



**THE PROGRESSIVE MUSIC AWARDS ARE BACK!
ALL THE 2017 NOMINATIONS REVEALED INSIDE...**

PROG

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interviews with:**

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Wakeman, White,
Rabin, Sherwood,
Davison and
Downes.

Future

PROG 78 JULY 2017
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Amplifier

Cosmograf

Tim Blake

Bent Knee

FaUST

Nad Sylvan

**BBC Radiophonic
Workshop**

Cate Le Bon

Sgt Pepper



MOSTLY AUTUMN

in concert 2017



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02 DE BOERDERIJ - ZOETERMEER, NL

09 THE MET - BURY

10 ROBIN2 - BILSTON

14 THE STABLES - MILTON KEYNES

21 THE WATERFRONT - NORWICH



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ISSUE 78 30.06.17

@contents

IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE



JEFF KRIVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES



**"Somewhere,
Chris
Squire is
having
a good laugh
at all this!"**

Yes p34

Prog presents both sides of the coin in the latest Yes storm...

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THE INTRO pg12

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He once roaded and then played with The Fall and partnered Mark Radcliffe on the radio. He's Marc Riley, and he's a progressive rock fan.

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Former Tinyfish man Rob Ramsay gets eloquent about his new spoken word album...

THE OUTER LIMITS pg 64

He came to prominence as friend and bandmate of one Johnny Rotten. But he's since worked with members of Can, Richard Thompson, The Orb, Björk and more. He's Jah Wobble and we ask how prog he is.

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Aside from working with Gong and Hawkwind, Tim Blake has been the composer of groundbreaking electronic prog. This is his story.

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BTBAM's bass player Dan Briggs opens up his own prog rock world.

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Tinyfish's Simon Godfrey returns with his new Transatlantic outfit.

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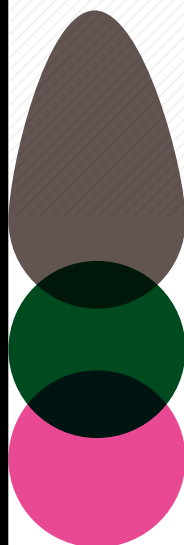
The Vampire is back and he's as flamboyant as ever.

FaUSt _____ Pg 86

The Krautrock pioneers are still as defiant and unique as ever.

Goldray _____ Pg 90

The most colourful proggy psych band around look to fill the void left by the now-defunct Purson.





Bent Knee

Land Animal

In Stores Now!

Formed at the Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2009, the Art-Rock sextet combines myriad influences from across the rock, pop, minimalist, and avant-garde spectrums. For fans of Radiohead, Cardiacs, King Crimson & Kate Bush

"The silo-smashing Bent Knee's unique mix is equal parts ingenuity and deliciousness"
- **The Wall Street Journal**

Available as CD Digipak (incl. bonus track) and as 180g Vinyl Edition (incl. the album on CD) & Digital Download.



TUESDAY THE SKY

DRIFT

In Stores 30th June 2017

FATES WARNING / OSI guitarist **Jim Matheos** debuts his Ambient Instrumental Rock project.

Features God Is An Astronaut drummer **Lloyd Hanney**, ex-Dream Theater/OSI keyboardist **Kevin Moore** (on two songs) and **Anna-Lynne Williams** (Trespassers William, Lotte Kestner).

Available as CD, 180g Vinyl Edition (incl. the album on CD) & Digital Download.



NEXT TO NONE

PHASES

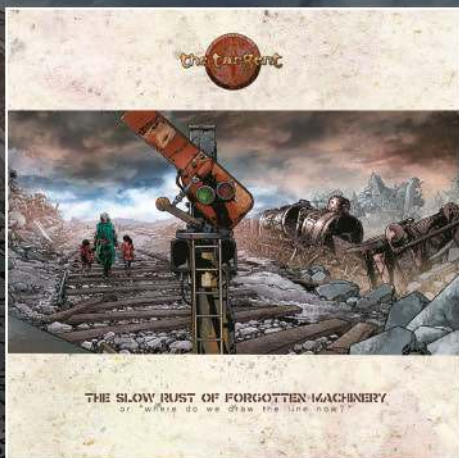
In Stores July 7th, 2017

Rising young progressive metallers **Next To None** return with their second album, following their recent European tour with Haken.

Mixed by Grammy nominated **Adam "Nolly" Getgood** (Periphery)

Artwork by **Travis Smith** (Opeth, Devin Townsend, Anathema)

On tour with **Mike Portnoy's** Shattered Fortress in June and July 2017!



The Tangent

THE SLOW RUST OF FORGOTTEN MACHINERY

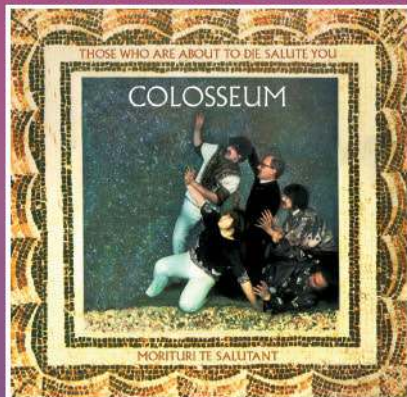
In Stores 21st July 2017

The Tangent are **Andy Tillison**, **Jonas Reingold** (The Flower Kings), **Theo Travis** (Soft Machine Legacy, Steven Wilson), **Luke Machin** (Maschine, Kiama) & new addition **Marie-Eve de Gaultier** (Maschine).
Feat. the stellar artwork from DC Comics artist **Mark Buckingham!**

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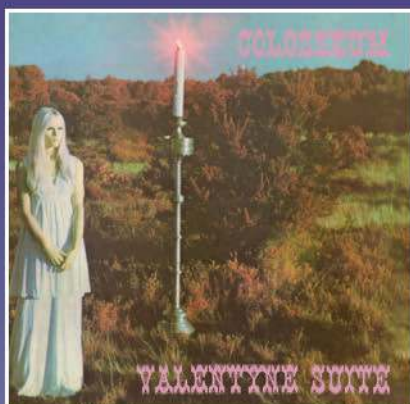
See **The Tangent & Karmakanic** live at Summers End Festival on the 8th October 2017!

COLOSSEUM



'THOSE ABOUT TO DIE'

- Recorded in the winter of 1968, "Those About to Die Salute You" was a stunning debut album and was one of the first successful attempts to fuse jazz, blues and rock. Featuring such classic tracks as "Walking in the Park", "Beware the Ides of March", "Those About to Die" and "The Road She Walked Before", "Those About to Die Salute You" reached number 15 on the UK album chart and remains a seminal album in the development of what would be known as Progressive Rock.
- This Esoteric Recordings release is newly remastered and includes three bonus tracks recorded at Pye studios in London in November 1968. The release fully restores the original album artwork and features an illustrated booklet with new essay.



'VALENTINE SUITE'

- This newly re-mastered and expanded reissue includes a bonus track of "Tell Me Now" (recorded at Lansdowne studios in April 1969) and a bonus remastered CD of the US and Canadian album "The Grass Is Greener", released on the Dunhill label in 1970. The album featured some material featured on "Valentyne Suite", albeit remixed and featuring new member Dave "Clem" Clempson (Guitar, Vocals), who replaced James Litherland in the group. The album also featured a series of songs unreleased in the UK such as "Jumping Off the Sun", "Lost Angeles", "Rope Ladder to the Moon" (written by Jack Bruce & Pete Brown), and a version of Ravel's "Bolero".



BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST 'OCTOBERON'

- New remastered & expanded 3 CD digipack edition of the classic gold selling 1976 album by Barclay James Harvest
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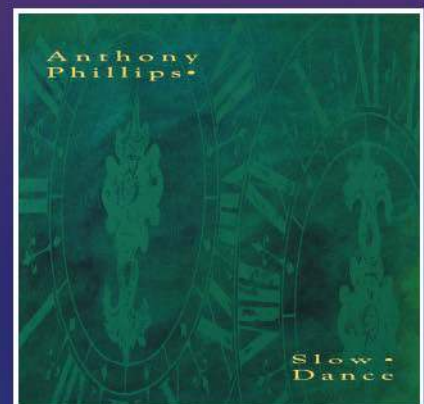
SECOND HAND 'DEATH MAY BE YOUR SANTA CLAUS'

- New remastered & expanded edition of the classic 1972 progressive rock album by former Second Hand
- With three bonus tracks
- "Death May Be Your Santa Claus" was the result of limited studio time, but intense creativity, a truly stunning example of progressive / psychedelic rock worthy of anything recorded at that time by Arthur Brown, Hawkwind or Even Van Der Graaf Generator.



CLEAR BLUE SKY 'CLEAR BLUE SKY'

- New remastered & fully restored edition of the classic 1970 Vertigo album by Clear Blue Sky
- Features original album master on CD for the very first time
- Fully restored artwork and liner notes with exclusive interview.



ANTHONY PHILLIPS 'SLOW DANCE'

- Released in 1990, the album is regarded by aficionados of Anthony's music as one of his finest and a two part orchestral rock suite which reflects him at his best and most imaginative.
- This new 3 disc digipack deluxe edition of the album features a newly remastered original stereo mix and a 5.1 Surround sound mix by Simon Heyworth, (on an NSTC / Region Free DVD), along with a CD of previously unreleased "Slow Dance" Vignettes. It includes a lavishly illustrated booklet that fully restores the original album artwork and features a new essay by Jon Dann.

FISH ON FRIDAY 'QUIET LIFE'

- The excellent new album by progressive rock band Fish on Friday.
- Featuring Alan Parsons, Nick Beggs (Mute Gods / Steven Wilson / Lifesigns / Steve Hackett) & Theo Travis (Soft Machine Legacy / Steven Wilson / Robert Fripp).



"You see, there's more to me than sounding like Collins and Gabriell!"

Nad Sylvan

PRESS/TIM WILD

Ed's Letter



It is with a huge amount of delight that we welcome back the Progressive Music Awards this issue. As I say elsewhere, it's been a strange six months that we here at Prog have endured, from the demise of our old parent company just before Christmas to our return to previous owners Future Publishing. For a while there was uncertainty in the air, but this is the fifth issue we've now published with Future, and everything's motoring along nicely.

So it's the perfect moment to announce the return of progressive music's big night in the spotlight. You can read all about the awards, the raft of new categories for you to vote in and, more importantly, who's been nominated, on page 14. And then head over to www.progmagazine.com/awards and get voting. You'll be amazed how quickly September will be upon us!

Prog legends Yes grace our cover this month. That's *both* versions of the band now that ARW are officially known as Yes featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman. In the wake of the fractious fall-out of the band's long-awaited Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction, are we headed, I wonder, for the kind of acrimony that surrounded the 90125 line-up of the band and ABWH in the 80s? Or, heaven forbid, another potentially ill-fated Union-style affair? We speak to every member of both line-ups to try and work out where it's all headed.

There's your usual round up of the current prog scene, with exclusive interviews with Amplifier, Bent Knee, Tim Blake, Cosmograf, Nad Sylvan, FaUSt, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Valdez, Gungfly and more.

Also, it's been great to helm the *Prog Magazine Radio Show* on the new TeamRock Radio, with old presenter Philip Wilding in the producer's chair. If you've not joined us yet, we air on Sundays at 5pm. Click the 'listen' button on the top right of the Prog website. And enjoy.

We're back August 4. Until then, as always, prog on...

Jerry Ewing - Editor



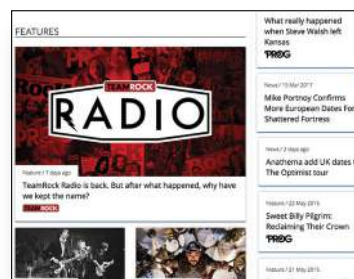
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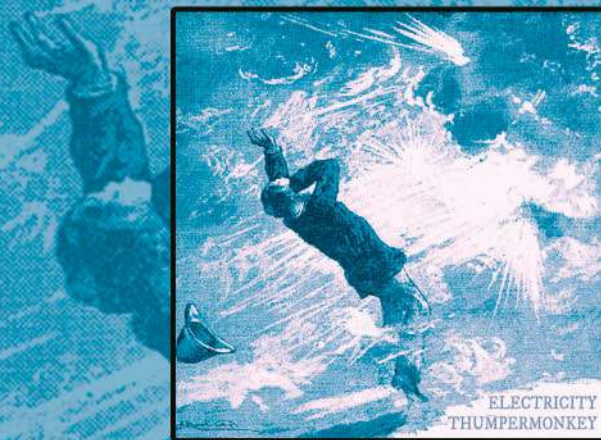
"CONDUIT" OCTOBER 2017

SAT 15TH JULY - COALFIELDS FESTIVAL, BARNSELY
SUN 23RD JULY - TRAMLINES, WSL, SHEFFIELD
SAT 5TH AUGUST - PROG METAL MADNESS, NEW CROSS



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6TH OCTOBER - BLACK HEART, CAMDEN

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Bloody Well Write

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WORTH WAITING FOR

Thanks for the fascinating interview with Arjen Lucassen [*Prog* 76], which led me to discover the slightly weird but astonishingly wonderful world of Ayreon. I have just bought two of the re-releases and am heading off to pick up my copy of *The Source* this afternoon.

I knew of Arjen Lucassen and had already bought *Guilt Machine* and *Lost In The New Real*, but Ayreon was a closed book to me until I read the interview.

I've always listened to your CD with interest and am truly grateful to you for introducing me to Big Big Train (through *Judas Unrepentant*), Haken (*Cockroach King*) and other bands such as Chat Noir and The Mute Gods. However, the Ayreon extracts never took my fancy, probably because the works need to be heard in their entirety for the true beauty of the music to unfold.

So my advice to all other prog fans is to persevere, even when the initial impact isn't that great. In my case, it has certainly been worth it with Ayreon.

I will now be proselytising for them shamelessly – but not on social media, as I don't share Arjen's confidence in all new technologies!

Thanks again for bringing more light into my life through your work.

Martin Turley

AN EPIC(A) ISSUE

Wow! Thank you so much for an incredible surprise in the March 2017 issue of *Prog* magazine [issue 75]. This was one of the best issues I've read in a long time. A great interview with Steve Rothery, a review of a Steve Hackett concert, plenty of representation of Genesis in the 100 Greatest Prog Anthems, two articles on Mike + The Mechanics... I'm one happy prog fan!

But the icing on the cake was *The Outer Limits* article featuring the incredible Epica. As a fan of *Prog* since the very first issue I have never been happier! I am a huge fan of Epica, so thank you for this article. Epica are first and foremost a symphonic metal band, but progressive rock/metal is most definitely a part of their epic sound. Here in the 21st-century, progressive music



Issue 75, featuring a feast of Genesis.



Arjen Lucassen, prog polymath.

KEVIN NIXON

exists in so many forms, so to call Epica a progressive metal band is not a stretch.

In the future I would love to see an article/interview with the twin powerhouses Jasun and Troy Tipton. The Tipton twins are responsible for the great prog metal bands Zero Hour, Cynthesis and Abnormal Thought Patterns.

Troy Tennard

NON-PC PROG

My name is Dimitris, I am 47 years old and I come from Greece. I was a reader of *Classic Rock* magazine for many years. When *Prog* magazine was in stores every month with *Classic Rock*, I thought, "Yeah right, a magazine about prog. So what, I know everything about prog!"

Then seven months ago my PC broke down. At that time I thought it was non-repairable and that all my music collection had gone. I bought that month's issue of *Prog* magazine only for the CD because I wanted to hear some prog music, because I am a fan.

And what happened? I read the whole magazine, even the adverts, and I discovered a whole new world of prog bands. Since then I am a fanatic reader of both magazines. Thanks for the wonderful magazine!

Dimitris Karras, Greece

BACK TO THE FUTURE

I couldn't agree less with Stephen Hughes and Alan Atkinson who want more coverage of older prog. I may well be one of those balding, 'mature' fans of the genre, born in 1960, but I live for the discovery of new music. To me there's nothing more thrilling than finding a new band or even a new genre of music (I also love folk, Americana, world music, electronic dance music, post-rock... the list is endless and ever-expanding).

In any genre there are the great and the innovators, but to only write about them, and only from a select period of time, is to end up regurgitating past glories or concentrating on the also-rans.

For the mag to focus on old music is to stagnate and fossilise. Keep up the good

Epica: making a tremendous noise on the outer limits of prog.



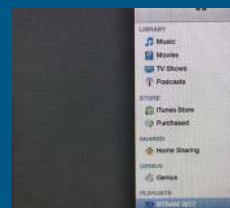
TWEET TALK

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NICK BEGGS
@NickBeggs
Formulating The Mute Gods III.



SIMON GODFREY
@simonsimple
I genuinely did get a ticket to Ryde, once. And I did care.



DAN BRIGGS
@danbriggsx
Almost there! #btbam

LETTER

Lifelong prog fan. Long-time *Prog* subscriber. I absolutely love your magazine. As an American prog fan, the only difficult part of reading *Prog* is having to see all the ads for concerts I'll never see. It's torture! I've read many letters to *Prog* over the years from UK fans lamenting a lack of attendance and/or enthusiasm at local shows. I'm sure they were well-founded, but I feel compelled to write and tell my UK prog brethren, you have no idea how good you have it.

I live in Raleigh, North Carolina. It's a great city: very artsy, with a steady stream of visiting performers, but very little prog. Sadly, that's the case with most US cities. We get to see the homegrown stuff – Rush, Kansas, Neal Morse, Dream Theater. And if we make the trek to Boston or NYC, we can see the few prog artists who can afford to do a handful of US dates every few years – Steven Wilson, Marillion, Steve Hackett. And that's about it. I'd give anything to see Damian Wilson. Or John Mitchell. Or Anathema, Panic Room, Big Big Train, or a hundred others. But it will never happen.

I recently went to a local club to see a NY-based prog band called Shwizz. They're a four-piece, mostly instrumental band. They remind me of The Aristocrats – a little less jazzy, a little more proggy, but virtuoso musicians. They were truly extraordinary. And there were about 20 people there. I counted seven people – myself included – who were clearly there for the band. The rest were just downtown revellers. Most drunk. Even a few pretty girls (nobody was more surprised than the band). They left not long after they arrived so in the end it was just the seven of us, enjoying one of the best bands I've ever seen in a club. Such is prog in the States. Enjoy what you have over there. Prog fans in the US would kill for it.

Frank Mahan, Raleigh, North Carolina

Hopefully the star prize will alleviate some of these prog gig woes! – Dep Ed

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

work, and thanks for introducing me to new acts. The free CDs are essential – it's all well and good reading about someone's opinion in the review pages, but nothing beats actually hearing it. Writing about music is like dancing about architecture, as someone far smarter than me once said.

Bob Hawkins

TULL'S SAX APPEAL

Whenever I read an interview with Ian Anderson, he always seems at pains to apologise for *A Passion Play*. The fact is, he should have further explored the possibilities of the saxophone instead of retreating unremittingly to the comfort of his flute for the ensuing 45 years.

A Passion Play is one of the best things Tull have ever done – I'm still totally knocked out by it. I mean, just listen to the bloody thing – it's killer! It's also worlds better than the two subsequent releases, *Minstrel In The Gallery* and *Too Old To Rock And Roll...*, which are the nadir of Tull's output. Thankfully, along came *Songs From The Wood* and *Heavy Horses*, which constitute the zenith.

Another of their best albums is *War Child*, again largely thanks to Anderson's brilliant use of sounds other than flute, such as bagpipes, resulting in one of their best and most rousing efforts.

So come on Ian, some sax or bagpipes might be just the thing at this point. Why let Mel Collins have all the glory?

Andrew Cooper

NO MORE NOSTALGIA!

Nothing bothers me more than seeing someone stuck in their 'glory days', oblivious of the time that has passed. While there are a few newer mentions, most of your magazine strikes me as mired in the muck of the past. It's ironic that this genre of fans originally sought out new and vital music and just stopped searching for the next wave of talent. Hard to believe one of the letters was asking for more articles on 70s bands. Dude, you can find all the info you want on any established band on the internet!

Let me be clear, I'm an old fart too.

I know almost every note of most of the top 100 anthems. Yes, Genesis, Pink Floyd and their ilk inspired me and countless others. This inspiration led to two roads: more of the same and divine innovation. Too bad the former gets more attention than the latter in *Prog*.

I understand you have to cater to your subscribers so my beef is more with the readers: wake up from your coma! Demand to hear the next prog epic. We may have to wade through an ocean of mediocrity to get there, but it's worth it. Buy the music, support the tours, buy the shirts. Be a part of keeping new prog vital and healthy.

John Pahl, NC USA

Tull's Ian Anderson in his pomp. This is what we wear in the Prog office every day...



ADAM WAKEMAN
@Wakemanofficial
Bongs have certainly changed a lot since my day. Cypress Hill must be touring round here or something.



BRUCE SOORD
@bsoord
Tracking with these lovely specimens today. The baritone (stolen from Katatonia) tuned down to A for some rockin acoustic bass.

PROG

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INTRO

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

VOTING OPENS FOR THIS YEAR'S PROG AWARDS!

New categories announced at the 2017 Progressive Music Awards, plus your chance to pick the winners.

► The Progressive Music Awards 2017 returns for the sixth year this autumn. The event will be held during the second week of September at the Underglobe in London, the exact date is still to be confirmed at time of writing. This year, the annual ceremony will include nine new categories all created with the aim of exploring prog's growing impact in the world of music and culture over the last 12 months.

In the reader-voted categories, new categories include Video Of The Year, Album Cover Of The Year and Reissue Of The Year. The popular Band/Artist Of The Year category has now been divided into International Band/Artist and UK Band/Artist to reflect the popularity of progressive music around the world. Event Of The Year has been extended beyond live concerts and festivals with the aim of showcasing prog's renewed popularity in popular culture. Included among this year's nominees are Yes' induction to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, the V&A's popular Pink Floyd exhibition and the BBC's tribute to satirical prog god, Brian Pern.

A number of previous award winners have returned to the list of nominees. Among them are Big Big Train – can they match last year's hat-trick of awards this year? They're up for awards in three categories including Album Of The Year and Album Cover Of The Year. Marillion are also up for another three categories – their popular Marillion Weekends are up for voting in the Event Of The Year category. They last won Live Event in 2015, but can they beat the tough competition to scoop it in 2017?

The Progressive Music Awards doesn't just pay tribute to established acts. This year, the nominees in the reader voted categories have been carefully selected on reflect the diversity of music now being made by newer artists as well. This includes the popular Limelight Award which was specifically created to honour the up-and-coming bands and acts profiled in the magazine section of the same name. Ten new names are up for selection this year, including Ghost Community and Kepler Ten.

Elsewhere, the new Unsung Hero and Industry VIP have been added to the magazine voted categories. Both pay tribute to those working behind the scenes who might not always get the credit they deserve. Meanwhile, the Chris Squire Virtuoso

Below: Matthew Wright hosted last year.



Above: Prog editor Jerry Ewing with Steve Hogarth.



"We're back in familiar territories but given the categories a shake up."

Jon Anderson was crowned 2016's Prog God. Who will win this year?



This month, Intro was compiled by
Isere Lloyd Davis
Malcolm Dome
Jerry Ewing
Jo Kendall
Martin Kieley
Hannah May Kilroy
Rhodri Marsden
Grant Moon
Natasha Scharf
Rick Wakeman
Sarah Worsley



The Prog Awards will return to the lavish Underglobe.



The Prog Awards celebrates the old and the new.



Jakko Jakszyk is presented his award by Ade Edmondson.



Big Big Train cleaned up at last year's awards.



Van der Graaf Generator picked up the Lifetime Achievement award. Right: The Anchress wins Limelight Award.

Award will return for another year, along with the coveted Prog God. Who will be awarded the very highest prog accolade? Keep your eyes peeled on the pages of *Prog* for the latest updates.

"It's been a strange six months for us at *Prog* magazine to say the least," says Editor Jerry Ewing. "With the well-publicised demise of the old TeamRock company and our subsequent return to our old stomping ground of Future Publishing, I felt we wanted to try and both convey the shifting to pastures new but equally get the message across that it very much is business as usual. To that end, we're back at the familiar surroundings of the Underglobe, a venue that has served us well over the past three years and is incredibly popular with everyone who attends the Awards. But we've given the categories a really good shake up to try and adapt to continually changing times. And it also allows us to offer a far greater amount of bands the recognition of being nominated, and offers the readers a much more varied selection from which to decide who gets their vote. This is certainly the most comprehensive and far-reaching list of nominees we've ever had, and also represents a very good cross section of where progressive music is at in 2017."

Readers will be able to find out all the gossip from the ceremony as it happens via the *Prog* website at www.progmagazine.com. And we'll be bringing you live coverage from the event itself, so make sure you're logged in during the night. The *Prog* Magazine Progressive Music Awards souvenir issue will go on sale October 12.

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



Progressive
Music
Awards
2017

The Nominations

Have your say and you could win a bumper bunch of proggy goodies from every nominated act.

Vote at:

www.progmagazine.com/awards

LIMELIGHT

(Last year's winner - The Anchoress)

Beatrix Players
Ghost Community
Kaprekar's Constant
Kepler Ten
KOYO
New Keepers Of The Water Towers
The Algorithm
Tilt
Voices From The Fuselage
VOLA

EVENT OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner - Big Big Train Live At King's Place)

ArcTanGent Festival
Be Prog! My Friend
Brian Pern: A Tribute
Marillion Weekends
Night Of The Prog
The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains
Ramblin' Man Fair
Summer's End Festival
Robert Reed's Sanctuary Live
Yes' induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame

VIDEO OF THE YEAR

Alan Reed - *Razor*
Bent Knee - *Hands Up*
Flaming Lips - *Should There Be Unicorns*
Gandalf's Fist - *Shadowborn*
King Crimson - *Heroes*
Mastodon - *Show Yourself*
Mew - *In A Better Place*
Nad Sylvan - *When The Music Dies*
Opeth - *Era*
Wolf People - *Night Witch*

ALBUM COVER OF THE YEAR

Ayreon - *The Source*
Big Big Train - *Grimspound*
Heather Findlay - *I Am Snow*
King Crimson - *Radical Action To Unseat The Hold Of Monkey Mind*
Kylver - *The Island*
Mastodon - *Emperor Of Sand*
Opeth - *Sorceress*
Robert Reed - *Sanctuary II*
Tim Bowness - *Lost In The Ghost Light*
Wolf People - *Ruins*

INTERNATIONAL BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Bent Knee
Devin Townsend
Dream Theater
Jean-Michel Jarre
Mew
Neal Morse Band
Opeth
Sólstafir
Voivod
Voyager

REISSUE OF THE YEAR

Alan Parsons Project - *Tales Of Mystery And Imagination*
Allan Holdsworth - *The Man Who Changed Guitar Forever!*
Brain Box - *Brain Box*
Can - *The Singles*
Pink Floyd - *The Early Years 1965-1972*
Rush - *2112*
Steve Hillage - *Searching For The Spark*
Vangelis - *Delectus*
XTC - *Skylarking*
Yes - *Tales From Topographic Oceans*

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner - iamthemorning - *The Lighthouse*)

Anathema - *The Optimist*
Big Big Train - *Grimspound*
Hawkwind - *Into The Woods*
Marillion - *FEAR*
Nad Sylvan - *The Bride Said No*
Neal Morse Band - *The Similtude Of A Dream*
Opeth - *Sorceress*
Steve Hackett - *The Night Siren*
Syd Arthur - *Apricity*
Van der Graaf Generator - *Do Not Disturb*

UK BAND/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

(Last year's winner - Big Big Train)

Anathema
Big Big Train
Gong
Lonely Robot
Marillion
Roger Waters
Steve Hackett
Syd Arthur
The Pineapple Thief
Yes, featuring Anderson Rabin Wakeman

The definitive remasters series of deluxe reissues in hardback covers with 3 CD's featuring the original albums remastered by Calum Malcolm (now available: 'Field of Crows' remixed by Chris Kimsey), rare demos & live versions with sleeve designs by Mark Wilkinson containing photo & extensive sleevenotes by Fish

"If you're a Fish-ophile you'll relish swimming in the vast ocean of demos, instrumentals and live tracks that engorge these lovingly designed packages. Yet it's his intensity and his theatre that keep them aflame."

PROG Magazine



"Suns On Empire co-written & produced by Steven Wilson, one of his first high profile gigs outside 'No Man' and 'Porcupine Tree'. The pairing of Fish's candour and wordplay & Wilson's rhythms and reveries merits critical rehabilitation"



"Field of Crows sounds like the work of a man who'd just discovered his mojo kicking back in - with Chris Kimsey's remix the album positively booms. It's another snapshot of Fish's still evolving musical story and one image that maybe we should have all lingered a little longer over at the time"



"Fellini Days is a confident, reassuringly complex record that plays to many of Fish's greatest strengths. An often overlooked album 'Fellini Days' has aged gracefully"



"Rain Gods with Zippos startlingly blending melody and mood with that flair for drama at which Fish excels. Fish possibly hasn't been given due credit for his ambition and diverse sonic palettes"



Moveable Feast: 4 cd's featuring 2 full shows with extensive set lists from Karlsruhe and Wurzburg, Germany recorded on the 'Feast of Consequences' European tour 2013-14 - **NOW AVAILABLE**



Farewell to Childhood: 2 cd's featuring a complete show from Warsaw and a DVD filmed in Berlin on the 2015-2016 European tour. **Mixed and mastered by Calum Malcolm NOW AVAILABLE**

Only available on mail order from his official website: fishheadsclub.com and from Amazon

'Weltschmerz / Clutching at Straws' 2017 UK Tour December featuring tracks from Fish's new studio album scheduled for release in 2018 and a final full performance of his last album with Marillion on its 30th anniversary

Fri 8: Leeds Uni | Sat 9: Manchester O2 Ritz | Sun 10: Leamington Assembly (special guest Doris Brendel)

Tue 12: Cardiff Tramshed | Wed 13: Bristol O2 Academy | Fri 15\Sat 16\Sun 17th (extra date now): London Islington Assembly rooms

Tues 19: Cambridge Corn Exchange (special guest Lazuli)

Wed 20: Newcastle Wylam Brewery | Thurs 21: Glasgow O2 ABC (special guest Doris Brendel)

Tickets available now from usual outlets

TANGERINE DREAM HONOUR FROESE

Electronic collective celebrate their 50th anniversary with new recordings.



Tangerine Dream, 2017: following the movements of a visionary.

BIANCA FROESE-ACQUAYE

When **Tangerine Dream** release *Quantum Gate* on September 29, they want the album to achieve two aims: to mark the legacy of late mainman, Edgar Froese, and mark a new beginning for the band.

Froese died in 2015 at the age of 70, after suffering a pulmonary embolism. But Thorsten Quaeschning, Ulrich Schnauss and Hoshiko Yamane, along with Bianca Froese-Acquaye, the founder's wife, manager and co-creative, knew they had to keep the unit going.

Quaeschning tells *Prog*, "It was Edgar's decision. I'm not sure I would have been in the position to say, 'I'm carrying on as Tangerine Dream.' I couldn't have said, 'I'm the guy.'"

According to the keyboard playing guitarist, Froese left detailed plans for the album after 2014's *Phaedra Farewell Tour*. "Edgar decided to make a whole new concept, and he wanted to return to the more electronic feel. He was a guy who planned everything. I guess he had planned to work on his own testament – but he never told us.

"To be honest, in 2007-2008 his health was not good. He looked kind of ill because he'd had an operation. Afterwards, he seemed stable, and we never thought it would get worse. If you'd asked us even two weeks before he died, we'd have said he had 20, maybe 30 [more] years."

Fans can rest assured that the founder's work will be heard loud and clear on the upcoming crowd-funded album, which follows on from June's *Particles*. "Edgar was a very hard working guy. He never stopped, not even at Christmas. So he left us, I think, 15 hours of music on hard disk, with arrangements, MIDI files... There's a good third, maybe a little more, on the album, so you do hear Edgar."

Asked what listeners can expect, Quaeschning says: "The Tangerine Dream-like sequences are back! I'm not the biggest fan of the early 90s Tangerine Dream – although maybe it's more that I'm not a fan of the plastic sounds of 90s music. Hopefully, this album will please fans from the 70s and 80s, and people from today. It's more electronic and more sequenced. It's more what you expect from Tangerine Dream."

Is there one of those wonderful long German words that describes how the band feel at the moment? "Good question," Quaeschning says, and adds, "in freudiger Erwartungshaltung," which roughly translates as 'a state of joyful anticipation.' **MK**

For more, visit: www.tangerinedream.org.

"Edgar wanted to return to the more electronic feel."



THE PROG RADIO SHOW IS BACK!

The **Prog Magazine Show** has returned to the recently relaunched TeamRock Radio. *Prog* Editor Jerry Ewing hosts the programme, which is broadcast every Sunday at 5pm at www.teamrock.com and via the TeamRock Radio app on iTunes and Android. It's repeated on Wednesdays at 5pm. The new schedule also includes the *Classic Rock Magazine Show*, as well as artist-led programmes from the likes of Devin Townsend and Marillion's Steve Hogarth.



Sunny side up: Mogwai.

BRIAN SWEENEY

MOGWAI FEEL THE CHANGE ON LATEST

Scottish post-rockers announce new studio album and tour for the autumn.

Mogwai release ninth album *Every Country's Sun* on September 1 via Rock Action Records – and they're still refusing to take their titles seriously. Despite a hint of military undertone, multi-instrumentalist Barry Burns tells *Prog*, "A close friend of ours thought every country had its own sun, and that's why Spain is hotter. It's one of the funniest things I've ever heard!

"Titles don't matter so much when you're making instrumental music. If you thought about it too much you'd get bored."

The follow-up to 2014's *Rave Tapes* is the first without guitarist John Cummings, who left in 2015. But Mogwai's workload meant they just had to "steam through" the change. "We didn't have time to think about it," says Burns. On the new record, he adds, "We felt his absence, but it didn't affect the way we worked. It affected the way we thought about stuff."

According to Burns, the album features "more variety" than its predecessor. "There's more guitar because [bassist] Dominic Aitchison was writing quite a few of the songs, and it shone through." So did their recent experiences of writing soundtracks, not least last year's *Atomic*. "When you're doing as much work as you can possibly do, you're getting better at what you do."

So with the comedy titles continuing, would it be fair to compare Mogwai albums to comedy sketch shows? "Aye, it's just like *Chewin' The Fat*," says the Scotsman. "And I'm Ford Kiernan." The one who gets drunk and starts fights? "Aye, that's me!"

For Mogwai's autumn tour dates, visit: www.mogwai.co.uk. **MK**

KIM UNVEILS HER SOLO DEBUT

Former Touchstone singer reunites with John Mitchell.

Kim Seviour's *Recovery Is Learning* will be out through White Star on July 28. Her debut is a collaboration with Lonely Robot/Frost* man John Mitchell, which draws on her experiences of illness.

"It's been a bigger journey than was planned," reveals the singer, who suffers from ME. "About halfway through, I had what could only be described as a full emotional breakdown. [But] I feel like whatever I was going through, some really good songs came out of it."

The nine-track album also features guest drums from Graham Brown (Rob Cottingham's Cairo) and piano from Touchstone's Liam Holmes.

"I think Touchstone fans will really enjoy it because there's still that commercial progressive influence," she says. "There's a good chunk of rock going through it but there are some songs that are more wistful. It's a real mixed bag."

For more, visit: www.kimseviour.com. **NRS**



Learning Curve: Kim Seviour.

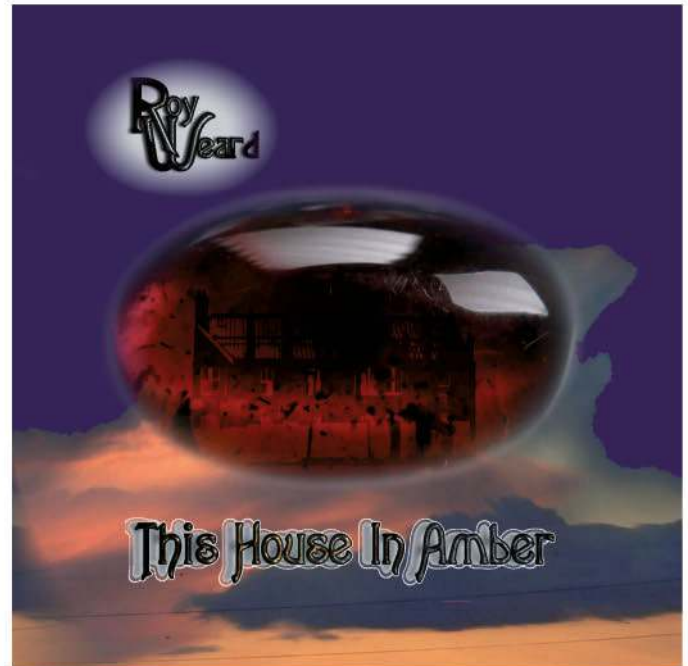


Roy Weard - This House In Amber

www.weard.co.uk

<https://royweard.bandcamp.com>

"An excellent album with dark and deep lyrical themes."

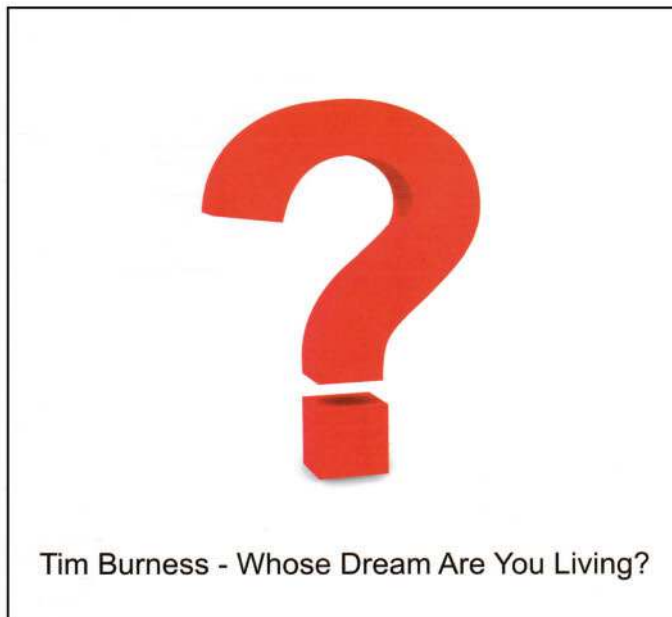


Tim Burness - Whose Dream Are You Living?

www.timburness.com

<https://timburness.bandcamp.com>

"A CD that cracked our 'Best of 2017' list."
ProGGnosis



Tim Burness - Whose Dream Are You Living?

Paradise 9 - 20th Anniversary 1997 ~ 2017 Live

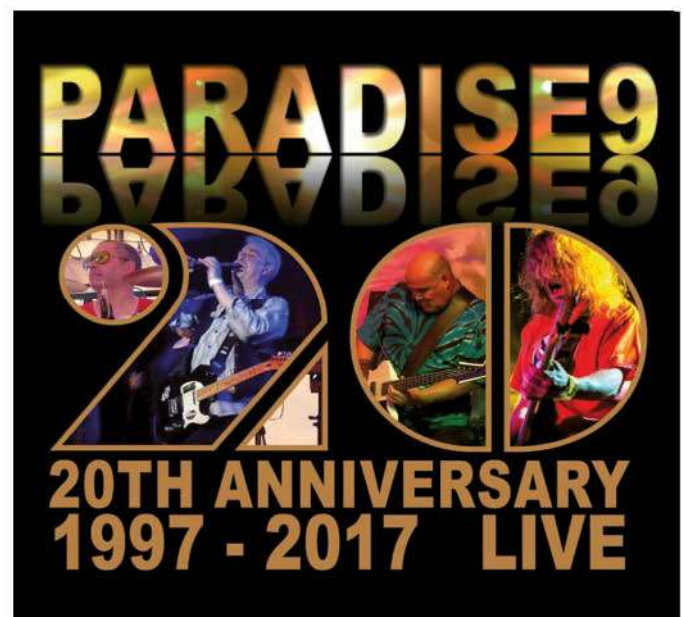
www.paradise9.net

<https://paradise9.bandcamp.com>

"Celebrating 20 years of Space-rock/
space-prog/proto-punk/rock n' roll."



www.realmusicventures.co.uk





Coming Technical! Caligula's Horse.

CALIGULA'S HORSE MAKE CONTACT!

Aussie proggers reveal their artistic concept album with Shining frontman.

Caligula's Horse have announced their new album, *In Contact*, will be out via InsideOut on September 15. It's their first conceptual release since 2013's *The Tide, The Thief & River's End* and, says vocalist Jim Grey, it shows off a more technical side to their sound.

"It ventures into territory that we've never touched on before, especially with the addition of our new drummer, Josh Griffin. We're broadening our horizons in terms of technical ability and stylistic stuff... There are complex a cappella sections, a lot of technical guitar work and a lot of instrumentation that you won't have heard from us before."

The album is divided into what Grey refers to as "four chapters", each exploring the stories of four fictional artists. "Each is experiencing either an internal or external struggle of trying to reach for something more in their lives, and using their art as a metaphor for that," he explains. "The universe I created for these characters is based on the idea that all forms of art, whether that's poetry, music or painting, is an attempt by human beings to remember a dream that we all shared at one stage."

In Contact also includes a guest appearance from Jørgen Munkeby, from the Norwegian band Shining. He contributes saxophone and backing vocals on the final 'chapter', *Graves*.

Caligula's Horse recently reissued their first two albums - *Moments From Ephemeral City* and *The Tide, The Thief & River's End* - via InsideOut.

For more, see www.caligulashorse.com. **NRS**

STEFANIE VALLEN



NEW MAGMA FILM TO BE RELEASED

A feature-length documentary about Magma will be released on DVD this July. Laurent Goldstein's *To Life, Death And Beyond - The Music of Magma* unravels the story behind Christian Vander's experimental project, and includes an interview with the drummer himself. Meanwhile, Magma have released a remastered version of *Wurdah Itah* via Seventh Records.

The expanded CD also contains previously unreleased material.

Embracing Mass Darkness: Leprous get serious.



LEPROUS' DARK NEW RECORDINGS

Norwegians team up with Canadian cellist for their atmospheric fifth album.

Leprous are to showcase a new sound on *Malina*, which is out via InsideOut on August 25.

"We didn't want any digital effects, and we wanted everything to sound as it really did in the studio," says frontman and keyboard player Einar Solberg. "The songs are more atmospheric and it's got a completely different vibe to [previous album] *The Congregation*. This has more of a rock feel - some of the songs are super-fast and completely chaotic but it's still very Leprous. The overall mood is even more melancholic than what we've done before."

The album also includes strings from Canadian prog cellist Raphael Weinroth-Browne, who caught Solberg's attention when he supported Leprous in Ottawa last year.

According to the frontman, the 11-track takes its name from the old Slavic word for 'raspberry'. "I wrote the lyrics to the title track when I was in [the Eastern European country of] Georgia and I saw this very old lady selling raspberries. She was very poor and could barely walk, but she still had to go around selling raspberries just to make a living. I felt very sad about it so I wrote the song, and we thought it would make a good album title."

Leprous will be heading out on tour this autumn with support from Agent Fresco, and the frontman teases, "We have something very special planned. I'm not going to reveal any more, but it will be a very different Leprous show to what we normally do."

For the full list of dates, visit www.leprous.net. **NRS**



FAD GADGETS

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

BASEROCK

If you're the kind of person who feels that a musical experience isn't real



unless your head is wedged into the bass bin of a 50,000 watt PA, you might find this backpack diverting. Strap it on, and you'll feel the bass frequencies of ambient music pulsating through your backbone. Turn it up, and you can experience the intensity of a defibrillator shock with a fraction of the worry. And, as if that wasn't enough of a selling point, it also comes with a two litre hydration tank and drinking straw.

www.getbaserock.com

JAMMY

Guitars are annoyingly lengthy. They don't fit in a suitcase, they're classed as outsized objects when travelling on certain airlines, and if you try to fold them in half they break. To the rescue of the travelling musician comes Jammy, a unit just over a foot long which extends, rather like a posh dining table. Almost miraculously, you suddenly have a guitar (albeit a weird looking guitar) with a full scale neck. It's not likely to be an acceptable substitute for your much-loved vintage Strat, but it's a neat party trick at the very least.

www.playjammy.com

ROCK BAND

Centuries after barrel organs first appeared on the streets of Europe, we still have a fascination for mechanical devices that can play tunes. Artist Neil Mendoza recently built the Rock Band, where small pebbles hit metallic bars and percussion instruments to create a gorgeously plinky version of *Here Comes The Sun*. He's even uploaded the instructions, so if you have a few solenoids, resistors, pebbles, and days to spare, why not give it a whirl?

www.neilmendoza.com



THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE!

Rick eavesdrops on a record label crisis meeting...

An emergency meeting was recently called at Clueless Records, one of the UK's major labels, to discuss falling sales. The chairman, president, six vice presidents, the Head of A&R, and the sales and marketing team were all in attendance. Also present was Eric, the 16-year-old work experience lad.

The head of the label's German office, Herman von Streaming, opened the proceedings. "Guten tag, gentlemen and ladies. I have called this crisis meeting as physical sales have now reached an all-time low."

He clicked his heels and continued, "Whilst it is true that streaming is very good for us and we certainly like that we can pay the artists next to nothing and pocket the major income share whilst ripping them off [sinister laughter]... but apart from that and the money we get from online downloads, we are *dying* so we need to find a solution."

Harry 'Good Time' Braindead, the 24-year-old Head of A&R, was the first to speak. "I don't get no play these days," he sighed, drumming his fingers on the table. His colleagues were impressed as he normally didn't have a clue when it comes to music. He still thought a crotchet was something to do with sewing.

Lucinda, Head of Sales, asked, "Do you mean radio play?"

"Nah, *foreplay*, innit!"

Justin Doors spoke next. He was one of the overpaid vice presidents. "I've been at Clueless longer than most of you," he said, his eyes

darting around the room to make sure everyone was listening. "It's been almost two years since I joined following my third-class degree in Media Studies at the University Of Herne Bay. Anyway, the truth is, the sales team just aren't selling and the promotions team just aren't promoting."

He sat down, feeling very smug that he had grasped the essence of the problem.

Herman ignored him and shouted. "The problem is clear; the public aren't buying enough CDs, and the question is *why*?"

"Surely *somebody* must have some ideas?" His face was now red.

The silence was interrupted only by the gurgle and whirl of the coffee pod machine as Eric started handing out drinks.

"Boy?" Herman asked, as the lad popped a latte macchiato in front of him.

"Well, there are no record shops anymore," replied Eric. "They all closed down when you lot tried to get everyone to buy online so you'd make bigger profits. Now everyone has realised they were conned into buying in a way they didn't want to, and so instead of saving money, you're now losing money."

Herman spoke again, "Ah, gut! Thank you, Boy! That is very interesting and you may have stumbled upon the answer. I will cut costs immediately. You're all fired and, Boy, you can have my job."

"No thank you, Mr von Streaming," said the teen. "I'm hoping to have a future!"



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

YOUR PROG CHEF: **BRUCE SOORD, THE PINEAPPLE THIEF**

On the menu: Take Yours Hot
(The Brucey Curry)



"This is my 'easy curry with fluffy rice speciality' that I regularly cook for the guys whenever we're rehearsing in town. I like mine pretty spicy to make the band sweat. It's quite low fat and certainly not authentic!"

Ingredients

(Serves two) Olive oil, 1 tsp cumin seeds, 5 garlic cloves (chopped), 1 tsp turmeric, 1 chopped onion, chillies to taste, 1 tin chopped tomatoes, 750g chicken (cut into chunks), 2 chopped peppers, 250g cherry tomatoes (halved), 250g Greek yoghurt, coriander.

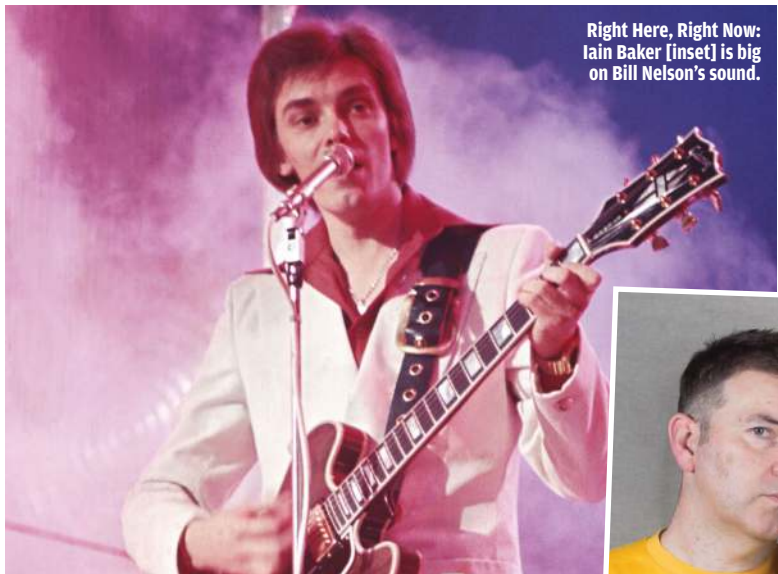
Preparation

"First, put some quality prog on the hi-fi (you do have speakers in the kitchen, right?), pour yourself a decent beer and make sure, like me, you have a chopping board with your face on it. The key to cooking this is to enjoy it and use the force. It's quite difficult to completely screw it up!

Pour a big glug of olive oil into a heavy pan and gently fry the cumin seeds and garlic. Add the turmeric for 30 seconds. Throw in the chopped onion and keep stirring. Next choose your chillies – this is really where a curry's flavour is defined. I use the Komodo Dragon chilli that's pretty damn hot and has a very distinctive flavour. But it's up to you what kind (and how many) you use. When it smells like it's cooking nicely, throw in a tin (or two) of chopped tomatoes, your meat (whatever you like, I usually choose chicken) and whatever veg you fancy. Add salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Let it simmer for at least an hour or until the meat is nice and tender. Towards the end, I throw in some cherry tomatoes and half a pot of Greek yoghurt, and gently bring back up to temperature. Serve with fresh coriander, naans and rice.

Brucey's dead cert method for fluffy rice: Measure basmati rice in a jug (200ml for two people is plenty), wash and add to a non-stick pan, season with salt. Pour over one-and-a-half times the amount of boiling water. Seal the pan with a tight lid and heat. Once it starts to boil, turn the heat down low. Leave it to simmer for about 10 minutes and absolutely *no* peeking. Open the lid, fluff up with a fork and that's it. Perfection." **JK**

MY PROG HERO Inspiring the wider music world...



Right Here, Right Now: Iain Baker [inset] is big on Bill Nelson's sound.

ANDRE CSILLAG/REV/SHUTTERSTOCK

IAIN BAKER

They don't speak the same *electrical language*, but Jesus Jones' keyboardist feels real admiration for **Bill Nelson**.

► "The first time I heard Be-Bop Deluxe was either through John Peel playing them, or through watching them on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. There was a strange duality going on in my childhood – I was this little punk kid buying all the punk records, but at the same time, I'd grown up with a father who'd played loads of wild and disparate stuff, so I was also listening to Be-Bop Deluxe, Barclay James Harvest and Mike Oldfield.

When people think of prog, they think it's the refuge of the virtuoso, and Bill Nelson is an incredible guitarist. On [1977's] *Live! In The Air Age* album, there's a version of *Adventures In A Yorkshire Landscape* and the guitar solo on that is just staggering. I can't imagine how he did it; it's almost transcendental. His playing is engaging, it brings people in, and I think that's what attracted me to him.

I love [1978's] *Drastic Plastic* – *Panic In The World* is just a fantastic song. But I also love the way [1976's] *Sunburst Finish* bursts into life with *Fair Exchange* – it's just amazing. Even going back

as far as the first album, *Axe Victim*, which has such a different sound compared to what came after it.

My fascination with Bill Nelson's work extends beyond Be-Bop Deluxe. *Drastic Plastic* was the sound of a band finding what was happening in the future, but he moved it on even further with Red Noise. By then, I was listening to post-punk and I think [debut] *Sound On Sound* fits in almost perfectly with that. It's an incredibly forward-thinking album. Then he does things like *Quit Dreaming And Get On The Beam and Chimera*, and the mini-albums... he's put out an incredibly strong body of work. He's always been forward-thinking and it made perfect sense to me when he won Visionary at the 2015 Prog Awards.

In Jesus Jones, we've always thought that if you get too bogged down in what's actually happening now, you get left behind. It's more exciting to be influenced by what could be done rather than what is being done. That's a progressive outlook." **NRS**

Passages is out this year. See: www.jesusjones.com.

“His guitar solo on *Adventures...* is just staggering.”

PROG IN BRIEF

BMG are continuing their series of **Emerson, Lake & Palmer** (right) reissues with the re-release of *Black Moon* and *In The Hot Seat* on July 28. Both remastered albums will also include a disc of live recordings taken from selected shows.



Nightwish have announced they will be touring next year. The *Decades: World Tour* will focus on rare material and reworked versions of older songs. It will coincide with the release of the *Decades* compilation album on March 9 via Nuclear Blast.

