitarist sets his musical time machine to '69 for six UK shows honouring his late father's seminal album.

Dweezil Zappa returns to the UK in December to celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Hot Rats*, his father Frank's 1969 solo album.

"It's surprising to me that that's one of the most popular albums considering it's largely instrumental," says Zappa. "Some could say that would be risky because some people just don't have the patience for instrumental music. But the music is strong, and the melodies — a song like *Peaches En Regalia* is really

a master composition, an amazing piece of music."

Zappa aims to tap into the sound and spirit of *Hot Rats* as faithfully to give the show "a time machine quality."

And that album won't be the only music on offer, says Zappa. "We'll seek out some rare things that weren't played much or at all and then of course we always have to balance that with a lot of fan favourites."

For the full list of tour dates, visit Zappa's official website [www.dweezilzappa.com](http://www.dweezilzappa.com). **DW**



Son of Mr Green Genes:  
Dweezil Zappa.



DOONE RECORDS PRESENTS

# DON'T PANIC

THE NEW STUDIO ALBUM FROM  
US PROG ROCK ENSEMBLE IZZ

Featuring the 18+ minute epic 42 and the  
dynamic title track Don't Panic



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## FAD GADGETS

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



### SMASH-PROOF GUITAR

For some, the act of smashing up a guitar is the ultimate expression of humanity's ongoing struggle. For others, like me, it's just a bit of ludicrous attention seeking (my apologies to Townshend, Hendrix and Blackmore). Anyway, Sandvik, the Swedish firm known for its mining tools, set itself the task of making an un-smashable guitar out of 3D-printed hyper-duplex steel. They then shipped it to Yngwie Malmsteen and challenged him to smash it. He couldn't. Of course, the whole thing was merely done to generate publicity, and I've fallen for it hook, line and sinker. [www.home.sandvik](http://www.home.sandvik)

### NURANOW

Some subscriptions make perfect sense, for example *Prog*. But these days everything is going down that route: computer software, socks, razors, music streaming, and now headphones. Nura, who featured in this column three years ago, are now offering headphones on a £9 a month, cancel-any-time-and-return-them deal. The headphones have a unique sound profile that's tailored to your ears and are truly great, but I'm really starting to lose track of all my subscriptions. [www.nuraphone.com](http://www.nuraphone.com)

### PLASTIC ANNIVERSARY

The sound qualities of plastic aren't rated particularly highly. Few people get into a tizzy about the sonic resonance of the descant recorder, and plastic guitars have never caught on. Undaunted, Baltimore band Matmos have made an album consisting entirely of acoustic sounds made by bits of plastic, from PVC tubes to vinyl records, milk jugs to police riot shields. The reuse of non-biodegradable material to make music could be seen as a political statement, but Matmos say that it's not. They just like the sound of plastic. [www.matmos.bandcamp.com](http://www.matmos.bandcamp.com)



## INTRO extras

### MAGMA SPILL THE BEANS ON NEW ALBUM

Magma are celebrating their 50th anniversary with new album, *Zëss*, and a world tour. Out on June 28 via Seventh Records, *Zëss* will be available with a 40-page deluxe CD book which includes all the lyrics. It was recorded with the City Of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra last year. Meanwhile, Christian Vander's influential collective have announced a handful of live shows for 2019, including one UK date at London's Islington Assembly Hall on October 4.

Lip service: Flaming Lips court their king.



GEORGE SALISBURY

## A REGAL NEW RELEASE FOR THE FLAMING LIPS

Wayne Coyne and co team up with The Clash's Mick Jones on their arty 15th studio album.

► **The Flaming Lips' *King's Mouth*** is out on July 19 via Bella Union, and it grew from an art installation inspired by wild gatherings. Frontperson Wayne Coyne explains, "We'd throw these elaborate, insane, druggy, adult parties at The Flaming Lips' gallery in Oklahoma City, and we sort of fashioned this face which became known as 'the King' which people could crawl into."

The American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore had the idea of turning these happenings into a more family-friendly exhibition with The Flaming Lips' music and visuals. A surreal immersive installation followed in 2015 and Coyne's narrative-led artworks eventually became the inspiration for new songs. A punk legend was even invited to collaborate on what would become the album. "I think when we got Mick Jones to do the narration, that really kicked it into being something spectacular!" says Coyne.

So what's it about then? "It's about this king whose mind is connected to the magic of the universe. After his death, his mind is still connected, and so we get to see the magic of the universe through his dead head."

Coyne is adamant there's nothing political about the record. "Our king isn't a reflection or a reaction to Donald Trump; my reaction to Donald Trump is, I don't give a fuck."

The Flaming Lips will be back in the UK in September to play *The Soft Bulletin* in its entirety to mark its 20th anniversary, although Wayne's tight-lipped about what surprises might lay in store. "What I will say is that it'll be an insanely spectacular, big, bright show that's full of fun and love, even though we're doing what some consider a sombre record."

The band play Edinburgh's Usher Hall (5), Manchester Academy (6) and London's O2 Academy Brixton (7). For more, visit [www.flaminglips.com](http://www.flaminglips.com). **JA**

## DISTRICT 97 UNVEIL NEW ALBUM

Chicago five-piece give their crowdfunded release a spooky twist this autumn. Plus they confirm there are more shows in the works.

► **District 97's singer** Leslie Hunt describes *Screens* as the band's "most collaborative and most accessible album to date". The new nine-track, out on September 27 via Right Honorable Recording Company, explores the disparity between real life and the way people present themselves in public.

The album's official trailer delivers a taste of things to come with a section of *Ghost Girl*. The spooky track, also the longest on the album, was inspired by something that happened to drummer Jonathan Schang in 2017 while on *Cruise To The Edge*. "I had a very fascinating dinner conversation with someone who told me she'd been haunted by ghosts, spirits and demons throughout her childhood. It was probably the most bizarre, but also most engrossing dinner I've ever had," he reveals. "[The section in the trailer is the] creepy part of the song where the girl is getting assaulted by malevolent spirits so the music is trying to capture that."

District 97 are now on tour and will announce UK dates shortly. See [www.district97.net](http://www.district97.net). **NRS**



Screen sirens: District 97.



# STRATUS LUNA

Join in on the instrumental journey with “no start or finish” alongside these prodigies.

**BRAZIL MIGHT BE** best known for giving the world samba and the Bossa Nova, but four young musicians from São Paulo look set to put their country on the prog map. Brothers Gustavo and Ricardo Santhiago started playing music with their cousin Giovanni Lenti when they were just kids, displaying talent beyond their years on Brazilian TV shows. The line-up was completed by the addition of Gabriel Golfetti, son of Gong’s guitarist Fabio Golfetti, in 2017. While the band range in age from 17 to 21, they embrace prog’s heritage.

“When I started playing the keys, my main inspirations were guys like Jon Lord and Rick Wakeman,” says Gustavo. “We’ve all been fans of progressive rock from a very early age, and trying to learn those complicated pieces is a great way to develop skills.” Likewise, Golfetti names Greg Lake, John Wetton and Mike Howlett as influences, alongside bands like Tool and Animals As Leaders. “Here the prog scene is very much alive, but undoubtedly niche,” he says. “There are a few places in the country that pump out a lot of music in the style, mostly here in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte. This is not to undermine the many other regions that have great progressive bands across Brazil, but over there it’s even harder to spread the music.”

Inevitably, the unique beats of Brazil have found their way into the band’s sound. “Anyone that’s born here grows up listening to a lot of percussive music on

the radio and in the parades,” says Santhiago, “so we’ve assimilated a lot of the vibes from Brazilian rhythms.

Some examples are the baião, present in the song *Zarabatana*, samba and others.”

Their self-titled debut album was recorded in Orra Meu studio in São Paulo and in their own homes. “Most of the tracks were recorded very swiftly,” says Golfetti. “What took a little longer was the guitar solo in the end of *Efêmera*. Ricardo tried a lot of things with that, bouncing around a lot of ideas for over a month. What came out eventually was so epic that it was the main reason to end the album with the track.”

When writing and recording, the band focus on getting the best results for each song, and then they worry about how to play it onstage. “We eventually find ways to make things work live afterwards, but in the end, even if we don’t have all of the minute details under control, the music flows very well, and with a lot more hype, energy and passion,” says Santhiago. “I’d point out that our music, even though complex, with hard-to-play instrumental passages, is very accessible and not at all intellectual or mathematical. The pieces move between many atmospheres, from psychedelic to epic, from energetic to introspective, and from acoustic to electronic. In short, it’s an instrumental journey with no well-defined start or finish.” **DW**

## PROG FILE



### LINE-UP

**Gabriel Golfetti** (bass), **Gustavo Santhiago** (keys, flute, sitar), **Ricardo Santhiago** (guitar), **Giovanni Lenti** (drums)

### SOUNDS LIKE

Classic Camel and Gong-style prog, with a dash of Indian classical music and the Canterbury scene, spiced with Brazilian grooves

### CURRENT RELEASE

*Stratus Luna* is out now via MoonJune Music

### WEBSITE

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



**“We’ve all been fans of progressive rock from a very early age, and trying to learn those complicated pieces is a great way to develop skills.”**

Kids today...  
Brazil’s Stratus  
Luna make the  
complex accessible.



LAURO SANTHIAGO



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

## YOUR PROG CHEF: **MICHAEL WOODMAN (THUMPERMONKEY)**

On the menu: Emerson, Lake  
and Parmesan Lasagne

“I’ve been cooking for a long time; there’s something meditative about the process that’s always given me pleasure. It’s often the only time I can catch up on podcasts and new music as well. On more than one occasion, I’ve even ended up chatting to Thumpermonkey’s bassist Sam [Warren] about the virtues of quinoa during rehearsals!

I can’t remember where the original recipe for this lasagne came from, but I’m pretty sure it was the result of trying to tweak an existing one to reduce the meat content. I can’t stand food

waste, and I make terrible, expensive shopping decisions when I’m hungry so I like to cook this in batches and freeze it.”

### Ingredients (serves 6)

6 vegetarian sausages (roughly chopped), 400g broccoli (cut into florets), 250g halved cherry tomatoes, 200g frozen peas, 400g mascarpone cheese, 150g fresh pesto, handful of chopped fresh basil, 12 lasagne sheets, 50ml milk, 100g grated mozzarella, 3 tbsp grated parmesan, 20g pine nuts, olive oil.

### Preparation

“Fry the chopped sausages in olive oil until browned. Meanwhile, preheat the

oven to 200°C/gas mark 6 and make up the names of at least five Zeuhl bands.

Boil some water in a pan and add the broccoli. Cook for 3-4 minutes and drain. While cooking, spread the cherry tomatoes on a baking tray, drizzle with olive oil, season well, and roast in the oven for 10 minutes.

Stir the broccoli, peas, half the mascarpone, pesto, and chopped basil into the sausages, and simmer for a few minutes to create a sauce. Taste and season. Spoon a third of the mixture into a casserole dish, top with roughly a third of the tomatoes then place three lasagne sheets on top. Keep layering until all the pasta sheets have been used up. Keep a few tomatoes aside.

Add the milk to the remaining mascarpone to make a white sauce. Pour over the pasta, and top with the mozzarella, parmesan, pine nuts and reserved tomatoes.

Listen to Weidorje while you bake the dish for 35-40 minutes, or until the lasagne is golden brown and bubbling. If it gets too crispy, cover with foil and continue cooking. Serve with salad and garlic bread.

Optional: announce, ‘Grub’s up!’ in Kobaian to your dinner guests. If they don’t understand Kobaian, that’s their problem – all the more for you!” **NRS**

## MY PROG HERO Inspiring the wider music world...

Wonderous sounds: the late  
Chris Squire and Steve  
Stevens (inset).



CHRIS SQUIRE: PRESS STEVE STEVENS: PRESS

## STEVE STEVENS

The Billy Idol and Deadland Ritual guitarist is  
always in the mood for **Yes** and Chris Squire.

“The very first time I heard *Roundabout* by Yes it had that nylon guitar string thing going on and I was like, ‘Wow!’ Here was a band that sounded so different but were still doing something in a rock format. So I went out and bought *Fragile* and it has *Roundabout* and *Mood For A Day* on it. All of these different styles in the context of a psychedelic rock band. I fell in love with them and devoured all their stuff. I got into other progressive rock guitarists like Robert Fripp, and they were good, but Yes just seemed to encapsulate all these different styles.

I’ve seen them live a dozen times. First time was back in 1974, when I was 14, on the *Tales From Topographic Oceans* tour at Madison Square Garden. It was incredible.

They were so far ahead of other bands. I also remember seeing ELP and, like Yes, they made me go, ‘Oh man, that’s what I want to do!’

When the line-ups changed, when Jon [Anderson] and Rick [Wakeman] left and The Buggles guys came in for *Drama* and then the 90125 era, it was whole different

thing. I saw Yes on the *Tormato* tour and recall thinking it was getting a bit stale but I’d already moved on to bands like XTC and Siouxsie & The Banshees by then. When they reinvented themselves, it was phenomenal. I don’t look at them in the same way, but what an incredible thing to have done, to keep it all going the way the band have. I saw them on a few dates with Trevor [Rabin] and they were great.

I became quite friendly with Chris [Squire]. We recorded together, did a couple of things. You know that expression, don’t meet your heroes? Chris was the exception to that. There’s been a few I’ve met who are definitely *not* like that; musicians who are not at all how they appear to be in their public persona. But Chris

really was. He was a rock star, larger than life and gracious. He lived up to my expectations.

You know that thing, whatever band you were into as a 14-year-old kid? You’re going to go to your grave loving the band.” **JE**

*Deadland Ritual* play at Download on June 14. See [www.deadlandritual.com](http://www.deadlandritual.com).



**“You know  
that  
expression,  
don’t meet  
your heroes?  
Chris Squire  
was the  
exception.”**

## PROG IN BRIEF

Steeleye Span’s (right) *EST’D 1969* is out on June 24 via Park Records. It includes contributions from all seven members and an appearance from Ian Anderson. They play the festival circuit this summer and will tour the UK later in the year.



Eloy are to release *The Vision, The Sword And The Pyre Part 2* via Artist Station Records in August. It’s the second part of their Joan Of Arc rock opera, the first part of which came out in 2017. The new recordings include large choirs and some very special guests.



MARK  
BENTON

BILL  
FELLOWS

TIM  
MUNRO

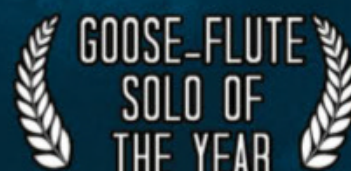
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## MANITOU

### THE MAD MOON RISING

(RAGE OF ACHILLES, 2004)

With a population of 5.5 million, Finland was never particularly well positioned to become a major force in music, progressive or otherwise. However, as the 21st century dawned, Finland's heavy metal scene began to punch above its weight in no uncertain terms, as bands like Nightwish and Children Of Bodom not only conquered their homelands, but also the rest of Europe and the US too. The result was a huge eruption of music from Finnish metal bands, much of which was bombastic and symphonic, but not necessarily proggy in any way. And on the surface, Manitou's debut album *The Mad Moon Rising* was very much in keeping with the Finnish metal trends of the time.

Formed in 1998, this young band from the city of Kotka had the technical chops and the shiny, ultra-modern production of their increasingly successful fellow countrymen. But what they also had was a progressive streak a mile wide and a singer, Markku Pihlaja, who sounded exactly like Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson. Across nine beautifully succinct but deceptively complex songs, Manitou seemed to have emerged fully formed and delivered a flawless first effort. Songs like *Drifting Shadow* and *Wish I Could Sleep* offered the perfect blend of traditional metal bluster and post-Dream Theater grandeur, with Pihlaja's voice providing a commanding presence throughout. With hindsight, it's an audacious blend of ideas: the longest song on *TMMR* barely scrapes six minutes and it's not hard to imagine mainstream metal fans loving every moment, but the underlying atmosphere is one of refined, progressive ingenuity.

And yes, Pihlaja's vocal resemblance to the Maiden frontman could have been jarring, but somehow it works and, perhaps via some strange subconscious phenomenon, it also makes the album sound like the work of established giants, rather than aspiring newbies.

*The Mad Moon Rising* was originally released on cult UK underground label Rage Of Achilles in 2004, but, despite some great reviews and a gentle buzz of approval from the metal scene, promptly sank without trace. Drowned out by an overpopulated Finnish metal scene that was arguably more concerned with the next big thing than the forging of fresh artistic paths, Manitou persisted for a few more years and two more albums, neither of which scaled the creative heights of their debut. They split in 2009.

Lead guitarist Markus Vanhala has gone on to have a highly fruitful career with an assortment of metal bands, including the similarly prog-tinged Omnium Gatherum, while Pihlaja currently lends his Dickinsonian tones to Karhula stoner rockers Kaihoro. Nonetheless, it's hard not to think what might have been if *The Mad Moon Rising* had reached the enormous prog metal-adoring audience it truly deserved.

**DOM LAWSON**



# ALL AROUND THE WORLD

## Our far-out trip to far-flung prog



Going solo: the Tosin Abasi-approved Stephen Taranto.

## STEPHEN TARANTO

Australian guitarist **Stephen Taranto** mixes djent, jazz and film scores, and waxes lyrical about his diverse scene.

While Plini's been putting Australian progressive metal on the world music map along with his touring buddies The Helix Nebula, the band's 'forgotten' member has been busy writing a stunning solo EP.

"With the rest of my band touring the world with Plini, the timing was right for me to put my own music out," says The Helix Nebula's other guitarist, the flashy yet tasteful shred maestro Stephen Taranto. "I'd started to amass a bit of a following on social media so it made sense; it filled the void with Helix not being very active."

Rich in imagination and driven by emotions rather than indulgent guitar acrobatics, *Permanence*'s creativity flourished through its independence. "Some of these ideas would've never made it onto a Helix record," says Taranto. "I was writing solo, so if I wanted a Hans Zimmer string section or two minutes of shred I could do it. I've always been an unconventional songwriter — sometimes I'll start from the end of a song and work backwards — so I really enjoyed having freedom to write whatever I wanted."

The project received a boost from Animals As Leaders guitarist Tosin

Abasi whose instrument company, Abasi Concepts endorsed Taranto.

"We met at [musician trade show] NAMM and everything just sort of happened," Taranto recalls, "I think anyone would have been pretty silly to say 'no' in that situation. He's been really, really supportive. It feels like a match made in heaven."

Galvanised by the endorsement, *Permanence* is helping fly the flag for Aussie prog metal; a flag Taranto has plenty of help brandishing.

"It's really come to fruition over the past few years with Plini, I Built The Sky, Caligula's Horse and Ne Obliviscaris," he says. "And the cool thing about it is that they're all so diverse. No one's getting bogged down trying to be an 'Oz prog' band; they're all under the progressive umbrella but doing their own thing."

Taranto's uniqueness, which hinges off ricocheting djent

rhythms, sweeping synths, jazz dreamscapes and cinematic orchestral twists makes another splendid addition to Australia's impressive prog metal heritage. **POW**

For more, visit [www.facebook.com/stephentarantomusic](http://www.facebook.com/stephentarantomusic).

**"If I wanted a Hans Zimmer string section or two minutes of shred I could do it."**

## PROG IN BRIEF

TIM TRONKOE

**Tarja Turunen's** (right) *In The Raw* is out on August 30 via earMUSIC. The Finnish soprano's latest studio album contains 10 new tracks, with guest vocals from Ayreon collaborator Tommy Karevik and Lacuna Coil's Cristina Scabbia.



**Haken** guitarist Richard Henshall releases his solo debut *The Cocoon* on July 26. Special guests include his bandmate Conner Green as well as Dream Theater keyboard player Jordan Rudess, and half of Boston proggers Bent Knee.



# LOST IN KIEV

Post-rockers examine artificial intelligence in cinematic new album.

**FORMED MORE THAN A** decade ago, Parisian post-rockers Lost In Kiev will be familiar to anybody who's kept an eye on the European post-rock scene. For their new album, *Persona*, they've taken an evolutionary leap forward, reconfiguring their instrumentals to fit their cinematic, multimedia concept, and signing to Pelagic Records, home of post-rock giants Mono and God Is An Astronaut.

"*Motions* [our debut record] was released on the Dunk! label, and this is how everything started. So thanks to the Dunk! label for believing in us — I think it's important to say that," explains bassist and synth player Jean Christophe Condette. "We were always close to the Pelagic family and bands, as we toured with Labirinto, we toured with Pg.Lost, and were fans of The Ocean for a long time."

*Persona* is a science-fiction concept album, conceived early in the writing process. As the band convened to begin jamming new material, the suggestion came up to focus on the theme of artificial intelligence, as Condette recalls: "For *Persona*, we wanted to reach the next step [in conceptual writing]. We started thinking about this idea of the artificial intelligence theme when we wanted to do a cover of the main theme of the TV show *Mr. Robot*, because we all like this universe, we all like sci-fi, cyberpunk and stuff like that... What is important to know is that at the origins of every Lost In Kiev album, we have an [overarching] idea." Guitarist Dimitri Denat shrugs, agreeing, "We can't make music just to make music — we like to find the story and tell that story across a full album."

Behind the scenes, the band are more confident than ever, and not only because they now have the backing of a larger label — "We are working with a more professional structure in every way," explains Condette — they are also a more stable line-up of four members. Denat is the sole dedicated guitar player, which is different to the past. "Live there were [five] musicians, but to compose *Motions* there were three guitar players, where someone composed one song, one another, etc, but there were five on stage, and maybe seven to compose the whole [album]." This has changed how the instrumentals are put together, with a tighter group of collaborators resulting in easier decision-making and more freedom for the members to experiment. "We were inspired by [the theme] to find new sounds; I had to find something less classical than distortion, delay, stuff like that, so it's interesting to shape new sounds [when responding to a concept]."

As for what they love about music, both Denat and Condette don't find it difficult to pinpoint. "I think there are many ways for the mind to get lost somewhere. Some people want to watch movies, some listen to music, some read literature. To me, the way I like to listen and do music is to get lost," begins Condette, with Denat adding, "I've been playing music since I was a kid, and there are no words to describe it. Music is more than words if you want to express yourself — you can tell something you couldn't say in words." **AL**

## PROG FILE



### LINE-UP

**Yoann Vermeulen** (drums, samples), **Maxime Ingrand** (guitar, synth), **Jean Christophe Condette** (bass, synth), **Dimitri Denat** (guitar)

### SOUNDS LIKE

Snappy, concise post-rock with electronics

### CURRENT RELEASE

*Persona* is out now via Pelagic

### WEBSITE

lostinkiev.bandcamp.com



**"We can't make music just to make music - we like to find the story and tell that story across a full album."**

They may be Lost In Kiev, but they've found a new home with Pelagic.





## I NEED THAT RECORD!

A Prog writer asks: is Record Store Day still serving its purpose?

“Record Store Day is the one day of the year when over 200 independent record shops all across the UK come together to celebrate their unique culture,” proclaims its website. The annual celebration commemorated its 12th anniversary this year, but there are those that grumble the releases are too expensive, the original idea has been taken over by the majors, releases are merely being bought to flog on and, importantly, that ‘every day should be record store day’.

And are they justified? Perhaps.

Here’s a disclaimer: I’m not a neutral party. I worked in record shops as a young man, prepared records for release, have written about records, participated in Record Store Day and, most importantly of all, I’ve bought records. Lots of them. Especially on RSD. I have an unopened mono version of *A Saucerful Of Secrets* (£26.99 vs £250 for the original) that’s sitting next to last year’s unopened *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (£24.99 vs £360), and that’s near my pink vinyl *See Emily Play* from 2013. I’ll never play them. I don’t intend to sell them. These are *mine* and their very existence gives me pleasure.

I’m blessed with an excellent local indie, Fives, two doors down from the Wimpy. The fact I can walk to both from my front door fills me with utter joy. Over the years, Fives has seen off competition from Woolworths, Our Price, Virgin Megastore, and numerous other indies. Peter Driscoll, the wise old owner of Fives, sold me Frankie Goes To Hollywood rarities in my teens, and unbelievably, he’s still running the shop today with his daughter Sandra. I’ve been very fortunate to host a Dansette Disco with them for the past seven RSDs, full of local DJs and bands. This year we were blessed with a guest appearance from Prog legend, Jo Kendall, who burnt the disco out with a fine selection of 7-inches.

The thing that gets me each year is the sheer joy of those, who’ve queued since the early hours, really getting what they want. Bags are gleefully opened and contents displayed – and, of course, prog is always well represented, this year with Yes’ first album, ELP’s *Live At Pocono Raceway, USA, 1972* and Jethro Tull’s 10-inch of *North Sea Oil* among others.

No matter the arguments at Fives, Peter takes in one day what he takes in the whole of December, enabling him to continue into his 42nd year of selling records. And with the icy wind blowing down many a high street, I’m happy to join in.

RSD has been responsible for ‘the vinyl revival’ and for prog, that can only be a good thing. Is Record Store Day still serving its purpose? Yes. If for one thing, and one thing alone, RSD offers an opportunity for like-minded souls to blink into the daylight, away from the record fairs and the computer screen. And we never have, and never will, call records ‘vinyls.’

### DARYL EASLEA

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



## HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene’s supporting crew

Claiming the city: Seaprog organiser Jon Davis.



DANETTE DAVIS

## SEAPROG

Festival co-founder **Jon Davis** reveals why he supports experimental music at grass roots level.

Choosing the right name for your event can be just as tricky as selecting the right line-up, but when three Seattle-based musicians came up with the idea of showcasing their community’s finest sounds, they didn’t shy away from the p-word.

“We decided to own it and say, ‘This is what it is and if you don’t like it, be that way!’” says Seaprog co-founder Jon Davis. “Prog isn’t a second-class form of music, and it doesn’t have to be a retrospective thing either.”

The initial idea was hatched around 2011 and the very first Seaprog opened its doors at the Columbia City Theater in 2013 with Thinking Plague and miRthkon among the acts performing. Since then, the event has grown along with the team behind it – the so-called Central Committee, originally comprising Davis, Dennis Rea and John Reagan, has since doubled in size and now includes three members of local proggers Pinto Wagonfire. They also curate local gigs throughout the year.

“We love prog, we all grew up on it, but our only rule from the beginning was that there were no boundaries. Over

the years, we’ve made some [line-up] concessions and we’ve even brought in some bands that are a little more towards the prog metal side,” reveals Davis, who also plays Chapman Stick with Zhongyu and Super Z Attack Team. “One of the things that many attendees have told us is that they really appreciate the variety.”

Although the Central Committee have widened their geographic net, Seaprog’s line-ups still focus on smaller, eclectic bands that give the festival an exclusive feel, and there’s a strong female presence too. This year’s event, which runs between June 7 and 9, sees District 97 and EchoTest performing alongside King Crimson alumni Markus Reuter and Trey Gunn. But how can such a specialist event survive in the current climate? The answer is the organisation Shunpike

which offers support to local arts groups and has helped them to officially become a non-profit company.

Seattle’s long been known for coffee and craft beer, but thanks to Seaprog, it’s now known for its prog too. **NRS**

For more, visit [www.seaprogfest.org](http://www.seaprogfest.org).

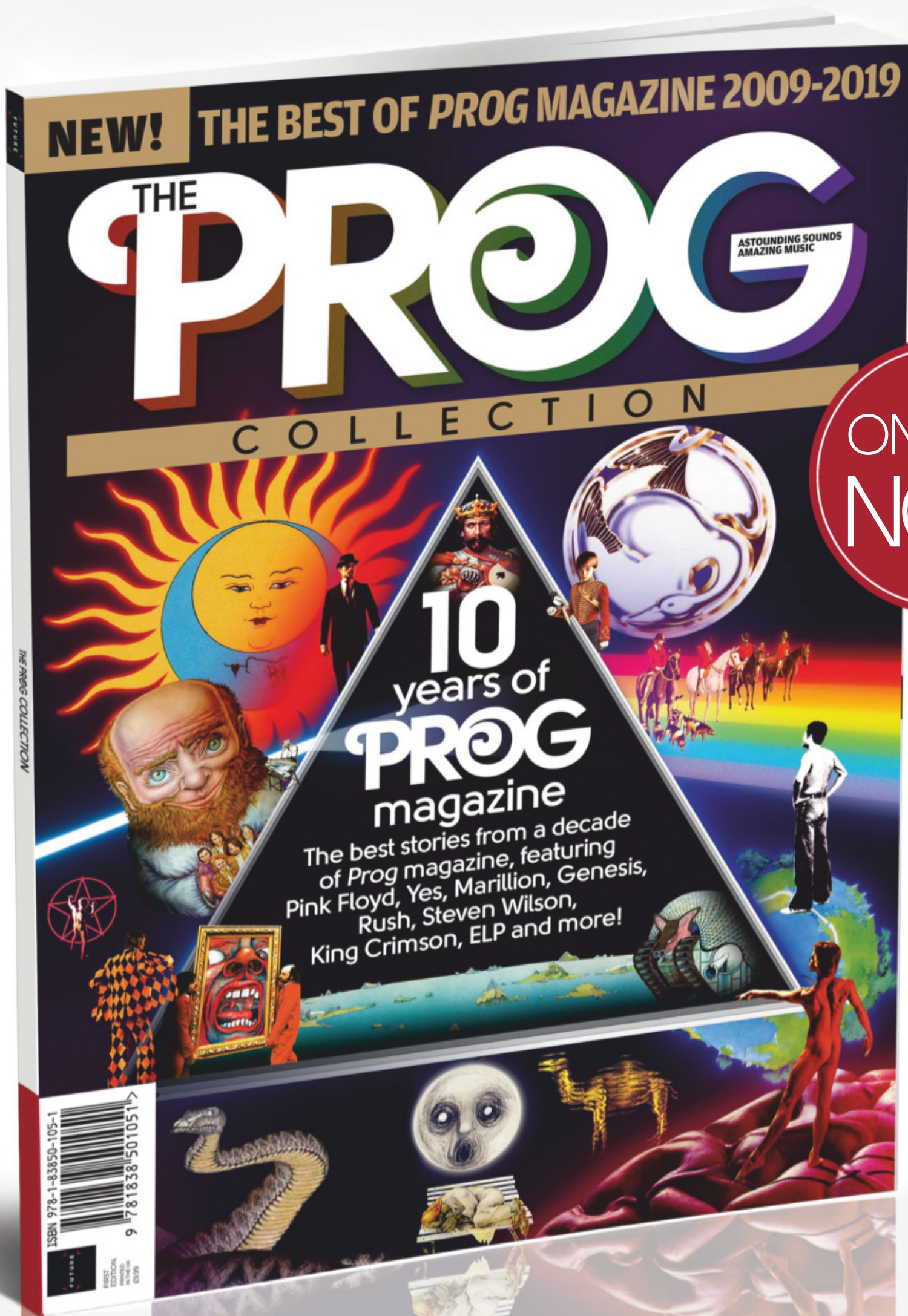
“Our only rule from the beginning was that there were no boundaries.”





# THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF PR©G'S FIRST DECADE

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# US, THEM & YOU

What got us all  
grooving this month...

## Official Progressive Albums Chart

The prog top 30 albums

April 2019

Compiled by



- 1 **MIKE & THE MECHANICS** Out Of The Blue (BMG)
- 2 **MUSE** Simulation Theory (HELIUM 3/WARNER BROS)
- 3 **SUNN O)))** Life Metal (SOUTHERN LORD)
- 4 **LONELY ROBOT** Under Stars (INSIDE OUT)
- 5 **GRAND MAGUS** Wolf God (NUCLEAR BLAST)
- 6 **PETER GABRIEL** Rated PG (REAL WORLD)
- 7 **PERIPHERY** IV – Hail Stan (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 8 **DEVIN TOWNSEND** Empath (INSIDE OUT)
- 9 **WITHIN TEMPTATION** Resist (SPINEFARM)
- 10 **RUSH** Hemispheres (UMC/VIRGIN)
- 11 **THE FLAMING LIPS** King's Mouth (BELLA UNION)
- 12 **KATE BUSH** The Other Sides (RHINO)
- 13 **DREAM THEATER** Distance Over Time (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 14 **WHITE DENIM** Side Effects (CITY SLANG)
- 15 **FLAMINGODS** Levitation (MOSHI MOSHI)
- 16 **SIGUR ROS** 22° Lunar Halo (KRUNK)
- 17 **JEAN MICHEL JARRE** Equinoxe Infinity (RCA)
- 18 **TODD RUNDGREN'S UTOPIA** Live At Chicago Theater (WIENERWORLD)
- 19 **SIGUR RÓS** Variations On Darkness (KRUNK)
- 20 **VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR** The Aerosol Grey Machine (CHERRY RED/ESOTERIC)
- 21 **MOSTLY AUTUMN** White Rainbow (MOSTLY AUTUMN)
- 22 **JORDAN RUDESS** Wired For Madness (MUSIC THEORIES)
- 23 **STEVE HACKETT** At The Edge Of Light (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 24 **A PERFECT CIRCLE** Eat The Elephant (BMG)
- 25 **QUEENSRÛCHE** The Verdict (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 26 **MOODY BLUES** In Search Of The Lost Chord (UMC)
- 27 **POND** Tasmania (MARATHON ARTISTS)
- 28 **ROGER WATERS** Is This The Life We Really Want (COLUMBIA)
- 29 **SPIRITUALIZED** And Nothing Hurt (BELLA UNION)
- 30 **BJORN RIIS** A Storm Is Coming (KARISMA)

Find out more at [www.officialcharts.com](http://www.officialcharts.com)

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- B) Mercury
- C) Virgin

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Now our turn...

**The Editor**  
Jerry Ewing



**THE FLAMING LIPS**

**King's Mouth**  
BELLA UNION

**The Art Guy**  
Russell Fairbrother



**FIVE TIMES SURPRISE**

**Five Times Surprise**  
CUNEIFORM RECORDS

**The Lone Office Lady**  
Hannah May Kilroy



**BARONESS**

**Gold & Grey**  
ABRAXAN HYMNS

**Musician**  
Einar Solberg



**BENT KNEE**

**Land Animal**  
INSIDEOUT

**The Writer**  
Fraser Lewry



**MZYLKPOP**

**Kiedy Wilki Zawyia?**  
DO IT THISEN RECORDS

**The Reader**  
Mike Newhouse



**PORCUPINE TREE**

**Up The Downstair**  
DELIRIUM



# YANN TIERSEN

From *Amélie* to island life: French artist takes inspiration from the natural world.

**IT'S NEVER TOO** late to be featured in *Prog*, as Rennes-born musician Yann Tiersen proves. Now 48, Yann released his first album, *La Valse Des Monstres* — a series of enigmatic accordion sketches — in 1995. But his music has transmogrified over the last decade or so, taking on a more wild, rustic edge, with long sonic meditations that you could loosely describe as post-rock. It's music that reflects his environment: Ushant, a small, weather-beaten island in the Celtic Sea.

Tiersen's latest album *ALL* evokes the ruggedness and beauty of Brittany, and of neighbouring Cornwall. If you listen closely, the drones and incantations may even conjure up druid-led rituals on tenebrous moorland, consolidated by the use of a Brythonic dialect throughout: "You know, my album is in Breton, which is really close to Cornish," Tiersen says. "Ushant is in the Celtic region and 100 miles from Cornwall. It's closer to there than it is to the French border for sure." He laughs when he says this, a thinly veiled attempt to conceal his antipathy towards the oppressor. If his home is a vassal state, then where is the French border? "Beyond Rennes," he chuckles. "I say that as a joke, but I believe Brittany isn't a part of France. Our culture is completely different."

If you've never heard of Tiersen, then some of his music may well be familiar to you. In 2001, songs from his early albums were collected together and used as the soundtrack for *Amélie*, a whimsical French romcom starring Audrey Tautou that was a surprise worldwide hit. The soundtrack went to No.1 in France and did great things for his international standing. It also

caused a kind of cognitive dissonance in Tiersen when his chansons were stripped of their context.

"I never actively did the *Amélie* soundtrack, I just said 'yes' to the use of my previous works," he explains. "The music on the soundtrack has a strong link to Brittany, and there's a darkness as well. There's a song called *The Drowned Girl* which I wrote for the 100-year commemoration of the sinking of the SS Drummond Castle. It went down near Ushant and 200 people died. Ushant people buried the corpses and in the middle of them was a little girl called Alice Reid. When I was doing my first album I was obsessed with her ghostly figure in a way. Suddenly it's on the *Amélie* soundtrack during a really happy scene in the middle of Montmartre. To take my songs and change the setting to Montmartre is just really, really weird."

Back on Ushant, Yann recently built a recording studio in an old discotheque called The Eskal. It doubles up as a community centre where his wife Emilie teaches Breton. And *ALL* translates to the rest of us the realities of island life, especially through the most treacherous of seasons: "The record is about nature, and forces in nature can be good and bad. The sea is rough and we have stormy winters. But actually having that in front of us and knowing that if we go to the sea we will definitely have trouble is kind of comforting, because you know your place in the world. You're in front of the elements and you know their power. It's actually reassuring in a way." **JA**

## PROG FILE



### LINE-UP

**Yann Tiersen**  
(synthesiser, accordion, violin, melodica, xylophone, toy piano)

### SOUNDS LIKE

The sea breaking against a lighthouse as Philip Glass plays a piano in the tower surrounded by chanting druids

### CURRENT RELEASE

*ALL* is out now via Mute

### WEBSITE

[www.yanntiersen.com](http://www.yanntiersen.com)



**"The record is about nature, and forces in nature can be good and bad."**

Yann Tiersen  
knows his place  
in the world...





# CARAVELA ESCARLATE

Brazilian trio channel the first wave of prog with a message of hope.

**SEEMINGLY BEAMED FORWARD** in time from that magical era when guitar-less, three-piece bands bestrode the Earth, Brazil's Caravela Escarlata are about as prog as it gets. Infused with the indulgent spirit of ELP, King Crimson and the most opulent of Italian prog, the trio's eponymous second album is a celebration of our beloved genre. But despite their debt to the past, they have struck upon a distinctive formula that is theirs alone. It is, as keyboard wizard Ronaldo Rodrigues explains, a simple matter of chemistry.

"A local producer called Claudio Fonzi put David [Paiva] and I in touch in 2011," he says. "We both wanted to play eclectic prog rock with multiple influences. When we met we discovered that we shared *many* things in common — a taste for prog from different countries and in different languages: for folk, Brazilian music and jazz fusion. We all had contact with prog rock in adolescence: this music has been with us for decades."

While much of the dazzling music on *Caravela Escarlata* wears its European influences with pride, there is no mistaking fluid grooves and exotic embellishments that could only come from Latin America. Brazil has a robust prog tradition of its own, and Rodrigues and his bandmates are eager to maintain the genre's close links to their native country's musical traditions, but it's also clear that when you grow up in Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian music is simply in your blood.

"Almost all the Brazilian prog rock bands from the 70s incorporated elements of typical Brazilian music, in a more or less pronounced way. We unconsciously kept this tradition because, just as they did many years ago, we also recognise and love this richness. David and Elcio [Cáfaró] have played, or *still* play, Brazilian music throughout their careers, so it's only natural that we have those elements in our songs."

Although predominantly instrumental, the songs on Caravela Escarlata's new album share another trait with much of prog's first wave: a wistful desire to spread positivity and optimism through metaphor and poetry, at a time when the world seems to be in a state of turmoil. Throw in the fact that *Atmosfera* and epic closing track *Planeta-Estrela* exist in the world of cosmic sci-fi and we might as well be back in the first psychedelic age, railing against the Vietnam War.

"This music has a peaceful message, from and for those who seek to understand the big questions in the world," Rodrigues says. "It's a chance to give some *hope*. Our trajectory as a band is a product of hope, perseverance and positive thinking that we seek to convey through some of the lyrics, through understanding the battles that need to be fought to reach our goals."

Now signed to Karisma, Caravela Escarlata are already working on their third album, which is scheduled for release sometime in 2020. They also have plans to take their explosive sound around the world, particularly to Europe, where Rodrigues is confident that there will be plenty of audiences on a suitable wavelength. Either way, the grand spirit of virtuoso power trios is alive and well, and when we do get the chance to see these old-school prog souls in action, it's going to be a full-on prog carnival.

"Our gigs are very intense," Rodrigues concludes. "We try to maintain fidelity with what was shown on the album. The studio work was guided by what could only be brought to the stage by us three. I don't feel comfortable presenting something to the public that's very distorted from what was recorded, but obviously the energy of the moment leads to unexpected directions! We always seek to bring *something* new to the audience." **DL**

## PROG FILE



### LINE-UP

**Ronaldo Rodrigues** (keyboards), **David Paiva** (vocals, bass, guitar), **Elcio Cáfaró** (drums)

### SOUNDS LIKE

An explosion of immaculate, old-school prog pomp with a side order of samba

### CURRENT RELEASE

*Caravela Escarlata* is out now via Karisma

### WEBSITE

[www.facebook.com/caravelaesarlata](https://www.facebook.com/caravelaesarlata)

**"This music has a peaceful message, from and for those who seek to understand the big questions in the world."**

**Carvela Escarlata:** ready to bring the prog carnival.

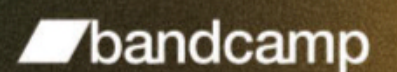




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# JUSTIN CHUBB

If you saw Sky TV comedy series *This Is Jinsy* you might wonder where the inspiration for the strange fictional island and its excellent absurdist folk pop soundtrack came from. Co-creator Justin Chubb maps a journey from Guernsey to Middle Earth, via Vangelis' studios...

**Words:** Jo Kendall **Portrait:** Carsten Windhorst

“In the 80s, Guernsey, where I grew up, had a very strong music scene. I was in a band with my brother, my *Jinsy* partner Chris [Bran] was in a rival band with his brother. Number 19 was where everyone got their vinyl and my dad had a shop called Fuzzey's which sold televisions, but it also had a record department. My mum came to work in the singles department and met my dad there. By the time I'd grown up it was no longer a record shop, but he'd employed identical twin girls, one of which, Betty, started her own vinyl shop and that's where I went with my pocket money.

I listened to lots of music because of my brother. We'd go to see a friend of his who he was working with and he'd always say, 'Do you wanna watch *The Wall*?' I'd be about 13. I found it scary, but really interesting because of that — and it's such a boys' album. I've always loved stories and this was quite deep with amazing animation. When I saw the actual record where the art and everything had so carefully cohered, it just seemed like, 'Oh wow, that's what music can do.' What's also great is that **Roger Waters** is so hard on himself. It has misogyny, racism and homophobia, but he's not condoning it, it's a journey into the dark side of the soul.

When I first heard *Wuthering Heights* I found **Kate Bush** spooky, witchy and disturbing. A few years later, my brother's friend put a cassette of *The Dreaming* on while we were driving. I said, 'Stop the car, I want to hear this properly!' To me, it was exactly what music should be. It was great storytelling, each track layered with sounds and ideas — and the best ending to an album ever, where the artist turns into a mule. She was breaking the image of this twee girl that people made fun of on comedy shows. She said, 'I want to be up there with my male peers.' It's a work of genius.

I would listen to lots of radio and tape it. *The Lord Of The Rings* was broadcast [on BBC Radio 4], and I loved that, and the music [by Stephen Oliver]. I was part of a youth theatre and we put on our own version. I directed it and wrote the music. It was great but it nearly killed me — directing 30 people, telling the story in three hours. I was also reading *Gormenghast* and similar classics. This was all about immersing yourself in other worlds.

I'd begun playing music on our piano at home. Me and my brother worked our way through my dad's *Beatles Complete* without knowing what the

songs sounded like; when we first heard *I Am The Walrus*, it was so dark that it freaked us out. But those lyrics were pure Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear.

Which leads to **Procol Harum** and **Stackridge**, who had the influences of very British surrealist nonsense writers. These people are very exciting to me and I celebrate eccentricity. My grandparents lived in Gloucestershire in this quite magical house and my grandfather was very into whimsy. These albums remind me of that. I like *A Salty Dog* because of the orchestration. I think it was Procol's first foray into string music, and you've got this concept of doomed sailors with a Lewis Carroll style. Not many people know about Stackridge, in spite of them working with George Martin at Abbey Road. I really like *Mr Mick* because of the weird story. An old man wanders off one day, letting his walking stick direct him. He ends up at a rubbish dump, falls asleep and the objects round him come to life and tell him stories. I love listening to this on headphones.

In the 80s I was in a Guernsey group with my brother called The Following and we came to England to 'make it'. We were folky-rocky-poppy types with long [fantasy-historical TV show] *Robin Of Sherwood* hair. I wore lots of capes. I'd really gotten into **Steeleye Span**, and before I left Guernsey someone lent me the three **Nick Drake** albums. I'd always been in love with England, and maybe living in England, and getting more into the folk genre. We recorded at Vangelis' studio [Nemo] with his engineer Raphael Preston. Vangelis' manager got very interested in me as a singer to replace Jon Anderson, who was about to leave. I had two meetings, then Vangelis decided to have no more singers. I was only 16, young and naïve. My brother decided to go back to Guernsey so I stayed and went to Ravensbourne College, Chislehurst, where I studied graphic design. I was still on my musical journey; Bowie had studied at Ravensbourne, Siouxsie Sioux had lived above Hong Kong Garden restaurant nearby and I had a miserable flat-share in Eltham, but it was Kate Bush territory. *Five Leaves Left* was my soundtrack to walking around the nearby park, and I got into **Trees**. Like Steeleye and Renaissance, Celia Humphries had this lovely pure female sound above a rocky-folky weirdness. I was into this idea of finding earthy, English roots beneath pop music. I wanted to connect with something older and richer, in sound and history.

At college, I listened to **Sandy Denny** and **The Incredible String Band**. ISB are so expansive in their ideas and lyrics and there are elements of comedy and playfulness. You felt you were entering their commune, a fading world of the psychedelic flower-power era, with all the pioneering world music ideas that Robin Williamson had brought back from places like Morocco.

