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of *Wish You
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A Farewell To Kings

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The Early Years

Mike Oldfield

The story of *Tubular Bells*

PLUS: Ian Anderson, Tangerine Dream,
Anathema, Big Big Train, and more great
stories from the first 10 years of *Prog Magazine*

Vol 12

THE PROG COLLECTION VOL 2 REVISED

Digital
Edition



VOL 2
REVISED

PROG

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

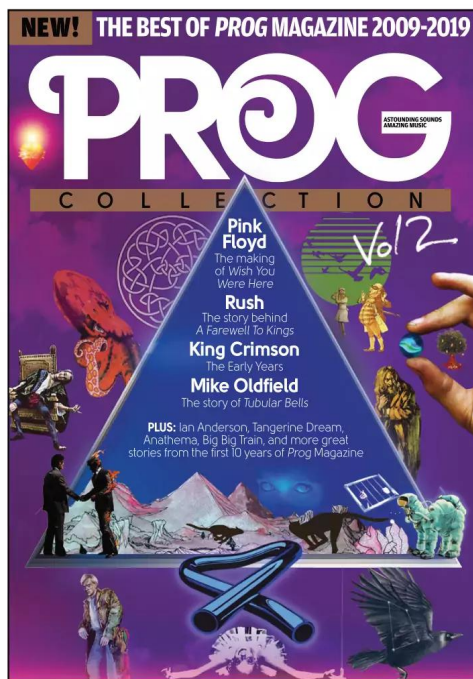
Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk
Tel: 0203 787 9060

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The music press and the mainstream record industry will never admit it, but progressive rock is in the middle of a new Golden Age. Sure, the days of the genre's original gods stacking up hit albums and selling out arenas across the world are gone, but few contemporary music scenes are as vibrant and creative as this one, and none inspire such passion.

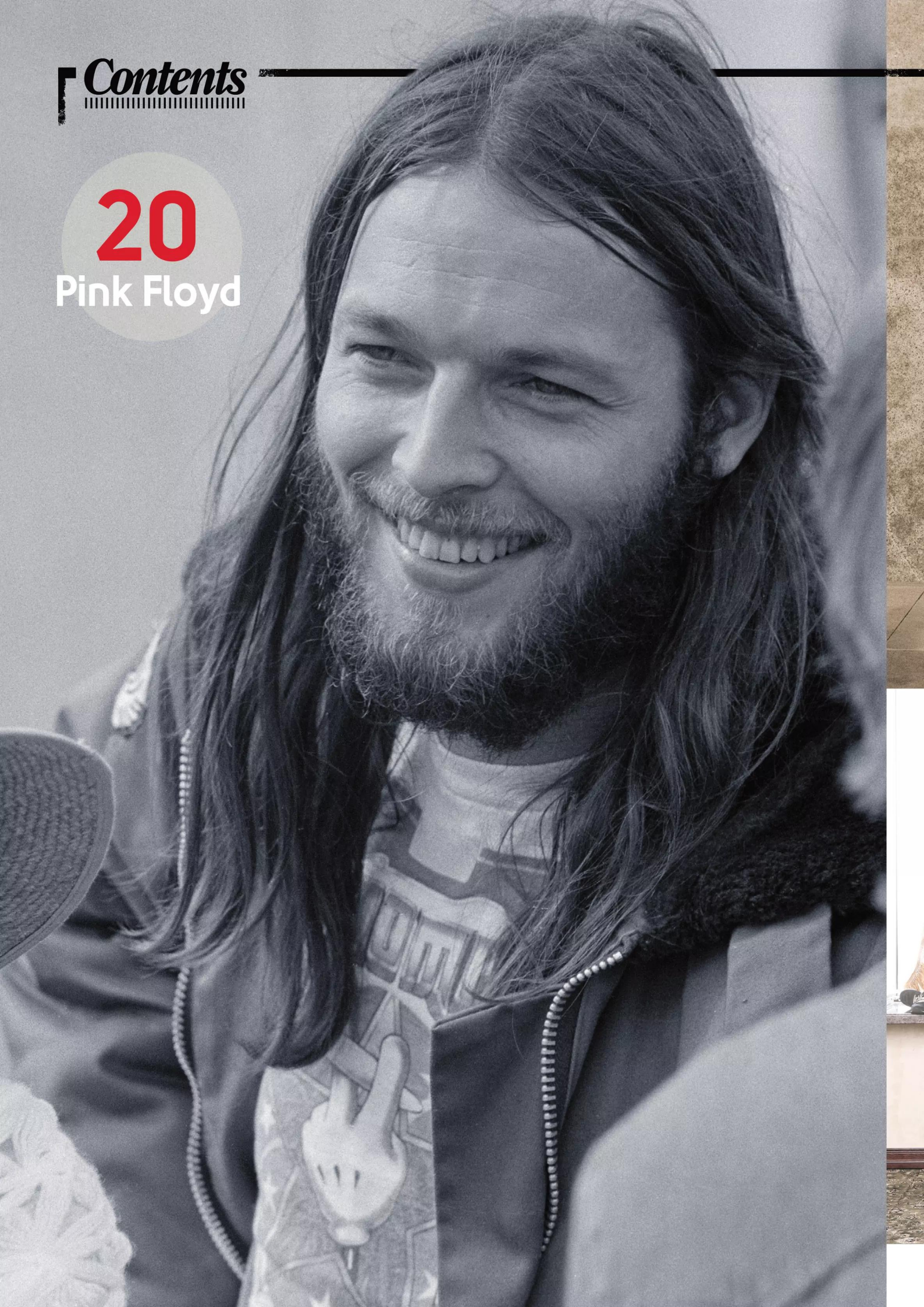
For the past 10 years, this incredible resurgence has been charted in the pages of *Prog* magazine. During that time, we've seen the genre's original founding fathers finally hailed as the icons we always knew they were, watched the radicals and visionaries who pushed music into uncharted new territories at last be recognised as maverick geniuses, and witnessed a whole new wave of progressively-minded artists and bands pick up the baton and continue to take it ever forwards.