COSMOGRAF

The Hay-Man Dreams

NEW STUDIO ALBUM
14 JULY 2017

*The rain comes, it soaks his worn out clothes
I follow, everywhere he goes.*

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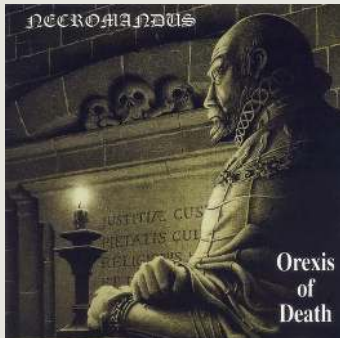
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NECROMANDUS

OREXIS OF DEATH

AUDIO ARCHIVES, 1999

So often cited as a second Black Sabbath, or pioneers of doom, you might wonder what Necromandus are doing in *Prog*. But this album is not so much proto-metal as progressive metal. And, it sounds a lot closer to Yes or Gentle Giant than the Sabs.

The Cumbrian band started in the late 1960s, when vocalist Bill Branch, guitarist Barry 'Baz' Dunnery (older brother of former It Bites singer and guitarist Francis), bassist Dennis McCarten and drummer Frank Hall teamed up. Originally taking the name Hot Spring Water, which they soon changed to Heavy Hand and then Taurus, they developed a heavy yet progressive blues style, which in 1972 caught the attention of Tony Iommi. (The Sabbath guitarist knew the guys because Hall's old band Heaven had supported an early version of Black Sabbath.) By now, the foursome were called Necromandus, a name suggested by a radio show, and Iommi agreed not only to manage them, but also to produce their debut album.

In '73, Iommi and the band went to Morgan Studios in north west London and got the album recorded, after which Necromandus signed to Vertigo, also Sabbath's label. They inevitably got the chance to support the latter on tour, and also opened for Badger, featuring Yes keyboard player Tony Kaye. But the album's release was delayed, and when Dunnery quit on the eve of their US tour with Sabbath, Vertigo shelved the record. It was eventually put out by Audio Archives in 1999, and subsequently reissued a handful of times. But by this point, the band had long since split up.

There's no doubt that, had the album come out when it was originally scheduled, it could have been the springboard for a successful career. There are nuances of blues, jazz and folk here, as well as a distinct but controlled heaviness. Listening to tracks like *Nightjar* and *A Black Solitude* gives an immediate appreciation for the deft musicianship and the calm yet intense sense of atmosphere. Barry Dunnery's guitar work is especially noteworthy, marking him out as a major figure. And the way in which Dennis McCarten and Frank Hall combine is a rhythmic joy: it's no wonder Ozzy Osbourne wanted to have these three in his first Blizzard Of Ozz line-up.

Iommi himself guests on the title track, and is almost unrecognisable from the guitar hero on Sabbath's albums; his approach is more understated and progressively fluent.

Last year, a new line-up of the band came together, with only Hall remaining from these early days (the others have all died in recent times), and they've just issued a new, promising album, called *Necromandus*.

In all, *Orexis Of Death* deserves its stature as a cult classic. It's an album that shows what might have been.

MALCOLM DOME



ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

String Theory: up-and-coming Canadians Cydemind.



CYDEMIND

Violinist **Olivier Allard** on Cydemind, the Montreal band taking prog metal and fiddling with it.

Think of violinists in prog and who comes to mind? Darryl Way? Eddie Jobson? Jean-Luc Ponty? Well, Cydemind's young fiddler Olivier Allard has a different hero. "David Garrett was my teen idol," he tells *Prog*, referring to the poster boy of crossover classical music. "That's why I have all this hair! And Nigel Kennedy too. He plays classical music at the highest level... Both Nigel and David try to take it to more people."

Cydemind are trying to get their own music to a bigger audience too. Formed in Montreal in 2011, Allard's joined in the current line-up by drummer Alexandre Dagenais, pianist Camille Delage, Nico Damoulianos on bass and Kevin Paquet on guitar. Together they've cultivated a highly melodic and symphonic hybrid of instrumental prog metal with a classical slant. Allard has just finished his masters degree in violin performance at Montreal University, and is aiming at his doctorate. "The violin has a really similar range to a singer, and I'm trying to make melodies people can sing over metal riffs. So many prog bands are really similar these days, so we hope this is what makes us unique and interesting."



"David Garrett was my teen idol."

Their self-released, full-length debut album *Erosion* shows them to be both those things. Pieces like *What Remains*, the particularly beautiful *Derecho* and whopping 28-minute title track are alloys of the band's prog influences – notably Dream Theater and Symphony X – and that concert hall approach. Allard's playing is by turns dizzily nimble and achingly plangent, and the band – highly accomplished musicians all – park the showboating and pull relentlessly in the same coherent, melodic direction. It's a heady mix that should have label heads seeing Canadian dollar signs.

To date they've played just a few small but well-received shows in Quebec – 'refreshing' is a recurring compliment. *Erosion's* out now, there'll be a launch show and then in August they embark on a mini tour of Canada with fellow countrymen Pyramid Theorem and Universe Effect. "Prog's definitely growing in Montreal, and across Canada," says Allard.

"There are lots of underground bands from Montreal, but not really an internationally known prog band." That might be about to change. GRM

For more, see www.cydemind.com.

PROG IN BRIEF

Anathema (right) have announced they will be heading out on tour with Alcest this September. They will play seven dates in the UK, including shows in Glasgow, Sheffield, Exeter and London. They will also play in Dublin on 24.



Oceansize's (left) debut *Effloresce* is to be reissued on vinyl via Beggars Banquet later this year. Former frontman Mike Vennart has been working on the new master at Abbey Road. The album will also be available as a HD digital download.

BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA

Mancunian multi-instrumental duo come into bloom.

“THE SONGS TEND to write themselves and this happens a lot in my kitchen. I guess cooking doesn’t happen there so something else has to!” chuckles The Blackheart Orchestra vocalist Chrissy Mostyn in a charming Mancunian accent.

Previously known simply as Blackheart, The Blackheart Orchestra are a soft acoustic and synth prog duo, formed by avid instrument collectors Rick Pilkington and Mostyn.

“When we met, I suggested to Chrissy that we do a couple of gigs together, just for fun. Before we knew it, a couple of gigs turned into 140 gigs in our first year!” says Pilkington.

Much like the title and artwork of their newly released second album *Diving For Roses*, the band’s fresh new sound is delicate and fragrant, like a rose in bloom. “We added more instrumentation on this album, including electronica and beats,” says Mostyn. “We used to be a solely acoustic band.”

“The music has changed from a very narrow world to a multi-lane freeway,” explains Pilkington, adding, “We have progressed and become more confident to try new things.”

Diving For Roses is a truly captivating concoction of acoustic instruments and electronic sounds, allowing an easy glide from pop song to ballad through the tracks. “I play acoustic guitar, electric guitar, omnichord, synth, piano, and I think that’s it...” says Mostyn.

“My instruments are the acoustic guitar, a violin bow, electric guitar, bass, percussion, drums, synths, piano, mandola... oh, and melodica! Basically anything we can get our hands on,” adds Pilkington.

“I think that instruments are instinctual,” concludes Mostyn.

“You get an instrument to make a cool sound and then a sound develops around that sound. I wouldn’t say that we are wizards with instruments, we just always have a go.”

Describing their stage as “an explosion in a music shop,” the duo pride themselves in performing all of their songs live, without any prerecorded instruments, and sticking to a very strict routine. “We get to the gig at 3pm every time,” says Pilkington. “We are loaded by 3.30pm, we are set up by 4.30pm and the doors aren’t until 7.30pm. That means we have a full two hours of playtime before the gig. If we manage to write a song in that two-hour period, then we will play it that same night and see how the audience respond.

Preferring an organic creative process as opposed to a theoretical approach, Pilkington is amused by the idea that they wouldn’t have a clue what key their songs are in if asked. “I like the freedom

of not being tied to any form of musical theory or knowledge whatsoever,” he says.

The album features some poignant love songs, notably *Now That We Are Ghosts*, a highly emotive tale of two lost lovers and an ode to companionship and romance.

“The inspiration came at about two o’clock in the morning,” says Mostyn. “I felt very upset, thinking about the suicide of two people who couldn’t be together. It’s about separation and loss... Gosh!” she laughs. “That sounds quite miserable, doesn’t it?”

In their cleverly crafted music video for *Sebastian*, there is a soldier who is revealed to be a woman, a victim of serial seducer Sebastian, tending to her wounds.

“The wounds she is tending to are in fact actually emotional ones and she is returning from the battlefields of love,” explains Mostyn.

The band’s proficiency and range supports the multi-instrumentalists’ idea that in-depth musical knowledge isn’t essential and their fun-loving, down-to-earth personalities shine brilliantly through the vibrant allure of their romantic songs. A Prog love story. **ILD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP
Chrissy Mostyn
(vocals, various instruments)
Rick Pilkington
(various instruments)

SOUNDS LIKE
 Emotion-drenched electronic and acoustic prog with folk and pop influences

CURRENT RELEASE
Diving For Roses is out now on Right Track Records

WEBSITE
www.theblackheartorchestra.com

“The music has changed from a very narrow world to a multi-lane freeway. We have progressed and become more confident to try new things.”



Two’s Company: The Blackheart Orchestra.



A PAUSE FOR QUIET REFLECTION

A reader on the perils of arguing online.

I've been following the multifarious Facebook threads posted on the *Prog Magazine* Readers forum with a mixture of interest, excitement... and bemusement.

Lots of new bands to check out, opportunities to reminisce and share our album and concert experiences, and naturally a bit of robust debating as we each try to put the world of prog to rights. And for the most part it's been friendly and cordial, and for me, it's become a sort of home away from home. It's a vibrant community that supports the magazine and the genre, and gives us a vital prog fix while we wait for the next issue to arrive.

However, as we all know from experience, sometimes a random comment can be easily misconstrued, or someone takes personal offence at an implied criticism, and before we know it a casual query becomes a verbal battlefield.

Just recently someone posted a comment inviting suggestions for albums which might change his opinion of a certain high-profile prog band. The initial responses were friendly, if perhaps a little querulous in some cases, but for the most part I found it interesting to read all the differing views around this band's considerable legacy of music.

Let's face it, when it comes to our favourite bands, we all have something earnest to say. Unfortunately some of us are a little more earnest in our contributions; it gets a little heated, and suddenly our community becomes the very thing we dislike about those other music forums which we perceive to be blinkered and prejudiced. Worse, it starts to drive people away from our own community.

I've been pleasantly surprised by how quickly this group has grown, and how much goodwill we show to each other in supporting a music genre that's all too often derided elsewhere. It would be a shame if this progress started to decline because of a few ill-judged posts. (I, too, can be just as prone to posting a ratty comment in the heat of the moment!)

Perhaps we should be asking ourselves: in the time it's taken to write and post our comment for argument's sake, how many new songs could we have listened to? How many new acts have missed their window of opportunity on the Facebook page because we were too busy reheating the same arguments about an established band? Said band doesn't need our approval, and probably cares less what any of us think. But the new bands trying to get our attention *do* care and need all the support they can get.

If any of you have seen the opening scene in the movie *The Warriors*, think of Cyrus addressing the massed gangs, berating them for fighting one another for their own little piece of turf. "All we have to do is keep up the general truce[...] because it's all our turf!"

Can you dig it?

JOHN STOUT

Got an opinion on the matter that you'd like to share? Please email us at: prog@futurenet.com.

HAVE A CIGAR

Saluting the scene's supporting crew



Clifford and Thomson with Roger Dean and Rick Wakeman.

TRADING BOUNDARIES

Eat, drink, shop and prog? **Michael Clifford** and **Tracy Thomson's** unique venue lets you do all four!

Behind the red-brick facade of a former Georgian coaching inn in rural Sussex lies one of the UK's most unusual spaces. Trading Boundaries is an award-winning live venue, retail complex and restaurant that also houses Roger Dean's official art gallery. As far as venues go, it's certainly unique and has some very famous fans.

"I remember one extraordinary weekend where we had Steve Howe for lunch, Steve Hackett for dinner, and Robert Fripp turned up for tea with Toyah!" laughs the venue's director and co-founder Michael Clifford.

He and business partner Tracy Thomson opened Trading Boundaries as a specialist furniture shop in Surrey in 1996. Little did the two former property developers realise it would be so successful, they would soon end up moving to a larger space in Fletching. The move gave them the opportunity to expand beyond anything they could have imagined.

"Before we were offering proper food in the café, we would fire up the barbeque on bank holiday Mondays," says Thomson. "We started adding music and it became so popular that the next natural step was to add regular live music into the café."

The Elephant Café has hosted numerous live performances over the last decade, including exclusive shows from some of the biggest names in the world of prog. Rick Wakeman, John Wetton and Focus are among those who've played at the 150-capacity venue, with Caravan, Gryphon and Steve Hackett all planned for this year.

"Both Tracy and I were brought up with Genesis and Yes, so we love that sort of music," says Clifford, "but Focus were probably one of the first prog artists we put on [in 2008]. I hadn't realised they were still touring and went to see them in concert. I met Sir Thijs van Leer afterwards and asked if he and the band would come and play at Trading Boundaries. They did and they loved it. They've been back several times now."

Sir Thijs Van Leer Live At Trading Boundaries came out last year as a limited edition via the new Trading Boundaries label. The owners

hope it'll be the first of many exclusive releases.

"This really is one of those places where people go, 'Oh my God, there's such-and-such!'" says Clifford. **NRS**

For the latest gig listings, see: www.tradingboundaries.com.



"Robert Fripp turned up for tea with Toyah!"

PROG IN BRIEF

Soul Enema have teamed up with Arjen Lucassen and Yossi Sassi on their second album, *Of Clans And Clones And Clowns*. It'll be available from iTunes and Bandcamp at the end of June and is the follow-up to 2010's *Thin Ice Crawling*.



Next To None (left) are to release their second album, *Phases* through InsideOut on July 7. It's been mixed by Periphery bassist Adam 'Nolly' Getgood. The band, featuring Max Portnoy, are currently on tour with Shattered Fortress.

Chasing The Monsoon's debut *No Ordinary World* will be released this autumn through Immrama Records. The project was formed by Karnataka's Ian Jones, and includes the band's former vocalist Lisa Fury as well as Nightwish's Troy Donockley.

Violinist Anna Phoebe and Jurojin guitarist Nicolas Rizzi have released a new single as **Papillon**. *Indigo* is the first in a series of recordings which will lead to an album early next year. The duo are currently performing around the UK.

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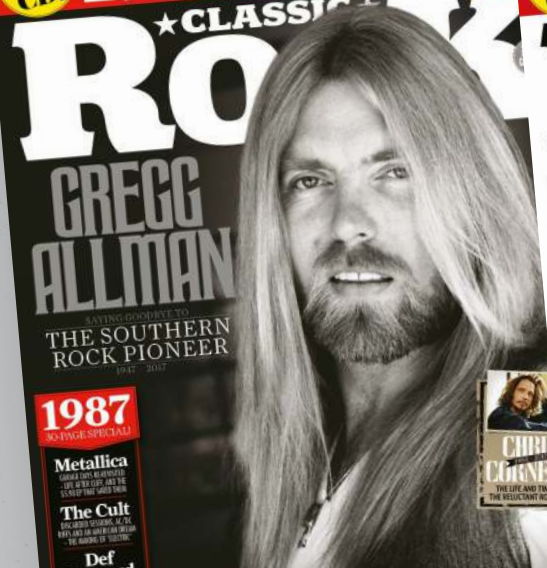
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Official Progressive Albums Chart

the prog top 30 albums

May 2017

Compiled by Official Charts Company

- 1 **HAWKWIND** Into The Woods (CHERRY RED)
- 2 **RICK WAKEMAN** Piano Portraits (UMC)
- 3 **MIKE & THE MECHANICS** Let Me Fly (BMG)
- 4 **JANE WEAVER** Modern Kosmology (FIRE)
- 5 **POND** The Weather (MARATHON ARTISTS)
- 6 **MASTODON** Emperor Of Sand (REPRISE)
- 7 **MOON DUO** Occult Architecture - Vol 2 (SACRED BONES)
- 8 **BIG BIG TRAIN** Grimspound (GIANT ELECTRIC PEA)
- 9 **STEVE HACKETT** The Night Siren (INSIDE OUT)
- 10 **PROCOL HARUM** Novum (EAGLE)
- 11 **JOHN MARTYN** Head And Heart - The Acoustic (ISLAND/UMC)
- 12 **AYREON** The Source (MUSIC THEORIES)
- 13 **MIKE OLDFIELD** Return To Ommadawn (MERCURY)
- 14 **KATE BUSH** Before The Dawn (FISH PEOPLE)
- 15 **DO MAKE SAY THINK** Stubborn Persistent Illusions (CONSTELLATION)
- 16 **LONELY ROBOT** The Big Dream (INSIDE OUT)
- 17 **NAD SYLVAN** The Bride Said No (CENTURY MEDIA)
- 18 **SOLSTAFIR** Berdreyminn (SEASON OF MIST)
- 19 **TODD RUNDGREN** White Knight (CLEOPATRA)
- 20 **MEW** Visuals (PLAY IT AGAIN SAM)
- 21 **PINK FLOYD** The Early Years - 1965-72 (RHINO)
- 22 **SILVER/LEAD** WIRE Silver/Lead (PINK FLAG)
- 23 **JETHRO TULL** The String Quartets (BMG)
- 24 **GOLDRAY** Rising (AKASHIC)
- 25 **MOSTLY AUTUMN** Sight Of Day (MOSTLY AUTUMN)
- 26 **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** 50 50 At 50 (MATTY GROOVES)
- 27 **FLAMING LIPS** Oczy Mlody (BELLA UNION)
- 28 **OPETH** Sorceress (NUCLEAR BLAST)
- 29 **PINK FLOYD** The Early Years 1972 - Obfuscation (RHINO)
- 30 **JEAN MICHEL JARRE** Oxygene 3 (SONY MUSIC CG)

Find out more at www.officialcharts.com

WIN! PINK FLOYD: THEIR MORTAL REMAINS.



This special hardback book with lenticular cover was published to accompany the V&A's retrospective The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains, that runs from May 13 - October 1, and we have one to give away.

Pink Floyd: Their Mortal Remains celebrates 50 years of Pink Floyd. The first ever book produced with full access to the Pink Floyd archive, it is heavily illustrated throughout and includes five essays written by authors including Jon Savage, Howard Goodall and Rob Young. These examine what makes the band special, from the mythology underpinning their output to their experimentation with technology to create new sounds, their staging and performance output to the anti-authoritarianism that infuses their lyrics.

We have one copy to give away. For your chance to win answer the following question:

What year did Pink Floyd release their first album *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*?

- a) 1965
- b) 1966
- c) 1967

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Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



ARCANE ROOTS
Melancholia Hymns
EASY LIFE

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother



THE TANGENT
The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery
INSIDEOUT

The Lone Office Lady
Hannah May Kilroy



AMPLIFIER
Trippin With Dr Faustus
ROCKSMOS

The Musician
Kim Seivour



LONELY ROBOT
The Big Dream
INSIDEOUT

The Writer
Giulia Mascheroni



NEAL MORSE
Sola Scriptura
RADIANT RECORDS

The Reader
Leo Trimming



COSMOGRAF
The Hay-Man Dreams
COSMOGRAF MUSIC

Seattle Sounds
Via Sheffield:
Order Of Voices.



ORDER OF VOICES

Sheffield quintet discover what happens when prog meets grunge...

“ANYONE WHO SAYS they are original is lying.”

As statements go, it’s a pretty bold one. But Leigh Oates, singer with Sheffield quintet Order Of Voices, has a point: it’s undeniably difficult for modern artists to be truly original due to the plethora of genre-defining musicians who have come before them. It’s virtually impossible not to hear familiar quirks or nuances in the vast majority of music that is being released today. Order Of Voices, however, have ceased the pursuit of originality in favour of reimagining the past into an amalgamation of past and present.

“It’s just about taking themes and changing them incrementally,” Oates continues. “We’ve got a ton of very wide-ranging influences and we just want to play the music that we, as music fans, would want to hear. It comes down to the fact that we don’t like the same stuff as a band. We’re not contrived, and we don’t want to do what other bands are doing.”

Oates, along with Ashley Homar (guitar), Stefan Blackwood (guitar), Ian Gaunt (bass) and Aynsley Dickinson (drums), has been driving Order Of Voices forward since the band’s inception in 2009. Part of that drive has come from their ability to create without boundaries. “No one is telling us what to do, and we don’t put any limits on ourselves. If someone is giving you a lot of money to produce a product, they are going to want a say in how that product is put together,”

Oates states. “I think it’s very rare when companies give you free reign as an artist. When you’re working with smaller companies or are self-financed, you’ve got more freedom to produce what you want. It’s people like *Prog* that help massively, and it’s grass-roots stuff.”

The band’s second album *Constancy* is one of contrasts, with assorted layers being uncovered with each listen, from Porcupine Tree’s delicateness to a bizarrely fitting Alice In Chains vibe. Oates says it’s these layers that the band were aiming for, to give each listener a different experience to take away with them. “Whatever people want to connect with our music, we’re happy with that. We leave our music open-ended,” Oates explains. “We don’t write concepts, and I mainly write around the human condition and the different emotions we experience. We write songs that people don’t want to skip: we trimmed our songs down from 14 to 10. We didn’t want to put stuff on there that didn’t hit the mark.”

The quality and innovative nature of *Constancy* is testament to the perseverance of Oates and the rest of the band, who have overcome a variety of setbacks and personal tribulations to produce a release befitting their grand aspirations. “There were a lot of false starts, technical issues and illnesses in the band,” Oates recalls. “It’s taken a long time to make this album, and it’s been a real labour of love.” **SW**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP
Leigh Oates (vocals), Ashley Homar (guitar), Stefan Blackwood (guitar), Ian Gaunt (bass), Aynsley Dickinson (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE
Layne Staley fronting Porcupine Tree with a dash of Tool thrown in

CURRENT RELEASE
Constancy is out now and is self-released

WEBSITE
www.orderofvoices.com



“We just want to play the music that we, as music fans, would want to hear.”

THE SOUNDBYTE

Norwegian avant-garde group blending prog metal and electronica.

“THE TECHNOLOGY SHOULDN’T control the music; the musician should control the technology.”

So says Trond Engum, the Norwegian bandleader of The Soundbyte. The avant-garde ambient band, built primarily around Engum’s ingenious guitar and electronic sounds, is a by-product of prog metallers The 3rd And The Mortal, which Engum formed and fronted in 1992.

“When we started using electronics, we did what most metal bands do, which is to use a sequencer,” says Engum. “That repetition became really frustrating because everything that we had rehearsed, like all of our tempo changes, disappeared. This is when I realised that I needed to learn more about music technology in order to control it.”

The introduction of electronic themes in the music was the inspiration needed for the charismatic frontman to create The Soundbyte in 1998, with fellow The 3rd And The Mortal bandmate and accomplished drummer Rune Hoemsnes. Now he’s on the band’s fourth album, *Solitary IV*: a powerful landscape of dark tempos building up to apocalyptic crescendos.

“Our goal for the last few years has been to use the technology at the same time as we are playing, while also taking control of the technology,” he says. “For example, none of our music is sampled or pre-prepared: everything is part of the instrumentation. You could say that it has been quite a long journey!”

All of the instruments on the album were recorded live, including the electronic sounds, which are controlled by or processed through the guitar and drums. “We try to mirror the live performance in the studio and mirror the studio recordings back to the live performance in order to get the best of both worlds and improve the composition process,” reveals Engum.

Norwegian folk influences can be distinguished through the intricate melodies of the dramatic *Solitary*

and *Descending*, adding a darker element to the music. “This is a dark album compared to the others and I suppose it is a comment about what is around us at the moment, what we are hearing and what we are seeing,” says Engum.

Solitary IV features the expressive vocal styling of singers Tone Åse and Kirsti Huke, who emulate the dramatic lines of each song with improvised vocal tones rather than lyrics.

“I did not want to incorporate any lyrics, because the listener is able to make up their own opinions about the different moods that we are trying to create,” Engum explains. “We attempted to make the album as visual as possible. Instead of warming everything up with analogue technology, we tried to cool it down.”

The band released a short promotional video for *Descending* that depicts a landscape in which a building begins to crack, but leaves on the trees keep on growing.

“That goes back to the idea of stripping things back. The video is of my hometown, Trondheim,” says Engum. “The idea was to break something down and have something organic grow out of it. The building starts to crack and everything starts to decay, except for the trees that have leaves growing on them.”

The controlled progressive metal melodies expressed in The 3rd And The Mortal are distinguishably entwined in the dreamy electronic improvisation of The Soundbyte, thus tapping into a truly enlightened motley of darkened emotions and visuals. Engum’s preservation of the music’s essence through ingenious technique is ever evident in this fourth album and is an inspiration to fellow prog musicians.

“I don’t feel like a visionary,” Engum says, “but I believe that it’s a good thing to have control over the technology in order to keep a human aspect within the music.” **ILD**

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Trond Engum (guitars), **Rune Hoemsnes** (drums)

SOUNDS LIKE

An avant-garde ambient landscape of electronic tones with distinct prog influences

CURRENT RELEASE

Solitary IV is out June 30 on Tot Records

WEBSITE

www.thesoundbyte.com

“I did not want to incorporate any lyrics, because the listener is able to make up their own opinions about the different moods that we are trying to create.”

The Soundbyte, L-R: Trond Engum, Rune Hoemsnes.





Badger © Roger Dean, 1973

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MARC RILEY

Turned on by Genesis, Beefheart, Zappa and Can, the former member of The Fall and The Creepers continues to smuggle prog into his nightly radio show on BBC 6 Music.

Words: Rob Hughes **Portrait:** Paul Husband


“**A**t 13, I was mad on Bowie and Lou Reed. Then I watched the famous footage of **Genesis** doing *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)* on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* one night, probably in 1974. I didn’t know anything about them but it was quite theatrical, like Bowie, and that’s what drew me in. I went out and bought *Selling England By The Pound* and that led me to *Foxtrot*, which had the 23-minute *Supper’s Ready*, and I ended up knowing every single note and lyric. And then, of course, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, which was edgier and punkier than the previous Genesis stuff.

I saw them do the album twice, when they played two nights at the Palace Theatre in Manchester, with Peter Gabriel dressed as Slipperman. It really was everything I’d hoped it would be. The second night, I was right in the front row of the balcony and somebody threw some toilet roll at Gabriel. He threw it back and it landed on this gantry just below me. So I leaned over and picked it up. I had this bog roll on my windowsill for years and years.

Captain Beefheart was one of many artists I have to thank Mark E Smith for. My relationship with Mark is well documented and when I got kicked out of The Fall [in 1983], it was a really unhealthy one, but I did learn an awful lot from him. We’d go round to his flat and listen to various bands in the early days. He used to play Beefheart all the time. I fell in love with *Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)*, then discovered *Clear Spot*, *Safe As Milk* and *Trout Mask Replica*, which is the record all the purists really go for. I saw

Beefheart at the Manchester Apollo on the very last tour he did, in 1980, and just felt so privileged to have seen him. I remember him finishing with *Kandy Korn*, which was mind-blowing.

Mark used to play *We’re Only In It For The Money* a lot too. Like Beefheart, **Frank Zappa** was another pretty disagreeable fella, from what I can tell, but madly adventurous. *We’re Only In It For The Money* is really mischievous as well, fuelled by *Sgt Pepper*, with stuff like *What’s The Ugliest Part Of Your Body?*, *Let’s Make The Water Turn Black* and *The Idiot Bastard Son*. I still play the album a lot to this day.



“To think that probably the last **Cardiacs** performance was in a room to an audience of one, which was me, is heartbreaking.”

Then came **Can’s** *Monster Movie*. Every now and again on my 6 Music programme, I’ll play *Yoo Doo Right*, which is 20 minutes long. It’s one of the greatest records ever made. When I bought *The Lost Tapes* a few years ago, it made me laugh out loud, because it’s such a great collection of songs that they just found lying around in the cupboard. Any band in the world would absolutely kill for a song like *Deadly Doris*.

It might’ve been through [ex-Fall bassist] Steve Hanley’s brother, Harry, that I got to hear **Pink Floyd’s** *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Then I bought *Wish You Were Here*. They’re two different beasts completely, but *Wish You Were Here* is one of those records I absolutely got lost in, particularly *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. You can sense the cynicism in the album, with Roger Waters sounding jaded by the music industry.

Cardiacs started in 1977, amid punk, but they’re indefinable, really. And there can’t be any doubt that Tim Smith is a genius. We had **Cardiacs** in session a few times on the programme and Tim was always so intense and committed. He was a perfectionist. The very last session they did for us was on June 23, 2008. Tragically, it transpires that’s probably the last time **Cardiacs** will ever perform. To think they played in a room to an audience of one, which was me, is even more heartbreaking.

My **Bloody Valentine** were playing at the Roundhouse the following night and Tim went along. I don’t know if it was anything to do with the volume or substances – I’ve heard all manner of things – but he had a cardiac arrest, which is one of the greatest ironies ever, and a stroke. It would be so great to see Tim up and running again at some point. It would make my year.

The first time I heard the **Butthole Surfers** was on John Peel’s programme. It was a case of, ‘What the hell is this? This is just mental!’ I ended up getting the first four albums and then went to see them at Leeds University, around 1985 or ’86. They had Teresa [Nervosa], their naked dancer, with a shaven head, doing all these kicks. They sounded like Hawkwind – it was coming from the same kind of scenario.

I saw them again, maybe three years later, at the Mean Fiddler in London. Gibby Haynes came on with his hands on fire, slapped a cymbal with petrol on it, which also set alight, and outside there were police with dogs, holding back loads of people who couldn’t get in. So there was fire inside and riots outside.

Prog is no longer a four-letter word. One of my favourite bands of the moment is **Thee Oh Sees**, whose leader, John Dwyer, has a really broad palette. I speak to him about music quite regularly. There’s psych and garage going on with Thee Oh Sees, but every now and then he veers very closely to prog rock. A song like *The Axis*, from *A Weird Exits*, is so Floyd-y and floaty. It’s a really beautiful piece. You can see there’s loads going on in his mind; he’s not at all blinkered.

These New Puritans are named after *New Puritan*, a Fall song [co-written by Riley]. The main genius within the band is Jack Barnett and I really fell for their first album, *Beat Pyramid*, in 2008. I saw them soon after at the Night & Day Café in Manchester and it was one of the best gigs I’ve ever been to my life. Jack used to wear this top that was almost like metal feathers. *Hidden* came out two years later and is an absolute masterpiece. It’s inspired by Benjamin Britten, with all these six-foot Japanese drums and a kids’ choir.

Three years ago, Stephen Bass from Moshi Moshi sent me a link to the video for *The Vile Stuff*, from **Richard Dawson’s** *Nothing Important*, and I was just gobsmacked. I’d never heard anything like it, really. It was steeped in traditional folk, but sounded like an alien had landed and made a record. His guitar playing is so unique and his sense of humour is second to none.

His new one, *Peasant*, is set in the time when the Romans left the north-east of England and everyone was wondering what to do next. So you have *Weaver*, which goes into the technical side of dyeing clothes, then *Soldier*, *Prostitute* and *Ogre*, where he builds a whole picture of this community. I think he’s going to inspire a lot of other people to make music. Doing what I do for a living exposes me to all these incredible people.”

You can follow Marc on Twitter: @marcrileydj and @BBCMarcRiley, and listen to his show on BBC 6 Music at 7pm, Monday to Thursday.





ROBERT RAMSAY

With a new album that covers everything from metaphysical theories to the *Hawaii Five-O* theme performed via the medium of chickens, Robert Ramsay's *Confound And Disturb* is aptly named. The Tinyfish/Shineback man reveals all...

Words: Chris McGarel **Portrait:** Bo Hansen

By the time Tinyfish played their last show at Celebr8 in 2012, they had released three highly regarded studio albums and played festivals from Poland to Philadelphia, gathering a fiercely loyal following. Main man Simon Godfrey left his motherland and moved Stateside, where he continues to work remotely with the band's lyricist, narrator and self-described Chief Audience Frightener, Robert Ramsay. In 2013 the duo released *Rise Up Forgotten, Return Destroyed* under the Shineback moniker, aided by members of Touchstone, DeeExpus, Darwin's Radio and The Fierce And The Dead. Now Ramsay is set to frighten audiences in the relative safety of their own home with a solo album, *Confound And Disturb*. Largely spoken word, this is not your typical prog album, so we needed to find out more.

What led you to record a solo album?

I'd always joked about doing one. I looked around and there's a whole bunch of material I've gathered that's been chucked in a drawer and I realised that maybe there was enough stuff to make an album. I just took the best bits and thought of a few more. It really took off when I went over to Philadelphia for RoSfest last year and we [Ramsay and Godfrey] recorded the vocals for three or four of the songs. I thought, "Right. This is actually happening now."

You're chiefly a lyricist/narrator. Did that present a challenge to making the album?

Well, people keep telling me I'm a musician. I play the harmonica extremely averagely. It did turn out I was the only member of Tinyfish who could read music! When I first told people I was really serious about doing it, all my lovely musician friends were going, "I'll help you out!" and I'm like, "I don't know what to do with you!" I couldn't think how best to use their talents. Matt [Stevens] I knew what to do with. I did the spoken-word bit for

The Black Box Society and I said to Matt, "Just imagine that you're trapped in a black box and you have to play your guitar to escape." I wanted the transdimensional guitar of madness!

I've put a sticker on the front of the album that says 'Advisory: Mostly Spoken Word' so people don't come up to me and say, "Hey! I bought your album and there's hardly any songs on it."

Or: "This doesn't sound like Tinyfish!"

I hadn't even thought of that, but now you say it... [hyperventilates]

How did the title come about?

It was actually Tim Lawrie [Bad Elephant Music] who named this album *Confound And Disturb*. It was going to be called *The Cosmic Poo Experience*. Sometimes when you've had a really good poo it expands your mind.

The artwork is quite special. What can you tell us about that?

My mate Andy Hall suggested to me that you couldn't have a real prog album unless you had a map like Tolkien. So I went, "Go for it!" and he very sensibly subcontracted it to Mark Buckingham, the famous comic artist. His work is so fabulous. I first met him when he and Matt [Stevens] did a double header at Orbital Comics. He was signing the last volume of *Fables*. I passed over my copy and said, "I've been a fan of yours ever since *Marvelman*," and he goes, "Oh, I've got all your records!"

It's a varied album for something that's ostensibly spoken word. It's got rap, rock, poetry, comedy, a cappella chickens...

As you say, it's a potpourri. At the moment, me and Simon are planning out the next Shineback album and I said, "If there's one thing I want, it's not a concept album." We've done 'concept album'. Because this was stuff that's been gathered over years, there was no theme. Sometimes I just have ideas that I can't get away from, like *Hawaii Fried Chicken*. The minute I found out you could do the *Hawaii Five-o* theme in chicken noises, that became the challenge. Once somebody suggests that to you, you start doing it in your head. [Clucks the *Hawaii Five-o* theme] "No! Stop!"

It's not all fun and games. You're a scholar of magical theory and there are some serious metaphysical ideas here.

I've taken the opportunity to do a few bits of propagandising and a few bits of truth telling. *The Real Rap* is talking about the fact that we make things real ourselves. One of my favourite bits of wisdom is from Bill Hicks, when he talks about, "It's just a ride," and says, "Everything's brightly coloured... you think it's real because that's how powerful our minds are." As Buckaroo Banzai put it, "No matter where you go, there you are" – you cannot escape from your own identity. They say travel broadens the mind but at the end of it, you're still there. I'll probably have to give away the album with copies of my book once I've finished it!

What can you tell us about the book?

It's called *The Engineering Of Coincidence* and it's going to be explaining the scientific basis of magic. Everybody who tries to explain magic just ends up with another model. We can't experience things directly – there's too much data. We put together a representation in our head and we tell ourselves that's actually what's out there, but it's actually all a model. My explanation is also a model but I've tried to make my model consistent and congruent with our current scientific explanation of how the universe is put together.

Now you've recorded one solo album, will you do another?

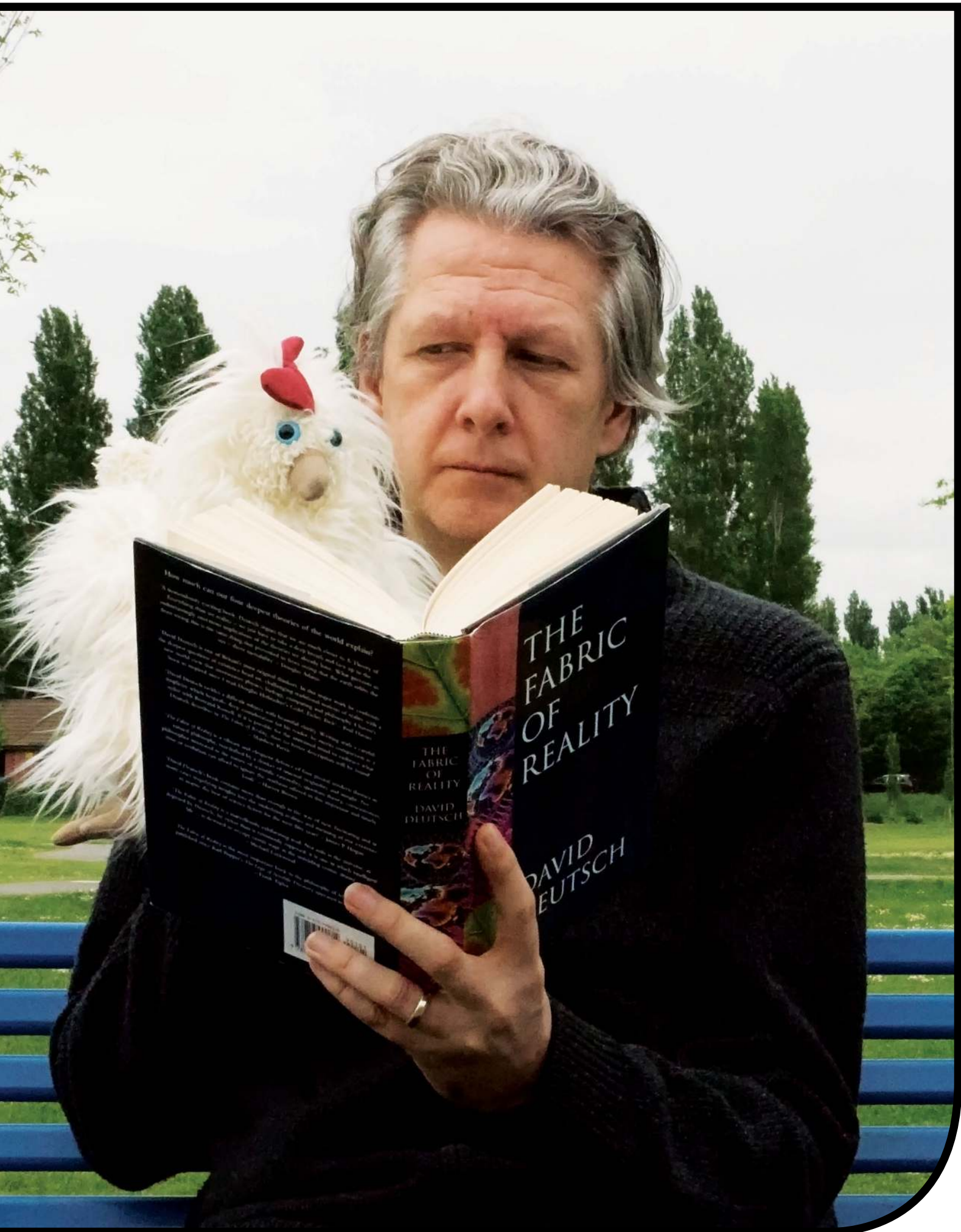
It's bizarre cos I thought there'll never be a second one and now I'm beginning to get all these horrible ideas! [Laughs]

That sounds ominous.

As far as dangerous is concerned, I'm about as dangerous as a cheese sandwich.

Confound And Disturb is out now on Bad Elephant Music. See www.robertramsay.bandcamp.com for more information.







Beyond And Before

Yes remain one of the busiest progressive rock bands on the planet. In the year ahead they've got Yestival and another Cruise To The Edge to contend with. And, it transpires, they're thinking about a new album. All five members offer their thoughts...

Words: Paul Lester **Images:** © Roger Dean



Ask Yes a question and you get five quite different answers. Actually, these days it's even more complex than that. Two days after their induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame on April 7, ARW morphed into Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin, Rick Wakeman, and so now there are eight possible answers to even the simplest enquiries.

But for this half of Yes — what you might call Yes Mk 1, although *Prog* realises that this is a hugely contentious proposal — each of the five put their own spin on things.

Even when they're asked where they are for this interview, Alan White explains that he is at home in Washington, still recovering but almost back to full fitness following his back operation last year. Geoff Downes is near Monmouth in South Wales. Jon Davison is in Lake McQueeney near Austin, Texas where his girlfriend's niece has family. And Billy Sherwood is in Los Angeles. As for Steve Howe, despite being known to live in South

Molton — and indeed having a phone code that confirms this — his reply is a somewhat enigmatic, "Hmm, let's say 'London' for a change."

There is no such obfuscation when quizzed about his erstwhile bandmates in this most combative of cosmic rock troupes, their respective antics at the Hall Of Fame and subsequent name-change. In fact, he discusses both in vivid detail, using language both damning and colourful. Unfortunately, the next day he calls *Prog* to insist on it all being retracted when it occurs he has said too much (see page 38). On the subject of the Yestival tour, which will feature Todd Rundgren and Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy, however, he is no less loquacious, just more charitable.

"Todd's written some great songs and never done anything ordinary," he says of arguably America's first and foremost prog rocker, happy with his choice as support alongside the sole surviving member of ELP. Sherwood is "very excited" to be touring with Rundgren — in 2002, he produced an album called *Todd Rundgren And His Friends* which featured the Runt's vocals over performances



"Everybody in the band has a certain amount of material they want to get off their heads. Maybe early next year, after the cruise."

Alan White





of his songs by Dweezil Zappa, Edgar Winter and Steve Lukather among others. "I'm a huge fan," he says.

Sherwood "never imagined in a million years" that he'd get the call from another of his heroes, Chris Squire, to follow in his footsteps before his untimely death in 2015.

"It was a really mindblowing time and it's still surreal that he asked me to do what I'm doing, but I'm honoured," he says. "It's so strange to grow up worshipping your favourite band and one of the main guys who you've been idolising asks you to take his place."

How have the fans taken to him?

"The general vibe I get is that people are on board with the idea. Part of that is, I think, is my relationship with Chris – they knew we worked together and were tight. There were some negative comments that leaned into the idea that now that Chris has gone there shouldn't be a Yes and I've tried to explain that this is what he wanted."

He laughs. "So do I go with your idea or Chris? I think I'll go with Chris and you'll have to take it up with him."

Compared to Yestival, the fifth annual Cruise To The Edge has a fuller line-up, which when it takes to the seas in February 2018 will include Palmer's ELP Legacy again, Gong, Marillion, Steve Hackett, Stickmen, Martin Barre (of Jethro Tull) and Anathema. Howe says, "It is what it is: a madhouse of bands, some old, some young, some well-known, some not so well-known. It's like a festival on water."

With his band, Palmer, Hackett and Tony Levin's Stickmen on the bill, Downes is delighted to see represented "the four big progressive rock bands – Yes, ELP, Genesis and King Crimson. It's a real prog-fest".

What's it like being stuck at sea with hardcore proggers?

"I'm among my own people," decides Sherwood, who has already performed



GLENN GOTTLIEB

on a Moody Blues cruise, with the all-star The Prog Collective. "I'm a people person and I enjoy meeting the fans."

"You get a couple of those," Downes sighs of overzealous types. "Prog fans are a strange breed, as you know. You get weirdos in all walks of life but generally they're all very respectful."

"I can relate to those fans because I've been a prog fan," Davison offers.

"I enjoy it, and you try to be on-point

Yes, L-R: Billy Sherwood, Jon Davison, Steve Howe, Alan White, Geoff Downes.

most of the day, but by the end of the cruise I'm completely drained. It's a good tired, though, I want to make that clear. It's not a drag to be close to the fans. But I need to take a cruise after the cruise!"

"It takes some getting used to," adds Howe of the close confinement. "We have controlled privacy. It varies from ship to ship whether we have restaurants only for us. There's some avoidance of masses of fans and some interactions. But I'm very confident that our fans are not idiots or rowdy or drunk at nine in the morning. I instill a bit of trust and we get along."

He pauses to reflect on the six days at sea. "It's nice when we get off – 'Ah, back on dry land.' I was never designed for water activities – I'm not a terribly strong swimmer."

Are package tours like Yestival and Cruise what – no pun intended – keep bands of Yes' vintage afloat?

"Well, unless you're up there in the big league, it's tough," says Downes,

"Fly From Here was pretty good; Heaven & Earth was not so clever. The Ladder, Magnification and Open Your Eyes were not much fun. That era, so many musicians in the band were so sad and disappointed that they didn't sell, and I wasn't."

Steve Howe



who notes that Yestival will find the band playing in venues ranging from 1,500 to 12,000, “A package featuring a few compatible bands can be safe.”

How do they feel about touring their substantial catalogue?

“We’ve always been the kind of band who push forward with new material, who look over the horizon rather than at it,” White says. “But it can be a lot of fun. We change our sets around; we’re still adventurous about what we play.”

As creative musicians, are they dying to get back in the studio?

“I need to be creative and in the studio – I thrive on that – and once I get a full belly of that experience I start missing being out performing, and vice versa,” Davison says. “You need the balance.”

“Everybody in the band has a certain amount of material they want to get off their heads,” White adds. “Maybe early next year, after the cruise.”

The drummer admits he enjoyed making *Fly From Here* (2011) and *Heaven*

& *Earth* (2014), and has good things to say about their recent output.

“There are some classic songs on those,” he says. “Chris’ *The Game* [from *Heaven & Earth*] is a fantastic song to play. *The Ladder* [1999] has some great songs on it. *Magnification* – I had the pleasure of writing a song with Jon Anderson for that one called *In The Presence Of*. It was a lot of fun to make.”

Sherwood helped with the vocal arrangements and mixing of *Heaven & Earth* and generally likes all Yes records. “I don’t draw lines between different eras and line-ups,” he says, diplomatically. “I enjoy it all. Even [1997’s maligned] *Open Your Eyes*. I’m a diehard: what can I say?”

Howe has less positive things to say about Yes’ latter-day output: “*Fly From Here* was pretty good; *Heaven & Earth* was not so clever. *The Ladder*, *Magnification* and *Open Your Eyes* were not much fun. That era, so many musicians in the band were so sad and disappointed that they didn’t sell, and I wasn’t. I wasn’t surprised, because the old days, you don’t go back there – you remodel yourself for future work. Take the Rolling Stones, they still make new records. Do you like them as much as *Sticky Fingers*? I’m not drumming up a hornet’s nest here, just looking at it logically.”

Ultimately, White acknowledges the need to satisfy the band *and* the fans.

“We’ve got to please the public and come up with a new album,” he decides, “even though it’s a lot of work for us. We’re not spring chickens.”

Is it the ultimate paradox: the future-facing band spending much of their career looking back?

“Yes, it’s a complete paradox,” Downes agrees. “Progressive music is by its nature constantly evolving.”

What does he estimate is the ratio of fans demanding nostalgia and new material?

“To be brutally honest,” he replies, “there isn’t the clamour to hear, say, the next Yes or Genesis album. Much as I think it’s important for a band to keep its integrity and make new music,

in terms of the people that come and see you, they will always remember the great tunes they grew up and they formed the backdrop of their lives. Whenever we play tracks from the latest album they rarely have the

impact of the classics.”

Howe isn’t aggrieved to be peddling nostalgia; far from it. “Not at all, no,” he says. “Some people have one album and that perpetuates their whole career. Yes and Asia and other bands I’ve been in have multiples of albums that are enjoyed, so it’s very rewarding

to work those records that are accepted pretty highly in the lists of great and big-selling records. There’s no distaste.

“I need new music, and I keep writing,” he continues. “But with a band like Yes, the new albums will never be as well-received, even if we could make records like we used to, like *Close To The Edge*, which is almost impossible. And that’s okay.”

Even if Yes’ future is largely based on their past, there are still reasons to look forward. So what of next year’s 50th anniversary? What plans do they have?

“I’m not telling you,” Howe teases. “We have nice plans, moulding the shape of an idea that’s a little different. It’s important to have heard the fans say what they would like. We’ve been out there for nine years listening to what Yes fans like. The other lot,” he alludes to Yes Featuring... “have been going for nine months. They’ve got some way to go.”

Still, he says, he wrote to them before their tour, wishing them good luck. “That’s my true spirit: that anyone can play Yes.”

They all believe that their version of Yes is playing in bigger venues, and that they have their own musical agenda – according to Davison, Yes focus on the 70s while Yes Featuring... with Rabin on board, are more 80s.

“We see ourselves as very different,” Howe insists. “What we’ve done for the last four to five years, and three of those with Chris, is be careful to play the music as it appears on the original recordings [on the album-replicating tours]. We’ve homed in on the actual early recordings and I don’t think that applies with the other group. They’re not so meticulous. Anyone is free to play whatever music they like. But we know what we like and we’re going to keep on doing that.”

Is there much chance of a *Union*-style reunion in 2018?

“No,” Downes states categorically. “I think that concept has been well and truly discarded by all concerned.”

“That’s a question above my pay-grade, to be honest with you,” Sherwood laughs. “I really respect all the musicians involved [in Yes ‘Mk 1’] and we’re having a great time out there. The band is sounding fantastic, the music is as fresh as when I heard it back in the day, and the fans seem to agree. Yes are in a good state right now.”

For their 50th anniversary, Yes will be continuing to honour the legacy and heritage of the band, as per the wishes of Chris Squire. Yes are working with Warners to celebrate the 50th anniversary, and the band will be touring around the world with a special 50th anniversary show. See www.yesworld.com for more.



Yestival (above) and Cruise To The Edge keeping the Yes show on the road.





"We'd said, 'You should go out as Yes featuring Steve, Alan and whoever is in the band and we'll go out as Yes featuring us three,' and they declined."

Jon Anderson

Perpetual Change

On April 7 2017, **Yes** were finally inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. But with the turbulent inner workings of Yes' various incarnations, it wasn't without drama. Multiple members of the band remember the event in their own words...

Words: Dave Everley and Paul Lester **Illustration:** Duncan Storr

Since it was established in 1983 by *Rolling Stone* magazine founder Jann Wenner, the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame has largely kept progressive rock at arm's length. The organisers' sniffiness has meant that just a handful of prog bands and artists have been inducted over the years: Frank Zappa (1995), Pink Floyd (1996), Genesis (2010), Rush (2013) and Peter Gabriel (2014).

There are some glaring omissions — King Crimson, ELP, Jethro Tull — but one name stands out: Yes. As one of the genre's founding fathers and band who did more than any to popularise prog, their absence was grating.

All that changed this year when the band were finally accepted into the Hall Of Fame via a public vote. Controversially, the institution's complex rule system meant that of the 17 people who have officially passed through the band's ranks, just eight were eligible: Jon Anderson, Steve Howe (who was interviewed for this piece, but subsequently asked for his quotes not be used), Trevor Rabin, Bill Bruford, Alan White, Tony Kaye, Rick Wakeman, and, posthumously, Chris Squire. That meant no place for founding guitarist Peter Banks, vocalist/producer Trevor Horn or current members Geoff Downes, Billy Sherwood or Jon Davison.

The issue was clouded further by the fact that there are two incarnations of Yes in existence — the Yes led by Howe and Alan White, and the version featuring Anderson, Rabin and Wakeman called, until recently, ARW.

The Hall Of Fame was a chance for both halves to come together and potentially settle their differences. As with most things involving Yes, the reality proved to be more complicated...

JON ANDERSON: It started about 15 years ago, when I was on tour with Yes. Management at the time kept saying, "We're going to get you in the Hall Of Fame." I said, "[Shrugging] OK..." And this went on for about four years, and I said, "Forget about it — don't even talk about the Hall Of Fame until it happens." Of course, it took its time.

RICK WAKEMAN: There have been so many musicians that deserved induction and were dead before it happened. Jon Lord is an example — Deep Purple got in so late. And when Yes suddenly get inducted, and Chris had died the year before — the only solid guy throughout the entire history of Yes — that made me angry. I said, "I'm not going. I feel that's an insult." Then I got the message back that they were going to induct him

posthumously. Then I went, "OK. If you do that then I'll turn up."

GEOFF DOWNES: Was I unhappy about not being inducted? No. Had it been maybe two or three years ago when Chris was alive, I'm sure myself and Patrick [Moraz] and a number of others — maybe Trevor Horn — would have been inducted. But I'm not upset.

BILLY SHERWOOD: It's no secret that Yes is political as hell — it's always been that way. It seems to be that's one of the things that drives the engine. It should be a reality TV show.

The current and past members of Yes convened in New York the day before the induction ceremony. Given the band's turbulent history

TREVOR RABIN: The sad thing is that there were really no real rehearsals. There was a lot of posturing and crap going on, and I could have done without all that stuff.

JON ANDERSON: Steve wasn't the most — what's the word? — affable person. He can be a little bit stubborn. So I went over and shook his hand: "How you doing Steve?" And he was, like, [reserved] "Hello." OK, I'll just get on with it and have fun...