I love **Fairport Convention** — when we did *Jinsy*, Ric Sanders from Fairport was a huge fan and wrote about us — but *The North Star Grassman And The Ravens* is the album where Sandy Denny found her voice. *Late November* is such an incredible track and I thought, 'I have to have more of this.' The cover draws you in, as well.

I absolutely adore **Lal and Mike Waterson's** *Bright Phoebus*. Lal's voice is something of the earth; you can hear roots and stones and a connection to something timeless. They wrote these songs but they sound like they've been around forever. The material is so strong, singing about the difficulties of motherhood, or nuclear war, or the comic stuff like *Winifer Odd*. Mike Waterson was a roofer at this time, he'd think of a song while working up top, come down the ladder and hum it into a tape recorder. They were people with real lives and it's a sort of *Wicker Man* part two for me.

I found **String Driven Thing** quite late. *The Machine That Cried* is slightly folky with very innovative guitar and Pauline Adams has also got a great voice. They're somewhere in the prog psychedelic scene, somewhat forgotten with songs about time and memory.

I love female vocals. There's something about the resonance of it sitting above deeper sounds. The dark side of the music industry is misogyny and its backwards-looking nature and politics. But female vocal, personality and songwriting can be so compelling, and when music comes from somewhere very deep within a person it can't be suppressed; it's not going to go away.”

*Dad Droid*, a new novel by Justin and Chris, is out now via Unbound. Folk album *Tvignest* by The Jinsy Boys is out now, too. Head to [www.jinsy.com](http://www.jinsy.com) for details and future projects.



**“I had Robin Of Sherwood hair and wore lots of capes. Vangelis' manager thought I could replace Jon Anderson.”**









# COURTNEY SWAIN

One of the most exciting, original singers in prog talks about facing her fears through her art, finding fresh ways to create music, and why there's a yeti on the cover of her new album.

**Words:** David West **Portrait:** Rich Ferri

**B**etween *Blood And Ocean*, the new solo record from Bent Knee's frontwoman Courtney Swain, was written during an artist's residency during a typically cold and dark New England winter on Martha's Vineyard. This deeply personal release — "The solo stuff is so raw to me," says Swain — explores her mixed Japanese and American heritage and the fear of not finding her place in the world. But music remains a source of joy for the singer. "I'm trying to keep the project very fun and very nurturing," she says.

**Between Blood And Ocean sounds quite different to your preceding solo release, *Growing Pains*. Are you always looking for ways to avoid repeating yourself musically?**

"That's a culture that was instilled in me through Bent Knee. We're very interested in keeping things different and I wrote this solo album at a residency where I was basically left alone for two weeks with a couple of instruments. One of my intentions was to take some gear I wasn't familiar with. I don't really play guitar, so I took a guitar. I took my keyboards, of course, but I took some synths I didn't know very well and some software I wasn't familiar with. I think that definitely contributed to the different direction in the sound.

**How do you approach writing?**

I tend to do a lot of my writing when I give myself an amount of time. My first two albums I did as part of the RPM challenge — it's short for

Record Production Month, to put down either 10 songs or 35 minutes of music during the month of February, which is the shortest and one of the darkest months of the year. I find that I work better in those concentrated environments. When I was at the residency, it was very idealistic because I didn't really have to worry about anything. It was just a house on its own with nothing around it, so I'd just wake up whenever I wanted, which was pretty early because I'd just come back from Japan and was quite jetlagged. If I wanted to wake up at 4am and do something because I couldn't sleep, then I could. I'd work until I'd exhausted my first spurt and then I'd go for a run or a bike ride. I have a timer system where I work in chunks of 25 minutes, take five-minute breaks in-between. I'd start my timer system and be like, "Okay, let's do this, let's get work done."

**When writing lyrics, do you draw upon your own experiences?**

A lot of my writing is very introspective; it tends to be very broad strokes. I don't know if this metaphor works but I think my lyric writing is pretty impressionistic. Sometimes I think about the lyrics I write and I'm like, "Wait, that metaphor doesn't even make sense," but it just felt right in the moment. I definitely write based on characters as well. One of the songs on the album, *I'd Kill*, I was writing from the perspective of a woman having a hard time conceiving. This was a story I'd heard from my friends in Japan. Pregnant women in Japan are given these badges that they can wear so that people can give them a seat on public transit or help them out. I was hearing there are some people that are so stressed out about conceiving, and it's such a stressful society, that they try to attack other women who are pregnant just out of sadness and anger. I was meditating on that, it's such an intense place to be.

**Does your experience of living in different cultures, the individualism of the USA versus the group mindset of Japan, inform your music?**

I think you've hit it on the head there. When I first moved, about 11 years ago, it took me a couple of years of being in America even just to figure out what my opinion was. I realised that, a lot of the time, what I thought was my opinion was more of what I was calculating based on the needs of the room or the group. How that informs my music, I think it's a big part of it. When I set out to the residency, one of my goals was to get myself to write in a different sound, a different creative process, but my other goal was to write a concept album about growing up in Japan, half-Japanese.

Nowadays I'm not sure what I am. For a long time, I identified as being Japanese, but I was never quite accepted as that there because I don't look Japanese. I look more white or American, so I wrote a collection of songs that were my musings on being an outcast and also just these bizarre stories about Japanese culture. A lot of people go to Japan, like, "Oh my god, it's the most amazing place," it's like a theme park of this bizarre and beautiful culture with incredible food. I feel a little pang in me because there's a lot more to Japan. Like every country, there are a lot of issues. It's a very stressful society, the rate of suicides there is really high, so some of the songs on this album are about that. But overall, it's a lot about isolation. One of the themes in my music and writing is this idea of isolation and belonging. I had just come back from Japan two days before I started this residency and I set it up specifically that way, so the experience was still fresh in my mind.

In the artwork for this album there is a cloaked figure and then there's this yeti who is wearing a flower crown. I was thinking about what that means, and I think it's this idea of fear. I've always been afraid because I haven't been Japanese enough or I haven't been American enough. A lot of my identity and my relationships with other people and my family have been defined by fear. Maybe the fear is this yeti. I went and spent some time with the yeti and the yeti was not that scary. That's the backbone of all this, this soul searching and self-acceptance and coming to terms with this fear that maybe wasn't needed. It was a defence mechanism.

*Between Blood And Ocean* is out now via Bandcamp.  
See [www.courtneyswain.com](http://www.courtneyswain.com) for more information.

**"A lot of my identity and my relationships with other people and my family have been defined by fear."**



Courtney Swain: part Japanese,  
part American, all awesome.





# "It's got some good things on it..."

A new vinyl reissue of Genesis' second live album, *Seconds Out*, is about to be released, so *Prog* speaks to **Tony Banks** to remember its creation, and discuss its legacy today.

**Words:** Chris Roberts **Portraits:** Kevin Nixon

"Hello Paris in the springtime!" says an animated Phil Collins during *Seconds Out*, the live double album released by Genesis in October 1977. Recorded mostly over four nights at the Palais des Sports in June – technically not spring, but let's not spoil the moment – the record documented the band's Wind & Wuthering tour (though it includes only *Afterglow* from that then-too-recent-to-fillet album). With Collins comfortably ensconced as frontman/vocalist and Chester Thompson drumming, the music hit the sweet spot between the group's old and new identities, as they showcased a blend of their classic prog – *Supper's Ready*, *Firth Of Fifth* and *The Cinema Show* (the last was actually taken from a 1976 show with Bill Bruford in the drumstool) – and more focused favourites from the dawning of 'the Phil era', with *A Trick Of The Tail* generously represented. Steve Hackett was to leave during the mixing sessions, leaving the band as, studio-wise, the Collins-Banks-Rutherford trio.



While Genesis didn't consider live albums to be massively important, to one generation of fans this offering was the way in, a first introduction to their catalogue. As such, there are some of us who still – perhaps sacrilegiously –

**Above: the cover of *Seconds Out*. What are the Parisians chanting? Answers on a postcard...**

think of these versions as the definitive ones. At the very least, the readings of *Supper's Ready* and *Carpet Crawlers* here give the earlier, studio-recorded Gabriel ones a real run for their money. *Seconds Out* made the Top 5 in the UK and even entered the Top 50 in the USA, where they were only just making inroads.

It's now reissued on vinyl, and founding member, keyboard king and 2015 Prog God Tony Banks is talking to us about its strengths, weaknesses and legacy. He was 10 years in with Genesis at the time, and says he recently listened to it "for the first time in a very long while". With the English reserve and understatement that's his public trademark, he adds, "It's got some good things on it."

**How does *Seconds Out* sound to you now, overall?**

"There's good and there's less good. Some things are better than the recorded versions, others not quite. I think *Supper's Ready* in particular is really good. We felt at the time that this live version was better. Phil's voice comes across very well. On *Foxtrot*, we were putting it together without knowing exactly what we had on our hands. We recorded a lot of the bits separately of course, and then joined them together. Whereas by the time of *Seconds Out* we were playing it more fluently. But I mean, Pete's voice on things like the '666' part was fantastic, so... you gain some, you lose some." 🎧





"I missed **Steve** on the next album, *...And Then There Were Three...*, as **Mike** was just finding his way as a **lead guitarist** and Steve might have **made more** of some of those songs."

Tony Banks: revisiting *Seconds Out* with English reserve.



### Is this the best Genesis live album?

“Oh I don’t know about that. Well, the first one [Genesis Live] came out against our will a little, so we were never enamoured of that. It was *all right*, I suppose. The early 90s *The Way We Walk* ones definitely have some good moments. We were playing more consistently by then. In a way live albums felt like ‘marking time’, not like a ‘real’ release, you know? Like a sort of ‘greatest hits’. *Seconds Out* has an atmosphere, though – Paris was good for us. Europe in general was exciting: where people liked us, they liked us a lot. English audiences were quite polite back then, and the Americans

shout, ‘Where’s Peter?’ and stuff. But even that was done with affection. Also, we’d not had fantastic success live touring *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, because we weren’t playing any old stuff. So now that we were touring *A Trick Of The Tail* and *Wind & Wuthering* and including old *hits* and *important* songs like *Supper’s Ready* again, the audience were on our side.

“As for Chester, the thing with having different drummers is that with some songs you don’t get the feel you had on the album, but other songs you get something better. So I know *Eleventh Earl Of Mar* isn’t on there, but it was much better with Chester. And

### What do you recall about the feel of the shows themselves?

“People always used to say we sounded better live than on record. I’m not sure that was true, but we heard it a lot at the time. And the Genesis show then was quite innovative in what it did visually. People got a memory of that when they bought *Seconds Out*. It probably got more extravagant over the years, but we were one of the pioneer bands when it came to lighting. We pioneered the Varilight, which is now ubiquitous. That was when people first saw it, and it was a very hot thing. You had lights that could change colours, 100 lights for one colour and 100 for another – that was a huge change from the early days! The front cover of the album is the *Afterglow* effect.”

### Another stand-out on *Seconds Out* has to be the gorgeous version of *Carpet Crawlers*...

“The strength of that song took us by surprise. It was written in a throwaway moment really. Mike and I just put together this simple – for us, anyway! – chord sequence, and Peter added this lovely melody on top. I think Phil’s voice, especially when it comes to the later verses – ‘*mild-mannered Supermen*’ and all that – just sounds so good.

“People always used to say we **sounded** better **live** than on **record**. I’m not sure that was **true**, but we heard it **a lot** at the time.”

made noise but did so throughout the songs as well. The Europeans listened reverentially, then if they appreciated something they’d make lots of noise at the end. So Paris was great – but it wasn’t Italy, which was best of all.”

### The French seem to enjoy chanting here, though it’s unclear what they’re saying...

“We never quite worked out what they are shouting either! At first it sounded like they were shouting ‘Pe-ter! Pe-ter!’ and we thought they wanted Mr Gabriel back. It transpired it wasn’t that, which made us feel better. It was something else, which we never quite got to the bottom of. They were very enthusiastic, whatever it was. Perhaps I should ask a Frenchman. I probably did at some point but can’t remember it now...”

### So Phil (and Chester) had bedded in to their new roles by now?

“Oh yes, we weren’t worried at this point. Obviously when we’d first started (with Phil singing), he was a bit concerned when the odd person would

we slightly changed things like *In The Cage*, which became a much more rocky thing. Not just because Chester was drumming but because our approach shifted. *In The Cage* sounds too jazzy on *The Lamb Lies Down...*, I think. And there’s a track with Bill [Bruford] on *Seconds Out*, isn’t there? He really took to *The Cinema Show*, the two of them [he and Phil] played that really well, so we wanted to leave that on there.”

### You left out the piano intro on *Fifth Of Fifth*...

“Did I? Ah yes. We didn’t have a proper grand piano to play live, so I tried to play it on this electric piano, but it had no touch sensitivity. I had to drop an octave in the middle, too, because it didn’t have the high octave. In those days we didn’t have the facility to play a proper piano – in fact, everything then was compromised. You couldn’t do half the things you played on the record, you had to change things. But that was OK: you had to come up with new solutions. Of course nowadays everything would be different.”

It really gives it a lift. To be honest it’s a very *strange* lyric, if you analyse it! But over the years it’s been a stage favourite: we used it as the encore on our final tour in 2007. I appreciate music that’s simple but effective. Perhaps often Genesis’ best moments are more complex, especially in those days, but that one’s very enjoyable – even if nobody bought it as a single!”

### Steve Hackett chose a strange time to leave the group – as you were mixing *Seconds Out* at Trident in London during the summer of ’77.

“He did. It was a curious thing, yes. Phil saw him in the street on the way to the studio and offered him a lift, and he said, ‘No, no, I’ll speak to you later’... and he’d left. I wasn’t too surprised that he didn’t stay with us forever, but I was surprised he left at the time he did. On recent albums, and obviously on *Wind & Wuthering*, he’d had several strong moments, so I thought maybe he’d be happier. But I think he always felt a little bit of an outsider to the group and that we didn’t do enough of his music. That’s



Blinded By The Light:  
“We were one of the  
pioneer bands when  
it came to lighting.”

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Tony Banks now spends his days gardening and playing golf... it's a tough life.



just how we were at the time. We'd do things that appealed to all of us, rather than to one or two. And to be honest, I tended to get more angry than anyone else if we didn't do my bits, so my bits tended to end up on the records. It was a shame, in a way. I missed Steve on the next album, ...*And Then There Were Three...* as Mike was just finding his way as a lead guitarist and Steve might have made more of some of those songs."

#### **Was it significant that *Seconds Out* "broke" the US top 50?**

"Our concerts in America were popular, but our records had never followed suit. And in *Wind & Wuthering* we'd just made our most extreme album in terms of harmonic complexity. Then perhaps after that, across the albums, we got a little more direct. Pockets of America liked us, but we meant nothing in the South or the mid-West until singles like *Follow You Follow Me* and *Misunderstanding* got a more universal appeal. But at this stage we were still a niche group: to some extent in England as well. We weren't exactly having monster hits. We were kind of 'underground progressive', and people who liked us liked us for that reason. Then didn't like us so much when we became popular, just because we were popular! That's always the way. You're a little more exciting when not everybody likes you..."

#### **What's your favourite live album of all time?**

"I'm not the best person to be asked this. I'm always slightly disappointed when I hear live versions of songs I love, y'know? I'm into compositions, so what I want to hear is the best possible version of that composition. And usually that's the studio version. Having said that, I've seen concerts I loved by Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Leonard Cohen, Paul Simon... but I think in the live situation you hear things differently: it's a one-off."

#### **Finally, what are you working on at present?**

"Not very much, though I'm always writing this and that. There's a feeling that *Five* (Banks' 2018 classical album) has more mileage in it. It came and went very quickly. It was No.1 in the classical charts for one week then got knocked off by Alan Titchmarsh reading poems, so that was a bit of a comeuppance! It never really got enough exposure. And I feel people who liked early Genesis would enjoy much of it. And... oh I'm just doing lots of gardening, a bit of golf, tennis – all the usual things, entertaining myself..." 🎵

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*The remastered Seconds Out is out June 7 via Virgin/UMC. See [www.genesis-news.com](http://www.genesis-news.com) for more information.*



# We know what you like

We recently asked *Prog* readers to tell us their favourite **Genesis** songs. And boy, did you deliver! A massive 40,000 people voted in our online poll, the biggest response the magazine has ever had to any online vote. So thank you! We've sifted through your responses and compiled a Top 40. You can see the poll results to your right, and we've listed the songs below chronologically. There are a few surprises...

**Words:** Malcolm Dome, Jerry Ewing, Chris Roberts, Johnny Sharp, David West

## SILENT SUN

*From Genesis To Revelation, 1969*

The first single for the Jonathan King-produced youngsters was written by Gabriel and Banks, striving to emulate the Bee Gees, whose plaintive ballads of the time they knew King liked. Midway between pastiche and homage, its naïve folk pop charm was then drenched in Arthur Greenslade orchestral strings by their now-discredited school alumnus, who suggested their band name. It got bad reviews and flopped, but sits serenely on the underrated (not least by its makers) debut album. **CR**

## THE KNIFE

*Trespass, 1970*

Their live show finale in the early years, *The Knife* is more aggressive and muscular than most Genesis of the time, that punchy, dare we stay stabbing organ riff inspired in part by The Nice (indeed, its working title was 'Nice'). In the context of the gentle *Trespass*, it's practically metal. Peter Gabriel, whose

flute solo gives a quiet respite from the jabs and hooks, was swotting up on Gandhi and wrote lyrics about the inevitability of violence leading to dictatorships. As the last song played at 1982's Six Of The Best reunion concert, it remains the final piece played by that permutation of personnel. **CR**

## THE MUSICAL BOX

*Nursery Cryme, 1971*

This charmingly macabre song tells the unhappy tale of young Henry who, in a scene straight out of Edward Gorey's *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, is decapitated by his friend Cynthia while playing croquet. When Cynthia later opens Henry's music box, he reappears as a libidinous old man. *Nursery Cryme*, the album on which the song first appeared, was a keystone moment for Genesis. Anthony Phillips and John Mayhew were gone from the line-up, replaced by Steve Hackett and Phil Collins, and while *The Musical Box* still had plenty of their formative folk sound, Genesis' music was growing in ambition and complexity. From the opening passages led by



*From Genesis To Revelation, 1969.*



*Trespass, 1970.*



*Nursery Cryme, 1971.*

BARRIE WENTZELL





Peter Gabriel sells  
England by the  
pound in 1973.

# GENESIS TOP 40

- 1 Supper's Ready
- 2 Firth Of Fifth
- 3 The Cinema Show
- 4 The Musical Box
- 5 Carpet Crawlers
- 6 Dancing With The Moonlit Knight
- 7 Watcher Of The Skies
- 8 In The Cage
- 9 Ripples...
- 10 Dance On A Volcano
- 11 I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)
- 12 The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway
- 13 Afterglow
- 14 Home By The Sea/ Second Home By The Sea
- 15 Blood On The Rooftops
- 16 Entangled
- 17 Follow You, Follow Me
- 18 Los Endos
- 19 The Knife
- 20 Mama
- 21 Squonk
- 22 The Fountain Of Salmacis
- 23 One For The Vine
- 24 The Battle Of Epping Forest
- 25 Can-Utility And The Coastliners
- 26 The Lamia
- 27 Abacab
- 28 A Trick Of The Tail
- 29 Back In N.Y.C.
- 30 The Return Of The Giant Hogweed
- 31 Eleventh Earl Of Mar
- 32 Dodo/Lurker
- 33 Robbery, Assault & Battery
- 34 Domino
- 35 Get 'Em Out By Friday
- 36 Duchess
- 37 Deep In The Motherlode
- 38 Duke's Travels/ Duke's End
- 39 Silent Sun
- 40 Fading Lights



12-string guitar and flute, the song features Hackett's rousing electric guitar work and a spirited organ solo from Tony Banks in the galloping mid-section. The old man mask that Gabriel wore onstage only added to the track's madcap drama when Genesis played it live. **DW**

## THE RETURN OF THE GIANT HOGWEED

Nursery Cryme, 1971

*The Return Of The Giant Hogweed* is just another eight-minute song about heracleum mantegazzianum, the toxic plant brought to England from Russia by a Victorian explorer. So how does it manage to distinguish itself from all the other songs on this subject? Firstly, Peter Gabriel, with a relish for dark comedy, exaggerates its dangers out of all proportion, suggesting it might take over the Earth like something from *The Day Of The Triffids*. Musically, the track's noteworthy for then-new member Hackett's first foray (along with *The Musical Box*) into "tapping", the guitar technique deploying the plucking finger directly on the fretboard (and later appropriated by Eddie Van Halen). He and Banks play harmonised triplets – not something 1971 was hearing much of from Mungo Jerry. Both Hackett and Collins were bedding in well on this album, if tentatively compared to later works. Keith Emerson called it "incredible" in an interview with *Melody Maker*, and Geddy Lee cited it as one of his favourites as recently as 2012 in *The Quietus*. "Playful, compelling," he said. "I was totally entranced". **CR**

## THE FOUNTAIN OF SALMACIS

Nursery Cryme, 1971

Here the band dug deep into Greek mythology to tell the tale of the nymph Salmacis and her attempted rape of Hermaphroditus, the son of Aphrodite and Hermes. When Salmacis called for her to be united forever with her love, a god answered her call by uniting the two forms as one androgynous being, giving rise to the name hermaphrodite. Often overlooked on an album that also features *The Musical Box* and *The Return Of The Giant Hogweed*, footage actually exists of the band performing this song on a 1972 Belgian TV show, while its inclusion on the extra live side of the UK version of *Three Sides Live* (a 1978 recording) helped bring further due acclaim. *The Fountain Of*



*Salmacis* remains one of the finest of the band's early, story-led epics. **JE**

## WATCHER OF THE SKIES

Foxtrot, 1972

In Chris Welch's book *Genesis: The Complete Guide To Their Music*, Tony Banks described *Foxtrot* as a "major leap forward. It was such a sweat to make this album." In August 1972, Genesis went into Island Studios, London, with producer Bob Potter, who was soon replaced by David Hitchcock. *Watcher Of The Skies* was already established as a live powerhouse, with Banks' swirling Mellotron providing the entrance music for Peter Gabriel, daubed in

Peter Gabriel leading his charges...

make-up with bat wings on his head to portray the Watcher, an alien visitor looking over planet Earth devoid of the extinct human race. Rutherford and Collins' syncopated, staccato rhythm section provides the punchiest counterpoint to Banks' Mellotron. **DW**

## GET 'EM OUT BY FRIDAY

Foxtrot, 1972

This is an epic that uses both realism and science fiction to berate the greed of many landlords in the early 70s. The time span goes from the contemporary world through to 2012, and the story is related through three main characters: businessman and

*Foxtrot*, 1972.







landlord John Pebble, his henchman Mark Hall and Mrs Barrow, who is a tenant of Pebble's and falls prey to his machinations. Peter Gabriel voices all three, modifying his voice accordingly. The song concludes with an allusion to the connection between ruthless corporations and organised religion. *Get 'Em Out By Friday* was only ever performed live 28 times; the first was at the BBC Studios in September 25, 1972 and the final time being at The Winter Gardens in Bournemouth on October 12 the same year. Onstage, Gabriel would don elaborate costumes appropriate for each character. Interestingly, in 1976 French cartoonist Jean Solé wrote and drew a comic book adaptation of the song. This was published in *Fluide Glacial* number eight. **MD**

## CAN-UTILITY AND THE COASTLINERS

### Foxtrot, 1972

Steve Hackett's delicate 12-string forms the bedrock of the song that finishes off Side One of *Foxtrot*, with lyrics penned by the guitarist around the story of King Canute, whose tide-battling stunt was designed to show his followers their faith was misplaced. There's a liltingly seductive melody to it – one reason why it's a favourite of Genesis fans, including Steven Wilson. As another tragic hero *'forced a smile even though his hopes lay dashed'*, a vintage Banks keyboard flourish and some electric guitar hopscotch help the tale truly take flight. Longer early versions on live

bootlegs are entitled *Bye Bye Johnny* and *Rock My Baby*, and are worth a listen despite the primitive sound quality. **JS**

## SUPPER'S READY

### Foxtrot, 1972

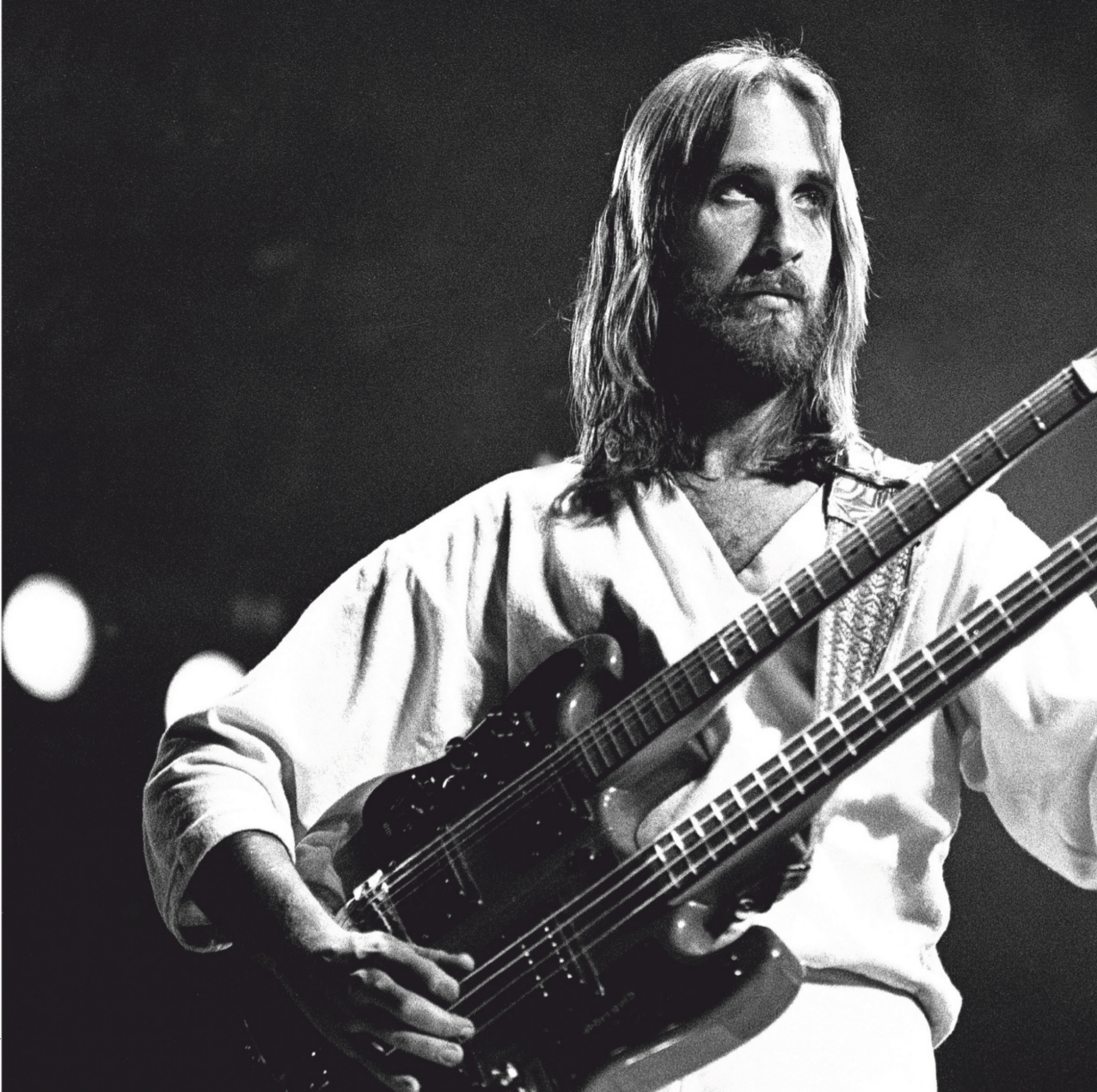
Not just the big daddy of Gabriel-era Genesis epics but the peerless pinnacle of prog. Over 23 minutes, its seven sections wonderfully weave together echoing motifs, fusing elements of classical symphony and rock vigour with almost absurd ambition. Each new passage builds on its predecessors and, against all logic, it works, climbing to a peak of emotion and grandeur as it constructs "a new Jerusalem", no less. Ask Tony Banks why people rarely make music like this any more and he'll shrug, "Well... you're not allowed to. We wanted to go further, to push away from the regular structures." All change!

Peter Gabriel has hinted that the lyrics were prompted by nightmares his wife had and by the Bible's *Book Of Revelations*. There's also a liberal lashing of surrealism, which might have come out of a game of free association between Salvador Dalí and Sigmund Freud – *'the frog was a prince, the prince was a brick, the brick was an egg – and the egg was a bird. Hadn't you heard?'* We visit Willow Farm, Lover's Leap, and an apocalypse – in 9/8 time, naturally – for good measure. This is high drama.

It is therefore all the more amusing that the song was conceived and put together not atop a windswept mountain or in the Palace of Versailles, but during rehearsals in a refectory beneath the delightfully named Una Billings School Of Dance in London's Shepherd's Bush. As Steve Hackett has recalled, the sound of girls upstairs learning tap dancing would "clumpety clump" down through the ceiling. "It was all a bit strange, and the atmosphere influenced our subsequent efforts... you couldn't be too serious for long." Mike Rutherford has said luck played a role, because they weren't always sure what they were doing. "For my part," Gabriel told this writer, "it was influenced by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as later was *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. We were consciously, then, trying to break out of tradition, tossing together different ideas and influences to see if there was a fresh way of putting them all together. I still enjoy it now."

And who doesn't enjoy a curious tale of good versus evil featuring Winston Churchill dressed in drag, the Antichrist and Narcissus turning into a flower? Perhaps the key moment, where everything lurches up a gear





and adds impact to all the music that's come before and is now to come, is the climactic '666' section. "That happened effortlessly, as good music often does," Rutherford's said. "When Pete put that '666' vocal over that passage, it felt a bit special. It wasn't how we'd imagined it. The game got raised." Banks was at first peeved that his school friend was trying vocals over where he'd planned keyboard solos, but conceded that "there's a lot of drama in the chords themselves, then what he did on top just took it to another level." In fact, he's added, "That half-minute or so is probably our peak." Most Genesis fans would agree that the whole 23 minutes or so are Genesis' dazzling zenith. Every time you hear it, it's "a brand new tune". **CR**

**“Peter Gabriel is one of my favourite singers, but I never liked him in Genesis, and their best studio albums for me were always *Wind & Wuthering* and *A Trick Of The Tail*. Because of this, my best Genesis album is *Seconds Out* – it features some of the great songs of the first era but played/recorded better; in particular that live version of *Supper’s Ready*. It’s probably the only Genesis song I still listen to. The greatness of the songwriting really emerges in the feeling on the live version. There’s something magic in it, and the way Phil delivers the epic finale is just incredible every single time!”**  
**– GIANCARLO ERRA, NOSOUND**

Mike Rutherford sticks his neck(s) out.

## DANCING WITH THE MOONLIT KNIGHT

*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973

*Selling England By The Pound* was the first Genesis album produced by John Burns, a prog rock veteran who worked extensively with Jethro Tull, King Crimson and reggae stars Toots And The Maytals. The music was written over six weeks and recorded in three. "I was a very fast engineer, because I had to be. They didn't have any money, and they were about £100,000 in debt to Charisma Records," Burns would later recall to *World Of Genesis* in 2006. *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight* is a somewhat indecipherable





ode to a lost England but it's a fine showcase of where Genesis had come from while pointing to where they were heading. The beginning is positively pastoral, with Gabriel's plaintive voice over Banks' classical piano, before Rutherford's 12-string picks up the melody. Collins' drumming is nimble and propulsive, particularly in the expansive instrumental passages, where he sets a galloping pace, inspired by listening to Mahavishnu Orchestra. **DW**

**“For me, it's *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight*. The opening lyric is wonderfully poignant and sets the song perfectly playing around articles of quintessentially English culture. Its**

**metamorphosis is clever and witty and the dynamic build as the gears are engaged and the arrangement develops mark the song as one of the all-time progressive rock greats. It continues to elicit fond memories and I consider it a benchmark song from that particular incarnation of the band.” – FISH**

## I KNOW WHAT I LIKE (IN YOUR WARDROBE)

*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973

“I love the album – it's completely bonkers from beginning to end,” said Steve Hackett in the 2007 reissues interview for the Genesis 1970-1975 box set about *Selling England...*, which gave the band their first hit single with *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*. The track reached No. 21 in the British charts and the group wouldn't trouble the Top 40 again until the *Spot The Pigeon* EP in 1977. Sandwiched between the portentous *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight* and the grandeur of *Firth Of Fifth*, *I Know What I Like...* reveals the more playful side of the band's music. The song was born out a guitar riff that Hackett and Collins liked to jam around, while the lyrics concern a character who's happy with his lot in life as a groundskeeper. Banks used a monophonic synthesiser for the first time on the album, adding new sounds to his arsenal alongside the trusted Mellotron and Hammond B3 Organ. “*I Know What I Like...* was in part an accident,” says Gabriel in 2007. “Often when we tried to chase things, we failed miserably and I think we got to learn, really, that when we were ourselves and allowed things to happen we seemed to have more success and resonance with audiences.” **DW**

## FIRTH OF FIFTH

*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973

Tony Banks' finest hour? OK there's plenty of contenders for that honour, but the piano intro to the live favourite is so exquisite that you marvel at the fact that Genesis left it off the previous album. Writing-wise, it was primarily Banks' baby, though he collaborated with Rutherford on the lyrics, which the latter pooh-poohed as among the worst he'd ever been involved with. Well, a pun on Scotland's River Forth isn't everybody's idea of a relatable starting point. Yet when Banks' classically influenced tinkling begins, you're drawn in to the subsequent

perversely complex time signatures, shifting tempos, and melancholy duelling between Gabriel's flute and Hackett's reiteration of the same on guitars, which sound more like violins. For him, too, this is a career high. It's usually one of the crowning glories of his live set to this day. In the context of the album, it lifts Side One into its next phase beautifully, responding to the relative levity of *I Know What I Like* with a reminder that nobody does elegant epics quite like this band: *The Cinema Show* serves a similar function at a kindred crossroads on Side Two. Even if Gabriel too was unimpressed with the lyrics – he wasn't the sole wordsmith at this point, and it hardly dovetailed with the prescient state-of-the-nation themes he was exploring – *Firth Of Fifth* just flows like, well, like a river. “I was just following the idea of a river and then I got a bit caught up in the cosmos and I don't quite know where I ended up, really,” said Banks in *Songfacts*. “But it just about stands up, I think. For me musically it's got two or three very strong moments in it and fortunately they really carried us along. It's become one of the Genesis classics, and I'm very happy for that.” **CR**

**“If it is true, as it is true, that the two fundamental components of progressive rock are, in fact, rock and the classical musical heritage, I think that *Firth Of Fifth* can be considered one of the highest points of this musical world. The creative imagination of Genesis, as always, produces something magic, which, replayed today, perhaps, sounds even greater.” – FABIO FRIZZU, COMPOSER**

## THE BATTLE OF EPPING FOREST

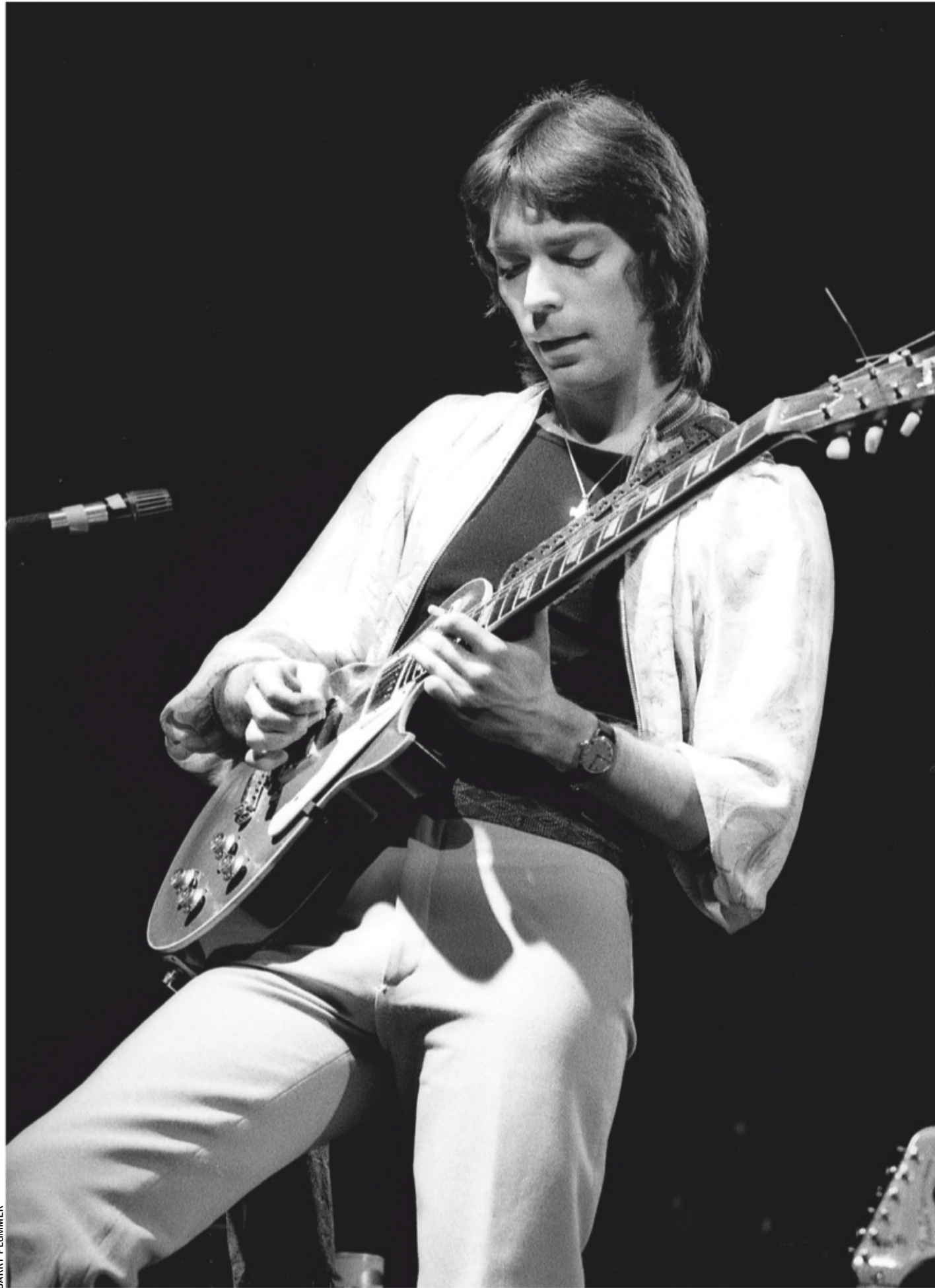
*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973

“We overworked it,” Banks said in 2007. “There was like, 300 words a line... any air had been sucked out of it,” Collins complained. But for all its lyrical density, what a breathtakingly tall tale assails us on this centrepiece of *Selling England By The Pound*. After a deceptively snoozy intro, one of the most antsy passages of any early Genesis track bursts in as if relaying urgent news. In a way, it was: Gabriel's lyrics were inspired by the true-crime tale of rival gangs battling for turf in the Essex badlands, and he even put ads in the paper to find out more info. His adoption of numerous different characters, from gangsters to vicars, is bizarrely brilliant, even if it makes for one of Genesis' real Marmite moments – for the band as well as fans. **JS**

*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973.







BARRY PLUMMER

## THE CINEMA SHOW

*Selling England By The Pound*, 1973

One of the rare upbeat songs from the Gabriel-era, eschewing their usual minor key melancholy for a cheerier vibe. *The Cinema Show* begins with Gabriel reaching up into his falsetto range to sing about Romeo and Juliet getting ready for their date at the movies. The highlight of the track is Banks' extended keyboard solo, which he plays with a notable fusion feel over a 7/8 riff written by Rutherford. "I think the instrumental at the end of this is probably the best of the ones we did at this stage in our careers anyhow," recalls Banks in the 2007 reissues interview to promote the *Genesis* 1970-

1975 box set. "It was an exciting thing to have created at the time, we were very pleased with it." Even after the band stopped playing the full song live, they continued to perform Banks' solo as part of a medley because it was, in Rutherford's words, "a huge crowd-pleaser, a great live song". **DW**

**“The Cinema Show is what really drew me to Genesis. Tony Banks' synth soloing on this track is beautifully melodic, and at the same brilliantly inspiring with verve and technique. Surely his work on this song alone sets him high up on the pinnacle of rock keyboard players.”**

**– GEOFF DOWNES, ASIA & YES**

**Steve Hackett would pass the Daz Doorstep Challenge.**

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1974.



## THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1974

Gabriel's art rock double-album swansong with the group is sometimes slagged off by silly people for being the kind of overblown folly that prompted punk. The fools. In reality, it merely pre-empts the new energy, with its short, twitchy, restless set changes and stylistic bravery. The album's opener, which introduces us to the loose concept of Rael's quest to find himself in New York City, reveals the singer's fascination with that metropolis. While the band were carving out the music, he had been busy conceiving the script in a separate room. "I loved New York," he told this writer. "It was very seductive. A magical place. And although punk hadn't been invented then, I thought we needed a hero from the streets, not from some English manor house." Banks' piano is as mellifluous as ever but Rutherford's fuzz bass is atypically punchy. Exiting on a quote from The Drifters' *On Broadway*, the track is an intriguing entry point into an underworld that's unique even for Genesis. **CR**

## IN THE CAGE

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1974

The troubled gestation of *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* – which, aside from creative tensions within the band, included the difficult birth of Peter Gabriel's first child and the end of Steve Hackett's first marriage – didn't prevent Genesis from creating their definitive prog rock masterpiece. *In The Cage* captures the mounting panic of the album's protagonist, Rael, who is trapped in a prison formed of stalactites and stalagmites. Underpinned by the heartbeat of Banks' pulsing keyboards, the musical intensity builds alongside Rael's growing claustrophobia. It's certainly tempting to read *In The Cage* as Gabriel longing for the creative freedom that he would embrace as a solo artist. **CR**

## BACK IN N.Y.C.

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1974

"I really wanted a tougher edge to [The Lamb]," Gabriel explained in 2007, and *Back In N.Y.C.* showcases the





perennially shape-shifting prog icon's ability to summon up a truly punkish rage when the role requires it. In this case, he's playing Rael as the troubled youngster has a flashback to his gang-banging teens, running wild in the streets of Manhattan before his heart is removed and shaved with a razor. Obviously. An addictive Banks synth pattern frames the highly diverting tale and the band rock with a visceral relish, really cranking up the emotional intensity before a rare, if not unique example of Peter Gabriel swearing in song. Altogether now: *'Tiiiiiii'm not full of shit!'* Contemporary live renditions, by all accounts, were even more exhilarating. **JS**

**Phil Collins had his hands full... and then he took over lead vocals.**

## CARPET CRAWLERS

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway, 1974*

On a frenetic album about consumerism and masturbation, you need your moments of contrast to really count. This is the band's most moving, emotive ballad, based on the lush atmospherics of Banks' rippling keyboards, yet sparing in its arrangement, allowing the song and its almost whispered chorus to shine. If pushed, Gabriel will say it's about "religion... supplication... probably some reference to Islamic prayer", but the mystery prevails. Amazingly, Banks reckons it was "the most

spontaneous" track of all, with he and Rutherford composing the chords "and saying to Pete, 'Er, that's it.'" By pure alchemy, a sonic cathedral was built before anyone was even saying 'sonic cathedral'. **CR**

**“A**round 2002, I was asked to contribute a track to a Genesis tribute album, *The Fox Lies Down*. From their vast catalogue, it was difficult to choose one song. Finally, I decided on *Carpet Crawlers*, because I love the opening section, with an amazing chord structure that really sets up the whole song.”

**- JOHN FORD, STRAWBS**





BARRY PLUMMER

## THE LAMIA

*The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, 1974

The Lamia originated in Greek myth as a child-eating monster, but evolved over time into a phantom who seduced men in order to devour them. Inspired by this mythical woman, *The Lamia* shows the different impulses at work within the band. On one hand, the classical mythology references are surely the product of the group's private school education, but the darkness of the lyrics shows Genesis – or perhaps more accurately Peter Gabriel – moving away from the romanticism of their previous records. It's sex as death, with the album's protagonist Rael turning the tables on the Lamia, consuming their bodies for sustenance after they've tasted his blood. Gabriel's solo releases would continue to mine this gloomy mood. **DW**

## DANCE ON A VOLCANO

*A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

Proving that the band could thrive without Gabriel, *Dance...* was born out of a jam between Banks, Rutherford and Collins at the outset of the album's writing sessions, while Hackett was busy with his solo record, *Voyage Of The Acolyte*. Banks said in 2007, "It set us off in a good direction." Joined by producer and engineer David Hentschel, who worked on *Nursery Cryme*, the band sound stronger than ever, particularly Collins' drums, which were a little thin on *The Lamb...* True to their past, there are odd time signatures with sections in 7/8. Despite a series of auditions for a new vocalist, Collins proves more than able to fill Gabriel's shoes. It can only have helped ease the transition for fans that their voices are tonally very similar. **DW**

The band get a touch of scarlet fever.

*A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976.