The induction ceremony itself took place on April 7 at the



Above: Jon Anderson playing at the induction with Geddy Lee of Rush on bass.

and the sometimes strained personal relationships, there was the potential for tension between the two camps.

JON ANDERSON: We met the night before. We were staying in the same hotel as the other Yes. There were smiles and "Hi!"s and things like that.

RICK WAKEMAN: Were we cordial? Depends what you mean by cordial. Did we laugh and joke and muck around? No. Were we polite to each other? Yes.

ALAN WHITE: I basically haven't fallen out with anybody, I don't think. We were talking together in different ways. I think we just got on with, it was something we got to do together, and I felt good about the evening.

RICK WAKEMAN: It was nice to see Alan, who had been really ill. It was nice to chat with him. Then you get into the real nitty gritty of getting together to rehearse...

19,000-capacity Barclays Centre in Brooklyn, New York. Other inductees included Pearl Jam, Journey, ELO, Joan Baez and rapper Tupac Shakur, but the eyes of all prog fans were on Yes.

GEDDY LEE (INDUCTION SPEECH): It's not overstating things to say [Yes] changed the way I played and listened to music forever. So here we are, decades later, and the music of Yes is still echoing down through the years, showing me that music truly is a continuum.

GEOFF DOWNES: I liked Rush's induction speech. When Geddy Lee was inducted [in 2013] he said he thought it should have been Yes.

JON ANDERSON: I was so nervous. I'm generally not nervous onstage at all, but when I got onstage to speak my nerves kicked in. I was in a state, actually. All I wanted to do was get up and sing.

JEFF KRIVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES





STEVE HOWE (ACCEPTANCE SPEECH):

Fame is fickle for many people, and some may long to bask in its glory. Others merely attempt to gain notoriety for their musical endeavors. Well, since music speaks long after its creation, this service has a payment for those with the respect for those who are no longer with us today. Allowing those to remain, to shine a light on all those who contributed to those such great ideas and melodies and lyrics and arrangements and direction with this Yes music.

BILLY SHERWOOD: I thought Steve's speech was really eloquent. I thought he spoke the most about what the essence of Yes really was.

ALAN WHITE: Steve is a little bit more serious about Yes music. With his guitar, he's almost religious about it. Rick's speech? It depends whether you want to listen to music or dirty jokes...

While the rest of the band members gave speeches that were heartfelt and respectful, Wakeman launched into a stand-up comedy routine that included gags about wanking, erectile dysfunction and prostate examinations.

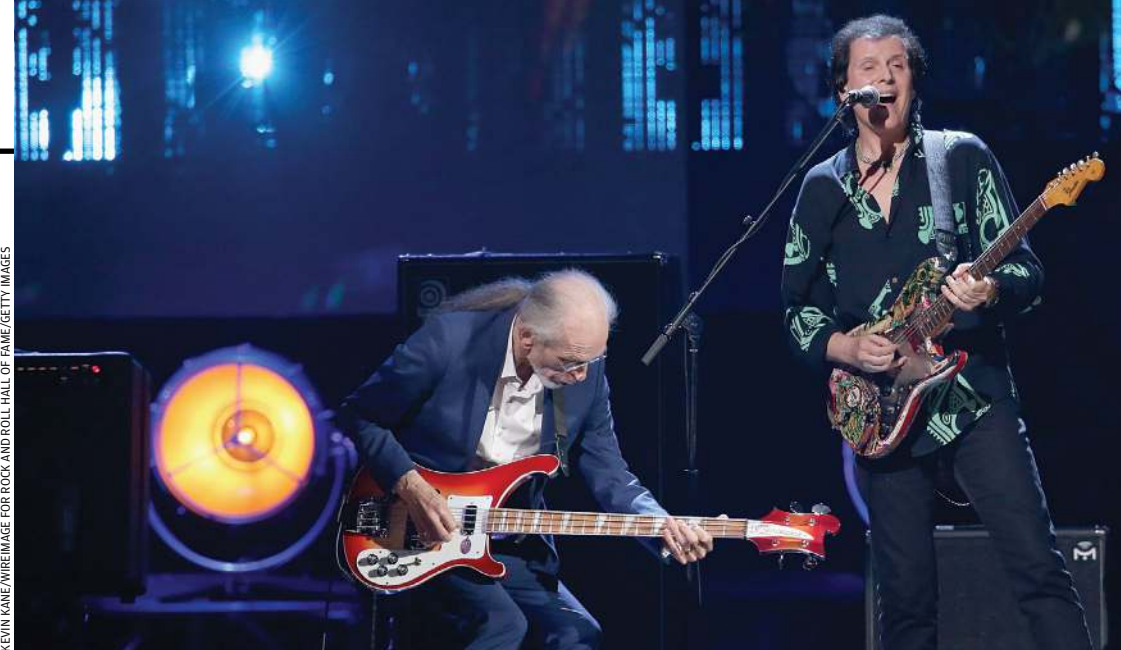
RICK WAKEMAN: Joan Baez's speech was great, and it was lovely to see Jeff Lynne and Roy Wood together. And then it all started to get a bit boring. I looked around and nobody was listening. Everybody was talking and drinking champagne. I thought, "This is ridiculous."

JON ANDERSON: I said to Rick, "Are you going to tell any jokes?" And he said, "I don't know, it's such a big audience, it might not go down well."

RICK WAKEMAN: It was actually our manager and agent who went, "Go on" at the table. And we got on the stage and Trev went, "Go for it." So I thought, "Sod it" and went for it.

JON ANDERSON: Rick started off and the audience were going bananas. Why not have humour? It's called fun.

JON DAVISON: Rick's speech had everyone cracking up. We were all at our banquet tables and not really expecting that, it threw everyone for a loop. He had some startling references. It was obvious he was making a statement.



KEVIN KANE/WIREIMAGE FOR ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME/GETTY IMAGES



MEDIAHUNCH/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

ALAN WHITE: Obviously it's going to appeal to certain people, whereas certain stalwart fans didn't like the fact that he did that amongst all the serious Yes music.

BILLY SHERWOOD: Oh boy. I would have really liked to hear more about Yes, to be honest.

Not everyone in Yes loved Wakeman's speech. In a subsequently deleted blog post, Geoff Downes accused Rick Wakeman of "making a prick of himself", while Billy Sherwood criticised the keyboard player for not leaving time for Chris Squire's widow Scotty, who had joined the band onstage, to speak.

RICK WAKEMAN: That was totally not true. They programme who can speak and who can't. And the programme for who could speak was Jon and Trevor, Steve, Alan and myself. Bill [Bruford] was not programmed to speak. But we wanted Scotty onstage with us, and if you listen at the end I did craftily try to get her up to the mic. I said, "Welcome Chris' wife Scotty...", but the Hall Of Fame weren't having any of it. So

Top: Steve Howe and Trevor Rabin playing *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* at the induction.

Above, Yes L-R: Steve Howe, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Bill Bruford, Rick Wakeman and Trevor Rabin.

unfortunately that's a classic example of somebody not knowing facts.

BILLY SHERWOOD: I made a personal comment which sometimes I like to do. But it wasn't nasty or anything about anybody's skill-set or personality. I just said what I felt: that I'd have liked to have heard more about Chris and Yes.

GEOFF DOWNES: I thought maybe Chris should have had more of a mention in there. But these things are spur of the moment. People maybe just forgot about saying anything important about him. That's the only thing I was disappointed about. Chris being such an essential part of Yes – he was not really honoured in as equal a way as some of the other people.

JON DAVISON: We're trying to take the high road. They've taken a lot of public stabs at us. We've tried to maintain some dignity, and of course that weekend everybody was together and emotions were running high. I think Geoff and Billy flipped a bit there, but they were apologetic to the fans about that. We quickly removed those statements and we're trying to move forward.



JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES

Yes put aside their issues for a two-song performance that saw Anderson, Wakeman, Howe and White sharing a stage for the first time since 2004. For *Roundabout*, they were joined on bass by Geddy Lee, while *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* saw Steve Howe swapping his guitar for four strings and ended with Rick Wakeman strapping on a key-tar.

TREVOR RABIN: It was a little weird, but some of those guys are not the guys we worked with. So it was a bit contrived, musically.

GEOFF DOWNES: I thought the band played well, it was good to see Alan back up there cos he had his back surgery some time ago and he seems to be getting back on course. Seeing Steve play bass on *Owner...* was pretty interesting – he plays very good bass actually. It was a nice event.

TREVOR RABIN: It was trying to glue two different elements together. And the glue wasn't sticking very well. I think it would have been great if we'd all got there with the right vibe and really rehearsed properly.

JON ANDERSON: We wanted Lee Pomeroy to play bass on *Owner*. It's funny, he wasn't allowed to because he was already playing for ELO that night. So Steve said, "I'll play bass." "Oh, OK, that's cool..."

GEOFF DOWNES: I think it would have been nice if Billy [Sherwood] had played; he was up for doing it. He's a very talented guy and it was Chris' wish that he continued with the band. But I understand the reasons that prohibited him.

BILLY SHERWOOD: There was a question about me playing bass but it didn't work out and I'm cool with that. I was happy just to be a part of the event.

Inevitably, that wasn't the end of the matter. Two days after the Hall Of Fame induction, the ARW camp announced they were changing their name to Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman, meaning there are now two bands trading under the Yes name.

JON ANDERSON: There was a lot of talk about going out as Yes when we started, but I said, "I don't want to confuse anybody. We'll go out as ARW to find out who we are musically and how it's going to work."

TREVOR RABIN: After the very first tour, management started saying, "We are inundated with people saying why are you playing all the Yes stuff but you don't call yourself Yes? Jon was the guy who started the band."

JON ANDERSON: I do get a lot of mail on my Facebook page: "I went to see Yes and you're not there any more." That's been going on for years now. Yesterday I was shopping and somebody came up and said, "So you're touring with Todd Rundgren?" And I said, "No, that's not me, that's the others."

RICK WAKEMAN: People get confused as to which is which. At concerts, fans hold up signs saying, "You are Yes." We had the same thing with ABWH.

JON ANDERSON: You should not confuse the fans. You should say who you are. We'd said, "You should go out as Yes featuring Steve, Alan and whoever is in the band and we'll go out as Yes featuring us three," and they declined. That was before the actual Hall Of Fame.

GEOFF DOWNES: They're perfectly entitled to call themselves whatever they want to call themselves. We're focusing on what we're doing and that's all we can do. We wish them well. We've got no axe to grind. We hope they succeed. They may have something against us. If they do that's their problem, not ours.

JON ANDERSON: Would the two parties come together? Your guess is as good as mine. If it's going to happen, it'll happen, and it should happen in the best of ways. If the band went out and said who they are and not fool the public, life would be much easier for them.

TREVOR RABIN: I can only speak for myself, but I have personally no interest in it. You'd have to ask Jon or Rick, but I certainly wouldn't.

RICK WAKEMAN: There's too much water under the bridge. There's a lot of issues that will never be made public because there's no point. Do I ever see a rapprochement? Absolutely not. I can bet my life on it.

What happens next is anyone's guess. While both parties are legally entitled to use the Yes name, the band's fractious history would suggest there may be stormy waters ahead.

RICK WAKEMAN: There's a couple of Bucks Fizzes out there. I think there's about 826 Drifters. There's nothing wrong with two Yeses.

ALAN WHITE: The internal politics with the band are such that we're both allowed to use the name really so... that's the reason we're going ahead and doing this. I'm just carrying on what I started doing 45 years ago.

RICK WAKEMAN: I've always said all along, I don't care what they do. They're fully entitled to do whatever they like. It makes no difference to me. I have no idea what they're doing, where they're playing. It's of no interest to me. Why would I look at them and go, "Oh, it's a rival band out there?" They're not a rival band. They're another lot out there playing Yes music, same as we are. We're just doing it our way and we're very happy with what we're doing, so why the hell should I worry about it? Good luck to them.

BILLY SHERWOOD: Would I go see them if they came to town? I would if I was free! Sure. I'm a Yes fan. In 2017, the more Yes, the merrier. As long as it's done with integrity and the delivery system is sound, no harm done.

JON ANDERSON: Somewhere, Chris Squire is having a good laugh at all this! He's loving every moment!

Top right: Rick performing at the induction to most peoples' amusement...

"Yes suddenly get inducted, and Chris had died the year before; that made me angry. I said, 'I'm not going. I feel that's an insult.'"

Rick Wakeman

YES

"It's the line-up that never existed. Nothing against Steve Howe or any of those other guys, but I think people want to know what might have been. So we tried to make it reality."

Rick Wakeman

The Yes Formerly
Known As ARW, L-R:
Rick Wakeman, Jon
Anderson, Trevor Rabin.

Re-Union

Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman united under the ARW banner last year, but true to the music in their souls, they've now adopted the **Yes** moniker. The trio give us an insight into their new music, promising some "epic", "amazing" and "special" things to come...

Words: Dave Everley
Images: Stephanie Cabral



Trevor Rabin hadn't played live for almost 20 years when he stepped onstage in Orlando, Florida on October 4, 2016.

The guitarist was nervous — surprisingly so for such a seasoned pro — and was wondering what the evening might hold. He was up there with Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman, two musicians whose careers had been inextricably linked with his own over the past three and a half decades as both members of Yes and individual artists in their own right.

The three of them had reconvened earlier in the year under the name ARW in order to revisit their collective past and, hopefully, map out a shining new future. For Rabin, who had built a career as a successful movie soundtrack composer, this was a welcome return to the world in which he had made his name. "The minute I got onstage it felt like I was back home," the South Africa-born guitarist says today.

By the end of the show, he and Wakeman had embarked on a spontaneous walkabout around the crowd, ending up at the mixing desk, something that would become a ritual at subsequent shows. "The first time we went out, it wasn't planned," says Rabin. "We just kind of did it. And then we thought, 'This is great, let's do it again!' It turned into a little bit of fun at the end, to go up to the sound guy and pinch his bum."

That *The Band Formerly Known As ARW's* debut tour was going to be a ringing success was never really in doubt, but few expected it to be quite as well received as it was. For the three men involved, who have subsequently renamed themselves *Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin And Rick Wakeman*, it's a vindication of the wisdom of sticking to your musical guns and proof that the world can never have too many bands called Yes.

"It's interesting that in Europe, progressive music is very important," says Anderson, speaking from his home in California. "Over in America, you've got your stalwarts, but it's not a big part of the business. The music business is more geared towards the early 60s model of pop and money. Which is cool, that's okay. But progressive music has always been around, and we're part of that game."

Still, it's been a long time coming. The roots stretch back to Yes' grand — and infamous — merger for 1991's *Union* album and tour. That was the only time Anderson, Rabin and Wakeman have appeared together on the same album (and even then, many of Wakeman's keyboard parts were reportedly overdubbed by producer Jonathan Elias).

"There are a lot of Yes fans who, for a long time, had been saying, 'Are you and Trevor going to do anything?'" says Wakeman. "That's the line-up that never existed. Nothing against Steve [Howe] or any of those other guys, but I think people want to know what might have been. So we tried to make it reality."

It would be nearly two decades before they picked up that conversation. The trio first began talking about working together in 2011, but it would still be several more years before the talk became reality. It begs the question: with hindsight, do they wish they'd done it sooner?

"You can only do it when you can do it," says Anderson. "And that's when everybody's available. We're all busy, but Trevor was so busy. I'd been down to see Trevor working on a couple of movies to see how it all worked, and it was just unbelievable, the amount of energy it takes for him to write a score. And that was his 39th movie."

"One of the things that you can't prepare for is timing," says Wakeman. "When is the right time to do



YES

something? If we knew that, we'd all be multi-millionaires."

Unsurprisingly, it was the death of Yes bassist and driving force Chris Squire in June 2015 that provided the catalyst to turn talk into action.

"The timing made itself when Chris died," says Wakeman. "None of us are spring chickens any more. We all got on the phone to each other and went, 'Right, we're not immortal, we should do this now.' That was the key moment, and I think it turned out to be exactly the right time."

For Jon Anderson, Squire's death made him reconsider his own relationship with the band he co-founded. As with many things Yes-related, the singer's departure in 2008 was complicated and chaotic.

"In some ways, I got very close to Chris again at the end," says Anderson. "We started the band, and my feeling was that eventually I would be in Yes again, because I never left Yes – they decided to do their thing when I was very sick. And so I just felt there was going to be a time when this was going to be called Yes."

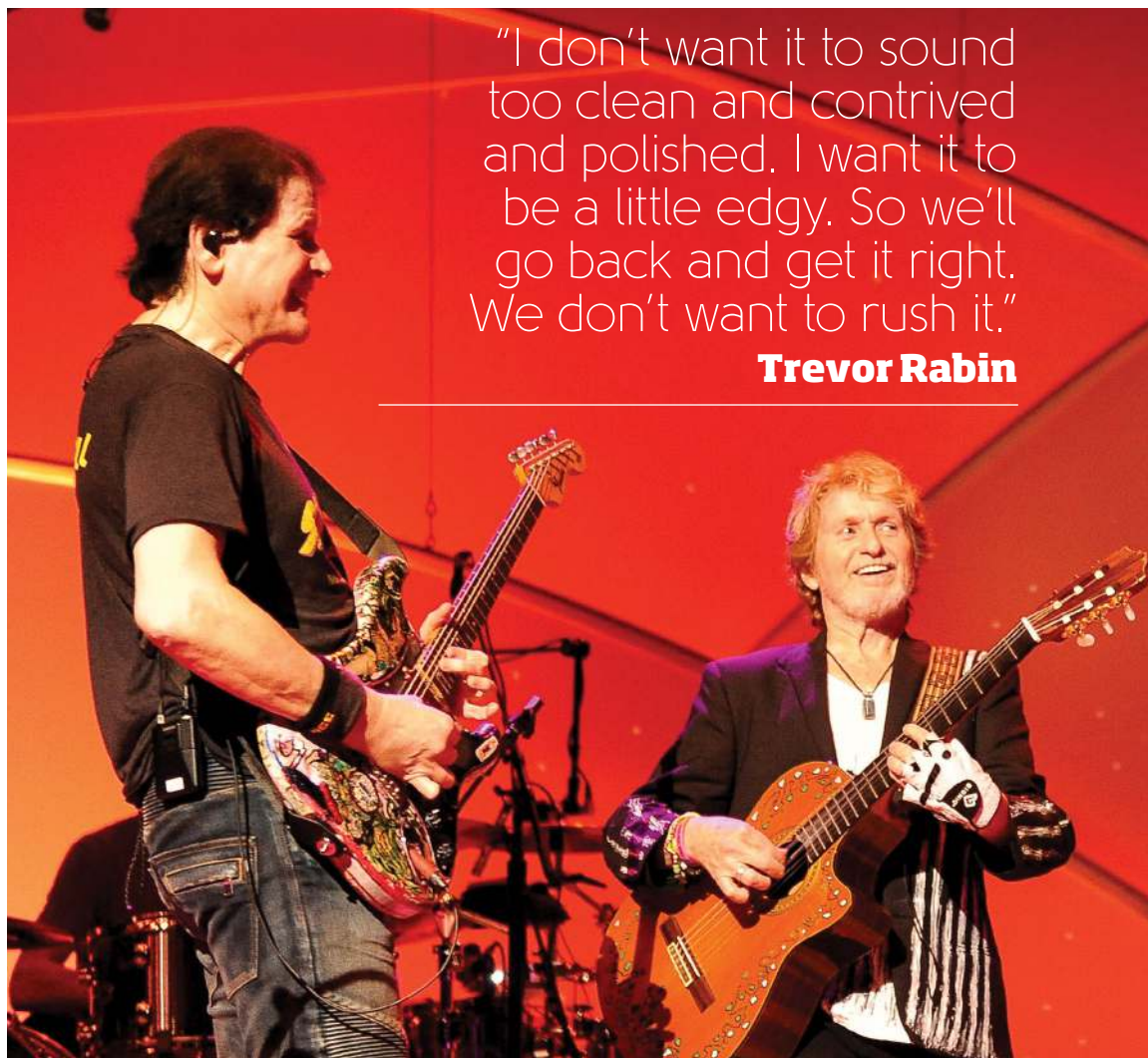
Anderson admits that his 2016 album *Invention Of Knowledge*, released with Roine Stolt of The Flower Kings, was his attempt to reclaim the Yes sound and draw out a potential roadmap for his new band's sound.

"That album was very much Yes style in my mind," he says. "Trevor loved that album so much. He said, 'You understand where Yes should be going in the future.' That's when we decided to go on the road."

For Rabin, this was an opportunity to reconnect with his musical roots. "It's funny, once I really started getting into film, I thought, 'I love doing this, I really don't miss the other thing,'" he says. "But then I did start missing it. I thought, 'God, I haven't played for so long. When am I going to play again?' That kind of led to it."

Wakeman says the trio went into this endeavour with a game plan: to recreate the essence of Yes without making a carbon copy. According to the keyboard player, they also laid down some rules right at the beginning.

"One of them was that if you were playing a piece that you weren't on originally, what you would do is imagine what you'd have done if you'd been in the band at the time," he says. "Was there any preciousness? No, none at all. Quite the opposite in fact. I think we livened the songs up a bit with the things we added. I'd like to think we gave them a different lease of life."



"I don't want it to sound too clean and contrived and polished. I want it to be a little edgy. So we'll go back and get it right. We don't want to rush it."

Trevor Rabin

Given the fractiousness that has partly defined Yes over the course of their long career, there was the potential for friction.

"We were together in rehearsals for quite a long time," says Wakeman. "There were little tweaks here and there. But I can put my hand on my heart and say there was never a moment where somebody said, 'I don't want to do that.' That was another rule – if somebody said, 'I really don't want to do that,' then it wasn't even considered."

When the tour got underway in Orlando, the band – the three former Yes men plus bassist Lee Pomeroy and drummer Louis Molino III – quickly slotted into the groove. As anyone who saw it can vouch, there seemed to be genuine joy emanating from the stage – and not just in Wakeman and Rabin's bum-pinching antics.

"It was like a miracle," Anderson says. "It was just like being back in Yes for me. I'm in my 70s, and to be up on stage performing with a great band, that was just magical. Rick is obviously an extraordinary, talented artist, and Trevor, coming out of 15 or so years doing film scores, played guitar like

I've never heard guitar played. It's like all-powerful. When he went for solos, he was going crazy every night."

Wakeman is quick to shine the spotlight on Pomeroy and Molino, two men he says are as integral to the band as the three veteran members.

"It may have been called ARW, but it certainly is a five-piece band," says Wakeman. "Lou and Lee are equally as important musically, and put so much work into it. Lee knows more about Yes than all of us put together. He doesn't just know his parts – Chris' parts – he knows everybody else's parts as well, annoying little bugger that he is. We call him The Oracle, because he just knows everything."

Whether Pomeroy foresaw the band's name change is another matter. Just two days after Yes were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, ARW announced that they would now be calling themselves Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin And Rick Wakeman. It's under that name that they're embarking on a US tour this autumn – and it's under that name that they'll be releasing a new album in 2018. Talk to the three of them today and they each have slightly different

Yes In The RAW:
Rabin, Anderson and
Wakeman on stage.



WONDEROUS STORY

The night Jon Davison met Jon Anderson.

Hard to believe, but true: Jon Davison and Jon Anderson had never crossed paths until April 7, 2017, when they met at a hotel in LA on the night of Yes' induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. It wasn't quite the seismic clash of parallel worlds that fans might imagine. "No," says Jon Davison. "I'm not sure he knew who I was! It was really noisy. I just approached him as a fan and wanted to thank him. Because I don't feel any rivalry or intimidation. I consider him in a whole different class than myself. And he's a hero of mine. So I just thanked him for all the inspiration and being so instrumental in bringing me to what I do today.

"He was very warm," Davison adds. "But I don't sense that he could understand amidst the noise that I was the other singer! I almost enjoyed it better that way - it was a fan having a moment to thank his hero."

Anderson confirms Davison's take on this meeting of Yes men. "I honestly had no idea," he says. "He never introduced himself. It was only when he went away that I thought, 'There's something about that guy that's kind of strange.' Then I said to my wife, 'I think that guy's the singer with the other band.' And thought, 'Why didn't he tell me who he was?' Because then I could have said, 'Well done,' because he performs the songs and lyrics I wrote, and he does a good job."

Despite that, the encounter was entirely at odds with all the rivalry and factionalism. "When I looked in his eyes, there was harmony and I could relate to him soul for soul," Davison says. "I felt inspired. There's so much discord and people get so heated online and fans get so ugly, which is so unfortunate when you consider the all-embracing message in Yes' music and lyrics."

Davison recently declared on Facebook that he would like to record an album with Anderson. "That statement," he explains, "was meant to be the antithesis of the general mindset of these people who get so nasty. That's what I'd like to happen. To create a really unifying message, a bridge between the two camps and all the fanbases. If Jon and I could do an album together, we could rise above all the pettiness." **PL**



The Two Jons: Davison (left) and Anderson.

JON DAVISON: GLENN GOTTLIEB; JON ANDERSON: MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY IMAGES

views of where things are at with regard to new music right now.

"Yes, we are working on new music," confirms Wakeman. "We've discussed it a lot, we've been throwing ideas backwards and forwards, there's pieces we've been working on that have been flying from Jon to Trev or from Trev to me. We have got a lot of stuff that we want to look at, that we want to dissect. There's a couple of wonderful basic songs that need ARW-ifying, or Yes-ifying, however you want to put it. But the truth of the matter is that the best way to get the music actually sorted and done is if you're all sitting in a room together."

"We've written quite a lot of music," says Anderson. "We haven't finished any of the songs yet, but we've easily got over an hour's worth of musical ideas."

"We haven't done anything yet because we're not quite there," says Rabin. "We had quite a bit of stuff which we were close to being ready to release. I listened to it on my iPhone and thought, 'Ah, there's a couple of things that are missing on it.' So it's taken a bit of a back seat. I don't want it to sound too clean and contrived

and polished. I want it to be a little edgy. So we'll go back and get it right. We don't want to rush it."

All three are similarly cagey on exactly what the new music will sound like. For Rabin, at least, there's little point in retreading old ground.

"There's absolutely no desire to repeat what we've done in the past," he says. "We're not listening to our old stuff and saying, 'We're missing a bit of that sensibility or emotion in the song - we need to add some Yes-y stuff.' That makes me cringe."

"The plan is, for about three weeks at the end of January and into February 2018, we're all going to sit in the jolly old same room, like we used to do years ago, look at all the bits of the musical jigsaw we have and try to put them in a semblance of order," says Wakeman. "Then I'll come back here, Trev will go into his studio and Jon will go in his. We'll have a template of what to work for, rather than just flying in the dark."

And can we expect a new album by the end of 2018?

"Oh, I would like to think by summertime we'll have something special," says Wakeman. "There is one amazing idea that's floating

around, and if we can pull that off, it will be brilliant."

Amazing how? Musically? Visually?

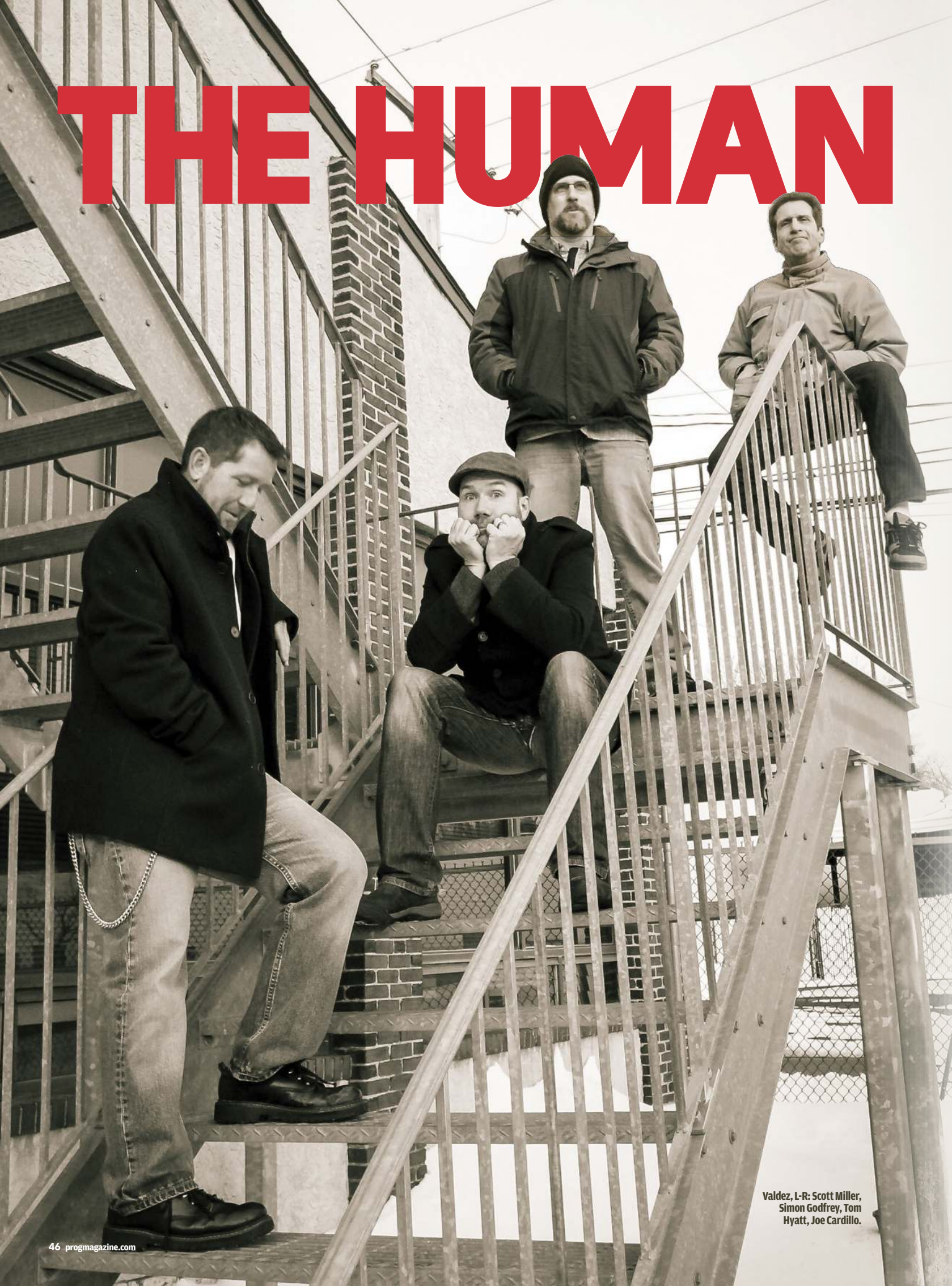
"Let's just say the whole thing will be pretty epic if we pull it off," he says.

Of course, 2018 is a huge year for both versions of Yes. It marks the 50th anniversary of the band. Just as the other incarnation are holding their cards close to their chests, so the Anderson/Rabin/Wakeman line-up are being equally cagey, though the singer promises the band's golden jubilee won't go unmarked.

"We're planning really, really adventurous and wonderful stuff," says Anderson. "I can honestly hear it. We have all the music for it and, God willing, it's going to happen. We're trying to figure out the best way of getting the music out there to the people, instead of having to go through the business. Music is easy but the business is a bitch." **PL**

See www.yesfeaturingarw.com for more information and tour dates.

THE HUMAN



Valdez, L-R: Scott Miller,
Simon Godfrey, Tom
Hyatt, Joe Cardillo.

CONDITION

You probably know him best for his work with Tinyfish and Shineback, but Simon Godfrey, now a resident of the US, has a new project in the works: **Valdez**. Godfrey and fellow bandmate Tom Hyatt talk life across the pond, celebrating the moment and their plans for the band's future.

Words: Rachel Mann

Think of Philadelphia and you might – if you passed school geography – recall The City Of Brotherly Love on America's East Coast. Images of their famous Liberty Bell (or, at least, strains of the *Monty Python* theme music) might flood your mind. Film fans might conjure scenes from its movies: *Trading Places*, or those incredible training montages featuring Philly's favourite fictional son, Rocky Balboa.

Music fans might remember that Philly gave birth to Stan Getz, Hall And Oates and, er, Disco Biscuits, among many others. And if you fancy a bit of weird, you'll remember that mainstay of urban myths, the 'Philadelphia Experiment' in which a massive WW2 ship was rendered invisible.

The City Of Brotherly

Love has claimed a new son since he moved there back in 2014: Tinyfish and Shineback main man Simon Godfrey. His very own 'Philadelphia Experiment' has worked out magnificently. His 'Letters from America' feature for *Prog's* website became mini-classics – love letters to the differences between the music scenes of the US and the UK. Philly is home now. Surely part of the reason for that lies in Godfrey's new US-based band, Valdez.

When we catch up with him and Valdez confederate Tom Hyatt (erstwhile bassist for US proggers Echolyn), the weather on the Atlantic East Coast is, it's fair to say, a little British. Hyatt suggests that, "If the weather were an ice cream, it would be at best vanilla."

When asked how things are in the US, Hyatt says, "Americans hate each other right now." Quickly he adds, "Fortunately I have some cool bandmates who think like I do."

Perhaps that's why Valdez seem so timely. In addition to Godfrey and Hyatt, Valdez has Cold Blue Electric's Joe Cardillo on keys and Stone Jack Baller's Scott Miller on drums. All four musicians have each been in the business for decades. This is a band with nothing to prove. Scott Miller is on record as joking: "It's not a supergroup. We're just four guys repaying our debt to society like the parole officer told us to."

There's much on Valdez's debut *This* to get Godfrey's Tinyfish and Shineback contingent

excited. It conjures, by turns, the sass and grind of 70s The Who, while being unafraid of 15-minute slabs of prog. Godfrey's heavier Tinyfish sound has been refined into a very bluesy and jazzy groove. Thematically the seriousness is still there (Godfrey doesn't shy away from exploring dementia and divorce), but the album's concept – to dare to celebrate the moment – shines bright. Godfrey has travelled 3,000 miles and seems to have rediscovered himself.

"THE LINES BETWEEN GENRES IN THE USA ARE MUCH LESS RIGID. THAT LEVEL OF FLEXIBILITY AND ECLECTICISM HAS RUBBED OFF ON ME."

Indeed, he acknowledges that the East Coast has freed him from being boxed in. "The lines between genres in the USA are much less rigid," he says. "That level of flexibility and eclecticism has rubbed off on me. And the 70s are not a bad thing over here."

With characteristic wit and quotability, he adds, "All my favourite bands are from the 60s and 70s... apart from Joe Dolce."

This resurrection is a cause for celebration. Godfrey's struggles with tinnitus are well-documented. They led to a retirement from live work in 2012. With brutal honesty, Godfrey admits, "When I stopped, I thought that could be the end of my musical career."

But... whisper it... Godfrey has been playing live again, and Valdez have a small US tour planned for the summer. They might even make it over to Europe in 2018.

"Tinnitus is unique to every sufferer," says Godfrey. "It's very dependent on diet and stress and sleep, as well as the physical injury. Moving to the US improved the condition immensely... it's still there, but I've learnt to manage it to the point where I can work again in a live setting."

Inevitably, this raises questions about the future of Tinyfish. Godfrey's assessment is honest. "None of us would ever say never. But circumstances are against us."

Guitarist Jim Sanders is based in Sweden, while drummer Leon Camfield is touring the world with The Simon & Garfunkel Story. Bassist Paul Worwood has pretty much retired from music. "I always love the idea

of Tinyfish coming together but right now it looks unlikely," Godfrey admits.

If Tinyfish are past, Valdez offer a promising future. The band's chemistry is impressive. Arguably the Hyatt-Godfrey friendship is prog's new bromance. Hyatt tells of how they met. "Simon's wife and I have been friends for a long time. She said he was a big fan of my band Echolyn."

Over a long night of yacking in a Philly comedy club, Valdez was born. Laughing raucously, Hyatt says, "Simon is one of the most adorable people you could ever meet. He had me out of my pants in half an hour."

Godfrey responds, "I remember my wife's eyelids drooping and eventually saying, 'Get a room.' It snowballed from there."

As to whether Valdez are 'prog', Godfrey and co are relaxed. "We didn't start out with a manifesto," he says. "We just want to make the best kind of songs we possibly can. If we capture an audience of dub reggae fans, then so be it."

Neither he nor Hyatt are bothered by trying to be clever or technical. As Godfrey sums up, "I'd rather be Van Morrison than Van Halen."

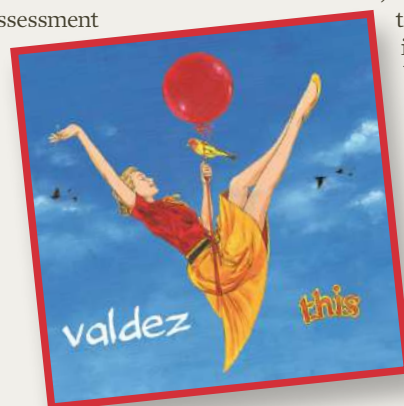
Of course, when it comes to friendship, Godfrey and Tinyfish/Shineback collaborator Rob Ramsay's relationship is outstanding. Godfrey is expecting a second album of Shineback work and, in the meantime, has contributed to Ramsay's forthcoming solo release. Godfrey is fulsome in his praise for Ramsay's lyrical gifts. "Rob is the other half of me as a songwriter. I love what he writes."

The Valdez debut has an expansive take on Ramsay's and Godfrey's old Tinyfish song, *Driving All Night*. It seems made for America's expansive spaces. "Bridging the divide is a subtle theme throughout *This*," says Godfrey.

With Valdez he seems to have bridged the physical and musical distance between his English roots and American home. With a smile in his voice, he says: "We didn't want

to approach these songs in a masculine way, but a more human way. It's about the human condition, rather than spaceships and trolls." ☺

This is out now on Bad Elephant. See www.facebook.com/valdezrock for more information.



Groovus Maximus

Recording on tape, running a label and finding inspiration from shamed politicians - it's all in a day's work for **Amplifier**, as they present us with their brilliantly trippy sixth album...

Words: Fraser Lewry **Images:** Sam Ryley



"Every period of your life has a and this album reflects our years: we're blokes in our

Ten years ago, Veronica Lario, the wife of Italian politician Silvio Berlusconi, published an open letter in *La Repubblica*, the only major Italian newspaper not owned by her partner. Splashed across the front page under the headline ‘My husband owes me a public apology’, it took the ageing philanderer to task for flirting with at least three different women at an awards ceremony, and expressed deep dissatisfaction with his performance as both a husband and a father.

Berlusconi duly apologised, maintaining that he treasured his wife’s dignity “like a priceless gift in my heart” (she would sue for divorce two years later), but the public nature of the humiliation gnawed at him, and he embarked on a Faustian crusade to reestablish his reputation as a paramour. This often consisted of ‘bunga bunga’ parties held at Papa Silvio’s disco chamber, a bolthole carved from the rock beneath his Sardinian mansion, where a mosaic

of the sea god Poseidon decorated the floor and the Viagra ran freely.

“Berlusconi’s like a James Bond baddie,” says Amplifier main man Sel Balamir, explaining his fascination with the man who inspired *Silvio*, taken from his band’s new album *Trippin’ With Dr Faustus*. “He epitomises the Faustian story. It’s timeless, passed down from generation to generation. You can see that character in any area of life. It’s always a man, and they always get what they deserve.”

If you’re thinking this sounds like perfect concept album fodder you’d be right, but in *...Faustus’* case, the truth is a little more humdrum.


“Without wanting to pop the balloon of conceptual mystique,” says Balamir, “it’s not really a concept album. They’re just songs that have gestated and evolved over a certain period. Every period of your life has a different colour and flavour, and this album reflects our lives in the past four or five years: we’re blokes in our 40s and we have sheds. A lot of it is about

the moral maze and the conundrums offered by even the most insignificant, minute choices. Like, when you go and buy a can of beans, you’re forced to ask if orphans are dying because you buy them. You’re forced to ask, ‘What are the implications?’”

When you buy those beans, are you thinking, “Aha! There’s a song here!”?

“No, because that would be weird,” says Balamir. “It’s more like the diffuse overall sum of all those cans of beans.”

We’ve met in a pub in the shadow of Brighton railway station, where a mural featuring some of rock’s dearly departed – Sandy Denny, Jimi Hendrix et al – adorns the exterior, while the very-much-alive Wreckless Eric is soundchecking upstairs.

Balamir has driven in from his home in Worthing, the inspiration for another new track, *Horse*. “It’s a funny place, Worthing,” he says. 

Amplifier, L-R:
Alexander ‘Magnum’
Redhead, Matt
Brobin, Sel Balamir,
Steve Durose.



different colour and flavour, lives in the past four or five 40s and we have sheds.”

“Wherever you go, it smells of weed. People are smoking it in the morning. It’s tempting to think that people move there when they retire, but I think people go there in their 30s or 40s and think, ‘This is awesome! I’m staying!’”

Trippin’ With Dr Faustus is a beast of an album. Amplifier’s trademark huge riffs are in evidence, crunching and churning with malevolent intent. It often sounds like the best of 90s alt-rock – Pixies, Pearl Jam, Jane’s Addiction, Straightjacket Fits – given a lick of psychedelic paint before being tugged and teased into beguilingly ominous, often uplifting new shapes.

“What we’re going to do this time is simply ask people what they want us to play. We’ve got a back catalogue of 100 songs so it’ll be really interesting to ask in September to see what people want to hear.”

The aforementioned *Silvio* is the unruly cousin of Chicago’s classic *25 Or 6 To 4*; *Kosmos (Grooves Of Triumph)* sounds like Yes, had Yes grown up in 90s Camden rather than 60s Soho; *The Commotion (Big Time Party Maker)* comes on like Magazine wrestling with Killing Joke; and the panoramic *Big Daddy* features guest vocals from the treacle-throated Beth Zeppelin.

“Beth’s a Scally bird from Manchester who sings like Tina Turner,” says Balamir. “I met her at a David Bowie tribute gig. She’s a foul-mouthed Janis Joplin character from a council estate and she’s brilliant. She teaches music to little kids, she’s really talented, and she does covers of things like *Nutbush City Limits* at working men’s clubs. She’s lovely.”

...*Faustus* is an album that marks a distinct change of approach from its predecessor. Like Beefheart’s *Trout Mask Replica*, 2014’s *Mystoria* was the result of months of gruelling rehearsal, followed by the briefest of studio visits, whereas ...*Faustus* is the opposite.

“It came together in dribs and drabs over four years,” explains Balamir. “It’s a record we’ve built.”

The luxury of unlimited studio time comes because the band now have their own setup in Manchester, but anyone expecting plush surroundings will be disappointed.

“It’s in an old Victorian workhouse,” says Balamir. “It’s not posh. We were thinking of setting it up as a proper studio, but the plumbing is dodgy and the toilet looks like something out of *Trainspotting*. It’s alright for us, but

if I was a paying customer I would expect not to be electrocuted by the light switches.”

Front and centre sits a battered Otari two-inch tape machine that formerly resided in Rochdale’s Suite 16, a studio once owned by Peter Hook and used by everyone from Joy Division to Lisa Stansfield and Bill Oddie. This ancient machine, which broke down more than once during the sessions, is the key to understanding ...*Faustus*.

“It had to be necromanced again and again,” says Balamir. “It was kind of hairy, but we found another tape machine we could cannibalise

impact on the overall execution, as it’s a process of *commitment* rather than a process of review.

“The other difference is that with 24 tracks, you’re limited to what you can mic up. You can’t have four different mics on the kick drum, you have one. Again, you need to *commit*.”

When you listen back, can you hear the difference? “What I hear is the space that’s completely missing from most records,” he replies.

Including your own?

“Yes, absolutely including our own.”

Another difference from *Mystoria* is that ...*Faustus* is released on Balamir’s



for parts. The best thing about the machine – apart from its awesome sound – is ‘rewind’. Once you’ve recorded something, you have to wait for the tape to rewind before you can play your part again, and those 20 seconds are space to meditate. You think about what you’re going to do, or what you just fucked up. It’s not like digital, where you play your part again and again and then pick your favourite.

“Instead, you practise the part and you play it and that’s it. There’s no editing if you make a mistake – you play again. It’s subtle, but it has an

Amplifier invite you to turn on, tune in and trip out with Dr Faustus.

own label, Rockosmos. Amplifier parted company with their previous label, Superball, after Sony Music swept up its parent company, Century Music. Lines of communication broke down and the band found themselves on their own, without funding. Lesser acts might have called it a day, but Amplifier have been here before. *Prog* asks Balamir for a potted history.

“I was really happy at Superball,” he says. “It’s just that they got gobbled up by Sony, and as soon as the decision chain becomes transatlantic, it’s hard. Responsibility evaporates, people

make choices because they have to, not because they want to, and you can't have a relationship of trust that works like that. MFN [Music For Nations, Amplifier's first label] were awesome. I couldn't wish for a better situation. But it was owned by Zomba, who got eaten. Everyone was rejected, apart from us and Tool. We had to buy our first album back for them, which killed our career at the beginning.

"Then we worked with SPV, which was really great at first, until they demanded another album *right now*, and when we delivered it, they hated it. So we went from being able to speak

So now Amplifier have their own label. Balamir works with a label services company who look after international sales and have a digital team, doing all the stuff one man cannot. Ironically, the company were bought by Sony soon after he signed, but so far, so good. "I'll probably get back to the office to discover that I've been bought by Sony," he says, only half-jokingly.

Next? Amplifier won't be following the album with an immediate tour, but this has its own advantages. "When we did *The Octopus* we didn't tour for six months," says Balamir,



to someone on the phone to no one returning our calls. Being on a record label sucked, so we literally fucked off and played in a room for four years. That's when we made *The Octopus* and put it out ourselves.

"It was never my intention to jump through so many hoops," Balamir adds. "In a parallel universe we would have signed to MFN and still be there. It's tiring... but one thing I can carry into my own label is an understanding of the amount of emotional investment both sides have to contribute to put out a record."

"and I would say that three times as many people came to see us. People knew the record. Also, we have to learn how to play... *Faustus*, because we never have! What we're going to do this time is simply ask people what they want us to play. We've got a back catalogue of 100 songs so it'll be really interesting to ask in September to see what people want to hear."

Balamir is great company. He enthuses about Spotify, Bandcamp, Huey Lewis And The News, the music scene in Sheffield, and about being the guy who runs the label, as well as

Rocking The Cosmos

Sel Balamir on the joys of having his own label.



rockosmos

"Releasing records is like a giant art project, says Sel Balamir.

"I try not to draw a distinction between the recording and putting it out and the photographs and the conversation that surrounds it."

After being burnt not once but twice by label deals that went rapidly south, it's unsurprising that Balamir has launched his own. Rockosmos launched last year with a 12-inch from Sheffield space rockers Awooga, and it's a home for adventurous music, but the Amplifier man strikes a note of caution, saying, "It's easy to be eclectic if you have the revenue to make mistakes."

The current roster includes Awooga ("They're three Yorkshire rednecks who should be on *Red Dwarf*, which is where they got the name from, not Kriss Akabusi," says Balamir) and London proggers Thumpermonkey ("They're like a puzzle: not just the music, but as you get to know them. They're very hard to categorise. They're kind of like the Cardiacs. They become addictive").

There's also an album in the works from Sheffield grunge band Dead Blonde Stars, the band who inspired Balamir to start the label. "I'm really excited by them, but I knew no one would sign them," he says.

What it is about Sheffield?

"The music scene in Sheffield is really fucking happening. You'll have an unsigned band night, 200 people will be there, and they'll all know all the words. It's like what you imagine Seattle was like. It's really uplifting."

Are you the guy from Amplifier who runs a label in his spare time, or the guy from Rockosmos who also plays in a band?

"It probably flip flops. I'm the second one at the moment. But Rockosmos offers me a platform to stand on to talk about my own music as well. My band are one of my bands."

See www.rockosmos.com for more information on the label and its bands.

being the one signed to it. "If I ruled the world," he adds, "I would insist that no matter who you were, you had to be in a fucking band. Whatever you did. Whatever job. Theresa May? In a band! Do some gigs, make some records, and let that inform your job." 🎧

Trippin' With Dr Faustus is out now on Rockosmos. See www.amplifierband.com for more information.

After debilitating health problems and a difficult fifth album, Robin Armstrong was wondering where to go next with **Cosmograf**. But today he's fitter, happier and is coming back strong with *The Hay-Man Dreams*, a 'listening album' rooted firmly in the past.

Crowman: Grant Moon **Portraits:** Dan Armstrong

He laughs it off, but Robin Armstrong's been through the wringer lately. For much of his adult life the Cosmograf linchpin has been plagued by chronic neck pain. It got so bad that by last year he was downing stop-a-horse painkillers just to get by. "It was horrible," he tells *Prog*, with a wan laugh bereft of any humour. "It got to a stage where I couldn't sleep, I'd spent thousands of pounds on physio and tests that didn't help, and I was downing Amitriptyline just to function, but it knocked me for six. I could play or work at the mixing desk for half an hour but then had to stop. I'd wake up and go to bed in terrible pain. It was an utter nightmare."

Then last March, a breakthrough. A lump he'd always had on his right arm – his picking arm – had begun to get noticeably larger. It then became clear to his doctor that this tumour (benign, fortunately) was the problem. It was sited on the radial nerve controlling motor function down the arm, and was relaying pain through Armstrong's nervous system up to his neck. Desperate by now, he was referred to a specialist unit in London, where the tumour was removed in September.

"The operation resolved my neck issue completely," he says. "As soon as I woke up, I knew things were different. It was almost a miracle. Within two weeks I was playing guitar again, but I was always sceptical – I thought it was going to come back. All these months on and it's all good. I've got some loss of feeling at the base of the right thumb, but I can still play, as badly as I did before!" This time the laugh is warm and self-effacing.

And 2016 was a watershed in another way for Robin Armstrong. Despite the pain, he'd poured heart and soul into *The Unreasonable Silence*, his fifth album as Cosmograf. Befitting of the auteur behind *The Man Left In Space*, *Capacitor* et al, it was a highfalutin sci-fi concept album, based on Albert Camus' heady philosophical treatise *The Myth Of Sisyphus* and featuring prog notables including Nick D'Virgilio, Nick Beggs and Spock's Beard's Dave Meros. Cosmograf's website and social media feeds were full of fans with warm things to say about it, but to Armstrong, it was a disappointment.

"I really thought it was going to cause more of an impact than it did. I thought people would love it, but maybe the complicated nature and depth of it got lost on people. Sales-wise, it didn't do anything as well as *The Man Left In Space*. And there was a lack of promotion for it – marketing's always been a weak point for me."

Listening to it again, *The Unreasonable Silence*

is a solid progressive album in the 70s, Floydian mode, with plenty of the widescreen melodic tropes and high production values that are part of Cosmograf's proggy brand. But if anything, perhaps Armstrong was sticking too closely to the hoary 'sci-fi concept album' boilerplate. It was as if, given everything else going on in his life, he could no longer see the space for the stars. "It could well be," he says now. "And I didn't want to go down that path again. So with this new album, I wanted six songs that would work in their own right, rather than tell a story."

It'll be interesting to hear what Cosmograf's considerable, loyal fanbase will make of *The Hay-Man Dreams*. In many ways it's his least characteristic album, and it might just be his best too. There is a story of sorts: in the late 19th century a farmhand dies and his wife builds a scarecrow in the field as a totem, to feel close to him through the years. Armstrong brilliantly imagines the world through this hay-man's eyes, and tantalisingly there's some truth behind the tale (see boxout).

This is the good ship Cosmograf crash landing to earth, in deep country, in the golden era of 70s rock. The tones are bucolic, heavy but folky in parts. With birdsong and

"I love 70s music – Sabbath, Purple – that's my roots, that's what really gets me going, and from there I went off into more proggy styles."

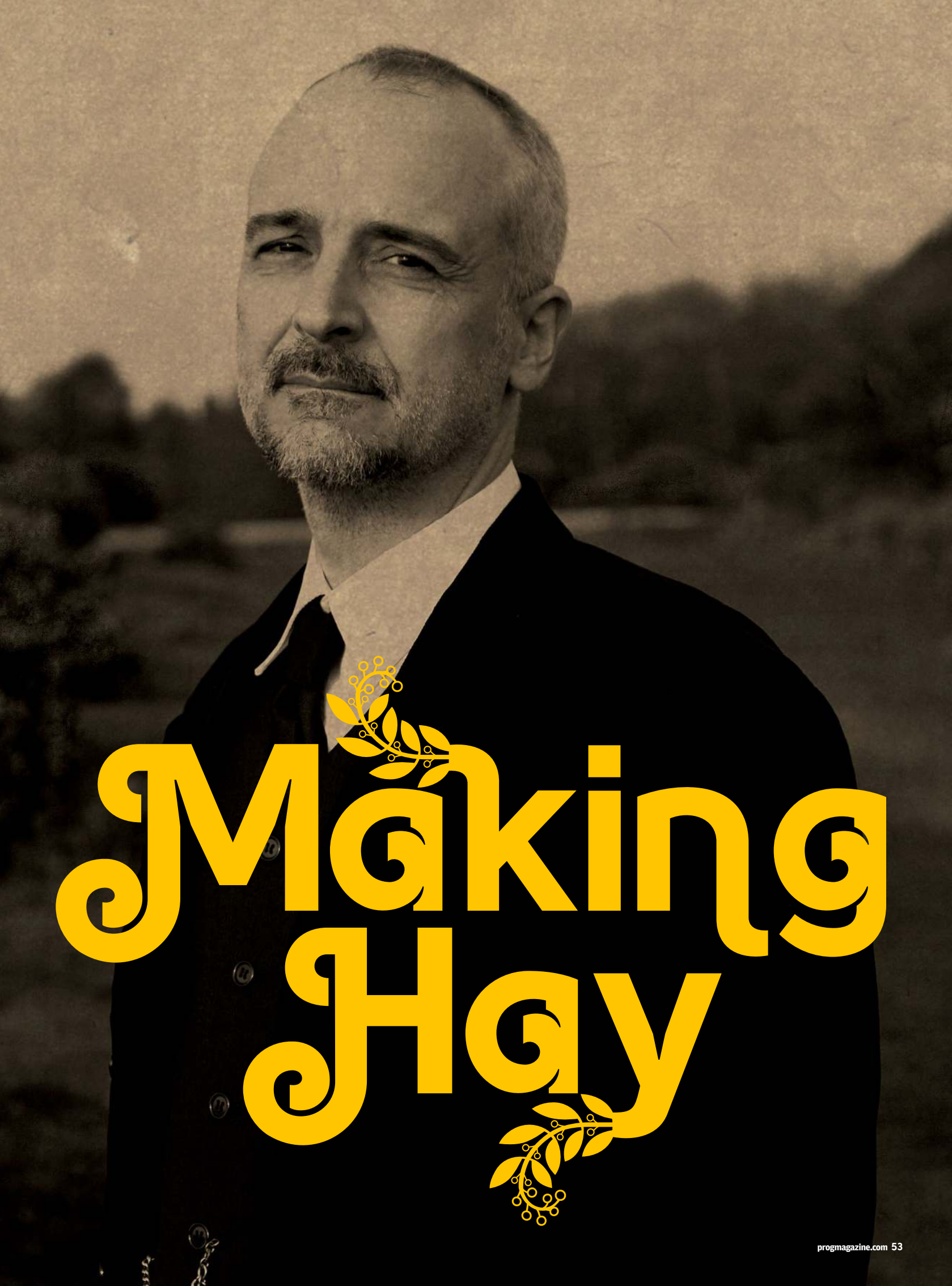
country sounds evoking a pastoral mood, the album's the colour of a summer's dusk. Armstrong reels off a wonderful period term to describe what will be his first album released on vinyl. "I really wanted this to be a 'listening album', harking back to, say, *Animals*. The last album was packed with lyrics, but here they're short and profound, and the instruments do more of the talking."

Portentous opener *Tethered And Bound* sets up the titular character. It's stark, doomy, claustrophobic even – Black Sabbath fronted by Peter Hammill, with Mellotron. "I made a very conscious effort to make this all sound vintage," says Armstrong. "Hammond organs, Les Pauls – no instruments made after 1975! I love 70s music – Sabbath, Purple – that's my roots, that's what really gets me going, and from there I went off into more proggy styles."

Armstrong's friend Matt Stevens adds his trademark ambient fretwork to *Trouble In The Forest*, centred on the dead man's heart-to-heart chat with his son, a conversation that was never to be, about working on the land and much, much more. "The struggle makes us honest" – I always heard that as a kid," says its writer. "It's a family thing. Anything worth getting is going to be worked for. It's a theme of the album: it's a tough old life."

There's a little Tull in the bluegrass guitar riff driving *The Motorway*, a little Jimmy Page too, circa *Over The Hills*





Making Hay

"To me this is a bonus album – I wasn't even sure I was going to be able to make it."

And Far Away. The rocky passages about driving a girl far in a car are pure Whitesnake. Armstrong takes comparisons like this in his stride. He has eloquently described how golden-age rock bands worked on a 'greenfield' site, whereas four decades on, musicians do what they can in their brownfield. "There's really nothing new. You take parts from here and there, re-present it, but there's nothing truly original. Here I was aiming for Micky Moody-era Whitesnake, the duelling guitar solos. I don't try to be startlingly original, so it doesn't bother me. Hopefully it still sounds like me."

He channels Steve Hogarth on the searingly downbeat *Cut The Corn*; *The Melancholy Death Of A Gamekeeper* sees him duelling guitars with himself; and the clincher is 13-minute closer *Hay-Man*, a beautiful summation on the story. Vocalist Rachael Hawnt portrays the widow hauntingly well, and Rachel Hall provides a lovely, lyrical violin solo, squeezed in during downtime at a studio session for Big Big Train. Veteran BBC continuity announcer David Allan reads snippets of Walter de la Mare's poem *The Scarecrow*, and all these layers add to an album that lingers in the mind. It's down-to-earth, moving, aching with sadness. "I'm with Steven Wilson on this," says Armstrong. "He's a great advocate of there being beauty in sadness. It really can be an uplifting thing."

"To me this is a bonus album – I wasn't even sure I was going to be able to make it. But when I came back to it after the hospital thing, it came together really easily. I just let it flow and it wrote itself, maybe because I didn't have any expectations. It's an immediate album, and while I hope Cosmograf's audience get it, you can't please everybody. You have to please yourself first."

Cosmograf's last live outing was at Celebr8,3 in 2014, and there hasn't been a show since. He admits to finding them stressful. "And I don't believe that playing small events makes a huge difference to your following. It takes a lot of time to organise, time I could be spending writing a new album. I'd much rather be in the studio where I've got control over the whole process. I like the way Big Big Train do it, a few select shows that instantly sell out."

"I'm not saying it'll never happen, but being on stage with 100 people chatting to their mates, or on their phones – *Hay-Man* just wouldn't work in that environment. And I can live with poor sales, I'm more interested in how well the record goes down with critics and fans."

After all, it's a listening album. One to listen to. 🎧

The Hay-Man Dreams is out on July 14 via www.cosmograf.com, with the vinyl edition released via www.planegroovy.com.

Keeping It In The Family: Armstrong looked to his ancestors for inspiration.

BACK TO MY ROOTS



Robin Armstrong reveals how the foundations of *The Hay-Man Dreams* lie in his family tree.

"I've always had an interest in genealogy. *When Age Has Done Its Duty* was based on my mum's folks, who were blacksmiths and lived in rural Shropshire. This is about my father's side. My great-great-grandfather was a gamekeeper and labourer on a farm in Abergavenny in the late 1800s. A track separated his farm from the one his future wife worked on. They met, started a family, and then he died in mysterious circumstances while walking down a street. He ended up in a ditch. Some said he'd been shot by poachers, but the coroner suspected an epileptic fit – there was never a real conclusion.

"There was an article printed about it in the *Monmouthshire Merlin*, the local paper at the time, and the headline was 'The Melancholy Death Of A Gamekeeper'. I thought to call the album that, but decided to keep it for the one song, as *The Hay-Man Dreams* lent itself to a bigger story.

"His name was Thomas Prosser, and he was about 27 when he died. He left my great-great-grandmother living in poverty with five children, one of whom was my great-grandmother. This got my imagination working. I had this idea that, in her anger and sense of loss, she builds a scarecrow, an effigy, and it becomes her point of contact with him, who she longs to have back. This scarecrow is stuck in this field, dreaming about his life of toil, his family, and his early death." GRM



DAN ARMSTRONG

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By Land



Boston's **Bent Knee** recently signed to InsideOut for album number four and are hoping it'll be the change needed to let them quit those day jobs. *Prog* talks to the six-piece about keeping their sense of humour, working to the bone and touring with those "wild boys" The Dillinger Escape Plan...

Words: Stephen Humphries **Images:** Chris Anderson

Bent Knee's visit to Germany last summer included a comedy of errors. The night before the Burg Herzberg festival, several members of the group visited their hotel sauna. Clad in their swimsuits, the American musicians were surprised to discover that everyone else in the sauna was naked. "It was the first time in my life when I felt uncomfortable having clothing on," recalls violinist Chris Baum.

The following night, Baum, singer Courtney Swain and live sound designer Vince Welch

celebrated their triumphant show at the festival by returning to the sauna. This time, the hotel receptionist recommended that they also try the salt baths, too. Heeding the maxim 'When in Rome...', the trio decided that they would take off their robes, just like the locals.

"It was our first time being naked in front of each other," says Baum. "We said, 'We should go to the salt baths before we get into the sauna.' So we walked down some stairs. Took our robes off. We were uncomfortable, but we confidently walked towards the pool.

As we got closer, we realised that everyone in the pool had a bathing suit on and were staring at us! We walked 10 paces toward the pool, realised we'd made a mistake and then we all just turned, put our robes back on and walked back up the stairs."

"Power walked!" says Swain, laughing.

If there's one thing Bent Knee have learned, it's how to maintain their sense of humour under adverse conditions. That attitude has buoyed the six Boston-based musicians during the difficult period of creating their fourth album, *Land Animal*.

A year ago, Bent Knee had a singular goal in mind: make an album that would enable the band members to quit their day jobs. Diamonds are formed under pressure; so are musical jewels. *Land Animal* has a baroque, chamber pop sound that may appeal to fans of XTC, Knifeworld, Sufjan Stevens and Cardiacs. Bent Knee's music is as playful and lively as the personalities in the band. Listen close to the lyrics, though, and you'll hear

Or By Sea

Bent Knee, L-R: Courtney Swain, Chris Baum, Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth, Ben Levin, Vince Welch, Jessica Klon.



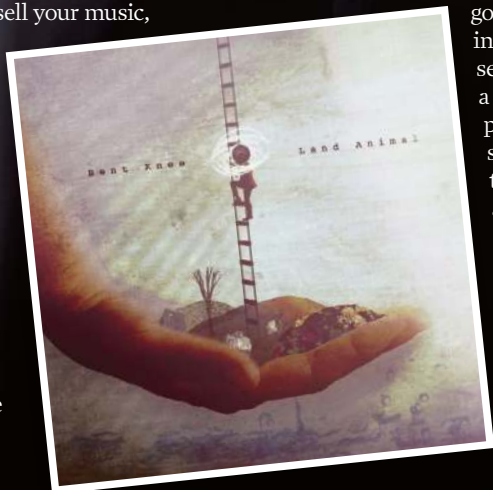
a deep strain of anxiety. The title track sums up how Bent Knee believed that the extensive touring behind their previous album, *Say So*, wasn't paying dividends.

"We had done everything that an indie band can do," says guitarist Ben Levin when *Prog* observes the album recording sessions. "You have to keep an email list, you have to keep your contacts, you have to sell your music, you have to have lots of videos. We did all of it. Then we toured as long as we could. But it wasn't immediately obvious if we had benefited a whole lot from touring so much. We felt very discouraged and lost. The verses of *Land Animal* are about scrambling your whole life like land animals have to."

Bent Knee operate like a start-up — except that the

investors are the band members themselves. The musicians have poured thousands of dollars from minimum wage jobs into the collective enterprise. Each member plays an operational role, whether it's handling booking, selling merch or overseeing promotion. Fourteen-hour days and late nights are the norm. What keeps Bent Knee


going is a belief in their unique selling proposition: a difficult-to-classify progressive pop sound that is all their own. But after seven years without making money, *Land Animal* feels like a make-or-break album for the 20-something musicians.



"It was our first time being naked in front of each other..."

Chris Baum

"There are so many bands that our friends [were in] that have died over the past year," says Swain, sitting on a couch inside Q Division studios, an anonymous building next door to a dry cleaner in Somerville, Massachusetts. "This was the year of everyone [else] getting married and giving up."

By contrast, Bent Knee had spent the spring and summer of 2016 crammed into a beat-up tour van that traversed more states than a presidential candidate. When they weren't on the road, they holed up for intense, week-long writing camps. Sometimes working as a group, sometimes in pairs, the musicians wrote songs about personal and universal concerns. 

"We are all in our late 20s now," says Baum, the group's upbeat violinist. "You start to become much more numb and beaten-down by the previous 25 to 30 years of bad news and terrible things happening in the world. You start to become affected less by all the news coming in. A lot of *Terror Bird* is about that."

One of Levin's contributions was affected by the sights from the windscreen of his driver's seat in the van.

"*The Well* is about global warming," says the bushy-haired guitar player. "Is what I am doing on this earth valuable enough to justify my carbon footprint? This summer we drove almost 40,000 miles. We kept filling up the tank. We'd seen a deer that had been smashed by buses. I can't even count how many animal corpses I saw on the side of the road. These roads are dividing habitats. How can you not drive if you want to tour?"

Bent Knee's campaign to promote their third album wasn't in vain. *The Boston Globe* and *The Wall Street Journal* ran enthusiastic features on Bent Knee. *Prog* magazine nominated *Say So* in the Vanguard category of the 2016 Progressive Music Awards. Then, finally, the biggest break of all. Unbeknownst to Bent Knee, they had caught the attention of Liam Wilson, the bass player for The Dillinger Escape Plan. He recommended Bent Knee as openers for The Dillinger Escape Plan's blockbuster farewell tour.

"Someone at one of our dankest house shows in Philadelphia a few years back sent him a video from the show that clued him into us. He kept tabs on us after that," says Swain. "It felt like we were bashing our heads against the limits of what we could do as an indie band. Out of nowhere, these Fairy Godfather dudes reached out to us and picked us up."

The tour was to prove more impactful than Bent Knee could have imagined when they signed on.

"They are wild boys," is how Bent Knee bass player Jessica Kion describes The Dillinger Escape Plan. That's a chronic understatement. On any given night, the members of the hardcore jazz metal band will breathe fire on stage and dive into the crowd. They've also been known to set fire to their drum kit, invite a couple to have sex in front of the audience, and almost ran afoul of the UK's public decency laws when singer Greg Puciato defecated on stage at the 2002 Reading rock festival. (Question to Mr Puciato: surely the festival backstage Portaloos weren't *that* dodgy?)

"Dillinger would tell us these crazy stories and we'd think, 'We like to have a few beers after the show and we don't stay up too late because we get sleepy,'" says Welch, the multi-instrumentalist who produced *Land Animal*. "We might be the most boring band on Earth. The craziest thing we did was bought a weed vaporizer in Oregon. I got stoned every night for a week after the shows."

Bent Knee were inspired by The Dillinger Escape Plan's kind embrace backstage and kinetic energy on stage.

"They changed our dynamic because we played a lot harder to get the audience's attention as an opening band," observes Kion.



The more muscular approach spilled over into the recording sessions for *Land Animal*, says drummer Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth. That vigour is immediately evident on album opener *Terror Bird*, which features a telegraph rhythm as urgent as an SOS, defibrillator jolts of guitar in the chorus, and a piano melody that rolls like a ship in heavy waves. The song is one of several tracks on the album that bears the influence of pianist and percussionist Nik Bärtsch. Bent Knee took a workshop with the Swiss composer to study how to superimpose one cycling musical pattern over another.

"The most obvious track that you see that polyrhythm stuff on is *Terror Bird*," says vocalist Swain, who plays the keyboards. "During the instrumental bridge we said, 'Let's try doing a Nik Bärtsch kind of thing.' We had a piano line of 16 notes cycling over it and they said, 'Let's make it 17 so that it will take a while for it to cycle.'"

One of the most ambitious aspects of *Land Animals* is its rhythmic approach. Wallace-Ailsworth's drum patterns range from the unchanging metronomic pulse in *Boxes* to the stuttering beat in *Hole*, which was inspired by the Ghanaian style of drumming. On the funky *Holy Ghost*, the beats bounce like a ball on a spinning roulette wheel.

"There's a line in 5 but my snare hits around 2 and 4, as if I am in 4/4, so you get an undulating sound that settles uneasily but you're also dancing to it," says Wallace-Ailsworth. "Rhythmically, this song is influenced by *King Kunta* from Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*—that driving, relentless groove with energy to it."

"The violin pizzicato stays very straight and that helps emphasise the weird groove that's going on," adds Baum.

Bent Knee's players have a penchant for muso-speak even when describing an uncomplicated song such as *Belly Side Up*.



“We felt very discouraged and lost. The verses of *Land Animal* are about scrambling your whole life like land animals have to.”

Den Levin

“All the parts are very simple,” says Kion, “especially my bass part which is just an ostinato of eight notes.”

“It’s the closest thing we’ve written to a straightforward pop song,” concurs Swain. “We’ve been labelled ‘prog’ for a large portion of last year. That hasn’t sat badly with us, but we want to be more than ‘prog’. We were talking to The Dillinger Escape Plan and they said, ‘We’ve always felt that we never fit well into a genre. But we also work well within a lot of genres.’ We thought, ‘That’s how we feel.’”

Thomas Waber, the head of InsideOut Music, picked up on that quality in Bent Knee. Earlier this year, he signed the band to the record label, which is releasing *Land Animal*.

“When we were doing *Say So*, there was a little bit of dialogue with InsideOut, but they passed on that album,” says Swain. “The real reason that they turned around and said ‘We want to take you’ was because we toured with The Dillinger Escape Plan. Vince and I went

to talk with Thomas over brunch in New York and he was very specific that the motivating factor was that we were appealing not only to prog fans, but also to a younger generation outside of prog.”

It’s a momentous, game-changing deal for Bent Knee. Swain can already testify to the power of the label’s distribution via Sony. On the day that first single *Land Animal* was released, she was impressed to discover that it was available on the leading streaming service in Japan, the country she grew up in.

“When I was a kid, I wanted to be a signed musician who was touring internationally,” says Baum. “Now that we’ve done all that, we are moving to the next thing. The landmarks continue to appear. It goes hand-in-hand with the album artwork, which has a character climbing a ladder that never ends.”

Since the record deal, the musicians haven’t given up their day jobs — which range from ride-share services to teaching music lessons

— but they have scaled back their hours to facilitate extensive touring. They’ve yet to make any money. If these musicians tried to withdraw cash from an ATM, the machine would probably spit the card out. That’s why Levin wears broken glasses with a rubber band wrapped around the damaged lens.

“I had a home the last time we recorded an album,” laughs Wallace-Ailsworth, who has been sleeping on his bandmates’ couches over the past few months.

That resolute, cheerful attitude helps Bent Knee to survive from day to day, much like the creatures in the lyrics of *Land Animal*.

“When I sing the song live, I always like to look out at the audience and look at the people to say, ‘Don’t you dare give up, because we’re all in this together,’” says Swain. “But I’m also really just singing to myself.” 🎧

Land Animal is out now on InsideOut. For more information, see www.bentkneemusic.com.

Rikard Sjöblom (second from right) leads Gungfly into their future.



DESTINATION

In July 2016, the news broke that Swedish prog maestros Beardfish were splitting up after 15 years and eight albums. Now, Beardfish's former frontman re-emerges with Rikard Sjöblom's Gungfly.

The Gungfly concept has assumed many guises over the years — its current form is a six-piece keyboard-heavy prog band, but it's occasionally appeared as a power trio and was first conceived in 2007 as an outlet for Sjöblom's musical ideas that didn't necessarily fall under the prog umbrella.

"If you compare Beardfish and Gungfly back in the day when both bands existed at the same time, I usually left stuff that wasn't really in the prog rock style for Gungfly and then of course sometimes a prog song or two would slip through the radar," says Sjöblom.

"I'd record something and you'd see the Beardfish members going, 'Oh wait, what was that? We should have had that song!' But now all of the prog-related material goes to Gungfly. Gungfly is changing."

Gungfly's marvellous, cosmos-spanning new album, *On Her Journey To The Sun*, contains songs intended for Beardfish before the band's split, as well as music conceived for Sjöblom's solo career. "For instance, the opening track *Of The Orb*, that was meant to go on my last album, *The Unbendable Sleep*," he says. "But then Robert [Hansen] and Magnus [Östgren] of Beardfish heard it and they were like, 'Oh, we'll take that one!' So I lost that one to Beardfish but then I got it back. And there's this song called *Polymixia*, it's an instrumental that was meant for Beardfish. We rehearsed it but never recorded it."

Beardfish's creativity was rooted in the mindset of the garage band, where the members would get together and develop material by jamming. It was the difficulty of maintaining that working method in the face of changing life circumstances that contributed to the group's demise. Gungfly marks a departure from that grease, oil and sweat school of music-making.

"This is an album I've been doing on my own," says Sjöblom, who plays most of the instruments on the record himself. The six-piece line-up — Sjöblom, Petter and Rasmus Diamant on drums and bass respectively, keys players Sverker Magnuson and Martin Borgh, and ex-Beardfish guitarist David Zackrisson — is the onstage version of Gungfly.

"The band is going to be recording stuff together in the future," says Sjöblom, "but on



"It's not a big ego trip. Gungfly isn't the best-known band in the universe but I still want to continue using that name. I've released albums as Rikard Sjöblom as well as Gungfly."

SOL

Beardfish may have departed this mortal coil as a band, but their former frontman is setting forth on a new musical voyage with his rebranded, ever-evolving **Rikard Sjöblom's Gungfly**, heading straight for the heart of the solar system.

Words: David West

the album, I think we only play two or three songs with all the members on them. That's basically the live band."

Even the live version of the band has had different manifestations. For some shows, it's been a stripped-down power trio.

"That was actually out of convenience," says Sjöblom. "Basically Petter, Rasmus and myself have been playing a whole lot of trio stuff together through the years. When I was invited to do Progtoberfest in Chicago, it was a case of, 'Let's make this convenient – we'll just fly over the three of us and we'll play

stuff from all over the place.' Most of the stuff was from the older Gungfly albums but we also did a couple of songs from the new album. It's always fun to mix it up a little bit. That's

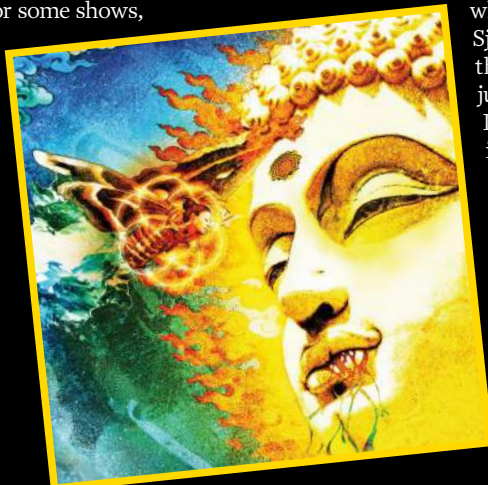
why it's called Rikard Sjöblom's Gungfly these days instead of just Gungfly, because I might be mixing it up and doing different setups with the band."

While it might be Sjöblom's name on the marquee, he's keen to point out that the new moniker doesn't mean he's

become a prog diva. "It's not a big ego trip," he says. "Gungfly isn't the best-known band in the universe but I still want to continue using that name. I've released albums as Rikard Sjöblom as well as Gungfly; those two things have always been more or less the same anyway so why not bring them together?"

Likewise, having the ability to alter the roster to fit the occasion creates new possibilities for arranging the material. "For a trio setting, you basically get to play a whole lot more," explains Sjöblom, "because there are quite a lot of instruments on the recordings but in a live setting there is a different energy and a different vibe.

"I always enjoyed that myself, seeing some of my favourite bands like Frank Zappa or King Crimson. I think the only band that was really super consistent was Gentle





Giant because they were all on the stage every time, but taking King Crimson for instance, sometimes there were just three people on stage doing the same songs but different versions of them. I really like that.”

One major change in Sjöblom’s life over the last few years has been becoming a parent and trying to balance his music career with his family.

“Being on the road, doing music in general, it fucks up all the routines,” he says. “You never really know, oh, I’m going to be working this Thursday from four in the afternoon till 10 in the evening. Balancing that with day care or kindergarten, just generally being around, can be tricky. You have to work together with the one you created the kids with, I guess, and have a pretty good relationship, so there is a giving and taking situation.

“I had a more difficult time getting into making an album, for instance, or writing songs, but once I’m there, it’s like I never left or never had kids. I’ve just got to be able to get into that realm of writing and creating because it can be tricky, but it’s doable. It’s a few years of no sleep. I go around looking like a zombie.”

For most musicians, being on tour is a marathon in sleep deprivation but, with kids at home, it’s the opposite for Sjöblom. “When I go out of town and I stay in a hotel, I sleep my ass off,” he says. “It’s one of the perks.”

On Her Journey To The Sun is drenched in wonderful sounds. While the album may not have been made by a group of musicians jamming in a garage, it sounds organic and alive, which may be thanks in part to Sjöblom’s love of vintage keyboards. Case in point, the track *Polymixia* features a Clavinet.

“I’ve always been a big fan of vintage keyboards. I have a couple of Hammond organs, I’ve got a Fender Rhodes piano, some synthesisers from an old ARP Pro Soloist, the one that Tony Banks used on the old Genesis recordings.”

“It’s a real Clavinet, the old Stevie Wonder, *Superstition* keyboard and I ran it through a whole bunch of guitar effects” says Sjöblom. “I had a field day when I recorded that!

“I’ve always been a big fan of vintage keyboards. I have a couple of Hammond organs, I’ve got a Fender Rhodes piano, some synthesisers from an old ARP Pro Soloist, the one that Tony Banks used on the old Genesis recordings. You find all these old keyboards and go bankrupt every time you purchase one, but it’s a lot of fun. There is so much energy and warmth that comes from using real instruments that you lose if you only use Virtual Instrument plug-ins.”

When inspiration strikes, Sjöblom prefers to start with a melody, rather than a lyric. “I can have a melody nagging me for days before I do anything about it,” he says. “Sometimes that melody can be inspired by just a line or something that I’ve scribbled down on a piece of paper but most of the time it’s melodies or chord progressions that do it for me.”

Once he has a musical idea, that can suggest a lyric or a theme. “It’s usually a feeling. Something in the mood of the music speaks to me and gets me going lyrically,” he says. “Then sometimes it can change as well. You start writing something and then you don’t feel

it’s right and you have to go back and revisit the lyrics. That happened a few times on this album. The last real song on the album, *The River Of Sadness*, that changed a couple of times throughout the writing process. At first it dealt with two lovers and then it ended up being more about losing friends.”

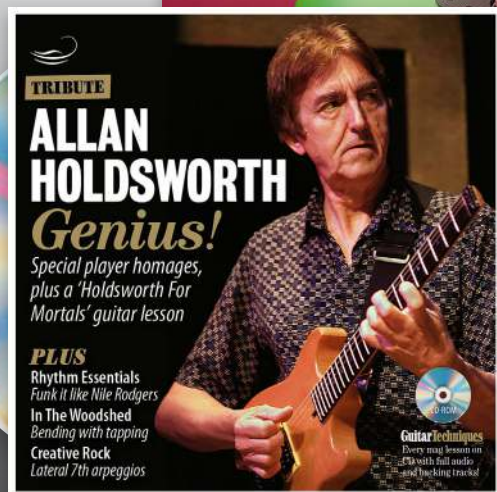
Where Beardfish used to rehearse at length and then record, with Gungfly it’s a case of recording then rehearsing the band to perform the studio creations. Sjöblom is keen to take *On Her Journey...* on the road, although he does have concerns. “I’m a worrying person,” he says. “I’m not afraid that everyone is going to be able to play everything. It’s more that I always have a feeling like, ‘Is there enough time to learn everything? How do we get the Hammond organ from the trailer to the venue?’ I worry about small stuff all the time but I never show it so I go around twitching.

“I’m just looking forward to getting out there and trying it out. It’s always nice to see a song come to life that way because recording is one thing, you witness a song come to life there as well, but it’s a different beast when you bring it out on the road.”

On Her Journey... is out now on InsideOut. For more details, see www.rikardsjoblom.com.

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READERS: THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR PROG MAGAZINE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ADJUST THE PICTURES OR THE WORDS. WE ARE CONTROLLING WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ...



Jah Wobble

He may be best known for his post-punk days as the bassist in Public Image Ltd, but he's also worked with the likes of Jaki Liebezeit, Steve Hillage and Brian Eno, and is a big prog fan himself. So now we have to ask the big question: **how prog is Jah Wobble?**

Words: Rob Hughes

The lead-off single for Jah Wobble's new album is a distinct echo from the past. First issued in 1978, *Public Image* was the debut 45 from PiL, the post-punk outfit formed by John Lydon in the wake of the Sex Pistols' demise. Over its abrasive three minutes, Lydon poured scorn on his former colleagues over Keith Levene's guitar and a classic rumbling bassline from Wobble.

Nearly 40 years on, Wobble and long-time band The Invaders Of The Heart have given *Public Image* a dub-jazz makeover that shifts the song into a whole other spacey dimension.

"I never would've thought of doing the old PiL numbers a few years ago," Wobble says. "I always thought they were sacrosanct or that you couldn't do them justice. But when it was suggested that we do this one, I said I'd give it a go. And we ended up doing a sophisticated minor key version. I love it. It sounds just as fresh as the original, but in another way."

Parent album *The Usual Suspects* is full of similarly radical reworkings.

“The others would all laugh at me because I wanted to get hold of all the Steve Hillage albums and play them to death. Prog was my guilty pleasure. When I was coming down from taking speed, I'd take downers and put Tangerine Dream on the turntable.”



Above: 1978's First Issue, PiL's debut album that introduced Jah Wobble's bass skills

Wobble has chosen to revisit songs from his sizeable back catalogue – one that spans PiL, solo work, collaborations and The Invaders Of The Heart, including 90s hits such as *Visions Of You* and *Becoming More Like God*. Factor in a couple of live tracks and cinematic scores and what you have is a ravishing suite of moods that gather at the intersection of dub, funk, prog jazz and world music. “We felt that we should document the live set,

because it's really developed,” Wobble explains. “We kept interpreting the numbers better and better and there's a lot of spontaneity there every night.

“Back in the day, you'd put numbers together, go in and record, then go out live. But this is the other way round – we played the stuff for ages, then went into the studio. This band is always very creative. Even during those sessions, we'd be coming to the end of a number and start improvising on something else.”

Wobble's deep passion for musical exploration has taken him far and wide since he was loaned his first bass by Sid Vicious, whom he met in 1973 at London's Kingsway College (Vicious, incidentally, also gave him his stage moniker, after slurring Wobble's real name, John Wardle, when drunk).

He's recorded with Can's Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebezeit, plus noted French DJ/producer François Kevorkian, Bill Laswell, Brian Eno, Afro Celt Sound System, Björk, Steve Hillage, The Orb, Pharoah Sanders and countless others – among them his wife, the Chinese guzheng player Zi Lan Liao. In that time he's released everything from film soundtracks and ambient albums to spoken-word pieces and tributes to William Blake and the Celtic Poets.

Originally inspired by dub reggae, Wobble's trademark low-end bass first found a home with PiL, investing their music with a depth and range more akin to modal jazz – and, as it transpires, the elasticity of the prog rock that informed his youth.

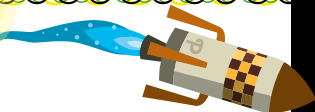
“I'm naturally not disciplined,” he says. “I'm always looking to go beyond strictures. That's why I found the whole thing about playing three-chord punk very bourgeois at the time. I was an uptight, ex-Catholic altar boy, and me and hallucinogenics didn't mix”



Public Image Ltd, L-R: Keith Levene, Jah Wobble, John Lydon.

The Usual Suspect:
bass legend and prog
fan Jah Wobble.





well at all. I was far more into booze and powders and was very drawn into left-field areas and prog. The others would all laugh at me because I wanted to get hold of all the Steve Hillage albums and play them to death.

“Prog was my guilty pleasure. When I was coming down from taking speed, I’d take downers and put Tangerine Dream on the turntable. I liked their more far-out stuff, where you could really get lost in it. There’s a correlation between that and the mind relaxing and expanding. I used to love Hawkwind too – they were incredible. I remember seeing them with Johnny Lydon at the East Ham Odeon [February 1975] and it was sold out.”

Amid rising tensions within the ranks, Wobble quit PiL after touring America with their experimental masterpiece, *Metal Box*, in 1980. He was, by then, already embarking on a different journey.

“I already knew I’d be leaving PiL because it had just become such an ugly, nasty, childish little scene,” he recalls. “We had [jazz/free funk guitarist] James Blood Ulmer supporting us on that tour, with the whole harmolodics thing going on. And I’d just got into Miles Davis at that point, thanks first of all to Kenny MacDonald, PiL’s tailor, who introduced me to *Dark Magus*.

“We’d just done *Metal Box*, which I thought was really out there and unique, and then I discovered there was already this thing on the black American music scene that was just as primal, uncompromising and un-bourgeois as you could get. I was absolutely inspired by music at that point. I was listening to people like Jamaaladeen Tacuma, who was Ornette Coleman’s bass player, and Arthur Blythe [jazz saxophonist].”

Post-PiL, one of the first projects Wobble took on involved Czukay and Liebezeit, with whom he recorded the avant-tronic *Full Circle* in 1982, at Can’s fabled Inner Space Studio. It was an education.

“They were amazing and really fucking serious,” he says. “Holger had studied with Stockhausen, who I’d gone to see at the Barbican, and I loved that whole musique concrète thing combined with words.”

It was also the start of a friendship with Liebezeit that endured through the decades. “I’ve never said this to anyone before. Whenever someone close to me has died, I’ll go and put their name down in this book where I practise Buddhism. And they’ll



Jah Wobble: “I’ve got no regrets, musically...”

ALEX HURST



From Top: PiL’s seminal 1979 album *Metal Box*; 1982’s *Full Circle*, featuring Jah Wobble with Holger Czukay and Jaki Liebezeit.

have a session there where they’ll say Buddhist prayers for someone who’s departed. I normally try to get that done as quickly as I can. But with Jaki I didn’t rush to do it because I knew he would be all right. Jaki’s karma is good. He was a special guy and an incredible drummer.

“As I got to know him better over the years, he once told me about when he lived in Ibiza [does a soft German accent]: ‘I was thinking of throwing myself down onto the rocks there, because I was useless. I was shit.’ He wanted to be a particular jazz drummer – I think he wanted to be the guy from *Sketches Of Spain* [Jimmy Cobb] – but in the end he was just resolutely himself. Jaki was just a Zen master.”

We’re sitting in the front room of Wobble’s house in the verdant Cheshire suburbs. He’s lived here since 1999, when he left the increasingly gentrified East London of his childhood for a fresh challenge and, as he puts it, “somewhere a bit earthy”. It followed a critical period in his life where, having kicked booze and drugs

midway through the 80s and briefly retired from the music business to become a train driver on the London Underground, he’d re-emerged on the Island label with two glorious world music albums, fronting The Invaders Of The Heart. Both 1991’s *Rising Above Bedlam* and 1994’s *Take Me To God*, featuring high-calibre guests such as Sinéad O’Connor, Natacha Atlas, Baaba Maal and Gavin Friday, were artistic and commercial peaks that suggested Wobble had crossover appeal.

Stardom had never been his goal, though he concedes that “for a while there it was really touching on that. But I didn’t take it too seriously. I think Island were very disappointed in me, because stuff like *Play Dead*, with Björk, was supposed to have my name on it and I didn’t really like the way the record sounded. So I told them I’d keep the publishing, but they could take my name off it. I think they thought, ‘This guy’s a loser.’

“By that time, I knew what I wanted to do – to plough my own furrow and be an artist. That Island period had



“When I used to listen to shortwave radio, I found the oscillations trippier than anything done with a synthesiser. It was like the cosmos talking to you.”



Jah Wobble's *Invaders Of The Heart* supporting *Killing Joke* at The Roundhouse in London, November 2015.

ROBERT SMITH/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

been a marvellous time for me. It was my concept with the world music and everything, with drones and disparate parts that you put together.

“I’d been into that stuff for a long time, starting from when I used to listen to shortwave radio. I found the oscillations trippier than anything anyone’s ever done with a synthesiser. It was like the cosmos talking to you.

“Doing that got me listening to music from the Middle East, then stuff from Iran and what I realise now was Sufi music. The big moment was watching an absolutely inspiring documentary on the BBC, *The Romany Trail*, in the early 80s. It tracked the migration of gypsy musicians from Rajasthan in India, through the Middle East and into the Straits Of Gibraltar from Egypt. There was a group in Cairo called *Invaders Of The Hearts*, which is where I took the name from.”

Moving up north was a physical extension of Wobble’s need to gradually disengage from traditional industry practice. This road to autonomy had begun in 1997, when he set up his own label, 30 Hertz.

“I was producing so much music that it was a no-brainer,” he says. “So it wasn’t really my decision. Starting a label was the best thing I ever did.”

Wobble continues to do things his way. The wild figure of his PiL days has evolved into a man with a rooted interest in spirituality and Buddhism (there’s even a separate meditation room in his house), with a BA in Music and Philosophy. He’s equally passionate about his beloved Tottenham Hotspur, and, of course, the music that seems to pour out of him with regularity. *The Usual Suspects* brings his tally of post-PiL albums to well over 50.

“The interesting thing with artists is seeing how they develop and how the concept changes,” he reasons. “Miles Davis was very much like that and I love the fact that he just released everything. He didn’t try to censor any of it. As Brian Eno once said, it’s about documentation. And that’s how I feel with my stuff. I once got banned from *Later... With Jools Holland* because I told them: ‘I don’t want to play with a pub pianist. I’m sorry if that causes a problem, but I’m not going to do that.’

“Stuff like that will hurt you, but I’m not frustrated and I’ve got no regrets, musically, which I think is important. I’ve made all the records I wanted to do and there’s still more to come.”

The Usual Suspect is out now on 3Ms Music. See www.jahwobble.com for details.



YOUR SHOUT!

He played with Johnny Rotten so does that make him punk rock? He also played with members of Can, so does that make Jah Wobble prog?

“From the first time that bass rang out on *Public Image* I knew here was a musician that would transform music. Those first two PiL albums, and then his experimental journeys on his solo albums and collaborations make him one of the most progressive bassists to ever exist. Incorporating dub, world music and rock together to form an incredible hybrid. Jah Wobble personifies prog fully.”

Paul Leader

“He made an album with Holger Czukay. Enough said.”

Steve Cadman

“Incredible bass player, whether with PiL, solo or collaborating with others, especially the extended version of Primal Scream’s *Higher Than The Sun* off the arguably prog *Screamadelica*. Progressive as in breaking boundaries.”

David Lloyd

“Wobbly! Not very much!”

Howard Canning

“So prog that he made Johnny Rotten progressive. That’s pretty prog!”

Wedgepiece

“Thought he was punk. Oh well...”

Hector Fortune

“About as prog as Jello Biafra. [Who has featured in *My Prog Hero* in this very magazine - Ed]”

Dave Probert

“Well you know, I wouldn’t complain if he won a prog award or two. Not exactly Genesis, but there’s enough there to consider him prog.”

Nick Burman

“Innovative, improviser, dubstar... Oh A13.”

Ealr Of Thorger

“I’m a fan, but I wouldn’t consider Jah Wobble prog because stylistically, he doesn’t quite fit. But he does have a quality that makes him unique, and a step above many bona fide ‘progs’: he’s a visionary. So if his style and musical execution are not exactly of your liking, there’s still that amazing vision that’s able to attract musicians such as Bill Laswell, Brian Eno, Jaki Liebeck, Holger Czukay, to name a few. I always find listening to Jah Wobble to be a rewarding experience.”

Jack Rottenberg

“Jah Wobble as prog? Not quite, though experimental and visionary as proven by the sheer breadth of collaborations and influences. The Krautrock stuff is probably the closest, though some of PiL’s post-punk output skirts the fringes of prog, but at the end of the day prog is one of the few labels I wouldn’t stick on him.”

Clive Summerfield

“PiL were prog though for the first three albums at least although I like the Wobble free one the best.”

Nicholas John Payne

“Now you’re being silly.”

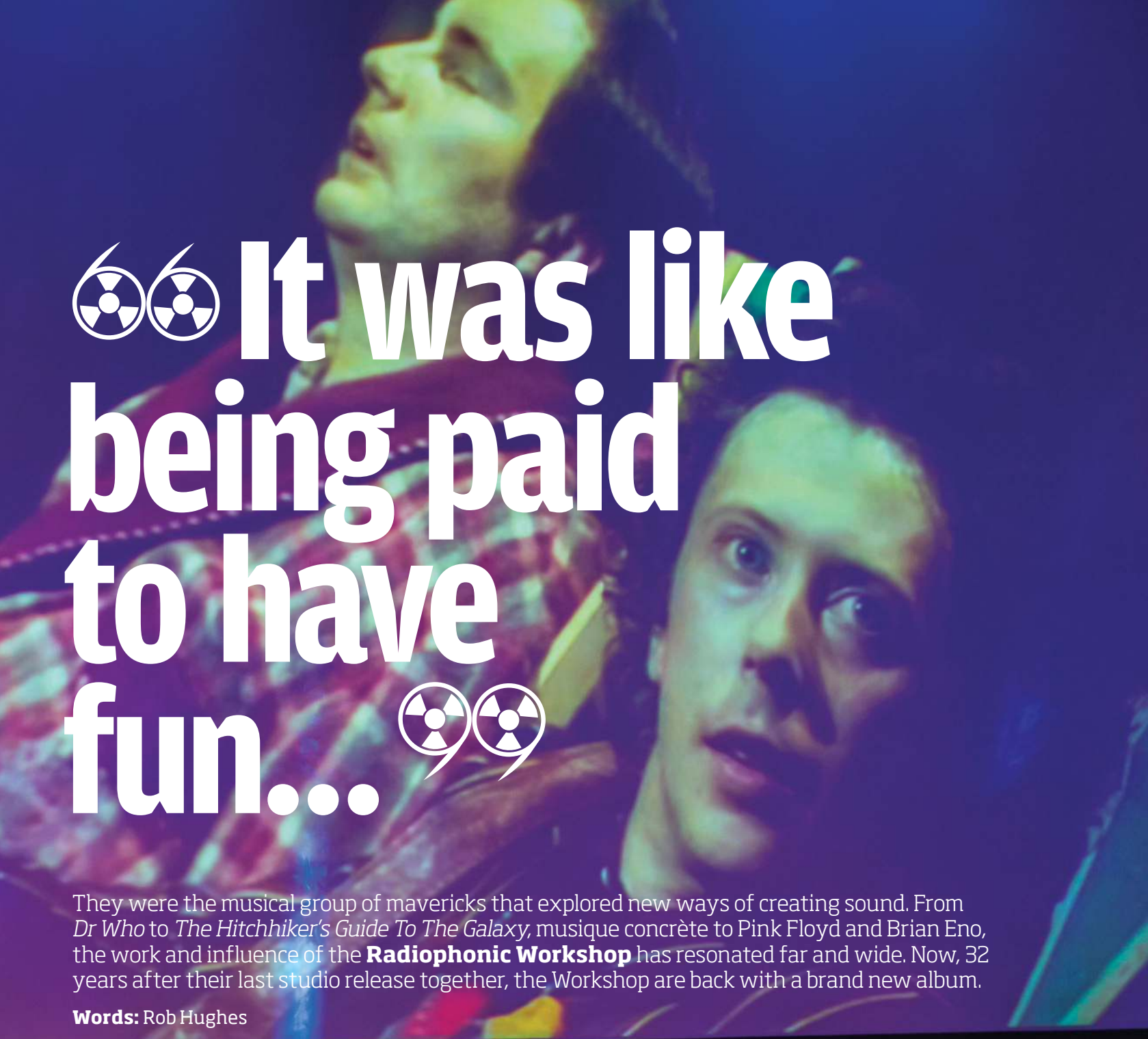
Steve Harrison

“Yes. Next question please?”

Jason Richards

“Who?”

Gerard McNulty



☢☢ It was like being paid to have fun...☢☢

They were the musical group of mavericks that explored new ways of creating sound. From *Dr Who* to *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, musique concrète to Pink Floyd and Brian Eno, the work and influence of the **Radiophonic Workshop** has resonated far and wide. Now, 32 years after their last studio release together, the Workshop are back with a brand new album.

Words: Rob Hughes



Don't panic! It's only a couple of cool froods: Paddy Kingsland and Dick Mills on stage.

Given its dedication to the advancement of sound, it's ironic that the BBC Radiophonic Workshop took its cue from a piece of literature dating back centuries. On the wall of Room 13 at BBC's Maida Vale Studios, its nerve centre of operations, hung a framed segment of Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*, an unfinished novel written in 1624.

"We have also sound-houses, where we practise and demonstrate all sounds, and their generation," it began, before offering a vision that promised "instruments of music likewise to you unknown" and "diverse tremblings and warblings of sounds". Rediscovered by Daphne Oram when she co-founded the Workshop in 1958, the text was adopted as an operative manifesto by everyone who worked there.

Over the next 40 years, the BBC Radiophonic Workshop served as a nexus of experimental sound design, creating a vast and unique library of work that took electronica, musique concrète and tape manipulation into the outer reaches. The TV and radio shows for which they composed included *Dr Who*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, *Quatermass And The Pit*, *The Hobbit*, *Chronicle*, *Horizon* and *Tomorrow's World*. There was also a huge range of commissions for schools and educational programmes.

This was cutting-edge daring, a secret group of technicians creating future sounds from banks of oscillators, tone generators, synthesisers and their own raw ingenuity.

"It was like being paid to have fun," explains Paddy Kingsland, who joined in 1970. "The guy who ran the Workshop, Desmond Briscoe, gave us the freedom to do things with enough time and no awful pressure. Of course, he wanted to make sure that something good came out at the other end, so he wasn't an easy touch. But we were getting results and he'd back you up. It was a marvellous working environment."

As a measure of their influence on the populist music world, it's instructive to note that Paul McCartney was a major fan, once visiting the Workshop's most celebrated member – Delia Derbyshire, pioneering arranger of the *Dr Who* theme – to ask for an electronic backing for *Yesterday*.

Derbyshire was also on hand when Pink Floyd visited the studio in October 1967. Noting their interest in electronic music, she directed Floyd to Peter Zinovieff, her colleague in avant-garde group Unit Delta Plus, who in turn introduced them to the VCS3 synthesiser. The latter would become a key feature of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, while Floyd sampled Derbyshire on *One Of These Days*.

"When I first started at the Workshop, there was Delia, John Baker, Brian Hodgson and David Cain," Kingsland recalls. "They were working mainly with tapes then. John Baker, for instance, was doing jazzy tunes for *Tomorrow's World* and those sorts of things, where he was a virtuoso at cutting up bits of tape in order to make a tune from something, like a bottle being uncorked. He was a wonderful musician, able to make that sound like real music rather than something mechanical.

"And Delia was using tape for textural and atmospheric pieces, and had a very sensitive handling of it. She was an eccentric. Delia took snuff, for instance, which was quite dramatic. She'd been highly educated at Cambridge, studying music, but at the same time she was trial-and-erroring as well. She seemed

"They didn't want a DJ talking, so they put all the records down onto a multitrack tape and then invited various guests to come in and busk links between the end of one track with the beginning of the next. I'd be there with my VCS3, a guitar or any old bits of gear, and Brian Eno used to come in and do them as a freelancer. Manfred Mann did it too, as did Bob Downes, who was a great jazz player. These amazing people would arrive and just busk."

Among those who've acknowledged a debt to the

Workshop are Mike Oldfield, Portishead, The Orb, Four Tet, Orbital, Hot Chip and Aphex Twin. And it's a legacy that still endures. Similarly durable is the Workshop itself. When the BBC shut down the department in March 1998, a victim of Director General John Birt's policy of closing down all services that weren't cost-efficient, its days seemed over. But, minus the 'BBC' prefix, Radiophonic Workshop are once again a going concern.



Delia Derbyshire, who created the *Dr Who* themes album (inset), in the studio with Desmond Briscoe.



The Workshop today, clockwise from back left: Paddy Kingsland, Kieron Pepper, Roger Limb, Peter Howell, Mark Ayres, Dick Mills.

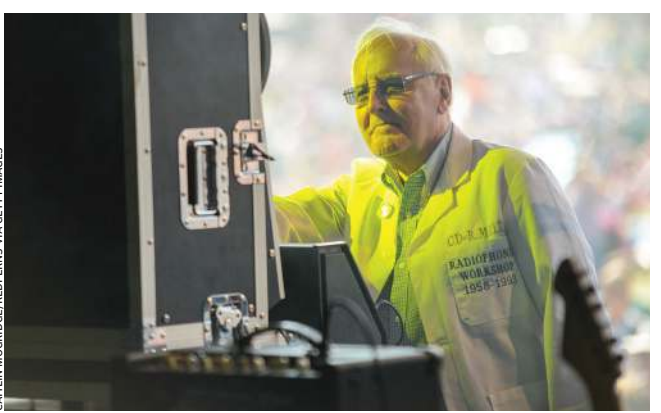
Rick Wakeman was a massive influence and through him I discovered the sprawling, ostentatious, rather pretentious but utterly marvellous Yes albums.

Mark Ayres

to have both skills, but liked to justify music in a very intellectual way, which was a very interesting approach."

There was also a degree of crossover with the progressive wing of pop. Phil Manzanera has cited the Workshop as a major signpost for Roxy Music, particularly when it came to the VCS3 and its ability to distort and reshape the sounds of conventional instruments. "I used to be involved in a late night show on Radio One, called *The Sequence*," says Kingsland.

Now comprising Kingsland, Peter Howell and Roger Limb (all of whose tenure dates back to the 70s), as well as original member Dick Mills and long-time associate/archivist Mark Ayres, the Workshop has been back on the agenda after a successful reunion gig at London's Roundhouse in 2009. They've since gone on to play several major festivals. This activity has led to reissues of their most acclaimed work, and now to *Burials In Several Earths*, their first commercially available



Main image: Dick Mills with a lap steel guitar and a zither at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop in Maida Vale Studios, London, 1969.
Inset: Mills on stage at Camp Bestival at Lulworth Castle, 2014.



album for 32 years. It finds them joined by guests Martin Ware (The Human League/Heaven 17) and engineer Steve ‘Dub’ Jones, of Chemical Brothers fame.

“We’d recorded with Ghostpoet and Orbital before, and I went into both of those sessions with an idea,” Ayres explains. “But for this one nobody really had anything, so we just set the gear up and plugged in. I was noodling on the Roland modular, Martin Ware started noodling too and Paddy began strumming his guitar. We were all looking at each other with eyebrows raised and then suddenly something started happening. It literally went on from there; it was purely a case of improvising and seeing where it went. Then I took it all away and started shaping it.”

What emerges is a spontaneous dialogue between man and machine. In the best

traditions of the avant-garde, *Burials In Several Earths* is both provocative and stimulating, a deeply experimental suite that startles, surprises and bamboozles. “We now live in an age where everything is possible in the studio, so we set absolute limits,” Ayres says. “We had analogue synthesizers, a piano, a guitar, theremin, autoharp: ‘This is what is in the room, this is what we’re going to use.’ And I think having those limitations is one of the things that really works with *Burials*... because it *has* got rough edges.”

Fittingly, the themes and sensory philosophy also circle right back to *New Atlantis* and the Workshop’s fundamental credo. The titles for each improvised piece are taken from Bacon’s novel, which portrays a society in which technology and spiritual enlightenment dovetail in perfect harmony.

“It was only when mixing the album that I started to think about what we were going to call it,” says Ayres. “The second piece, *Things Buried in Water*, starts very serenely and then goes completely wacky. It suddenly sounded like a big disaster had happened. And then there’s all these watery noises afterwards, which sounds like a ship sinking. I had this picture in my mind of the Titanic and this horrible, peaceful silence as it sinks to the bottom of the ocean. And that became a picture for that piece. Then I thought, ‘This is all about exploring,’ and remembered the *New Atlantis* quote. It struck me as being such a Radiophonic title anyway. So it was reverse inspiration really, but it all fitted and slotted into place very naturally.”

Kingsland, meanwhile, explains that, “Radiophonic Workshop has always been

about coming up with ideas, then leaving you to do the rest with your imagination. And that's what *Burials...* is all about."

For Ayres, who was tasked with archiving their entire catalogue when the BBC pulled the plug – three whole rooms stuffed with uncatalogued tapes, eventually consolidated down to "a mere 3,800 reels" – his involvement with the Workshop has been a labour of love. It's also a natural extension of his lifelong fascination with the operation.

With the exception of 81-year-old Mills, his other bandmates were born in the immediate post-war years. Ayres, however, who worked on music for *Dr Who* in its Sylvester McCoy phase, is a child of the 60s, and is therefore in the core demographic for the Workshop's most productive era.

He also sees the parallels between the Workshop and his other great passion: prog. "I think Radiophonic Workshop is up there with The Beatles in terms of importance,"

The way I experienced electronic music in my early teens, and before that, was entirely descriptive, like *Dr Who* or hearing a sound pretending to be a tree. So I learnt to take electronic music as a very descriptive art form, more than, say, the classic symphony. And that's very much in line with prog, where you have things like *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, which was entirely inspired by something.

"Rick Wakeman was a massive influence and through him I discovered the sprawling, ostentatious, rather pretentious but utterly marvellous Yes albums. I loved how the language and the music and the words fitted together in a very impressionistic way."

The similarities to prog are appreciated by Kingsland too, especially when he reflects on the breadth of possibilities that opened up to him and the others. "It was hard work, but it was all interesting and varied," he says. "We used to do projects for schools, as well as mainstream programmes like *The Hitchhiker's*



Kingsland's main claim to fame is his music for *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*: "Douglas Adams had taken the idea for it to BBC producer Simon Brett, long before the book had come out. They made a pilot and Simon thought, 'Paddy can do all that jiggery-pokery.' So he called me and asked if I could do some stuff for it.

"I think we did the *End Of The World*, a Vogon voice from the commander of the Vogon fleet that was going to destroy the Earth, and there was that little noise for the book. Then we went off to the pub and I remember Douglas saying, 'I don't know if they're going to like it or not.' Because in those days, the people running the comedy department weren't very progressive. It was all sitcom-type stuff. But they saw it and commissioned the six episodes.