**“C**hoosing a favourite Genesis song is a tall order. The problem with Genesis is the shifting sands of their output – different eras throw up differing pleasures. So thank goodness that the first album of theirs I got was *Seconds Out*, which covers so many bases – and from that I choose *Dance On A Volcano*. Drama, power, mystery, 7/8, the band telling us and itself that, ‘*You better start doing it right*,’ the perfect opener for their next adventure.”  
– **AL MURRAY, COMEDIAN**

## ENTANGLED

*A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

“*Entangled* is one of my favourite songs on the album,” said Banks in 2007. The track came into being through an instance of true synchronicity. Steve Hackett had a guitar riff in 3/4 time but no chorus, while Banks had a chorus





idea — the ‘*If we can help you, we will,*’ section — written on the piano in 3/4. Put together, the two made a perfect fit, while Collins’ delicate vocal performance is amongst his finest. **DW**

## SQUONK

### *A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

The first track that Collins recorded vocals for on *A Trick Of The Tail*, just to see how it sounded, confirmed that he was the right man to fill the vacant singer’s role. For Collins, *Squonk* was the band’s nod to Led Zeppelin, letting him channel some of John Bonham’s heaviness — “A bit of *Kashmir*, a bit of *When The Levee Breaks*. When you listen to it, it doesn’t sound like that, but that’s what it was meant to be,” said Collins in 2007. The track translated so powerfully live that the band used it as a show opener for years thereafter. **DW**

*Wind & Wuthering*, 1976.



## ROBBERY, ASSAULT & BATTERY

### *A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

*A Trick Of The Tail* proved this dog could wag without Gabriel, and Phil Collins elected to sing Side Two’s opener in a voice he’d first used as a youth when playing the Artful Dodger in *Oliver!* Banks wrote the bulk of it, trying, with mixed results, to emulate Peter’s lyrical mannerisms. Rhythmically inventive (Phil was growing in confidence regarding his status within the power structure), the song shuffles to its cathartic “done me wrong” pay-off. **CR**

## RIPPLES...

### *A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

As Phil Collins steps up to the mic as lead singer for the first time, the music begins to evolve to suit the new four-piece format. “We thought songs like *Ripples* and *Mad Man Moon* would be great for his voice,” Banks said in 2007, and the music also seemed to successfully straddle Genesis’ past and future approaches to songwriting. It opens around Mike Rutherford’s beautiful, alternately tuned 12-string, so we’re instantly reminded of *The Cinema Show*. But once that irresistible, yearning beauty of a chorus comes in it has its cake and eats it: echoing an unmistakably Genesis sound while also embracing the broader, more emotive songwriting strokes the band were increasingly aspiring to. This love-lorn vignette also tells of Genesis starting to get in touch with their heart as well as their head, as the “blue girl” swims away, not just representing lost loves past, but a sense of age eroding beauty and innocence. **JS**

## A TRICK OF THE TAIL

### *A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

The title track of the band’s 1976 album. It was released as a single with *Ripples* on the B side. Not only was this the first Genesis single to feature Phil Collins on lead vocals, but they also shot their first promotional video for this song. The song itself was inspired by the 1955 William Goldman novel *The Inheritors*, in which the author used the device of a primitive tribe to comment on social morality. In the lyrics here, Tony Banks, who was the sole writer, talks of a beast who leaves his own kingdom to join human society, but he is captured and put on display as a freak. In the end, though, he comes out on top. The track was also partly influenced

by *Getting Better* from The Beatles. And to some extent this is a partner to *Squonk* from the same album. Amazingly, Genesis have never played *A Trick Of The Tail* live! **MD**

## LOS ENDOS

### *A Trick Of The Tail*, 1976

The closing instrumental from *A Trick Of The Tail* saw Collins bringing the jazz rock of his Brand X side project into Genesis, with a tip of the hat to Billy Cobham’s *Spectrum*. “It was more my baby than anybody else’s,” said Collins in 2007, who came up with the melody that provides the platform for the band to bust some chops. It’s a great showpiece for a drummer, who unleashes a series of blister-inducing runs around his sprawling kit. “It certainly turned into a great live piece, it was great fun to play and it really rounded off the album well,” said Banks in 2007. **DW**

## ELEVENTH EARL OF MAR

### *Wind & Wuthering*, 1976

There’s a thrillingly ebullient quality to *Wind & Wuthering*’s opener. Mike Rutherford’s prowling, growling bass sets it off on the march, reflecting the unfolding lyric and his key role in its creation: “I had this idea after reading this history book about a failed Scottish rising,” he told *NME*’s Steve Clarke soon afterwards. “I liked the idea of him — he was... a bit camp and a bit well-dressed.” Meanwhile, the remnants of a Hackett ballad initially titled *The House Of The Four Winds* forms part of the middle section before the titular hero and his army stomp on towards London, which “will be their grave”. **JS**

## ONE FOR THE VINE

### *Wind & Wuthering*, 1976

This Tony Banks masterpiece was almost ready for *A Trick Of The Tail*, but Banks says he spent a year on it “to get it right”. Partly inspired by Michael Moorcock’s sci-fi novel *Phoenix In Obsidian*, the narrative follows a reluctant prophet-like ‘chosen one’, forced to lead others into battle then electing to disappear. Or does he? A live perennial, from an album about which most of the band seem weirdly sniffy, its interplay between Banks and the departing Hackett is as gorgeous as the debate among fans about “what it means” is endless. Back in ’76, *Sounds* magazine called it “Genesis’ finest moment”. **CR**



## BLOOD ON THE ROOFTOPS

*Wind & Wuthering*, 1976

One oft-remarked-upon aspect of Genesis' sound is their 'English melancholy', and this may be the finest example. Collins and Hackett teamed up to write a bittersweet "dark and grey" elegy, railing (ever so politely, gently and English-ly) at the tedium of the TV news. Of course there's tea involved, as a remedy. The other members have cited this as perhaps Hackett's greatest contribution to the band, and, to this day, when he plays it live it's spellbinding. **CR**

**“While *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* has remained my favourite Genesis album over the years, there are at least a dozen pieces – from 1970 to 1991 – that could be contenders for my favourite song by the band. I’m going to go with *Blood On The Rooftops*. It’s a mesmerising fusion of the poetic and the mundane, with fragile yet majestic music accompanying a beautifully observed and surprisingly gritty lyric.”**  
**– TIM BOWNESS, NO-MAN**

## AFTERGLOW

*Wind & Wuthering*, 1976

From the 1976 album *Wind & Wuthering* and written by Banks, the storyline is about being the last person left alive after a nuclear holocaust. But in a wider context it can be seen about coming to terms with loneliness. Oddly, Banks once commented that a few days after writing this, he noticed the resemblance it seemed to have to *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas*. He also says it was written very quickly. And Collins used massed sampled vocals at the climax, mimicking 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*. The band played *Afterglow* live no fewer than 560 times, making it their fifth most-performed song onstage. **MD**

## DEEP IN THE MOTHERLODE

*...And Then There Were Three...*, 1977

If the trio struggled to find a coherent overall feel or consistent temperature on this album, there were still stirring individual tracks. This Rutherford composition, bringing Side Two in on a thunderous high, got past its working title of 'Heavy' and features him playing bottleneck slide guitar

The only thing about them is the way they walk...  
Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks and Phil Collins on  
the We Can't Dance American tour, 1992.





after next-to-no practice. Set during the Nevada gold rush (the hook ‘go west young man’ became its title as a single in America and Japan), it glistens. **CR**

## FOLLOW YOU, FOLLOW ME

...And Then There Were Three..., 1977

“This can’t be any good,” Mike Rutherford said to *Classic Rock* in 2017, thinking of Genesis’ first hit single as a trio in 1978, because it came together so quickly. His introductory guitar riff, performed with an MXR flanger, was built upon by Banks’ melody line and filled-out chords, before Collins’ vocal melody was firmed up. “It worked so well as a very simple thing,” said Banks in 1982 to *Trouser Press*. Rutherford added lyrics in minutes, its romantic sentiments inspired by his wife, Angie. “Normally lyrics take agonising over and developing. But... you realise that’s the charm.” Indeed it is – and as well as a radio-friendly earworm, it added an anthemic final flourish to ...*And Then There Were Three...* **JS**

## DUCHESS

Duke, 1980

After the opening crash of *Behind The Lines* on 1980’s *Duke*, things get decidedly more atmospheric as the band relay the tale of a rock star diva, charting her rise to superstardom and subsequent fall. It was the first ever Genesis song to use a drum machine and was even released as a single, reaching No. 46 in the UK chart. The subsequent video, shot at Liverpool’s Empire Theatre, showed Banks, Collins and Rutherford watching the titular Duchess in full flow. **JE**

## DUKE’S TRAVELS/ DUKE’S END

Duke, 1980

The *Duke* album was originally conceived around a 30-minute suite of music that comprised *Behind The Lines*, *Duchess*, *Guide Vocal*, *Duke’s Travels* and *Duke’s End*. Fearing comparisons with *Supper’s Ready*, the band decided against sequencing the songs in that way. They still performed the suite live, however, with Collins introducing it as “The story of Albert”, the character from the album cover. These two songs, making up the closing 10 minutes of the album, make for a full-on prog rock work-out, reprising themes from *Behind The Lines* and reminding those who were aghast at the singles success Genesis were



...And Then There Were Three..., 1977.



Duke, 1980.



Abacab, 1981.



Genesis, 1983.



Invisible Touch, 1986.



We Can’t Dance, 1991.

achieving that they could still indulge when the mood took them. **JE**

## ABACAB

Abacab, 1981

This title was not, as some believe, the chord sequence of the opening song of the album of the same name, but rather how sections of an early version of the song were labelled using letters of the alphabet. Some Genesis fans recoil from *Abacab* because of the production sound, others because of the use of the Earth, Wind & Fire horns. But it had some fine moments, especially the title track. The live version from *Three Sides Live* really has an impact. **JE**

## DODO/LURKER

Abacab, 1981

The longest track from *Abacab* is another track that benefits from its live retelling on *Three Sides Live*, on which the band’s storytelling format and musicality come back to the fore. The lyrics to the *Lurker* section, which were written by Tony Banks, include a convoluted riddle that continues to puzzle the band’s fans. “There is no real solution,” Banks told *Record Collector* in 1997. “It was a bit of a joke. I didn’t have anything specific in mind.” **JE**

## MAMA

Genesis, 1983

Influenced by John Lennon, Grandmaster Flash and David Niven’s *The Moon’s A Balloon*, the opening track from 1983’s *Genesis* album came to life with Rutherford playing around with a drum machine in the studio. The song itself is one of the darkest and moodiest of the entire Collins era, described by Steve Hackett as “hauntingly beautiful”. Despite telling the story of a young man yearning for a prostitute, *Mama* was also a massive success as a single, reaching No. 4 in the UK charts, yet remains one of the most experimental-sounding songs of latter-era Genesis, and a massive live favourite as well. **JE**

**“For me, it’s Mama. Isolation. Disconnection. Searching. Reaching out... ‘It is getting so hard’. What this song means to me, what it does to me, is to put me in a place of nostalgia, confusion, clarity, a sense of loss, a sense of being lost – and found – all at once. A great melody. A great vocal. A great song. Brilliant.”**  
– DANIEL CAVANAGH, ANATHEMA

## HOME BY THE SEA/ SECOND HOME BY THE SEA

Genesis, 1983

For many, or at least those who don’t wave the “Post Gabriel/Hackett the band were rubbish” card, this song was the last real prog throw of the dice (not true, of course). Telling the story of a man who burgles a haunted house, only to end up the prisoner of its ghosts, who relay their stories to him for the rest of his life, the two connected pieces form an 11-minute suite that closes Side One of *Genesis*. By far and away the highlight of the album and a belter when played live, it was even released as a single in some countries (not the UK, obviously). The video was shot at Dallas’ Reunion Arena in 1984. **JE**

## DOMINO

Invisible Touch, 1986

1986’s incredibly successful *Invisible Touch* featured no fewer than four hit singles, fuelling detractors’ claims the band had abandoned their roots. *Domino* suggests they hadn’t entirely. A 10-minute-plus suite of two songs, *In The Glow Of The Night* and *The Last Domino*, the lyrics, penned by Banks, were inspired by the Lebanon war of 1982. It showed Genesis could still prog out, even if they were concurrently *Spitting Image* puppets on *Top of The Pops*. **JE**

**“Synth- and FX-driven 80s Genesis is a sound that for me very much defines that era of music. Domino is a stunning example of that sound but also the band’s ability to compose highly intelligent arrangements that are packed with so many hooks that even the pop world can’t resist.”**  
– JAMES MONTEITH, TESSERACT

## FADING LIGHTS

We Can’t Dance, 1991

Ripples never come back, but there’s a hint of the *A Trick Of The Tail* ballad, at least in its mood, in this finale to 1991’s multi-million seller, Collins’ last studio recording with the band. A misty-eyed moe about memory and the passing of time, it comes in with Phil singing over a drum machine and synth beds before Banks and Rutherford crash in alongside big ‘proper’ drums. A long instrumental flurry, the net result of much previous improvisation, lifts us into elevated epic territory. It feels like Phil’s farewell, even if that wasn’t known at the time. **CR** 



# The Living Years

**Mike Rutherford** has no intention of slowing down, having just released a new album with Mike + The Mechanics. We join him on the road to talk Genesis, touring today and what's ahead...

**Words:** Mike Brooks **Portrait:** Patrick Balls

**"I**t's a long tour that we're on, someone said to me the other day that it's a young man's schedule," smiles Mike Rutherford in that unflappable manner of his. "And they were right! It's been great so far actually, the UK was great a few weeks ago and we were doing two sets, and I always enjoy breaking the show into two sets. I'd previously avoided that but this is the fourth time that we've done a tour in England so it'd be good to do something different and break the show into two parts, and starting the second set acoustically really gave the show a different feel, which worked."

We're in Stuttgart and it's mid-April. Mike has been on the road with his Mechanics since February. The band still have another two weeks to go on the Looking Back (Over My Shoulder) tour, in support of their *Out Of The Blue* album, a set of three new songs and reworking of the many Mike + The Mechanics hits, of which there are far more than you might at first think.

**Do you still enjoy touring? You had a hiatus for a while... Does modern technology make it easier, especially being away from home?**

"I think I do, I'm not really sure. You know, basically when we stopped touring 10 years ago, I thought that was it after Paul Young [Sad Café vocalist] passed away. I spoke to Paul Carrack and we thought that was a good time to stop, you know, an end of an era. And for a good while we didn't do anything. But then I had some songs that sounded

like they were Mechanics songs, so I kind of went back to how we first started. So basically, I wrote a bunch of songs with no singers in mind, went into the studio and went about working how we'd worked when the Mechanics first started. And it worked!"

**As far as bassists go, who do you admire, from your early days to now?**

"Well, Pino [Palladino] has to be one of the most amazing players of all time, a lovely guy and the fastest learner I've ever known. Play him a song twice and it's there... I'm working my way around it and he already has it down pat. The McCartneys of this world are still great... they're musical bass players. Jack Bruce as well, again, a very unique sound and a very melodic player."

**You always came across as a bass player who was trying to play what was right for the song, and not being flash for flash's sake or trying to be a virtuoso.**

"Yeah, I think you're right but it's a process of learning when it's



New album *Out Of The Blue*, out now.

"I always thought **Chris Squire** was an amazing bass player. I went to see **Yes** years ago and I came away thinking how different they were to us, in a nice way, and how they were all **virtuoso players** whereas we were more **songwriters** and that was okay."







applicable and when it's not. As you get older, you get wiser to these things."

**When Genesis were hitting their stride in the early to mid-70s, were you aware of what was going on in the prog rock scene and what your contemporaries such as Yes and Rush were doing?**

"I never really knew much about Rush... and I still don't! I really don't know much of their material and I should investigate some of it sometime when I can get round to it, but Yes I was very aware of and I always thought Chris Squire was an amazing bass player. I went to see Yes years ago and I came away thinking how different they were to us, in a nice way, and how they were all virtuoso players whereas we were more songwriters and that was okay."

**When you were writing the legendary stuff with Genesis, were the bass lines ever a starting point?**

"I don't think a bass line was ever a starting point for the band; it was far more likely to be a drum machine thing between Phil and I."

**When Daryl Stuermer took over the live bass playing duties, he had his own way of playing. Was there ever a point where the bass player in you wanted to swap roles?**

"Well, basically, it was half and half for a long time, maybe a little less on the last few tours but it was very much split duties. I think he always understood how to play the right part for the song."

**Do you still keep in touch with all the Genesis guys?**

"Yes, I saw Daryl playing with Phil of course back in November on the west coast of America, and I saw Chester [Thompson, drums] in March and he looked very good, and I see Tony quite regularly as he lives quite close to me."

**Do you miss the Genesis machine, and are the cogs still turning?**

"We've got a whole bunch of live sets that we discuss occasionally but I'm not sure we could face the hard work to go through it all. There are no plans for Genesis at the moment but then three years ago, I wouldn't have thought Phil would be doing what he's doing now. The Mechanics are supporting him on some stadium shows in Europe during the summer; and his son is great, too... who would have thought Phil would be on the road with his son drumming and enjoying it as much as he is... so never say never!" 

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*Out Of The Blue* is out now via BMG.  
See [www.mikeandthemechanics.com](http://www.mikeandthemechanics.com)  
for more information.



# Hope And Spray

With **Van der Graaf Generator**'s debut, *The Aerosol Grey Machine*, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, *Prog* discovers the story behind the album from fateful meetings to Arthur Brown worship and beyond...

**Words:** Dom Lawson

**L**ike many of the great progressive rock stories, the Van der Graaf Generator saga began with a meeting of unsuspecting kindred spirits. Both arriving at Manchester University in the mid-60s, aspiring young musicians Peter Hammill and Chris Judge Smith could easily have never met, but fate had other ideas. A sign on the Students' Union noticeboard asked whether anyone was interested in forming a rock band. Hammill had been writing songs and harbouring creative ambitions for years, while Smith had just returned from an enlightening trip to California at the height of the psychedelic movement. Forming a rock band was exactly what they both had in mind.

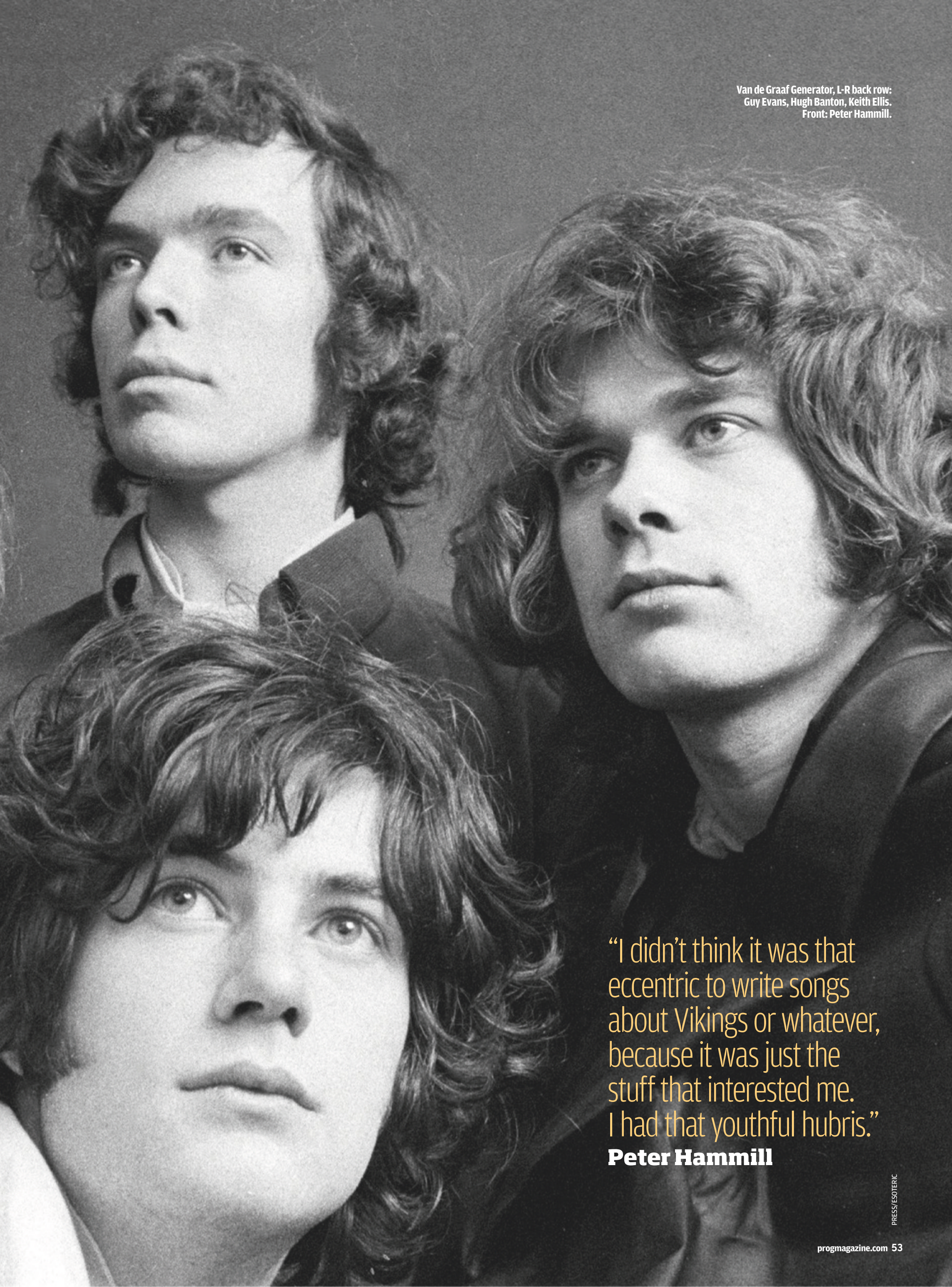
"About 30 people turned up in response to the ad," Smith tells *Prog*. "Peter was there, on the floor, playing a guitar. I staggered over to listen and it was a good song but I didn't recognise it. I asked him whose song it was and he said it was his. I said, 'Blimey, got any more like that?' [Laughs] He had 30 or 40, so I thought, 'Ah ha, this guy's good!' That was how we got talking about maybe putting a band together."

"There was a lot of fairly awful 12-bar blues jamming going, so at a certain point, Judge and I split off from everyone else," explains Hammill, "along with a biker lead guitarist who came with us, but who didn't stick around for long. At that point, Judge and I became a unit and it carried on from there. I think we both saw each other as kindred eccentrics."

"The most impressive thing we ever saw was Arthur Brown," 







Van de Graaf Generator, L-R back row:  
Guy Evans, Hugh Banton, Keith Ellis.  
Front: Peter Hammill.

“I didn’t think it was that eccentric to write songs about Vikings or whatever, because it was just the stuff that interested me. I had that youthful hubris.”

**Peter Hammill**



adds Smith. “Both Peter and I were completely knocked out by him and we were determined that if we started a band, it’d be organ-driven rather than a guitar band. And so it proved!”

With both men enthusiastically stockpiling material, a nascent Van der Graaf line-up was soon formed, now featuring organist Nick Pearne alongside Hammill on guitar and vocals and Smith on percussion. Although some of the material the trio were performing would end up on *The Aerosol Grey Machine* in one form or another, Hammill remembers this period as being noticeably weirder than anything that featured on the debut.

“The songs that ended up on *The Aerosol Grey Machine* were comparatively less far out than what Judge and I started doing,” Hammill notes. “There were various iterations of Van der Graaf in Manchester. There was the initial band period and it was already bonkers and theatrical, with flaming drumsticks and Judge

versions of *Ferret And Featherbird* and *Giant Squid* that were not present on certain original pressings of the LP), fans will also be delighted to find the band’s early demos. Performed as a duo, these primitive but intriguing first efforts were recorded as an attempt to secure a record deal. Even by 1968 standards, the songs they were penning were nowhere near middle-of-the-road, and yet the plan worked.

“HB [Hugh Banton, Van der Graaf keyboardist] had joined by this time and he had contacts,” says Hammill. “We needed to find management, so with great naivety we decided to go and record 25 of the songs we had, just in duo form, and leave it up to Hugh to sort out a career for us. We were both a bit under the weather when we did it, actually, but that’s what got us the golden ticket, which was a deal with Mercury.”

*Going To*, which was released, somewhat audaciously, by Polydor in January 1969.

“I quite liked *People You Were Going To*. I actually did something useful on that,” says Smith. “I played a slide saxophone. It’s a remarkable instrument, actually, and that does sound quite good. I was quite happy about that, but less so about the b-side, *Firebrand*. Great songs, though, both of them.”

“I was contracted to Mercury at that point, so the single was out for about a week but then the injunctions started flying,” chuckles Hammill. “So then it *wasn’t* out, and now it has certain rarity value!”

Heading swiftly back to the drawing board, Hammill and a now five-piece Van der Graaf line-up (with Smith, Banton, drummer Guy Evans and bassist Keith Ellis) started rehearsing for a forthcoming tour. During the rehearsals it became apparent that Judge Smith was increasingly surplus to requirements and that Hammill’s songwriting talents were not to be denied.

“It was a painful period.

We’d both left university and we’d been the duo and embarked on this course together,” says Hammill. “He wasn’t unemployed, but *underemployed* in the group.”

“I’d insisted on us getting a proper drummer, without really realising that if we got a proper drummer, what was I going to do?” Smith laughs. “I just wasn’t good enough a drummer for where the band was going, so they got Guy [Evans]. All I could do was shake a tambourine and sing backing vocals. I wasn’t much help on the songwriting front either, because Hammill was entering this incredibly fertile period. I thought, ‘Jump before you’re pushed!’ really.”

Pleasingly, Smith has no regrets about jumping ship at such a pivotal moment in the Van der Graaf story.

“Oh, I think I would’ve just embarrassed myself, if I’d stayed,” he sighs. “I had other things to try. I wanted my own songwriting



Chris Judge Smith, Peter Hammill and Hugh Banton. Prog uniform present and correct, we see. Jolly good.

*The Aerosol Grey Machine*, now with added goodies.



emerging from behind the kit with a latex wolf mask! After *that* packed up we did quite a few shows just as a duo, where Judge was playing percussion on typewriter and ocarina so in a way it was wilder than the way *The Aerosol Grey Machine* ended up.”

“When we were the duo, I was doing bits of percussion and some harmony vocals but not very well, I must admit,” says Smith. “It took a while to find my voice and learn to do it properly. But yeah, we played in various places. There was a club called The Magic Village and I think we supported Tyrannosaurus Rex there before they became T.Rex. Obviously Peter’s songs were wonderful, even then.”

Prog speaks to Hammill and Smith as they await the release of a deluxe, multi-disc reissue of *The Aerosol Grey Machine*, the first official Van der Graaf Generator album. Aside from a remastered version of the album (replete with

“What a wonderful time! You make a bizarre, crappy demo, you send it to a record company and they give you a contract! It was unbelievable.”

## Chris Judge Smith

“The demos are pretty frightful,” chuckles Smith. “They’re awful. I was trying to sing like Arthur Brown... big mistake! But what a wonderful time! You make a bizarre, crappy demo, you send it to a record company and they give you a contract! It was unbelievable. We just thought, ‘Yeah, of course!’”

Now on the Mercury books, Van der Graaf also secured a manager: the legendary Tony Stratton-Smith, who was alerted to the band’s existence by the classified ads manager at the *International Times*, the bible of the flourishing late-60s cultural underground. Keen to get his new charges working, Stratton-Smith arranged for them to record a single, *People You Were*

to push on, which it has done continually. Half a century later, I’m still at it. So no, I’m fine. I was delighted by the band’s success.”

As Hammill remembers it, Tony Stratton-Smith somehow managed to persuade Mercury to release him from his “absolutely horrific contract” on the condition that an album would be recorded and released under the Van der Graaf name. *The Aerosol Grey Machine* was briskly recorded at Marquee and Trident Studios in London in the first half of 1969, with producer John Anthony overseeing the sessions. Although plainly less experimental and challenging than later records, *The Aerosol Grey Machine* fizzles with



youthful exuberance and wide-eyed wonder at the possibilities of recorded sound.

“Because budgets were so tight in those days, there was a lot of responsibility on the producer to bring something in under budget and on time,” Hammill explains. “But in terms of the music, John gave us an *enormous* amount of freedom. The reason why we all became so interested in the process and pushing the boundaries in the studio was because he was encouraging us to do that.”

From woozy opener *Afterwards*, the emotionally charged *Running Back* and revered live favourite *Octopus* through to skewed instrumental *Black Smoke Yen* (which, according to Hammill, was inspired by Keith Ellis’ love of Charles Mingus) and the title track’s quirky vignette, *The Aerosol Grey Machine* has aged remarkably well, sounding more substantial and daring than a lot of the music that was emerging from the psychedelic underground at that time. Back in 1969, the band were confident that their music had staying power, even if circumstances would force them to wait for any real commercial success.

“I didn’t actually think that my songs were that eccentric,” Hammill muses. “I didn’t think it was that eccentric to write songs about Vikings or whatever, because it was just the stuff that interested me. I had that youthful hubris. You have to remember that everything appeared to be open in 1968, 1969. It appeared to be possible to take stuff from everywhere and just have a go.”

*The Aerosol Grey Machine* was released in September 1969. Inexplicably, Mercury only released the album in America, “where we had absolutely no name whatsoever,” Hammill points out. “So of course, it tanked completely!”

Nonetheless, Van der Graaf Generator had their collective foot firmly wedged in the music industry door and *The Aerosol Grey Machine* remains a suitably idiosyncratic and imaginative launching pad, right down to its distinctly psychedelia-unfriendly title.

“That came from a joke about me!” says Smith. “When I was in San Francisco in ’67, I found that I was very, very sensitive to psychedelics. At that time, there were a lot of messianic people who wanted to turn on the world, and they’d spike drinks and drop acid into sugar bowls in restaurants. I was hearing that this was going on in London as well, so I was paranoid about that. So the joke was Peter suggesting I should have some kind of aerosol mist that acted against psychedelia and greyed everything out. So I was *The Aerosol Grey Machine*!”

Within a few months of their (sort of) debut’s release, Van der Graaf Generator would complete work on *The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other*, kicking off what is generally regarded as the first classic period in the band’s history. But even though *The Aerosol Grey Machine* is more standalone oddity than anything more easily defined, it does provide a glowing and glorious summary of the many wayward steps Hammill (and Smith) took to arrive at that point.

“In a way it is the first album, because it was the culmination of that pre-history of Van der Graaf,” Hammill concludes. “I learned

**Treemendous musicians: Peter Hammill, Chris Judge Smith, Guy Evans, Keith Ellis and Hugh Banton (front).**



an incredible amount from that time. We were part of that whole underground world and it was a really broad church. That was wonderful.”

“I’m of a belief that good music doesn’t come from your brain. It comes from somewhere else,” Smith says. “We stick up an antenna and pick it up. Peter picked up magnificent tunes. He’s a clever fellow with a very interesting, poetic vision and gave them good lyrics, but it’s the *tunes*. Those tunes are just astonishing.” 🎵

*Van Der Graaf Generator: The Aerosol Grey Machine 50th Anniversary Edition* is out now via Cherry Red/Esoteric. See [www.cherryred.co.uk](http://www.cherryred.co.uk) and [www.vandergraafgenerator.co.uk](http://www.vandergraafgenerator.co.uk) for more information.





**Tesseract is always going to be the number one thing, everything revolves around Tesseract. But I've already started working on my second and third solo albums.**

A whole four years after it was created, **Daniel Tompkins'** debut album is finally being released. Self doubt and procrastination held the Tesseract frontman back, but now he's finally got the courage to spread his wings.

**Words:** Dannii Leivers **Images:** Steve Brown

# King Of His Castle





“**P**utting a record out under your own name is a statement. There comes

a lot of responsibility with that and I didn’t feel like I had enough pull or stature within the music industry.”

Four years ago, Daniel Tompkins wrote and recorded his debut solo album, *Castles*, and then put it on ice. In part, the decision was a practical one. At the time, the vocalist had only recently rejoined prog pioneers Tesseract, after quitting in 2011. The band had released their third album, *Polaris*, and headed off on a world tour. Logistically, it meant Tompkins’ solo material had to be left on the back burner, but his reluctance to release *Castles* also came from a personal place.

“Four years ago, I was still growing as an artist,” he admits. “I didn’t have a big reputation or a following. I procrastinated for a very long time, uncertain whether it was even the right decision to put a record out under my own name.”

Now *Castles* is about to make its way into the world and much has changed in the four years it’s been sat on a shelf, not least Tompkins himself. During our long conversation, the word ‘confidence’ pops up on several occasions. Certainly there’s no sign of that crippling self-doubt that plagued him back in 2015, a shift he puts down to experience and relentless work both with Tesseract and his many side projects, most notably his experimental pop outfit White Moth

Black Butterfly and synth wave band Zeta. Last year Kscope, Tesseract’s label since 2014, signed Tompkins, throwing their financial support behind *Castles*.

“I never thought I’d be in a position where I would have the backing of a label to even consider putting this record out,” he says. “I was just going to put it out on Bandcamp and self-distribute it but as soon as I realised I had the input of the label, I had money and an actual advance to put into the record. As soon as I spoke to Kscope and had the green light to go with this, my whole mindset changed. I rehashed everything. I’ve revisited pretty much the whole album and added parts, just to give it a new breath of life, because if you listen to the same thing for four years you start to question it.”

At the time of this interview, Tompkins’ official website displays a bulging discography of 15 albums, yet prior to the writing sessions for *Castles* he was in a creative desert. “I had released something stupid like 10 albums in six or seven years and I just felt drained,” he says today. “I had no inspiration. I’d sung and written about everything I wanted to and drawn on all the emotive stuff. I was numb.” His inspiration came in the form of US producer Eddie Head, the rhythm and lead guitarist in metal band Haji’s Kitchen, with whom Tompkins had worked a few years before. The pair began jamming out ideas over Skype and online, Head in the US and Tompkins in his home studio in Nottingham, eventually writing the eight songs that made up the main body of *Castles*. Tompkins is no stranger to making music remotely — that’s the way Tesseract have recorded all of their albums, but working with Head, he found something different in the familiar.

“In the past I’ve always been given music to write to, with Eddie we worked the opposite way,” he explains. “We created the vocal and then added the music and sound palette around it, with Tesseract it’s always been the opposite way. I asked Acle [Kahney, Tesseract lead guitarist and producer, who also mastered *Castles*] to do a remix of one of the tracks. I gave him just a vocal and said, ‘Try writing music around this and see what happens’ and he came up with the remix of [first single] *Saved*. Hopefully that might inspire a new writing direction for Tesseract!”

Kahney was just one of the individuals who was asked to provide a remix for the final version of *Castles*. “I was going to put out the eight tracks, but then when I signed to Kscope there was a conversation about having more songs,” says Tompkins. “But

Daniel says putting himself in the hands of a stylist was “liberating”.



because the album was so old I didn't feel like me writing extra songs would work. That's where the idea came from to invite friends to remix some tracks." To flesh out the album's track list, Tompkins roped in several of his peers to produce remixes of the original tracks he'd recorded with Head, including Zeta's Paul Ortiz, producer Dmitry Stepanov and White Moth Black Butterfly's Randy Slauch, the man also responsible for adding sublime orchestration to work by Tesseract, Periphery and Devin Townsend.

The result is a record that explores many tangents and myriad visions while pushing past the boundaries of progressive rock. Tesseract fans might pine for the synapse-frying poly-riffs of Tompkins' day job, but *Castles* is held together by a dark, electronic backbone where choppy glitches and warped bass hiss and bubble, recalling work by Björk, Massive Attack, Nine Inch Nails and even dubstep. Naturally up front and centre, Tompkins' silky voice is the star of the show, an almost angelic anchor amongst the digital soundscapes. "I know it's not what my core audience necessarily want to listen to," he admits. "They want to hear heavy music, but this is what I want to do. I love pop music and pop vocals; really well-produced contemporary vocals, and I feel confident in my own voice now. I'm happy to put it on a pedestal, let people listen to all the nuances and the detail."

*Castles'* dislocated textures and sparse pianos provides a fitting backdrop to examine the natural turbulence of human interaction, tapping into some of Tompkins' own experiences. "I've always been in a very stable relationship," he says. "But being an ex-police officer and a high-risk domestic violence specialist, I also dealt with the serious end of failing relationships. I wanted to take a step back and tap into someone else's troubles as opposed to my own thorns." Tompkins joined the police force aged just 18, but quit to join Tesseract full time in 2009. The impact on his salary was immediate and severe, and throughout his career Tompkins has spoken candidly about the realities and strains that leaving the force to go full time in the music industry has brought upon his personal relationships, eventually leading him to leave Tesseract in 2011.

"I've been through some really difficult times with [my wife]," he admits. "I'm 36 and we've been together for 20 years. We've been on the verge of separating but we've built a life together and grown stronger through all those struggles. The pulsating synths on *Castles* represent the passion in relationships. 'Dark',

'electronic', 'deep' and 'passionate' were the key words we drew on, the symbolism of finding victorious love. It is possible to find because I've found it myself. It pains me that people are so flippant about love these days. There are so many people who change their relationships like they're upgrading their phone."

What's overwhelmingly apparent is that *Castles* has brought Tompkins an autonomy and independence he's never experienced before, even with his own side projects. "The first White Moth Black Butterfly album [in 2013] was intended to be my solo project. But I started to include other songwriters and other producers and it grew into something much bigger," he says. "I lost creative control. I've never seen a project from start to finish where I've had full control over the sound vocal production, the image... [*Castles*] is all about the visual, all about how creative I can be, and I've treated it as an opportunity to redesign myself."

**I never thought I'd be in a position where I would have the backing of a label to even consider putting this record out. I was just going to put it out on Bandcamp and self-distribute it.**

The most telling sign of this artistic rebirth can be seen in the exotic press shots that accompany the album, which show Tompkins resplendent in fierce feathers, spiked jewellery and black makeup. "I know it looks a little Zoolander but I really enjoyed that process, it was so liberating," he says. "I met with a stylist and photographer and I just said, 'I want you to treat me as an open book.' Putting yourself out there wearing a feathered headdress brings with it a lot of prejudice. I had so many mixed comments about those visuals but it was a real talking point, so exciting and it's inspired me."

To accompany the album, Tompkins also shot a couple of music videos for singles *Saved* and *Limitless*, in several locations across Wisconsin, Milwaukee, accompanied by a full film crew, his first time making a video alone. The short for *Limitless* feels especially bold, the kind of video a proper pop artist would make, with a full narrative that required him to push himself out of his comfort zone.

"Acting's not my forte but when I filmed that video I had to go to some deep emotional place," he laughs. "The whole album explores the arc of relationships but *Limitless* explores the theme of loneliness and desperation. I've been together with my wife for 20 years, I've built a family and a home and I tried to put myself in the shoes of people who must feel absolutely devastated [when a relationship ends]. I think I've grown just by doing that one video. I didn't know if I could do it, it was a risk. But I think I pulled it off. There's a moment in a church scene where the tears you can see are real, I'm actually crying. I was looking up at the cross and feeling this immense sense of vulnerability."

Given where Tompkins was four years ago, both professionally and personally, it's great to see him not only looking forward to the future but relishing the challenges to come. "Tesseract is always going to be the number one thing, everything revolves around Tesseract," he assures us. "But

I've already started working on my second and third [solo] albums and I'm thinking of working with a producer in the same room from start to finish. That will be another first for me; I've always shied away from working with producers. When you come from grassroots rock and metal I think there's an expectation for you to write and produce your own music, but you can create some awesome work you'd have never created by yourself."

As we come to the end of our conversation, it seems to dawn on Tompkins just how far he's come and how much he's changed since he first wrote the songs on *Castles*. "Over the years being an artist has grown me as a person," he muses. "I'm so confident now because I'm a performer, because of music, because I'm a singer. That's where I found my confidence – through music." 

*Castles* is out now via Kscope.  
See [www.danieltompkinsvocalist.com](http://www.danieltompkinsvocalist.com) for more information.



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“I met the  
Airbag guys  
at high school;  
we all wore  
Pink Floyd  
shirts on the  
first day which  
pretty much  
sealed our  
friendship!”





There are no chips on Bjørn Riis' shoulder – his music is not autobiographical.

# A Gentle Storm

Guitarist and vocalist **Bjørn Riis**' fourth solo recording tackles the troubles of modern relationships. But is there another storm brewing in the Airbag camp, too?

**Words:** Natasha Scharf **Images:** Anne-Marie Forker

**B**jørn Riis' passion for Pink Floyd shines through his work both as a solo artist and with Airbag, the band he helped form in 2004. So it comes as a surprise to learn that his biggest influence is actually a theatrical hard rock band.

"When I was eight years old, I would stand in front of the mirror with a Flying V that my teacher had helped me carve from wood, and my face made up like [Kiss singer] Paul Stanley's," confesses the Norwegian musician. "I grew up in the 80s so I did all the hair metal, and Kiss were one of the first bands I got into. Their message of doing what you believe in has always been a huge influence on me and I'm probably a bigger Kiss fan now than I've ever been."

*Prog* gasps and Riis quickly adds with a chuckle, "But I don't think you can hear them in my music!"

It's a warm and sunny day in Oslo when *Prog* catches up with Airbag's leader at the band's windowless rehearsal studio. He comes across as happy and relaxed – "I'm looking forward to going out in the garden with a cold beer later!" he says – even if such clemency seems at odds with his tempestuous latest offering, *A Storm Is Coming*.

Where Riis' 2014 solo debut, *Lullabies In A Car Crash*, earned him further comparisons to Pink Floyd and Marillion, his fourth recording takes him back to his heavier roots with elements of Deep Purple and Black Sabbath. Riis even admits he used the latter's *Vol 4* as a production template for this album's stripped-back style. *A Storm Is Coming* combines those hard edges with tender touches that build on the Porcupine Tree-esque soundscapes from last year's mini-album, *Coming Home*. There's further inspiration from

Archive and Tim Bowness as the guitarist explores the difficulties of human relationships with a little rhythmic help from drummer and Airbag bandmate Henrik Bergan Fossum.

"I've always been fascinated by human emotions and human psychology; what makes people fail in their relationships and in their lives, or at least feel that they're failing," says Riis. "There's always an emotion behind my music and people always ask me if I'm feeling okay or if I need help, but it's not autobiographical. I work as a musical teacher in a kindergarten and I ride the subway every day and see all kinds of people; they're happy, sad, arguing, yelling at their kids, and you start to wonder why they're doing that."

"I've tried to write both a musical and lyrical narrative using the storm as a metaphor. I think everyone can relate to that feeling of something bad about to happen; it can be pretty frightening but there's always a sense of calmness afterwards. Musically, there are quiet passages that go into something heavier to create the same kind of contrast."

These stylistic variations were born from the guitarist's desire to experiment with details he wouldn't normally merge into Airbag's atmospheric sounds. Opener *When Rain Falls* and the 15-minute *Stormwatch* are prime examples of his approach. Both balance their satisfying heaviness with a lighter feel; the punchy former clearing the way to a jazzy second half, and the brooding latter complemented by keys from OAK's Simen Valldal Johannessen, and Mimmi Tamba's (from Bowie's *Lazarus* musical) stunning vocals. Elsewhere, the soaring *Icarus* reaches new heights as Riis switches between a melodic acoustic and grungy electric guitar, with additional bass from Wobbler's Kristian Hultgren.





"I didn't get a guitar until I was about 13 or 14 and borrowed an acoustic from a friend so I think I must have been about 20 when I first started playing electric," he admits. "I discovered Pink Floyd in the early 90s, which was a huge turning point for me, and that led me to wanting to play guitar. I was at an age when music was starting to mean something more and I found comfort in music. I met the Airbag guys at high school; we all wore Pink Floyd shirts on the first day which pretty much sealed our friendship! I remember sitting in my friend's home, listening to his old vinyl of Pink Floyd on his huge hi-fi system, night after night. Not just *The Dark Side Of The Moon* but also the older stuff: *Meddle*, *Atom Heart Mother*, *Obscured By Clouds*, and later on *Animals*, which is now one of my favourite albums. It was a very magical period for me and I have some really memorable experiences from that time. We all went to see Pink Floyd play at Valle Hovin Stadium here in Oslo on their 1994 [The Division Bell] tour and straight after that we decided to start a band. That's pretty much when I got my first electric guitar. I believe that's part of Airbag's strength: we have a bond not just as musicians but we also discovered music together."

friends since high school but we'd never had *that* talk; everything came very naturally to us so now we've had to sit down and have the talk, and figure out where we want to take the band in the next five or 10 years."

Although Riis dismisses any suggestions that his solo career might now be eclipsing Airbag, *Prog* can't help but wonder if he ever thought Airbag were finished and he'd be better off focusing on his solo work.

"No, not really," he says almost immediately. "Airbag has always been mainly me writing the songs so I knew if I wanted to keep the band alive, it would stay alive. We had a fairly long pause and it was a case of either starting to work on an Airbag album or me recording a new solo album. I don't want to sit around waiting for the other guys and I realised that it would be faster for me to make a solo album. I enjoy working on my solo stuff; it's been great fun and very challenging working on my own and I can definitely see myself making another solo album. I've also learned a great deal which I think will enhance Airbag."

Airbag's new album is due in 2020. It's too soon to discuss the music, but Riis does reveal one small detail with a big laugh: "I wouldn't dare bring any Sabbath riffs to Airbag!"

**"There's always an emotion behind my music and people always ask me if I'm feeling okay or if I need help, but it's not autobiographical."**

All this talk of bonding does raise the question of what is going on in the Airbag camp? The band's last studio album, *Disconnected* came out in 2016, during which time the five-piece shrunk down to a trio. It was a difficult period, especially given the band's shared history, yet the personnel changes afforded the opportunity not just for Riis to develop his own solo career, but also for the remaining members to look towards the future. Although it might appear that the band have been on hiatus, behind the scenes there's been a great deal of activity. Not only have they been working on new material, but earlier this year, Riis, Fossum and vocalist/guitarist Asle Tostrup regrouped for three shows, including their second *Close To The Edge* cruise where they debuted a new song with the working title of *War*.

"It was great fun to play that live. I think we needed to come out and have that experience to get psyched about the progress ahead," says Riis. "[Losing keyboard player Jørgen Hagen and original bassist Anders Hovden] forced us to sit back and figure out where we wanted to go. We've been

With a handful of solo shows and a lot of studio sessions already scheduled this year, there's little danger of the guitarist getting bored. Just as the crepuscular rays of the post-rock-infused *Epilogue* close *A Storm Is Coming* with a feeling of optimism, it's clear there are no clouds obscuring Riis' future. 