"Douglas was always late writing it," adds Kingsland, "so it was always such a stressful thing and we'd be putting it



Recording at Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios in Bath.


 **Delia was an eccentric. She took snuff, for instance, which was quite dramatic. She'd been highly educated at Cambridge, studying music, but at the same time she was trial-and-erroring as well.** 

Paddy Kingsland

he states. "Musically, it's been a massive influence to anyone of my generation. We were brought up with this stuff and it's become part of our DNA, part of the way we appreciate sound music. You heard Radiophonic Workshop on *Blue Peter*, or at school, because of *Music, Movement And Mime*.

Guide To The Galaxy. A lot of the educational stuff taught you how to do things for other purposes, with all sorts of effects. I did something called *Inside The Body*, imagining you'd shrunk down to the size of a blood cell and could go around the body to visit all sorts of places."

all together frantically at the last minute. But it was a great experience.

"At the time, we thought the music we were making would just go out and be forgotten," concludes Kingsland. "But people still remember those things we did and that the Workshop and electronic music was a different kind of sound. It wasn't the same old orchestral stuff that had been used before – it was very new and thrilling and frightening. It lent itself to the imaginative backgrounds for things. And we happened to be the ones who were given the chance to do that. We were just very lucky to be in that particular place at that moment in time." 

Burials In Several Earths is out now on Room 13. See www.theradiophonicworkshop.co.uk for more information.



The Beatles, May 19, 1967, l-r: John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison.



As the acclaimed eighth **Beatles** album celebrates its 50th anniversary, prog icons such as Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman, Steve Hackett and Roger Waters discuss the impact the record had on the burgeoning progressive rock scene.

Mr Kite: Dave Everley

Everyone who was there at the time can remember exactly where they were when they first heard *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. For Rick Wakeman, the epiphany came in the living room of his parents' suburban house in Northolt Park Green, Middlesex as he listened to his father's old Radiogram.

"The BBC were doing the first playing of it, and I was eagerly awaiting this album, just as everybody was," recalls Wakeman of hearing The Beatles' landmark eighth album. "The opening blew me away. I thought, 'This is just something else.' And then what came on after it was just, 'Oh wow, this is completely different.'"

The next day I bought it. As did millions and millions of others."

Roger Waters – whose own band, Pink Floyd, recorded their debut album *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* in Abbey Road at the same time as The Beatles were laying down *Sgt Pepper* – was listening to the same broadcast as he was driving to some long-forgotten destination.

"I remember pulling the car over into a lay-by, and we sat there and listened to it," Waters told US radio station KLCS a few years ago. "Somebody played the whole thing on the radio. And I can remember sitting in this old, beat-up Zephyr 4, like that [sits for a long period, completely agape]."

For Steve Hackett, his first encounter with the record that would come to define the era and help sow the seeds for progressive rock came slightly

later. "I grew up in Pimlico, so Chelsea was on the doorstep," says the guitarist today. "I remember going to the Chelsea antiques market. I went up to the second floor, into this room that had Indian hanging silks, and there was this strange music playing. It wasn't until I got

"The Beatles were the first progressive band. There were other bands making adventurous music – The Beach Boys, Frank Zappa and various others. But The Beatles were doing it first, not just with *Sgt Pepper*, but before too."

- Jon Anderson

hold of the album that I realised it was *Within You Without You*. They had completely reinvented themselves, unrecognisably so in fact."

Sgt Pepper has just turned 50, and the fact that so many people have such clear memories half a century on is testament to its standing as one of the most significant albums ever



A Day In The Life: The Beatles at the press launch for *Sgt Pepper*.

released. As with so many other strands of music, its influence on prog is huge.

Let's be clear: *Sgt Pepper* wasn't the first progressive rock album. But the record, as with the band who created it, did more than any other to open up the minds of a generation of aspiring musicians who would go on to lay down the foundations of progressive rock soon afterwards.

"The Beatles were the first progressive band," says Jon Anderson, who was a year from co-founding Yes when *Sgt Pepper* was released in May 1967. "There were other bands making adventurous music – The Beach Boys, Frank Zappa and various others. But The Beatles were doing it first, not just with *Sgt Pepper*, but before too."

Anderson himself was playing residencies in Hamburg with his band The Warriors when he first heard *Sgt Pepper*. "Me and my friends in the band played that album endlessly for about three weeks," he says. "We'd do a show, then go back and listen to *Sgt Pepper* all night. We were high as kites, on so many levels, then the album came out and we got even higher. It was like someone opening a door to revolutionary music."

Sgt Pepper didn't come entirely out of the blue. The Beatles had long since transcended their roots as an R&B-influenced pop band, something proven by the 1966 single *Eleanor Rigby*, a slice of foreboding Scouse Gothic that sounded like nothing that had come before.

"*Eleanor Rigby* was such a groundbreaking song," says Hackett. "It wasn't a traditional pop song. It was this character portrait, this

short story. And you can almost smell the dust on the old instruments that were being used. It had such an adventurous spirit, and you can trace that thread into *Sgt Pepper*."

That song, along with the equally revolutionary psychedelic freakout *Tomorrow Never Knows*, appear on 1966's *Revolver*, the last album the band recorded before they announced their retirement from touring in August of that year. That decision proved to be arguably the most significant of their career, allowing them to devote their attention to the studio – something that, in the hands of The Beatles and their producer George Martin, became the most important instrument in their arsenal.

The sobriquet of 'The Fifth Beatle' has frequently been hung around Martin's neck, and rightly so. He began as their producer, arranger and mentor, but by the time of *Sgt Pepper*, he was their co-conspirator too. It was Martin who did everything from manipulating the tape loops on *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, playing the harpsichord on *Fixing A Hole* and pioneering the use of cross-fades to remove the gaps between songs to creating the famous 40-second long final chord on *A Day In The Life*. Remarkably, all of this was done on four-track machines.

"When George told me the limited equipment they had to record it on, and the

way he bounced one track onto another to make sure they had enough to do the next thing, I just thought, 'How the hell did they do it?'" says Wakeman. "This was a man and a band trying very hard to record music that technically shouldn't have been possible. It was that spirit of studio experimentation that the progressive bands would pick up on."

The Beatles recorded *Sgt Pepper* with Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick over a period of five months between November 1966 and April 1967. It was a measure of how fast the creative river was flowing that the first song they recorded for *Sgt Pepper*, Lennon's kaleidoscopic *Strawberry Fields Forever*, was hived off as a stand-alone double A-side single backed by *Penny Lane* in February 1967 and didn't feature on the finished album (memorably, *Strawberry Fields Forever* was one of the first hit singles to feature a Mellotron, which Lennon had been introduced to by The Moody Blues' Mike Pinder).

The seed for the (very) loose *Sgt Pepper* concept came from Paul McCartney, who had the idea of a set of songs recorded by a fictional band who were one part Edwardian music hall entertainers, one part LSD-fuelled visionaries. It wasn't a concept album as such – and even if it was, it was a long way from being the first – but as with virtually everything they did, The Beatles popularised the idea that a set of songs could be conceptually and musically linked.

"*Sgt Pepper* was undoubtedly a form of concept prog," says Rick Wakeman. "It might not have been a full-on concept album, but there's seriously conceptual stuff in there."

"It's a film for the ear," says Steve Hackett. "There are all these little character portraits, vignettes. The Beatles were really good at coming up with these flashpoints in people's lives. Like *She's Leaving Home* – the moment where she's just about to go. Or *Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite!*, where it wanders into the fairground at the end. That's so vivid."

But strip away both the quasi-conceptual element and George Martin's groundbreaking production, and *Sgt Pepper* works on the most elemental level. Like the prog bands they inspired, The Beatles realised that all the highfalutin artistry was nothing without a great song at the heart of it.

"Musically, their songwriting was at the highest quality," says Wakeman. "If you've got a great song, you can do anything with it. That showed with *A Little Help From My Friends*. Joe Cocker turned this pretty little pop tune into a classic rock song."

Even the album's most overtly progressive moment, the climactic *A Day In The Life*, is effectively two relatively conventional songs spliced together.

Jon Anderson has even covered it live, unaccompanied apart from a ukelele. "It's a beautiful song," he says. "Very progressive, but also very simple."

When *Sgt Pepper* was released on June 1, 1967, the revolution was already underway.





L-R: Brian Epstein, George Martin and Geoff Emerick at Abbey Road Studios, June 1967.

The Beatles had already broadened the parameters of pop on *Rubber Soul* and its follow-up *Revolver*, but *Sgt Pepper* offered a full-spectrum musical experience. All life was here, from undiluted psychedelia (*Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*) and proto-hard rock (the all-too-brief reprise of the title track) to the heartfelt quasi-Eastern spiritualism of George Harrison's *Within You Without You*, a song that Steve Hackett marks as "a significant turning point in what would become known as world music". But at heart, *Sgt Pepper* was part of the grand British music hall tradition that would extend to some of prog's more theatrical exponents, not least Genesis.

"There's an aspect of The Beatles that's a vaudeville band," says Hackett. "There's as much George Formby in there as there was Chuck Berry. But that was their strength — they were able to draw from British music hall tradition, R&B and even Indian music. They adopted a pan-genre approach that made it possible for so many other British bands to go, 'Right then, if they've done that, we can include a bit of jazz or a bit of classical...'"

Sgt Pepper's impact on prog's founding fathers was instantaneous. In the wake of hearing it, Jon Anderson remembers urging his band The Warriors to rehearse more "because we had all this new and wonderful music to be made. They told me to piss off, so I left and eventually met Chris Squire and formed Yes".

For others, the possibility was more existential. "What I learned was that it was okay for us to express ourselves," said Roger Waters. "That we could be free artists and there was value in that freedom."

For others still, it was musical: Robert Fripp, who had listened to the same BBC broadcast as Rick Wakeman, recalled King Crimson covering *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds* during the band's early rehearsals. As The Moody Blues' Justin Hayward says: "Whatever The Beatles did, people followed."

The debate about whether *Sgt Pepper* is even a prog album — let alone the first — still rages 50 years after its release. But whatever question you raise, *Pepper* has an answer. Take the most common claim levelled at it: that it lacks the moments of individual virtuosity that would come to define prog. True, but what it does have is a collective virtuosity on almost every level — musical, conceptual, cultural, spiritual. Zappa, The Beach Boys and the rest each possessed several of those characteristics, but *Pepper* was the only one that truly brought them all together. And that, more than anything, mark it as the true starting point for prog's 50-year-and-counting adventure.

"It moved things forward a couple of years in an instant," says Rick Wakeman. "It took us that much closer to what would become progressive rock."

"*Pepper* is the template for all things weird and wonderful," says Steve Hackett. "The Beatles decided they were going to change everything. And thank God they did." 🎵

The Beatles celebrate Sgt Pepper with various special anniversary edition releases. For more information, see www.thebeatlesonline.co.uk.

In America, the psychedelic underground was emerging, arms outstretched, into the sunlight. In Britain, the youthquakes of the mid-60s had helped set London swinging. *Sgt Pepper* was simultaneously the bridge between these two worlds and their soundtrack.

"You have to remember that this was more than just music," says Steve Hackett. "We got stoned to it, made love to it, all of those things. It's part of your DNA if you

were that age at the time. It's more than just a record. It defines the times."

Part of the album's attraction for some was its countercultural connections, especially its associations with drug culture, most notably on *Lucy*

In The Sky With Diamonds. John Lennon and Paul McCartney both denied the song was a not-so-sly nod to LSD, while the latter insisted that the album wasn't written under the influence of any kind of drug. But for many of the people listening, the end result had much the same effect.

"*Sgt Pepper* was very cosmic," says Anderson. "We got pretty stoned listening

to it without drugs. It was just a constant flow of emotion."



Pepper had a more earthly impact too. The 45rpm single had long been the pop industry's format of choice (and major cash cow), but its importance was being eroded. Inspired in part by folk-era Bob Dylan, The Beatles had shown that the long-playing album could be more than just a collection of hits with

1966's *Revolver*, cracking open the door for Zappa, The Beach Boys and countless others. But such was the cultural weight of the one-time Fab Four that *Sgt Pepper* enshrined the notion of the album as a self-contained piece of art, one of the pillars of progressive rock.

"*Sgt Pepper* established the

fact that albums were the new big thing," Pink Floyd's Nick Mason

said. "We have a huge debt of gratitude to The Beatles because it transformed the relationship with the record company, who stopped trying to make us make singles and more or less said, 'Get on with it.' And it gave us far more studio time and far more opportunity to work on different ideas and so on."


 "You have to remember that this was more than just music. We got stoned to it, made love to it, all of those things. It's part of your DNA if you were that age at the time. It's more than just a record. It defines the times." - Steve Hackett


Like the original prog bands, none of these artists sound the same, mixing strands of Krautrock, jazz, folk, pipe organ music and "weirdo art pop", but there's a common thread linking **The Anchoress, Jane Weaver, Cate Le Bon, Susanna** and **Anna von Hauswolff** beyond their gender. Fiercely independent, their bold, idiosyncratic music is marking them out as real pioneers in today's progressive music.

Words: Mike Barnes

A photograph of a woman with long, straight blonde hair, seen from the side, playing a grand piano. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top. The piano is illuminated from below, casting a warm glow on her hands and the keys. The background is dark with some horizontal lines, possibly from a stage or a concert hall. The overall mood is intimate and artistic.

Deeper Understa

A Lone Wolf: Anna
von Hausswolff.

“**Y**ou often find women working alone, very much as an auteur producing their own records, because that is a way that you can control your vision,” says Catherine Anne Davies, aka The Anchoress. “You only have to look at Björk and the way that she’s portrayed in the media, where often men are given a lot of credit for what she does. You can’t blame us for almost locking ourselves away and doing the whole thing ourselves.”

Davies advises against generalising about musicians on the basis of gender, but her idea is one way of accounting for a growing number of remarkable female artists, either solo or very much in charge of their artistic vision, who are currently operating in the fields of art rock and experimental music.

As The Anchoress, Davies won Best Newcomer at the 2016 Prog Awards following on from her debut album *Confessions Of A Romance Novelist*. The original anchoress, or female hermit, was the 14th century Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, who was also the first published female writer in English. Davies’ pseudonym is a droll reference to the amount of time she spends sequestered away, working on her music. “It suits me quite well, that solitary existence,” she says. “At the moment, gear is my one true love.”

But Davies has stepped out into the light in recent times, touring as support to Simple Minds and also playing guitar and keyboards with the group.

“I wanted to play with the idea of being a confessional singer-songwriter and I think it’s a useful framework, to slip between the autobiographical and the fictive,” Davies explains. “There are hidden keys you can turn and unlock more layers and more depth if you want to, or just listen to it as a pop record.”

“If you’re making reference to Kate Bush, you’re saying that person is creative and interesting, and something that will be long-lasting.” - **The Anchoress**

“I like to play with people’s expectations. I want to make a funk song, I want to make a prog song, I want to make something very ethereal and atmospheric, I want to do a Berlin-era Bowie thing. And the next record will be very much vintage synth-driven.”

As well as putting in studio hours on the “dense, playful sound” characteristic of her finely wrought songs, Davies also works with Paul Draper from Mansun – she has co-written a number of songs for his upcoming debut solo album – and with a core of musicians, prefers a “team effort” to being a strictly solo.

Kate Bush casts a long shadow over idiosyncratic and experimental female solo artists, and there have been comparisons made between her work and Davies’. Of course, if you play them back to back, they

ending

Solitary Refinement:
The Anchoress, aka
Catherine Anne Davies.

"My music was called folktronica, but you wouldn't say that now as it's not trendy. Now people are saying 'kosmische' and 'motorik' about it, so it's different." - **Jane Weaver**

sound quite different. Does Davies find this comparison irritating?

"No, not at all, I'll take that to the bank," she replies. "For me, if you are making reference to Kate Bush, you are saying that person is creative and interesting, and something that will be long-lasting. I'm happy with that comparison if it helps people conceptualise what I'm doing."

Another potential pitfall for young artists of either gender is confronting the jaded 'seen it all before' attitude of older listeners – at least in theory. Davies doesn't see this as a problem.

"Songwriting is always an open book and there is always more to be done. What you've got is a huge, rich history to draw on and you can make something new out of that. My generation are a post-modern generation so we don't have those anxieties. I find it quite freeing and I hope that [my music] is a testament to that."

While still at school, Jane Weaver played in the Britpop band Kill Laura and hit her stride in the folk-tinged ensemble Misty Dixon, who split up in 2004. She then decided to go solo, playing acoustic and electric guitar.

By her 2010 album *The Fallen By Watchbird*, she was experimenting, using more keyboards and synths. "My music was called folktronica, but you wouldn't say that now as it's not trendy," she says. "Now people are saying 'kosmische' and 'motorik' about it, so it's different, although the albums are kind of similar to me."

Her most recent album, *Modern Kosmology*, was released earlier this year. It's a melding of cool vocal lines which often nod to the primary colours of 80s synth pop within the spacey, psychedelic swirl of her guitars and keyboards. The insistent rhythms are reminiscent of Neu! and early Stereolab.

"In the studio you need an open channel to your head without any distractions," Weaver says. "With some songs you have a picture of it in essence, but then getting it out of your head is like a translation with subtitles."

"I enjoy the isolation, but I wasn't really enjoying playing live on my own. I like the camaraderie of being in a band and sometimes I needed that heavy backing, the wig-out!"

Her influences include Can, David Axelrod and Acanthus, who provided soundtrack

music for some of Jean Rollin's 1970s horror films. Former Can vocalist Malcolm Mooney, whom Weaver met over a decade ago through her husband, musician and producer Andy Votel, adds vocals on *Ravenpoint*. "He's very nice, a good dude, with a commanding, poetic voice," she says.





Jane Weaver: genre-hopping, guitar-loving, stereotype-defying.



REBECCA LIPTON

Have you heard the one about the female multi-instrumentalist who turns up at the gig venue and the sound guy says, “Alright darling, are you the singer?” Weaver found that such attitudes have yet to die out when she went into a Manchester guitar shop, asking about Fender Jazz Masters and Jaguars.

“The guy had profiled me and said, ‘Why, is it for a gift for somebody?’ I wish I’d had laser eyes at the point. I was really annoyed.”

In the end she bought a Gibson Firebird: “I’d love to have a massive wall of guitars...”

Modern Kosmology has been widely acclaimed as her best album, but Weaver is still thinking in terms of approaching each one differently. As a student she completed a foundation course in art, but ended up not taking her studies further as she had secured a record deal.

“Now music is my painting,” she says. “I’m influenced more by art than music in a way, because the art world seems to be more experimental and freer and avant garde. I’m currently working with someone doing visual stuff for live shows and I want to go beyond the psychedelic lights. I’d like to do more installation stuff eventually, different ways of combining art and visuals.”

In 2007, Weaver put out the *Bearded Ladies* compilation on her Bird label, with a mischievous subtitle: “Fifteen homegrown selections of forlorn and freakish female songsmithery from the past four decades.”

One of the musicians who appeared on the album is Welsh artist Cate Le Bon, who first came to notice supporting Gruff Rhys of Super Furry Animals on a solo tour in 2007.

“I think I was lucky to be around musicians like Gruff from an early age, who were hugely influential in terms of attitude. He is a true artist who wouldn’t compromise his art for anything,” she says.

Le Bon uses standard rock instrumentation but her music has always been hallmarked by both twisting melodies and striking lyrics. But rock music is not always the best medium for those of a poetic bent: if your lyrics contain imagery like *‘Escape the cold cement of time’* and *‘Exhale the sound of symphonies’*, you can end up being labelled “weirdo art pop”, as Le Bon was by one quality newspaper. “I’ve had people tell me that my songs are nonsensical, but all the words are purposeful,” she shrugs.

Her vocal range is wide, shifting from a husky lower register up to exquisite top notes, her lines shaped by the cadences of her Welsh accent. She admits that if you aren’t tuned in to it, it can sound puzzling. In fact, she recalls, “Someone came up to me after a gig in Texas and asked me what language I was singing in!”

Gruff Rhys rather mischievously described Le Bon as a cross between Nico and Bobbie Gentry, but it turns out that one of her principal influences is Faust. This can be heard most overtly in the unrelenting snare quaver beats on a song like *Crab Day*, from her album of the same name, which seems to nod back to Faust’s *It’s A Rainy Day Sunshine Girl*.

“Faust is a group I’ve been listening to for years and years so it’s not just specific to *Crab Day*,” she counters. “When you cite your favourite artists and albums, people assume that it’s your desire to sound like them, and it’s not.

“What I take from Faust is the abandonment and the playfulness, and a disregard for the notion that all the songs on an album have to be of the same genre. To me it’s punk, it’s reactionary to things that are homogenous and dull, and it’s more of an attitude than it is necessarily a drum beat or a sound.”

Le Bon relocated from Wales to Los Angeles in 2013 where she plays in the instrumental

group Banana with Josh Klinghoffer of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. She is especially glad to have hooked up with Tim Presley as they have worked on each other’s material and produced a duo album as Drinks, 2015’s *Hermits On Holiday*. “I think we cancel out the single-minded stubbornness in each other,” she laughs.

Le Bon is adamant that she won’t compromise. She wants to remain true to her muse. She describes how she will set about writing her next album: “What comes first is a feeling of what the record will be, which could be described as a shape or a colour or a texture, which is representative of that feeling. When you were a kid trying to make something or write something, there is nothing in your mind except the task at hand and there is no assumption of an audience that you have to please – which is how originality or authenticity is possible.”

Susanna Wallumrød has a voice of extraordinary emotional potency. In 2009 this writer had the pleasure of seeing her and keyboard player Morten Qvenild in their native Norway, as Susanna And The Magical Orchestra. They played a set of typically slow and sparse cover versions, including Joy Division’s *Love Will Tear Us Apart* and Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah*. Susanna’s vocals filled the room without histrionic and the way that she inhabited the melody and the lyrics made Dolly Parton’s *Jolene* – shorn of any jauntiness – so achingly sad that audience members were seen wiping away tears.

On her records, big rock anthems like AC/DC’s *It’s A Long Way To The Top* are delivered like stark warnings or laments,



while on Thin Lizzy's *Jailbreak*, Susanna took the original's romanticised bad boy swagger and recast it like a traditional folk song, where one just knows that the fugitives' freedom will be short-lived.

"Quite early on I got interested in jazz and it's common to use old songs and to make your own personal style and own interpretation so I worked a lot with that," she says. "And it has just become a way to do music for me – both Purcell and AC/DC.

"I was also listening a lot to, for example, Chet Baker or Miles Davies, and I worked with my singing teacher to sing along with the chords, the solos, trying to get inside the songs a little bit more than being a voice on top. I really enjoyed that way of working into the core of a tune."

That approach is evident on her earlier albums like *Melody Mountain*, but she was keen not to become typecast and moved on 3 (2009) into more complex and animated self-penned songs with more synthesisers and electronics.

One of her most exploratory albums – as Susanna – is 2013's *The Forester*, which she had initially composed for a classical singer and lute – on which her sparse piano lines are fleshed out by the early music group Ensemble Neon. She has since worked with harpist Giovanna Pessi and she has also played with John Paul Jones who had a duo, Minibus Pimps, with her husband Helge Sten, also known as Deathprod.

In 2009 Susanna collaborated with Norwegian singer and multi-instrumentalist Jenny Hval in performing a piece, *Meshes Of Voice*, with keyboards, electronics and some spectacular vocal harmonies. Susanna found an unedited live recording in a drawer and, struck by how good it was, released it on her SusannaSonata label in 2014.

"We really worked hard on it," she recalls. "Jenny's vocal arrangements are very complicated."

Her 2016 album *Triangle* found her exploring more expansive, free-flowing compositions. "I think that world has really opened up something new for me and I am trying to push further into it," she says.

Susanna was recently commissioned to make a 70-minute piece by Vossa Jazz festival in Norway. *The Garden Of Earthly Delights*, based on paintings by Hieronymus Bosch, was created with the all-female quintet Susanna & The Brotherhood Of Our Lady. The aftershow dinner was fittingly visceral.

"It was a traditional dish called Smalahove, which is a sheep's head on the plate," she says. "One of us ate the eye, although not me!"

With her 2013 album *Ceremony*, Anna von Hausswolff turned a corner in her music from the melancholic, sombre piano ballads that hallmarked her debut album, 2010's *Singing From The Grave*, to songs played on the pipe organ of Annedalskyrkan Cathedral in her home town of Gothenburg.

"It was the first album when I wanted the record to work like a film, so there was a clear

Cate Le Bon: hard-hitting and fiercely original.



storyline and I wanted it to feel like one piece," she explains.

The pipe organ songs were originally worked out on a synthesiser

with samples, before playing the real thing. It was surprisingly easy to record, with one microphone hoisted up 10 metres.

"Still, when I get to play some pipe organs I get overwhelmed by the volume of the instrument," she says. "If I get some time with the pipe organ I rarely sing at all, because I just want to hear the instrument and the room. So the instrument itself has contributed to more of the instrumental pieces that I'm making at the moment. It's a very meditative thing for me to do, because I can play out these drones, take time and relax, and I can breathe and I can listen – it's not a thing to rush."

She jokes that more people are letting her in now – she played solo in Lincoln Cathedral in 2013 – and her most recent album, *The Miraculous*, features the colossal pipe organ in the Acusticum

concert hall in the Swedish town of Piteå, which was more difficult to record due to the hall acoustics. In a standard concert with her group she plays a Nord C2 D double manual synthesiser with organ samples and pedals and she is developing another machine with her own samples.

The combination of the massive organ sound with its overtones and von Hausswolff's soaring voice is a powerful one, but it was under threat when she damaged her vocal cords, losing her voice in the early 2010s. However, she has since painstakingly rebuilt it with the help of a voice teacher.

"My vocal cords are super-sensitive," von Hausswolff says. "I'm very jealous of artists who can sing with their rock'n'roll lifestyle because I really can't. I can go into certain sounds with my voice where I think, 'This sounds really good but it's not a good place

"What I take from Faust is the abandonment and the playfulness, and a disregard for the notion that all the songs on an album have to be of the same genre." - **Cate Le Bon**



Susanna Wallumrød: putting her magic into classics and originals.

ANNE VALUER

for me to be in.' I recognise the bad places now and avoid them."

She cites influences like PJ Harvey, Popol Vuh and Bobby Beausoleil's score to *Lucifer Rising*, while enthusing about Hans Zimmer's organ soundtrack to *Interstellar*. Some of the music played with her band is lyrical, while some uses slow, pulverising beats reminiscent of Swans, with whom she has toured. She mentions groups she has seen live who have really impressed her.

"Norwegian punk/metal band Okkultokrati are super-energetic, really aggressive, at high volume, and give you a boost of energy and a kind of positive way of experiencing aggressive emotions.

"If you watch Sunn O))) or Earth, it's more of an inner journey," von Hausswolff adds. "You just stand there and feel your muscles vibrating with the music and the frequencies fill you up – there isn't a single space within you that isn't filled up with music."

Given the physicality of her own music, where does she see it fitting into this spectrum? "I want everything," she laughs. "No, I really do. I have to have in mind the venue when I play a live show. If I'm in a rock club it becomes a little bit more extroverted. If I play a pipe organ show and it's all instrumental, I play with my back to the audience and it becomes more introverted

– it's more about what's going on in the room and within themselves."

The one topic that all five musicians have picked up on, beyond any issues of gender, is the need to have a quiet space in which to create, something they recognise is under threat from the speed of modern life and its incessant barrage of information.

Davies and Weaver ring fence time alone in the studio, and Le Bon says she can't understand why some people share their creative processes on social media. Susanna also mentions that she feels our connections with nature are being lost, while other connections could do with being lessened.

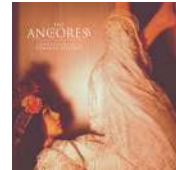
"My friends are all disturbed by the thought that we're all connected all the time, and everyone is trying to find a way of having some time away from the computer, phone and social media," she says.

Echoing these thoughts, von Hausswolff also wants to reconnect in a way that seems to reflect her huge, immersive music. "Nature scares me, intimidates me a bit," she says. "But it's also overwhelmingly beautiful, it doesn't judge you, it's a calm, forgiving place." 🕯

For more, see: www.iamtheanchoress.com, www.janeweavermusic.com, www.catelebon.com, www.susannamagical.com and www.annavonhausswolff.org.

This Woman's Work

Prog picks our favourite tracks from the ladies' varied works.



THE ANCHORESS
What Goes Around (Acoustic Version)
(*Confessions Of A Romance* Novelist: CD2

The Kitchen Sessions, 2016)

Revenge sounds delicious here – 'You will get your sticky end/I hear you practised on my friend' – in a version of just voice and strings that highlights the brilliance of the songwriting.



JANE WEAVER
H>A>K
(*Modern Kosmology*, 2017)

This song achieves a sleek propulsion through throbbing bass and synths, and then leaves the runway courtesy of Brian Edwards' flamboyant, high-velocity drumming, with Weaver's multitracked vocal chorales up in the firmament.



CATE LE BON
Hollow Trees
House Hounds
(*My Oh My*, 2009)

This is a groovy, fuzz guitar-driven strut with a serpentine melody, and it finds Le Bon effortlessly singing across her full range. The accompanying video begins with her laying an egg and gets steadily more surreal from there.



SUSANNA AND ENSEMBLE NEON
The Forester
(*The Forester*, 2013)

An uncategorisable, bittersweet 15-minute song suite with arrangements by the Ensemble's Jan Martin Smørdal and Julian Skar. It was derived from Susanna's piano demos and encompasses both early music and modernism.



ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF
Evocation
(*The Miraculous*, 2015)

An upward-arching vocal glissando cues in this magisterial, fabulously melodramatic single that lopes along with great club-footed beats, a sweet vocal line and an organ sound that could flatten a house.

Gothic Grandeur:
Nad Sylvan, prog's
most theatrical star.





A Method To His Madness

He's the theatrical singer who's worked with plenty of prog royalty. Now **Nad Sylvan** is back with his second solo album proper, continuing the Gothic concept of the first. Never one to stay in a safety zone, Sylvan is one of prog's most intriguing characters. We find out why...

Words: Chris Roberts



"Do I feel Swedish?" ponders Nad Sylvan, sniffing back a cold and hoping it gets better quickly so his voice can adorn

the Steve Hackett show in Dublin later that night. "I actually feel more like a person from everywhere – a 'world citizen', if that's not a cliché. And I don't just mean because of all the touring with Steve.

"I always felt apart from typical Swedish culture," he reveals.

"Growing up in Malmö in the 60s, in a very rough, working-class area, I wasn't like the others at all. When I was very young I was bullied. I went through hell because I already stood out. I refused to do what everyone else did.


"Even when I was little, I wouldn't dress the same. I'd play with the girls because I was quite sensitive, even frail. I could feel things. I had intuition, the

artist's spirit. So I guess eventually I developed an image which was how I'd like to see myself.


"When I go to a show, I want to be entertained, I want to see somebody doing something onstage. If you look at Bowie, Alice Cooper, Peter Gabriel, Michael Jackson, Prince – they were all eccentric, they all went over the top. I'm not putting myself on their level,

but they wouldn't have been as successful if they hadn't been confident enough to try something other than T-shirt and jeans. I need something to work with!"

Sylvan, who has channelled such feelings into becoming a consummate vocalist and flamboyant showman, has plenty to work with right now. As well as being a vital part of Steve Hackett's revisitations of Genesis, where he sings the old Gabriel and/or Collins numbers, he's just released his second solo album proper.



"When I go to a show I want to be entertained, I want to see somebody doing something onstage. If you look at Bowie, Alice Cooper, Peter Gabriel, Michael Jackson, Prince – they were all eccentric, they all went over the top."




The Bride Said No is a powerful follow-up to 2015's *Courting The Widow*, wherein he succeeded in evoking the melancholy and majesty of peak Genesis while transcending his influences and avoiding any copyism to create one of the finest prog albums of recent years. The 22-minute, seven-part centrepiece *To Turn The Other Side* is a showstopper.

This time he's taken the plot onwards, with music that mixes in flavours from other genres while retaining an elusive, timeless alchemy. Steve Hackett, Guthrie Govan and Roine Stolt guest on guitar, while Tony Levin and three female vocalists also appear. The concept tale of the previous album is extended too. "You need to make a big statement," he says. "Why linger in a safety zone? You have to expand."

He's proven the wisdom and courage of this over the course of a lengthy climb to his currently thriving musical career.

After decades of frustration and relative obscurity, his voice came to the attention of Hackett thanks to his work as a member of Unifaun (their name taken from the lyrics of Genesis' *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight*), and then with fellow Swede Stolt and other Flower Kings in Agents Of Mercy. He also sang on last year's Anderson/Stolt album *Invention Of Knowledge*. Now in his mid-50s, he's happy to at last

have given up his day job. Day job? One tries to picture the splendidly dandyish, foppish Sylvan fitting into the everyday working world.

"Actually it was a night job, not a day job," he laughs. "At a surveillance centre, all alone at a switchboard answering calls, with just two giant computers for company. It wore me out, because I was making music all day, then 

going to that all night. But they were gracious when I finally left. They knew I'd endured, and it'd taken many years of persistence for my musical hopes to come to fruition.

"You don't choose music – it chooses you, it comes to you. It's in your DNA. Success is just a matter of luck – there's only so much you can do about that – but the music itself is how you express yourself, your identity."

So what is "the bride" saying this time, apart from "no"? Sylvan didn't originally intend to paint a second chapter of the somewhat Victorian Gothic concept begun on *Courting The Widow*, but when he revisited a song he'd penned long ago, which evolved into the title track, he saw thematic links forming.

"My character the Vampire enters fresh waters in his world, so I've brought him into present times. Which makes for an analogy with the music, where I feel the rhythms are more contemporary and it's heavier in parts, more rocking.

I even hear elements of classic R&B too, because in my past I was a soul singer. And you even have me using the phrase 'You go, girl!' which is a very modern attitude.

"You see, there's more to me than sounding like Collins and Gabriel! Although obviously that – the work with Steve – is a great springboard. But I feel confident I'm not about pastiche.

To me there's more I can do and my heart is honest. My music is theatrical, dramatic, but it's also a diary."

This album, however, sends us out to sea again with some shady characters, so we'll assume the 'diary' part is allegorical.

"Ah yes. The ship is a vessel for music. The Vampire is joined by the Quartermaster, who's an alcoholic and a royal bastard. And the widow who wouldn't marry him wants revenge. Almost every song was written or co-written last year within six months, so it's quite coherent really. There's anxiety, mystery, a lot of feelings..."

While there is indeed much variety on the album – without it sacrificing its sense of grandeur – the track *What Have You Done* features not one but two epic prog guitar solos to bring the house down, courtesy of Misters Hackett and Govan. This came about by accident, Sylvan says, and could even at one point have involved Andy Latimer of Camel.

"I got to know Andy while touring Japan with Steve. We hit it off, but he's not known for guesting. This

I didn't know at the time, so I asked him. I could well imagine him on this track – he has that warm sound and style. So it was agreed, but then unfortunately Andy was ill when the time came. I thought, 'Oh Christ, what shall I do now?' I didn't think Steve had time, so I begged Guthrie. Then Steve did come in to play some stuff,

so I asked him to do it just in case Guthrie got busy. Of course, then it turned out they both delivered on the same day! As both solos were so amazing, the best and only right solution was to let the two complement each other and go completely over the top. It just takes off and flies, doesn't it?"

Flying is also evoked in the video for new track *When The Music Dies*, wherein Sylvan wears a pair of angel wings. He speaks of this rhythmic, intense number, with Tony Levin on distorted Chapman Stick, as having crossover potential, and declares it a tribute "to all the greats we lost in the last year".

The White Crown, meanwhile, is "where your very own prog Vampire goes crazy. I think there's so much going on in there. I'm not abandoning my progressive instincts but it's bringing in funk and even a Broadway musical theatre side..."

"I even look at early clips on YouTube of me performing with Steve and I can see why some people found me annoying! I was still looking for a way to do my thing."

As Sylvan's own career continues to ascend, he's grateful he persevered – for decades, not years – when things weren't happening for him. "Music came to me when I was young and if I'd given up, I'd have felt I had nowhere to go. I'm not the only one, of course. A lot of very talented people never get heard. I guess I learned to hone things... I even look at early clips on YouTube of me performing with Steve and I can see why some people found me annoying! I was still looking for a way to do my thing. Yes, I like theatricality, but I learned that sometimes if you stay still, it can have a bigger impact. Your eyes, a hand gesture – do it once or twice, but not all the time.

"I mean, technology can sometimes take control of us too much, like when everyone's on their phones instead of living in the now, and that's a bit sad, but it's where we are. But it's been very useful to me too, so I've had my learning periods and I've grown."

One thing Sylvan learned a while back was his stage name. He was never 100 per cent

certain until one day he just blurted it out. It's been through a few changes. Born Hugh Stewart in California, his parents moved back to Sweden the same year. When they divorced, his mother changed his name to Christopher. He was Christopher Grabner when she remarried, but he didn't feel any

of these monikers was a good fit. He fronted a succession of struggling bands in Sweden (some less struggling than others: with One By One he once supported Lionel Richie in front of 12,000 people but got so drunk on whisky that it was a disaster), yet thought his name "sounded boring, like a golf player". So, impressed by Alice Cooper and Marilyn Manson, he landed on Nadine Sylvan.

When an A&R man in London asked him his name as he pitched an album he'd made on which female voices shared the mic with him, he spontaneously said "Nad" instead of "Nadine", in case the guy got confused as to who was the lead singer.

Eventually, after spinning between genres, he embraced that lifelong love of Genesis and threw himself into Unifaun and Agents Of Mercy. He now feels that Unifaun's 2008 album is "a cult album that's getting late

recognition thanks to the internet", telling us it will be reissued soon.

Agents Of Mercy "went under the radar a little, somehow, but made some very decent music". And then Hackett came calling.

"A woman's name just seemed, again, over the top, but I was getting desperate. A friend encouraged me, saying, 'Be outrageous. Be the class clown if you need to be. You have the musical skill. Just make them notice it.'"

And Sylvan – that's a word which relates to the woods, or something that inhabits them. Is it true you live in a forest?

"Yes," he affirms. "I've lived for the last 10 years by a lake in the forest, 30 kilometres outside Stockholm. I'm very happy there. The big city's not for me. It's very picturesque there and I'm up on a hill, overlooking the lake. The nearest neighbours are a short walk away.

"When I'm not on the road with Steve and the band, I go there and just... exhale. After striving for so many years, through so many setbacks, then to have made my own albums that I'm proud of – it's good to just go back there and breathe out and be grateful. To leave all the tensions behind."

Not that he plans to rest for too long. He'd love to make a third album in the vein of *Courting The Widow* and *The Bride Said No*, and envisions the whole project as a trilogy.

"Firstly, I'm always available to Steve whenever he needs me, and it looks like we have plenty of dates ahead into next year. I'm so grateful the band have accepted me as a part of it, whereas before I was a guest. But as and when I find time, my goal is absolutely that this will form a trilogy, in terms of the music, the themes. If the first was the past and this one's brought the characters into the present, then the next will move them into the future.

"I don't worry about my age now," Sylvan adds. "Rock has changed its perspective... people age but the music refuses to die. It's never too late. It's a way of life."

Nad Sylvan is still standing out and striding forwards. It's a Nad world. 📍

The Bride Said No is out now on InsideOut. See www.nadsylvan.com for more information.



Curtain Call: Sylvan in his Vampire role.





Here AND Now

FaUST's "Krautrock rhythm section", Jean-Hervé Péron and Zappi Diermaier, shot exclusively for *Prog*.

Faust have always been a band out of time, twisting rock tropes into avant-garde prog sounds since the 70s. Now **faUST** – one of the two current incarnations of the band – are back with a new album that's as timeless and thrilling as ever.

Words: Sid Smith **Images:** Kevin Nixon

"I was never aware that we were doing something special," says Jean-Hervé Péron, sounding genuinely mystified when *Prog* catches up with him at his farm in northern Germany. We're here to discuss the new faUST album, *Fresh Air*, as well as the pervasive impact the band's recorded legacy has exerted upon a generation of musicians since the release of their 1971 debut album.

"Even now, after almost half a century, I'm always amazed when people write about how influential we've been. Why are we a spring of inspiration for other people? I've no idea, but of course I'm very happy and proud of it."

Though grateful for such attention, Péron admits to being utterly baffled as to why artists as diverse as John Lydon, Sonic Youth, Joy Division, The Fall, Julian Cope, Radiohead and Henry Cow, to name but a few, have praised his band's distinctive but decidedly idiosyncratic output. If the likes of Can and Neu! assaulted the senses with the precise efficiency of a surgical strike, Faust – infused with the performance art ethos of Dada and Fluxus as much as any musical passions – were more akin to the anarchist's bomb, whose explosive outcomes were uncertain and indiscriminate.

"The 1960s and the beginning of the 70s are as much an influence for some of the people who are saying things about us. I think the German musical movement at that time was very strong and we had good reasons to be very strong because we wanted to be different from what had come before."

Formed after journalist-turned-producer Uwe Nettelbeck was asked by Polydor to put together a homegrown band to rival the success of the incoming UK acts of the day, Faust were the unlikely outcome. Given a pile of cash and told to come up with an album, the band – Jean-Hervé Péron (bass), Hans-Joachim Irmiler (keyboards), Arnulf Meifert (drums), Rudolf Sosna (keyboards, guitar), Gunther Wüsthoff (synth, saxes) and Werner 'Zappi' Diermaier (drums) – retreated to the bucolic surroundings of a studio in Wümme. There, with Nettelbeck at the controls, they created a defiant, stream-of-consciousness album featuring avant-garde tape manipulation and ragged approximations of rock tropes.

With an intense disregard to accessibility, the result was far removed from the commercial product Polydor had hoped for. Released in 1971, *Faust* eagerly scooped up ingredients of musique concrète, rock and pop, and combined them into a rich confection of intuitive connections and sprawling sonics. Even today it remains powerfully innovative.

Unsurprisingly dropped by Polydor after 1972's *Faust So Far* yielded a similarly eclectic mix, it was 1973's *The Faust Tapes* that really put the band on the radar. Signed to Virgin, the full-length album retailed for the price of a single, ensuring sales in excess of 50,000. Its abrupt jump-cuts in mood, mix of hi and lo-fi recordings, and scattershot distribution by virtue of its price meant it had a huge impact.

"Some chose to play frisbee with the LP and for others, it changed their lives," says Péron. "Let's say Faust was never afraid of strong contrasts. The times were intensely creative, full of ecstatic fun, enjoying drugs, sex, dogs, art and whatever came our way. The privilege of the youth, to be futile yet essential to society."

**"I'm always amazed when people write about how influential we've been."
Jean-Hervé Péron**





FAUST, L-R: Geraldine Swayne, Arthur Swindells, Zappi Diermaier, Jean-Hervé Péron, Amaury Cambuzat. Left: the band's new album *Fresh Air*.

As youth has given way to age, it's little wonder that a group that's been around in one form or another for nearly 50 years has been the subject of acrimonious break-ups and factions. For several years now, Péron and Zappi Diermaier's incarnation of the band have styled themselves as faUST, following a split with Hans-Joachim Irmiler, which the bassist politely declines to discuss.

"It's written as faUST because it's us — Zappi and me. There's another Faust in the south of Germany, based on Joachim Irmiler, but we don't have contact and I want to make sure that people know which version of Faust they're getting."

As he talks, it's clear there's a bond between Péron and drummer Zappi, so named after the drummer's admiration for Frank Zappa.

"I met Zappi at the end of 1968. We've been through so many things, good and bad.

We've argued, we've split and so on. But we are the rhythm section. Sometimes we're called *the* Krautrock rhythm section! There's a certain bond between a bassist and a drummer, obviously. We are the tar that people walk upon, we are the stones, we are the earth.

"Our relationship is almost like a true love story between

a man and a woman," he adds. "Love and hate in almost equal measure."

Another byproduct of age, aside from wisdom, is that often bands slow down and take things a little easier. At worst they fall back on their laurels and churn out a 'greatest hit' or two. Not faUST. Their new album, *Fresh*

Air, possesses many of the features of their classic back catalogue. From the slow-burn introduction of the title track through a series of industrial jolts and the beatific reveries of the closing piece, it contains the unmistakable imprint of the processes the pair have followed over the decades — earth-moving drones, primal rhythms, field recordings, poetic declamations and the surging build of momentum and its release.

Given its energy, *Fresh Air* is aptly named. Studio tracks laid down in Germany were combined with recordings from their recent 28-day US tour, where the duo were joined onstage by guests such as violinist Ysanne Spevack, singer-songwriter Barbara Manning and Die Krupps guitarist Jürgen Engler.

Having accrued hours of music, Péron says the resulting tapes were then "decanted" into

seven tracks whose running order was designed to convey a particular narrative and dynamic sequence. "We had a story to tell. There's a certain flow and continuity to the album. We found the *spannungskurve* — the curve of tension. We want people listening to get carried from one piece to another. It ends on a very long piece called *Fish*, which is one of our favourites. It's an ur-theme, a primal

thing, the music and the lyrics. It's all about the sea and expectation and youth. It's very primal. It takes the people who listen very smoothly and nicely to the end."

Sifting through the myths and legends surrounding the band can be difficult. One tale goes that after Richard Branson paid the

band half of what they were expecting for a gig, Péron then stripped off half his clothes for the show. "Yes, it's true!"

laughs Péron. "I think it was in London when I got naked on stage. I can't recall if the reason was that Richard didn't pay. I think the real reason was that Richard promised to have a huge PA and when we arrived, it was a small PA. I called Richard and said, 'I thought we were getting a mega PA?' He said, 'No way,' and that we'd have to play with what's there. So I said, 'If you don't get the PA, I'm going to play naked,' and he said, 'Go ahead,' so I did!

"I think after half a minute they dropped the curtain on us. This was the time where it was all supposed to be free sex and all this, but in the UK there was a bit of prudery. It was funny because we kept on playing behind the curtain. Eventually I put my pants back on and the show carried on as normal."

What counts as 'normal' as defined by Péron is probably quite different to how other bands might understand the word. In their 70s heyday, Faust garnered a reputation for unconventional stage presentations.

"That's still the biggest misconception about us, that we're all about rampage and destroying TVs, playing loud and nasty. When promoters book us, they always ask if we're going to use explosives or make fire on stage. So in a way, we've built our own prison, if you like, through building such a strong public image that we're caught in it."

In 1973, Péron rejected the much-proffered description that the band were avant-garde, saying, "Faust isn't avant-garde. We're not trying to be ahead of our time or beyond our time — we're just trying to be here and now."

Is that something that applies to faUST now? "Yes, totally," Péron says. "One thing is for sure: we don't want to be behind our time. We want to be here and now. This is not a philosophical decision. It's just a fact."

Fresh Air is out now on Bureau B. For more information, see www.bureau-b.com/faust.php.

**"Let's say Faust was never afraid of strong contrasts."
Jean-Hervé Péron**



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SOMETHING'S HAPPENING...

With their fabulous threads, West Coast-style psych and passions to start a new movement, **Goldray** perfectly capture the spirit of a bygone era while simultaneously making their own stamp on modern music. *Prog* just had to find out more...

Words: Fraser Lewry **Image:** Christina Jansen

A band can get a lot done in seven years. The Beatles released 12 albums. The Doors formed, put out six records, lost their singer and wobbled on for another two. Rick Wakeman joined The Strawbs, made an album, left, joined Yes, made another three, left, made four solo records, and joined Yes a second time. But deep in London's leafy Brockley, things move at a more sedate pace: Psychedelic proggers Goldray, formed in 2010 around a nucleus of former Reef guitarist

Kenwyn House and singer Leah Rasmussen, have finally released their debut album, *Rising*. So what's taken so long?

"The twisting turns in the road can take you on different paths," says House, rather mysteriously. "We had various options, but eventually decided to take our own route and do it ourselves."

"Last August things finally came together," adds Rasmussen. "We got the right people and the right energy."

Energy seems to be an important word to the pair. They pepper their conversation with references to it, and to freedom, and to the

importance of art, magic and beauty. It's the kind of discussion that's increasingly rare in the era of 140-character fury, when people greet strangers with aggression rather than curiosity and the President of the US seems more interested in checking his phone for personal slights than he is in diplomacy.

Rising, Goldray's debut album, is out of step with such a world. It's also very good. A collection of songs firmly in thrall to West Coast 60s psychedelia, it's equal parts Jefferson Airplane and The Doors, dressed in Kings Road finery and embellished with all sorts of spiritual trinkets. *The Oranges Song*

"If you look at the great bands from the era we love, they're all wearing capes and stabbing their keyboards with kitchen knives."

Kenwyn House



sounds like early Pink Floyd tackling a parallel universe version of The Beatles' *Hey Jude* written by George Harrison rather than Paul McCartney, *Gypsy* comes on like Patti Smith's *Dancing Barefoot* by way of Woodstock, while *Eyes* starts off with a riff that isn't too far from The Small Faces' *Tin Soldier* before veering off to explore parts hitherto unknown. House's guitar underpins everything, from churning riff to spiralling solo, while Rasmussen soars above it all like Siouxsie Sioux channeling Grace Slick. There's even some hurdy gurdy.

It all comes in a colourful sleeve (below), full of eastern promise and mysterious iconography. "Every body of work needs a wrapper, and it's one hell of a wrapper," House tells *Prog*. "I can't tell you what any of it means, though, because then I'd have to kill you." We think he's joking.

If this all sounds like a return to a time when people packed their lava lamps and bongos into battered suitcases and escaped to San Francisco with flowers in their hair, then Goldray are committed to the journey. In fact, they're probably driving the bus.

"There's been a lot of anger and rebellion, which I think is necessary in our world," says House, "but at some point you've got to bring positivity and beauty and the lighter side of magic into your artistic statement, otherwise it's just really empty. For

me and Leah, the era between 1965 and 1975 speaks very much to that. John Lennon said, 'Before Elvis, there was nothing.' Well, for me, before John Lennon there was nothing. Before Grace Slick there was nothing. Before Jimi Hendrix there was nothing. And a lot of what happened after that has been a regression, taking us backwards creatively."

"This is the beginning of a whole new way," adds Rasmussen. "It's going to be massive. 1967 is about to happen again."

What's more, they don't think they're alone. This is a movement. "The Flaming Lips did it in the 90s," says House, "and I really appreciate what they did for the scene. But when we were writing our record we heard Tame Impala, and they blew our minds. And we didn't feel quite so alone. I feel the same listening to Uncle Acid And The Deadbeats. I see seeds within the current music scene that are quite encouraging. Purson were another band who made us not feel so alone."

"I'm really sad they broke up," Rasmussen says. "I had real hope for them. I thought they were going to be big. They had everything."

Another thing Goldray have in common with Purson is a taste for spectacular threads. Leah and Kenwyn look like the triumphant winners of a trolley dash competition at a high-end Haight Asbury boutique, decked out in

paisley and silk, feathers and gleaming gold.

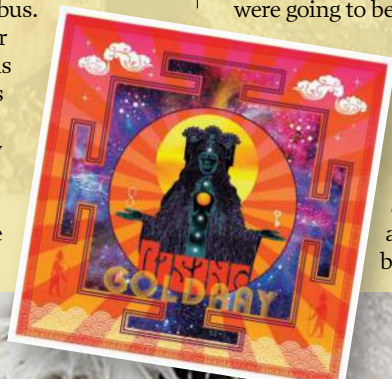
"Would Jimi Hendrix have been Jimi Hendrix if he'd just been wearing jeans and a t-shirt?" asks Rasmussen, quite reasonably. "You need to reach all the senses. It's art. It makes a statement of freedom and liberation. When you transform into your persona, you turn into someone else. When I walk onstage, I feel like I'm not the person I was a few hours ago. Something else has taken me over. When you dress up, you walk into another realm."

"If you look at the great bands from the era we love, they're all wearing capes and stabbing their keyboards with kitchen knives," adds House. "It's got to have a visual side or you're missing a big chunk of the story. If you're an artist, you need to embrace the role. It needs to be magical. No one wants to see normal."

"When we first started writing the album we looked at each other and said, 'My God, this is way out!'" says House. "At that time psych wasn't really happening. We were in our bubble, doing what we wanted, and when we lifted our heads we realised there was a movement going on! There's this endless march towards totalitarianism, and we need people to say, 'No! I'm not going to go to work today! I'm going to stay at home and learn to play the sitar and grow my hair!'"

"Somethings's happening!" says Rasmussen. "Don't you feel it?" ☺

Rising is out now on Akashic Records. See www.goldrayband.com for more information.



THE PROG

INTERVIEW

TIM BLAKE

The *Prog* Interview is just that: every month, we're going to get inside the minds of some of the biggest names in music. This month, it's synth and electronic prog maestro **Tim Blake** who, as well as creating his own solo work, has played with Gong, Hawkwind and many more. The British-born musician now resides in rural France, and here he looks back over a six-decade-long career, remembers falling out with David Allen and gives us his views on Brexit...

Words: Greg Moffitt **Portrait:** Melvyn Vincent

Tim Blake is one of the true pioneers of electronic prog. Perhaps best known for his celebrated solo albums *Crystal Machine* (1977) and *Blake's New Jerusalem* (1978), he has also been a member of both Gong and Hawkwind, among various other collaborations. After joining Gong full-time in 1972, he was one of the first to bring synthesisers from the studio to the stage. Later, with *Crystal Machine*, he was arguably the first to use laser lighting as part of a rock concert.

He has continued to record and perform over the years, including

a return to the Hawkwind fold in 2007 following his original tenure back in 1979/'80. Blake moved to France in the 1970s, where he continues to live a life of splendid isolation deep in the countryside.

Taking time out from feeding his chickens, he's surrounded by a stack of synths, theremins, and all manner of electronic paraphernalia. In a jovial mood, he recalls some of the stellar sights and sounds of his career.

You emerged onto the scene in a time of upheaval – socially, politically, and culturally. What are your memories?

The big explosion was 1968. Here in France, in the spring, you had the great student uprising, and General de Gaulle left France. In fact, if the Communist party hadn't turned around on the students, France would be a very different place today.

I left school in 1968, and my parents had made the choice to privately educate the kids they brought up. But it didn't really work on me so by the time I was 16, I wanted out, and the school wanted me out too. So I was unleashed into the world that was bubbling up and exploding all around us and I went on to do a year's performance art study.

I had been a choirboy, and played classical trumpet at school, so had already been very involved with music. I then did an apprenticeship in a recording studio in Barnet and trained myself as an engineer.

One of my colleagues at music school had been Celia Humphris and she came up to me one day and said, "Look, Tim, I've just accepted an offer to sing with a folk band called Trees." More importantly, she said that Trees were managed by a group of people in Notting Hill Gate and

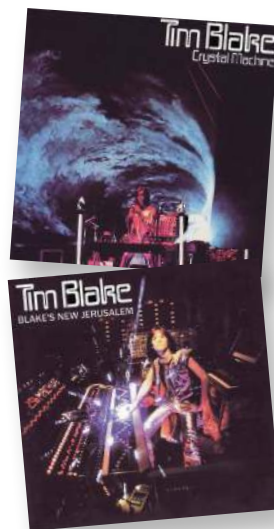
that I had to meet them. They were really nice and probably the most important surviving member of that group is Bias Boshell, who's worked with Barclay James Harvest and The Moody Blues. He's a very well-trained classical music scholar, like a handful of others who have marked prog music in England – Emerson, Wakeman... I've always had great respect for those who work on paper, partly

because I've never done it myself.

So there I am, doing sound and meeting these managers who have three or four groups, some of whom I worked for, such as Skin Alley and High Tide, who featured Thomas Crimble and Simon House respectively, later of Hawkwind. Virtually everybody I call friends in the music business are people I met at this time. Doing sound, I got to go to some good gigs, and it was hanging about with High Tide that introduced me to *Soft Machine*, and that resulted in me getting invited to work with Gong.

My generation, we had LSD, we had Jimi Hendrix, we had everything to change the world. We had been witnesses to huge changes in civilisation, and one of the things that was there was spacey music and, finally, electronic music. It was the music created during all this social change.

Solo albums *Crystal Machine* and *Blake's New Jerusalem*.



Hawkwind At Rockfield Studios, Wales, June 1980, L-R: Tim Blake, Harvey Bainbridge, Dave Brock, Simon King, Huw Lloyd-Langton.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Tim Blake: musical revolutionary.

“

My generation,
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”



Caped Crusader: Blake on the cover of his *Blake's New Jerusalem* album.



PRESS/CHERRY RED

“

The period when we wrote *Angel's Egg* is when Daevid wasn't participating in the group in any way at all, and I think the only piece of music he brought into *You* was something he wrote in 1970. But Steve [Hillage] and I were improvising madly at that time.

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How did you first discover the synthesiser?

In 1968 you had the release of *Switched-On Bach*. The electronic music I was listening to at the time was pretty intellectual stuff, but then all of a sudden along came Walter [now Wendy] Carlos and everybody just looked at each other and said, "What the fuck is this?" Here was the new instrument that virtually no one's tried. That's where I got into actually creating music. Then when Tangerine Dream were recording *Phaedra* I was in the control room at The Manor, watching, and I was fascinated.

Although you and the likes of Tangerine Dream and Klaus Schulze enjoyed

Gong's classic 1973 album *Flying Teapot*.



considerable success taking electronic music to a wider audience, Jean-Michel Jarre's 1976 album Oxygene went stratospheric.

Have you ever felt, "That could have been me!"?

It seems to me that the success of Jean-Michel Jarre has got nothing to do with synthesisers, or laser shows. It's that he inserted into his music all the elements of French popular music, which



Hatching New Ideas: Gong's 1973 album Angel's Egg.

Stones with [Gong founder] Daevid Allen the night before. After I first met Gong as a band and listened to their music, once everyone had gone to bed, I sat down and wrote a song. It's a song I really like, it's on *Blake's New Jerusalem*, and it's probably the least performed of all the ones I do – *Song For A New Age*. It's harmony, science and

points in our relationship with Daevid, they're true, but I'm the only one to have these points of view. He said I must be very alone on that, and I am.

Gong suffers a lot from what I call the Winston Smith complex – people rewriting history. As a young man, I reckon Gong got the very best that I could give and I'm extraordinarily proud of the work we did in those days. Technically speaking, the best recording is probably *Angel's Egg* because when I listen to it, it

Invisible Touch: Tim Blake on the theremin.



he's an expert in. If you actually listen to *Oxygene*, if you removed all the electronic instruments and had it played by a band of accordion players – very good ones, admittedly – it wouldn't lose anything. In fact, in might end up better. But he captured the spirit of festive French music, really popular stuff, made it electronic, and the result can only be millions of sales.

You appear on all three albums of Gong's Radio Gnome Invisible trilogy, by far the band's most coherent body of work. Although a creative purple patch, it wasn't without its problems, particularly interpersonal ones.

If I'm right it's February 1972.

If you look up the Rolling Stones concert at The Marquee and add on 24 hours, that's when I arrived in France, because I'd gone to see the

love, and I still believe that these are the three elements of the triangle that make our life up, the way we do things.

The period when we wrote *Angel's Egg* is when Daevid wasn't participating in the group in any way at all, and I think the only piece of music he brought into *You* was something he wrote in 1970. But Steve [Hillage] and I were improvising madly at that time. Then, a Gong show would start with me and Steve just going for it. We were absolute musical buddies at the time.

I fell out with Daevid. I have very high standards of being honest and he couldn't meet those standards. I don't like crooks and I ended up telling him. As Steve said in some interview I read, I have some very important

sounds exactly like Gong playing in their house, which of course is what it was. With *You*, it's such amazing music, but I think we could have made a better recording. But we had internal problems by then and I think these were taking over. But I'm

always happy to talk about Gong because it was a very exciting time in my life, and a very short time when you think about it, especially when you consider that I've been making music with Hawkwind for 12 years, possibly 13.



1974's *You*, Gong's fifth album.

In 1975 you joined the line-up for Steve Hillage's first solo album Fish Rising, recorded not long before your and Steve's departure from Gong.

Fish Rising would probably have been a Gong album if we didn't have the problem with Daevid. P

Three Hands Are Better Than Two: Tim Blake today, still a keyboard king.



MELVYN VINCENT

I'm the only one prepared to mention this. Just look at the band photographs after *You*. When I look at them, I see a whole load of people completely freaked out, as if we'd been done, and we had been. I get the feeling that if you compare Steve's music – which is awfully good – before he met Gong and then go up to his fourth solo album *Green*, it sounds like I wrote it from beginning to end. All I can say is that he must have found

some real inspiration in Gong and it managed to bring him out of his shell amazingly.

You also began work on what would become the *Crystal Machine* album while still a member of Gong, and it seems that the aftermath of the split spilled over into your solo career.

I had to leave Gong in '75 because I was unable to have a good relationship with Daevid any more. I was fed up seeing the

music I and others had written have the name on it changed at the last minute. He didn't even belong to the group after '73. His participation on *Angel's Egg* and *You* was because we tolerated it and we shouldn't have. Spiritually, the band broke up after that. It left me with a lot of negative contractual situations which were not conducive to me getting on with another recording career. So at first we just put everything into doing

some shows with sound and light, and by the time we got to '76, we put on our first *Crystal Machine* show in Vienna.

We're talking impossible budgets here – working with synthesisers was already expensive, but fucking about with lasers? Forget it! It's the best way to go broke that I know. I then cut up some recordings I had and put them together, just to show people what it sounded like – a demonstration tape. It hadn't even occurred to me to make a record, especially as my Gong period left me in a lot of shit. But it got played purely accidentally to someone who offered me a licence on it and that's how it started.

As soon as Virgin lost their exclusivity on me, I put all this out as a record and I'm glad I did. It sold a few copies and it made my reputation. But all the money I made from *Crystal Machine* and *New Jerusalem* was confiscated by a publisher who I never made a deal with, to pay off Gong debts. All my money bought was a set of trains and planes to keep Richard [Branson] happy.

***Crystal Machine* was released the same year as *Never Mind The Bollocks, Here's The Sex Pistols*. Did you personally feel the impact of punk on your career?**

We were 'there definitely is a future' whereas punk was 'no future'. I remember meeting Sid Vicious in Barclay Records and he just seemed to be an oik who marched in and menaced everybody with a flick knife and I just don't think that's got anything to do with music or art. It didn't do him any good, did it?

You headlined Glastonbury Fayre in 1979, topping a bill that also included Steve Hillage, Gong offshoot Mother Gong, and none other than Peter Gabriel.

I'm stood having a natter to someone and Michael Eavis walks up and says, "Right, production meeting in 10 minutes!" Then I found out I'd be closing the festival, playing after Peter Gabriel, and of course my ego was swelling! But that's when the stomach cramps hit and it was the most terrifying performance of my life. I remember watching Peter and thinking, "Wow, that's good!" and then rushing off to the Portakabin, getting changed and going back on stage. There are very few photos of it and

I've never heard a recording of it. But it was a lovely festival, a fantastic moment, and we ended up having a ball. I'd love to return to Glastonbury one day but it doesn't seem like the kind of festival that can fit people like me in any more.

It was around this time that you first performed with Hawkwind.

It was the '79 10th-anniversary tour, which was actually 'Hawkwind featuring Tim Blake', which was an arrangement between our different record companies. It's a friendship that goes back to August '69.

A lot of things were going on between '69 and '71 but Hawkwind were still finding their way, and when they did finally start doing things – *Silver Machine* and the whole *Space Ritual* thing – I was in Gong. When Nik [Turner] left Hawkwind, which he did very well compared to how I left Gong, he had a record contract and I played on that record [1978's *Xitintoday*, by Nik Turner's Sphynx]. And when I've met up with Dave [Brock], we've always enjoyed seeing each other. I was surprised when I was invited to play with Hawkwind, but I didn't hesitate and it was rather a joy.

When we were rehearsing and started to get the set together, Dave said, "This is where you're gonna perform *New Jerusalem* and then after that if you play *Lighthouse*, we'll join in." I said, "You must be joking!"

Lighthouse has now been part of the huge Hawkwind repertoire since 1979 and I'm very proud of that. Good old Dave on his wedding day was singing it and I wasn't even there!

Unfortunately, I left Hawkwind very rapidly on the *Levitation* tour, which was a bit of a shame as it was really rather good. We had something really good going with Ginger Baker in the band. But I had a personal disaster going on and I hadn't really wanted to be on tour. I was expecting a child and the child was stillborn and my priority was simply not playing rock'n'roll. But I didn't explain this to the others and they didn't discover



Steve Hillage's 1975 *Fish Rising* album.



Hawklord: Tim Blake with Hawkwind at the Hammersmith Odeon, December 1979.

PETER STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

this till years later. I had a huge disagreement with Dave and the rest of the band after a show at Victoria Hall in Hanley, and I left the next morning and just went home.

What are your thoughts on the current music scene?

On my record *The Tide Of The Century* I talk about time as a wave, and we have a tsunami of right-wing thinking coming through the world right now. In France, the worst is still to come.

But what I've noticed is that the rise of these intolerable movements seems to come with a decline in invention in progressive music. I've participated quite a bit in progressive music in my life, and I'm certainly a child of the period when this was becoming a style. But where is the great progressive music now? What makes our glasses drop off our noses, and us say, "Wow!?" That hasn't happened

to me for quite some time. Who's come along to replace Pink Floyd? Nobody. Is this a sign of the social regression we're now beginning to see across Europe, where all of the values of the 60s and 70s are being thrown out the window?

The hopes and aspirations from this time have taken a beating.

Is there a relationship? There must be. There's a tiredness and we're not leading people on to a new world any more. We're letting a load of wankers take over who want to go back to an old one, and it's possibly our fault.

As a Brit abroad, you've been affected by Brexit. Is this a manifestation

of this backward slide?

I was one of over a million people banned from taking part in the referendum by the courts. In my opinion, if I'm not allowed to express myself then these people in England should not be allowed to change my future or put it in peril. I'm not going to have

Boris Johnson or Nigel Farage telling me how to live. If I lose my European citizenship then my French residency won't be worth the plastic it's printed on. If I have to return to England, I'll sue the government to buy me a house the same size as the one I have here, which would be millions because you guys are mad about the price of your property.

It's also very difficult to work in England, which is why I haven't been appearing with Hawkwind as much. The Brexit vote has pulled the plug out. You might never see me again, in which case it's a case of, "Bye! Loved ya!" It might just come to that.

Rick Wakeman wore a cape, Keith Emerson wore a cape, Peter Gabriel wore a cape and you wore a cape. The list goes on. We languish in an epoch devoid of heroes – when we lost the cape, did we lose the plot?

There's photos of me in a cape? Oh dear! I wore a cape because someone made me one and it would have been impolite not to wear it. We were a generation brought up on *The Caped Crusader* though, weren't we? And as I'm living in the area where the Teutonic knights came from, I think it's very appropriate. Maybe Boris Johnson should wear a cape. In fact, I think everyone should have a cape, don't you? ☹

See moonweed.free.fr for more information on Tim's music.

“
Fish Rising would probably have been a Gong album if we didn't have the problem with Daevid. I'm the only one prepared to mention this.
”

New spins...

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

We've been to war. We've been to space. Now South London's electronic maestros find themselves in tune with the heart and soul of the British working class.

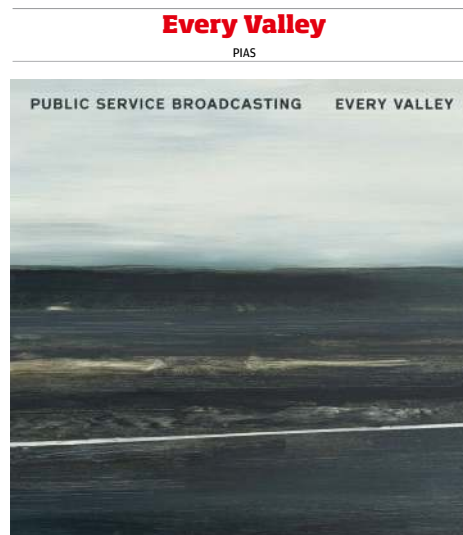
Words: Paul Lester **Illustration:** Stuart Briers

Following albums about the space race and the conquest of Everest and an EP about the Second World War, you might imagine Public Service Broadcasting would choose a suitably grand topic for their third long-player. Instead, J Willgoose Esq, Wrigglesworth and JF Abraham have made a record about the collapse of the mining industry. Inevitably, however, such is their dexterous use of stirring symphonic post-rock and electronica, and judicious deployment of sound clips, they have managed to make a monument out of what seemed like a molehill. What could have been a modest black and white documentary about a small Welsh mining community has become PSB's latest epic, technicolour testament to the human spirit and heroic endeavour.

Every Valley was recorded in Ebbw Vale, the former industrial town that was once the centre of the steel and coal industries. Willgoose didn't just assemble the album drily from the BFI archives – he went right to the beating heart of the matter, spending a week in the area, where he spoke to people directly involved in the mid-80s miners' strike. Consequently, *Every Valley* is a record of soulful, progressive keyboard rock, one with conceptual heft, suffused with the sad stories of the suffering and their soaring will to overcome.

It's emotional electronica with a point; diatribes you can dance to. You get the impression Willgoose really allowed himself to be moved by the subject he was exploring this time. If *Inform-Educate-Entertain* (2013) and *The Race For Space* (2015) involved you in their respective historical moments, *Every Valley* offers a degree of catharsis that will surprise.

In musical terms, this is their strongest collection to date, with a greater degree of integration of sonics and polemic. They haven't achieved this alone. There are many guests – cameos from James Dean Bradfield of The Manic Street Preachers, Tracyanne Campbell of Camera Obscura, Derbyshire trio Haiku Salut



PSB's latest is an epic testament to human spirit and heroic endeavour.

and Lisa Jên Brown of alt folk group 9 Bach – each helping to transform these missives into miniature dramas: Pathé with extra pathos.

The album opens with the title cut's lyrical voiceover from a 1957 British Transport film, followed by actor Richard Burton rhapsodising about the glory days when the coal industry was in its pomp and miners were the "kings of the underworld". It sets the tone for an album about struggle and triumph, exhibiting all the power of a magisterial New Order instrumental. There's a sense of foreboding about *The Pit*, with its stark facts about mines ("You're in a 200-yard-long coal face now... the temperature reaches 80 degrees... it's three-feet six-inches high from floor to roof") as your mind flicks back to the 1966 Aberfan disaster. *People Will Always Need Coal* is a mordant reminder

of a time when mining was a profession with a future, the poignant message enhanced by a pleasing attention to detail, all scratchy guitar and criss-crossing keyboards and percussion. Symphonically arranged, it builds to a juddering crescendo.

Its predecessors may have reached, respectively, No.21 and No.11 in the charts and seen PSB headlining the o2 Academy Brixton, but *Every Valley* has an even greater chance of being embraced by a mainstream rock audience.

Progress is affecting and pretty, Campbell's voice the earthbound side of ethereal as the music moves with a smooth grace. This and *Go To The Road* are alternative/indie at their best. *All Out* is the angry centrepiece, sound and fury capturing the chaos and tumult of the miners' strike. It starts with a staccato guitar pattern reminiscent of The Beatles' *Helter Skelter*, its jabbing thrash belying the notion of PSB as boffins. "All Out is our expression of truest anger to date," Willgoose has said. He wanted "the speakers to be almost exploding". Job done.

On *Turn No More*, the Manics' Bradfield – pointedly from the mining community of Blackwood – sings touching lines from Idris Davies' poem *Gwalia Deserta*. *They Gave Me A Lamp* (with Haiku Salut) has the brassy euphoria and stomp factor of a Northern Soul single and *You + Me* (featuring Brown alongside Willgoose, making his vocal debut) builds to a sweeping-strings crescendo.

We already know there will be an unhappy ending to this story ('*Black clouds are gathering round*,' sings Willgoose) – and what happened to the mining industry. Nevertheless, the album ends in rousing fashion, with *Take Me Home*, a folk song from the 70s sung by Ebbw Vale's own Beaufort Male Choir, whose 40-strong membership include former steelworkers and miners. Like everything here, it conjures a mood of quiet despair while having an attacking quality of defiance, resonating as powerfully with the ghosts of the past as it does with the challenges of Brexit-era Britain.



ALPHA MALE TEA PARTY

Health BIG SCARY MONSTERS

Instrumental trio take things up a notch with superb third album.



Alpha Male Tea Party reveal in their promotional material that they feel their third album *Health* is “probably the first time we’ve truly got what’s in our heads properly on to record”. If that’s correct, then you’ve really got to ponder just what the hell is going on in their three bonkers brains.

A coming of age - but with all the intrinsic quirks and quips.

The 10 songs form a vibrant rainbow of vivacity that at one moment can be gushing with frenetic, off-kilter distorted frenzy, yet seconds later might dissipate into a dreamy soundscape or introspective musing. For an instrumental band, concocting this amount of feeling isn’t an easy job.

The album makes it seem like Alpha Male Tea Party are blossoming. With a new label in tow, who also work with the likes of Axes, Minus The Bear and Tricot, it’s almost a coming of age – but they thankfully still have the intrinsic quirks and quips. The opener is called *Have You Ever Seen Milk*, while other track names include *Carpet Diem* and *I Still Live At Home* – still relatively sane compared to previous offerings such as *You Eat Houmous, Of Course You Listen To Genesis* and *Depressingly Shit Lunchtime Sandwich*.

The aforementioned opening track is something of a microcosm of the album as a whole, with the six and a half minutes flitting between hazy, spacey broodings and marauding, maverick chops. Think *And So I Watch You From Afar* getting it on with dearly departed turbo-proggers Cleft and this is close to what you get. It’s uplifting stuff, with *Museum Of Walking’s* spider-fingered riffwork hitting all the right spots, and the stonking *Nobody Had The Heart To Tell Him He Was On Fire* a multicoloured joy.

Then there’s *Don’t You Know Who I Think I Am?*, which opens with rhythmic riffs dripping in sludge, while *Some Soldiers* is an intoxicating roller-coaster ride through wacky guitar effects, pulsing beats and a hip-shaking groove.

Say the word ‘prog’ to a lot of young listeners and their minds might conjure up wizard hats and soulless fretboard vainglory, but when you’ve got acts like these rowdy Liverpudlians flying the flag, there’s plenty of hope left yet. Curious alt and pop rockers should find enough gleaming hooks of accessibility in this album to hopefully invite them to explore our wonderful genre further.

Sometimes gateway drugs lead on to bad things, but if *Health* can help to create a future generation of bright-eyed proggers, then this addictive record might just be worth them taking the risk. And for those seasoned experimentalists out there, Alpha Male Tea Party have just made one of the year’s must-listen albums.

CHRIS COPE

ACCORDO DIE CONTRARI

Violato Intatto ALTRÖCK

Fourth must-have release from Italian jazz rockers.

One of the challenges with largely instrumental music played at something like a virtuoso level is to avoid seeming to be hermetically sealed from the emotional spark that’s required to pass between player and listener. You might well play the fastest paradiddle in the West but if that isn’t framed within a decent tune then it’s largely worthless. Formed in 2001, Bologna’s *Accordo die Contrari* have a proven track record of managing to carry off both sides of this testy equation. Their 2014 album, *AdC*, marshalled hard-hitting guitar/keyboard riffs allied to swift flurries of snappy time changes with



a lack of whimsy that placed them at the more muscular end of the Canterbury-orientated prog spectrum. Their latest release demonstrates that their ability in this respect remains happily undiminished. Joined by a new recruit, Stefano Radaelli (alto and baritone sax), the long-established partnership of Giovanni Parmeggiani (keys), Marco Marzo (guitar) and Cristian Franchi (drums) deliver an expressive series of elegantly fashioned pieces with plenty of room for players to breathe and grow. Guesting vocals and violin add depth and timbral range, sitting well within what’s already a mature and impressive work. **55**

ANDROMEDA MEGA EXPRESS ORCHESTRA

Vula ALIEN TRANSISTOR

Fourth album in 10 years by the dazzling Berlin-based 18-piece.

Daniel Glatzel, the leader and principal composer of this international ensemble, advises that the hour long *Vula* should be listened to straight through for it to make sense. But by then the listener will also need to cool their head down, as the musical imagination and standard of playing on offer are staggering. The brief title track feels like a prelude or overture, an intriguing swirl of contrasting themes. The 14-minute *In The Light Of Turmoil* begins with brisk tuned percussion and guitar motifs and displays a typical trait of different instruments picking up the melody in succession as the track morphs



through cinematic themes, with strings, flutes, synths and brass, sudden Zappa-esque staccato unison lines, Stravinskian rhythmic stabs and drum-led grooves, with echoes of Jaga Jazziz. Just when a breather is needed, *Lakta Mata Ha* - gorgeous flutes, harps and piano

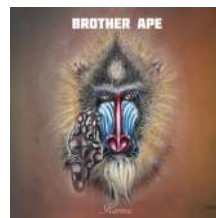
- is just as intricate but more lyrical. Following the bracingly fractured and avant-garde *qwetoipntv vjadfkvlvjieop*, *Interlude* is soothing aural balm. The multifaceted complexity of *Vula* feels like a reversal of the idea of slapping an orchestra onto prog rock tunes - this is an orchestra actually playing its own unique style of progressive music. **MB**

BROTHER APE

Karma FREIA MUSIC

Stockholm trio’s highly accessible seventh.

Most of us UK prog fans have yet to hear much of Swedish power trio Brother Ape, but with this new album being their first for Dutch-based but globally connected label FREIA Music, you’d hope that would change - not least because this is the most instantly engaging record they’ve made since their 2003 debut. The jazz rock touches that regularly punctuated their sound are less evident. Instead we hear clear ambitions towards widescreen arena rock in the style of 90/25-era Yes, exemplified by Hina Surawa’s synth-coated melancholic sweep and the emotional balladry of *Don’t Stand At My Grave And Cry*. But this



is no airbrushed AOR: the jagged riffs and scattergun percussion of *Let The Right One In* leave satisfying sonic scars, and the epic chorus that climaxes *Oblivion* is built on top of stuttering, uneasy rhythms and slashing twin guitars. There’s also an unashamed romantic

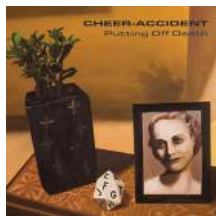
wanderlust - they characterise the almost showtune-ish, string-soaked musings of *If I Could* and *You Are*’s beautiful acoustic patterns. This is helped by the fact that frontman Stefan Damicolas’ vocals are now stronger and more emotive, sounding like the genetically spliced offspring of Roger Hodgson and Jon Anderson. This Ape is clearly evolving. **JS**

CHEER-ACCIDENT

Putting Off Death CUNEIFORM

Mortal combat with Chicago's most adventurous.

Making a career of being radically experimental is tough. Any guitar band off the deep end of the avant-garde has recourse to noise rock and its many sub/sister genres, but outside of that, recording album after album of wildly experimental tracks, let alone coherent ones, isn't easy. For this reason bands like Cardiacs are rightly revered, and on this, their 18th album, Chicago's Cheer-Accident show that Tim Smith's group do not hold a monopoly. Sprawling opener *Language Is* masquerades as downtempo indie rock with some jazzy tendencies before degenerating into looped white noise,



much like some of Steven Wilson's early solo sketches. *Immanence* is an almost St Vincent-like fusion number, while the stop-start percussion and synthesiser driven second half of *Falling World* is strangely catchy. Album highlight *Lifetime Guarantee* offers something more recognisably rocky, even evoking early Yes. Angular synthesiser is offset by groove-driven rhythmic strangeness and offset by melodic vocals. The Krautrock-y final section, immediately following a vocal break that reaches Knifeworld levels of excess, is a peak, and a satisfying conclusion to a highly eccentric song. **AL**

CHON

Homey SUMERIAN

A summery technical guitar record? Why not?

Chon are a divisive band. An instrumental guitar group with toes in the math rock and prog metal scenes, their technical brand of complex, clean guitar acrobatics has enthralled some, and left others cold. With their debut *Glow* they delivered a dense and impressive record that nevertheless stopped short of any deep emotional punches. *Homey* doubles down on the relaxed, lighthearted mood of their debut, as well as the stunning complexity of the guitar work - witness lead single *Waterslide*. More interestingly, on three of four collaboration tracks on the album, they bring in outside collaborators,



and there's more of a hip hop or even synthwave feel. The addition of vocals and an explicit pop sway with simplified guitar lines results in a leanness and a catchiness elusive to them before. It seems like this is what the San Diegans want to be doing now, then the album segues back into a complex instrumental piece of twinkling guitars. You've got to applaud them for making bolder artistic decisions and broadening their repertoire, though it does leave the question of where they will go next. If it's possible to make saccharine-sweet technical instrumental guitar music, on *Homey*, Chon have delivered. **AL**

CIRCLE

Terminal SOUTHERN LORD

Off-kilter hoopla from Finland's pilates-loving weirdos.

Finnish collective Circle have, incredibly and unbelievably, released more than 30 albums since their inception in 1991. Let's hope their latest isn't true to its title because these Suomi weirdbeards plainly still have plenty of good stuff to offer. Bludgeoning heavy metal is at the core of the band's sound but you don't have to dig too deep to detect numerous other, delightfully disparate, influences. (Our favourite is speed-Kraut, in case you were asking.) While everything in Circle's native language, you can just sense there's plenty of dark humour and off-kilter hoopla afoot. Beginning with the 13-minute *Rakkautta Al Dente*, the song



initially sounds like a straightforward combo of lommi riff and intense death metal vocals. But just as the whole shebang threatens to become overwhelming, the band step off the gas - the singing style becomes the whisperings of a demonic priest, while the music resembles a jazzy, noodling Hawkwind. Twists and turns aplenty, then: *Imperium* is Paul Di'Anno singing Dream Theater; *Sick Child* sounds like the ailing son of Zep's *Achilles' Last Stand*; the brain-searing *Saxo* seemingly has vocals by a ranting Japanese dictator. If nothing else, it'll make you think twice before buying a second-hand Citroën supermini. **GB**

AMPLIFIER

Trippin' With Dr Faustus ROCKOSMOS

Album six from technicians of spaceship Manchester is devilishly good.



For Amplifier, the story of Faust has never been more relevant. As greed, ego, fear and seduction become the defining trends of the 21st century, the idea of a man selling his soul for absolute power is frighteningly plausible. *Trippin' With Dr Faustus* might retell the story as a rock'n'roll fable, but the message behind it resonates strongly: if you make a bargain with the Devil, don't be surprised if what you want comes at a cost.



An immersive experience... possibly their finest album to date.



It's often seemed as though Amplifier themselves have been caught up in some kind of diabolical struggle against the music industry. As purveyors of intelligent, melodic songs fuelled by huge riffs and prog dynamics, a sort of Muse for grown-ups, they're a band who should be in rock's top league by now. But company buyouts and label mismanagement have hampered their progress, and now here they are releasing their sixth album on their own label. Yet despite their rocky financial position, the freedom of having complete control over their own destiny seems to have genuinely inspired them. Recorded over a three-year period between 2014 and 2016, *Trippin' With Dr Faustus* is an immersive experience and quite possibly their finest album to date.

The full armoury of the Amplifier sound is immediately in evidence on opening track *Rainbow Machine*, its explosive riffing welded onto a meaty groove, while Sel Balamir's voice is rich and expressive, without ever tipping over into portentousness. There's more than a hint of 70s stadium rock giants such as Zep and The Who, music conceived and created at an epic scale. But it's the artful arrangement that highlights their prog DNA, with *Rainbow...* transitioning through all manner of clever changes. *Breakzone* ramps up the tension, a gothic guitar refrain accompanying Balamir's casual utterance, *'It's doomsday'*, before more tightrope dynamics, Sabbathian downdraught moving seamlessly into Radiohead uplift.

While Amplifier have in the past sometimes been a little too monolithic, here they make sure there's plenty of light amid the shade. The gutsy folk rock of *Big Daddy* has a testifying, West Coast vibe, while *Anubis* is a warm, finger-picking acoustic reel - both songs benefit enormously from the vocal talents of the mysterious Beth Zeppelin. But *Old Blue Eyes* brings the album to a suitably dark conclusion, its evil bass riff sucking at the air, its wah-wah like a mocking choir of demons. Only the Devil is left laughing at the end.

Fancy some swaggering space prog with your apocalypse? Here's the deal...

JOE BANKS

BENT KNEE

Land Animal INSIDEOUT

Powerful third beast from the Boston art rockers.



Bent Knee's new record *Land Animal* is an impressive feat, however you choose to approach it. As an art rock record at the poppier end of the spectrum, it's atmospheric and cinematic with hooks aplenty, mainly courtesy of their insanely powerful singer Courtney Swain. As a progressive or experimental release, Ben Levin's angular, sparse guitar work is a breath of fresh air in terms of being technical without being showy or in your face, while the rhythm section of Jessica Kion on bass and Gavin Wallace-Ailsworth on drums are restrained enough to never get carried away with just how good they are.

Atmospheric and cinematic... a breath of fresh air.

Instant comparisons in terms of sound would be to other female-fronted progressive groups that flirt with both math-rock and pop, like UK upstarts Orchards or Signals. Although Bent Knee predate those groups, it's interesting that this angular alt pop sound should be so recognisable from groups of different ages operating on both sides of the Atlantic. It seems like Radiohead or Yeah Yeah Yeahs, with the mercurial Nick Zinner on guitar, are probably touchstones in common between these groups.

There's an understated technicality to the instrumentals, particularly on tracks like *Hole* where aside from the brief and showy nod to technical metal, there's actually a lot of subtle intricacies in the drum work. *The Well* is another example, where lilting rhythms crash against angular, sparse percussion and guitars using more effects than you can shake a stick at. *Time Deer* meanwhile is a more straightforward cut that makes much of a Yeah Yeah Yeahs-style pop guitar hook.

The only criticism that can reasonably be levelled at Bent Knee is that, unlike the instrumental parts, there's not a lot of subtlety to the vocals on this record. On most tracks there's a need to have the most technical, high-register vocals at every juncture and it means there's a lack of dynamic range as a result. In this sense it's a very 'music college' type of sound where it's as if there's a competition between unseen peers over who is the best musician going on out of sight of the listener.

This results in some brilliant moments, though: the spine-tingling and vertiginous climax of opener *Terror Bird*, the soaring middle eight of *Hole* or the Thom Yorke-like wig-out at the end of *These Hands*. When this impulse is reined in, however, it delivers the highlight of the album in the sinister and apocalyptic *Insides In*, while album closer *Boxes* deserves an honourable mention for its more nuanced dynamics.

For all its excesses, a record like *Land Animal* doesn't arrive very often, and Bent Knee are at least pushing to do something novel, performing at the peak of their powers to date.

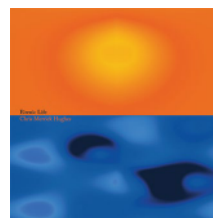
ALEX LYNHAM

CHRIS MERRICK HUGHES

Eirenic Life HELIUM

Respected baroque pop architect strips back to vault forward.

Hughes' reputation precedes him. Not only did he once pound drums in Adam's Ants, he also produced the McLaren-envisaged Burundi-beat of their *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* album and most of the best of Tears For Fears' multi-platinum catalogue. So when it comes to sonics, Hughes knows his business. *Kings...*' chart-topping constituent parts, *Sowing The Seeds Of Love* and *Everybody Wants To Rule The World* are big, blousy records; brash, massive, laden with lush ornament. *Eirenic Life* (a rare solo work, his first in 23 years) represents a polar opposite facet of Hughes' complex musical persona -



that of modern classicist. Inspired, as always, by Steve Reich, *Eirenic Life* - six pastoral, outwardly tranquil piano pieces - might invite comparison with Eno, purely for its calming exterior, but rather than simply providing an agreeable aural wallpaper of somnolent ambience, closer attention reveals mood-manipulating depths more readily associated with Max Richter or Erik Satie. Hesitating glissandos tumble across brooding dronescapes, and while there's a contemplative serenity to be found here, there's also an unavoidable feeling of imminent dread to keep you unsettled and engaged. How very 21st century. **IF**

COMEDY OF ERRORS

House Of The Mind COMEDY OF ERRORS

Scottish house-building on solid foundations.

Since reforming in 2011, this Scottish collective have released three albums, reflecting styles ranging from their original neo-prog roots to more contemporary symphonic rock. This fourth outing - "an exploration of the Jungian unconscious and non-linear time" - reiterates these stylistic threads, evoking the likes of Camel, Twelfth Night, IQ and The Flower Kings in the process, while moving the band into new territory. From the bright, driving piano of *Tachyon*, the angular guitar, soaring chords and glorious organ sounds of *House Of The Mind*, through to the frantic ending of *Ever Be The Prize*, this doesn't sound



like a band that can trace its history back to the mid-80s - it's fresh, youthfully energetic and even jaunty in places, and there's an immediacy to much of the record that's hard to dislike. It isn't perfect - at almost 14 minutes in length, *Song Of The Wandering*

Jacomus does drag things out a bit, and the Scottish folk-steeped *One Fine Day* sounds like the band simply forgot to write its ending - but there's an enthusiasm and charm to it all that's undeniable. Comedy Of Errors are building a very enviable back catalogue and *House Of The Mind* can only bolster their growing profile. **GMM**

GAUDI

Magnetic RARENOISE RECORDS

Stellar cast play stellar space music.

Given access to the library of multitrack master tapes of the RareNoise Records output, London-based composer Daniele Gaudi dug deep into the vaults and constructed something entirely new and different from the fabric and materials there. Emphatically not remixes of existing music, this is perhaps more reminiscent of the spirit of Bill Laswell mix translations where one element is grafted onto another. Thus there are some impressive virtual line-ups fashioned from sessions that included players such as Laswell; Killing Joke's Ted Parsons; Buckethead; P-Tree's Colin Edwin; Crimson's Pat Mastelotto and



Tony Levin; Japan's Steve Jansen; Roger Eno; and Eric Mouquet, better known as Deep Forest. With much of the album's eight tracks inculcated with an infectious dance-infused electronica, Gaudi's compositions emanate a ponderous solemnity that burrows

deep into the consciousness. However, it's the beguiling sonic space where the heart of this album resides. Resonating in cavernous, bespoke settings, Gaudi's finely wrought production variously conjures echoing dub interiors, shimmering stadium-sized environs and intimate arbours. An attractive, compelling space for the head. **SS**

GOLDRAY

Rising AKASHIC

Ex-Reef man's starry-eyed trio make impressive debut.

With a name like Kenwyn House, the former guitarist of Reef always seemed as if he belonged on the credits of a slightly more psychedelic record, and with Goldray's debut, he seems to have finally made it. Teaming up with erstwhile progressive house vocalist Leah



Rasmussen and drummer Geoff Lauren, they've spent the last seven years gigging, writing and painstakingly crowdfunding *Rising*, and they can be proud of the end result. You can still hear traces of Reef's bluesy rock blueprint on the twanging, gutsy riffs of *Outloud* and *Soulchild*, but around them are built trippier sonic sojourns that recall Jefferson Airplane,

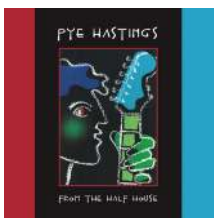
most clearly in the just-eaten-something-strange final track *The Oranges Song*, where we're told that 'refuse tips of riddles live next door'. They're part of what Rasmussen claims is "a concept album... the listener will work out what that is from listening to the record". Not in this reviewer's case, but even if the lyrics rely heavily on vaguely mystical buzzwords, her melodramatic, breathy delivery helps them convince regardless, and it's the feel of this record that defines it, from the gorgeously ghostly Nightwish-isms of *Calling Your Name* to the swirly, hypnotic chorus that reels you into the sitar-laced *Eyes*. **JS**

PYE HASTINGS

From *The Half House* CARAVAN RECORDS

Caravan frontman's solo debut - at the youthful age of 70.

If you were expecting a kaleidoscope of grey- and pink-tinged prog from Pye Hastings' first ever solo album, look away now. Self-recorded in - and named after - the Caravan mainman's remote retreat in the Scottish Highlands, *From The Half House* is more akin to the work of Dire Straits and Chris Rea. Thankfully, however, the listening experience ain't the equivalent of driving a knackered golf buggy the wrong way down the road to hell. Beginning with *Better Days Are To Come*, this is relaxed, reflective stuff. Hastings' sweet-sounding voice is to the fore and apart from a burst of bludgeoning guitar at the beginning



of *I'll Be The Judge*, all is calm and serene. Highlights include *When You're On Your Own*, with its twinkling Oldfield vibe, and the ballads *To See You Again* and *Shine A Light For Me*. But the best bit is on superiority-complex song *There Will Always Be Someone*, Hastings

reminding us of cunning stunts of the past with: 'What does he have when the party's over/What can he do when he can't join the hunt/What do you call a man with such talents/...Quite.' In caravan (lower case 'c') terms, this is more tiny teardrop trailer than silver-studded Airstream, but given the heartfelt sensitivity of Hastings' performance, it matters not a jot. **GB**

THE HELIOCENTRICS

A *World Of Masks* SOUNDWAY

Eighth album from Syd Arthur-related London funk psych jazz collective.

Already renowned for their fluid approach, incorporating as they do hip-hop, Krautrock and musique concrète - eschewing conventional song structure for live improvisation - the London group have thrown another random element into the mix: Barbra Patkova, an improvisatory vocalist with lyrics sung in her native Slovakian. The results are not unlike Amy Winehouse were she to have free-associated wildly over David Axelrod's baroque instrumentals or the manic peregrinations of Sun Ra's Arkestra. *Made Of The Sun* is languorous and jazzy; *Time* is electronica with a patina of exotica. Amid the quiet



cacophony of *Human Zoo*, the squalls of sax and pattering percussion, The Heliocentrics - bassist Jake Ferguson, drummer/producer Malcolm Catto, guitarist Adrian Owusu, multi-instrumentalist Jack Yglesias and a supporting cast including Syd Arthur's

Raven Bush - manage to corral the components towards something resembling a vague 70s blaxploitation movie theme. Depending on how closely you listen, you will either hear bustling sound-bursts, quixotic rhythms and jazzy noodling, or desolate torch songs for the broken-hearted: *Capital Of Alone* is the future-soul sound of London. **PL**



PROGRESSIVE FOLK

Paul Sexton's pick of acoustic-styled songsmiths, old and new.

We're a little late in our admiration for Lianne Hall's *The Caretaker*. John Peel, no less, was an admirer of the British-born, Berlin-based singer and writer, and as ever, he knew of which he spoke. Released a little earlier this year by Market Square, it's a greatly accomplished body of work. The album gazes on a folky landscape, but with subtly electronic instrumentation and Hall's compelling vocals, sometimes recalling KT Tunstall, the effect is often hypnotic. *The Crow's Nest* is particularly mesmeric, and *The Last Song Of The Caretaker* has melancholic poise.



Cards should also be marked for William The Conqueror, the new recording vehicle of Scottish-born but Cornwall-based troubadour Ruarri Joseph. His solo work, which once had him signed to Atlantic Records, has moved via a folky ambience to an ever more indie sound and mentality. The group's *In My Dreams* combines a great guitar groove, incisive lyrics and Joseph's Cat Stevens-esque voice, and is a great preview of the album *Proud Disturber Of*



The Peace, due later in the summer via Loose.

Among other singles, **The Black Guards**, folk rock crusaders of west Cumbria, debut with *Drawn In* (Folkstock). The six-piece reportedly whip up a storm as a live act, fiddles, pipes, mandolins and all. The single strums with plaintive urgency and it's a promising appetiser. Also try **Jenny Lindfors** in her nom de disque of Sailing Stones, on the stunningly pretty, self-released *The Blazing Sun*.



Street Cries (Talking Elephant) is a collection of traditional songs reworked for modern times by **Ashley Hutchings** - who else? Recorded in 2001, it's rich in both historical imagery and latter-day expression, in the hands of such stylists as Cara Dillon, John Tams, Dick Gaughan and the aforementioned June Tabor.

Estimable north London reissue specialists Earth Recordings breathe new life into **Anne Briggs'** seminal *The Time Has Come*. The English folk singer is often cited as a musical mentor by Richard Thompson, June Tabor and many others. Her second LP, originally on CBS in 1971, was a staging post in moving beyond the traditional songs of her first set and showcasing some of her own, as well as those of Lal Waterson, Henry McCulloch and others. Briggs' voice is steadfastly graceful, the settings quintessentially English and her playing fleet-fingered, on instrumentals such as *Highlodge Hare* and *Clea Caught A Rabbit*.



Finally, congratulations to the Angel Air label, who mark their 20th anniversary with their 500th release, aptly by one of their core bands, erstwhile folk-rock staples **Stackridge**. *The Final Bow, Bristol 2015* is a double CD recorded at their final concert at that city's Fiddlers Club some 18 months ago. It's a fitting keepsake of a show that reached all the way back to early favourites such as *Lummy Days* and *Dora The Female Explorer*.



MAKING METAL GREAT AGAIN*



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EBERHARD KRANEMANN & HARALD GROSSKOPF

Krautwerk BUREAU B

Krautrock royalty make a modern classic.

There's some fierce pedigree running amok in this first collaboration between these two German maestros. Grosskopf first appeared playing drums on Klaus Schulze's 70s albums including *Moondawn* and *Body Music* before joining Manuel Gottsching's Ash Ra Tempel-succeeding Ashra (appearing on 13 LPs) and releasing several solo albums. Kranemann was an early member of Kraftwerk and Neu! before reinventing himself as Fritz Muller and forming his own band. Both also boast a heap of other collaborations. Working together, the pair show how Krautrock can still be a formidable force with unashamedly



lengthy tracks that include *Midnight In Dusseldorf Berlin* (a shadowy after-dark cruise with scathing guitar), and *Happy Blue*, combining ethereal melodies with mid-period Can-style disco groove exploring the unknown, Gosskopf lacing Jaki Liebezeit's minimal drive with his own spin. *Buddhatal* is a 12-minute beatless drone meditation in deep space, before *Be Cool* ignites toupee-whisking banging techno, napalming the autobahn with cross-panning and scrabbling no wave guitar. All told, a relentlessly exciting or brain-massaging collaboration that can be considered a modern Krautrock classic. **KN**

MAMMÚT

Kinder Versions BELLA UNION

Iceland delivers drama and personality again.

Spooky-looking Reykjavik five-piece Mammút's new album instantaneously hits you right between the eyes. It's a gorgeous blast of highly dramatic art rock, alternating between darkness and bright light, overflowing with personality. There are three women at the heart of Mammút - Icelandic for "mammoth" - and singer Katrína is the daughter of Birgir, who was in Björk's pre-Sugarcubes post-punk band Kukl. If that makes some of us feel old, her voice is so electrifying it'll take years off you - even when she's singing such typically Icelandic, casually philosophical lyrics as: 'I'm afraid to die... but it's okay.' She's a



one-woman army of me - and yes, Björk comparisons will be plentiful - but the band soar to the challenge of making music big enough to accommodate her. Every track has copious colour and serpentine structure, while never losing touch with the visceral. *The Moon Will Never Turn On Me* is both shy and flamboyant: 'Oh the truth must be funnier than this,' she sings. *Breathe Into Me* is deftly yearning; *Pray For Air* is desperate with desire. You can feel their emotional legitimacy. Worthy of wooing the UK just like The Sugarcubes did almost 30 years ago, Mammút are a volcanic force of nature. **CR**

MUMPBEEK

Tooth RARENOISE

Anglo-Norwegian prog jazz with lots of bite.

Having studied avant-garde composition at the Royal Northern College of Music, Roy Powell went from accomplished jazz pianist in the 1990s with a string of acclaimed releases to Nordic relocation, embracing a proggy direction via power trio Interstatic and the Euro-US quartet Naked Truth. Mumpbeak's second release, like its 2013 debut, sees Powell once again channelling his considerable energy through a guitar-pedal enhanced Hohner E7 Clavinet from which springs expressive sounds ranging from diaphanous, fairy-dust twinkles through to ballsy distortion, pitch-bends and dayglo wah-wah that would make



Hendrix envious. Powell's lithe tunes employ melodic hairpin bends that evoke early electric Chick Corea and, surprisingly perhaps, a light touch of cerebral complexity not unlike Gilgamesh's Alan Gowen. A flamboyant soloist, he makes impressive leaps across the octaves in wild, powerfully contrasting pieces, driven by Elephant 9 drummer Torstein Lofthus' dazzling cymbals and the low growl of Lorenzo Feliciati's inquisitive bass which threads this mix of prog and jazz rock together. With a scorching Hammond organ raising the emotional temperature, Mumpbeak's intensity proves unstoppable. **SS**

COSMOGRAF

The Hay-Man Dreams COSMOGRAF

Sadness and longing from a far-flung English field.



Robin Armstrong, in his Cosmograf guise, has taken a perhaps unexpected turn with *The Hay-Man Dreams*. Where recent collections have been built around broadly science/science-fiction and metaphysical themes, this sixth album is considerably earthier in both narrative and execution.



Drama, poignancy and richly layered instrumentation.



Told via a series of vignettes as experienced or witnessed by the titular scarecrow, we're presented with tales of impossible yearnings, the pace and turn of rural life, the encroachment of modernity, and mysterious deaths. Armstrong has said that there is a unifying story arc underlying the album, based on research into his own family history, but it must be said this isn't immediately obvious.

Reflecting the bucolic and sombre inclinations of the subject matter, the music is almost uniformly slow, languid and downbeat, with distinctly folky and blues textures to tracks like *Trouble In The Forest*, *Cut The Corn* and large sections of the title track. Opener *Tethered And Bound* starts with what might well be a cheeky nod to the synthesised lawnmower intro to Genesis' classic *I Know What I Like* and settles into a vaguely middle-era Floyd feel. Even when the intensity builds, as it does in *Tethered And Bound*, *The Motorway* and towards the majestic end of the almost 13 minutes of *Hay-Man*, for instance, it does so with a decidedly early 70s classic rock lope.

In another break from past Cosmograf releases, Armstrong has also scaled down the list of guest contributors, taking care of the vast majority of instrumentation himself, which underscores his wide-ranging talents on guitar, keyboards and bass - check out the acoustic guitar solo in *Cut The Corn*, the solo from *Hay-Man*, the achingly tasteful piano in *Melancholy Death Of A Gamekeeper*, and the athletic basslines in *The Motorway* for prime examples.

Drums are courtesy of new collaborator Kyle Fenton and there are additional vocals from Rachael Hawnt, including a fantastic, breathy, soulful turn on *Hay-Man*. The inimitable Matt Stevens' guitar appears on *Trouble In The Forest*, Rachel Hall adds beautifully emotive violin to the denouement of *Hay-Man*, and ex-BBC continuity announcer David Allan provides spoken-word interjections at various points.

The Hay-Man Dreams isn't the easiest album to engage with immediately - there's a certain ennui pervading much of it, which is perhaps entirely deliberate, emphasising the sorry isolation and impotence of the Hay-Man - so repeated listening is almost demanded. There is drama and poignancy here, alongside considered and richly layered instrumentation, but existing Cosmograf fans should be advised of a definite shift in pace and tone.

GARY MACKENZIE

MAGENTA

We Are Legend TIGERMOTH

Welcome return for the veteran Welsh prog band.



It feels as if Magenta have been on the back-burner, and the back foot, since 2013's *The Twenty Seven Club*. Prolific main man Rob Reed has been busy with his *Sanctuary* project, channelling his all-time hero Mike Oldfield on two intricate, well-received records. Before that there was his all-star Kompendium project, and who could forget his supergroup, Kiama? (Well, most of us, probably.) In issue 75 of *Prog*, Reed revealed how he struggled with writer's block when it came to material for Magenta, and of course Christina Booth's treatment for her well-publicised health problems had to take priority over music.

Magenta are strong, reinvigorated and in fan-thrilling form.

But despite all these slings and arrows, Magenta's eighth album sees them coming back strong, reinvigorated and in fan-thrilling form. Comprising just three tracks, *We Are Legend* takes its title from Richard Matheson's sci-fi novel *I Am Legend*, with Reed specifically inspired by Charlton Heston's movie version *The Omega Man*. The album cover casts Reed, Booth and guitarist Chris Fry as lone survivors in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and the song *Legend* explores this idea across a cinematic, 11-minute prog workout. It starts out with horn blasts reminiscent of *The Matrix*'s opening credits, then turns into almost a decent Bond theme in 7/8, with Fry's guitar twanging accordingly.

Cinematic, layered and very literal, the song swaggers, with Booth's ever-lovely vocals belying lyrics about the apocalypse, eternal night and death by zombie. There are hints of Marillion and It Bites, and in a wonderfully clever section midway through, the music seems almost to warp gradually in pitch, ever upwards, ever more uneasy.

Inspired by Van Gogh, *Colours* starts gently with a sweet, Genesis-like music box passage before giving way to grinding guitars. This time out Fry was clearly told to mug up on *Wish You Were Here*: some of his guitar parts are shards happily chipped off Gilmour's crazy diamond. Reed interlaces a Yes/ELP-like Moog synth part here, a Hammond there, and the now-official rhythm section of Jon Griffiths (drums) and Dan Nelson (bass) strike that needed balance between ferocity and fragility, and bring to the record the new energy they've injected into the band's all-too-rare gigs of late.

But the highlight is the 26-minute behemoth *Trojan*. Its intro is pure Vangelis circa *Blade Runner*, and elsewhere there are nods to (again) Floyd, even Pendragon, and some electronica in the mix too, Fry's accomplished playing topping it all off. In one long piece the band encapsulate everything they've done so well over the past 16 years. When they do get around to it, nobody does it quite like Magenta.

GRANT MOON

NEXT TO NONE

Phases INSIDEOUT

Prog metal ingénues continue to grow up in public.

Edging swiftly away from all notions of a "junior Dream Theater" (drummer Max Portnoy is the son of, well, you know who), these songs are heavier, weirder and, importantly, far more confident and intelligently arranged than anything on the band's 2015 debut. In terms of prog points, there is a fiendish amount of rhythmical complexity - much of it plainly influenced by the post-Meshuggah tech-metal scene - and a great deal of overt heaviness and aggression threaded through these songs. This results in an album that seeks to convert old-school prog metal fans to the ways of more recent titans of the genre



like Between The Buried And Me and Painted In Exile. Songs like *Answer Me* and the sprawling, 10-minute *Kek* brim with strong melodies and bright (or demented) ideas, and everything is propelled along with the kind of swivel-eyed exuberance that has been punched out of most musos by the time they hit 30. The downside is that every time vocalist Thomas Cuce uses his reedy upper register, NTN sound like a generic, teen-friendly metalcore band, and no amount of polyrhythmic showboating will make that more palatable to discerning ears. Nonetheless, this is a strong second LP and the band's potential remains vast. **DL**

ORSOME WELLES

Rise SELF-RELEASED

Solid heavy prog rock from Down Under.