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*A Storm Is Coming* is out now via *Karisma*. See [www.bjornriis.com](http://www.bjornriis.com) for more information.

**Riis is content working alone, but is far from finished with Airbag.**



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Out 07.06.2019



# That Time Of The Night

Thenighttimeproject,  
L-R: Mattias Norrman,  
Alexander Backlund,  
Fredrik Norrman,  
Jonas Sköld.



From tour burnout to line-up upheavals, it's been a turbulent journey for prog supergroup **Thenighttimeproject**, that features ex members of Katatonia. But with their dark and melancholic second album, things seem to be falling into place.

**Words:** Matt Mills

**I**n 2010, Fredrik and Mattias Norrman should have been feeling at the apex of their career. The two brothers were, respectively, the guitarist and bassist for the Swedish masters of melancholy, Katatonia, who were then experiencing critical and commercial success with their 2009 album *Night Is The New Day*.

Instead, the increasing number of heads that they were turning and the escalating demand to tour and promote began to prove too much. So as the 2000s became the 2010s, they stepped away, leaving a group that had defined their lives for a decade.

"It all just got too intense for them," remembers Alexander Backlund, the singer for the Norrmans' new aural venture, Thenighttimeproject.

"They both decided to leave and, at that time, Fredrik had a lot of material that he'd been building up: songs that he wanted to use. That was the basis for Thenighttimeproject."

Norrman formed Thenighttimeproject almost immediately after his career-upheaving

exit from Katatonia. Armed with his collection of self-penned songs — originally intended to be used for his now-former band — he gathered up In Mourning frontman, and decades-long friend, Tobias Netzell and Mandylon drummer Nicklas Hjertton.

Musically, these three musicians could not have been more different. While Norrman emanated from a background of bleak, nihilistic prog, Netzell was a connoisseur of pummelling death metal and Hjertton spent most of his time with emo-tinged alternative rock. However, Thenighttimeproject was able to act as a middle ground for the trio, exploring a softer but no less emotive side of their differing tastes. Their sound is best likened to a fusion of The Dear Hunter and latter-day Opeth: it gives gothic rock'n'roll overtones a more melodic edge, daring to be catchy while also exploring new, dark pathways.

"It was a matter of just putting ideas on the table," Backlund says of Thenighttimeproject's earliest days, before he was a member. "Fredrik wasn't Katatonia's main songwriter, so maybe that's another reason why he wanted to do this project: to follow his own ideas." 

I have so much creative freedom with this band that I want to push it as far as it will go.







Thenighttimeproject:  
a band for all (pale) seasons.

Due to Norrman's exhaustion after spending so much time on the road with Katatonia, he initially wanted to limit the band to the studio, never to tour. The power trio first began recording together in autumn 2015, expanding their guitarist's original ideas into a full-blown, self-titled album, which saw the light of day the following January.

When it arrived to kickstart 2016 with the most deliciously morose soundtrack possible, *Thenighttimeproject* was met with rave reviews. Its compromise between metal, rock and prog made it beloved underground – but this success was short-lived. Although Thenighttimeproject attempted to capitalise upon their rising stardom by releasing a stand-alone single, *The Anti-Meridian*, in 2017, the rocket strapped to their backs soon began to veer off-course.

Seven years after the three-piece line-up first came together, Netzell and Hjertton quit the band – a move hauntingly similar to the Norrman brothers' exit from Katatonia, which sparked Thenighttimeproject's very existence to begin with. Just as his homemade triumvirate were beginning to get into their own prolific swing, Norrman was suddenly and unceremoniously dumped right back to where he started.

"They were a three-piece, originally, and then 66 per cent of the band just left," says Backlund. "Nicklas and Tobias, they were just getting to that age where they each had, like, 50 kids. I imagine that most people would've called it quits at that point, but Fredrik has this weird energy about him... and he's stubborn."

During that period of Thenighttimeproject's internal strife – which left their very future in question – Backlund was a full-time music producer with a band of his own, called Letters From The Colony, for whom he sings and plays guitar. He first met Norrman in January 2017, after the guitarist hired him to produce the *Anti-Meridian* single and made use of his recording studio, Nailvillage.

"We both live in a pretty small community called Borlänge, in Sweden," he explains, "so a lot of the bands there share members."

As a result, the pairing between Backlund and Norrman felt like a natural destination for

Thenighttimeproject. Backlund was familiar with the group's work ethic and had formed a fast friendship with the project's leader since their stint recording together. Backlund officially joined Norrman's reinvigorated band that summer, along with Mattias, who was returning to his brother's side as a bassist. Backlund's Letters From The Colony bandmate, drummer Jonas Sköld, completed Thenighttimeproject's rejuvenation, but – despite having new cohorts at his side – Norrman's morale was at rock bottom.

“

Fredrik wasn't the main songwriter in Katatonia, so maybe that's another reason why he really wanted to do this new project: to follow his own ideas.

”

Backlund remembers, "Fredrik was very hard to read, emotionally. I can't tell you exactly how he felt, but his ambition to move forward was really low. He had two songs that were finished and he just wanted to record and release those as an EP. I don't think that he was actually that super confident about the new material after the old members left.

"It was basically a matter of me and Jonas pushing him to make an album," he continues. "We made him use his other, really good demos and it actually got him really excited; that's what started our journey."

At that time, Backlund and Sköld were hot off of making Letters From The Colony's debut, *Vignette*: a Meshuggah-style effort in

extreme, polyrhythmic metal. Still feeling bitten by the creative bug, Backlund was keen to explore new soundscapes and try softer, more subtle methodology.

"I think that part of the reason this band even exists is that a lot of metal musicians have ideas with a softer side," he ponders. "I listen to all sorts of music, not necessarily just metal, so we have this outlet in the form of Thenighttimeproject where we can try out some softer stuff. Otherwise, you'd end up with more bands like Bring Me The Horizon, who just do a total 180, genre-wise."

Bolstered by Backlund and Sköld's joint enthusiasm, the band returned to Nailvillage in 2018 to record their second album, *Pale Season*. With a title referring to the "less-colourful patches of memory" and "the years that fly by without anything exciting happening", this follow-up is a continuation of the band's melancholic stylistics. It's a nine-song existential crisis that ebbs and flows from the gorgeous melodies of *Binary*, to the grungy riffs of *Embers*, to *Signals In The Sky*'s ominous ambience. A re-recorded rendition of *Anti-Meridian* soars to greater heights than ever before, with Backlund's operatic vocal delivery

only amplifying the heartbreak.

*Pale Season* is an untouchable serving of audial gloom that is among the upper echelon of prog in 2019. With any luck, this second album will be the springboard to success that Thenighttimeproject's debut should have been. And, already, things seem much more promising than before, with Backlund revealing that plans are already underway for the band to tour as soon as they can.

"Fredrik has four kids now, so he wants any excuse he can find to get away," he laughs. "And, even though I have Letters From The Colony, I want to keep working on this band. It's such an important part of my musical expression. I have so much creative freedom with this band that I want to push it as far as it will go." 🎵

*Pale Season* is out on June 28 via Debemur Morti. See [www.facebook.com/Thenighttimeproject](http://www.facebook.com/Thenighttimeproject) for more information.





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# Black Mountain

Their musical roots may be in punk, but these Canadian psych rockers create concept albums, take influence from Yes and Storm Thorgerson and love a long song. So now we have to ask:

**How prog are Black Mountain? Words: Rob Hughes**

**N**othing screams prog like a great concept album. Black Mountain's approach is a little different, however. Rather than weighty narratives or complex song cycles, the Canadian space rockers' latest album is a fast-moving hymn to the exhilarating freedom of the open road. Named after a vintage 80s muscle car, *Destroyer* came about after singer/guitarist Stephen McBean got a driving licence.

"It definitely had a fair amount of influence on the songs and the recording," says the LA-based McBean, who finally took to the wheel a couple of years ago, aged 48. "When you're making records there are different ways of taking yourself out of the process and analysing the songs. I used to do things like sit on a park bench, get really stoned and listen to a Walkman. But for this one it was a case of getting into the car, putting in a rough mix and driving around to see how it sounded. It led to me rediscovering a lot of music, rekindling my love for things like classic rock and metal."

**“One of my friends gave me *The Wall* when it came out. I was already familiar with *Money* and a lot of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, which was all over FM radio, so there was definitely a lot of prog that entered my consciousness back then.”**

**Destroyer. Not to be confused with the Kiss album.**



*Destroyer* is a tearaway, for sure. There are tankfuls of wild biker rock and stoner metal, and choking riffs that burn like wheels on tarmac. But the album has way more to it than simply a need for speed. There is the kind of tetchy psychedelia and discursive prog folk that have been Black Mountain trademarks since the band began in 2004. Synths bubble, time signatures shift. There are nods to Hawkwind, Peter Hammill and – most explicitly – Yes, on *Closer To The Edge*.

Above all, there's a liberating sense of exploration and wonder. "I've always bounced all over the place, trying to dig into different things," McBean explains. "It could be listening to early Cure or Nico, Slayer or Fairport Convention. That's the beauty of music. I can never quite say what form a Black Mountain record might take, because we have a pretty wide scope. It could be a synth record, it could be folk, it could be heavy metal. And something will put the Black Mountain stamp on it when it feels right. There's definitely something ominous and epic about our records."

While it may be pushing it to call Black Mountain a prog band, many of the requisite elements are in place. Fluid tempos aside, you'll find extended jams, cosmic musings, bold experiments and sci-fi songtitles. The band's album covers, designed by keyboardist Jeremy Schmidt, echo the striking visuals of the 70s. The sleeve of 2008's *In The Future*, Black Mountain's second long-player, was directly inspired by the work of Storm Thorgerson, co-founder of art collective Hipgnosis. "Hipgnosis is one of Jeremy's big influences," says McBean. "There's definitely an epic quality to those pieces, and a vagueness and mysteriousness – sometimes taking the mundane and mixing it up. That era is definitely a big influence on the art and is a very important part of any Black Mountain record as a whole."

The loose motoring theme of *Destroyer* serves as a link to McBean's first musical experiences back home in Canada. "I discovered music, essentially, by sitting in the back seat of my parents' car in the heyday of FM radio," he says. "My mum would go grocery shopping and I'd just stay in the parking lot and listen to the radio. For me, discovering music was pretty much an escape from school and the whole pressures of growing up."



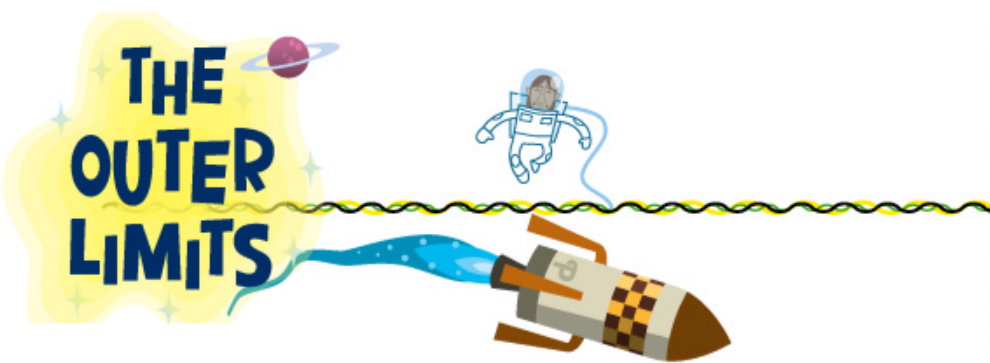
Ice work if you can get it. Black Mountain today, L-R: Jeremy Schmidt, Rachel Fannan, Steve McBean, Arjan Miranda, Adam Bulgasem.



The way they were, clockwise from front left:  
Steve McBean, Matt Camirand, Jeremy  
Schmidt, Joshua Wells, Amber Webber.







PRESS/BLACK MOUNTAIN

The young McBean initially savoured the sounds of classic rock, before developing more eclectic tastes: “One of my next loves after Kiss — and probably because I was living in Ontario — was Rush. It was in the heyday of *Hemispheres* and *A Farewell To Kings*, so I was hearing that stuff when I was probably about eight or nine. Then one of my friends gave me [Pink Floyd’s] *The Wall* when it came out. I was already familiar with *Money* and a lot of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, which was all over FM radio, so there was definitely a lot of prog that entered my consciousness back then.”

He began on the thriving hardcore punk scene in Victoria, on the southern edge of Vancouver Island. Taking their name from a mental ward in an episode of *Woody Woodpecker*, McBean formed Jerk Ward in 1981. The band eventually evolved into Mission Of Christ, after which he relocated to Vancouver to try his luck with another outfit, Gus. Issued in 1995, the title of their sole album couldn’t have been more prog: *The Progressive Science Of Breeding Idiots For A Dumber Society*.

McBean believes that his particular grounding in punk shaped his outlier worldview. “Growing up on an island in my teenage years, the punk and metal scenes were very diverse,” he recalls. “NoMeansNo were the godfathers of that scene, so there were a lot of bands from Victoria who did really weird, angular time-signature punk. Or just had a slightly skewed sense of humour, whether it was politically or personally. Maybe it was because they were outside of the big city influence.”

This, in turn, led to McBean going through what he calls a “post-punk prog phase.” He encountered the sounds of Magma, Captain Beefheart and Peter Gabriel. Then he found a whole new library of possibilities in the underground music that emerged from early-70s Germany: “I’d heard the obvious ones like Kraftwerk, but I remember hearing *Vitamin C* by Can

“Who forgot the bucket and spade?!”

2016’s *IV*, after which Joshua Wells and Amber Webber left the band.



PRESS/BLACK MOUNTAIN/OLIVIA JAFFE

When “musical differences” get out of hand...



EDD WESTMACOTT/PHOTOSHOT/GETTY IMAGES

**Black Mountain performing live at Glastonbury Festival, June 29, 2008.**

2008’s *In The Future*, with Jeremy Schmidt’s cover art inspired by Storm Thorgerson.



in my late 20s. It was that thing where I’d remembered hearing that song as a teenager round at somebody’s house. The same goes with stuff like Brian Eno’s *Needle In The Camel’s Eye*. Those memories are all tied in, so a lot of those songs are subliminally imprinted on my mind.”

Another key influence came from further afield. “In my early 20s the Boredoms came out and then there was an explosion of Japanese freak-rock that led back to some pretty strange stuff,” he says. Perhaps none stranger than Flower Travellin’ Band, the legendary prog psych ensemble who delivered cult 70s classics like *Satori* and *Made In Japan*. Odder still, their most lucrative international market proved to be Canada. The band’s

impact on Black Mountain can be heard, most strikingly, on *In The Future*’s epic *Tyrants*.

Black Mountain began as a song. Then fronting Jerk With A Bomb, alongside drummer Joshua Wells, it was one of a number of demos that McBean laid down in 2003. By 2004, they’d begun using the name on stage and had expanded to a quintet. One of their signature pieces was *Bright Lights*, a mammoth jam that eventually made its studio bow on *In The Future*. In many ways, it came to represent the Black Mountain aesthetic — an intoxicating mixture of disciplined melody and anything-goes noise.

“The first half of that song was always pretty structured, but the second half really came out of playing it live a lot and striking out,” McBean offers. “I was obsessed with trying to find out how to stretch out songs at that time. When things are rolling and you’re in tune with the audience, you can really drift in and out of time. It’s fun and perhaps also a little tongue-in-cheek in the sheer pompousness of having an 18-minute song. There’s a lot of humour in Black Mountain. It may be masked in dour seriousness, but it’s definitely there.”

Indeed. Even at their most streamlined, charging forward in





**“I’ve always bounced all over the place, trying to dig into different things. It could be listening to early Cure or Nico, Slayer or Fairport Convention. That’s the beauty of music.”**

a rush of head-nodding grooves, Black Mountain are conscious of avoiding any rock’n’roll stereotypes. “It’s nice to dabble close to the clichés though,” laughs McBean. “The other day I was rediscovering Peter Hammill’s divorce record, *Over* [1977]. It’s tragically horrendous in its way, but at the same time it’s so great. So we’re definitely skirting along the lines of bad taste or pompousness. Calling the new record *Destroyer* was definitely a part of that. Jeremy and I were riffing one-word titles back and forth via text messages. There were hundreds — some that were pretty good and some that were downright awful — but we knew the feeling we wanted. There were ones that were so close, like ‘Mutilator’ or ‘Re-animator’, then ‘Destroyer’ popped

its head. It was so obvious and kind of arrogant, but we both agreed it was too good not to use. We thought that some people would get a laugh out of it, while others would be like, ‘What? You can’t use the same name as the most famous Kiss record!’”

McBean doesn’t enjoy being idle. Aside from the five studio albums with Black Mountain, he’s recorded another four as Pink Mountaintops, a repository for experimental pop and electro-rock, aided (at one time or another) by various guests from bands like Godspeed You! Black Emperor and The Black Angels. In 2014, he unveiled a hardcore metal project, Obliterations. Schmidt, meanwhile, recently provided the soundtrack to ‘lost’ 80s sci-fi film *Beyond The Black Rainbow*, under his alias as Sinoia Caves. Schmidt’s score is evidence of more prog-related inspiration, reaching back into the cosmic synthscapes of Tangerine Dream, John Carpenter and Wendy Carlos.

The duo’s return to Black Mountain coincided with a shake-up in band personnel prior to *Destroyer*. Following the release of its predecessor, 2016’s *IV*, longtime members Joshua Wells and Amber Webber chose to concentrate on their side project, Lightning Dust. The new Black Mountain line-up now includes various associates of Flaming Lips, Oneida and Sleepy Sun. The result, says McBean, is that the band feel like it’s now come full circle.

“*Destroyer* was made in a similar way to the first Black Mountain record, in that the band was formed as the record was being made,” he states. “After Joshua and Amber left, there was a brief moment of sadness. Jeremy and I had a quick huddle and decided that neither of us wanted to pack it in. The journey of actually continuing was a lot more difficult, but we figured that the best way to do it was to start making a record and not plan whether it would be Black Mountain or Pink Mountaintops or something new. So we invited friends over and jammed some new songs. Some of the stuff came out a little heavier or stranger and it became pretty obvious, the more it went on, that this was going to be a new Black Mountain record. We weren’t trying to mimic the old line-up. This band will always be about creating something different. That’s what makes it interesting.” 

*Destroyer* is out now via Dine Alone. See [www.blackmountainarmy.com](http://www.blackmountainarmy.com) for more information.

## YOUR SHOUT!

It’s a big and varied sound from Black Mountain. But is it prog?

“Superb band. Virtuosity and heaviosity in equal measure. Yes, they are fundamentally progressive, and they are the bee’s knees. The new album dropping is a source of huge excitement for me.”

**Edward Monk**

“One of my favourite bands bar none. Stoner, psych, prog, etc... Call it what you want. Essential listening for a prog fan.”

**Mark Dahm**

“*In The Future* is a great record – probably more psychedelic/stoner than prog as such. If you’re a fan of 60s stuff like Jefferson Airplane and Iron Butterfly, or more recent bands like Queens Of The Stone Age and Crippled Black Phoenix, this album is like a perfect combination of both.”

**Andy Morton**

“They are definitely prog. If in doubt, just listen to *Space To Bakersfield*.”

**John Herdman**

“They definitely have progressive tendencies and lean more towards heavy psych and stoner rock, awesome music!”

**Charles Moss**

“We’re big fans and totally Goblin meets Hawkwind as well.”

**Matt Stevens**

“*Space To Bakersville*, as trippy as hell. Looking forward to the new album, evolving over time into a very enjoyable listen.”

**Richard Simmons**

“Excellent band!!”

**Dave McClelland**

“Never heard of them.”

**Tim Fain**

“Awesome band! Even better live!!”

**Jason Cordero**

“Black Mountain have been my favourite band for about 10 years now, I’ve seen them twice so far. Fuzzy, ear-splitting accuracy. I can’t believe how hard they can rock at such slow tempos. Their drummers can hold it down.”

**Brian Davis**

“I’d never heard of them until just now – they are fuckin’ awesome.”

**Christopher Cappadozzi**

“Psych/stoner with a twist of prog, some tracks more proggy than others, and a bit of power pop too. *IV* is a great album with a couple of ‘must-have’ killer tracks. Excellent live on stage, too. Must admit though, the little bit I’ve heard so far from the new album hasn’t excited me, but I will get it none-the-less, as it is sure to grow on me.”

**Rod Fletcher**

“Who?”

**Laurie Loughland**

“Oh yeah, I remember black moonshine.”

**John Stannard**

“Saw them on tour with Ruby The Hatchet a while back. Great show!”

**Vinaya Saksena**





# DRAGON LINES:

THE  
CURIOUS  
STORY  
OF THE  
THIRD  
EAR  
BAND





Third Ear Band in 1969,  
L-R: Paul Minns, Glen  
Sweeney, Richard Coff.

RAY STEVENSON/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Myths, magick and *Macbeth*: Prog looks back over the captivating career of the **Third Ear Band**.

**Words:** Malcolm Dome

**W**hen the legend becomes fact, print the legend.

So goes the saying. In the case of the Third Ear Band, this is very much the case: surely there are few other prog bands with such a miasma of myths circulating them. Is it true they took their name from an obsessed fan who carried around Van Gogh's severed ear in a bag? Is it true that the bandmembers were heavily involved in alchemy practices and were pagan worshippers? Is it true they became an acoustic-oriented band because all their equipment got stolen? And is it true that Glen Sweeney, regarded as the band's main wellspring of creativity, fought in the Second World War?

"That last one wouldn't surprise me," laughs Peter Jenner,

change to the Hydrogen Jukebox led to the recording of a somewhat avant-garde live album, with Sweeney using a pair of amplified scissors not only for percussive effect, but also to clip the dress from his girlfriend onstage. It was during this brief period that the band's equipment got stolen, and they morphed into the Third Ear Band, an acoustic collective who took inspiration from all parts of the global musical village.

At the core of the Third Ear Band were Sweeney (tablas), Paul Minns (oboe), Richard Coff (viola) and Mel Davis (cello) — sadly, all are now dead. One of the first signings to Harvest, their aforementioned first album was a remarkably uninhibited artistic melange.

"The guys never stuck to any rules," recalls Jenner. "They took risks in a way that was highly

**"They took risks in a way that was highly progressive. I loved them for it. In some ways, what they were doing was pioneering what we'd call world music today."**

**Peter Jenner**

who produced *Alchemy*, the band's debut album in 1969. Jenner was one of the principles in Blackhill Enterprises, who took on the Third Ear Band for management in the late 60s.

"I was a hippy and so were they," he explains. "They were a groovy underground band, and not at all pop. That was enough for me! Although I get a credit for producing *Alchemy*, all I really did was sit there and let them get on with it. They improvised a lot, which I loved. I never interfered."

The Third Ear band had their roots in the famed UFO club in Central London. There were free-form musical sessions developed every night in the mid-60s, and from these came The Giant Sun Trolley, before they released music as the National-Balkan Ensemble in 1968. A further name

progressive. I loved them for it. In some ways, what they were doing was pioneering what we'd call world music today."

Celtic, raga, Chinese, Indian and Native American daubs abound throughout *Alchemy*. And there were rumours the band were actively involved in mysticism. But guitarist Denim 'Denny' Bridges, who joined in 1970, has his own views on this.

"I believe Glen was very knowledgeable about the subject. But he was certainly also prepared to use it to get interest in the band. If he felt that using alchemy and magick imagery would get us attention, then he would exploit this side as much as possible."

By the time Bridges joined, the band had released their self-titled second album in 1970, and had also recorded the soundtrack 



for a TV production of *Abelard And Heloise* the same year. They'd also gained a significant profile from appearing on the bill for three of the celebrated free concerts in Hyde Park, which happened in 1969/70, organised by Blackhill Enterprises. The Third Ear Band played at events headlined by Blind Faith, the Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd; they also played the Isle Of Wight Festival in 1969.

"We thought it would help their profile," explains Jenner. "So we put them in as the opening act. Nobody seemed to mind them being on the bill, and one of the legends that came out from these festivals was that the Third Ear Band inspired good weather. Because whenever they came onstage it was sunny. Mind you, this was the summer time, so maybe you'd expect fine weather anyway! But having a reputation for bringing such a positive vibe didn't do them any harm."

"I was at the Blind Faith show," adds Bridges, "so I knew who they were when I joined. I answered an advert in *Melody Maker* and went to their rehearsal place in Balham, South London. The fact I had a double-neck guitar probably put me ahead of the field for the job. They wanted to move away from the medieval style they'd been known for and become more electric. I did find their use of improvisation intriguing, but the way they outlined the new musical direction was rather inspiring."

The band's next project was to prove fascinating, yet also sow the seeds for them splitting up: they were commissioned by Roman Polanski to create the music for his adaptation of *Macbeth*.

"I have no clue how we got this," admits Bridges. "Polanski wanted the kind of music that the Third Ear Band were known for performing. It fitted the way he was going to interpret Shakespeare. He allowed us free rein. Everything we did had to be run past him, and there were some pieces he rejected, but for the most part we got on with things the way he wanted."

Some of the music was prepared in advance.

"We came up with two pieces, which were to be used for dances," says Bridges. "Now, because the dancers had to have the music before they could come up with the choreography, it was necessary that we send over the music without seeing anything visual in advance. But on the rest of the movie, what happened was that



Third Ear Band supporting Blind Faith at their free concert in Hyde Park, June 7, 1969.

MICK GOLD/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



RAY STEVENSON/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Richard Coff, Glen Sweeney, Ursula Smith and Paul Minns at Isle Of Wight, August 1969.

**"Keith Chegwin did the vocals for *Fleance*, which is on the album. But that's because he sang this in the film. He was an actor who was part of the cast, and certainly was not in the Third Ear Band at any point."**  
**Denny Bridges**

we'd play along to footage that was sent over. We always had vague structures and frameworks for the tracks. These could be based on a rhythm, and then we'd effectively improvise around this skeleton and build something up that made sense according to what was on the screen. It was certainly a challenge, but one I feel we rose to meet."

The film came out in 1971, with the soundtrack coming out the following year. Since then, it has been claimed that children's TV presenter Keith Chegwin was in the band for these recordings. Bridges puts this into a proper context.

"It's true that he did the vocals for *Fleance*, which is on the album. But that's because he sang this in the film. He was an actor who was part of the cast, and certainly was not in the Third Ear Band at any point."

What the *Macbeth* soundtrack did was reinforce the band's acoustic outlook at a time when they were hoping to move away from this. Bridges accepts this led to the band's demise soon after the album was released.

"In reality the band disintegrated. At the time, Paul Buckmaster and I shared rooms on the road. He played the cello and bass, but was starting to earn a reputation as an arranger, which is the area in which he would end up building such a successful career. He'd sit in the back of the van while we were travelling to and from gigs working on this stuff. Eventually he decided to leave and concentrate on this side of things.

"Now, Paul and I were very likeminded in wanting to get





At London's Roundhouse, after the first Harvest artists showcase on May 30, 1969.

PRESS/CHERRY RED RECORDS

away from the whole medieval sound for which the band had been known. But *Macbeth* dragged us back into that environment, even though I'd been brought in because they were keen to go electric. So, when he quit, I felt I should follow suit. There were also a lot of political issues going on, and the band didn't so much come to an end as fall apart."

"The reason for the split was quite simple," insists Andrew King, who managed the band for Blackhill, and also produced *Third Ear Band* and *Macbeth*. "They couldn't make enough money."

Just before it all came to a halt, the Third Ear band did begin work on a new album.

"We did go into the studio to record some electric tracks, and this was for a planned fourth album," says Bridges. "But then Harvest decided not to keep us on the roster; I think we had a three album deal, and this had run out with *Macbeth*. So, those tracks were kept in the record company's vault for decades. Obviously losing the deal hastened the end for the band as well."

Some of these seemingly lost recordings have now surfaced as bonus tracks on the reissue of the *Macbeth* album as part of Cherry Red's series of reissues.

Bridges does remember that during his two-year period with Third Ear Band they were active on the live front.

"We must've only done about 30 gigs during that time. But the band did get some significant dates. For instance, we were asked to open for Centipede, the massive jazz/progressive ensemble led by Keith Tippett, in Paris and it didn't get much bigger than that. We also did a number of shows supporting Pink Floyd around England. In terms of getting high-profile opportunities, we did well when it came to tours."

While the band did return during the late 80s, it was those few years in the late 60s and early 70s for which they are rightly celebrated. But there are still those mysteries mentioned at the start of this feature that have to be resolved. For instance, did Sweeney actually fight in World War II?

"Well, he was old enough," laughs King. "And I believed him when he said he was involved."

"It wouldn't surprise me if he did," adds Bridges. "We were all in our early 20s back then, whereas Glen was so much older. But a lot of the stories out there about him were actually spread by Glen himself. He was great at

self-promotion. Whether it's true or not you could never be sure.

"He was also excellent at spreading confusion. There are loads of songs out there that all have the same title. You also have tracks which have multiple titles depending on where they come from. You never quite know what you are listening to. But that was typical of Glen – he loved keeping things mysterious, especially when it came to the truth about himself."

One story about Sweeney suggests that he spent much of the Second World War being pampered by six rich Egyptian ladies in a Cairo mansion...

"It's the sort of existence Glen would fantasise about leading," admits King. "And it might well be true. But none of us would have any idea whether he was making it up or not. He was such an entertaining character, though, and very much the band leader."

All of which leaves the truth behind the origin of the band name. Did it come from an obsessed fan who stalked them and carried that Van Gogh ear in a bag? Or, maybe it came from the title of a novel by German-American author Curt Siodmak, which has also been intimated.

Well, we can rule out the latter, because Siodmak's book came out in 1971, *after* the band had adopted their name. Bridges, though, feels the truth is a little more prosaic.

"I never heard that tale about the Van Gogh ear. But I think the origin of the name came from the idea of the third eye. And since this was talking about music, it made sense to use the 'ear' instead of the 'eye'. I know that's boring, but when you delve behind the stories Glen loved to spread, you normally find the facts aren't as flamboyant as he liked to make them out."

The recent reissues of those Third Ear Band albums highlight that, even now, no one sounds quite as bonkers, eclectic and free-thinking as this lot.

"People always talk about the Third Ear Band as if they were so obscure," concludes King. "But they were more successful than most on the Harvest label and sold a lot of records." ☺



From top: albums *Alchemy*, *Third Ear Band* and *Music From Macbeth*.

*Third Ear Band: Music From Macbeth, Remastered & Expanded Edition* is out now via Esoteric/Cherry Red. See [www.cherryred.co.uk](http://www.cherryred.co.uk) and [www.ghettotraga.blogspot.com](http://www.ghettotraga.blogspot.com) for more information.



# Man vs Myth

John Arch with Fates Warning was prog metal's greatest might-have-been moment, but when the chance came to perform and record again would he test himself, or settle for living with the legend? *Prog* finds out what brought the **Arch/Matheos** project into being after all these years...

**Words:** Matt Parker  
**Images:** Mark Cubbedge

John Arch (left) and Jim Matheos:  
making up for lost time.



**I**t can't be easy being John Arch. His short-but-sweet period with Fates Warning positioned him as progressive metal's ultimate could-have-been contender. The US group's first vocalist and co-writer had an astonishingly wide-range and seemingly ever-developing power, but left the band in 1987 after the release of the tantalising fan favourite *Awaken The Guardian*. A year on, his former bandmates, led by guitarist Jim Matheos, would recruit replacement Ray Alder

and go on to release their breakthrough record *No Exit*, cementing their place alongside Dream Theater and Queensrÿche as part of progressive metal's founding trinity.

Matheos stayed in touch with his former collaborator, but Arch never toured again and instead busied himself with life in the real world – as a partner, a father, an employee. Music became a hobby, and the frontman in him took a backseat. In the eyes of the fans, however, John Arch's light was never fully dulled. Across the intervening decades, the rumour of this lost talent sacrificed at the altar of band politics continued to spread and the Arch myth was made. Then, in 2015, the vocalist got a call from Matheos: how would he feel about reuniting with the group's 1986 line-up for two shows celebrating *Awaken The Guardian*'s 30th anniversary?

"Immediately, it's a panic attack within me," recalls Arch of that first conversation. "I'm saying to myself, 'Okay, this is stuff that I sang and wrote in my early 20s and it was hard back then, so here I am, kind of an old man, and I'm going to step on stage again...'"

But I really knew it was something that had to

be done. I definitely owed it to the fans, their support has been humbling, so I kind of said, 'Okay,' and then a day later I got a phone call from Jim saying, 'Oh, by the way, we're going to shoot a live DVD for both shows.' I'm like, 'Oh, nice. I like the way you did that!'"

"Saying that touring is not something that John likes to do now is an understatement," adds Matheos. "It's not something where he just says, 'Well they're going to get what they get.' He really loses a lot of sleep about these things, so I felt bad for him. He puts a lot of pressure on himself. But that's one of the things that I admire about him and why I like working with him, because I know that I'm going to get that result."

The collaboration had been rekindled before: on 2003 EP, *A Twist Of Fate*, and the first Arch/Matheos release, 2011's *Sympathetic Resonance*, where Arch collaborated on tracks originally intended for Fates Warning. Both evidenced a vocal still in-tact, but the live shows were a significant challenge.

"It was a huge undertaking for him, physically, just to get his voice in shape again," emphasises Matheos. "He hadn't done any dates at all of that size since the mid-80s, then he'd kind of had this whole thing built up around of him of God status. So there's that added pressure. He wanted to be able to sing what he put down on those records so long ago. But he's also got this myth built-up about him – and he'd got to live up to that as well."

A year of prep came before the ...*Guardian* shows, yet they passed in the blink of an eye.

"In my eyes, I am never prepared, no matter how much I rehearse, no matter how hard I try," says Arch. "But I committed to it, and before you know it, there I was, standing on stage, and the lights came up, and I was like, 'Oh shit, here we go.' Then the first note hits, and there's no turning back at that point."

It's not hand-to-hand combat, but it's hard to think of a more potent fight or flight scenario for someone in the vocalist's position – the gamble of a lifetime's id and ego for a few nights' entertainment.

"It was a lot of weight," acknowledges Arch. "But then you see the lights on the fans, and you

**"You know you're at a point in your life where you're getting older and that if you're going to do something you better hop on it."**  
**John Arch**



realise they are not that hyper-critical person that you are. They are already pumped, and they're loving the music and it's like a sea of warmth that comes over you."

The shows were regarded as a triumph: emphatically cementing the mythology around Arch's vocal ability. His voice — a Bruce Dickinson-type with a writer's ear for melodic intricacy — is not just age-defying but sits among the finest in prog metal. Even digging through the usually caustic YouTube commentary on live footage, the feedback is overwhelmingly positive: "the Shakespeare of metal vocalists", "what Fates Warning should have been", "Jeez fkn christ! John Arch just gave me chills" etc.

It is easy to over-romanticise the fulfilling of this mythology and it should not undermine the significant and underrated

all that preparation done and the good energy still coursing through their veins, thoughts started to turn to a reprisal of that Arch/Matheos moniker and a new record.

"John's got this really strange dichotomy of being this really grounded person who has a job and a family, and at the same time, this artist's temperament," reflects Matheos. "Which is 180 degrees different from that. He has to have both those living in his head and I can see that duel thing going on all the time. But I think this time, having a taste of being in a band again got him inspired."

"Inherently," clarifies Arch. "You know you're at a point in your life where you're getting older and that if you're going to do something you better hop on it."

The resulting record, *Winter Ethereal*, may take fans by surprise — tipping the hat to the

are great, just like that' and convinced me to leave them in there. That's what I like about working with him. He pushes me outside my comfort zone."

"It ended up being where he does the majority of the leads on this album," continues Arch. "In the end, I did compliment him on his lead work, because I thought it was well deserved. The very ending of *Kindred Spirits*, for instance, he does a David Gilmour type of lead, but it's just so melodic, it's so theatrical, and it's so fitting. I thought it was beautiful."

*Winter Ethereal* is a fitting tribute to a relationship that, against the odds, has endured for 37 years. Did either party picture the duo making music together after so long?

"Yeah, truthfully, probably not," admits Arch. "And that's my own inner working [to blame] because, to be honest, my biggest



Never mind what could've been, the guys are loving working together again.

**"John's got this really strange dichotomy of being this really grounded person who has a job and a family, and at the same time, this artist's temperament."**

**Jim Matheos**

accomplishments of Fates Warning's own creative evolution, yet the catharsis for both fans and band was palpable. The first few years after Arch's departure from the group had been "a little rough", says Matheos, "but I think that can never really be a smooth transition." Fortunately, time — particularly time away — is a great healer.

"We got older and we reassessed," summarises Arch. "I'm not the type of person to hold grudges, because life is hard enough as it is. I was always behind them, I was never jealous, and I always wished them the best of luck. Then, sooner or later, we moved on, to become friends, and eventually began working together again."

The shows were thus a tipping point — an important public acknowledgement, but with

blend of Yes and Maiden that so inspired the genre's first-wavers, with a hard-hitting contemporary production that powers it away from cliché. *Wanderlust* stacks a Dio-esque vocal jaunt over a thunderous and addictive harmony riff, while *Never In Your Hands* bounces with pep. Ultimately, both musicians sound invigorated — believing enough in their strengths as writers and performers to spar without pulling punches. The impact on both is palpable, not least in Matheos' lead playing, much of which is first or second take stuff — and very out of character for the meticulous craftsman.

"Never to this point have I thought of leaving those," admits Matheos. "I always have someone else do a lead or I meticulously go back later, but Arch kept telling me, 'These

fear was fear itself, of having the confidence in myself, and coming back. [If anything] I wish I'd the courage a little bit earlier to get in front of the mic again, because it's been nothing but rewarding since then. It just goes to show sometimes even at my age, you can still accomplish things and you can still do your best."

Matheos perhaps summarises it best: "I put it all down to the fact that I don't know how to do anything else," he reflects with characteristic clarity. "Ultimately, it's fun to be able to do what you love but, sometimes, it's not the easiest thing." 📀

*Winter Ethereal* is out now via Metal Blade. See [www.facebook.com/archmatheos](http://www.facebook.com/archmatheos) for more information.



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# HEAVEN ON HIS MIND

Fresh from his band's latest epic *The Great Adventure*, **Neal Morse** is back - this time with a mammoth prog rock musical based on the story of Jesus. It has been in gestation since 2008, so do good things come to those who wait? *Prog* finds out more...

**Words:** Chris Cope **Images:** Joel Barrios

**T**here's only one person who can write a near-two hour prog rock opera double album about the story of Jesus and get away with it, and that person is Neal Morse.

Twenty-five songs, myriad guest musicians and a multitude of genres, *Jesus Christ: The Exorcist* is either a zap of divine inspiration or just the latest piece of prolificacy from the ever-busy mind of the former Spock's Beard man.

Regardless of which side of the theological fence you may sit on, the rock opera is pretty much what you would expect - Broadway splendour intersected with moments of gung-ho prog adventurism, with plenty of Biblical messages slathered over the top.

"In the same way with a lot of the concept albums that I've written, it started off with a suggestion somewhere," Morse says down the line from his home in Nashville, cheerful and chirpy.

No, not a suggestion from the Heavens above, but perhaps the next best thing - multi-instrumentalist friend and music business man Michael Caplan.

"He and his friend had been listening to *Jesus Christ Superstar* one night," Morse explains. "He called me up the next day as they had said to each other, 'Man, somebody should do a new thing like this - not an updated version, but

a new rock opera based on the gospels.' Michael leaped out of his chair and said, 'I've got the guy!'"

That was back in 2008, though, with the first draft - written by Morse in around six weeks - sitting in the wilderness for years after labels and producers decided against taking the plunge.

"Michael had some bites from some producers but it never happened, and

**"Whether it's  
a simple song with  
three chords or  
a really elaborate  
epic piece, it's all  
miraculous to me."**

I moved on to do some other things, like Transatlantic's *The Whirlwind*, Flying Colors and more Neal Morse and Neal Morse Band albums," he continues. "I guess I kind of just put it on the shelf and waited for God to open a door. The really interesting thing that happened was we decided to put it on at Morsefest 2018 to play it live. The reason why we did that was because [long-time collaborator]

Neal Morse: superstar.









Mike Portnoy was busy with Sons Of Apollo all year, so my wife and I were trying to think of what we could do that year that we wouldn't need Mike for. When I thought about the Jesus musical I got really excited because I love it so much."

After the gig was locked into the schedule, Morse started to rewrite and hone the draft, chopping the length down from two and a half hours, and it was during this time that the record secured a deal.

Featuring guests such as Spock's Beard's Ted Leonard and Nick D'Virgilio alongside Morse's usual bandmembers like bassist Randy George and Eric Gillette on drums, the finished album is a melting pot of original demos tracked back in 2008 and a smattering of re-records.

Like with the majority of Morse's solo work, though, you don't need to be a believer to have your heart and head galvanised by the music.

The 10-minute *Jesus' Temptation* is near-vintage Neal Morse, juggling key-driven, souped-up prog rock with masterful melody, while *Judas' Death* launches with a flurry of demonic notes. The other side of the coin is the made-for-stage theatrics, with *Free At Last*, for instance, fit for a Disney love scene.

*Jesus Christ: The Exorcist* could seem like a midlife crisis detour for many, but for Morse it feels right, and part of his path. It was in the early 2000s when he infamously left Spock's Beard and supergroup Transatlantic to devote his energy to Christianity, channelling God's inspiration for solo music.

His journey started when he moved to Nashville and began attending the church his wife had been raised in, but it wasn't until some first-hand experiences that he decided to dive into religion headfirst.

"I was in my 30s, and I have to say really what changed me was having this actual experience of the presence of God," Morse says. "I'd never experienced anything like what was happening in that little Christian church. It began to draw me, I wanted more so I began to go more and more.

"My daughter was born with a heart condition and she was healed after the church prayed for her, and that really changed my heart, too. It made me start thinking that maybe God was good, instead of really being bitter at God, which was what I had been for most of my life. I just began to change and experience him in miraculous ways, and he began to answer prayers of mine. So I eventually gave my life to him, in the name of Jesus."

It is pretty clear Morse has not looked back since finding himself at those crossroads. Concept album *Testimony*, released in 2003 after his

conversion, outlined his transition to Christianity, and it has been a steady stream of acclaimed prog records and worship music ever since.

But his departure as a founding member of Spock's Beard and Transatlantic, leaving two groups behind at perhaps the height of their prowess, raised eyebrows in sections of the prog community, and it still continues to follow him like a shadow years later.

Morse admits that he had pangs of doubt throughout the whole process of going solo, and although he has since worked again with the two groups, it still seems to prick at his mind.

"It was one thing to pray about whether we should buy this new house, or the direction for our family, but this was a big deal," he says, with some amount of sincerity.

"This was going to affect a lot of people. Quitting the bands was a big deal – that was our livelihood. How are we going to pay the rent, what's going to happen with the band, the audiences, the record companies? There was a lot at stake.

"I was miserable. It was rough and I was questioning it all the time. I fasted for days, and I didn't get any more of an answer than I already had, which was 'trust me'. I wanted to know more than that. But he showed me things. He let me know. He let me know I was on the right path in ways that are maybe difficult to define.

"It was one of the biggest things that's ever happened to me, or that I've ever done. I testify about it a lot at church, because it was my Garden of Gethsemane moment. It was like I was giving it all up. I didn't know that he was going to give me the *Testimony* album – that was months later. I was just giving it all up and fully surrendering and it's been just absolutely incredible in every way. He's taken such good care of my family

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**"I guess I kind of just put it on the shelf and waited for God to open a door."**

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– we've never had to worry about money really. And he's blessed me abundantly creatively above all I could ever imagine."

Morse was born in 1960 and grew up in Los Angeles with a choir director and music teacher father, who would tutor his children – aged as young as four – on how to sing harmonies. You



can tell, with lush, multi-layered vocal textures an intrinsic part of Morse's sound alongside a studious grasp of dynamics and songwriting.

In his teenage years the musician spent a lot of time "getting stoned and listening to progressive rock albums", with Yes, Jethro Tull and Emerson, Lake & Palmer among the LPs getting spins. It was the former, meanwhile, that truly opened his eyes to prog.

"When I saw Yes I felt like they incorporated everything I loved about music into one thing," he recalls, mind strolling back to the 70s. "I saw them play live when I was 12, opening up for Black Sabbath in Los Angeles, and they really changed my mind. I was raised with all this classical music and some jazz, and I loved the power of rock and I felt like Yes particularly embodied everything that I loved about music."

During our interview Morse receives a message from Flying Colors singer Casey McPherson. They are in the





middle of writing lyrics for the prog supergroup's third album — "It's really fun, man" — in the rare moments of downtime the musician has from his solo work.

And he is somehow not too busy to also be considering returning to work again with Transatlantic, whose last album, *Kaleidoscope*, was released over five years ago. "We're talking about it," Morse subtly says, like holding a close-guarded secret. "We are in discussions, but nothing's nailed down yet."

It is clear Morse still has many fingers still in many pies, and he has hopes of touring *Jesus Christ: The Exorcist* around the world, for a week in different locations like England, Germany and New York. "I think you need probably around 20 people to pull it off," he admits. "You need six musicians and six singers at least, and that would be the bare bones. But it's really going to depend on whether it finds an audience."

**As the saying almost goes, Jesus' light is so bright, Morse has gotta wear shades.**

**Jesus Christ: The Exorcist: you don't need to be a believer to enjoy it, honest.**



The album is being released mere months after the Neal Morse Band's latest epic, *The Great Adventure*, which he also toured around the world in the spring. 2018, meanwhile, was just as busy.

Whether he is an enviously talented workaholic or divinely inspired is a discussion for another day, but you get a feeling the mammoth *Jesus Christ: The Exorcist* is just par for the course for the prolific Morse. But with so much output, does he ever worry his inspiration might run dry?