The Australian music scene just seems to be the gift that keeps on giving. Its conveyor belt of distinctive, metallic prog rock bands has seen the likes of Karnivool, Voyager, Plini and Dead Letter Circus rise to international prominence over the last few years, and while Melbourne five-piece Orsome Welles haven't quite made a splash yet outside of their home country, the quintet have been simmering away nicely. *Rise* is their latest EP, and it sees the Aussies playfully juggle chunky, grooved-up riffs with real melodic sheen and just enough prog dalliances. Opener *Build A World*



enjoys jagged, twisty-turny guitar work, while the Tool-esque *Maestro* proves to be the jewel in the five-track EP's crown as singer Michael Stowers' soaring vocals nod to the colourful hues of Beardfish's Rikard Sjöblom. *Rise* isn't hugely groundbreaking, though, and proggers looking to go on a wild, kaleidoscopic trip may well be disappointed by a reliance on rock gusto that wouldn't sound out of place on an Alter Bridge record. Take things at face value, though, and on this showing, it appears that Orsome Welles aren't going to remain Australia's secret for too much longer. **CC**

DANIEL O'SULLIVAN

Veld GENESIS

Incantations and idiosyncrasy from sonic speculator.

Partly inspired by Ray Bradbury's 1950 short story *The Veldt*, which forecast the potential dangers of virtual reality, O'Sullivan's new solo album similarly conjures up a universe where nothing is quite as it first appears. Sounds, song structures and indeed whole genres seem to merge into one, morphing from beautiful to abrasive, from pretty to creepy and back again. The whole thing works as a cohesive piece of music, which is testament to his skill with bricolage and montage. O'Sullivan has operated under a number of guises, from his relatively pop-influenced project Mothlite to border-pushing collaborations



with Grumbling Fur, Ulver and Æthenor. His willingness to mix and match noises and found sounds from across different disciplines and aesthetics makes *Veld* something of an obstacle course for the untrained ear. Yet after digesting the experience a time or two, full focus is achieved. The slow, muggy drones leading to blasts of euphoria that echo Broken Social Scene, the angelic Cocteau Twins-like female voices, the sampled oddities and the crooning of lines like 'ghosts live inside of us' all coalesce into a multi-dimensional artwork that successfully soundtracks our profoundly confusing 21st century. **CR**

ROBERT RAMSAY

Confound And Disturb BAD ELEPHANT

Tinyfish's word wizard unleashed!

For those who have followed the strange and fascinating story of Tinyfish with any sort of enthusiasm, the prospect of a Robert Ramsay solo album is undeniably enticing, as the harmonica-wielding wordsmith has emerged as one of modern prog's most intriguing eccentrics. *Confound And Disturb* certainly doesn't disappoint: a primarily spoken-word enterprise, bolstered by musical interludes and bursts of jarring ambience, it begins with Ramsay laying down the specifics of his last will and testament, and continues through strange monologues, skewed life lessons, bug-eyed surrealism and



the occasional chicken impersonation. At their most effective, amid the art rock squall and folksy twinkling of *Tramps In Their Purest Form*, Ramsay's ramblings exhibit subtle shades of Viv Stanshall and Ivor Cutler, albeit via seemingly sci-fi-inspired tales of wilful

bizarreness, rather than anything more quaintly mundane. Elsewhere, *The Real Rap* leaps cheerfully into grubby trip-hop territory, while *The Black Box Society* is half serene diatribe, half acid rock freakout. Fervently British but witty and endearing enough to connect with most sentient music fans, *Confound...* fulfils its brief with deliciously quirky aplomb. **DL**

ROEDELIOUS, CHAPLIN & HEATH

Triptych In Blue DISCO GECKO

Ambient stalwarts live from Brunel's Goods Shed.

Twenty years on from Hans-Joachim Roedelius collaborating with Andrew Heath on Aqueous' *Meeting The Magus*, the pair reconvened with Christopher Chaplin to improvise three piano and electronics pieces captured here for digital-only release. While Chaplin and Heath are relative neophytes, Roedelius is a towering figure in the field of electronic music. Across his 82 years he's produced over 40 solo albums and worked with Dieter Moebius, Michael Rother and Brian Eno. A prime mover of kosmische, Krautrock, synth-pop and ambient music, this co-founder of Cluster and Harmonia neither swaggers nor dazzles, yet remains



a diligent maestro of sound manipulation, rebooting prevailing atmospheric conditions and gently mutating environments with confident keyboard touches. Largely unsung, Roedelius had a firm guiding hand on experimental electronic music's tiller as it negotiated

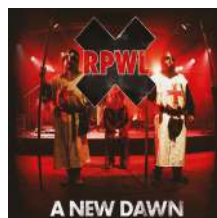
the most crucial leg from avant-garde oddity to mainstream ubiquity. Just as in the mid-70s, when he helped Neu! throttle back from revolutionary hurtle to motorik cruise and engaged Eno's ear as he retooled pop's future with Bowie's Berlin trilogy, Roedelius is still producing music of the future, the only difference being that the future is now. **IF**

RPWL

A New Dawn GENTLE ART OF MUSIC

German proggers' new epic takes a massive multimedia turn.

RPWL could never be accused of doing things by halves. Twenty years into their career, the German art rockers - formerly a Floyd tribute act and now noted for their highbrow conceptual pieces - present a whopper of a celebratory concert movie/album. Filmed in their home town of Freising, Bavaria, this was no mere rock show. The one-off performance involved 50 actors and extras in a play and multimedia event. Naturally, it was presented in their native tongue, though an English edition sees the dialogue overdubbed by the entire cast and narrator. It's presented on Blu-ray and DVD, an audio version



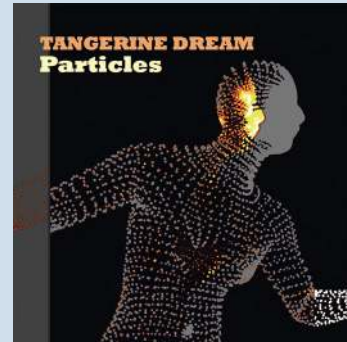
spread across two CDs or three LPs. With subject matter that references both Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the tale of a factional group pursued by political and religious leaders for peddling a homeopathic hyper-awareness drug known as

Veritas Forte, RPWL couldn't do 'simple' if they tried. Nor should they, as plenty of others take the easy option. The ghost of Floyd is omnipresent throughout via a simmering mix of male lead and female backing voices, notably during *A Clear Cut Line*, which bears obvious similarity to *The Great Gig In The Sky*. This is one for sufferers of ADD to avoid at all costs. **DML**

TANGERINE DREAM

Particles INVISIBLE HANDS

Edgar Froese may have passed but the Dream machine floats on.



“When I am gone they should search for the mystery of the dark candle in the big white room,” Tanga's mainstay Edgar Froese enigmatically informed an interviewer before he died suddenly in January 2015. Meanwhile, his widow Bianca Acquaye says that, with Froese's blessing, she will continue to work closely with subsequent line-ups to fulfil her late husband's avisions, despite Edgar's son Jerome, a member for 16 years, declaring TG cannot exist without the man who formed them in 1967.

Floating ambience, soaring cathedral melodies... it sounds like Tangerine Dream.

For decades, TD have seemed light years away from the Floyd-influenced psychedelic outfit formed at Berlin's fabled Zodiac Club, or 1970's debut *Electronic Meditation*, the bonkers jam between Froese, drummer Klaus Schulze and guitarist Conrad Schnitzler that scored their record deal with Ohr. After 1971's feet-finding *Alpha Centauri*, the epic *Zeit* saw TD creating evocative deep space symphonies that hugely influenced the nascent prog movement. 1973's Peel-championed *Atem* secured a deal with Virgin, the astonishing *Phaedra* providing an unexpected Top 20 breakthrough. The Froese, Peter Baumann and Christopher Finke line-up would lead to a 40-year career that saw their music often getting smoother and sleeker.

The post-Froese line-up of new musical director Thorsten Quaeschning (who joined in 2005), keyboardist Ulrich Schnauss (2014) and electric violinist Hoshiko Yamane (2011) debuted last June at the Polish concert that became a live album. In September they will release *Quantum Gate*, the first instalment in *The Quantum Years*, a phase Froese intended to use for revisiting TD's seminal mid-70s sound.

Particles gives a taste of things to come and indeed sounds like Tangerine Dream as they deploy their trademark floating ambience, soaring cathedral melodies and pulsating sequences on disc one's three tracks recorded in Berlin studios. After the atmospherically ambient *4pm Session* and glistening cover of the theme from hit Netflix show *Stranger Things* (itself influenced by TD), they confidently revisit the classic *Rubycon*.

Disc two, recorded live at last September's Schwingungen Festival am Wasserfall, presents new tracks and straddles the catalogue with glossy remakes of 1980's *White Eagle*, '86's *Dolphin Dance* and *Shadow And Sun*'s riding, keening hang-gliding-over-mountains-in-your-underpants synths.

Although Froese's spirit is obviously nudging the musicians' cerebral faucets, without their leader, this is essentially still the world's most officially approved tribute band. Well worth a digital bubble bath for TD's many devotees though.

KRIS NEEDS

THE TANGENT

The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery INSIDEOUT

UK quintet attempt to take the pulse of the nation.



Having started out in 2002 as a one-off solo project from Andy Tillison during an extended break from Parallel Or 90 Degrees, The Tangent has since grown into a multi-headed beast than nothing can stop. Not even the minor heart attack that Tillison suffered two years ago, just after the release of their eighth studio effort, *A Spark In The Aether*.

Eloquent, far-reaching prog that addresses how nationalist attitudes still prevail.

If said album marked a return to prog rock dynamics after the orchestral flourishes of 2013's *Le Sacre Du Travail*, then *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery* is very much cast from similar stuff. It is, however, more inflamed than we might expect. This might or might not be down to Tillison's recent brush with mortality, but there's no denying the rage and disaffection at the kernel of these highly topical songs. The multi-instrumentalist uses Roger Waters as an example of someone whose prog tendencies pack a fierce socio-political punch. "Waters set a challenge to others in the genre," he states. "A challenge which has not been frequently accepted."

With that in mind, you certainly can't accuse Tillison of neglect of duty. *The Slow Rust Of Forgotten Machinery...* is an often savage critique of Britain in 2017, his ire directed towards those in positions of responsibility, from the establishment to the tabloid press and the more divisive elements of TV news. At the album's centre is *Slow Rust*, over 22 minutes of eloquent, far-reaching prog that addresses the British Empire and how nationalist attitudes still prevail in some quarters.

Tillison's vocals entwine with those of new recruit Marie-Eve de Gaultier on a sublime epic that flows gently one moment and roars the next. There are stinging references to the wars we make and the wars we happily finance, alongside the right-wing media's coverage of the refugee crisis. Tillison compares the tone of reportage surrounding those on the boats ('like incidental characters in a weekend hospital show') to the frivolous goings-on chez Brangelina.

The sense of revulsion is magnified further in the epic *A Few Steps Down The Wrong Road*, with its nods to Brexit and the false narrative of ordinary people being allowed mastery of their own political destiny.

All this might suggest a prolonged outpouring of wrath, yet The Tangent invest these songs with a measured grace that befits musicians of the stature of sax player/flautist Theo Travis, guitarist Luke Machin and bassist Jonas Reingold. *Doctor Livingston (I Presume)* is a busy instrumental that plays to all their strengths, a fusionist's dream of prog, jazz and quasi-funk, proving The Tangent can still deliver on a grand scale.

ROB HUGHES

KIM SEVIOUR

Recovery Is Learning WHITE STAR

Touchstone's former frontwoman makes first solo steps.

The title is important. After the better part of a decade with the band, two years ago health issues forced Kim Seviour to walk away from Touchstone. The singer had been dealing with chronic fatigue for some time and needed to make some changes in her life. However, abandoning music was never an option and *Recovery Is Learning* is Seviour's first solo album. Co-written with and produced by her friend John Mitchell of Lonely Robot, Frost* and others, it's perhaps rather more pop-based than some may have expected, though as their cover of Tears For Fears' *Mad World* served to remind



us, Touchstone never hid from that particular element of their makeup. Dizzying time signatures are in short supply but it's great to hear Seviour in powerful voice, soaring above a set of songs that mostly favours the formula of less-is-more. Keyboards tend to dominate

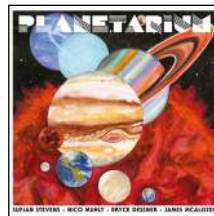
though Mitchell's guitar is, of course, another pivotal element, his solos adding an additional aura of class to the album's title track. Kim's study of her condition seeps into many of the lyrics - she calls it "a truly organic self-fulfilling prophecy" - but instead of self-pity this album resonates with acceptance, optimism and positivity. **DML**

SUFJAN STEVENS, BRYCE DESSNER, NICO MUHLY, JAMES McALISTER

Planetarium 4AD

Avant-supergroup reach for the stars.

The origins of this unique collaboration can be traced back to 2011, when Dutch concert hall Muziekgebouw Eindhoven asked US classical composer Nico Muhly to create a piece of music based on the Solar System. Roping in The National's guitarist Bryce Dessner, singer-songwriter Sufjan Stevens and the latter's longtime drummer James McAlister, the quartet first performed it together in Amsterdam the following year. They reshaped the material in the studio soon after, but it was only in 2016 that they returned to *Planetarium* for a final buff-up. Good things come to



those who wait. Stevens' feathery vocals are the album's fixed core, around which his astrological and metaphysical enquiries are given grandiose scope. The suitably imposing *Jupiter* is typical: hushed vocals and tinkling synths flaring into electronic avant-noise before

subsiding into a symphonic progscape warmed by brass and strings. At other times, ambient passages drift like time-lapse studies of the cosmos. Most impressive of all is the 15-minute space odyssey that is *Earth*, a musical journey into paranoia and contradiction that feels like an extended eco prayer. **RH**

THE EDEN HOUSE

Songs For The Broken Ones JUNGLE

Nephilim men build a bigger dwelling for album three.

A few months before the release of The Eden House's second album *Half-Life*, co-founding bassist Tony Pettitt announced he was rejoining his old band, Fields Of The Nephilim. But instead of signalling their demise, it marked the beginning of a new period of creativity, and the result is the atmospheric *Songs For The Broken Ones*. Core members Pettitt, guitarist Stephen Carey and former Nephilim drummer Simon Ripplin have created an album that builds on their trademark Floydian soundscapes and melancholic vocals, but also brings in some unexpected nuances from special guests that include Sneaker Pimps'



Kelli Ali and Faith & The Muse chanteuse Monica Richards. There are fragile echoes of Cocteau Twins in the haunting *The Ghost Of You*, flamenco flourishes on the danceable lead single *Verdades*, and brooding gothic atmospheres on *12th Night*. Anathema's Lee

Douglas provides sultry vocals on the Mazzy Star-esque *It's Just A Death*, while violinist Bob Loveday and new vocalist Louise Crane (ex-Solemn Novena) spice up the Eastern-inspired *Misery*. Then there's the ambitious trip-hop-inspired closer, *The Ardent Tide*, just shy of nine minutes. A natural follow-up to *Half-Life*, this reaffirms THE's place in the scene. **NRS**

THE LAST DINOSAUR

The Nothing NAIM

Quietly bold lo-fi album ponders mortality.

London musician Jamie Cameron seems young to be making an album all about death. The loss of a close friend in a car crash 12 years ago, however - Cameron was also in the car - has haunted him since, and he felt the need for a cathartic set of compositions. *The Nothing* isn't morbid in any grandiose or showboating way, but rather whispers its hushed path through the emotional minefield that is coming to improved terms with grief. Like the music of Sparklehorse or Eels which it aims to emulate, it eventually finds a route to being gently uplifting. His previous album *Hooray For Happiness!* (from 2010)



centred on a relationship break-up, so there may be shades of deadpan irony at play here. *We'll Greet Death* is a lilting shuffle which eventually embraces a chanted refrain, while *Grow* is an alt-folk amble delivering its pathos with a light touch. *The Sea*

stutters softly in with finger snaps before muted harmonics guide it to a place between post-rock and pretty balladry. Jamie Cameron is effectively a one-man band, and his admirable DIY ethos doesn't always construct the scale he desires, although Rachel Lanskey's viola textures really help to bring some colour to the sketches. **CR**

THE MOTHERS EARTH EXPERIMENT

The Mothers Earth Experiment WORDFISH

West Midlands six-piece invoke Island pink-label mischief.

If you can't judge a band by their album covers - and the photo of six earth-smudged faces staring into a woodland pit doesn't give you much to go on - then maybe you can judge them by who they've supported: in the case of The Mothers Earth Experiment, Gong, Syd Arthur and Arthur Brown. Then you get a more brightly illuminated picture. The opener *Talos* starts off with the two guitarists playing a blues-tinged pattern to underline Mark Roberts' soaring lead vocals in a three time, which stylistically makes one think they might have fitted on an Island sampler from 1970. But in the



instrumental links, dropped or added beats typically shift the perspective of the piece. The group use this device a lot and on *Quietus* they play these time changes so deftly and subtly that the 'one' is left hanging, briefly leaving the listener in a state of

disorientation. Some have cited them as having a jazz influence but apart from having a nifty keyboard player in James Baker, it doesn't really swing as such. But their rhythmic mobility is integral to the structure of their songs and both underpins and complements the vocal melodies, which are forceful and memorable throughout. **MB**

UNTIL RAIN

Inure LASER'S EDGE

Itinerant prog metal crew flex their sonic muscles.

Formed in Thessaloniki, Greece, but now based in the UK, Until Rain have made steady progress since their prodigious 2009 debut *The Reign Of Dreams* and now sound more than ready to elbow their way to the top of the prog metal pile. *Inure* isn't an album overburdened with radical ideas: instead it offers a more refined and elegantly subversive version of the fervently modern but fluid bombast that this sextet have been honing for the last decade. At times it feels like the band have spent a lot of time listening to Scandinavian, rather than British or American, prog bands. Despite regular bursts of quasi-extreme metal



crunch, *New World Fiction* and *Because Something Might Happen* both echo the harmony-laden richness of The Flower Kings at their spiky but lavish best, while opener *Progressus In Idem* marries the heavier end of Dream Theater's much-mimicked blueprint

with the kind of quirky, atmospheric textures and rhythmic tricks beloved of Pain Of Salvation. The end result is only intermittently surprising - a textbook prog metal enterprise but there is something undeniably distinctive and charming about the way Until Rain blend their influences to bolster some consistently absorbing songwriting. **DL**



AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Having worked predominantly in the New Age field, Turkish synth composer **Yüksel Güney Hanedan** proves his avant-garde credentials with his latest, self-released work. *The Voyage*, he says, 'depicts impressionist sounds of an imaginary post-modern vehicle journey'. It does, too - with new age adornments, Hanedan's locomotive ambient/noise tapestry makes for a hypnotic and compelling journey in sound.

Similarly layered and experimental is the latest entry from

London electronic composer/producer **Lossy** with **Strangers Are People Too**, alias visual artist/VJ Sarah Culross. Four-part piece *Microverse* (Boot Cycle Audio) features sparse Eno-esque synths, pissed-up pianos, Aphex Twinned beats and simple horn lines intertwining, making for an intriguing, immersive and deliciously Warped listen. If its progressive electronica and modern avant-jazz slant weren't enough, the accompanying visuals take it to an altogether more psychedelic plane.

If Zeuhl is more your thing then you're probably all over **Universal Totem Orchestra** by now.

The Italians' third album *Mathematical Mother* (Black Widow) came out in December but, as is sometimes the way of things, the CD's only just reached us, and thank Vander it did. Even if your Italian's rustier than your Kobaian, Ana Torres Fraile's extraordinary soprano vocals will keep you enthralled. The

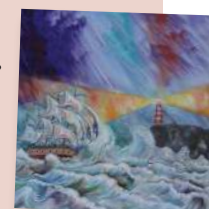
music's grand, gothic, bombastic, with a wide symphonic sweep and some knotty, old-school avant-prog noodlings from guitarist Daniel Valle and keysman Fabrizio Mattuzzi.

Meanwhile, Nottingham's **Seas Of Mirth** purvey a punky, shanty-inspired rock shot through with musicianship that hints at a serious world/roots sensibility, and a lot of fun it is too. *Hark! The Headland Approacheth (I'm Not From London)* is a rollicking, rum-soaked trip awash with fiddles, pipes, Primus-y basslines and spirited all-together vocals. Tunes like *The Curse Of The Conniving Lighthouse Sniper* and *The Curse Of The Dreaded Devil's Triangle* roll, pitch and yaw thrillingly beneath your feet. Nautical, but nice.

We'll be speaking to Australian guitarist **James Norbert Ivanyi** in a forthcoming issue of *Prog*. The three tracks on his fourth EP *Denalavis* not only confirm what a monster metal guitar player he is, but also show his evolving, prog-influenced compositional approach and talent for evoking moods (dark ones), complete with splashes of Mellotron and even a cheeky Erik Satie lift in *Malignant Inhabitants*.

And on another classical note let me leave you this time with a sublime modern orchestral work from **Tom**

Hobden and Eliot James. Violinist Hobden was in indie band Noah & The Whale and James produced them, along with Mumford And Sons and Laura Marling. *Roam* (Village Green) sees them explore their mutual love for the likes of Vaughan Williams, Britten and Max Richter, and it's a lovingly produced, beautifully performed debut.



RADIOHEAD

OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 - 2017 XL RECORDINGS

I'm OK, you're OK. The 20-year anniversary of the 90s landmark.



Attempting to emulate Miles Davis' avant-garde epic *Bitches Brew* – “building something up and watching it fall apart” – though incomparable genre-wise, on balance, history validates Thom Yorke's youthful chutzpah.

The songs are infused by an experimental weirdness... Genius.

Breaking free from the retro-fixated, introspective Britpop stodge of their peers' output, *OK Computer* had critics of the day clambering for the nearest thesaurus, and with good cause. A courageous left-field leap from the wondrous, if essentially conservative, guitar-stuffed *The Bends*, it would prove a career-defining bridging point from indie to the fragmented shards that ensued. A searing riposte to the day's 'things can only get better' mindset, impersonal cityscapes of steel and glass vibrating with pre-millennial tension, inner anxieties and alienation were examined through the filter of burgeoning technology and palpable unease. Or they were just “fucking miserable bastards”, as some suggested. Flagged up by lead single *Paranoid Android*, the six-minute, four-part *Bohemian Rhapsody* for the ADHD generation, never before or since has such convoluted ambiguity charted in the Top Three (well, perhaps Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*).

Opener *Airbag* lulls us in, not entirely dissimilar to *The Bends*' *Planet Telex*, but from there on, things shift fast and loose. *Exit Music (For A Film)* – literally, for Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet* – plus further singles *Karma Police* and *No Surprises* ostensibly display the trappings of conventional songwriting, but they're infused by an experimental weirdness: unusual instrumentation, too much space, left-turns, surprises. Genius, in other words.

The scrappy guitar aggression of *Electioneering* rubs abrasively against the genuinely distressing *Climbing The Walls*: the aural equivalent of psychogeography in a mental asylum. The blank-faced core is *Fitter Happier*, the robotically intoned, stark slice of musique concrète that reads like a recipe for corporate nihilism – a message that hasn't dated.

Package-wise, there's the original album, eight B-sides, plus three offcuts of considerable quality. *I Promise* conflates Roy Orbison and U2's *All I Want Is You* with added pathos, while *Man Of War* dials up the pomp with a backward glance as it passes. The anthemic *Lift*, according to guitarist Ed O'Brien, was subconsciously nixed due to its commerciality, and he's got a point. Lose the drum shuffle and some of the arrangement and here's the Elbow and Coldplay blueprint writ large.

As pertinent now as it was 20 years ago, presaging the political, the personal and the musical – Brexit, binary opinions, atomisation, the ghostly dubstep of Burial – *OK Computer*'s a time-travelling Zeitgeist.

TIM BATCUP

CAROLANNE PEGG

Carolanne Pegg - Remastered Edition CHERRY RED

A lost folk prog masterwork rediscovered.

Recently, there's been something of a renaissance in female classic folk artists. Last year Shirley Collins garnered huge plaudits for *Lodestar*, a cathartic return as she re-found her voice and recorded her first album in 38 years. Meanwhile, original Fairport singer Judy Dyble has delighted prog fans with her renewed energy for music.

Carolanne Pegg's eponymous solo album from 1973 is, of course, not exactly new, but this reissued rarity feels absolutely fresh. It kicks off with a crisp and rocked-up version of Collins' *Open The Door*, but Pegg's talent is all her own. Her voice – a combination of Kate Bush's edgy theatricality and a folkie's down-home warmness – reminds us that Kate Bush was not the first Brit to break the female vocals out of sweet clichés.

Pegg is more than ably abetted by guitar maestro Albert Lee. His country-flavoured licks spit fire over Dave Peacock's bass and Michael Lavelle's cello. The crisp interplays between the three represent one of the real benefits



of the remastering job. However, it's Pegg who startles. Her vocal feats – by turns gritty, weird and moving – turn folk and country into a psychedelic prog masterwork. Tracks like *A Witch's Guide To The Underground* and *The Sapphire* evoke a lost dark-folk world that

never was. She is, then, a kind of fairy godmother not only for Kate Bush, but Crumbling Ghost and even Richard Dawson. Perhaps the standout track is *Fair Fortune's Star*, a multi-movement suite that follows a lady through a dark wood towards enlightenment. It might act as a symbol for Pegg's journey itself. Not only does it compete with peak Fairport but it achieves a menace they couldn't dream of.

This re-release benefits from a superb essay by Prog's Malcolm Dome. This is a beautiful album whose only sadness lies in what might have been if Pegg had received the popular attention she deserved. On the closing track, when Pegg sings, 'I guess we're winter people now,' you're left thinking this album deserves a second spring. **RM**

COLOURBOX

Music Of The Band (1982 - 1987) 4AD

Eighties innovators celebrated by 2000 Turner Prize winner.

Anyone who visited the Wolfgang Tillmans exhibition at the Tate Modern during the first half of this year will know that this music sounds truly great. Partly because the acclaimed German artist chose it to play on a loop in a conceptualised “listening space”, where the sound quality was so fine you wanted to live there, and partly because Colourbox were always as visionary as they were eclectic.

Their wilful mash-ups of soul, dub, electronica and hip-hop seemed all the stranger emanating from the then mostly “ethereal” label 4AD, and their freak international No.1 hit single *Pump Up The Volume* – a collaboration with AR Kane under the name MARRS – led to litigation regarding samples on top of disillusionment with the pressures of success. Yet in five years, brothers Martyn and Steven Young (together with Ian Robbins and vocalists Lorita Grahame and Debian Curry) had left a groundbreaking, gratifying legacy.

Steven and Ian sadly passed away in recent years, so this compilation –



released as a double album with gatefold sleeve featuring a new Tillmans photograph – arrives as a tribute to them, as well as a bona fide art artefact. As Tillmans says, they were “pioneers of experimental pop”, and “at the forefront of sampling, which in its digital form would become ubiquitous in the course of the 1980s”.

For all their fascination with studio technique, these tracks flow with a light-footed ease, their catholic influences ranging freely over spacious, rock-steady grooves. Being an authentic fanboy, Tillmans has elected to omit one or two better-known numbers, like *Tarantula* (made famous by This Mortal Coil) and even their would-be *World Cup Theme*. However, their blend of high jinks and intensity glows on the likes of *Looks Like We're Shy One Horse*, *Just Give 'Em Whiskey* and the 10-minute tease of *Nation*.

The sampled voices get busy, but on *The Moon Is Blue* we're reminded that Grahame's singing was their main vocal weapon. The roots of modernism. **CR**

GOBLIN

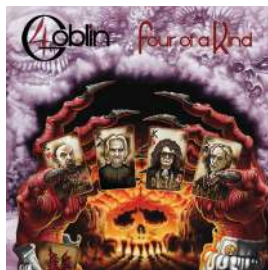
Four Of A Kind BLACK WIDOW

Four's a crowd but this version of Goblin hit pay dirt.

Stick around in the progressive world long enough and inevitably you'll probably end up with more than one version of your original band. Look no further than cover stars Yes. Or FaUSt.

For Italy's Goblin, there are currently four incarnations doing the rounds: pre-Goblin act Cherry Five, Goblin Rebirth, Claudio Simonetti's Goblin and plain old Goblin, and it is the latter mob, featuring originals Massimo Morante (guitar) and Fabio Pignatelli (bass) with drummer Agostino Marangolo and keyboard player Maurizio Guarini, both of whom had joined by 1975, that are here.

It was this line-up who recorded the reunion album *Back To The Goblin* back in 2006 and almost a decade later announced a PledgeMusic campaign to fund a new album. Originally released in 2015, Black Widow have got their hands on *Four Of A Kind*, and reissued it, with one extra track, a live version of the track *Goblin*, from their 1976 album *Roller*, recorded in 2014, along with four Goblin playing cards, representing



the four members. Fortunately the music is far easier to comprehend than the band's chequered past. It's more stylised prog than the sometimes discordant, jarring soundtrack work which forever cemented their place in the prog pantheon.

Opener *Uneven Times* offers a heady mix of Yes and ELP, while *In The Name Of Goblin* and *Bon Ton* add more Genesis-like textures.

Guitarist Morante and keyboard player Guarini both come to the fore on the highly atmospheric *Kingdom* and *Dark Blue(s)*, *Love & Hate* and *008* all maintain a solid and engaging run of form.

The epic 12-minute plus of *Goblin*, recorded live in Austin, Texas and taken from the band's own live *Austinato* release, closes things off, replete with drum solo.

If the band's blood-spattered Giallo and zombie affiliated soundtracks have passed you by, then this reissue of *Four Of A Kind* is the ideal place to begin your investigation. **JE**

IQ

The Seventh House GIANT ELECTRIC PEA

Hampshire neo-prog stalwarts' 2000 album released on gatefold vinyl.

Well, as they say, better late than never. A mere 17 years since its 2000 release, IQ have finally been able to release their seventh album on double-disc gatefold vinyl.

Back then, for a small label like GEP, it surely made sense to stick to the dominant format of CD. Now though, vinyl is back as an increasingly desirable, luxury format. And the result doesn't half look good. The bright red cover art makes it one of those records that's always going to stand out on the shelf, but more satisfying still are the gatefold sleeve, the two weighty discs and the poly-lined inner sleeves.

Does it sound better? That probably depends largely on your personal preference. Audio buffs would point out that CD superseded vinyl for good reason, and in some ways, CD's ability to present an album like this 56-minute affair without the need to touch your stereo does lend itself to works designed as an artistic whole, to be digested in one sitting. But the music sounds anything but dated.



If you're a newcomer to this album, it may not be as conceptually stirring, or as long as its celebrated predecessor, 1997's double album *Subterranea*, but musically, it's a worthy successor, on which each of the band deliver powerful performances.

Ebullient opening statement *The Wrong Side Of Weird* bursts into life via John Jowitt's revving bassline and Peter Nicholls' vocal ability to flit between the lost and lonely and menacingly malevolent. A searing guitar solo from Mike Holmes closes out *Zero Hour* and some beautifully Gilmourian reveries open the next track *Shooting Angels*. Meanwhile, there are some majestic piano breaks from Martin Orford on the title track.

But, as ever, captivating melodies are IQ's strongest suit, as showcased on the descending figures of *Erosion* and the anthemic piano balladry of *Guiding Light* to end the album. So you can debate at your leisure which format you'd rather listen to, but the content stands up as well as it ever has. **JS**

NIRVANA

Local Anaesthetic/Songs Of Love And Praise: Remastered & Expanded Edition ESOTERIC

Original 'weird' Nirvana's two early 70s rarities expanded.



Decades before their Seattle namesake settled out of court to continue using their band's name, London songwriting duo Patrick Campbell-Lyons and Alex Spyropoulos were seducing pirate radio with the baroque chamber loveliness of July 1967's debut single *Tiny Goddess*, and predating the Pretty Things' *SF Sorrow* as rock's first concept opera with *The Story Of Simon Simopath*, the first band album released on Island Records. After releasing 1968's *All Of Us* and scoring minor success with the phasing-drenched *Rainbow Chaser*, the duo faced acid rock-craving audiences with their chamber-style The Nirvana Ensemble. When Island rejected their third album, Spyropoulos split, leaving Campbell-Lyons to go it alone on the newly launched Vertigo label.



A painful divorce channelled through jazz-inflected rock.



Leaving behind all classical influences and lyrical subtleties, Revox-recorded songs channelled the pain of Campbell-Lyons' divorce through jazz-inflected rock. Joined by pianist Pete Kelly from the *Hair* musical pit band, Crimson horn man Mel Collins and Jade Warrior percussionist John Field, he recorded the two extended suites that form 1971's startling *Local Anaesthetic*.

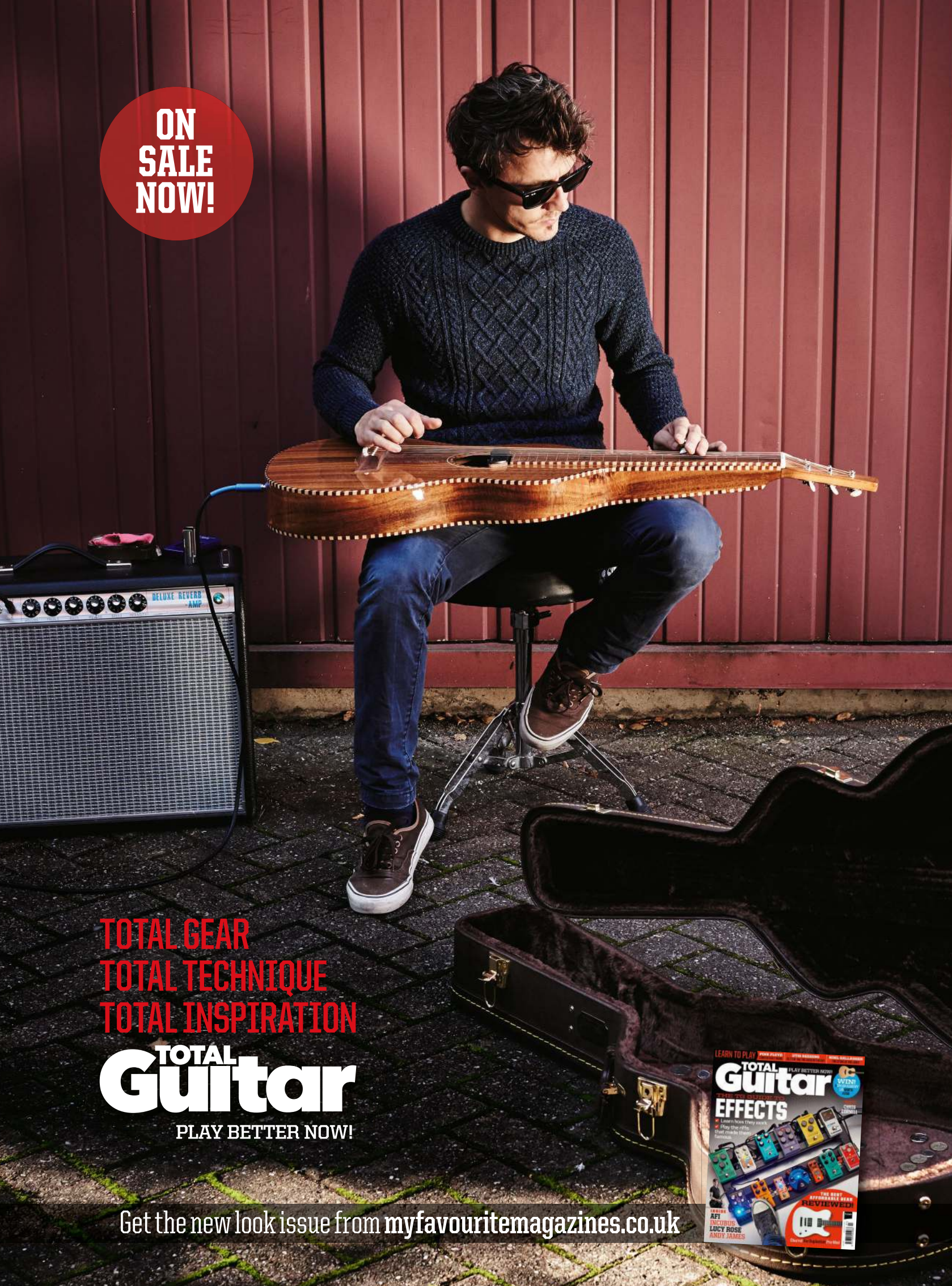
Campbell-Lyons describes the album as "Nirvana getting weird... indescribable and schizophrenic". Sounding like a deeply hurt and somewhat sozzled Ray Davies, the convoluted *Modus Operandi* is indeed a far cry from the band's ornate delicacy as he forces himself down avenues of pain and bitter reflection against music that often mirrors his trauma. The five-part *Home* sees him letting loose his demons against a band straining at the leash to get down in the funky style so popular in the early 1970s, while Campbell-Lyons gamely emotes movements with titles like *Construction* and *Fanfare*. The reissue comes with heartbroken single *The Saddest Day Of My Life* and oddly Chas & Dave-recalling B-side *I Wanna Go Home* (if they were crying into their beer).

1972's more conventionally song-based *Songs Of Love And Praise* was more uplifting thanks to its infusion of positive spiritual optimism on titles such as *Lord Up Above* and psychedelic bossa nova *Need Your Love Tonight*, while *Stadium* makes up for its rather corny lyrics with a tasty jazz piano middle section from a band including Procol Harum drummer Bobby Harrison and returning cellist Sylvia Schuster.

The album also demolishes beautiful early single *Pentecost Hotel* with a Wandsworth school kiddie choir, and *Rainbow Chaser* is revisited with somewhat ill-fitting soul brass tattoos. The two B-sides that accompanied those two tracks when released as singles provide bonus tracks, wrapping up a worthwhile pair of eccentric early prog curios.

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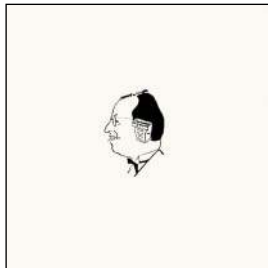
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JEAN-JACQUES PERREY

Jean-Jacques Perrey
Et Son Ondioline FORGOTTEN FUTURES

Early works from electro-exoticist signpost the future.

As Simon Reynolds observes in his excellent sleeve notes, history likes to portray the early pioneers of electronic music as serious, high-minded figures. Composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Schaeffer were unapologetically experimental in their



A vacuum tube-based keyboard with a variety of filters, the Ondioline was invented in 1939 to mimic the sounds of an orchestra, but in Perrey's hands it became something far stranger.

Compiled here on album for the first time, the range of noises that he coaxes from the keys

is fascinating. At one extreme, there's the sonic humour of *Chicken On The Rocks*' yodelling mechanical bird, and on *Barnyard In Orbit*, an entire chorus of farm animals. At the other, there's the delicate tonalities of *La Vache Et Le Prisonnier* and the pensive, fluting *Dandelion Wine*.

But it's those songs where Perrey's playing subtly enhances the composition that are the most compelling: *Cigale* is swinging lift music for Le Corbusier's modernist tower blocks, while the *Telstar*-indebted *Pioneers Of The Stars* resembles a psychedelic Morricone theme.

Perrey isn't exactly unsung - he went on to produce a series of exotic Moog albums that epitomised the trend for 'space age bachelor pad music' a few years ago - but it's his early mastery of the Ondioline, a forerunner of the modern synth, that is less well known.

Jean-Jacques Perrey believed the future should be fun, but he made it beautiful as well. **JB**

MAX RICHTER

Out Of The Dark Room MILAN MUSIC

Classical master sings for the screen.

Of all the composers who've emerged from the success of Reich, Glass and the so-called 'minimalist' movement, perhaps Max Richter has achieved the widest public and critical recognition. Two of his recent projects - the eight-hour *Sleep* (which also produced a fine remix from Mogwai) and his *Vivaldi: Four Seasons Recomposed* - have taken electronic and classical music in fascinating directions.



The Haunted Ocean 5, often heartbreaking.

Apart from 2014's WWI movie, *Testament Of Youth*, Richter works with low-key, non-mainstream projects, and his appreciation for traumatic memory (*Sarah's Key*) or an oppressed girl's dream of freedom

(*Wadjda*) is astonishing. The solo cello on *Wadjda's Journey* is exquisite - a representation of a human voice rising above an electronically altered Middle Eastern underscore.

This compilation of Richter's work for cinema is not only fascinating, but it's also a fantastic initiation into both his oeuvre and his development as a composer. It reveals both the consistency of his writing and his willingness to work with challenging screen material.

Richter has an unequalled gift for making one slow pulse of woodwind gesture towards abstracts like 'love' or 'fear'. A single piano note dies into silence and it takes you with it.

Opening with music from the animated war-based movie *Waltz With Bashir*, this album packs many of Richter's best tropes - the endless lines for strings, the quite terrifying electronic beats and dark brass - into a relatively short space. His mastery of orchestration, individual instruments and repetition is mesmeric and, as in

One of the common criticisms of movie music is that it's too episodic to really add up to anything. Certainly this compilation isn't as revelatory as one of his full-length works, but it's rich with music that will reward repeat listening, deep into the night or on the daily commute. Richter's music helps you feel without telling you what to feel. It's a rare achievement. **RM**

KRAFTWERK

3-D The Catalogue PARLOPHONE

The Men Machines' live sets collected over myriad formats.



Looking back at the 70s, within the musical climate that gave this magazine its name, Kraftwerk were a far from easy proposition for some people. Computers were a largely unknown quantity and there was a distrust of the machines 'playing themselves', like a nightmarish subplot from George Orwell's 1984. And so a group like Kraftwerk, who were flaunting their relationship with hardware, were seen by some to be the epitome of fake, soulless music. This was not helped by a certain post-war xenophobia. When, in 1975, journalist Lester Bangs asked if theirs was a musical "final solution", the group's Ralph Hutter countered by extolling the "superior mentality" of the German people. It's clear now that with Kraftwerk, the German sense of humour was also greatly underestimated. And it still runs freely through these releases, from a single DVD of selected highlights to the full live reworkings of the eight albums from *Autobahn* onwards.



**Remarkably fresh...
retro-futuristic art
that's age-proof.**



When Hutter ominously intones '*Man Machine/Semi-human being*' through his vocoder, it's played so straight that the effect is deliciously absurd. And it's accompanied by some striking animated constructivist artwork of red, white and black shapes. These are essentially more robust, expanded versions of the originals, or retreads of their 2005 live release *Minimum-Maximum*, but both the audio and visuals are superb.

Nothing ages more quickly than music about, or ostentatiously using, contemporary technology, but the dancing electronic beats and shiny synth melodies of 1981's *Computer World* sound remarkably fresh and timeless. The visuals, displaying ancient computer fonts and numbers, and obsolete terminals, are so beautifully animated that it forms a piece of retro-futurist art that has remained age-proof. But when Hutter mechanically informs us about data held by '*USA, Scotland Yard and KGB*', he couldn't be more topical.

Kraftwerk haven't released any new material in 30 years and one imagines the reason is because they got it so beautifully right at the time. The sedate, cruising-speed motorik of *Autobahn* is nearly a decade older, but sounds even more modernist. The accompanying video, designed like a cross between a sat nav and a car chase computer game (except that all the vehicles are proceeding in an orderly manner) is stylish without really being involving. The four group members stand wearing jumpsuits adorned with fluorescent strips, like something out of a 1960s sci-fi film, manipulating their consoles throughout. One wonders if they're actually doing anything and then, on *The Robots*, they all lift their arms up robotically. This suggests that at this point, at least, the machines really are playing themselves. And it sounds great.

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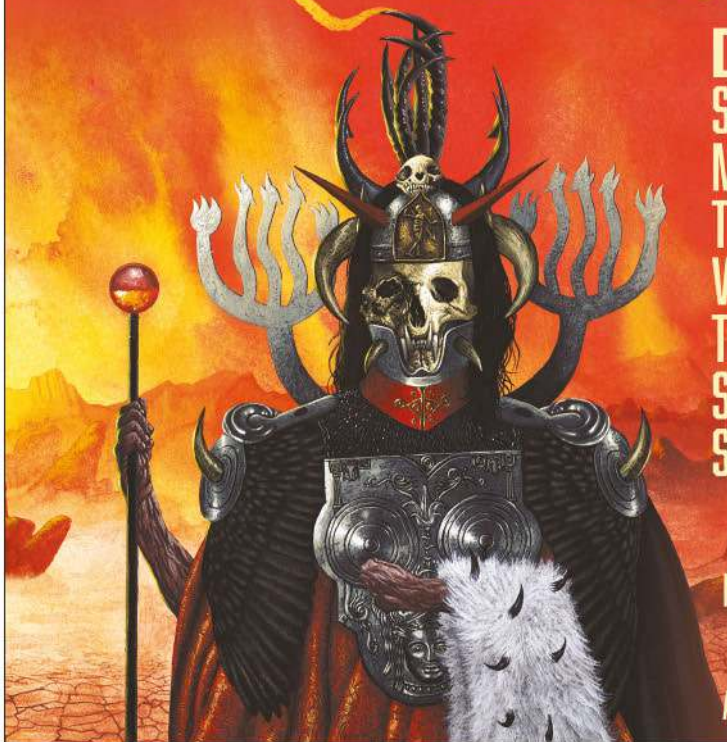
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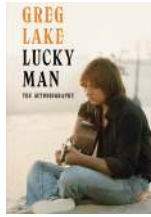


GREG LAKE

Lucky Man: The Autobiography CONSTABLE

From the beginning to the end...

Having had more encounters with pimps, pornographers, hoods, hookers, heavies, pop stars, rock legends, chancers, dancers, movers and shakers than most of us have had hot dinners, you might expect Lake's autobiography to be a garrulous cavalcade of riotous, scandalous episodes. However, throughout its pages, Lake is cast as more of a bystander, alone in a crowd rather than leading the parade. Though he sold millions of albums worldwide, Lake is frustratingly light on the creative processes animating them. Though mentioned, the frictions that lit up ELP are mostly left undiscussed in any meaningful detail.



He is, however, unflinching in his criticism of the *Works* era and their 90s return. Tellingly he points to mutual respect as the cornerstone of a successful group - once gone, then so too is any notion of a band. Related in simple prose, his account of what by any measure is a remarkable life seems curiously muted. Lake once said that a musician's output is a more reliable indicator of who they are as a person, rather than trawling through interviews or books. Though containing several useful insights and, in the latter part, some poignant observations on his own mortality, reading *Lucky Man*, it's hard to disagree. **SS**

PENDRAGON

Masquerade 20 METAL MIND

A testament to Pendragon's legacy and staying power.

It's fitting that this 20th-anniversary celebration of Pendragon's classic, commercially successful *The Masquerade Overture* was documented in Poland, where the band are held in such high esteem. The venue's modest size and the unpretentious stage set-up give this confident tour de force of neo-prog real intimacy. With the sometimes overlooked Peter Gee on bass, additional guitar and keyboards, Clive Nolan's keyboard noodling and new boy Jan-Vincent Velazco very ably occupying the drum stool, the band is on great form, although it's a relaxed Nick Barrett's guitar and voice that consistently demand attention. Diehard



fans will enjoy the bang-for-their-buck, yet with minimal angles and production design flourishes the two and a half hours of this set may drag for the casual viewer. Also, apart from the whole of *The Masquerade Overture* and four *Men Who Climb Mountains* tracks, only three other songs are included, with nothing from the earliest albums, so it's no entire career retrospective. Extras include a gallery, an interview with Gee and Valezco, and a video collage of the band's time in Sri Lanka. Written when prog was a dirty four-letter word, *The Masquerade Overture* and this DVD remind us of the potential potency of a genre. **GMM**

YES

Close To The Edge: How Yes' Masterpiece Defined Prog Rock by Will Romano BACKBEAT BOOKS

Exhaustive, well-presented insight of Yes' 1972 opus.

Is there such a thing as the ultimate prog album? Now there's a lengthy, inconclusive debate in itself. But New Yorker Will Romano does a cogent job in presenting the case for *Close To The Edge*. Naturally, he goes into massive detail on every aspect of this record, including the background of the musicians involved, also providing a historical perspective of the era. If you're after an in-depth analysis of Yes' celebrated fifth album, then this admirably suits the purpose. Romano is adept at getting to the nub of Anderson's lyrical inspirations, and explaining the clever wordplay on *Siberian Khatru* - if you don't already



know what it is, you'll find out now. But in doing so, the author ensures the creative awareness that led to the recording of this album is never overlooked. He is clearly a fan - his first taste of Yes was a 45 of *Roundabout*, given to him by his uncle - and never lets intellectual observation cloud his love for the music. With first-hand references from key personnel such as Anderson, Wakeman and engineer Eddy Offord, its 288 pages - including a centre 12 pages of photos, but a surprising lack of the album's feted visuals - reinforce the claim for this being the defining record in prog history. **MD**

PINK FLOYD/NICK MASON

Their Mortal Remains/Inside Out V&A PUBLISHING/W&N

Two books that celebrate Floyd's 50th Anniversary.



Despite not being active since 2014's *The Endless River*, and Nick Mason quoting David Gilmour as "declaring that it was definitely, indubitably, irrefutably Pink Floyd's last album", there does seem to be an awful lot of Pink Floyd around these days. Admittedly a lot of that has to do with it being the 50th anniversary of the band, or at least the release of their still astonishing debut album *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, given the band's roots can be traced back to 1965 and they were performing live as The Pink Floyd in 1966.

Still, a 50th anniversary is nothing to be sniffed at, and the

This goes way beyond the definition of an exhibition guide.

current *Their Mortal Remains* exhibiton at the Victoria & Albert Museum is a fitting reminder of one of the most majestic careers in British rock music.

To that end, the resplendent, heavyweight tome that accompanies the exhibition goes way beyond the definition of an exhibition guide. With access to the band's archives, *Their Mortal Remains* is a treasure trove of delights for fans. But it's not just the visual side that sets it aside as something extra and worthwhile. There are five essays from the likes of composer Howard Goodall and commentator Jon Savage, while band biographer and sometime *Prog* writer Mark Blake also weighs in with a reappraisal of the band's magical back catalogue.

With its striking lenticular *Dark Side Of The Moon* prism cover and a more than reasonable cover price of £26, if you can't actually get to the exhibition itself then this worthy volume almost makes up for it.

Nick Mason's avuncular tome *Inside Out*, prefaced *A Personal History Of Pink Floyd*, has also been updated and reissued. Aside from the restyled cover, we get a new chapter which addresses recent Floydian comings and goings such as the release of *The Endless River*, *The Early Years* box set and the aforementioned *Their Mortal Remains* exhibition.

This writer would have liked a more in-depth recall of the recording process of *The Endless River*. And Mason once told this writer he felt like a ship's cook keeping his head down in the galley, popping up when the coast was clear, so that the affable Mason has remained great friends with both warring factions of the band, touring with Waters and remaining one of two members of Pink Floyd is a credit to his role in the band. He offsets Gilmour's curmudgeonly assertion that "this is the end" for the band with a mischievous "but you never know..." offering fans some hope that the seemingly impossible might happen once more.

JERRY EWING

PROG

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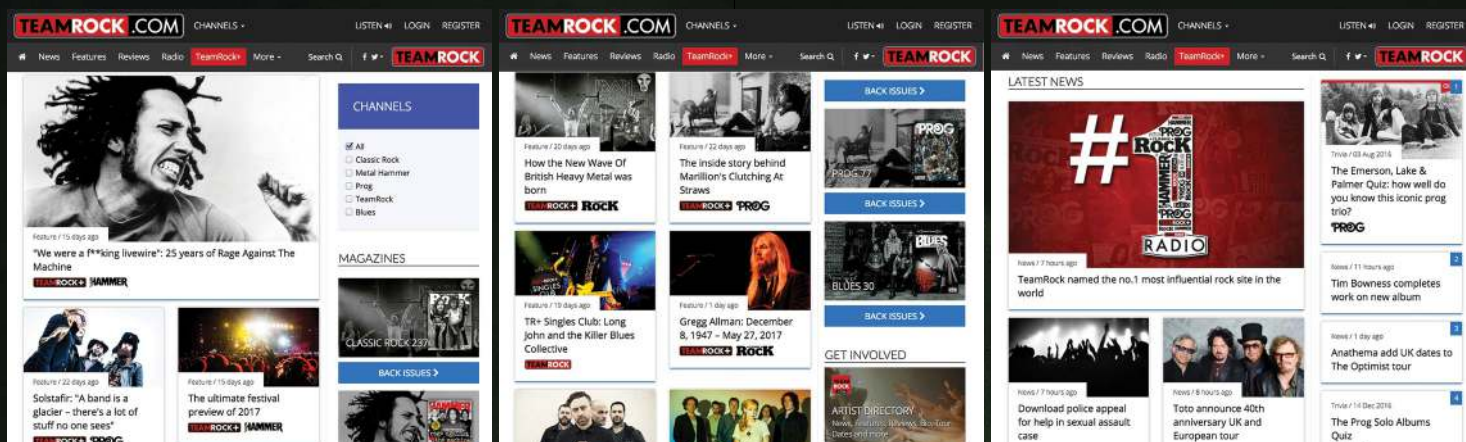
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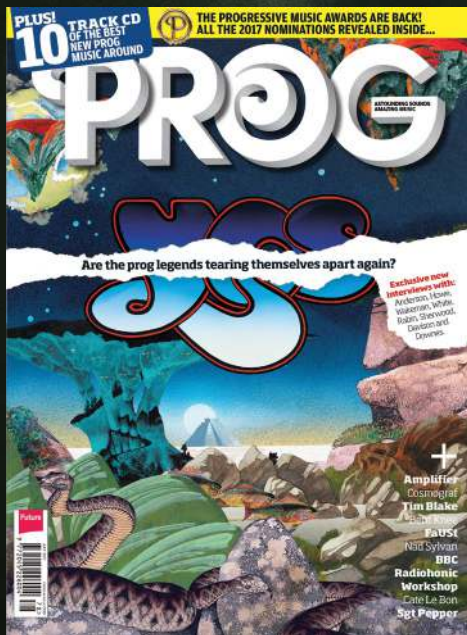
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Three years ago, in May 2014, the first Trinity Festival took place at this very location, with three worthy cancer charities being grateful beneficiaries of the proceeds. After much demand, a follow-up event is finally here, with a six-band line-up benefiting those same charities.

The Assembly is a nicely appointed venue that's mostly all standing for this event, though there are some small seated areas at the sides, which are eagerly snatched up by those fans who realise that things will soon get tiring on the legs!

First up at lunchtime are Southampton four-piece **A Formal Horse**, who start the day off by defining the word 'divisive'. Their musicianship is superb throughout, but the combination of uncompromisingly heavy, angular prog combined with the clear, almost operatic vocals of Hayley McDonnell splits the crowd down the middle. Reminiscent of Annie Haslam guesting with Thumpermonkey, it's brave, but it certainly isn't easy listening.

Next up comes **Dec Burke**, formerly of Darwin's Radio and Frost*, fronting his new band who, we are informed, are about to be christened Dusk. Burke's guitar work is always excellent, and here he has put together a tight and impressive unit. Given a little luck, Dusk may have a bright future.

The afternoon session concludes with the eagerly anticipated debut gig from ex-Touchstone vocalist **Kim Seviour** and, judging by the way the crowd swells in number, this is the point where the festival starts to really take off for many. Upcoming album *Recovery Is Learning* is well represented, with the title track and lead-off single *Chiasma* particularly impressive.

Seviour herself, resplendent with eye-catching red and black hair, seems more at ease and natural as a performer than she has ever been, suggesting that leading her own band may be what she was born to do.

An intrusive feedback issue midway through fails to derail the performance, and the crowd responds enthusiastically as the first session ends on a high.

A two-hour interval allows fans some 'shore leave' to explore the fleshpots of Leamington, before returning for an evening session that's kicked off by **Ghost Community**. Led by the ever-smiling Matt Cohen (who gives the impression he would remain cheery as his house burned

down), the band's other focal point is larger-than-life frontman John Paul Vaughan.

In truth, they're more of a classic heavy rock outfit with proggy touches than 'yer actual prog band', but they hit the ground running with powerful opener *Rise Up*, and by the time they get into their stride with *Blue December Morning* and the song *Ghost Community* itself, the audience is well and truly won over.

Finishing with a cover of Marillion's *Uninvited Guest* seems a little odd when they have more excellent original material up their sleeves, but overall this is a band who have grown massively in stature as a live act over the past couple of years, and look set to continue on an upward trajectory.

After a short break to get the charity auction underway, with *Prog* editor Jerry Ewing wielding the gavel, **Touchstone** take to the stage, showcasing their revamped line-up. Since their impressive 'Mk II' live debut last December, the band have improved still further, with Polish vocalist Aggie now commanding the performance in imperious fashion, while displaying considerable vocal prowess.

Bassist 'Moo' Moorghen has settled into his increased vocal role extremely well, and they win over the audience immediately.

The fan favourite *Wintercoast* has never sounded better, and closer *Lights From The Sky*, the title track of their current EP, is another highlight. For many people, they are the band of the day, and a resurgent one at that.

The headline slot is taken by John Mitchell's **Lonely Robot**, who deliver a set that simply oozes class from the opening instrumental *Airlock* onward, with material drawn from both of their albums to date. By his own admission, Mitchell prefers the role of sideman in a band, but he

leads from the front here with aplomb, despite wearing a rather warm-looking astronaut costume throughout! The pick of the set is a flawless delivery of the song *Lonely Robot* itself, but closer *Sigma*, from new album *The Big Dream*, notably has many fans singing it after the band finish their set.

In all, with only a few sound gremlins to nitpick about, the day is a triumph, and as many of the crowd head for the aftershow party next door, there are no dissenting voices to be heard. With deserving causes also benefiting, what's not to like?

STEVE PILKINGTON



Ghost Community: in high spirits.



Dec Burke: introducing fans to Dusk.



Kim Seviour: shining in the solo spotlight.



Benjamin Short: Horse man of apocalyptic prog.



A Formal Horse's Hayley McDonnell.

Touchstone's Aggie has the crowd in the palm of her hand.



Lonely Robot:
out-of-this-world
atmospheric prog.



MARK HOWELL

Space Cadet: Lonely
Robot main man
John Mitchell.



Touchstone's Adam
Hodgson and Moo
Moorghen rock out.



ROSFEST

VENUE	THE MAJESTIC THEATER, GETTYSBURG
DATE	05-07/05/2017

Rain and cloud dominate the skies over the historic town of Gettysburg for the 13th Rites Of Spring Festival in Pennsylvania. If there's any hint of ill portent from the supposed unlucky number, this is soon dispelled by the Friday night opening act **Kyros**. Retooled after changing their name from Synaesthesia and replacing band personnel, the young Londoners present a leaner and more aggressive side to their work and continue to develop momentum.

Moon Safari struggle early in their set from a sound system hell-bent on smothering their mellifluous harmonies. However, the band resolutely push past the technical difficulties to deliver an inspiring set. It's a performance that regularly drives the hairs on the back of the neck briskly to attention. By the time they leave the stage with *Lover's End Pt. III* ringing in the ears, everyone present knows the standard for the rest of the weekend has been set extremely high indeed.

The opening slot on the second day is occupied by **The Aaron Clift Experiment**. The Texan outfit, augmented by a live string quartet, play a selection of powerful tunes from their two albums *Lonely Hills* and *Outer Light, Inner Darkness*. On the strength of this performance, they're worth watching out for.

Syracuse's **Unified Past** play a brooding set. The dark performance throws singer Phil Naro's crystalline vocals into sharp

relief as it crests a wash of menacing guitars and Tool-like growling basslines.

Made up of personnel from Unitopia, Southern Empire, UPF and Resistor, **U.N.I.T. dB** from Australia are the surprise guests of the festival. The band deliver one of the standout performances of the weekend, with music taken mostly from Unitopia and Southern Empire's back catalogue, earning them several standing ovations from the crowd.

The Neal Morse Band close out Saturday night with a tour de force performance of the album *The Similitude Of A Dream*. Fresh from touring in Europe, the sheer scale of the material and the delivery by the band are breathtaking. Everybody involved is relaxed yet engaging, even joking with one another and the audience during a technical outage, before launching full throttle back into the set without a second thought. Morse is an artist famed for his ambitious arrangements, but the tunes on display are alive with nuance and grace. This is progressive music at its very best.

Sunday morning's 'church lot' is occupied by London's **The Fierce And The Dead**. Their brand of intense instrumental post-rock/punk proves a huge hit with the crowd, who are treated to a performance filled with ghostly guitars and vicious rhythmic onslaughts. It's a ferocious but magnificent US debut.

Nashville's **Evership** provide the weekend with its most overtly theatrical performance,

and they immediately capture the imagination of all present. Keyboard player and project mastermind Shane Atkinson presides over proceedings like a paternal steampunk version of Vangelis.

Edensong have spent the last decade crafting an epic yet dynamic sound. Here the New York-based outfit offer an intriguing set, filled with delicate drops of catchy dissonance that deftly give way to heavy red-meat riffing.

Neoclassical behemoths **Anglagård** continue to push the boundaries of what's compositionally possible with every show. There's a focus and intensity in tonight's

performance that's hard to deny and absolutely impossible to forget. They inhabit a sonic landscape devoid of technical mediocrity and hold the audience rapt throughout, before hauling them to their feet and providing the festival a resoundingly epic finale.

SIMON GODFREY

"Neoclassical behemoths Anglagård continue to push the boundaries of what is compositionally possible with every show."



Evership: evergreen prog from nashville.



Moon Safari: setting the standard early.



Unified Past's Phil Naro gets Tool-ed up.



BEATRIX PLAYERS

VENUE	HOXTON HALL, LONDON
DATE	11/05/2017

Visiting the listed Hoxton Hall is like heading back a century or two, to a time when the world of music was very different. This renovated Victorian music hall, complete with velvet drapes and solid wood flooring, is the perfect

location for London-based chamber poppers Beatrix Players, whose elegant, progressive sounds make the most of its old fashioned ambience and high ceilings.

There's been a real buzz surrounding this all-female trio recently, and tonight the reason for it is revealed: their captivating performance and tremendous stage presence silence the audience

from the opening bars of the powerful *Rushlight* until the close of their set.

The warm sound and beautiful vocals make it hard not to draw comparisons to Tori Amos and Kate Bush, as well as the classical-inspired Mediaeval Baebes and iamthemorning. Every member of the audience is transfixed when Amy Birks hits the high notes in *Never Again*, and

caresses the intimate *All That Thinking* with a softer tone. Add Jess Kennedy's piano and Amanda Alvarez's cello and the result is pure perfection.

This evening, their sound is made even grander by musicians on French horn, double bass, violin and drums, allowing the ensemble to faithfully recreate tracks from their sparkling debut *Magnified*.



Surprise Guests: Aussie supergroup U.N.I.T.D.B.



Festival opener KRONOS, formerly Synaesthesia.



Dream Theatrics: Neal Morse leads his band through a stunning set.



The Fierce And The Dead.

JOEL BARRIOS



Ånglagård: pushing boundaries and wowing audiences.



There are further highlights, one being a breathtaking rendition of Nine Inch Nails' stark ballad *Hurt*, which the band transform into a warm and powerful feminine anthem. The trio even hark back to their early years with a rendition of *Elsa* from debut EP *Words In Lemon Juice*, but their most glorious moment comes when they introduce

the Sound Choir onto the stage - their incredible harmonies elevate this wonderful performance, making it a truly spectacular experience.

This is the first time Beatrix Players have performed live with a full choir, but it's not at all obvious from the slick results. Stunning harmonies bring a whole new level of drama to songs

such as *Lady Of The Lake* and *Ophelia*. When the choir eventually exit and Birks introduces the folkish *Roses* as their encore, she adds a quiet confession. "We couldn't go off and come back again, because the stage is so tight!"

It's been magical. If you haven't seen Beatrix Players live yet, you really must.

NATASHA SCHARF

AL STEWART

VENUE	THE PALLADIUM, LONDON
DATE	12/05/2017

Al Stewart is excited, in his own diffident manner, to be on the Palladium stage. "That's where Paul stood, and John stood there, and George over there," he tells us.

He shares some good anecdotes, not least his regular about how bad he was at picking hit singles. Of course, one 1976 American hit - *Year Of The Cat* - extended what might have been a respectable but niche 60s/70s folk career into one of considerable crossover and longevity.

Tonight he's playing selections from that fine album, as any audience would demand, but also dipping into his earliest work and throwing in a few curveballs. *The Back To The Bedsit* tour isn't quite a theme night in a tiny Soho folk club like Les Cousins, but there's a sense that Stewart - recipient of a Lifetime Achievement award at the BBC Folk Awards in April - wants it to resemble one as much as is realistically possible.

So it's an acoustic set tonight, with no drums or keyboards. The 71-year-old deftly understated singer is flanked by guitarists Dave Nachmanoff and the mighty Tim Renwick (who not only played those solos on *Year Of The Cat* but has worked with Pink Floyd, Bowie and McCartney). For some numbers they're joined by others, most notably Marc Macisso, whose saxophone lifts the temperature.

Early on, Nachmanoff is granted too many solo songs, but our main man, dressed as a history teacher, soon takes charge in a polite, erudite sort of way. *Bedsitter Images* takes us back in time, while *Palace Of Versailles* transports us in place too. After all the introversion, the yearning *Time Passages* works up a groove; indeed, almost a sweat, though it must be said that its recorded majesty, like that of *Year Of The Cat*, can't be matched without the full musical kit and caboodle.

After an interval, everyone seems to have relaxed into the feel more, and the likes of *Broadway Hotel* and *Sand In Your Shoes* escape any sonic thinness to release their strains of romance and mystery. *Old Admirals* is introduced as, "One I like, as opposed to the ones I think you'll like - that's fair, isn't it?"

Carol represents the underrated 1975 album *Modern Times*, which was the first where Alan Parsons broadened Stewart's sound palette from folk to deliciously crafted, creamy-smooth quasi-prog.

The finale - *Year Of The Cat*, of course - involves a spotlight picking out the sax man in the Royal Box, before he literally runs around the auditorium, blowing up a storm. A rousing climax to a subdued but often sublime evening.

CHRIS ROBERTS

ROGER HODGSON

VENUE ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON
DATE 20/05/2017

Roger Hodgson knows what his audience want. They are fans who love the Supertramp era bookended by the albums *Crime Of The Century* and *Even In The Quietest Moments...*, and these songs form the basis for what he does tonight. It makes for a celebratory atmosphere that represents the enduring joy of the live music experience.

Hodgson has become a magnificent onstage communicator. In his Supertramp days, he never talked to the crowd, but he's slowly grown from an initial diffidence as a bandleader into someone who has an easy rapport. He doesn't so much work the crowd as work *with them*. After opening song *Take The Long Way Home*, Hodgson asks for the house lights to be turned up, so that "I can see my beautiful audience. I think I know most of you!"

This betrays his intimate charm, while he gently chides a few latecomers by wryly observing, "You've missed the best song. But I can't do it again as time's short!"

The humour immediately gets everyone into the right frame of mind for what's to follow.

School leads into the solo tracks *In Jeopardy* and *Lovers In The Wind* from his overlooked 1984 album *In The Eyes Of The*



Roger Hodgson: intimate and charming.

Storm. Both slot in beautifully with the iconic material, as does *Along Came Mary*, from his most recent solo release, 2000's *Open The Door*. But it's classic moments from those Supertramp days that get the fans on their feet, with *Breakfast In America* and *The Logical Song* simply stunning.

The latter ends the first set, and it's a shame the momentum is broken by the break, even though it allows for toilet breaks and bar visits. However, while many others have struggled a little to get the special feeling back after such an interval, Hodgson cleverly overcomes this by opening the second set with the more low-key *Child Of Vision* and *Lord Is It Mine*, allowing us to seep back into his groove. One of the highlights from this part of the evening is the staggering *Death And A Zoo*, revisiting *Open The Door*, which is enthralling and enticing. Meanwhile, new song *The Awakening* proves Hodgson is still writing fine compositions.

All of this entices and teases the audience, before *Dreamer*

and *Fool's Overture* get everyone on their feet. Of course, it's the encore that brings things to the expected crescendo. *Give A Little Bit* raises the temperature, setting up *It's Raining Again*, which sees umbrellas unfurling across the Albert Hall in an evocative finale reminiscent of *The Last Night Of The Proms*.

Intimate and charming, Hodgson and his excellent band – multi-instrumentalist Aaron Macdonald is particularly impressive – leave an indelible impression on the audience after what was undoubtedly one of the best gigs of the year so far.

MALCOLM DOME

"It's classic moments from those Supertramp days that get the fans on their feet, with *Breakfast In America* and *The Logical Song* simply stunning."



Sax Appeal: Aaron Macdonald.



The band play a mix of solo and Supertramp classics to a rapturous audience.

WOLVERINE

VENUE	THE GARAGE, LONDON
DATE	27/04/2017
SUPPORT	UNTIL RAIN, ODDLAND

Earlier this year, Highbury's The Garage venue closed its doors to undergo a massive, glammed-up refurb. But tonight, in a weird twist of fate, London's iconic venue has never felt emptier. Despite the brand new sound system and lighting rig in the 600-capacity main room, there's a painful smattering of only 10 punters watching tonight's opening band, Oddland. It's awkward beyond belief - you can almost hear the toilets flushing between songs.

Some bands would buckle under the disappointment, but not Oddland, whose lauded second album *Origin* came out last year. Blending atmospheric, doom-like lower strains with complex, technical guitar playing and a voice edging towards New Romantic, these Finns create an immersive experience in an empty venue. "You have to take these things with humour," says their singer Sakari Ojanen.

It's not clear if he's referring to the audience presence or his sore throat, which has encouraged a couple of wobbly high notes, but either way, they put on a good show, ranging from the rousing crunch of *Penumbra* to the bottomless iron stride of *Will*.

Until Rain aren't put off by the lack of turnout, mustering boundless innocent enthusiasm while they tap into that fashionable bottom-quivering djent sound on songs like *Something Might Happen*. Bassist Linus Abrahamson lunges and limbos as he drills out deep rhythms for their mad-hatter heavy prog.

Cons Marg articulates his vocal dexterity with dramatic growls and falsetto high notes akin to the vocal gymnastics of System Of A Down, and their music isn't a million miles from this influence either, bending, plunging and tempo shifting every minute or so.

It could be brilliant, but their set is too drum-heavy, losing the atmospheric padding that synth player Lef Germenlis should be providing.

Any hopes for a deluge of latecomers fades away as Wolverine begin their slot. *This Cold Heart Of Mine* bites with the epic iciness of Queensrÿche, tempered with latter-day Katatonia, throwing elongated vocal bullets through a shield of luscious, atmospheric prog.

"This one's about my daughter who had a heart condition that threatened her life," says vocalist Stefan Zell before enveloping us with minor keys.

The successive long notes don't come without their penalties, as Wolverine's semi-morose steer moves into bland territory, and their atmospheric hooks fritter away into the empty spaces. However, *In Memory Of Me* remedies that with a blast of synth-driven brooding heaviness oozing emotion.

It might not be the show that the band hoped for, but it was a solid performance for the fans who did turn up.

HOLLY WRIGHT

VOYAGER

VENUE	THE EVELYN HOTEL, MELBOURNE	DATE	12/05/2017
SUPPORT	THE ALGORITHM, WINDWAKER		

This is one of those bills that looks like a mismatch: a poppy, proggy heavy rock/metal headliner, an idiosyncratic French techno and metal hybrid as main support and a progressive metalcore opener. Sounds out of whack? On paper, yes. In reality, it works an absolute treat.

Windwaker have a massive sound, and they walk a fine line between impressing the tech-heads with their musicianship and the technicality of their riffage while maintaining an accessible sound through their melodic vocals and the straightforwardness of their grooves. And closer *Castaway* is just mighty.

The Algorithm is a musical project so tripped-out that you don't know whether to pop an E, wave a glow stick and dance, or to headbang furiously. This one-man project, with a live drummer, is an electro-symphony with heavy guitars and live drums, and nary a vocal within earshot. It shouldn't work, but it does.

The live drums, which give the sound an organic feel, lay down the sometimes alien grooves while main man Rémi Gallego switches between heavy guitars, a heavily distorted bass guitar and his DJ/producer decks. Sometimes it's orchestral, sometimes it turns the venue into a disco/rave and sometimes it sounds like technical thrash metal. And it's all seamless.

Voyager are launching their brand new album *Ghost Mile* this evening, and they come on sounding sharper than a brand new axe, with all five members smiling ear to ear and looking like there's nowhere else on Earth they would rather be at this moment.


"Sometimes it's orchestral, sometimes it turns the venue into a disco/rave and sometimes it sounds like technical thrash metal. And it's all seamless."



"Who, me!?" Charismatic frontman Danny Estrin.

Charismatic frontman Danny Estrin's broad toothy grin is particularly infectious, and the joyous mood on stage quickly spreads to the adoring Evelyn audience.

This is a band that has experienced a career renaissance in the last few years, starting with their last record *V*, and now continuing with *Ghost Mile*. So while they have an illustrious back catalogue behind them, they focus closely

on the more recent material, opening with the first two singles from the new album, *Ascension* and *Misery Is Only Company*.

The set is a 70-minute volley of majestic and masterful tunes, including *A Beautiful Mistake*, *Breaking Down* and the title track from the new album. There's also the smart *Hyperventilating*, plus a few bars from a couple of sneaky covers, namely Gangsa's *Paradise* and *I Like To Move It*, and a tasteful single encore, a hectic version of *White Shadow*.

A Voyager gig is about as much fun as you can have at a heavy show, and tonight is no exception.

ROD WHITFIELD



Voyager: "As much fun as you can have at a heavy show."

HAWKWIND

VENUE THE ROUNDHOUSE, LONDON
DATE 26/05/2017

Some 45 years on from the Greasy Truckers Party, the show that really served to put Hawkwind on the map, the band return to the Roundhouse. Just like the Grade 2-listed venue, which after decades of dormancy reopened in 2006, Hawkwind are very much changed. Dave Brock, the guitarist/singer who turned 75 last August, stands as a final link to the past, but Hawkwind's newest album, *Into The Woods*, went Top 40, and even as part of a national UK tour, 3,000 noisy and excitable fans are present tonight. Clearly, a thirst remains for this band's gnarled, unpredictable space rock. If only the beer was still on sale at 1972 prices.

Things begin with an acoustic set, but although the band played six or seven unplugged tracks elsewhere, tonight we get just three: the new album's *Ascent*, golden oldie *We Took The Wrong Step Years Ago* and the Lemmy-penned *The Watcher* from *Doremi Fasol Latido*, which Brock dedicates to its composer. He tells the crowd that Hawkwind

last played the Roundhouse in 1977, with the newly formed Motörhead as support, also revealing that a few nights ago, the vintage-era keyman Dik Mik attended a show in Ipswich: "If it wasn't for Dik Mik getting him [Lemmy] into the band, none of this would have happened." It's a nice touch.

With the electrified *Born To Go*, 12 minutes of pure, pounding, swirling Hawks freakout, the show proper begins. Aside from *Magnu* and *You'd Better Believe It*, heavy-hitters from Lem's time frame are mostly conspicuous by their absence – there's no *Master Of The Universe*, *Brainstorm* or *The Golden Void*, but the songs the band *do* play remind us of their catalogue's immense depth.

Halfway through the band's performance, a magician appears, declaring: "This is called *Skin Up*," and proceeds to blow some Rizla papers into the air. And just as we're thinking, "What a load of old bollocks," the fella conjures up a snowstorm from nowhere. It's a genuinely amazing display.

With former Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell returning to the stage after an opening set from his new band The Bastard Sons, *Brainbox Pollution*, another track from *Doremi Fasol Latido*, begins the encore. And there's really only one way to end things, and that's with a rare outing of *Silver Machine*, the hit single the band recorded at this venue all those years ago.

Though there have been superior Hawkwind gigs, tonight reminds us that these days, this band rarely – if ever – let us down.

It wasn't too long ago that whispers from the Hawkwind camp indicated that Brock was almost ready to stop performing. However, the

addition of 20-something bassist and Lemmy-a-like Haz Wheaton has caused the old warhorse to "really perk up" (to use his own words).

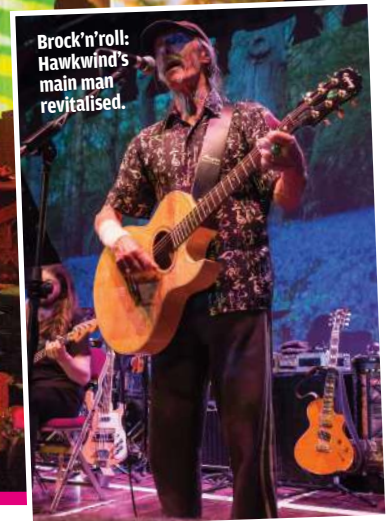
Now it feels as though the band could keep going forever.

DAVE LING

"Though there have been superior Hawkwind gigs, tonight reminds us that these days, this band rarely - if ever - let us down."



Take A Trip: Hawkwind take flight.



Brock'n'roll: Hawkwind's main man revitalised.

THE TEA PARTY WITH THE MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

VENUE HAMER HALL, MELBOURNE
DATE 28/04/2017

An illustrious Canadian world music-tinged prog rock act playing together with one of the great symphony orchestras of the world in an auditorium with near-flawless acoustics. Sounds like a tantalising prospect? It most certainly does, and the real-life experience of it exceeds even those lofty expectations.

In fact, it's a veritable feast for the eyes, the ears and the soul as the legendary three-piece serve up their iconic tunes for the ravenous Hamer Hall crowd. And those songs take on an even more sumptuous dimension when accompanied by the magnificent symphonic flourishes of the MSO. The juxtaposition is so seamless, it's like The Tea Party's music is designed to be experienced like this.

Opening with the classic *Temptation*, group and orchestra take the enraptured audience on a two-set, two-hour-plus journey across a large cross-section of the band's epic back

catalogue. By the second song, the ever-enigmatic and entertaining Jeff Martin has invited a random punter up on stage, and she ends up dancing with drummer Jeff Burrows in what Martin deems her "Springsteen moment", which draws much mirth from the crowd.

The gig also features multiple appearances from the elegant and ethereal Canadian opera singer Christine Williams, who threatens to steal the show with her stunning operatic vocal histrionics. There are also several acoustic interludes, a Middle-Eastern percussive jam with Martin bashing it out on a djembe, Martin taking the

piss out of a hapless roadie, some left-of-centre instrumentation and a sweet cover of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*.

There's also a very poignant moment when Martin dedicates the song *Oceans*, originally written for the band's late manager Steve Hoffman, to a dear friend of the band's who had passed away suddenly a week or so before.

The orchestra only take centre stage when they play the intro to *Heaven Coming Down*, instead they are utilised more as a tasteful enhancement for the band's epic songs, rather than an actual centrepiece. It works an absolute treat.

ROD WHITFIELD

PERIPHERY

VENUE 02 RITZ, MANCHESTER
DATE 19/05/2017

Another summer, another slew of articles in the metal community decrying the paucity of juggernaut headline acts. “We need a new Metallica,” we’re told. Corporate bludgeoners Avenged Sevenfold and Five Finger Death Punch are the great white hopes, of course, but may *Prog* opine that the answer to the problem could yet come from left of field?

Like thrash before it, djent has now outgrown its subculture, awaiting the first of its originators to take it to the biggest stages. Periphery, with linchpin guitarist Misha Mansoor, are the closest thing the scene has to a band ready for a major step up, and they’ve always been a class apart – able to tweak the formula they helped create into something accessible, without undermining the polyrhythmic purists.

There’s something in the air here, beyond the errant plastic cups. Tonight’s gig is announced early on as the “biggest headline show we’ve played in the history of Periphery”, and the fans respond, from balcony to bar, with a roar of approval.

Anticipation resolved, there’s a no-nonsense confidence from the band’s opening salvo *A Black Minute*. The mix is surprisingly spacious for a group who have essentially built their reputation on speaker-blowing low-end, and the likes of *Stranger Things* and *The Way The News Goes...* sound at once monstrous and dextrous. Accomplished tech metal types so often seem canned, but these songs are made of flesh and bone.

Onstage, strobe lighting freezes scenes of dynamism, as hair flails, cables whip and guitars cut paths through the grey, all momentarily captured in comic book frames. Frontman Spencer Sotelo is in his element, and embraces every opportunity to make use of the full-throated crowd.

Arms outstretched, Sotelo gives it the full messiah complex, channelling Manchester’s own swaggering icons. For his part, Mansoor is a more subdued, calculated presence, keeping the flair on the fretboard, yet sparing only the occasional look at what he’s doing.

Mansoor can stake a significant claim as the most influential player in this region of progressive metal – he wrote a large chunk of the rule book and he plays like it, too.

Tellingly, the newest material receives a warm welcome, and as the set gathers momentum, Sotelo’s elation becomes infectious. “This is one of the greatest nights of my life,” he states. “Thank you for being a part of it.”

Appropriately, it’s 2016’s *Lune* that closes proceedings. “Do you feel the love?” pleads Sotelo in the song’s closing sections.

“Yes, we feel the love!” comes the unprompted reply.

It’s clear that both parties mean it.

MATT PARKER

KOYO

VENUE THE OLD BLUE LAST, LONDON
DATE 04/05/2017

For many venues, bare brick walls, dodgy stairs and extremely ‘distressed’ paintwork would suggest that decorators and a bit of TLC were required. But this is Shoreditch, London’s Hipster Central, so we can probably pass off this upstairs venue as ‘shabby chic’. Punters clearly aren’t deterred, and are here in healthy numbers for the first proper London gig from Leeds-based KOYO.

With little fanfare, the band take their positions on a tightly packed stage. The venue fills with the extended spacey synth and jangly effects-laden guitar noise-fest intro to *Strange Bird In The Sky*, with its Hawkwind-meets-Radiohead vibe, and frontman Huw Edwards’ fine, high vocal lines.

The band almost wilfully defy easy pigeonholes. While Dave Brock and Thom Yorke’s crews are surely influences, almost every song tonight departs from any expected script in some way. *Jettisoned* starts out as a psychedelic bossa nova, yet has expansive choruses and swampy blues rock interludes, with a big middle section and a guitar solo. *Ray Of Sunshine* is based on a serious rhythm section groove getting progressively dirtier, has a head-spinning bass/noise workout middle section presaging some early 70s rock moments, and morphs into a post-rock, syncopated denouement.

The band’s clever use of pre-recorded tracks and triggered samples, courtesy of both keyboard player Jacob Price and drummer Tom Higham, are utilised to terrific effect throughout the set, particularly on songs such as *Jouska*.

KOYO are a slightly different beast live compared to the minimal studio material released so far. *Lost In The Kingdom*, possibly

the most obviously classic, symphonic, prog-tinged track they’ve released, with its epic intro, becomes a harder edged, more febrile proposition on stage, more alt-rock and grunge than minstrels and elves.

Set closer *Tetrachromat (Parts 1 & 2)*, which *Prog* readers might have caught on a recent covermount CD, also takes on a different persona live. Joined by Laurie Covell on sax, the 60s pop vocal harmonies and lazy flow of the first half contrast with the steady build of the band from almost nothing to all guns blazing, while Covell turns in some great playing throughout the elongated instrumental *Part 2*. The track dissolves into an organised chaos ending and the band leave the stage to the strains of wailing keyboards and messed-up feedback.

It’s a short set from a young band turning many heads at the moment. KOYO are clearly canny, playing a number of free gigs in carefully selected venues. There’s more than a touch of the shoegazing hipster about them, but they tie together many genres and feels, and are more raw and compelling live than their studio work might suggest.

GARY MACKENZIE

“They’re harder-edged on stage, more alt-rock than minstrels and elves.”



KOYO frontman Huw Edwards.



Tiny Stage, Big Noise: KOYO turn heads and blow minds.

KATATONIA

VENUE	SOUND CONTROL, MANCHESTER
DATE	11/05/2017
SUPPORT	GHOST BATH

Though Ghost Bath may shrug off any comparison to Deafheaven, and certainly think of themselves as belonging to a different thread of extreme music, there's definitely some sonic similarities evident as they warm up the crowd tonight. Some have never gotten over the controversies surrounding this band – who originally claimed to be from China, despite actually hailing from North Dakota in the US – but considering the music on its own, there are enjoyable moments, even if it doesn't translate particularly well live.

The problem with this type of atmospheric heaviness in general is that live, the guitars are so distorted that they get largely swallowed by the drums, leaving just drums, vocals and maybe a clean,

atmospheric guitar audible in the mix. Such is Ghost Bath's fate tonight, and unfortunately it means their tunes simply don't come across as being particularly powerful.

When Katatonia take to the stage, they have no such mix issues, with Jonas Renkse's stunning vocals cutting through with ease. That said, the reason for this – the use of modelling amplifiers over real ones – proves a double-edged sword. With no amps or speakers on stage, in a venue without a large PA system, there's less of a physical feeling to the heavier, more dramatic passages, and the instruments come across as being just that bit more clinical. It's a small complaint, however, because luckily their performances and song choices are strong.

Naturally, last year's *The Fall Of Hearts* is at the centre of proceedings, though there are also an equal number of tracks from 2006's brilliant *The Great Cold Distance*. The highlight of the set comes early though, in the form of *Criminals* from *Viva Emptiness*. The subtle, menacing guitars from the studio version

become a creeping, visceral scream and make the dramatic transition to the chorus all the more powerful.

The emotive and atmospheric *Teargas*, from *Last Fair Deal Gone Down*, also gets a strong audience reaction, as do the more progressive *Dead Letters* from *Dead End Kings*, and *Leaders* from *The Great Cold Distance*, which has the audience screaming the chorus back at the band.

To their credit, the fans aren't just interested in the back catalogue, and the new songs go down well too, chief among these the soaring, Porcupine Tree-like *Serein* from the band's most recent album. Single *Old Heart Falls* is similarly strong, as is *Passer*, which ends the main set.

In some ways it's astounding that over such a long career, Katatonia have managed to so consistently pen not only decent but great songs. Tonight is a welcome reminder not just of how good their back catalogue is, but also that they're still producing solid material.

ALEX LYNHAM



Katatonia: a dazzling performance.

"A welcome reminder of how good their catalogue is."

GOLDRAY

VENUE	THE BORDERLINE, LONDON
DATE	10/05/2017
SUPPORT	THE MOTHERS EARTH EXPERIMENT

The Mothers Earth Experiment are a six-piece prog psych band with a touch of glam about them. Their first number, *Quietus*, starts with staccato, stabbing keyboards – very Yes/ELP. A nine-minute epic, it has a loping, funk blues midsection that allows the players to get lost in their oceanic, psych drone music, and a coda that mixes up Floydian ambience with free

jazz bursts. *Talos* is another sectional piece, with a tricky time signature and a freewheeling approach that sees them melding Krautrock, blues and prog. Eco-anthem *Cool Down Mama* is bluesy funkadelia with art rock touches and a blistering guitar solo. Ones to watch.

Goldray are already being watched, including as they do Kenwyn House, guitarist with Brit rockers Reef, and Leah Rasmussen, touted as the unholy scion of Kate Bush and, well, every frontwoman ever with a penchant for the witchy and magical.

Rasmussen, all billowing red dress, brings a theatrical quality to her

performance. She can certainly hit those high notes, but her lightly rasping, soaring voice, over the predictable chords and changes of *Rising*, sounds more like Bonnie Tyler fronting Kula Shaker than anything more exotic. *Eyes* could be Siouxsie Sioux in charge of a pedestrian psych-bedazzled rock band. Where the Banshees took psychedelia to a new place, Goldray are mired in its conventions, from the sitar to the lyrics and reverb-drenched vocals.

Elsewhere they aim for the feral energy of Led Zeppelin. On *Outloud*, Rasmussen goes for a Plant-esque shriek, but it's less a wolverine howl

than a screechy caterwaul. In fact, it's not until *Whole Lotta Love* comes over the PA after the gig is over that you think, "Ah! That's it, done properly." Really, a track like *Soulchild* is more on the level of a budget Cult with a female Ian Astbury at the mic.

Goldray allude to the mystical power of rock, but ultimately fail to conjure it. *Calling Your Name* has a slow-burning intensity, but in its delivery it's less The Doors in the desert than a window onto a shopworn, tried and tested set of mannerisms and clichés. Right now, this band are not convincing.

PAUL LESTER

MIDNIGHT SUN

VENUE	THE BEDFORD, LONDON
DATE	14/05/2017
SUPPORT	INTROITUS, JADE VINE

In recent *Paper Late* columns in this very publication, our esteemed editor addressed poor attendance at some prog shows, and tonight's gig serves as a case in point. Despite a bill featuring three excellent bands, there's no audience at The Bedford, so Midnight Sun, Introitus and Jade Vine take turns being each other's crowd. Something went very wrong with the promotion for this gig, which wasn't mentioned on The Bedford's website, Facebook or anywhere either inside or outside the venue.

Originally from Greece but based in London, Jade Vine inhabit the same branch of the prog spectrum as Muse and Anathema, offering a very contemporary take on the genre and a knack for crafting moments of grand scale.

Frontman Constantine Magdalinos has a high, clear voice that's full of yearning in *Lose Control*, which also features excellent, melodic drumming from Babis Margaritidis, who is armed with a set of mallets. The quartet's gift for writing catchy hooks is on full display in *Corpus Callosum*, and the set closer *Would You?* is loaded with drama. Jade Vine are definitely a band to watch out for.

From Sweden, Introitus are a family affair, led by husband and wife Mats and Anna Bender. From the outset, Anna's voice demands attention with her impressive range and projection. The group blend folk elements, courtesy of Henrik Björklind's skill on the flute and recorder, with moments of sheer neo prog power.

Anima and *Slipping Away* are bookended by Anna's vocals, while the midsections boast huge workouts for Mats Bender on keys and Pär Helje on guitar as they rise, soar and dive down again.

Soulprint, which Anna wrote for her dying mother, is the highlight of their set, delivered with unrestrained passion and ending with a melody traditionally sung by Swedish milkmaids to call the cows home at sunset. Just beautiful.

Midnight Sun, not to be confused with the 70s Dutch group of the same name, is a new project from singer Huw Lloyd-Jones of Unto Us and Also Eden. "This is really intimidating, playing to a roomful of musicians," he jokes at the start.

They're the heaviest act on the bill, with Tom Ennis, another Unto Us connection, shredding away on his seven-string guitar, and drummer Sam Slater letting rip with his double kick pedal in *Early Warning* and *Broken Angels*. *Tomfoolery* is a showcase for Ennis' fretboard skills, with Lloyd-Jones observing that the track was originally called *Tom's Prog Wankery*.

The arrangements are densely busy, lacking the dynamics of the other two bands, but there's power and energy aplenty. If only there was an audience!

DAVID WEST

BLACKFIELD

VENUE	ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL, LONDON
DATE	26/05/2017

Pre-tour publicity emphasised that this would be Aviv Geffen taking Blackfield's music on the road without collaborator Steven Wilson. The Brit has been very involved with the latest album, *Blackfield V*, but given his own thriving career as the godfather of contemporary prog, plus his sideline remastering almost the entirety of classic prog, the word was that he wouldn't have time to squeeze in yet another burst of activity. And so for the first hour we settle in to a confident if unspectacular set from the Israeli, who's a huge star in his homeland and a champion of the political left. He's also a coach on the Israeli version of *The Voice*, and there's no doubt he can carry a tune.

What is surprising is how little of the new record he plays. With the full studio involvement of both Wilson and Alan Parsons, the loose concept album about the ocean and the tides of life is a strong offering, but there's scant attempt to showcase it here. Its standout moments, *Family Man* and *How Was Your Ride?*, are ignored, with just *October*, *The Jackal* and *We'll Never Be Apart* receiving an airing.

The net result is that we're shown the rich back catalogue Geffen has assembled over a quarter of a century in the business. The diehard element of the crowd take delight in this pick'n'mix approach, even if fair-weather fans don't really get the soft-prog fillips that *Blackfield V* offers.

The youthful-looking Geffen is a committed, smooth performer, and with a casually competent band, he glides



In A Field Of His Own: Aviv Geffen.

through tracks that range from easily digestible and commercially oriented to something marginally heavier. You'd perhaps need some expertise in the Israeli political arena to glean some of the lyrical nuances, but the music's primarily a pleasant purr.

Then comes the gear change. The black-clad Wilson surprises us all by ambling on stage, and for 15 minutes a frisson charges up the music and the hall. Again eschewing the new material, the reunited pair kick off with much verve through the mid-tempo colour washes of *Blackfield* and *Pain* from their 2004 debut album together, and the staccato rush of *Once*, the opener from their second.

Wilson, enjoying himself, takes on the bulk of guitar and vocals, Geffen happy to defer. The audience lap up this bonus, with Wilson fans thrilled to see the man in what is – by his current standing – a modest-sized venue.

After he leaves, the energy remains high as Geffen raises his own game, hurling heartfelt angst into early song *Glow*, before an anthemic finale of *Cloudy Now* and *End Of The World*, both well-known homeland hits that have ex-pats here punching the air.

The special guest lifted the atmosphere. Thankfully, Geffen didn't let it drop.


CHRIS ROBERTS



Aviv Geffen (right) gets into the groove.

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 25 BURY ST EDMUNDS The Apex
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17 LEICESTER De Montfort Hall
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Mon 23	BOURNEMOUTH Pavilion Theatre
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Fri 27	SOUTHEND Palace Theatre
Sat 28	HUNSTANTON Princess Theatre
Mon 30	WOLVERHAMPTON Grand Theatre
NOVEMBER 2017	
Wed 1	CHELtenham Town Hall
Thu 2	BLACKBURN King George's Hall
Fri 3	NEW BRIGHTON Floral Pavilion
Sat 4	EDMONTON Millfield Theatre
Sun 5	CAMBERLEY Theatre
Tue 7	CHATHAM Central Theatre
Thu 9	RHYL Pavilion Theatre
Fri 10	SOUTH SHIELDS Customs House
Sat 11	EVESHAM Regal
Wed 15	BILLINGHAM Forum Theatre
Thu 16	LOWESTOFT Marina Theatre
Sun 19	ISLE OF WIGHT Medina Theatre
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Where's home?

Greensboro, North Carolina.

Your earliest prog memory?

My dad was deep into prog so there were always records around the house – King Crimson's *Discipline*, Gentle Giant, Peter Gabriel – and the covers made a real impression. Dad never pushed prog on me, but it was just kinda destined.

First prog record you bought?

Dream Theater's *Scenes From A Memory* was my first, full-on "I'm buying a prog record!" record. Got it in Pittsburgh.

First prog gig attended?

Dream Theater really were the big gateway band for me. I saw them on their *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence* tour [2002]. I think it was in Cleveland.

Favourite gadget?

I keep a mini two-octave keyboard in my backpack at all times, along with a book of manuscript paper and a pencil!



Any guilty musical pleasures?

I do own Alicia Keys' first album, *Songs In A Minor*. I really thought there was something there, but she peaked on that record.

What would be your specialist subject on *Mastermind*?

Baseball. I've been a diehard Cleveland Indians fan since I was six years old.

Your biggest prog extravagance?

I do still buy a lot of records every year, mainly on CD but vinyl too. And I bought a house last year – does that count?

Your all-time prog hero?

Bass-wise it's Tony Levin, but Robert Fripp too. I finally got to see King Crimson lately and it felt like a masterclass, a college course.

Favourite prog venue?

There's a mountain town in North Carolina called Asheville, home of the Moog synthesiser, and there's a venue there called The



BTBAM's Dan Briggs

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

Orange Peel, which is a really cool room, great vibe. The Fox Theatre in Atlanta is another good one.

Outside of prog, what else are you into?

Cooking. I've been a vegan since I was 15, and you have to learn to get creative. My speciality? How about some collard greens, barbecued jackfruit, and maybe some mac and cheese...

What do you collect?

Just records, I have thousands of records. I think I might have a bit of a problem with that.

What was the last prog album you bought?

John Zorn's *Naked City*, on vinyl. It's a cool statement. John's all about trying to turn jazz people on their heads.

Last prog gig you saw?

The Zombies on their 50th-anniversary tour of *Odessey And Oracle*, in the Carolina Theatre in Durham. Tell you what, they were incredible. Great harmonies, a mellotron and Leslie speaker on stage – awesome.

Ever had a prog date?

The Zombies was a date night! Thankfully my girlfriend celebrates progressive music. She's heard a lot of weird shit come out of the speakers...

Most important prog song?

I can still put on Dream Theater's *Change Of Seasons* and get something out of it. It's a great lesson for how to make a long song not feel so long.

Prog muso you'd like to work with?

I've been influenced by Danny Elfman, so that would be fun. But it'd be cool to do something with Casey [Crescenzo] from The Dear Hunter.

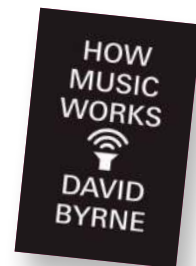
I always get happy and silly when Zappa is on.

What's the best prog gig you've ever seen?

Last summer we played Be Prog! My Friend in Barcelona and I got to see Magma. They played right after us and they fucking blew me away – it was so goddamn cool. Then Opeth and Steven Wilson played. It was such a great night.

Pick us a good proggy read.

I keep David Byrne's *How Music Works* on me – it's a great reference; he's a great writer. *Catching The Big Fish* by David Lynch was the last thing I read, an extraordinary book about creativity.



Which prog album always gets you in a good mood?

I can put on Zappa's live *In New*



York, or *Roxy & Elsewhere*. I love the live Zappa records – you get that comic sarcasm and the insane musical brilliance. I always get happy and silly when Zappa's on.

VICTOR WATTS/REV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Your all-time favourite prog album cover?

I know people always go for *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, but I have it blown up four feet square on my office wall, right next to *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*.



What else are you up to at the moment?

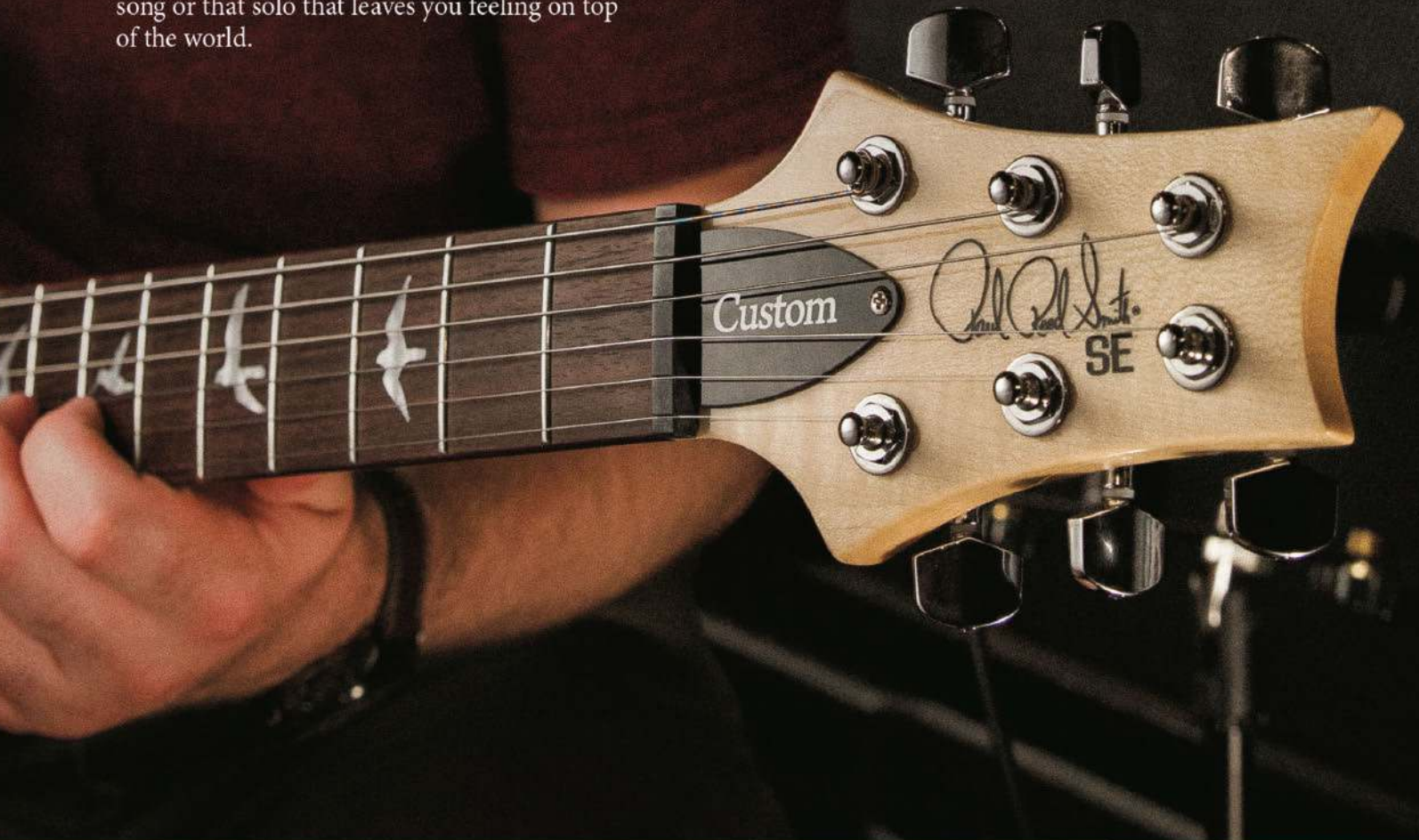
Coma Ecliptic: Live came out in April, my Nova Collective album's out [*The Further Side*] and we've been working on the live version of that. But BTBAM go into the studio in July to record the new record, so I've mainly been writing music, maniacally!

You can keep up with Dan's various projects on Twitter: @danbriggsx.



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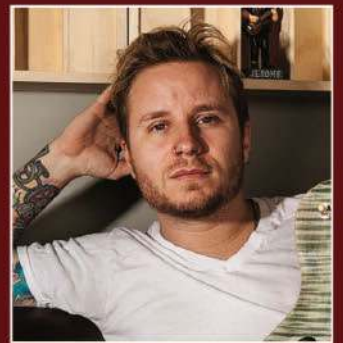
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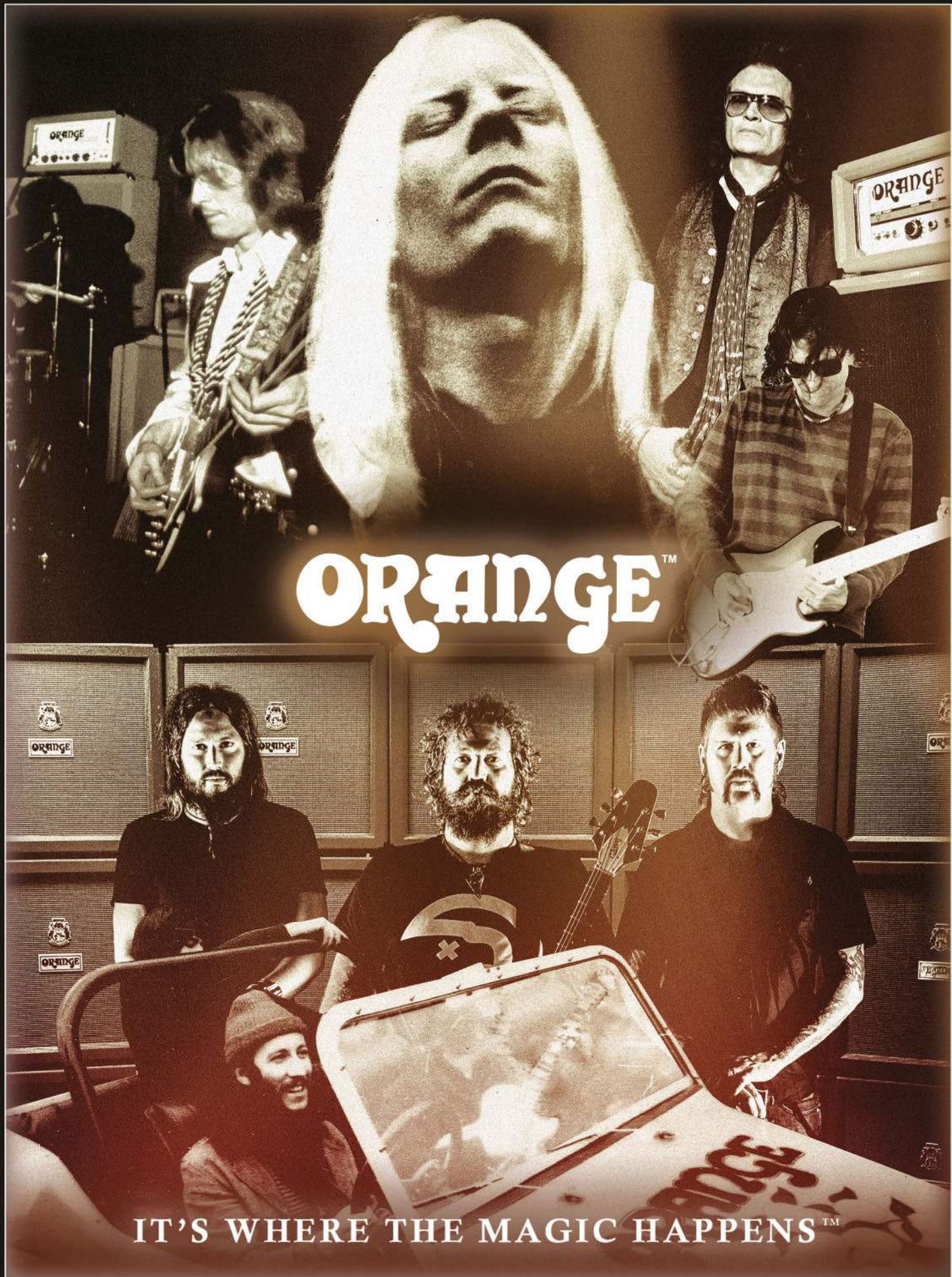


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