"I used to, but I don't really any more," he says. "I get concerned sometimes if I feel like maybe we're shortchanging something, like if I feel we're in too much of a hurry and we're not really giving the piece of music the attention that it deserves. There's a tendency that I have to just want to finish things. I think it's a strength, but it can be a problem, too. That's something that I get cautious about

— I really have to stop and pray and say, 'Hey, don't be in such a hurry. Let's make sure this is right'.

"I hope I don't ever dry up. To me, every moment of creation is a miracle. Every time I just sit down and play something and go 'that's cool', and I sing something over it, and then I'll think of a lyric for it, or something will sort of drop into my mind when I'm in the car, or when I'm swimming with my grandkids. These random times these things will just drop into my mind, and then somehow it will come back to me when I'm writing and fall into place in a real miraculous way. Whether it's a simple song with three chords or a really elaborate epic piece, it's all miraculous to me. I'm amazed with God and I'm amazed with the whole process. To me, it's still kind of magical." 

*Jesus Christ: The Exorcist* is released on June 14 via Frontiers Music. See [www.nealmorse.com](http://www.nealmorse.com) for more info.



"I think we're a little bit like  
Rush, in their musicality  
and treating each other  
with respect."

**Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen**





Jazz rock or rock jazz?  
**Hedvig Mollestad Trio** don't  
care, they just want to  
make a connection...

**Words:** Joe Banks  
**Images:** Julia Marie Naglestad

If you're a fan of boundary-pushing, genre-shredding music (and as a reader of *Prog*, that goes without saying), then you can't have failed to notice the astonishing stream of bands that Norway has produced over the past 10 years, many of them released by the Rune Grammofon label. Initially spearheaded by norsk rock stalwarts Motorpsycho, and quickly followed by the likes of Bushman's Revenge, Elephant9, Fire! and Krokofant, a loosely affiliated scene has developed that mixes jazz, prog, metal and psychedelia to create a new type of challenging but accessible avant-rock.

Yet as the promo blurb for their latest album says, it could very well be Hedvig Mollestad Trio that ultimately define this scene. *Smells Funny* is their fifth album in eight years, and quite possibly their best yet. Consisting of Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen on guitar, Ellen Brekken on bass and Ivar Loe Bjørnstad on

However, there's still plenty of room for improvisation. Talking down the phone from Oslo, Mollestad and Brekken gleefully recall the spontaneous recording of the album's final track, *Lucidness*, a pounding avalanche of noise out of which Mollestad's guitar spirals upwards towards the light. "I was eyeballing Ivar thinking, 'What the fuck is he going to do?'" she says. "I was ready to do something nimble, but then just threw it away!" adds Brekken, who audibly dives into the maelstrom despite her bass dropping out of the mix halfway through. "When I took off my headphones, Hedvig said, 'I think this is the take!'"

One of the defining elements of the Trio's music is this contrast between technical precision and a looser, more exploratory vibe. For example, Brekken might play a complex run that Mollestad weaves around like fire, while Bjørnstad lays down a beat that both drives and swings. This sense of dynamic

# Come Smell The Band

drums, the music they make is a deliriously exciting mash-up of 70s-style hard rock and jazz, monolithic riffing combined with lithe instrumental interplay. Imagine Black Sabbath jamming with Mahavishnu Orchestra while Robert Fripp looks on approvingly. If you haven't investigated them before, now is a very good time to do so.

The Trio see themselves primarily as a live band, but *Smells Funny* does a good job of capturing their on stage energy and musical telepathy. The secret is being well-prepared, as Mollestad explains: "We work really hard before we go in the studio. We build these pieces of music and then turn them inside out. We try them in different meters and with different dynamics or tempos. We even change the tunings and the keys to make them sound right. Even so, they change when we record in the studio, because our attitude changes. We're pushed more there. So yes, we're a live band, but we need the studio to make new material, because we get tired of playing the old stuff!"

tension is immediately apparent on the album's opening salvo of tracks, *Beastie*, *Beastie's* crunching homage to the Beastie Boys' *Sabotage* and the King Crimson-esque powertrain of *First Thing To Pop Is The Eye*.

"It's fun to play *Beastie*, *Beastie* in unison as a riff, with Ellen playing bass the same way as the guitar, with pull-offs on the e-string hard on the beat," says Mollestad. "But with *First Thing To Pop...*, there are so many notes in the bottom end with the bass and drums, I have to work with sounds rather than play anything tricky or metric, that would be too much! We like to work with different layers in the music."

The Trio operate as a purely instrumental band, but *Prog* wonders if any of their material is inspired by specific concepts or reflects what's happening in the world? "Some songs start as an idea, I have a feeling of what it's going to be about," says Mollestad. "On [second album] *All Of Them Witches*, there's a song called *Code Of Hammurabi*, which is about the witches being burnt. I really tried to visualise that, get in the mood about the

Being in a band  
really is the pits.



"If gender is important in performing arts, why aren't guys asked what it's like to be a man playing music? Guys can go through a lifetime of being a musicians, and treated as artists, without having this gender thing. But it's hard for us to avoid it."

## Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen

seriousness of it, and draw a line to those souls who are treated the same way today."

Brekken says, "On *Black Stabat Mater* [2016], we had one political idea behind all the titles." Mollestad continues, "There were a lot of refugees coming to Norway at the time, and the government didn't know how to handle it. They were afraid there were going to be too many, so they didn't have very open arms. They gathered the refugees at night in buses and sent them across the border to Russia. The weather forecast was minus 40 degrees. *Approaching* and *On Arrival* try to make sense of how that feels, and *Somebody Else Should Be On That Bus* [refers to] our Minister of Integration at the time."

The current album's title is a reference to Frank Zappa's quote, "Jazz isn't dead. It just smells funny." "We wanted to find a title that was striking, but not pretentious," says Mollestad. "It's not about jazz dying, because it's absolutely still alive, but it's something else from what it used to be." Brekken adds, "Though we don't really care about this discussion. People try to label us, jazz with rock or rock with jazz, but this is just something that smells funny, it's a mix of so much different stuff."

The Trio first met and started playing together at the Norwegian Academy Of Music in Oslo, having all previously studied music as part of Norway's 'folk high school' gap year system

(a possible reason why the country produces so many talented young bands). Mollestad's father was a jazz musician, and she took up guitar from the age of 10; Brekken played tuba in a marching band before discovering AC/DC and her uncle's Fender Precision bass; and Bjørnstad's upbringing was evidently arts-focused too, his sisters Ingebjørg and Marit being a singer and dancer respectively.

Brekken describes the Trio as a particularly close-knit group: "I don't think I know anybody better than Hedvig and Ivar other than my mum and dad! When we haven't been together for a while, I feel kind of naked... I think our egos are pretty well-balanced as a trio." Mollestad agrees: "Three people are easier to manage, because there's always a majority. I think we're a little bit like Rush, in their musicality and treating each other with respect. We try to be rock stars, but we aren't! We don't succeed, but we're friends!"

One topic that tries their patience though is the media's focus on the Trio as being two-thirds female. "It's very misleading to

talk about gender when you talk about music, because it suggests that females have these certain kinds of qualities, which obviously we don't," says Mollestad. "If gender is important in performing arts, why aren't guys asked what it's like to be a man playing music? Guys can go through a lifetime of being a musicians, and treated as artists, without having this gender thing. But it's hard for us to avoid it."

The Trio's profile is growing both locally and internationally, with regular live work as both headliner and support act. When they last played in the UK in 2014, it was at the Royal Festival Hall opening for their hero, John McLaughlin – "with balconies and people sitting down, you know?" remembers Mollestad. The good news is that the Trio are touring Europe this September and hope to play at least one date in London.

While their gigs have traditionally been split between rock clubs and more sedate jazz venues, they definitely have a preference for the former. Says Brekken: "People have to be standing up, so you can touch them with your hands and make a connection."

Mollestad adds: "The best thing is to be able to smell the audience!" "And they have to smell us as well," says Brekken, "and we usually smell quite bad!" 🐕

*Smells Funny* is out now  
via Rune Grammofon.

See [www.facebook.com/HedvigMollestadTrio](http://www.facebook.com/HedvigMollestadTrio)  
for more information.

Hedvig Mollestad Trio, L-R:  
Ellen Brekken, Hedvig Mollestad  
Thomassen, Ivar Loe Bjørnstad.





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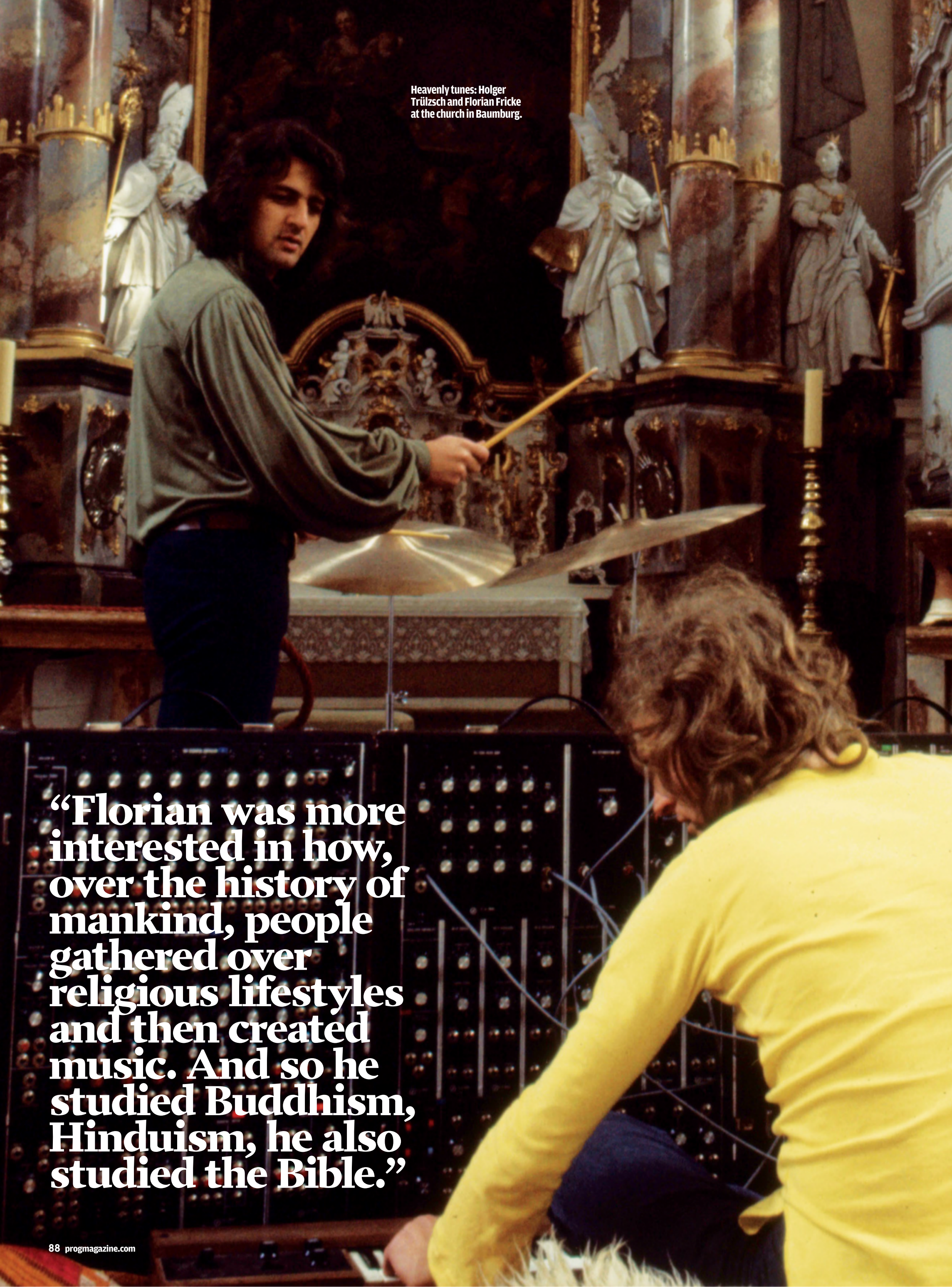
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Heavenly tunes: Holger Trülsch and Florian Fricke at the church in Baumburg.

**“Florian was more interested in how, over the history of mankind, people gathered over religious lifestyles and then created music. And so he studied Buddhism, Hinduism, he also studied the Bible.”**



# The Song Of Songs

Enigmatic krautrock pioneers **Popol Vuh** continue to intrigue 50 years on from their inception. *Prog* lifts the lid on their enthralling career...

**Words:** Mike Barnes **Images:** Edition Popo Vuh/BMG

Of all the groups active in Germany in the so-called 'krautrock' scene of the late 60s into the 70s, Popol Vuh were the most mysterious and enigmatic. With their exploration of the transcendental in electronic and acoustic music they had little overlap with rock, and stylistically found themselves set apart from their peers. The group's founder and sole constant member, keyboard player Florian Fricke, was musically active until his death in 2001, but he had rarely been interviewed for the UK music press and many releases flew under the radar.

But now BMG are beginning a reissue campaign with *The Essential Album Collection Vol. 1* on CD and vinyl box sets, remastered by Frank Fiedler from the original line-up and latterday Popol Vuh member Guido Hieronymus.

An image had formed around Fricke of a shadowy, almost hieratic figure, inhabiting a rarefied creative space in which he made his avowedly spiritual music, while also contributing soundtracks to films by the German film director Werner Herzog.

Fiedler remembers him rather differently:

"Florian was a very good worker — he could see a whole project through to a good end. He was a family man, too. He liked to cook, he liked to go to restaurants, drink wine and be in good company, laughing and relaxing. And when he had money he was very generous."

In 1969 Fiedler was a student at the Berlin Film Academy and was hired by a young woman from Munich as a cameraman for a portrait of the film director Pasolini. He went to her apartment in Munich where Fricke was also a guest.

"I met him more and more, and we started to get into deeper discussions as to what is going on in the world," says Fiedler. "We both read the *Popol Vuh*, the book of the K'iche' Indians [of Guatemala, which includes the Mayan creation myth]. The title was hanging in the air, and so the project's name became Popol Vuh."

Born in 1945 in Kiel on the north German coast, Fiedler recalls that as he and his young peers reached maturity they rebelled against the older generation, who they saw as being stuck within narrow ways of thinking.

"We had longer hair and smoked hashish," he says, laughing. He also recalls the liberating effect of 60s rock and pop music, particularly from England, and the thrill of seeing Jimi Hendrix play at the Star Club in Kiel. "We grew up with this evolution of rock music and a rich and colourful hippie movement," he says. "It was, in many ways, a desperate cry for freedom, certainly here in this country after all the humiliation of wartime."

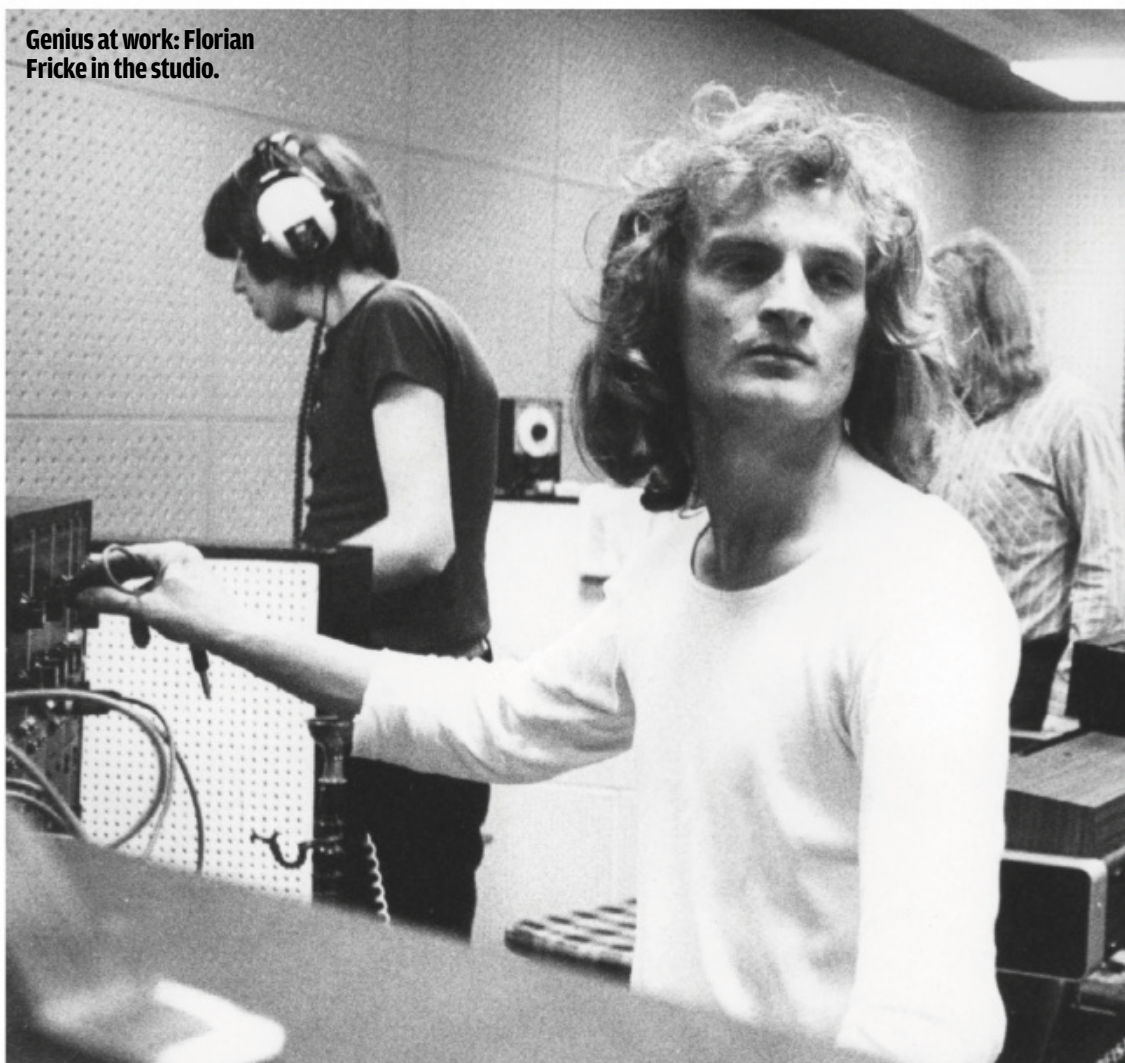
Fricke had studied piano at Munich Music High School. "It was his intention to go beyond what the pop music was offering," says Fiedler. "What Florian did was a kind of a crossover between timeless classics and the new freedom of pop, rock and jazz."

To add to the newness of his music, Fricke had acquired a Moog III and began working with Fiedler in autumn





Genius at work: Florian Fricke in the studio.



1969 on Popol Vuh's debut, *Affenstunde*, which was released in 1970 and named after a chapter in the Popol Vuh about the rise of humankind. Much of Side One was recorded on a two-track Revox reel-to-reel in a farmhouse near Miesbach in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, which belonged to the family of Fricke's wife, Bettina.

The credits for the album are Fricke on Moog, Holger Trülzsch on percussion and Fiedler on 'Synthesiser mixdown'. So what exactly was his role?

"Every good artist needs a counterweight," says Fiedler. "Florian was the instrumentalist and responsible for composition, but he worked more out of his intuition in terms of getting the sounds from those four black boxes that were in front of him, and I helped him because it was so complex. I did the filtering mostly. You couldn't programme that machine, you had to move the control knobs and put the modules together with cables."

Popol Vuh's Moog music didn't sound like anyone else's – it had a strange eerie tone and there was an undulating, serpentine flow to the melodies pitched somewhere between signalling and singing, its rhythmic complexity



*Affenstunde*, Popol Vuh's first album.

*Einsjäger Und Siebenjäger* album, which was recorded in Baumburg Church.



Popol Vuh, 1974, L-R: Djong Yun, Florian Fricke, Daniel Fichelscher.



enhanced by the use of a sequencer and echo and delay during mixdown sessions.

"It was Florian's idea for a soprano voice [effect] and to get the filtering to take it away from a hard electronic sound, to get more of a human sound. I mean, you could do things with a Moog III that really were painful. That was a problem with that machine, you had to filter to get the sound he envisaged out of it."

Fiedler feels that on the title track of *In Den Gärten Pharaos* (1971), "We really got that sound to the peak." Side Two of the album is a colossal church organ piece, *Vuh*, which Fricke recorded in a former monastery church in Baumburg, Bavaria.

Fricke guested playing Moog on Tangerine Dream's 1972 album, *Zeit*, but Popol Vuh's next album, *Hosianna Mantra* (1972) featured a predominantly acoustic chamber ensemble of piano, guitar, oboe, tamboura and a real soprano, Korean singer Djong Yan. In situations like these, when Fiedler's technical expertise was not needed, he would continue his career as a film cameraman.

*Hosianna Mantra* is full of melody, with a radiant sound like light shining through stained glass. It also demonstrated that even in the group's more expansive moments, Fricke was beginning to strive towards a clarity of expression.

Fricke has described his own creative process thus:

"The path to creation is like walking on a small path. It begins without intention, purposeless, yet a goal arises. I say yes and approach the goal. I forget it again, but the goal starts to be more and more alive in me and I move steadily towards it, to receive it. It is me, who is moving. This is my collaboration, my devotion, which fills my person totally with an undivided attention. And I feel the power within, focused on the goal. This is the path to a small path."

Popol Vuh evoked similar atmospheres on *Seligpreisung* (1973) – the first album featuring guitarist and drummer Danny Fichelscher with Djong Yun singing lyrics derived from the Gospel of Matthew, also recorded in the church in Baumburg – and on *Einsjäger Und Siebenjäger* (1974).

The implications of the different religious elements in the title 'Hosianna Mantra' has prompted some to claim that Fricke converted to both Christianity and Hinduism.

"No..." says Fiedler, clearly surprised at the idea. "Fricke never converted to any religion. He was Protestant from his family, but his idea was not to worship from a religious background. He was more interested in how, over the history of mankind, people gathered over religious lifestyles and then created music. And so he studied Buddhism, Hinduism, he also studied the Bible, but he took the Martin Buber translation in Hebrew, which is much more direct and powerful than our German translation of the Latin Bible."

But Popol Vuh's music does seem religious at times.

"Yes, it seems..." Fiedler replies. "But if you also take the movie music, you get another picture of Florian's intentions."

Two of the soundtrack albums that Popol Vuh made for Herzog that are included in the current box set are *Aguirre* (1975) and *Nosferatu* (1978). The former is characterised by Fricke's use of the instrument he called the "choir organ", a Mellotron-like device that utilised taped recordings of voices. Its unearthly sound contributes to the unforgettable opening sequence of *Aguirre: Wrath Of God*, in which hundreds of conquistadors snake down a steep mountain pass. There are a number of variations on this opening theme, some with percussion and some with pulsing Moog, and although the album is padded out with some earlier outtakes and a lengthy, eerie Moog piece *Vergegenwärtigung*, none of which are used in the film, it's still a coherent collection.

*Nosferatu* features the ghostly ritual chorales of *On The Way*, which Herzog used in the film to chilling effect. Again, the album is a mix of previously released and new recordings, haunting folk-like and Eastern-sounding pieces



Bettina von Waldthausen,  
Frank Fiedler and Florian  
Fricke in 1971.

“We grew up with this evolution of rock music  
and a rich and colourful hippie movement.  
It was, in many ways, a desperate cry for  
freedom, certainly here in this country after all  
the humiliation of wartime.”



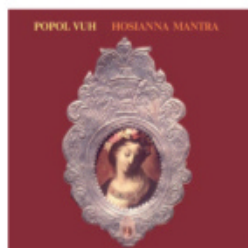
featuring the sitar and tamboura, Eno-ish still-lifes and some uncanny electronic pieces. Fiedler recalls Moog sessions in the mid-70s in Fricke's house in Munich for the soundtrack when he and Fricke experimented with deep bass frequencies to underpin the instruments.

Did Herzog have any input into this soundtrack music?

“He didn't,” Fiedler replies. “He liked Florian's compositions so much because they fitted his intention in telling a story. He didn't check [the tape], he just came and he took it and got it to the editing table.”

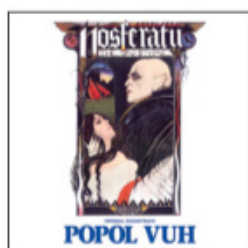
Popol Vuh continued supplying music for Herzog until *Cobra Verde* in 1987 and released new music until 1999, some of which explored Fricke's fascination with chants, breathing techniques and overtone singing, including *Agape-Agape/Love-Love* (1983) with Renate Knaup of Amon Düül II as one of the vocalists. Fricke also recorded the multi-vocal *I Am One With The Earth*, a limited pressing solo album recorded in an old basilica in 1983.

In 1995 Fiedler and Fricke branched out, making a movie, *Kailash, Pilgrimage To The Throne Of Gods*, about the sacred Tibetan mountain, which eventually came out as a DVD, a soundtrack CD and a CD of unheard piano tracks in 2015. Some of this material was reworked for *Shepherd's Symphony*, which also featuring Guido Hieronymus on keyboards and guitar (1997) and moved towards ambient trance. In that year Popol Vuh also produced *A Train Through Time*, based



**Hosianna Mantra**  
album, 1972.

**The Aguirre (1975)  
and Nosferatu (1978)  
soundtrack albums.**



on a drum sample of Danny Fichelscher which appears as a bonus track on *Affenstunde*.

Shortly before Fricke's death at the age of 57, he and Fiedler had made a multimedia operatic production called *Messa Di Orfeo*, which was performed in Southern Italy at the Time Zones Music Festival, firstly at Molfetta in 1998 and then the following year. “We performed in the old Rocca Malatestiana fortress in Fano with a 30-piece choir and a gigantic movie projection,” Fiedler says. Sadly, that was to be their last collaboration.

Fiedler supervises the Popol Vuh tape archive, and as well as BMG releasing the remastered albums there will be a Popol Vuh anthology including unreleased material and a release of “new Popol Vuh mixdowns in collaboration with some electronic musicians”.

There is also a work in progress, now nearing completion, designed to help keep his friend's name alive.

“There are piano tracks and Moog III tracks that I gave to Guido and he composed for them,” Fiedler explains. “His wife, Biljana Pais, wrote lyrics and she has a fantastic gospel voice, and so we suddenly had a project: the name is Popol Vuh Beyond and the title is *Requiem For Florian*. It has been an interesting experience to see it grow.”

*Popol Vuh – The Essential Album Collection Vol. 1* is out now via BMG. See [www.popolvuh.nl](http://www.popolvuh.nl) for more information.



# THE PROG INTERVIEW

## LASSE HOILE

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 **Lasse Hoile**. The Danish filmmaker, artist and photographer has collaborated with Steven Wilson, Opeth and Dream Theater, and he's just released *Muzak*, a book that showcases the visual collaboration between him and Porcupine Tree. From Motown to metal to prog, his love for cinema and the thrill of discovering Porcupine Tree, Hoile discusses his artistic journey with *Prog*. Just don't mention Lars von Trier...

**Words:** Polly Glass

Lasse Hoile is a big man. With his coal-black attire, solemn features and deep Danish mumble, he towers like someone you'd expect to meet in a dark forest — and looks even taller sitting at the low table in the Greenwich cafe where we meet. He drinks an oat milk latte, seemingly a hipster hallmark but it's actually more reflective of his ongoing struggle with Crohn's disease.

Following the death of his (British) father in December, Hoile has been at his house

dealing with the aftermath — which, through numerous admin and communication breakdowns, has been “a fucking nightmare”. He's open and good-natured in conversation, but his present situation weighs heavily in his voice.

“He [my father] died of an aneurysm in the stomach that burst due to hypertension... so he was probably mad at something,” he laughs weakly.

Born in 1973 in Aarhus, Denmark, Hoile's introduction to what one might deem ‘the dark side’ began with horror films at the local cinema. As a young adult he lived in Greenland for four years, where he acquired mail-order heavy metal demo tapes that were advertised in magazines, it being the pre-internet age. Through that he became friends with Nordic black metallers Mayhem, now the subject of

a new film, *Lords Of Chaos*.

“He [singer ‘Dead’] killed himself with a shotgun and his friends sent me pictures of him with some bones and then Euronymous [guitarist] got killed by this guy called Burzum [aka Varg Vikernes].

I have all those emails, letters and postcards and shit they sent me.”

Ultimately, however, Hoile found his true calling when he discovered Porcupine Tree — centred on a friendship with Steven Wilson that began in the 90s and has continued through years of arresting artwork, videos and live visuals. It's fair to say that Wilson's presence and impact would be quite different were it not for Hoile.

We're meeting today in the run-up to the release of his latest book, *Muzak*, a richly illustrated, album-by-album treasury of his work with Porcupine Tree. Carl Glover, *Muzak* designer and longtime Hoile/Wilson collaborator and friend (also the brains behind artwork for Led Zeppelin, King Crimson and The Rolling Stones, among others) sits across from us and offers the most succinct explanation of their creative process on these records: “You try to make it look like the album sounds.”



The Signature Edition cover of *Muzak*.

“

When you hear Pink Floyd for the first time, at least for me, it was like, [gasps] ‘This music talks to me!’ And other good things, like Radiohead when you heard it for the first time, you thought, ‘This is amazing!’

”

The imagery in *Muzak* reflects a packed, macabre fusion of inspirations that include Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Tarkovsky films, old album covers and, perhaps most potently, ‘life’. And through all of it (those stark eyes of *In Absentia*, the sunseting darkness of *Deadwing*, the dead-eyed children of *Fear Of A Blank Planet*) there's something acutely ‘human’, even in the strangest images...

**Which came first for you, music or art?**

Both, I guess. I have always been a big music nut, and I have always been a movie nut. When I was a kid, my mum and dad got divorced, and when I was with my dad he would put me

Lasse and his faithful furball, Oreo.



ALINA HOILE



Have camera,  
will travel.





in the cinema so he could go to the pub and drink. And my parents always listened to music. It wasn't the kind of music I liked, but I would look at the album covers. I liked the Motown stuff actually, my mum loved Marvin Gaye, I still like [that] today... But it wasn't until later when I got away that I opened my mind more to music.

**We read that after your parents got divorced you spent some time with your mother in Greenland?**

Yeah, four years. I finished boarding school and then I had to go to Greenland. I met people there who introduced me to 60s and 70s progressive music, that was around 1989, 1990. I started getting into all kinds of exciting stuff.

**What bands were key for you at that time?**

Pink Floyd obviously, Kraftwerk, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Procol Harum, Electric Light Orchestra... I was a lot into Frankie Goes To Hollywood I guess [chuckles], I really liked those big productions. So I got into that, a brief stint in punk, some heavy metal... Just everything, y'know.

**What stands out in your memories of Greenland itself, as a place to live?**

It's very isolated, you have to entertain yourself. I lived in two places, on one [of those two places] it took 20 minutes to walk from one end to the other, and then you'd go hunting or sledding with dogs or hiking in the hills, and I would paint and draw as well – horror stuff, weird shit.

**And what were you like as a teenager generally?**

I think I was very confused. I tried a lot of different things... It's hard to find an identity; if you stand out too much out there you get bullied. So you had to be careful, especially as a Danish person in Greenland I got picked on, so you had to keep a low profile unless you wanted to get beaten up.

**You mention trying different things. Can you give us examples?**

Everything from clothes to music to hobbies... I tried to hunt, I really liked that. We went out in small boats and almost had an accident, then I didn't do that anymore! We went sledding, ended up in the storm and had to cover ourselves with the sled, thought we wouldn't make it, didn't do that again after that [laughs]. But I always tried to do art. Drawing gave me comfort somehow.

**And the cinema, that you spent a lot of time in as a child... what films were you watching?**

Everything. There were matinees where you could see two, three, four films, everything from old westerns to really cheesy Roger Corman horror films, *Star Wars*, *Gremlins*. I wasn't that old but I saw *Blade Runner*, *The Thing*, *Alien*... I had a lot of nightmares back then! But I guess the more you see it the more you become... not 'immune', but you think 'it's not so bad'. It was better than sitting in the pub with my dad.

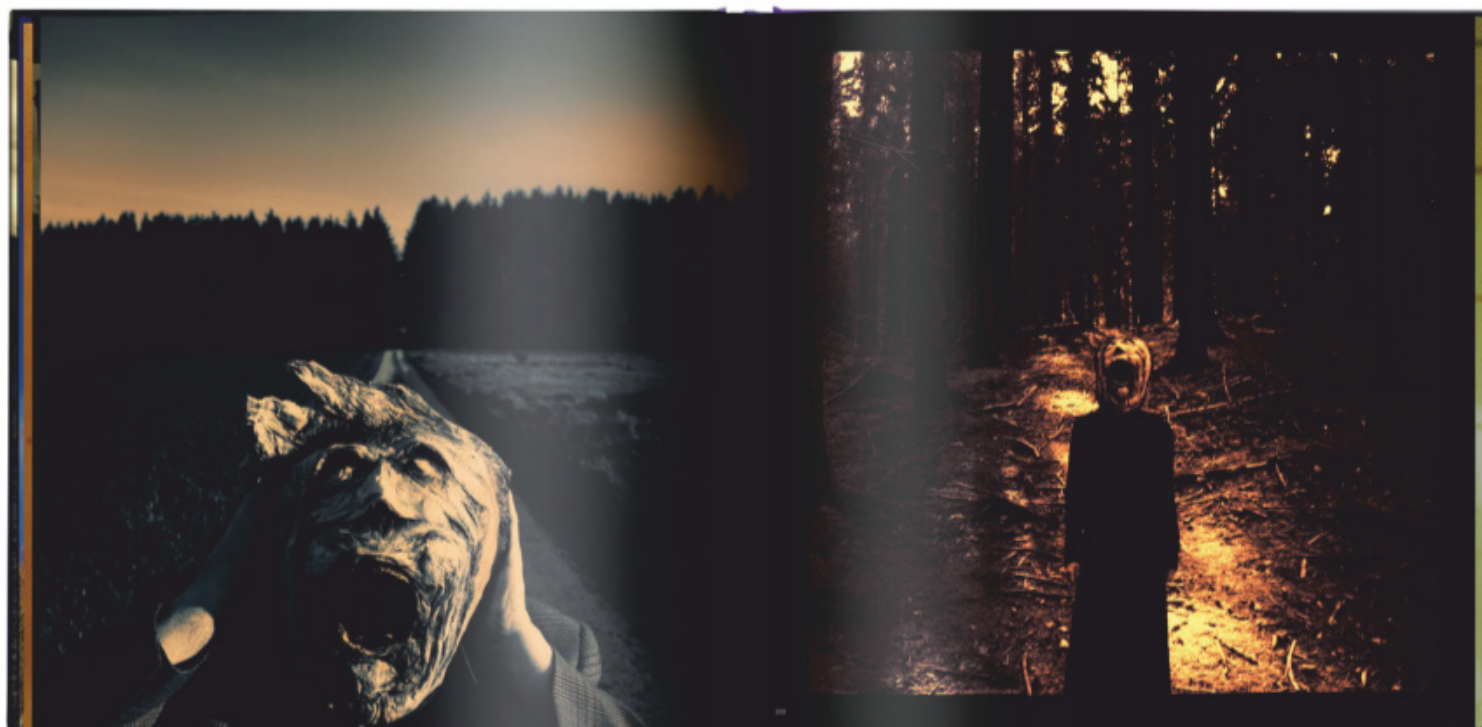
**So your dad was in the pub a lot.**

Yeah, I'm afraid, a lot... [trails off]. It's how it was. I mean, he was a social person, so he would always be in pubs having fun.

**How would you describe your family dynamic, growing up?**

Well, they always let me do what I wanted to do. That was good,

**Muzak** features many never-before-seen images, plus photographs of stage backdrops, films and album art sessions.





“  
People don't understand the word 'progressive' – they think it's the same doodling and the same thing over and over again. The thing with progressive music is you have to progress! And that's what Steven Wilson does.”



Lars von Trier's loss is our gain.

CARL GLOVER

in a way – you could go on adventures. I guess they were busy with their lives, and they knew I would be OK. I mean, they didn't have, like, super-interesting jobs. It was just very lonely I guess, in a way. So I just drew and read a lot of books, my dad was good at drawing so I kind of picked that up from him.

**Was there a piece of art that made you think, “That's what I want to do with my life?”**

It was going through my mum's album covers. But also when you're under 14 or something [in Denmark] you have free access to all the museums, so I'd take the bus and go and see every art show that was in town... It's hard to explain, 'cos I kind of eased into it [art]. I didn't plan on doing it; at first I wanted to be an astronomer, but my maths was shit so I had to give that up. Then

I wanted to be a philosopher and that was like, “Fuck... all these books?!” I used to live next to a library so I'd go there every day and find something interesting, landscapes, prehistoric stuff, and look at the images. And because I spent so much time in cinemas I wanted to do special effects. I tried to get into a special effects company in '91 in Los Angeles but they wanted, like, \$60,000 and I was only 16 or 17. But they did write, “Oh you have talent, you should really try.” But I didn't have \$60,000!

**You came to England to go to art school, but ended up going back to Denmark to do movie make-up. What happened?**

I wanted to spend time with my dad so I lived in Maidstone, and I then I tried to get into Kent Art College. I submitted some of my horror artworks and they told me

“try again later”. I wanted to learn to paint – at that time I was always so fascinated by the Renaissance, the colours and all of that. Then I got into make-up school in Denmark which turned out to be a disaster.

**In what way?**

There's only room for one or two people in the whole of Denmark to do it [chuckles] unless you do, like, fashion and stuff like that. And I didn't wanna do that. But I tried to do a lot of effects for short films and stuff like that, so from there I started to make short films with some friends... We had a deal with [Danish film company] Zentropa and Lars von Trier to do some films... and then he fucked us in the ass because he was doing *Dancer In the Dark*, and took all our gear and money [laughs]. I told him to go fuck himself, and I never saw him again.

**So that was the end of your relationship with Lars von Trier.**

Yeah, thank fuck for that. Then we did our own thing for a while, but we were always on the fringe so it was hard to get a grant. Then in the mid-90s I also went into photography. I was like, “Hey I can't paint, but this Photoshop thing can help me!” So I started to make these collages and stuff like that... I realised this was something I really liked. I edited a lot of TV series, directed some short stories and stuff like that, and then that money I spent on camera gear and gradually got into it.

**Also in the 90s you sang with a death metal band called Panzerchrist. What are your memories of that time?**

Oh Christ... Blurry, a lot of drinking! [laughs] I tried the guitar, I tried the drums,





I could do a little bit of everything but I was horrible at it. So I said, “Ahh, I could always scream,” and we had a good group of mates. We played a lot of gigs. It was just five years of getting wasted! But we did make two good albums.

**It was around this point that you approached Steven Wilson at a Porcupine Tree gig in Odense, Denmark.**

We had a couple of friends and we were sitting around [with

“

It was just very lonely I guess, in a way. So I just drew and read a lot of books, my dad was good at drawing so I kind of picked that up from him.

”

them] saying, “Music’s so boring these days.” When you hear Pink Floyd for the first time, at least for me, it was like [gasps], “This music talks to me.” And other good things like Radiohead when you heard it for the first time, you thought, “This is amazing.” Everything was grunge or post-rock, and it was just the same. Then I heard *Stupid Dream*, and I was like, “What the fuck is this?” It’s not Pink Floyd, but it had the same kind of... *soul* to it. I just had to find everything [by them], and then *Lightbulb Sun* came out, then we saw they were gonna come to Denmark me and a couple of friends called and said, “Hey, we need tickets!” and the guy said “Hold on, hold on, *nobody’s* bought any tickets, there’s plenty left!” We arrived and we were the first and only ones there. I think about 28 people turned up. And I later found out they’d just sacked their merch guy...



CARL GLOVER

**So the stars started to align...**

Yeah. And they just played amazingly. I said, “I have to work with these guys.” I’d done a few stupid heavy metal covers. It was like, “I can’t do heavy metal, death metal, stupid... I need to branch out, I’m better than this!” We were so ecstatic after the show. On the way home I almost fucking crashed the car because I drove over red lights, just thinking about the show. But we got home and I dug up Richard Allen [PT manager] at Delerium’s contact, sent him some of my stupid pictures and said, “Hey, I have to work for you.”

**And he then put you in touch with Steven. Was it love at first sight, so to speak?**

I think so. I can’t even remember what I sent. Obviously it was really heavy Photoshop stuff, but luckily not a lot of people did that kind of stuff back then, but I also

tried to keep it ‘human’, in a way, so it wasn’t just a mish-mash. And we just discussed what he liked, the photographers and the films he liked... We just kept it going.

**In Muzak, you and Carl talk about the influence of European cinema, and you and Steven also shared a fondness for serial killers and... well, weird shit.**

[Laughs] Yeah, I mean, it’s more like the human mind and the reason behind it; what drives people to do these things? And why doesn’t anybody notice anything? It’s always the nice guy, “Oh, he was the friendliest guy ever”... I think it’s more like the psyche behind it, rather than the act, that’s interesting. But yeah, we talked about that, and art, everything really. I would discover something and send it to Steve, and he’d discover something and say, “Hey have you seen this?” Just

like you do when you’re young with your friends.

**What were the bands that you first bonded over?**

It was really hard to give him something he hadn’t heard! I did introduce him to Mew and some electronic stuff though. I like progressive music... I’m a big King Crimson fan. But I don’t like all that technical stuff, the twiddly diddly stuff, it gives me stress. So electronic music is probably more my thing. I really listen to everything, from drone music to death metal. If it’s good I’ll listen to it. It’s not like, “Ugh, I hate Justin Bieber”... I do, by the way, but you know what I’m saying; if it’s a good pop song I’ll listen to it.

**So where did you stand on *Permanating*, the most polarising Steven Wilson track?**

Well I think it’s about time he started making stuff like that,





Getting reddy on the shoot for *To The Bone* with Steven Wilson.

**You've worked with other bands besides Steven Wilson, like Opeth, Anathema, Dream Theater... In your mind is there a common thread that unites these bands, besides the fact that they're progressive and have metal roots?**

A band like Opeth I think I knew them before Steven, because of my old heavy metal days, not as people but I knew their music and liked them. But I could see bands like Opeth and Katatonia, at least they were doing something new, they were slowly branching out into different kinds of stuff. I know it pisses off a lot of fans.

**Your work has essentially evolved alongside Steven's. Have you worried or thought about the idea of being pigeon-holed as an artist?**

Oh yeah. The thing is I have so many ideas, a lot of them I haven't realised, there are many things

**you believe in the supernatural, or something along those lines?**

No [pause]. But I've experienced some weird shit.

**Such as?**

Well, at my dad's place things keep falling down, but also two people have died there; my dad and his friend. But there's always a reason. I've stayed in a few creepy places, where you can almost feel... But I think if there is an afterlife, you would know about it. I've been stuck on an island in Denmark in an old 18th-century house, which people said was haunted, and you come down and the coffee machine is on and shit like that. But maybe it's just people who forgot something.

**So, for all your immersion in unsettling things, horror and all the rest of it, what are you afraid of?**

[Long pause] Failure? No, I've failed so many times, I've fucked up so many times. You learn from failures. Sitting around doing nothing is the worst for me. Unfortunately... since my dad died... I have all this shit going on and I haven't been able to do much, and that kills me.

**What is it that keeps you coming back to what you do?**

I have to. It's the only thing that keeps me happy... I still have to take shit jobs, to pay bills, but I like to challenge myself and try and do stuff I think is impossible. I've got all these ideas I'd like to do before I die, with a little more money... I'm not saying I'd like a million quid to realise some dream. I just want enough cash to be left alone for a couple of months, and not have to worry about anything else.

**So it's time, really...**

'Cos most of the people [involved] are friends, or friends of friends, and I use their old stuff in their garage, which is fun and you can do a lot with that... The thing I love most is when I sit with Steven and Carl and we work out all these concepts and it grows into something, and after a year you have something you can hold in your hands. It's the best feeling in the world. ☺

*Muzak: The Visual Art of Porcupine Tree by Lasse Hoile is out on June 10 via Flood Gallery Publishing.*

Lasse Hoile's striking image for Porcupine Tree's *In Absentia* cover.



because he's always had it in him to make really good pop songs. I think there are people that don't understand the word 'progressive' — they think it's the same doodling and the same thing over and over again. The thing with progressive music is you have to progress! And that's what Steven Wilson does. The song makes me happy, it's surprising, it's refreshing, it's not stupid pop.

**As someone who's worked with Steven for so long, which of his albums have you found most satisfying to work on? And which do you come back to the most?**

I really liked *The Incident*, maybe it's because it's the last, there's a lot of emotions with me and everything involved in that. We went around, me, Steve and Mike Bennion, they wrote this movie script and we were trying to get that going... It was a lot of fun.

**Of the music you listen to now, what artists do you come back to most frequently?**

Talk Talk, Brian Eno, Gas... I listen to a lot of this stuff called Echospace Detroit, which is like dub-ambient with stuff that goes on for, like, an hour and five minutes — I like to work to it. And sometimes I just like to listen to Morbid Angel for 30 minutes, or some old Entombed, and then some classic... well, I guess in that respect it can be called a bit schizophrenic, my music taste.

I haven't done yet, because I have all these things I really need to get out, and a lot of those involve covering up faces [laughs] and I've been doing that for much too long! I can't help it, I don't know if it's a 'thing' but I really need to start not doing that! We always had a fondness for masks, I think it comes from seeing old pictures from the 20s where they had these big papier-mâché heads, and it's really surreal and creepy.

**Another fondness of Steven's you share is for old ghost stories. Do**



New spins...

## JANE WEAVER

Established as the First Lady of modern UK space rock, Jane Weaver travels further out into the cosmos on a magical mix album. Join her club, and may the drone be with you...

**Words:** Joe Banks **Illustration:** Leona Beth

Jane Weaver's latest transmission from the void is a journey both back through time and into the future, featuring songs from her previous albums *The Silver Globe* and *Modern Kosmology* remixed and reimagined into a seamless whole. The inspiration for it comes from a series of shows she did last year where she set herself the challenge of performing sans band using just drones, tape loops, custom-built vinyl discs and her voice. As the sole creator of the music she makes in the studio, she wanted to assert her authorial vision in a live setting as well, lest anybody think she was merely the frontwoman for other's ideas.

This was entirely in-keeping with the *modus operandi* she's followed for over 20 years now as a solo artist, eschewing the path of least resistance to pursue her own muse, honing her melodic instincts and gradually immersing herself in the arcana of psychedelic folk, electronic exotica and Eastern European film soundtracks. All these influences bubbled over, along with a previously hidden love for the interstellar chug of Hawkwind, on 2010's *The Fallen By Watchbird*, the album which kick-started the trajectory she's been on ever since.

Yet if *The Silver Globe* and *Modern Kosmology* displayed Weaver's skill at taking space rock's sonic template and alchemising it into something new and exciting, then *Loops In The Secret Society* distils these base materials even further, often stripping the songs back to just their vocal melodies and words before swathing them in swirling cosmotronica, as though freshly forged from inside the Big Bang.

Opening track *Element* rides in like a voyager from the depths of space, conjuring images of glowing nebula and dust clouds at the dawn of creation as Weaver's heavily reverbed voice coos in approval. Propulsion gradually emerges, as looped synth arpeggios and then the pulse-racing bass and snares of the motorik beat fade up, the krautrock ur-rhythm that never gets old. Groups such

### Loops In The Secret Society

FIRE



Swirling  
cosmotronica,  
forged from  
inside the Big Bang...

as Can and Neu! became popular again during the time of rave because their music induced the same feelings of transcendence and loss of self as acid house and techno, something that Weaver also understands and builds on here. The noise and beat draw you in, while her voice comes through in waves, a guiding presence in the cosmic darkness. But what's clear from the outset is that this is a long-form trip you must surrender to in order to fully appreciate.

Throughout the album, songs melt into each other, connected by a series of ambient synthscapes so that the power of the drone is ever-present, like background radiation from an exploded star. Perhaps Weaver is trying to break down the way we subconsciously hear music as basic mathematical formulae, and instead encourage us to experience it on a level

more akin to the loops and spirals of fractal equations. As with all great kosmische, there's the sense of boundaries dissolving and new channels opening, music as an access vehicle to a different state of consciousness.

That's not to say the listener is completely cast adrift. One of the side-effects of deconstructing and simplifying the design of Weaver's songs is that her words come to the foreground in a way they sometimes didn't in their original setting, revealing an artist struggling with big, existential questions. The fast, nervy heartbeat of *H>A>K>* is like a journey through the inner space of a body, rushing through blood vessels and arteries. Weaver murmurs, 'I can't tell you where you're going,' but hints that there are clues everywhere if you just look, 'disparate lines, cords into connections.' Perhaps the album's key lyric comes on the glorious reverb-laden future pop of *Did You See Butterflies?*, where she sings, 'I've been trying to find another map,' one that doesn't just show the workaday reality we often find ourselves in, but offers a route to somewhere more meaningful.

Sometimes there are hints of a beautiful but icy fatalism creeping in. The minimalised *Slow Motion* is still achingly poignant, and the line, 'Stop listening to people whose agenda doesn't feel good,' could be a call for us to come to our senses and reject the worldview of post-truth demagogues and online trolls. But she follows it with the quietly devastating, 'Sometimes everything's amazing, then the silence reminds us we are lost.' And on the pagan invocation of *Ravenpoint*, all hand drums, sitar and high strings, Weaver bluntly declares that, 'We're on our way to dust.'

Yet that's not the over-riding vibe of this ecstatic, celestial album. Instead, it's about the soft radicalism of exploratory music, the positing of a stranger, better world – the 'secret society' we could all be a part of if we wanted. As the psychology of the modern era becomes ever more oppressive, it's a message that's worth holding onto.







## BARONESS

**Gold & Grey** ABRAXAN HYMNS

The Savannah crossover crew take it slow as they expand their palette.



The final instalment in Baroness' chromatically-themed collection, *Gold & Grey* is less about ending something and more about a wealth of new beginnings for the forward-thinking US metal band. The group are much-changed since 2007's debut *Red Album*. Inevitably, their horrific bus crash outside Bath in 2012 played a significant part in that. Frontman John Baizley is reminded of his patched-together left arm every time he picks up a guitar and the crash also directly contributed to the departure of rhythm players Allen Blickle and Matt Maggioni.

**A colourful scattershot of awe-inspiring range.**

2015's acclaimed *Purple* offered a chance to exorcise some of those demons and, in the process, make the kind of direct widescreen post-metal record they'd been threatening to release since their arrival. It connected in a big way. Critics at the time were quick to frame these accomplishments against the recovery of Baizley and guitarist Pete Adams, but the truth is that Baroness — in particular, Baizley — have always been possessed by a higher purpose than your usual snakebite swillers. Remove the rubber-necking mythology and *Purple* and its 2012 predecessor *Yellow And Green* remain significant because they evidenced a group striving to not just escape their metallic cage, but melt it down and form its constituent parts into a new object entirely.

*Gold & Grey* takes things much further with a hugely varied approach to sound, songwriting and a noticeably slower pace. What's more, Adams has tagged-out and been replaced by new guitarist Gina Gleason, making Baizley the only remaining veteran of the group's first decade. Baizley's consistently impressive Mucha-esque artwork is therefore as familiar as this record gets. It is the most detailed cover yet and — bedecked with nudity and nails, spears and flowers, a pickaxe and birds, teeth and veils — reflective of an intricate collection that is both their softest and most piercing to date.

*Emmett Radiating Light* might be the quietest track Baroness have ever written, so much so you can still hear the cicadas hissing in the background of its cleverly-incorporated acoustic demo. *I'm Already Gone's* chorus refrain recalls the sing-along personal tragedy of Radiohead or The National, albeit in meatier form. Yet, as on *Front Toward Enemy*, when they stray back to heaviness, it's delivered with a tone that fizzles and cuts with a vicious serrated edge. The result is not the earnest shot at the 'complete record' that Baroness have recently specialised in producing — and that may disappoint some. Instead it's a colourful scattershot of awe-inspiring range. A document of a band at a crossroads to anywhere.

**MATT PARKER**

## ASTRAL SOCIAL CLUB & GRUMBLING FUR TIME MACHINE ORCHESTRA

**Plasma Slice Trifle** VHF

First-time collaboration between three intrepid sonic explorers.

*Plasma Slice Trifle* is exceptionally psychedelic as one might expect from an album featuring Daniel O'Sullivan and Alexander Tucker of Grumbling Fur and Neil Campbell, aka Astral Social Club. Their particular brand of sensory disorientation is achieved via overlapping layers of activity in which the instruments are timbrally blended into one another. On the title track we travel 'Back to the egg, back to sperm, rolling home...' the soundtrack a bizarre mix of a novelty pop hook processed and gradually buried under a babel of voices, textural



sonics and keyboards, somewhat reminiscent of Faust's *Krautrock*. *Three Years Apart* is more expansive with O'Sullivan's sinuous violin exploring a handful of notes over shuddering tremolo'd keyboards. Grumbling Fur's albums and Tucker and

O'Sullivan's solo recordings are generally song based. And although *Plasma...* is predominantly instrumental, their dual vocal incantations rise out of the reverby soundfield of *Ozone Antifreeze Intelligence*, struggling to surface from the turbulent currents of the dramatic 13-minute closer *Toejam Boxdrum*. **MB**

## BROTHER RUTHERFORD

**Tunneling** SELF-RELEASED

Pastoral post-rock fusion from the leafy US Northeast.

Brother Rutherford is the instrumental side project of Richmond, Virginia drummer Ethan Johnstone, who plays in Night Idea and Houdan The Mystic. Described as "earthen instrumental music" by Johnstone, the tracks have a pastoral quality to them in the feel of the instrumentation, with organic drum parts, acoustic guitars, and even the odd banjo here and there. In style terms, the album is somewhat stranger. *Into The Hedges* is pretty much the folk tune its name suggests, with Johnstone ably supported by Linnea Morgan on violin. But then *Tangled Ceremony* could



almost be an El Ten Eleven tune, building up from cyclical loops, while the jazzy feel of *Light Guides* seems to be aware of many of the tropes present in Japanese math rock exports such as Uchu Conbini. Finally, there's *East Wind* and *Alizarin Skyline*, which

combine Johnstone's folk side with an almost trip-hop sensibility, to great effect. For all this, *Tunneling* is a surprisingly coherent listen, due to its strong melodic sensibility. For fans of post-rock bands such as Yndi Halda who aren't afraid to explore folk crossover, this is likely to prove a beguiling and essential release. **AL**

## CAVE IN

**Final Transmission** HYDRA HEAD

Tragic but triumphant LP from Boston's experimental stalwarts.

In March 2018 Cave In's bassist Caleb Scofield was killed in a motor accident, as the band were prepping their first material in seven years. This tragic event not only formed the context for the theme of the album, but the recordings as well. They had already demoed the record with Scofield, and these tracks, along with the opener *Final Transmission* — a voice message he sent his bandmates after his last session with the band — comprise the record. *Final Transmission* is a gritty-sounding work, somewhat by necessity, while in tone it's as intimate as can be for a band that specialise in atmospheric, expansive



tunes, from metalcore to space rock to alt. On tracks such as *Winter Window* they're as punishing as ever without losing the melodic edge of their more accessible releases. Meanwhile, on *Night Crawler* and album highlight *Shake My*

*Blood* there's a strong hint of Failure's hugely influential 1996 alt/space venture, the *Fantastic Planet* LP. That an album of this calibre should be born out of such tragedy is heartbreaking, but as guitarist Adam McGrath says, it's a fitting swan-song; "In a weird way, it's the end of the story [of] our relationship together." **AL**



## ELEPHANT9

**Psychedelic Backfire I & II** RUNE GRAMMOFON

Career-spanning double set from Norwegian psych-jazz rockers.

Keyboardist Ståle Storløkken is on a roll. Known for work with Motorpsycho, Terje Rypdal and improv supergroup, Supersilent, *The Haze Of Sleeplessness* (reviewed on p. 106) added another layer of gritty experimentation to his overflowing CV. On these two live Elephant9 discs, recorded in a four-day residency, he moves the focus into a highly saturated, Day-Glo rock. The churchy reveries that begin *I Cover The Mountain Top* soon burst into fiery Hammond organ slashes which become distilled into pure overdriven fuzz tones that evoke the sweaty virtuosity of early ELP and the reckless abandon of Egg's



patented *Blane* freak-outs. Nikolai Hængsle's bruising bass and drummer Torstein Lofthus' constantly shifting barrage ratchet up the fast-cut intensity that is the band's calling card. That combination of passion and controlled power extend to the second album that

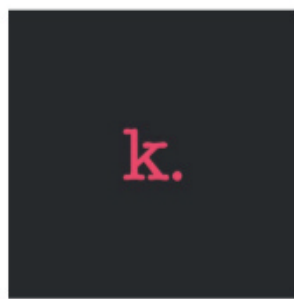
benefits from a dowsing of accelerant in the form of Reine Fiske's six-string fuel. It's scorching stuff throughout, and not without surprises. Stevie Wonder's *You Are The Sunshine Of My Life* drifts across an insistent ostinato that gradually comes to a rolling boil with Mellotron flutes and plangent lead lines providing an impressive catharsis. **SS**

## EVELINE'S DUST

**k.** GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Pisa crew's second album is more than dust in the wind.

The humble compact disc has considerable pros but assorted cons. Not far shy of its 40th birthday there are still far too many artists who apparently feel compelled to use the medium to its maximum storage capacity and create albums that are close to 80 minutes. Which is all very well if quality can be sustained for that duration, but all too often it can't. As such, this second studio album by Italian quartet Eveline's Dust is a welcome antidote for all those releases which outstay their welcome. Running to a mere 43 minutes, *k.*'s seven songs recount the tale of a girl, *k.*, with an incurable illness. Eveline's Dust's first



album, 2016's *The Painkeeper*, showed considerable musical promise which has now been conclusively realised with *k.* The band may take a tried and tested neo-prog template as their starting point but they then superimpose some jazz rock

and fusion ideas. The album features some truly lovely jazzy piano and guitar from vocalist Nicola Pedreschi and Lorenzo Gherarducci respectively, and Eveline's Dust cleverly resist the temptation to overcrowd; even while including some intense musical passages, there's plenty of space in the arrangements. **NS**

## FREEDOM TO GLIDE

**Seed** FREEDOMTOGLIDE.BANDCAMP.COM

Midlands duo complete their war-themed trilogy.

Sometimes, you can make a universal point that much better by focusing on the personal. On this final instalment of three war-themed albums, after twice casting a broader eye over a century of conflict, Andy Nixon and Pete Riley have zoomed in on one in particular. So *Seed*'s narrator is a traumatised, despairing soldier home on leave in the final year of World War I. Once again we hear occasional echoes of *The Final Cut* and *The Wall* from the duo that met as part of a Floyd tribute, but FTG wear their influences increasingly well - the alluring Gilmourian guitar illuminating *Escape To Survive* a prime



example. Elsewhere, they've ventured into more distinctive pastures - the dramatic, propulsive piano cascades on *The Right Within The Wrong* set a disquieting mood, before the pace slows for *The Space Between The Lines*. But at the heart of the piece

is piercing, resonant songwriting. That's particularly noticeable at the story's midpoint, the striking acoustic vignette *The Only Way?* where our troubled hero meets an enemy soldier, asking 'How many children must you lose before the nation cries, 'no more'?'. No answers are offered, but we should be glad someone's still asking the question. **JS**

## HEATHER FINDLAY

**Wild White Horses** BLACK SAND

New directions from Findlay, with a touch of Thunder.



The ongoing musical evolution of Heather Findlay continues apace on *Wild White Horses*. In recent years, the singer has done prog rock with Dave Kerzner in Mantra Vega and explored her folk leanings with her own trio. This time she joins forces with Thunder's guitarist Luke Morley, who co-writes roughly half the songs, as well as playing most of the instruments and producing.



**A lack of prog, but the melodies are strong and accessible.**



Recorded at the famed Rockfield Studios, the album takes Findlay into the realm of classic rock, with some engaging diversions along the route. The opening *Here's To You* has a country rock vibe, led by acoustic guitar and piano as Findlay sings about saying farewell to a friend or lover, a staple country theme.

Findlay and Morley return to the country rock style throughout the album. It's clear and present in the steady bounce of *Winner*, which features guest flute from Ian Anderson, and the easy gait of *Cactus*. The closing track *Forget The Rain* could have come straight from Nashville's Music Row and is the sort of accessible crossover tune that would be a huge radio hit for Lady Antebellum or Little Big Town as she sings, 'Couldn't get much better than dancing in your arms.'

Bringing more rock into the mix, Thunder frontman Danny Bowes duets with Findlay on *Just A Woman*, which provides an interesting contrast between his soulful, bluesy grit and her clean, unsullied tone. *Southern Shores*, one of the songs written by Findlay alone, has a catchy rock riff and a big chorus. *The Island* is radio-friendly AOR, while *Face In The Sun* brings in some Indian instrumentation, harking back to the spirit of Led Zeppelin's *Friends* or The Beatles' *Love You To*.

The folk stylings of the *I Am Snow* album and her trio work (plus Uileann master Troy Donockley) make an appearance in *I Remember* and Findlay is in fine voice throughout, although for a rocker she's never had the gravel of Janis Joplin or the belting power of Ann Wilson. She's closer in spirit to Linda Ronstadt with her crystalline timbre and that gentle vibrato.

Fans of Findlay from her time in Mostly Autumn, or those who discovered the singer from the collaboration with Dave Kerzner, may be surprised by the lack of prog on this record, but Morley's production is full-bodied and even if the time signatures aren't odd, the melodies are as strong as they are accessible. Given all the different musical avenues that Findlay has explored to reach this point, *Wild White Horses* is surely just the latest chapter in her compelling story, not its conclusion.

DAVID WEST

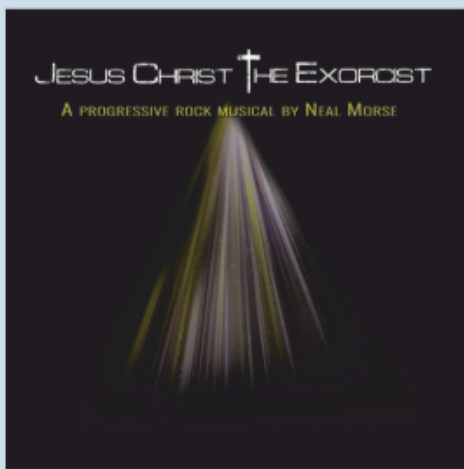




## NEAL MORSE

**Jesus Christ The Exorcist** FRONTIERS/RADIANT

Ten years in the making, prog psalms with one heck of a narrative.



It's fair to say that 'religion and rock'n'roll' doesn't trip off the tongue like, 'strawberries and cream' or 'prog and paradiddles'. While prog has its fair share of religious people – BJH's John Lees is a Christian, Richard and Danny Thompson are both Muslims – their faith is rarely foregrounded. Not so Neal Morse. His conversion to evangelical Christianity in 2002 led to his departure from Spock's Beard and Transatlantic. While he rejoined the latter, Morse remains unafraid of placing his faith left, right and centre in the 5.1 mix of his music. His new project, a kind of *Jesus Christ Superstar* for a new century, takes that commitment to a new and fascinating level.



**Jesus Christ  
Superstar for  
a new century.**



Rice and Lloyd Webber's venerable rock opera looms large in Morse's take on the 'greatest story ever told'. He acknowledges it as inspiration for a project that's been 10 years in the making. However, Morse's 'Progressive Rock Opera' has several advantages over the theatre piece. Unlike Lloyd Webber, Morse is a proper prog musician. This means his musical decisions are wilder, bolder and more technically satisfying. The *Overture* is heavy and sophisticated, benefitting from Paul Bielатовicz's virtuoso licks and Morse's keyboard brilliance. Where a straight theatre composer would hold back, Morse's prog sensibility just keeps going. The segue into the epic *Getaway* is both cool and satisfying.

*Jesus Christ The Exorcist* has a distinguished cast, too. Spock's Beard's Ted Leonard plays Jesus, Talon David is the Magdalene and Morse himself plays Pilate. Big Big Train's Nick D'Virgillio plays Judas Iscariot. Tonally, the opera is lush with major-key epic bombast. Tunes such as the excellent *Gather The People* and *Jerusalem* work as big choral pieces with shiny refrains, while there is more than a smattering of gritty blues rock. *Jesus's Temptation* sprays bluesy riffage in every direction, while *The Woman Of Seven Devils* is a fierce rock-out.

Some sceptical prog fans will ask whether there's enough for them in this overtly religious piece. Some may hope that the famous put-down of Spinal Tap's religious output – 'a pretentious ponderous collection of religious rock psalms' – might apply to *Exorcist*. It doesn't. Whatever else it is, *Jesus* story provides one heck of a narrative. Songs like *Heart Full Of Holes* and *The Last Supper* provide touching accounts of human weakness and betrayal.

Still some listeners will find this all too much. But prog and rock opera is surely meant to be 'too much'. Morse's efforts – despite detractors who'd love to dismiss *Jesus Christ...* as pompous schlock – are a striking contribution to his oeuvre.

**RACHEL MANN**

## JUSTIN HOPPER & SHARRON KRAUS WITH THE BELBURY POLY

**Chanctonbury Rings** GHOST BOX

Pagan radiophonica meets medieval balladry on intriguing spoken word project.

This latest release from Ghost Box epitomises the label's guiding principle of "the past inside the present", time as perpetual reoccurrence rather than a linear continuum. Justin Hopper is a writer and performer whose psychogeographical memoir *The Old Weird Albion* forms the basis of the album. With modern folk artist Sharron Kraus and Jim Jupp's Belbury Poly providing electro-acoustic backing, Hopper describes visions of his dead grandmother levitating, recounts a childhood out-of-the-body experience, and tells the story of how the Devil tried



to destroy Sussex. It seems odd at first to hear the American Hopper talking about quintessentially British subjects, but his narrative soon becomes another uncanny element in the album's sound-world. The title track is a classic slice of mock-orchestral

synthesis from Jupp, Wendy Carlos meets Schools TV, while *Layers* features the dank rattle of an ancient lute. Kraus uses her voice to wordless, ghostly effect on tracks such as *Breath* – like something from an obscure Hammer Films horror – but delivers a luminous Sandy Denny-esque vocal on *Wanderer*. **JB**

## HUIS

**Abandoned** UNICORN DIGITAL

Impressive third outing from St- Père's busman's holiday.

Oftentimes when a musician has a side-project, it's an opportunity for them to flex musical muscles that don't get much of a workout in their day job. That's not really the case for Canada's Michel St-Père. When he's not leading the always-excellent *Mystery*, he plays guitar for Huis, a Montreal quintet who inhabit the same territory where prog crosses over with AOR. Produced by bassist Michel Joncas, their third album *Abandoned* boasts a bright, polished sound as it explores themes of loss. It's not a gloomy listen by any means as Huis trade in big hooks and sweeping arrangements, although



they do favour steady mid-tempos. Singer Sylvain Descôteaux has a strong voice, with plenty of tone and the range to cover the heartfelt moments of the title track or to give it some welly in *The Giant Awakens*. St-Père is a guitarist of great refinement, ensuring

that every solo has form and purpose while his *Mystery* bandmate Jean Pageau makes a guest appearance to play flute on *We Are Not Alone* and *Stolen*, a standout track that moves between classically-tinged piano passages and rockier riffing. Slick and sleek it may be, but *Abandoned* is heavy on musical drama. **DW**

## INTROITUS

**Shadows** BAD ELEPHANT

Prog from where the forest meets the city.

There's a new record label and line-up for Sweden's Introitus as they release their fourth album, belatedly following 2014's *Anima*. While they're still led by keys player Mets Bender and his vocalist wife Anna, the band lost flautist Henrik Björklind when he gave notice in 2017. Now they're joined by Linnéa Syrjälä who brings accordion to the mix. They're obviously keen to make the new recruit feel at home, giving the accordion lots of room. Introitus have always mixed folk and prog, but Syrjälä's presence really brings out the former, rivalling Benders' keyboards for prominence in the arrangements. *My Hero* has a lovely,



laidback acoustic feel, and there's spirited playing from Bender in the bustling up-tempo rock of *Figures*. Less effective is *Desperation*, which takes too long to get up to speed and the chorus refrain – 'Desperation, isolation, frustration,

desolation' – could have been lifted from a rhyming dictionary. The album ends on a high with *Awakening*, which lets them really show their range. Starting from a folky, accordion-led intro, they move into a big neo-prog synth workout, then to a dash of metal guitar riffage, before Anna uses her high-flying range to impressive effect. **DW**



## JAMBINAI

Onda BELLA UNION

Korean traditional music meets post-rock dynamics.

Jambinai guitarist Lee Il-woo reckons that, “Most people expect Asian traditional music to make something smooth for yoga or meditation”. He’s keen to prove that need not be the case as the group inject age-old musical forms with a modern approach in a way that feels entirely natural. *Sawtooth* sets a template of sorts, a meditative interplay of trad Korean instruments – Lee’s pir (a bamboo oboe), the haegeum (a two-stringed fiddle) and the geomungo (a type of zither). After a few minutes this is suddenly hit by an exhilarating wave of drums, keyboards and frantically strummed guitar power



chords. These elemental surges bring to mind Sigur Rós and Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Singer Bora Kim holds her own weaving melodies through the gathering storms. *Sun.Tears. Red* is more percussive, with twisting time signatures and chanting vocals and howls

leading to choruses of metal intensity surmounted by strings, but in a way that avoids rock cliché. Jambinai pull out all the stops on the 13-minute *In The Woods*. After a lengthy opening of twinkly tuned percussion, sweet electric guitar, acoustic instruments and vocals, the band weigh in to thrilling effect. They must be astonishing live. **MB**

## JORDSJØ

Nattfiolen KARISMA

Understated Scandi-prog diamond.

Led by multi-instrumentalist Håkon Oftung and recording on analogue gear in their own studio, Oslo’s Jordsjø follow 2017’s self-titled debut album with a more assured affair, inspired by old horror movies, German 70s synth music, Norwegian jazz, nature, campfires, Swedish folk songs and fantasy novels. With band members from Tussmørke and Black Magic, that first set was a heavyweight double that attracted comparisons to labelmates Wobbler, White Willow, Sinkadus and Änglagård. Although flying familiar symphonic prog motifs, Jordsjø’s strength is in the warm, dreamy



atmospheres they evoke on *Til Våren* and *Solens Sirkulæresang*, deploying subtle interactive telepathy rather than bombast to create a subtler, natural sound. It peaks on the incantatory forest prog of *Mine Templer II*, sequel to the debut album’s excursion

that allows the band to weave a shimmering tableaux of flutey Mellotron, piano and guitars, laced with vintage Scandi-jazz interplay. *Ulvenatt* takes the album out at a Floyd slowie pace, rich organ buoying reflective guitar soloing. Such retro-sorties can often sink into unintentional parody but Jordsjø transcend their influences naturally. **KN**

## NTH ASCENSION

Stranger Than Fiction METATRONIC

Northern British proggers in the ascendant.

Nth Ascension are stewarded by Darrel Treece-Birch, who has become best known for his role over the last decade with British melodic hard rockers Ten. However the keyboardist has a lengthy 30-year-plus history that comfortably predates his recruitment by Ten, and his membership of Rush tribute band CounterpartsUK clearly advertises his prog inclinations. Treece-Birch’s band are completed by vocalist Michael Alan Taylor and father and sons Martin, Craig and Gavin Walker. This third album follows a similar stylistic path to its predecessors, with further continuity provided by another



three instalments of the band’s *Clanaan Chronicles*. Musically, *Stranger Than Fiction* is eminently accessible progressive hard rock, despite *Journey’s End* and *Sound To Light*, which unfold over 16 and 18 minutes respectively. At times they test patience

with some of the atmospherics, the principal culprit being the six minutes of *The Opening. Fire In The Sky* finds them at their best, marrying commercial instincts with a grandiose arrangement. Mixed by Neal Morse Band guitarist Eric Gillette, *Fiction*’s sonic quality arguably exceeds its songwriting, but it’s the band’s strongest release to date. **NS**

## PROGRESSIVE METAL

Dom Lawson buckles up for a delve into the darker, heavier side.



There is epic and then there is **Varaha**. Ostensibly operating in the post-metal world, this Chicagoan quartet have constructed a debut album of audacious scale and scope. Blending wildly evocative post-metal sprawls with extensive orchestral pieces across 75 immersive minutes, *A Passage For Lost Years* (Prosthetic) demands total surrender and, given how jaw-dropping the likes of *My World And Yours* and the title track are, will almost certainly get it. Progressive heaviness just found its new heroes.

Best known as the bassist with Napalm Death, Shane Embury has had countless side-projects over the years, but none have strayed as far into prog territory as **TRONOS**. Debut album *Celestial Mechanics* (Century Media) offers a versatile, noisily psychedelic take on slow-motion doom metal and shimmering post-shoegaze art rock, with flashes of polyrhythmic perversity and surging space rock adding to an irresistible sense of conceptual madness and controlled chaos.



Originally self-released in 2013, **Slaldic Curse**’s third album *Devourer* (Apocalyptic Witchcraft) fully deserves a more fulsome re-release. Admittedly, this is progressive extreme metal and therefore unlikely to delight many Mostly Autumn fans, but if your taste extends to thrash or black metal, the British crew’s fiery virtuosity and unerring ingenuity should scratch an exploratory itch. The eight-minute *Abduction Void* is particularly mind-blowing. Similarly, you may need to embrace the notion of screamed vocals to truly enjoy German mavericks **Temple Koludra**’s extraordinary *Seven! Sirens! To A Lost Archetype* (Transcending Obscurity) but it’s a leap of



faith worth making. Inspired by the hazy depths of Indian spirituality, labyrinthine epics such as *Namarupa* and *White I Trance* combine black metal’s ornate savagery and instinctive magniloquence with ethereal atmospherics and traditional instrumentation.

There are few things more proggy in the history of heavy music than the six insanely bombastic sci-fi concept albums made by symphonic black metallers Bal-Sagoth between 1995 and 2006. Off the radar for the past decade, most of the band’s final line-up have reconvened as **Kull** and their debut album *Exile* (Black Lion) is exactly what Bal-Sagoth fans have been craving. Still the sonic embodiment of an epic intergalactic battle, songs such as *Hordes Ride* and *Aeolian Supremacy* may lack former frontman Byron Roberts’ literary intricacies, but brothers Chris and Jonny Maudling have lost none of their compositional prowess and this is an undeniably barnstorming return from some true originals.

Finally, Swiss folk metallers **Eluveitie** have surpassed themselves on the boldly conceptual *Ategnatos* (Nuclear Blast). It’s an album full of expansive, cinematic and strongly melodic metal anthems, all woven together to effect the ebb and flow of a compelling story arc, liberally sprinkled with progressive tropes and then parked on the side of a mountain to achieve maximum, windswept melodrama.







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## PATTERN-SEEKING ANIMALS

**Pattern-Seeking Animals** INSIDEOUT

Beard backroom boy pens his own symphony.

As a contributor to Spock's Beard's songwriting over the last 16 years, John Boegehold should be a lot better known. Pattern-Seeking Animals are a vehicle for the American's musical vision, albeit with the presence of ex-SB drummer Jimmy Keegan and current SB alumni Ted Leonard (vocals/guitar) and Dave Meros (bass) ensuring that Beard fans will be more than comfortable here. In fact, while they do make occasional forays into unexpected territory - a dash of psychedelia, a beatific pop detour - the bulk of this self-titled debut exists in the same shiny and



soulful but spiky symphonic prog domain that has proved so fruitful for the post-Neal Morse prog icons. The melodic and succinct likes of *The Same Mistakes Again* and *Fall Away* point to an expert economy of songcraft; hooks are wielded with dexterity,

Boegehold's keyboards a shimmering bedrock. More adventurous pieces such as *No Burden Left To Carry* and the grandiose *Stars Along The Way* are more about evolving atmospheres than nimble-fingered showboating, with a quiet melancholy informing Leonard's predictably dazzling vocals. A strong, intriguing debut. **DL**

## PELICAN

**Nighttime Stories** SOUTHERN LORD

First album in six years bears fruit for forward-thinking Chicagoans.

It is easy to understand the pure filth, sludgy and snotty, that regularly radiates from Pelican's sixth album *Nighttime Stories*. The unexpected death in 2014 of Jody Minnoch, who sang with members of the post-metallers in grindcore side act Tusk, collides with a distaste for the Trump-fronted political climate in America to form a dark backdrop to the album's gestation period. But for every handful of apocalyptic riffs, there is a feeling of hope. Opener *WST* is a brooding acoustic lament that is quickly joined by some post-rock stomp, while *Midnight And Mescaline* sounds



like Thrice letting loose. Proggers will get their kicks from the atmospheric musings which permeate the eight instrumental tracks, with the Chicago outfit knowing the right time to grab the gear stick and up the ante. At the crux of *Nighttime Stories*

though is the tumultuous crunch; the down-tuned attack of *Cold Hope* crashes and stings like a North Sea wave on a winter's night, while the title track grinds like early Mastodon. But as finale *Full Moon, Black Water* concludes, its dreamy bookends and tugging melody show that there can be beauty in the bleakness. **CC**

## PINKISH BLACK

**Concept Unification** RELAPSE

Left-leaning Texan doom-proggers again prove there is life after death.

Instead of giving up, Daron Beck and Jon Teague kept on making music together despite the suicide of their bandmate, bassist Tommy Atkins, in 2010. Three became two, and the pair launched Pinkish Black as they moved on from their old group, the gloomy-yet-experimental Great Tyrant, to start afresh. Now on album four, the duo snatch inspiration from all corners of their minds - from punk to space rock to Zeuhl - with title track opener *Concept Unification* a creepy, lurching electronic-led dirge, while *Until* sounds a little like if Queens Of The Stone Age got high and went lurking around some



graveyards. For further atmosphere, the dreamy synth of *Petit Mal* veers into indie and the swooping brush strokes of *Inanimatronic* sound fit for an independent movie soundtrack. Readers hankering for John Petrucci guitar runs or Jon Anderson

wails won't last long on *Concept Unification*, but more open-minded proggers will take heart from the non-conformity and the palette of styles, often elevated by a rich use of synth, while the ghostly 12-minute finale *Next Solution* will bag brownie points too. Often enthralling, Pinkish Black seem to be getting better with age. **CC**

## NAD SYLVAN

**The Regal Bastard** INSIDEOUT

And then there was three...



With his wild electro-shock of *Bride-Of-Frankenstein*-style hair and wide staring eyes, when haunting the stage in Steve Hackett's band, Nad Sylvan cuts a decidedly strange, spectre-like figure. It is, therefore, no surprise that the trilogy which began with 2015's *Courting The Widow*, and continued with *The Bride Said No* in 2017, has the air of a grandly elaborate theatrical production.

**Less reliant on vintage Genesis and notably improved.**

The final instalment of Sylvan's gothic romance pursues a storyline littered with vampires, victims, ancient curses, questions of destiny, questionable morals and doomed love, all of it served with a lurid splash of 'penny dreadful' gore. Filled with imposing, majestic themes, the album's portentous arrangements illustrate a series of plot devices that variously involve establishing an effective creeping menace, on the one hand with cape-swirling, villainous bursts of maniacal laughter, on the other, all of it wreathed in a flourish of somewhat camp Grand-Guignol delivery.

Sylvan admits that when writing the material in-between his touring commitments with Hackett, he sends his draft ideas out to what he calls 'proper musicians' to flesh things out as they see fit, leaving him to cherry-pick and hone the pieces. Over the course of three albums he's built up quite a cast of repertory players and pals to breathe life into his musical dioramas - including Hackett himself, who provides his trademark luminous fretwork to *Honey I'm Home*, and Govan Guthrie, who adds admirable pyrotechnics to *I Am The Sea*. Overall, *The Regal Bastard* is noticeably less reliant on vintage Genesis for its musical palette and inspiration than previous releases. This is indisputably an improvement, especially given Sylvan's uncanny ability to emulate the raspy timbres of Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins. While novel, that kind of close reading of somebody else's work jolts attention out of the song and, at times, is akin to a historical reenactment society recreating something that's entertaining enough at one level, but worryingly derivative on another.

The pop ethic of the mid-tempo *Whoa (Always Been Without You)* works better, even though it sometimes veers towards a composite of several other tunes that you can't quite put a name to. The title track, like most of the pieces, benefits from the tight, in-the-pocket rhythm section work of Nick D'Virgilio's crisp drumming and Jonas Reingold's fluent bass, along with grandiloquent orchestral embellishments that animate the dramatic intentions underpinning the work. Although a bonus track, Andrew Laites' captivating setting of WB Yeats' *The Lake Isle Of Innisfree*, a poem about finding one's true self, perhaps works best of all.

**SID SMITH**





## THE NIGHTTIME PROJECT

**Pale Season** DEBEMUR MORTI

Second offering from ex-Katatonians' Swedish supergroup.



Frederik Norrman's supergroup have evolved considerably since their 2016 debut album, in personnel if not musical style. Founding singer Tobias Netzell (better known for In Mourning and his stint alongside Norrman in October Tide) and erstwhile Mandylon drummer Nicklas Hjertton were forced to bow out in 2017 due to the all-too-familiar juggling of multi-project commitments, whereupon Norrman elected to upgrade to a four-piece, reuniting with bassist brother Mattias — a fellow Katatonia alumnus, of course — and Letters From The Colony pair Alexander Backlund (vocals) and Jonas Sköld (drums). If anything, their melodramatic musical template seems stronger as a result.

**They've only just begun to explore their musical possibilities...**

Always operating close to the opposite melodic end of the musical spectrum from their work in extreme metal outfit October Tide, the Norrman brothers amp up the soaring, melancholic tunes further still on this second full studio set, and Backlund's introduction adds a charismatic focal point.

The band have explained that thematically, *Pale Season* "refers to those less-colourful patches of memory — years that fly by without anything spectacular happening, which pale in comparison to the vividness of one's childhood or the early days of romance." In truth, those contrasting emotions are evoked more effectively by the peaks and troughs within the music than any particular lyric line.

Fading in with crackly vinyl sounds and seductively despondent guitar figures, opening track *Hound* evokes a distinct emo flavour to the brooding, introspective vocal melodies. But it's not too long before Norrman Sr's urge to strike a power chord or two gets the better of him, as the slow-building, epic sadness of *Rotting Eden* finally explodes into heart-wringing melodic metal.

*Embers* is similarly punctuated by a juddering, juggernaut-like onslaught of guitar riffs, as Backlund's yearning vocal reaches out to the heavens above it.

There's a mighty sweep to several other tracks, peaking with the seven-minute *Final Light*, but subtle touches like the insistent synth figure running through the title track still add welcome atmospheric dynamics. It does the album no harm to bring in outside influences: *Signals In The Sky* is lit up by fluttering female vocals, while wistful arpeggios are bookended by crunching machine gun guitar volleys.

They end on the most intriguing note of all, though, as there's a positively ambient feel to final track *Meridian*. It suggests this is a band that have only just begun to explore the musical possibilities open to them. We're left with the distinct impression that this is not so much the end of a *Season* as it is the start of a bright new one.

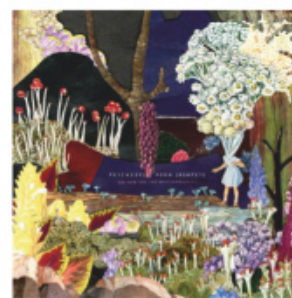
JOHNNY SHARP

## PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS

**And Now For The Whatchamacallit** MARATHON

Toasted Aussie-psych ahoy!

Even with two limited edition *High Visceral* LPs released in their native Australia, the Perth outfit still sold out two UK tours and probably just did it again on their current global jaunt. Touring life informs the band's first high-profile UK album, singer-leader Jack McEwan saying the original concept started as 1930s carnival "reimagined for future generations". That's before touring plunged him "into my own kind of circus... large nights out, larger characters, drunken recollections of foreign cities and rabbit hole-ing into insanity." This crystallises in single *Bill's*



*Mandolin*, inspired by the instrument given to him on a UK jaunt that belonged to his grandfather, which he strummed as a kid that was now privy to touring shenanigans. Like *Hymn For A Droid* and *Social Candy*, the song's built on dense, spiralling guitar tapestries

and complex rifferama over which McEwan's airy vocals breeze and croon, starbursting most prog-like on *My Friend's A Liquid* and *Native Tongue*, only collapsing into lysergic mayhem when *Dezi's Adventure* relocates *Pet Sounds* in a Martian dunny. Tame Impala and King Gizzard fans could love tossing these Crumpets on their barbie. **KN**

## SCARDUST

**Sands Of Time** M-THEORY

Israeli symphonic proggers reboot their dramatic debut.

Exuberant choirs, elegant strings and maximum shredding; no, it's not Nightwish but Israel's latest prog exports, Scardust. Originally released independently in 2017, *Sands Of Time* has now been reissued on double vinyl, complete with a bonus acoustic song. Opening with the five-part title track, Scardust's debut is packed with gothic drama from start to finish. Theatrical and catchy, the recordings occasionally venture into the worlds of prog jazz and baroque, and combine the five-piece's diverse influences — which include King Crimson, Queen, Symphony X and Dream Theater — with the bombast



of Once-era Nightwish. The compositions and instrumental performances are intense even in the second half, which focuses on heavier, standalone numbers and includes guest vocals from Orphaned Land's Kobi Farhi and Jake E (ex-Amaranthe). But it's

singer Noa Gruman's vocal gymnastics that stand out as she flips between elegant soprano and guttural demon in a split second. It's enhanced by her own Hellscore 'metal choir', who also appeared on Orphaned Land's *Unsung Prophets & Dead Messiahs*. 2015 EP *Shadow* hinted at what they could do, but *Sands Of Time* is extraordinary. **NRS**

## STALE STORLØKKEN

**The Haze Of Sleeplessness** HUBRO

Retro-futurist set using an arsenal of analogue synths.

Supersilent keyboard player Storløykken is a fixture of the Norwegian progressive scene, also playing with Motorpsycho, trumpeter Arve Henriksen, jazz guitarist Terje Rypdal and others. These instrumental pieces have elements of the buzzing, gloopy sound of vintage synths, but rather than simply making an analogue bubble bath, Storløykken shows that these instruments can still be deployed in new and exciting ways with plenty of imagination, and here with the addition of some crunchier digital synths. *Prelude...* has a rather old fashioned buzz about it but the title refers to the



altered states that the mind can experience during insomnia and so, typically, also feels rather unsettled. On *Orange Drops* an uneasy introduction cedes to a pretty, chiming sequencer pattern and high and low lead lines that weave together, while the brief

*Reality Box* mixes chimes with what sounds like a distressed mechanism of a clock ticking away the sleepless minutes. *Skyrocket Hotel* finds Storløykken playing fizzing figures over a clanky rhythm track and again there is something ominous about it. The eight-minute closer *Nitro Valley* gives the album an almost Tangerine Dreamy resolution. **MB**



## SWEET OBLIVION FEAT GEOFF TATE

**Sweet Oblivion** FRONTIERS

Ex-Queensrÿche frontman returns to prog metal.

There may be a parallel dimension somewhere in the infinite cosmic void where it is possible to review this without making reference to the new Queensrÿche album. But this isn't it. Italian ensemble Sweet Oblivion were conceived to reunite Geoff Tate's voice with the kind of music his former band were making back in the pioneering prog metal days of the mid-to-late 80s. Tate has been busy with his own Operation: Mindcrime project lately, releasing plenty of worthwhile but occasionally misguided music that never quite seems to honour the era that inspired its name, but it's not hard to



work out why he may have been tempted to participate here. Queensrÿche are on blistering form at the moment, with a new album, *The Verdict*, being widely hailed as their best in decades. Sadly there is nothing on *Sweet Oblivion* that comes close to Tate's

former comrades current efforts, but *Behind Your Eyes* and *Transition* press all the right buttons and offer a respectful facsimile of *Empire*-era 'Rÿche. Tate's voice is a reliable joy, too, and guitarist Simone Mularoni is a master of the emotive solo. The problem is, 'Rÿche diehards are already being expertly catered for elsewhere. Awkward. **DL**

## TERAMAZE

**Are We Soldiers** MASCOT

Might and melody from Australia's great white hopes.

Teramaze impressed with their 2015 record *Her Halo*, which melded deep and dynamic songwriting with enough prog metal punch to leave a mark. *Are We Soldiers* is bigger and busier. Pop enough to prize big melodies, yet heavy and just a little pompous in its scale and arrangement. It is still progressive metal as we know it - the jarring rhythms, hefty drum kits and endless arpeggios are all here in abundance, as is that frustratingly-compressed production quality that makes it feel like your ears are being sat on - but there's good work within those parameters. The grinding guitar sound



on *From Saviour To Assassin*, *M.O.N.S.T.E.R.S.*' frenetic fret-wrangling and the ear-worm chorus of *Weight Of Humanity* are all exhilarating. Enduring groups tend to simplify as they evolve, but *Soldiers* feels more complex and, at times, the worse for it. The

best moments are those in which the band luxuriate in space, most notably closer *Depopulate*, which throws in orchestral elements, a bounding metal verse, synth pads and just enough of the kitchen sink to sound sizeable yet not compromised by its audacity. We're not sure it's a crossover killer but prog metal fans may find themselves recruited. **MP**

## THE GIFT

**Antenna** BAD ELEPHANT

Mike Morton and co dial up their neo-prog influences.

The spirit and sound of 80s neo-prog abound on The Gift's fourth album. Unlike 2016's *Why The Sea Is Salt*, *Antenna* has no overriding concept and favours shorter compositions, although tracks like *Changeling* and *Closer* don't lack for length or multiple moods. The album tends to be very vocal-led, with singer Mike Morton taking a prominent role in both the mix and the arrangements. *Changeling* begins with a drum machine beat straight from the 80s new wave, before the full band kick in to take it into rockier territory. At times the ambition of the writing exceeds the grasp of the



production - a fatter sound would beef up *Wild Roses*, wherein the drums sound particularly thin, and the ballad *When You Are Old* lacks weight. Among the strongest tracks, *Long Time Dead* boasts a funky little riff and a bluesy harmonica intro, with tasteful soloing

from guitarist David Lloyd and Gabriele Baldocchi on piano in the midsection. *Hand In Hand* offers a lovely acoustic guitar intermission, while *Back To Eden* taps into the jaunty, jangly guitar pop of The Cure. There are plenty of engaging ideas here, but *Antenna* might benefit from just one more pass through the mixing desk. **DW**

## PSYCHEDELIC PROG

Take a trip with Rob Hughes as he seeks out the latest mind-expanding music.



Following on from previous albums *Ngan!* and *Tschak!*, Russian cosmonauts **Gnoomes** offer up *Mu!* (Rocket Recordings), the third in their self-styled 'Exclamation Mark Trilogy'. Leader Sasha Piankov has expanded the line-up to a quartet, allowing the band to stretch into spacey nirvana, from the blissed-out *How Do You* to the seriously trippy *Irma*, which sounds like horses stampeding over some distant astral horizon. Wonderful, in a word.



By contrast, inner space is the place for pan-Asian duo **Tengger**, whose *Spiritual 2* (Beyond Beyond Is Beyond) finds Itta and Marqido crafting psychedelic drone music on analogue synths, harmonium and various toy instruments. The result is profoundly trance-like, particularly *Kyrie* and the Neu!-inspired *High*. *Ajari* feels like a New Age rejoinder to the electronic pulse of The Who's *Baba O'Riley*.



On earthier territory, Californian veterans **Yawning Man** deliver improvised guitar instrumentals from deep in the Joshua Tree desert on the thrilling *Macedonian Lines* (Heavy Psych Sounds). The trio of Gary Arce, Mario Lalli and Bill Stinson have been together since the late 80s, perfecting a balance of post-rock and cerebral psych-blues. The emphasis here is on textures rather than riffs, with great titles like *I'm Not A Real Indian (But I Play One On TV)* and *Bowie's Last Breath*.



If it's dream-pop that floats your celestial boat, then Sweden's **Death And Vanilla** are ideal captains. The trio excel on *Are You A Dreamer?* (Fire), recalling late-60s Californian psych and 90s shoegaze, borne on the drifting vocals of Marleen Nilsson. They're also capable of rocking out when the mood takes, as on the churning *Vespertine*. Staying with a watery metaphor, *Until The Tide Creeps In* (Bella Union) is a swimmingly-fine debut from Brighton-based



four-piece, **Penelope Isles**. The band are anchored by the songwriting team of siblings Jack and Lily Wolter, whose mixture of indie-kid smarts and hazy psych-pop feels like a homegrown companion to Beach House. *Underwater Record Store* is as charming as its title suggests, while the percussive *Gnarbone* builds up a head of steam à la Public Service Broadcasting.



Led by Oli Heffernan (once of Year Of Birds), Middlesbrough's **Ivan The Tolerable & The Elastic Band** dispense proggy psychedelia and bearded space-jams on *Rations* (Stolen Body). Prolific to the point of averaging three albums a year, the instrumental ensemble rely on ambient grooves, pastoral moods and hypnotic guitars for maximum effect.



And chops to **Lost Souls Of Saturn**, whose self-titled debut (R&S) sees the core duo of Seth Troxler and Phil Moffa explore everything from avant-jazz to cult sci-fi, throbbing techno and beyond. Impossible to classify, easier to admire.







## UNITED PROGRESSIVE FRATERNITY

**Planetary Overload Part 1: Loss** GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Environmental concerns broadcast via a huge cast-list.



Climate change sceptics and those with more Catholic musical tastes may wish to avert their eyes and ears. Seldom has an album release proved more timely than this. United Progressive Fraternity's second album *Planetary Overload Part 1: Loss* arrives considerably behind its original schedule but hot on the heels of protests in cities around the world organised by Extinction Rebellion, designed to highlight concerns about climate change and other ills visited upon the planet by mankind. United Progressive Fraternity have adopted a thoroughly clunky name; but it communicates their raison d'être more accurately than any more abstract or exotic nomenclature could. Equally the album is a signpost for the album's contents and conveying the musical collective's core message, it couldn't be clearer.



**Satisfyingly cohesive despite 13 writers being involved.**



UPF are led by vocalist Mark Trueack – formerly of the much-missed Unitopia – and multi-instrumentalist Steve Unruh. However they are supplemented by a veritable army of other musicians spread internationally around the globe. As such *Planetary Overload...* runs the risk of the whole constituting less than the sum of its parts. But to the credit of producers Trueack and Unruh that pitfall is avoided, with the 11 tracks here proving satisfyingly cohesive despite no fewer than 13 writers being involved.

Stylistically, UPF have largely forged their own sonic identity – no mean feat given the diverse array of talent involved. A handful of familiar names pop up across the LP; Yes singer Jon Davison's vocals are immediately recognisable on the scene setting title track, which opens this 75-minute album, and he crops up again towards the album's conclusion on the almost 20-minute *Seeds For Life*. That song, the album's tour de force, also showcases the talents of Steve Hackett, former Hackett keyboardist Nick Magnus, Damanek's Dan Mash and Marek Arnold and Mystery's Michel St-Père.

But alongside the big and medium-sized names, there are numerous comparative unknowns whose deft musicianship makes this album such a delight. There's a vast range of instruments deployed, as UPF embrace French horn, sitar, oud, saz, bouzouki, flugelhorn, dulcimer and zither (many by the hand of Knifeworld's Charlie Cawood). Such a cornucopia might look gratuitous on paper but Trueack and Unruh have made some careful and astute musical choices.

Unsurprisingly perhaps there's a world music flavour to some of the material but it's very apposite given UPF's fundamental aim. Their message may not be subtle but it's compellingly communicated.

**NICK SHILTON**

## THE RESONANCE PROJECT

**The Resonance Project** SELF-RELEASED

Athletic instrumental prog from new LA duo, with moments of serene beauty.

The Resonance Project has been a long time in the making. The progressive metal duo, comprised of drummer Lang Zhao and guitarist Yas Nomura was initially conceived when the two studied together at the LA Musician's Institute. However, the ambition and complexity of their compositions was at the time beyond their ability to realise them, and so the two elected to wait. Now completed, their self-titled debut is six tracks of dense and instrumentally challenging progressive metal, with nods to classic acts such as Dream Theater and modern touchstones like Between The Buried And Me, Haunted



Shores and, mostly, Scale The Summit. There's guest spots aplenty, most recognisably session guitarist and Instagram star Mateus Asato, 16-string guitarist Felix Martin and funk/hip-hop/gospel ace Bobby Lewis. Ironically, the strongest track on the

album, *Reflection*, features no guests, and relies on a continually morphing set of arpeggiated chords and a heavenly melody line to drive the song. The music is mostly a rich jazz-fusion inflected take on modern progressive metal, but the dense instrumentals and acrobatics take a back seat for restful acoustic closer *Angel's Ladder*. **AL**

## THE SKYS

**Automatic Minds** SPINNUP

The Lithuanian proggers return, but are they on autopilot?

Lithuania's premier progressive rock exports The Skys return four years after *Journey Through The Skies* with sixth album *Automatic Minds*. Given the passage of time, *...Minds* is relatively modest, running only to nine songs and just over 40 minutes. It's also rather uneven qualitatively. *Get Rid Of This* is a disappointingly workmanlike opener before the album is considerably enlivened by the hypnotic title track with its manic sax breaks, followed by the intriguingly titled *The Guardian Of The Water Tower*, replete with a none-more-neo prog keyboard solo. Previous Skys albums have been littered with guests –



Lifesigns' keyboardist John Young and drummer Frosty Beedle; Roger Waters/Steven Wilson guitarist Dave Kilminster; Panic Room's Anne-Marie Helder – and *Automatic Minds* maintains the tradition. Floyd backing vocalist Durga McBroom features extensively

alongside Waters' sideman Snowy White, lending some signature guitar to *Love Of Life*, and perhaps most improbably Ariana Grande saxophonist Justin Klunk. *...Minds* shines in places – the brief but sweepingly cinematic *Singing Tree* and more expansive *Dead End*. It's a solid record but there's the nagging feeling that The Skys could do better. **NS**

## VANISHING TWIN

**The Age Of Immunology** FIRE

Multinational group's second LP, recorded on an iPhone and in an abandoned mill.

The name "Vanishing Twin" comes from the death in utero and foetal absorption of vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Cathy Lucas' unborn sibling. And if that sounds like it might indicate a nightmarish early-80s-style industrial band, the quintet's music is marked by her songwriting skills and adventurous arrangements. Despite their unorthodox choice of recording locations, *Immunology* has a warm, primary coloured sound, *Krk (At Home In Strange Places)* setting the tone with its gently swinging rhythm, wah-wah guitar and squidgy synth. Lucas' unruffled vocal cadences on *Wise Children* evoke Laetitia



Sadier with Stereolab and Monade, or Trish Keenan of Broadcast, while on *Magician's Success* the synth settings bring to mind Jean-Jacques Perrey and early Radiophonic Workshop via *An Electric Storm* by White Noise. The addition of acoustic guitar, Valentina

Magaletti's brushed snare, tuned percussion and Lucas' violin on *You Are Not An Island* makes for a delicious combination. Male voices singing in French and Japanese lead into Lucas' swooning choruses on *Planète Sauvage*, with its rolling groove, tricky snare and hi-hat patterns, and slightly cheesy synthetic 60s soundtrack strings. **MB**

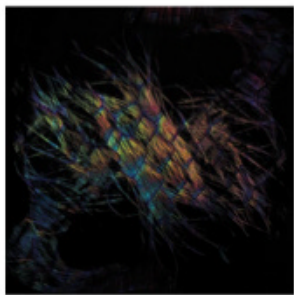


## VAURA

**Sables** PROFOUND LORE

Brooklyn post-men forge ahead with an 80s flourish.

You can still hear traces of Vaura's former life as a thunderous post-metal band on their third album, but the eight years that have passed since second album *The Missing* have clearly been transformative. An opulent and frequently bewildering splurge of brilliant ideas, *Sables* plunders the dark side of early 80s new wave, the frosty grandeur of gothic rock and the pulsing clatter of krautrock, with songs that are meticulously crafted and accessible, wilfully perverse and exploratory. It starts with *Espionage*, an exercise in glowering robot funk, powered by a distinctly Gabriel-esque stuttering



beat and stabbing, mutant funk guitars. *Zwischen* is a warped, reverb-heavy travelogue through Crimson-esque soundscapes, while *The Lightless Ones* marries insidious, shadowy melodies with a breezy kosmische gait. *The Ruins (Hymne)* is strident but mournful 80s

arena goth, with spidery arpeggios and a hint of doomed romance; *Eidolon* is all Cocteau shimmer before morphing into something more grandiose. Best of all, *Basilisk (The Infinite Corpse)* crams in post-rock ambient, amorphous noise and creepy art rock vibes redolent of Bauhaus. Progressive to the core and deliciously weird with it. **DL**

## WEEND'Ô

**You Need To Know Yourself** SONICBOND

First physical issue of the French four-piece's remixed 2012 debut set.

In any creative endeavour, the hardest thing is letting go. As a musician, after you've listened to a track 2,386 times, at what point are you going to be satisfied? French quartet Weend'Ô evidently reached that point too soon with their 2012 debut album, and soon afterwards elected to remix it, with producer Stephan DeReine adding new arrangements. It's only received a physical release now, but it's clear that the extra care and attention lavished on its presentation has been well worth it, lifting it comfortably above the realm of generic prog metal. Particularly captivating is the haunting airiness to



the extended intro of *Betrayal*, before it takes flight and then bursts into flame with some dizzying guitar work from T rence N'Guyen. Urgent percussion and antsy guitar heighten the emotional unease of *Run Away*, then we're further intrigued as Laetitia

Chaudemanche's ever-emotive vocal lines seem to reach out to be saved amid the thrashing metal maelstrom of the title track. Techno undercurrents and juddering time signatures deepen the darkness enveloping *Welcome In My Mind*, and the midnight piano that introduces *The Soulmate* sets a stylishly cinematic scene. **JS**

## PER WIBERG

**Head Without Eyes** DESPOTZ

Super Swede sideman takes centre stage.

The first thing that strikes you about Per Wiberg's solo debut is the sound. It is dark, bassy and uncomfortable – a sort of goth-garage-rock noise that reflects the prog journeyman's time with Opeth, Clutch's Bakerton Group and Spiritual Beggars, without emulating any of those. *Anywhere The Blood Flows* has a Hawkwind-esque space rock drone, particularly in the closing quarter, but is overlaid with a doomy piano chime. *Pass On The Fear* is bleak, plodding and paranoid – the shadows it references seem to move and build every time your head is turned. *Get Your*



*Boots On* has a little of Joy Division's monotone moodiness in its verse and then reveals itself to have more in common with Sweden's garage and punk lineage – the likes of Division Of Laura Lee et al. *Pile Of Nothing* and *Fader*, in contrast, opens

a grand doom portal, à la Candlemass. Somehow, though, Wiberg finds a dark commonality in all these seemingly disparate points of reference. To his credit, despite years spent serving in the wings with other groups, Wiberg's created a voice and aesthetic all of his own on *Head Without Eyes*. It's, er, worth a look... **MP**

## AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Progs* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...



Glam rock and post-punk collide on *Global Identity* (Taxi Gauche), the debut solo album from New York-based artist **Brion Starr**. His art rock flamboyant vocals hit home solid, experimental songwriting clearly harking back to Roxy Music and *Warm Jets*-era Eno. There's hints of Syd-psy here and Tom Verlaine's punky attitude there, but it's not pastiche – it's too exciting and convincing for that. Tape-loopy experiment 90 *Dresden* and droning *Dream Cream* indicate Starr's lofty creative intentions.



**The Soft Cavalry** is the latest project from Rachel Goswell of veteran UK shoegazers Slowdive and her husband, experienced session/touring musician Steve Clarke. Released on Bella Union, their self-titled record shares some of Slowdive's dream-pop DNA but with elements of Pink Floyd, Mercury Rev and The Blue Nile in here too. It's a monument of emotion, atmosphere and old-school melody, with walls of synths and reverberating guitars weaving a backdrop for Clarke and Goswell's heart-on-sleeve

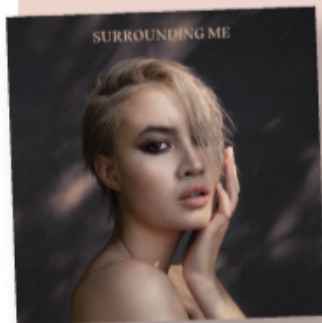


performances. It's a beautiful, considered piece of work and a triumph for Clarke who, with Goswell's help, struggled hard to muster the confidence to find his artistic voice. The gamble has paid off.

**The Ed Palermo Big Band** has released some seriously accomplished albums of Zappa and Todd Rundgren music, with King Crimson and Jethro Tull in their repertoire too. *A Lousy Day In Harlem* (Cuneiform) is a more down-the-line jazz record, with Palermo leading his superior orchestra through beautifully arranged pieces by Ellington, Monk, Coltrane et al, his own compositions fitting in easily among them.



Not the case with **Donna Zed**, the Swiss



model/singer/songwriter whose first EP *Morphine* led to opening slots on Steven Wilson's 2018 To The Bone tour. The follow-up *Surrounding Me* (Zamaros Musique) sees her further develop her soulful, leftfield mix of jazz, retro-pop and balladry. It's an empowering set elevated by Zed's cool charisma and her engagement with her material.

Finally, one that'll have some retrophiles vaulting over their Genesis vinyl collection for cover! **Flying Lotus** is the LA artist/producer behind the Brainfeeder label, and he produced Thundercat's storming recent record *Drunk*. With Alice and John Coltrane in his genetic and musical lineage, *Flamagra* (Warp) is his sixth album, a psychedelic, jazz-inflected mix of grooves, hip-hop, soul and pop. Among the guests are Thundercat, Parliament's George Clinton, and even genius film director and – lately – transcendental meditation guru David Lynch. This is richly imaginative avant-garde music that's far beyond rock's ramparts, but well worth venturing out there for.





## KING CRIMSON

**Heaven & Earth:  
Live And In The Studio, 1997-2008** DGM

Latest box set covers the *ProjeKcts*, Crimson's fractal explorations.



In prog, as in everything, there are certain timeless truths: Fairport Convention's final encore is always *Meet On The Ledge*, Tool's new album is always 'nearly done' [see *News for, er, news on that — Reviews Ed*], and King Crimson are, well, bloody overwhelming. To quote that lady from *Game Of Thrones*: "It is known, Khaleesi." No matter how ambitious and demanding a prog band aim to be, Crimson exceed them. In their 50th anniversary year, there will be many celebrations, including 50 live gigs (plus one). *Heaven & Earth* is the seventh of Crimson's mind-bogglingly rich box sets which will eventually take in every era of the band's work. This volume centres on the 90s *ProjeKcts* off-shoots as well as revisited versions of *The Konstruktion Of Light* and *The Power To Believe*. It's a Crimson fan's delight: 18 CDs, four Blu-rays and two DVD-A discs, covering 11 years of new and live material.

**Improv that makes the Grateful Dead seem moribund and clichéd.**

Crimson fans, like all fans, fixate on certain line-ups and albums. *Heaven & Earth* gives the listener an opportunity to reappraise an era that, arguably, sits in the shadow of Crimson's greater glories. *The Rekonstruktion Of Light* offers a profound reworking of the original *Konstruktion* album. *Rekonstruktion* shows how an album can wait for years for the world to catch-up. It's often alarming, industrial metal explorations were too much for many in 2000; now it feels like it was doing the spade-work for bands like The Fierce And The Dead. Pat Mastolotto's new acoustic/electric drum track and a fresh mix from Don Gunn enable *Rekonstruktion* to feel like a better studio partner for *The Power To Believe*, which always felt like a more completely realised offering. A remastered *Believe* is itself a rich and fearsome thing.

The sheer size of the box set gives space for every *ProjeKct* recording to be aired for the first time. It is intimidating, profound and revelatory. Four of the CDS and two Blu-rays are devoted to that era when the six Crimson's 'fractalised' into smaller groupings to better aid experimentation. It is a completist's dream, with one CD devoted to the 30 shows from *ProjeKct 2* alone. Here the band slowly interrogate a dozen-or-so tracks, over and over, altering their order and tone in search of their ultimate iteration. By turns crushing and subtle, Crimson's live exploration make so-called 'improv' outfits like the Grateful Dead look moribund and clichéd.

Should anyone be intimidated by the box set's near-religious intensity, David Singleton and *Prog*'s very own Sid Smith supply some beautifully poised sleeve notes. Yes, this box set might be frightening, but it holds treasure that lasts.

**RACHEL MANN**

## BRUFORD-BORSTLAP

**Sheer Reckless Abandon** SUMMERFOLD

Inspired pairing make creative sparks fly.

While Bruford needs no introduction, his partner for this reissue package, Dutch pianist, Michiel Borstlap, may not be so familiar to *Prog* readers. Born in 1966, despite his relative youthfulness, by the time he began working with Bill, this graduate of the Hilversum Conservatory had already been rubbing shoulders with Pat Metheny with his compositions covered by luminaries such as Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock.

This package brings together their first live encounter in 2002, *Bruford-Borstlap In Concert In Holland*, and includes a full-length DVD originally released in 2004, as well as two further live albums compiled from various recordings, 2004's *Every Step A Dance*, *Every Word A Song* and 2007's *In Two Minds*. All three albums have an intimate quality to them allowing us to eavesdrop on a deeply fascinating extended musical conversation. In a partnership that goes far beyond Bruford's collaborations with Patrick Moraz in the 80s, their articulate improvisations have a voracious free-flowing aspect that rushes past any



obvious stylistic boundaries and avoids ever becoming bogged down with technical displays. Throughout, the pair never lose sight of groove or melody as the basis for their mutual explorations.

Borstlap is a constant revelation whose lyrical warmth is never far from

the surface. A formidable and persuasive player with a determined gaze on where his notes are best deployed to have their greatest effect, his piano and subtle use of synthesiser is occasionally reminiscent of Joe Zawinul's soaring extemporisation and wry funk that provides the perfect foil to Bruford's restless dynamism.

The DVD is a joy, providing a ring-side seat on their enthusiastic interactions with each other. As Bruford whips up his patented rhythmic bedlam, we see the pianist's hands poised, ready to descend. At the last minute, the drummer changes course with Borstlap instantly reacting, taking the piece to pastures new. With either player likely to take the initiative in steering the feel or shape of the music, this collection has an encyclopaedic, expansive intensity. **SS**

## KATATONIA

**Night Is The New Day** PEACEVILLE

Katatonia's atmospheric classic, now available in book form.

First released in 2009, Katatonia's eighth album marks the point where the band completed their slow journey from monolithic merchants of doom into something altogether more tender. While opener *Forsaker* opens with thundering riffs, the battery subsides and gives way to more atmospheric concerns, music that seeks to attain transcendence through elegance as much as aggression. A decade on, you can hear the influence of this album in the music of Ghost and Gojira, Opeth and Ulver, even Steven Wilson. And it's a reminder of the extraordinary impact Massive Attack's unearthly 1998 track *Inertia Creeps* had on a whole generation of open-minded rock musicians.

For its 10th birthday the album has been repackaged as a hardback book wrapped in new artwork from long-time collaborator Travis Smith, containing the original album, a second disc made up of the songs that appeared on the 2011 tour edition of the release, plus seven live tracks, a DVD, and the obligatory slice of coloured vinyl. Of the



extra material, the highlights come in the shape of Frank Default's lilting remix of *Day And Then The Shade*, and a savage version of *Liberation* recorded at Germany's Summer Breeze festival in 2012.

The DVD features a 5.1 mix and high-res audio courtesy of The

Pineapple Thief's Bruce Soord, plus the original promo videos for *The Longest Year* - set in what appears to be a Cormac McCarthy-inspired post-apocalyptic Hellscape - and the spooky gothic nightmare of *Day And Then The Shade*. Rounding off the package is a 10-inch EP of *The Longest Day* which, while completing the reissue jigsaw on aesthetically pleasing red vinyl, feels a little superfluous given that its four tracks also feature elsewhere in the set.

This is but a small quibble. As *Prog*'s Dom Lawson says in the excellent notes that accompany the release, *Night Is The New Day* was "music that braved the dark while daring to explore its limitless possibilities", and this lovely repackaging does a fine job of continuing the adventure. **FL**



## PROCOL HARUM

**Broken Barricades** ESOTERIC

The rockier bridge between *AWSOP* and their symphonic future.

By 1971, Procol Harum were a significantly different band from the one which had soundtracked Britain's Summer Of Love with the trippy, Bach-quoting *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*. The psychedelic/proto-prog sound they had pioneered on their first few albums was in abeyance and in its place was a far earthier vibe that, as the press release for *Broken Barricades* said at the time, leaned in the direction of "fashionable musical heaviness." And while they had hardly gone full-on Sabbath, there's undeniably a harder, more muscular feel to this album, the sound of a band contemplating the US arena rock circuit while still trying to hang on to what made them special in the first place.

It starts in fine style with the dramatic, jabbing riff of *Simple Sister*, played by guitarist Robin Trower as though goading the rest of the band into action. Gary Brooker ably rises to the challenge, his voice still retaining its soulful melodicism in this new setting, while his bluesy, jangling piano is more than a match for Trower's soloing. And



while the sound might be tougher, the arrangement is still pleasingly baroque. Less pleasing are the misogynistic lyrics, Keith Reid having seemingly moved on this album from gloomy romanticism to a violently downbeat assessment of the world.

There are two lovely ballads here in the title track and *Luskus Delph*, Brooker's yearning vocals almost inevitably inviting comparison with Traffic's Steve Winwood, but they're outnumbered by gritty blues rockers such as *Memorial Drive* and *Power Failure*, the latter even featuring a drum solo. The album's other stand-out track is *Song For A Dreamer*, Trower's shimmering tribute to Jimi Hendrix.

*Broken Barricades* proved to be a turning point for Procol, with Trower leaving soon after its release, and the band subsequently embracing a more symphonic rock sound. This reissue also features two previously unreleased live concerts, the Stockholm gig from October '71 including an excellent version of *Repent Walpurgis*. **JB**

## TRAFFIC

**The Studio Albums 1967-1974** UMC/ISLAND

A real Traffic jam...

At once mercurial and wildly diverse, Traffic are one of those bands who occupy that netherworld on the fringes of progressive music. For some, the band are as prog as you can get, the prodigious nature of their musicianship and their melding of jazz, folk and rock more than evident signposts to planet prog. And yet the more snobbish listener can just as easily wrinkle their nose at the thought of Steve Winwood, Jim Capaldi and co holding their own with Fripp, Wakeman, Hackett et al...

Traffic's was essentially a two-phase career, Winwood absconding to join Eric Clapton in Blind Faith in 1969, returning to the Traffic fold the same year to create some truly stunning music. Indeed, it's possibly the sound of those first two albums, *Mr. Fantasy* (1967) and *Traffic* (1968), that invite the progish scorn, bedecked in the psychedelia of the time, and the hit singles *Hole In My Shoe* and *Paper Sun*. With early songwriter Dave Mason ousted upon Winwood's return, from 1970's *John Barleycorn Must Die*, Traffic were on



a roll. How this classic album doesn't appear in great prog album lists, we simply do not know. Equally how 1971's exemplary *The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys*, its 11-minute title track possibly the greatest thing the band recorded, failed to chart in the UK (it went Top

10 in the US) is another of rock music's great anomalies. The magic dipped slightly on 1973's *Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory*, and by the time of 1974's *When The Eagle Flies*, Rebop Kwaku Baah had been fired, the band then disbanding midway through a tour promoting the album.

Each Traffic album has been remastered from original tapes and presented with gatefold sleeves and pink eye Island Records labels along with posters for each. Being a vinyl set, however, there's no sonic extras, no previously unreleased gems to tempt you to part with your money (and this set's not cheap). However, bearing in mind the sheer majesty of the music that Traffic created, that might just be enough for some of you. **JE**

## TANGERINE DREAM

**In Search of Hades: The Virgin Recordings 1973 - 1979** UMC

Visionary electronic meditations in a definitive box.



To say Tangerine Dream's output is big is to understate how vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly big it is. With over 100 studio and live albums prospective listeners can be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed. This 18-disc box (16 CDs and two Blu-rays) aims to be the definitive collection of their most successful and well-loved era.



**Terrifying  
summonings of sci-fi-  
tinged cosmic horror.**



After four albums fusing nascent krautrock with fledgling synthesizer technology, 1973's seminal meisterwerk *Phaedra* garnered commercial and critical acclaim. Championed by John Peel, the avant-garde album charted at Number 15 in the UK and heralded a run of groundbreaking releases on Virgin. *Phaedra*, *Rubycon* (with a must-hear extended 15-minute intro), *Ricochet*, *Stratosfear*, *Encore*, *Cyclone* and *Force Majeure* have been remastered from the original tapes by Ben Wiseman.

Steven Wilson has created new mixes where multitracks were available: for *Ricochet*, two tracks from *Phaedra* and the previously unreleased soundtrack to the play *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Wilson has mixed these for hi-resolution stereo and 5.1 on the Blu-rays. All of the above is reason enough for newbies to dive in. The real gold for acolytes lies in the treasure trove of unreleased material.

As well as *Tyrannus* there are two CDs of outtakes from the *Phaedra* sessions and three full concerts including their UK premiere on June 16, 1974. During this period Edgar Froese, Christopher Franke and Peter Baumann improvised sets so these essentially comprise another six CDs of 'new' music. The legendary BBC Radio 1 recording of the Albert Hall gig from the 1975 *Ricochet* tour was previously available in 2003's *Bootleg Box Vol. 1* but here it's newly remixed from original tapes and prepended by John Peel's enthusiastic introduction.

The music itself is dark and exploratory, perfectly captured by Rupert Lloyd's cover art. *Tyrannus* and the live shows are terrifying summonings of sci-fi-tinged cosmic horror with bass sequencers pulsing like a doomed spaceship's engine room. From 1978 onwards, a more traditionally prog sound emerged incorporating drums and occasional vocals; single edits and hard-to-find cuts from this era have been liberated from long-deleted collections and appear as bonus tracks on their parent studio album. For visual content there's a 68-page book, the 1976 Coventry Cathedral transmission for OGWT, a 45-minute documentary and performance for German TV.

Purists may prefer the original vinyl where analogue synths were faithfully captured, but the digital sheen applied to these classic albums sounds modern, highlighting the impact the Virgin-era Tangerine Dream had on electronica to come.

**CHRIS MCGAREL**



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## SIGUR RÓS

### Ágætis Byrjun - A Good Beginning (20th Anniversary Edition) KRUNK

The Icelandic duo's breakthrough – in a seven-disc celebration set.

Nothing like the tricky second record syndrome for Sigur Rós, given that their debut, 1997's *Von*, was met with about as much acclaim and interest as another Theresa May press conference on Brexit. Case in point, *Ágætis Byrjun* may have been released in Iceland in 1999, where it brought new meaning to the term slow-burner, but didn't see the light of day in the UK until a year later and in the States a year after that. It's an old adage, but it's a truism too; good things come to those who wait.

Twenty years later and the magic of *Ágætis Byrjun* – musical smoke and mirrors, lush atmospherics, avant-garde arrangements, endless experimentation, songs written in a nonsensical language – is still self-evident. Beautiful, cold, intense, uplifting, its impact was as seismic, you would imagine, as the first time someone heard a distorted, electric guitar come snaking out of their radios; like nothing they had ever heard before.



The original album remains for all to see and hear, but if you really want to dig down into its creation and genesis, then this seven (!) LP boxset is for you (other smaller variations are available). The word lavish is often overused, but the 84-page hardback book, three

discs of rarities, as well as the *Live At Íslenska Óperan* performance from 1999 is just that. All remastered, all rebooted, all brought back to life. There are cassette clicks, some fresh-faced photos of the band – who look like these performances are happening almost in spite of themselves – mere striplings of youth experimenting with strings, oboes and song speeds in order to find the right way into and out of their music. To say they're meticulous would be to understate it somewhat.

It would be a lie to say that it all works or is always an easy listen, but if art truly comes from adversity, then this is the sound (and vision) of a band putting a tonne of work in and seeing their dream fully realised. **PW**

## FRANK ZAPPA

### Zappa In New York ZAPPA/UMC

Epic five-disc reissue for Frank's '76 NYC residency.

Whether you fancy watching Frank Zappa in hologram form or not, this five-disc 40th anniversary edition of one of the late, great maverick's finest live albums is an irresistible indulgence. With vast quantities of previously unheard material bolstering what is an already iconic first act, this is a typically generous redux from the Zappa organisation, but it's the sheer, spine-tingling clarity and sparkle of the remastering that lifts this into realms of the spectacular. Captured in late 1976 during a four-show run at New York's Palladium, it's a snapshot of one of Zappa's finest ever bands hitting an exquisite level of shared chemistry, replete with setlists that leap from early Mothers classics right through to the then-fresh *Zoot Allures*.

The main album remains one of the most exuberant of Zappa's countless live releases. Peppered with all the usual skewed banter, the lyrically mischievous likes of *I Promise Not To Come In Your Mouth* and *Honey, Don't You Want A Man Like Me?* crackle with



invention and joy, but as ever, it's the lengthier jams that truly showcase the sublime interplay between Zappa and a stellar cast, with drummer Terry Bozzio, percussion virtuoso Ruth Underwood and trumpeter Randy Brecker making particularly telling but

graceful contributions throughout, even as their leader spirals off on another mellifluous instrumental tangent. The final, sprawling *The Purple Lagoon* is simply stunning and one of those perfect Zappa moments that shines the spotlight on his compositional skills, rather than his propensity for (admittedly quite funny) jokes about blowjobs.

The remaining three discs are full of similarly breathtaking ensemble performances, from a magical *Peaches En Regalia* to a lurching, muscular *The Torture Never Stops*, via an extraordinary, Eddie Jobson-starring 28-minute version of *Black Napkins*. Above all, this is glorious, life-affirming, heartily three-dimensional music. Frank lives. **DL**

## ZEE FEATURING RICHARD WRIGHT AND DAVE HARRIS

### Identity GONZO

Floyd's "Quiet one" and his noisy 1984 synth-pop excursion.



When Pink Floyd first materialised, it was Rick Wright's Farfisa organ providing space age edge before he became the band's key sonic architect after Syd's departure. Known as "the quiet one", Wright's sublime contributions were pivotal as Floyd ascended to global domination, but when Roger Waters was building *The Wall* he felt sidelined, exacerbated by family concerns and encroaching depression. Wright left during recording, playing its tour as a hired hand before departing until Waters had left.



**Sticks two fingers up at megalomaniac conceptualising.**



Driven by anger at his shoddy treatment, Wright created a polar opposite to Floyd's rock-wired bombast by recording *Identity* as Zee with singer-guitarist Dave Harris from New Romantics Fashion. Wright had acquired the hugely-expensive Fairlight synthesiser and it often sounds like he's trying out his new toy's arsenal of pre-recorded orchestral bites, framing Harris' moody lyrics with big dustbin-lid drums, synthetic riffs and flutey melodies; no bad thing if taken in the spirit that its delights were then coating most mainstream music (including Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love*). Sticking two fingers up at Waters' megalomaniac conceptualising, Wright obviously relished exploring this brave new world, even if he later disparaged *Identity* as "an experimental mistake".

Its eight tracks were well sequenced, starting with jumpy single *Confusion* (a 12-inch mix and racy B-side *Eyes Of A Gypsy* providing reissue extras). Wafting on dense electronic static, *Voices* is a lush ballad garnished with jazz fusion motifs and unmistakable Floydian resonance. The stuttering electro groove of *Private Person* could've sat proudly on NYC's black music radio, while *Strange Rhythm* invokes Bowie-like vocals, Afrocentric chants and pulsing marimba-grooves. Side two's *Cuts Like A Diamond* is the most Floydian offering, placing electronic woodwind tones and soaring guitar over stately plod. *By Touching* maintains the slow tempo, vocals struggling over crashing drums. After marimba-topped jazz-funk romp *How Do You Do It*, Wright reasserts his role as slow-burn master on soft-focus ballad *Seems We Were Dreaming*, resurrecting his Hammond organ over the cavernous beats.

Recent years have seen Wright's colossal contributions to Floyd acknowledged, including by the band on 2014's *The Endless River* and Nick Mason's recent tour. This era-defining romp is now a cult classic and perhaps the oddest, most "non-Floyd" work in their catalogue – an intriguing snapshot of the undervalued master having a blast of his own in the shiny modern world, using its finest tools.

**KRIS NEEDS**



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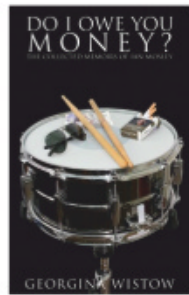


## DO I OWE YOU MONEY? THE COLLECTED MEMOIRS OF IAN MOSLEY

**Georgina Wistow** WIZOFMOS PUBLISHING

Marillion's tub-thumper, in his own tome.

**D**on't be fooled by those Aviator shades and calm demeanour, Ian Mosley is clearly some kind of monster. And by monster I mean a *Sesame Street* ogre you can't help but like but are still worried he might eat your kids. A thrilling player and a man of few words, he's the inscrutable metronome who helped propel Marillion ever upward. The son of a classical violinist and besotted with music (and hitting things) from a very early age, this occasionally confused collection (that's more Wistow's stuttering delivery rather than Mosley's storytelling) of memoirs and reflections from fellow band members, family and



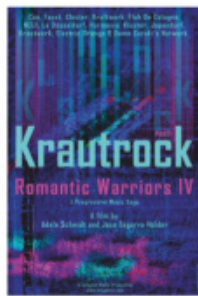
friends, charts a journey through the drudgery and uncertainty of session work, the fleeting success of playing with Steve Hackett and Darryl Way's Wolf, hard drugs (if you consider being prescribed Prozac a hard drug) and a slew of female companions that might make Warren Beatty blanch. There's near-arrest, usually aided and abetted by Mark Kelly, the rise and fall of Fish (and the daunting, wearying repercussions of being cornered by circumstance and a singer who wants nothing more than to leave your band) and how he almost laid out Steve Hogarth on a tour bus in Italy once. We knew it, the brute... **PW**

## ROMANTIC WARRIORS IV: KRAUTROCK PART 1

**Various Artists** ZEITGEIST MEDIA

Essential viewing for krautrock fans.

**T**here really should be a *Prog* award handed out to filmmakers Adele Schmidt and Jose Zagarra Holder for their incredible work in documenting progressive music's origins and development. Having already focused on the successors to the classic bands of the 70s, the RIO movement and the historical and current strands of the Canterbury scene, their affectionate gaze has now turned to Germany's heroes. Detailing the anarchic collision between the avant-garde impulses of the art scene, agit-prop theatre and a defiant pushback away from US dominance in pop and rock culture, the distinctive world they created is explored via a series of



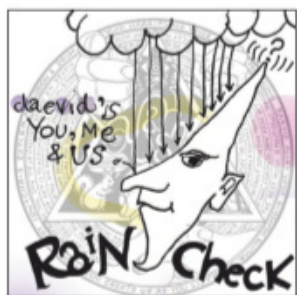
fascinating, insightful interviews with several sonic pioneers including Michael Rother, Irmin Schmidt, Faust's Jean-Hervé Péro and Kraftwerk's Wolfgang Flür. Allowing them and several others the space to relate first-hand experiences, simply and directly without any of the jarring editorial leaps that so often mar the rockumentary format, gives this history an authoritative feel. Sympathetically interspersed with rare footage and, where applicable, some superb contemporary performances, this two-hour instalment of the *Romantic Warriors* series eschews gratuitous nostalgia while bearing witness to an innovative movement. **SS**

## YOU, ME & US

**Rain Check** BONOBOS' ARK

Daavid Allen, Yumi Hara and Chris Cutler on top form in Tokyo 2013.

**T**his 30-minute DVD was originally released as a limited edition for fans while Allen took the proverbial rain check and delayed embarking on what became *You, Me & Us*' Get Well Soon Daavid! tour in 2014. The fact that it documents one of his last tours before his death in 2015 only adds to its poignancy. While Allen was always keen to break new ground, here he subtly nods back to the past on *Madame O*, a song-cum-poetry recitation, which, set to semi-improvised backing, evokes his mid-60s free jazz/poetry combo the Daavid Allen Trio. Allen adds his trademark glissando



guitar to the Hara composition *Statement Heels* on which she plays rippling piano, while Cutler – one of the many outstanding UK drummers who stood in with Gong in the 70s – whirls his arms around landing a rim shot, plays some intricate hi-hat then clips the bell of the ride cymbal, showing us the groove by playing all around it. The trio play a reworking of Soft Machine's *Hope For Happiness* with Allen reminding us that he was an exciting, unpredictable lead guitarist, and the set closes with a powerful version of Gong's erotically charged *Dynamite/I Am Your Animal*. **MB**

## MUZAK: THE VISUAL ART OF PORCUPINE TREE

**Lasse Hoile** FLOOD GALLERY PUBLISHING

Collected creepy visuals which enhanced the prog favourites' aura.



**“W**hat you are holding in your hands”, says Lasse Hoile in the introduction, “is a record of eight years' work for what was the best band on the planet at the time.” It is, he continues, “something for the eyes that accompanies something for the ears”. Indeed it may, as he suggests, be best experienced with Porcupine Tree's last four albums playing alongside. Yet even as a silent book of art and photography it brims with a dark fascination.

## A mix of Francis Bacon, Banksy on Mandrax and Blair Witch.

It may prove even darker than you'd expected. These are, in the main, very sinister images, pessimistic in their view of modern life, its perceived soullessness and failed communications. While Steven Wilson and band's songs certainly delved into these areas between 2002 and 2009, Hoile's accompanying art amps up the misery without the life-affirming respite which music inevitably brings. *In Absentia*, *Deadwing*, *Fear Of A Blank Planet* and *The Incident* were no cheery celebrations, but these images, separated, feel like a cross between Francis Bacon, Bill Viola, Banksy on Mandrax and *The Blair Witch Project*.

Designed by the Dane's collaborator Carl Glover (and containing many previously-unseen works), *Muzak* is a lush production, expensive and collectable. Glover interviews band members Richard Barbieri and Gavin Harrison, their former manager Richard Allen and Hoile himself. There's much talk here of budget and technique, though Barbieri nails it when musing “there seemed to be a balance between beauty and the grotesque”. *In Absentia*, though, prefers the latter, Hoile's own face in warped poses of agonised torture as if trapped in Hell. *Deadwing* lightens up (relatively), depicting women, children, hooded figures and spooky forests. *Fear Of A Blank Planet* creates resonant images of alienated youths addicted to TV and pills in bleak concrete cityscapes, while *The Incident* fuses Victorian Gothic and a dash of Tarkovsky (again, veiled heads are used to unnerve us).

Some of this ominous, malevolent mood could be stereotyped as Scandinavian, but you sense the artist is reacting to a global unease (as well as to what he specifically hears in P-Tree's work). Stressed eyeballs, brains on palms and a level of foreboding which Edvard Munch might have deemed excessive are not everybody's idea of a deluxe coffee table book – (it's averse to the wit of, say, *Hipgnosis*) – but then again P-Tree thrived against the grain, their success defying and bewildering the mainstream. Fans, thus, will love immersing themselves in this eerie, twitchy world, which is perhaps closer to reality than most of us care, or dare, to admit.

**CHRIS ROBERTS**



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# Take a bow

## WINTER'S END

**VENUE** THE DRILL HALL, CHEPSTOW  
**DATE** 04-07/04/19

It's interesting to note that talking at gigs is one subject that is usually guaranteed to send prog fans into a rage. Prog is more than aware that the majority of attendees at Winter's and Summer's End are those who expect to enjoy their live music unencumbered by chat. So it's equally interesting to note that this year at Winter's End, more so than any other, an abundance of chatter is evident when a band clearly not to the liking of the otherwise silent chatterers is on stage.

A little more distressing is to overhear one berk openly mocking the foreign accent of one of the artists. One would hope this especially is down to festival fatigue, being Sunday, and over-indulgence, and is not a reflection of the more insidious factors creeping into today's society. Prog has always been the most welcoming of communities, despite the obvious snobbery that can exist in small pockets. But this kind of attitude is just not on. Fortunately, the general atmosphere of these welcome events is one of camaraderie, and is mostly what's on offer, as well as some damn fine music.

### FRIDAY

We're thrown a slight curveball with the opening act on Friday, American **Aaron Brooks**. One man and a guitar isn't your normal Winter's End fare, but Brooks' jovial demeanour and nods to The Beatles eventually wins healthy applause.

**Midnight Sun** are, however, a much better-known entity, featuring one of the festival organisers, Huw Lloyd-Jones, on vocals. With the band last seen at Summer's End back in 2017, it seems like we've been waiting for their debut album for aeons. Fortunately, *Dark Tide Rising* is about to drop so it's a fortuitously timed appearance and a set that throws hints of Marillion and Talk Talk together with some sublimely heavy guitar and adds to a fine performance overall. And if you thought German headliners **RPWL** were all about sounding like Pink Floyd, then you'd be partly right. But the quartet offer up their new album, *Tales From Outer Space*, in their impressive set, which is melodic, heavy prog, and a real crowd-pleaser in Chepstow, with an added Pink Floyd cover thrown in for good measure.

### SATURDAY

With the festival defying the mythic 'Winter's End time' (it largely runs to time all weekend!),

**Exploring Birdsong** open the Saturday and are utterly charming and completely beguiling. They play piano-led progressive rock with just bass and drums, and two female backing vocalists as accompaniment to Lynsey Ward's delightful vocal leading things from the front. A bright future, we'd say. French proggers **Weend'ô** are up next, and were also last seen at Summer's End in 2017. And my, have they improved. Now with *Time Of Awakening* released, the band seem to be ever more finding the perfect balance between progressive themes and harder-edged grit. Laetitia's vocal has clearly grown in stature, no longer lost in the mix as it seemed to be two years ago.

**Cyril** bring forth a deluge of "Nice one" jokes from the throng, although one suspects the honouring of a 1970s Tottenham Hotspur footballer might be lost on a bunch of Germans. They go down well with the audience, featuring as they do Marek Arnold who most here know from his work with Damanek, and although enjoyable enough, they don't exactly blow you away. Alas, a family dinner overruns so we miss Scottish proggers **Abel Ganz**, but talk of them is mostly positive when we do get back to the Drill Hall for **Threshold**.

Threshold have such great potential. They cracked Europe early on and they've made some excellent albums, 2017's *Legends Of The Shires* among them.

**Aaron Brooks:**  
a welcome curveball.

Cyril do a nice one.

**"Judging by the expressions on some people's faces, Winter's End hasn't ever witnessed anything like ZIO."**



Z10: a barmy breath  
of fresh air.

Tweet the news,  
Exploring Birdsong  
are delightful.

Midnight Sun  
shine some  
strange colours.

Threshold: on the  
threshold of greatness,  
but falling short.



Kayak avoid the choppy waters of a Sunday night headline slot.

RPWL:  
Germanic gems.

Weend'ô deliver a much improved performance.

L'Anima: straight over the heads of some eejits.

but they've largely treated the UK and its prog scene as an afterthought, which is disappointing when one considers the standard bearers they could've been. Tonight they're good, but veer towards the perfunctory.

The set, largely built around the latest album, is enjoyable, but doesn't blow you away in the manner you might expect from a band of more than 30 years' standing. And ultimately, there's no way round the fact that returned singer Glynn Morgan, while good, is no match for his predecessor Damian Wilson as singer or crowd pleaser. Don't get us wrong — Threshold are good, but you're left feeling tonight could have been so much better.

## SUNDAY

Sunday starts with a jolt of enjoyable Gibraltar prog metal via the streets of London, in the shape of **L'Anima**. Fired on by Breed 77 guitarist Pedro Caparros and with former Yardbirds singer Andy Mitchell's silken croon, they certainly wake up the crowd and even inspire a Winter's End first: a lone female up and dancing with real enthusiasm! Sadly it's not what a tiny minority of the audience want to hear, and boy do they let everyone around them know it. German quartet **Crystal Palace**

placate the aged rabble-rousers with a polished set of classic-sounding prog. The band are clearly delighted to be here, and are the second German act to have the crowd tittering at the football connections, one wag suggesting he'd favour the band over the UK football team in a penalty shoot-out. It's no surprise to see their latest album, *Scattered Shards*, flying off the merch table.

**Godsticks** bring with them an element of class with their set of groove-laden heavy prog. The band are very much a well-oiled live machine, having toured with The Pineapple Thief so extensively and with mainman Darran Charles playing second guitar with Bruce Soord's mob. There are a few grumbles about lack of keyboards from those stuck in a dreadful time warp, but the majority seem to enjoy the technical proficiency. We think they're rather wonderful.

Judging by the expressions on some people's faces, Winter's End hasn't ever witnessed anything like **ZIO**. And, let's say it from the off, the band are fantastic. A joyous breath of fresh air from the minute they dive into a thumping take on Toto's *Girl Goodbye*, which morphs into an almost unrecognisable version of Supertramp's *Bloody Well Right*. Before you know it, they're dashing headlong into a cover of Nirvana's *Territorial Pissings* (now that really is a Winter/Summer's End first!), bassist Lzi Hayes hovering over drummer Jimmy Pallagrosi, who is thrashing away at a kids' drumkit at the front of stage.

**"If you thought German headliners RPWL were all about sounding like Pink Floyd, then you'd be partly right."**

## MICHAEL ROTHER

|         |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|
| VENUE   | UNDER THE BRIDGE, LONDON |
| DATE    | 05/04/19                 |
| SUPPORT | THURSTON MOORE           |

It's rare to see a venue so packed for a support act, but so it proves for the former Sonic Youth frontman. It's an odd choice, as he comes from a lineage more associated with the likes of Glenn Branca

and the No wave scene rather than what came from Germany in the 70s. If Moore had played with his current London-based band, that would've offered us a chance to 'compare and contrast', but instead he plays an improvised solo set. His Fender Jazzmaster is fed through myriad effects pedals, and the music ebbs and flows, rising from plucked arpeggios through to wiggled-out walls of noise and back again.

The last time this writer was at Under The Bridge, we were met with the scarcely believable sight of Chelsea FC owner Roman Abramovich grinning and nodding his head vigorously to the Magic Band playing *Ant Man Bee* from *Trout Mask Replica*. Tonight's crowd appear to be oligarch-free, but when Michael Rother comes on to deliver his set of irresistible motorik it's difficult not to nod along.

Rother was originally influenced by Jimi Hendrix before finding his métier in the 70s with Neu!, so it's appropriate that the set opens with a cacophonous blast of guitar squall, before gliding smoothly into a selection from 1979's *Katzenmusik*.

The trio utilise a lot of technology onstage, with Rother using a laptop to produce billowing synth sounds that drift through the songs as they do on his solo



## GOLDRAY

|       |                        |
|-------|------------------------|
| VENUE | THE UNDERWORLD, LONDON |
| DATE  | 26/04/2019             |

To listen to Goldray is to transport yourself back to the late 1960s. Since forming in 2010 as the part-time muse of then-Reef guitarist Kenwyn House, the quartet's music has established them as one of the most loyal and authentic time capsules in rock today. Their riffs have the cosmic aggression of West Coast psychedelia. Their production has the analogue crispness of The Doors. And it seems that loyalty to recreating the rock'n' roll sphere as it existed 50 years ago extends to their live shows, too.

As Goldray prepare to take the stage of London's Underworld, the small venue is transformed into an impressive time capsule. The era of flower power is resurrected live and in living colour: vibrant lilies dangle in abundance from the amps and mics, while the band's name is presented on the backdrop in near-gaudy levels of gold glitter. These aesthetics only continue as House and his nostalgic cohorts take to the stage, met with a warm response from a sparse yet enthusiastic crowd. House - wielding his classic Gibson - dons a t-shirt with yet more petals printed on it, but frontwoman Leah Rasmussen steals the visual show. She is coated from head to toe in the most regal gold and blue gown, made complete by a flamboyant tiara and polka dot, sequin-laced cape. Tonight she is the high priestess of hard rock, with both the look and enigmatic dance moves of a female Arthur Brown. The cherry on this psychedelic cake comes from dancing, multi-coloured lighting, which provides all the pomp and extravagance of a true classic rock show.

Musically, Goldray are similarly unstoppable. Their hour-long ceremony of heavy, vintage antics is dominated by riffing track after riffing track from their acclaimed debut album, 2017's aptly titled *Rising*. The slow-building *Diamond Road* appears early in the evening, with its seven-minute breadth used to slowly crawl from dissonant melodies all the way to brazen, percussive stomps. *Soulchild* is a more straight-shooting jaunt, emphasising Rasmussen's blues-tinged singing. Joining these established anthems is a generous helping of entirely new material, set to rear its head on Goldray's as-yet-untitled second album. These songs fit in seamlessly with the rest of the setlist, continuing the simplistic, nod-inciting rhythms and slicing guitarwork that this band have built their name on.

Whether the songs that they're playing are old or new, Goldray simply shine this evening. Unlike many other acts who attempt to appropriate the history of rock music, these connoisseurs fully commit to the practice and soar because of it.

**MATT MILLS**

But before it all gets too out of hand for some, singers Hayley Griffiths and Joe Payne are introduced, adding another dimension to the band's sound, which, when they hit their groove, is very melodic, very catchy prog rock. Songs like *X-Ray* and *Wings* from the band's forthcoming debut concept album are big and bold, enhanced by the exhilarating performances of Griffiths and Payne.

And so to headliners **Kayak**, who amazingly, until the previous night in London, had never played in the UK before, despite being stalwarts of the Dutch prog scene for more than 40 years. The Sunday headline position can be a thankless slot given that an audience of, largely, a certain age having been watching prog non-stop for almost two and a half days. But where some have fallen in the past, Kayak thrive. Theirs is an excellent set of classic melodic prog, which, although leaning heavily towards last year's *Seventeen* album, also dips right back to their 1973 debut *See See The Sun for Mammoth*, and takes in a huge array of material in between. Led from the front by Ton Scherpenzeel's keyboard sound, the band are in majestic form. Aside from the lanky keyboard player and bassist Kristoffer Gildenlöw, it may be a new and relatively unknown line-up, but Kayak are, alongside Exploring Birdsong and ZIO, the highlight of a fine weekend.

**JERRY EWING**

albums, while rhythm guitarist Franz Bargmann occasionally goes through some device that give his instrument the range of a bass guitar. Former Neu! drummer Hans Lampe also plays his relentless rhythms on an electronic drumkit - which sound remarkably like a punchy acoustic set-up.

Tonight's show celebrates the 40th anniversary of Rother's second solo

album, *Sterntaler* - actually released in 1978 - which the three musicians play in its entirety. Although the beauty of his music lies in its repetition, the introduction of each piece with a wave of massive power chords, ceding to simple, strong, smooth verse melodies, is impressive, but also a tad predictable.

The set is lifted by a final batch of tracks by Harmonia - souped-up

versions of *Deluxe* and *Dino* - and by some Neu! tunes. *Hallohallo* is slightly but tellingly looser and grittier than much of what has gone before, and Thurston Moore joins in at considerable volume for versions of *Negativland* and *E-Musik*, which prompt much vigorous nodding of heads from the delighted audience.

**MIKE BARNES**





# NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

|       |                        |
|-------|------------------------|
| VENUE | THE ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON |
| DATE  | 04/05/2019             |

What a difference a year makes. It was May 2018 that *Prog* first eagerly stood in a packed and sweaty Dingwalls, just down the road from the Roundhouse, to witness the first ever gig of Nick Mason's new Pink Floyd-related outfit Saucerful Of Secrets. Back then prog forums were awash with those questioning the worth of guitarist and singer Gary Kemp, most unaware of A) what a damn fine guitarist he actually was (not strictly the fan's fault - one can barely hear any guitar on Spandau Ballet records) and B) the fact he's actually a huge prog fan. By September of last year, when the Saucerful Of Secrets played at the Roundhouse for the first time, Kemp's inclusion was met with nodding approval. Tonight he's a massive part of the whole, now well-oiled machine, fellow bandmembers Guy Pratt, Lee Harris and Dom Beken operating on a similar, almost telepathic level. The band's jaunts around Europe and more recently America have clearly served them more than well.

The bulk of the set remains similar to the one anyone that's seen the band before is used to, concentrated between debut single

Arnold Layne and 1972's *Obscured By Clouds* (rumour persists that David Gilmour suggested, "I'd rather you didn't" when asked if the band might perform *Echoes*). But there are some surprises. Following the opening barrage of *Interstellar Overdrive*, *Astronomy Domine* and *Lucifer Sam*, as fine an opening triptych as one is likely to hear, the welcome strains of *Remember A Day* are eventually heard - the addition to the set in March of this year the very first time the song had ever been played live. Later in the set, *Childhood's End* from *Obscured By Clouds* gets an equally welcome airing.

In and around these, the likes of *See Emily Play*, *Vegetable Man*, *The Nile Song* and excerpts of *Atom Heart Mother* are delivered with a polished sheen that's now taken over from the slightly more ragged version of the band's early days. This, however, takes nothing away from the performance, only adding more weight to the fact that even in their early experimental phases, grandeur was what Pink Floyd were always striving for.

This arrives even more emphatically with a spirited *Set The Controls For The Heart of The Sun*, alas not with Roger Waters as it had

been in New York, and the thunderous riffing of set-closer *One Of These Days*, leaving a heaving Roundhouse howling its approval in unison.

Behind his kit, seemingly unruffled as ever, Nick Mason smiles and waves to the crowd. His particular mode of timekeeping is the very heartbeat that fires on so many of these early Floyd songs. Indeed, it would be fair to say he's drumming as well

today as he has at any time in his elegant and lengthy career, his Saucerful Of Secrets allowing him a deservedly fitting but slightly unexpected time back in the spotlight.

As Mason points out, tonight's show has been recorded for release, capturing in posterity a wonderful return to the stage. One wonders what early Floyd gems they'll choose to unearth for audiences when Mason and his Saucerful Of Secrets open their second live chapter?

JERRY EWING



**"The thunderous riffing of One Of These Days leaves a heaving Roundhouse howling its approval in unison."**



Gary Kemp: always believe in your soul... and, er, your prog.



Nick Mason: the beating heart of the band.

The Saucers trip the light fantastic.





## TERRY RILEY AND GYAN RILEY

**VENUE** UNION CHAPEL, LONDON  
**DATE** 16/04/2019

**C**rikey, this is a treat. Normally seen in much larger venues (this writer last caught Riley Sr at the Barbican), the composer and his son have chosen the 900-capacity Union Chapel as the London date on their European tour, playing selections from Terry's vast catalogue as well as their 2018 recording as – modestly – *The Rileys, Way Out Yonder*.

And with the news that Notre Dame was in flames the night before, some here – including Terry, as he'll admit to *Prog* after the show – must be mindful of that beautiful building as the Chapel's gorgeous stained-glass Rose Window backgrounds the duo when they begin the 20-minute opener *Out Yonder*. Terry initially uses his grand piano as a giant stand for playing an iPad, picking out busy, burbly synth swirls with swishes of his fingers. Then Gyan joins in with a huge note bend on his guitar, and they eventually lock horns for some fast-paced jazzy interplay with Gyan tapping, sliding and slapping strings after Terry moves to the piano for some insistent and nimble repeat phrasing that loops in some familiar Eastern themes. Often grinning and holding each other's gaze, the connection is musical, ancestral, magical – and very playful.

By the end, the crowd have enjoyed the chase as much as the players.

The *Way Out Yonder* record is a natural focus for the evening – and it's pretty much the only thing on sale at the Chapel's rather sparse merch table – its tracks comprised of live improvisations from gigs in Canada, America and Japan. But tonight's set also includes the effervescing energy of Riley Sr's *Shri Camel/The Lake*, the fabulous psychedelic Bach-style of *G-song* (preluded by Riley lounge-singing some very droll lyrics roleplaying an observer bemoaning the music's lack of vocal, and its electronic noodling), and the thrilling *Y Bolanzero*, where raga meets Spanish dance and Gyan's fingerstyle flashes dramatically. In agility stakes, the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree; anything Gyan plays, Terry can complement with pure intonation presto runs and grace note elegance ("I do at least four hours of playing each day," he tells us later).

But it's not all about what his dad can do; Gyan has long been an in-demand virtuoso and his own work has depth and complexity, such as the moodier, more melancholy *Melismanttra*. Here Terry takes out a melodica for a gentle whirl around Gyan's heavier syncopations, finishing on stately piano notes and a wistful outro.

And then there's Riley Sr's voice. He crooned over *G-Song*, and later captivates with *Gha Ten In Darbari*. A long, compelling traditional raga improv, Riley Sr's years of early-morning practice/worship of the form are apparent in each soulful breath, note, tone – and the quality ain't too shoddy for a chap of 83. In Sanskrit, raga means colour. Tonight The Rileys brought us their rainbow.

JO KENDALL

## SYD ARTHUR & THE JACK HUES QUARTET

**VENUE** ST PANCRAS OLD CHURCH, LONDON  
**DATE** 11/04/19

**E**verything feels remarkably relaxed when *Prog* arrives at the delightful setting of St. Pancras Old Church this evening. Support act Adam Coney is strumming away on acoustic guitar, Syd Arthur bassist Joel Magill is stood grinning away at the back, and a bijou crowd fill the tiny pews of the ornate church. We had wondered what sort of crowd tonight might pull, and the answer is mixed. A few recognisable faces from the prog community, some hipster types, even, we discover later, a Wang Chung fan all the way from Germany!

Musically this evening is a fascinating proposition. Joel and brother Josh on bass and drums, together with former Wang Chung man Jack Hues and his fusion Quartet. Things are centred around their cover of Beck's *Nobody's Fault But My Own*, which grew out of a similar jam back in 2010. They recorded the Beck song in 2012, but only released it earlier this year. Time moves slowly in this new Canterbury-inspired world.

Time, and space, are two of this evening's key ingredients, alongside some stellar musicianship and a setlist that improvises its way around some exemplary covers. If everything seems eclectically loose as the musicians strike up, Radiohead's *Weird Fishes/Arpeggi* soon becomes mostly recognisable, the *In Rainbows*

track stretched out into an epic, loose-limbed workout. Although they dance around the core arrangements of the songs they cover, it soon strikes you that this is music, often great music, being made simply for the enjoyment of it. This is possibly why, by the time the band indulge themselves with *Nobody's Fault But My Own*, you're left with the feeling that this entire performance should possibly be operating on a far greater scale, such is the magnitude of the performances on offer.

When they dip into Robert Wyatt's *Sea Song* you know something special is occurring, Hues handling the vocals with aplomb, following it with an utterly wonderful take on Talk Talk's *Myrrhman*, with Hues paying tribute to the late Mark Hollis as, fittingly, the church bell tolls (an occupational hazard of gigs here). Hues' own *Non Locality In A Sea Of Electrons* holds its own amongst the covers, before an astonishing take on Soft Machine's *Facelift* brings things to a wonderful conclusion.

There's no encore. It's as low-key an ending as the beginning. The musicians linger, happily chatting with fans, while Hues is collared with a wedge of Wang Chung releases to sign by the aforementioned avid fan. You're left with the feeling that this wonderful exercise in free-form jamming, propping up some contemporary tunes and paying homage to some prog classics really does deserve a bigger audience.

JERRY EWING

**"Time, and space, are two of this evening's key ingredients, alongside some stellar musicianship and a setlist that improvises its way around some exemplary covers."**



Jack Hues recalls the size of the *Weird Fishes*.



Joel Magill perfects his thousand-yard stare.



It's nobody's fault but their own...



# JOHN LODGE

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| VENUE | CADOGAN HALL, LONDON |
| DATE  | 13/04/19             |

One always had that feeling that John Lodge was the rocker in The Moody Blues. He added a bit of bite to the band's output, while Justin Hayward provided the supply of sweet ballads. Lodge's entrance tonight, as his band strike up a sort of Moodies overture, pays testament to that. Looking trim and healthy and sporting as fine a bouffant hairdo as a man of 75 possibly can, he and his band, that includes long-term collaborator Alan Hewitt on keyboards and Moody Blues' drummer Billy Ashbaugh, break into 1978's rockingly good *Steppin' In A Slide Zone* from *Octave*.

The Moody Blues cast a big shadow over the evening's songs, although the likes of *Nervous*, *Lean On Me (Tonight)* and *Candle Of Life* aren't ones troubling the Moodies' own

live repertoire these days, which tends to stick to a 'Greatest Hits' format. It's all too much for one punter who can't help but take to the aisles throwing shapes possibly last seen at a free Stonehenge festival. Vocally, Lodge may not quite be up there with Justin Hayward anymore, but it doesn't stop the audience revelling in an enjoyably robust *Gemini Dream* from 1981's *Long Distance Voyager*.

Playing three songs from the symphonic delight of *Days Of Future Passed* allows Lodge to reminisce fondly of former Moodies colleagues Mike Pinder and the late Ray Thomas, with touching words preceding a cover of *Legend Of A Mind*, which brings the first set to a close (apparently the venue insists on an interval at all performances).

We get three songs from the spirited 10,000 *Light Years Ago* — *In My Mind*, *Get Me Out Of Here* and the title track — as well as *Saved By The Music* from the sole Blue Jays album from 1975, but nothing from

1977's *Natural Avenue*. But there's little room for complaint — with a musical catalogue as envious as Lodge's, choosing any kind of setlist must be a nightmare.

*Isn't Life Strange* and *I'm Just A Singer (In A Rock And Roll Band)*, both from 1972's *Seventh Sojourn*, end the second set on a celebratory note. But there's more to come, when Yes singer Jon Davison appears with the band for a rousing encore of *Ride My See-Saw*, which gets the entire audience up and clapping along. It's a suitably fitting end for Lodge: it's great to see him taking his solo band out on the road so much, and in venues offering a more intimate feeling than the stadia frequented by The Moody Blues. A really enjoyable night all round.

JERRY EWING

John Lodge is clearly not just a singer (in a rock and roll band).



**"Playing three songs from the symphonic delight of *Days Of Future Passed* allows Lodge to reminisce fondly of former Moodies colleagues Mike Pinder and the late Ray Thomas."**



## SOFT MACHINE

|       |                   |
|-------|-------------------|
| VENUE | JAZZ CAFÉ, LONDON |
| DATE  | 02/05/2019        |

"You've made happy men very old," quips guitarist John Etheridge at a very busy Jazz Café. Soft Machine have had many permutations since forming in 1966, but while they're long in the tooth, they pull in a broad spectrum of fans. The audience include a surprisingly large contingent in their 20s and 30s, far too young to have experienced Soft Machine's early heydays but no less passionate about the group's energetic jazz rock for that.

The set draws heavily from last year's *Hidden Details* album, mixing in older cuts along the way. While Theo Travis switches between flute, sax, and keys, there's no dedicated keyboard player in this line-up, but Etheridge has that covered by making his guitar sound like an organ. It's mind-boggling to think that drummer John Marshall and bassist Roy Babbington are almost 80. Marshall rivals be-bop legend Roy Haynes for the age-defying propulsion of his playing. Tony Williams' influence can be heard in his approach to *The Man Who Waved At Trains*, keeping time on the hi-hat so he can use his ride cymbal for colour and melodic interaction. Marshall

could rival Ginger Baker for his stony-faced demeanour, but occasionally Etheridge will catch his eye and play something that makes the drummer grin broadly.

*Life On Bridges* brings to mind late-60s electric Miles Davis — no one plays the beat as the band launch into a maelstrom of freeform improvisation with Etheridge's guitar stabbing out noisy bursts. By contrast, *Heart Off Guard* is a melodic duet between Travis' sax and Etheridge's guitar, which serves as the prelude to the bluesy *Broken Hill*. New tune *Fourteen Hour Dream* and *Kings And Queens*, from 1971's *Fourth*, bring out their Canterbury folk and psychedelic influences.

The former is a highpoint with a wicked bassline from Babbington and spirited soloing from Etheridge and Travis. The main set concludes with a medley of *The Relegation Of Pluto*, *Tarabos*, *Sideburn*, and *Hazard Profile Part 1*, featuring a surging solo from Marshall and Etheridge tearing up his guitar's neck.

To save brains from melting, they ease back to encore with *Chloe & The Pirates*, before finishing with the fat and funky *Gesolreut*, a showcase for Travis' glorious honking saxophone. No band of this vintage have any right to still sound so fearless and ferocious. Don't miss them.

DAVID WEST



## THE CLAYPOOL LENNON DELIRIUM

|       |                               |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| VENUE | THE FILLMORE PHILADELPHIA, PA |
| DATE  | 12/04/19                      |

As the mastermind behind Primus and the artistically accomplished son of a certain Beatle, Les Claypool and Sean Lennon are already individually respected talents, and they've spent the past few years collaborating with boundless idiosyncrasy as psychedelic rock duo The Claypool Lennon Delirium. Unsurprisingly, they hold nothing back at this performance, pulling out great selections from their catalogue – in addition to a few outside surprises – to prove even more delightfully distinguishing in a live setting.

Introduced by a dissonantly hallucinogenic build-up, the band devote almost equal attention to both of their studio albums. This year's *South Of Reality* is showcased via its joyously quirky opener, *Little Fishes*, as well as the ominously strange title track and the LP's two suites – the poppy, dreamlike *Blood And Rockets* and the Middle Eastern-influenced *Cricket Chronicles Revisited* – among other standouts. Fittingly, 2016's *Monolith Of Phobos* is represented by that epic's precursor, the nightmarishly sludgy two-part *Cricket And The Genie*, plus the playfully bizarre *Mr. Wright* and the hypnotically ensnaring *Breath Of A Salesman*. Aside from occasionally muffled vocals and instrumentation, each piece is faithfully reproduced with honed precision and entertaining enthusiasm.

Thankfully, the same can be said for the pair's dutifully innovative interpretations of Pink Floyd's *Astronomy Domine*, King Crimson's *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, The Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows*, and, as an encore, Primus' *Southbound Pachyderm*. These make for some of the best moments of the night, with the audience audibly adoring Lennon and Claypool's personal connections and clever approaches to the material.

While not as surreally rich as the music, the accompanying visuals nonetheless form a fitting environment. Simply put, the front artwork of *South Of Reality* (a cockroach overlooking glaciers underneath a pink sky) is broken into three large posters behind the players, and throughout the night, the lights change colours and movements with frenzied synchronicity to perfectly capture the vibe of each moment. Sure, a bit more technological spectacle would've benefitted the set even more, but what's there certainly accentuates the mood well enough.

The Claypool Lennon Delirium prove to be greater than the sum of their parts tonight. While isolated elements of each frontman's artistry shine through, it's the ways in which they form unique styles as a shared entity that truly astounds. With exceptional musicianship, vocals, songwriting and even a bit of endearing banter in-between tracks, the duo are easily charming from beginning to end.

JORDAN BLUM

## ARENA

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| VENUE | ULU, LONDON |
| DATE  | 06/04/19    |

Taking into consideration that this show happens in central London on a Saturday night, and also the positive response to last year's album *Double Vision* (their ninth studio set to date), Arena might reasonably have expected a bigger crowd. However, if there's disappointment at the fairly modest turnout then it certainly doesn't show.

Arriving to the strains of Rossini's *William Tell Overture* ensures that the mood is vibrant and upbeat from the off, and what follows is a well-balanced and hugely enjoyable romp through the Arena catalogue, with just 2015's *The Unquiet Sky* going unrepresented during a colourful display that lasts for the best part of two hours. It's also slickly executed, strobe lighting and back-projected film images serving to bring to life the music's storytelling qualities.

As you'd imagine of any group formed by an ex-member of Marillion and Pendragon's keyboard player (drummer Mick Pointer and Clive Nolan, respectively), Arena are not trying to reinvent the wheel. The unashamedly neo-prog chassis that has kept them rolling since 1995 is quite sufficient for their means, thanks very much.

Paul Manzi marries an excellent voice to an amiable stage presence, but apart from the usual good evening, goodnight and perfunctory song introductions the frontman defers most of the meaningful stage banter to the more loquacious Nolan. When *Double Vision* dropped last May, Arena fans became hot under the collar over the prospect of the band performing the entire 22 minutes of its centrepiece, *The Legend Of Elijah Shade*. Realistically speaking, such a possibility was

shelved when 2018's tour dates saw them elect to mix a sprinkling of new tunes with a first-time, in-its-entirety 20th anniversary revision of their much-loved third album, *The Visitor*. Tonight, however, all bets are off.

"Between us all, this song contains somewhere just under a million notes," grins Nolan during a comically theatrical build-up.

"After a couple of drinks it had seemed like a good idea [to play it live] and it was only more recently when we started to rehearse that we realised the full stupidity of that, but we're going to do it anyway..."

Nolan is simply being modest and Arena proceed to nail the full shape-shifting majesty of this epic colossus – one of three tracks lifted from *Double Vision*. *The Mirror Lies* and *Poisoned* – the latter a debut single in their 23-year career – dovetail perfectly into the concert

repertoire. Playfully and without naming names, Nolan confides that *The Mirror Lies* is about "other bands from our genre that rely more on spin than they do on music" – ouch!

As John Mitchell delivers a skylark-esque

guitar solo worthy of Francis Dunnery himself during *Solomon*, Arena's sign-off song of the night proper, this mild bout of stone-throwing seems entirely justified.

DAVE LING



"Arena proceed to nail the full shape-shifting majesty of the epic *Legend Of Elijah Shade*."



Paul Manzi: one cool cat.



John Mitchell: not such a lonely robot tonight.



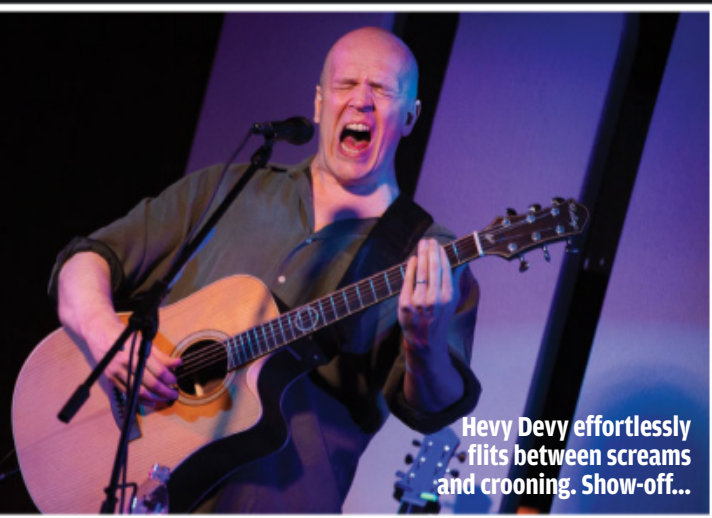
Manzi prefers to use his voice for songs, not banter.



# DEVIN TOWNSEND

**VENUE** THE GLEE CLUB, BIRMINGHAM  
**DATE** 30/04/2019

Over his 25-year career, Devin Townsend has certified himself as one of the most unconventionally intriguing music personalities in modern prog. Known for many musical projects and styles, from the extreme metal Strapping Young Lad to cinematic prog with the Devin Townsend Project to alt country duo Casualties Of Cool, not to mention his work with Steve Vai, tonight he's riding solo to celebrate the release of his new album, *Empath*. The Canadian greets the audience with his typical tongue-in-cheek remarks and comical



Heavy Devin effortlessly flits between screams and crooning. Show-off...

banter before pausing to tune his acoustic guitar, which he admits to doing wrong. It's just him on stage tonight, making for a very stripped-back evening with a low-key, intimate atmosphere.

Townsend asks, "What do you guys want?" and the eager audience shout, "Do whatever you want!" Joking, Townsend takes this opportunity to make a quick exit, chuckling, "Alright, I'm off home!", before instead launching straight in to *Let It Roll*, followed by *Why?* from *Empath*. Anyone who's heard *Empath* would surely agree that it's one of Townsend's more meticulous works: a complete mind-bender that sees him at his most impenetrable. Delving in to his illimitable imagination, it's a culmination of Townsend's past works and a journey through his many musical personalities.

Energy levels now peaked, Townsend takes a breather and, as the echoes of *Funeral* bounce across the room, he shouts, "Well, that was awkward!" in his usual self-deprecating way before asking, "Shall we all be awkward together?", laughing, as the crowd cheer. He is straight back in with *Love?*, *Deadhead* and fan favourite *Ih-Ah!*. His raw emotion is fearless and vocally he's outstanding, switching from almost guttural screaming to much softer opera-esque whispers. He asks the audience to death-scream part of *Coast*; we're a little bit off, but manage it. Townsend applauds us before launching into *Thing Beyond Things*. With a back catalogue as rich and varied as Townsend's, it's hard to please everyone, but tonight touches upon everything he is known for.

The chance to question the prog maestro himself is likely a highlight for many and takes up most of the second part of the evening, with Townsend stopping for a quick jam in between the interval and Q&A. Topics for questions include the drumming aspect of *Empath*, how Townsend writes songs from dreams, and how he overcomes pre-gig nerves, to which he reveals to taking some time out alone before his shows, doing some breathing exercises, and practising mindfulness/meditative techniques. He's also asked whether Ziltoid was based on his Snorkel The Shark from his Strapping Young Lad days – the answer is yes, with Townsend saying that puppets act as 'alter egos', allowing himself to express himself more freely.

Townsend is an artist who toys around with expectation and he does what he wants, and doesn't take himself seriously. Those unfamiliar with him might think some of his tracks border on slightly nuts, but tonight is a ludicrously fun evening where we get a closer look at the man behind the music.

**EMILY BIELBY**

Just one man and his guitar... and a bunch of die-hard fans.

**"It's just Townsend on stage tonight, making for a very stripped-back evening with a low-key, intimate atmosphere."**

## NE OBLIVISCARIS

**VENUE** 170 RUSSELL, MELBOURNE  
**DATE** 10/05/19  
**SUPPORT** CALIGULA'S HORSE

A Melbourne winter is about to set in: the warm weather is receding, giving way to the city's infamous chill. But you wouldn't know it – 170 Russell is positively scorching tonight.

Opening in understated style with the title track of 2015's *Bloom*, Caligula's Horse take us on a journey across varied soundscapes, providing a dynamic ebb and flow that is simply beautiful.

The lead guitar work of Sam Vallen is clean and clear, simultaneously melodic and shred-worthy: he really is one of the best lead guitarists around today. Very much his equal and equivalent in the vocal department is Jim Grey, whose voice is soothingly powerful, rising to soaring melodic heights juxtaposed seamlessly with crooning, swooning lows, and his between-song banter is as familiar as a welcome old friend. With the whole band on excellent form tonight, their set, while briefer than we're accustomed to with them, reaches the majestic heights we've now come to expect from Caligula's Horse.

Virtually everything about Melbourne's Ne Obliviscaris is unique, and their monumental prog metal has interesting individual elements. Tim Charles' violin adds a discordant strangeness that offsets the heaviness beautifully and his clean vocals provide additional emotion. Dan Presland's cannon-shot snare and precision around the kit are simply astonishing. Overall, the sextet together make playing this scintillatingly complex music look ridiculously simple and effortless.

Their live show has reached a new level of sleek, slick professionalism in recent years, and tonight they bring in extra

lighting and production, resulting in a world-class arena metal show in a club that holds around 1,000 people. While we're on that, Charles calmly announces that this is the band's biggest-ever headline show before launching into *Forget Not*, a song they wrote a decade and a half ago and is also their title song. The dynamics inherent in *Xenoflux* make your blood tingle, while *Intra Venus* is a head rush. In fact, every song is a journey, every song is an opus.

This night is another triumph for Aussie progressive heavy music, and one of the shows of the year so far.

**ROD WHITFIELD**



## SWALLOW THE SUN

|         |                        |
|---------|------------------------|
| VENUE   | THE UNDERWORLD, LONDON |
| DATE    | 06/05/2019             |
| SUPPORT | OCEANS OF SLUMBER      |

If there's a theme for tonight, it's baring the soul. Texan progressive metallers Oceans Of Slumber take to the stage in a haze of dry ice, and all eyes are immediately focused on singer Cammie Gilbert, whose rich voice quietly unfurls through the building tension of *Sunlight*. Arms outstretched and swaying to the music, she's a calm, authoritative presence. The venue's not full - most likely because it's a bank holiday Monday - and the clattering drumming often overpowers her vocals, but the crowd devotedly cheer and clap along to the riffs. Most of Oceans Of Slumber's set comes from their stunning current album, *The Banished Heart*, and they close with what Cammie describes as their "saddest song", *No Color, No Light*. "If I cry, you have to cry too, that's how this works," she quips. Despite its chilling tone, the communal experience feels uplifting.

Finnish dark prog metallers Swallow The Sun ratchet up the drama. They similarly emerge from dry ice, but with black hoods up and accompanied by the sound of chanting monks. It's been three years since they played London, and a lot has happened. In April 2016, founding guitarist Juha Raivo lost his partner, Aleah Starbridge, to cancer. The band released the harrowing EP *Lumina Aurea* last December, before putting out their seventh album, *When A Shadow Is Forced Into The Light*, in January. Juha described it as a "victorious and proud" counterpart that proves "love is always stronger than death".

They open with the title track, moving between the shadows and blue light onstage, wrapped in the grandiose guitar parts. It is arresting. Soon the album's doomy-yet-catchy single *Firelight* is greeted with a singalong, already sounding like a classic. There's a sense that everyone here is rooting for the band, as well as being unafraid to experience their own catharsis. During *Cathedral Walls*, from 2012's *Emerald Forest And The Blackbird* and featuring a recording of ex-Nightwish singer Anette Olzon, a hardened-looking metalhead bellows out the lyrics. But the most heart-wrenching moment is new track *Stone Wings*, featuring some achingly beautiful lyrics: 'The fires are burning, under starlight/Through veils of golden light/The sails so pure, so white/Through the river of death/I carry you, my love.' At its close, singer Mikko Kotamäki's scream merges with Juha's.

New members Juho Räihä (rhythm guitar) and Jaani Peuhu (keyboards) fit seamlessly into the line-up, but the finale is a callback to Swallow The Sun's more extreme past, with the windmill-worthy *Deadly Nightshade* and usual closer *Swallow (Horror Pt. 1)*. As the lights come up, we're left emotionally drained but satisfied.

**ELEANOR GOODMAN**

## MAJOR PARKINSON

|         |                           |      |          |
|---------|---------------------------|------|----------|
| VENUE   | THE DOME, LONDON          | DATE | 03/05/19 |
| SUPPORT | ALWANZATAR, ARMY OF MOTHS |      |          |

A bewildering evening begins with an acoustic set from Army Of Moths. With twin vocals from David Sheridan and Debz Joy and a sound near the centre of the Syd Barrett/early Bowie/Cardiacs Venn diagram, attempts at cajoling the crowd are stymied by the pair's habit of speaking over each other between songs. But over the course of the set a small but appreciative audience choir assemble stage front, and by the time closer *I See You* rolls around they're engaged in lusty singalongs.

The action continues during an unexpectedly cacophonous break between acts, as the Greatest Hits Of Motown are pumped through the PA at the same time as Alwanzatar (AKA Kristoffer Momrak from Norwegian proggers Tusmørke) soundchecks. Long of hair and black of cloak, his set begins with muted rhythms that evolve into various dancefloor sounds, from scattergun drum and bass to squelching late-night trance. As the beats consolidate into patterns, Momrak fills in the foreground with blasts of flute, and after plenty of concentrated knob twiddling it's goodnight, a quick wave, and he's gone.

The Motown continues in the next break, with Lionel Ritchie luring the crowd towards sedation, before Major Parkinson's Claudia Cox arrives onstage to enliven proceedings with some looping violin. Eventually the band assemble around her, the last to arrive frontman Jon

**"Major Parkinson are the Coldplay Cardiacs, with giant, commercial songs bent into strange, uncommercial shapes."**



Claudia Cox takes a bow.

Jon Ivar Kollbotn: suited, booted, and ready to dance on periodic tables.



Ivar Kollbotn. He has the elegant bearing of a chemistry master from a well-to-do boys' school, with wild hair and stylish threads, and flails his arms in a manner not seen since Jarvis Cocker's heyday. He's a riveting watch, even if his voice's low register sometimes struggles to be heard above the music. During *Lover, Lower Me Down* he fashions a noose from the mic cable and twists it around his neck, and his attire is shed as the set progresses. Off comes the tie, waistcoat, shirt and braces, while the jacket maintains an on-off-on-off status, even reversing to double as a straightjacket during *197*.

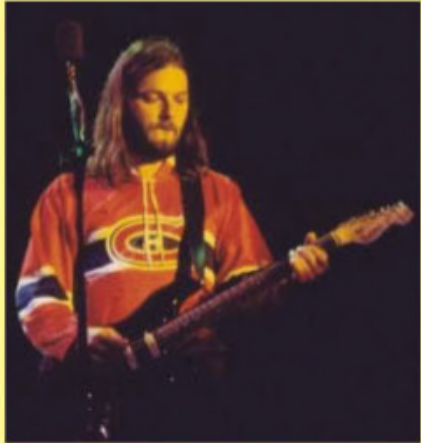
The music's extraordinary. Its bombast could fill stadiums, with choruses you might think were designed for vast singalongs, were they not riven with enough otherworldly weirdness to truncate their appeal. Major Parkinson are the Coldplay Cardiacs, with giant, commercial songs bent into strange, uncommercial shapes. It's thrilling, it's joyous, and at the end, as Abba's *Dancing Queen* blares from the PA and the band share champagne onstage, it's only natural to hope they continue to keep it freaky.

**FRASER LEWRY**



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## THE GATHERING

30 YR ANNIVERSARY SHOW

FRI. 11 OKTOBER 2019

## SUPERSISTER PROJEKT 2019

## PROGDREAMS VIII

20/21/22 SEPTEMBER 2019

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

JOHN HACKETT BAND

THE WATCH

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THE DAME

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BY BRIAN CUMMINS (CARPET CRAWLERS)



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SAT. 19 OCTOBER 2019

## MYSTERY

FRI. 25 OCTOBER 2019

## BJØRN RIIS

SUPPORT: OAK

SAT. 26 OCTOBER 2019

## THE ELO SHOW

SAT. 2 NOVEMBER 2019

## STILLMARILLION

TOTALLY FUGAZI TOUR

FRI. 8 NOVEMBER 2019

## JADIS

SUPPORT: MANGROVE

SAT. 9 NOVEMBER 2019

## ADAM HOLZMAN

& BRAVE NEW WORLD

FRI. 6 DECEMBER 2019

## MOSTLY AUTUMN

SAT. 14 DECEMBER 2019

## IQ

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SUPPORT: TIGER MOTH TALES SOLO

SAT. 21 DECEMBER 2019

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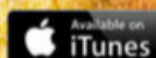


seed

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F R E E D O M T O G L I D I E

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RECORDS



**Where's home?**

The outskirts of Southampton, about 15 minutes from the New Forest.



**Earliest prog memory?**

Me as a 12-year-old playing with my Hornby train set, and my older brother blasting out Genesis' *Foxtrot*. I loved it straight away, and started getting into music soon after.

**First prog record you bought?**

Camel's *The Snow Goose* and *Rain Dances*, both at a Record & Tape Exchange in London in the early 80s.

**And the latest?**

Steve Lukather's *Transition* [2013]. Some of it's proggy, some of it's AOR. It's well worth listening to.

**First prog gig?**

Peter Gabriel at the Southampton Gaumont in about 1977. Tony Levin, Jerry Marotta, Larry Fast and Sid McGinnis were all in the band. I was totally hooked from then.

**Last prog gig?**

The Tubes at The Brook in Southampton [in 2016]. Still an incredible, off-the-wall band.

**Newest prog discovery?**

Blackfield. I didn't realise Steven Wilson was involved when I heard *Blackfield*. There are some great songs on there.

**Guilty musical pleasures?**

Barbra Streisand's *Guilty*. Brilliant songs, brilliant production for the time and her singing is unbelievable.

**Your specialist subject on Mastermind?**

The history of cakes. I know it's not highbrow, but I have a real affinity with cakes!



KEVIN NIXON

**Gary Chandler of Jadis**

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon**

**Favourite prog venue?**

The Boerderij in Zoetermeer. The equipment, the sound, the crew are all second to none and a lot of UK venues could really learn from a visit there. Also The Citadel in St Helens, which is sadly about to close.

**Your prog hero?**

Steve Hackett. I was drawn to his style immediately, he can say so much with so few notes.

**Outside of music, what are you into?**

I go for a lot of walks, and I cycle and read music biographies. I like to read how these people got where they did and the bumps along the way.

**Ever had a prog date?**

No, I haven't. And no one has ever come up to me after one of our gigs to ask me out for a drink either!

**Who do you call in the prog fraternity for a good night out?**

I don't go out much but when I do it'll be for a curry and some beers with [Jadis drummer] Steve Christey.



CARSTEN WINDHORST

Barbra Streisand's singing on *Guilty* is unbelievable. And the songs are brilliant.

**Most important prog song?**

Genesis' *Dance On A Volcano*. Whenever I'm setting up a new set of speakers, that's what I use. It's such an amazing piece of music. When those bass pedals come in it's just ridiculous, so exciting.

**Prog muso you'd like to work with?**

It will never happen, but to come up with something and have Peter Gabriel sing it would be marvellous! I would also love to sing something that [Pendragon's] Nick Barrett had written. He's done some amazing stuff.

**What prog album gets you in a good mood?**

Tell you who's good for that: Supertramp. Either *Crime Of The Century* or *Crisis? What Crisis?*



**The best prog gig you ever saw?**

Genesis at the Southampton Gaumont [since renamed the Mayflower Theatre] in 1992. A very rare theatre show before going off and doing arenas all over the place. The sound was stunning, and being so close to my musical heroes made it the best gig.

**A good proggy read?**

Steve Lukather's biog [*The Gospel According To Luke*]. I've just started Neil Peart's *Roadshow*, and Phil Collins' *Not Dead Yet* is good, too.



**Favourite prog album cover?**

I've ended up with so many t-shirts and posters of [Pink Floyd's] *The Division Bell*. I just really like it.



**What are you up to at the moment?**

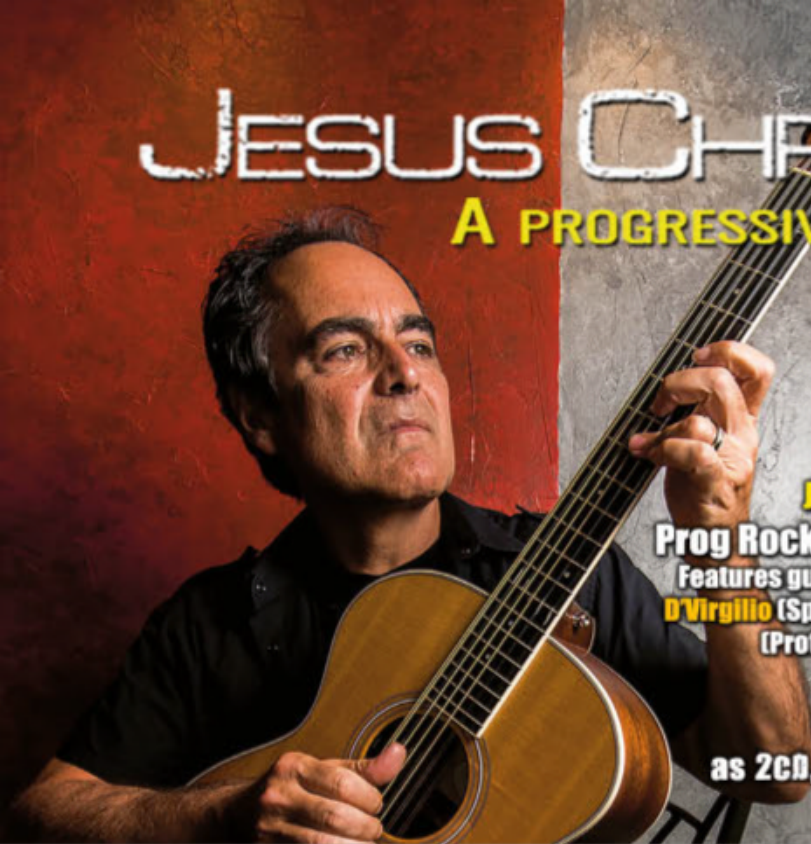
Well, we have got our current album, *Medium Rare II*, out at the moment, and we will be promoting that with some gigs in November. Meantime I'll be writing the next Jadis album – the conveyor belt continues!

See [www.jadismusic.com](http://www.jadismusic.com) for more information.



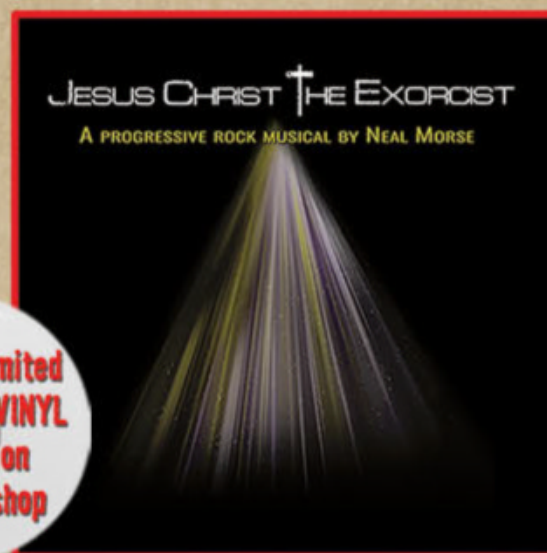
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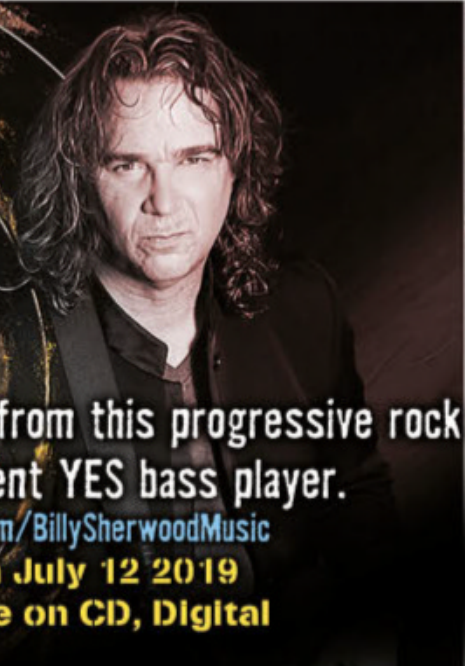


## BILLY SHERWOOD CITIZEN IN THE NEXT LIFE

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[vandenplas.de](http://vandenplas.de)



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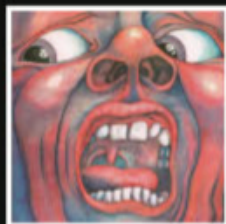
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Artwork from a painting by P.J. Crook.



## KING CRIMSON: SETTING STANDARDS



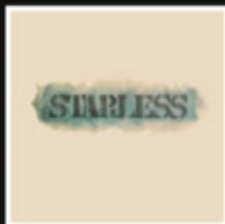
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On (and off) The Road



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The standard catalogue is also available for download & streaming.

[www.dgmlive.com](http://www.dgmlive.com)

\* coming October 2019

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