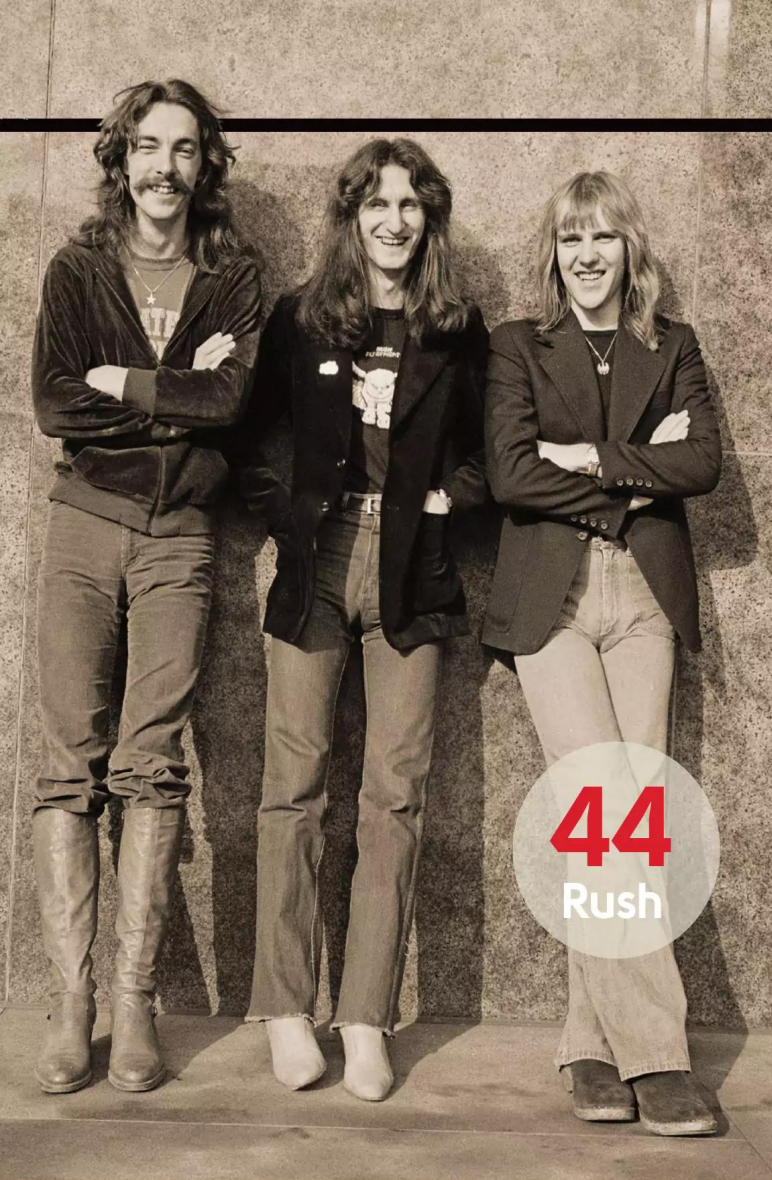
As part of *Prog*'s 10th birthday celebrations in 2019, we lovingly put together this second volume of articles compiled from the pages of the world's greatest progressive music magazine to salute the genre's icons, cult heroes and new generation of geniuses. Inside, you'll find the stories behind such landmark albums as Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*, Rush's *A Farewell To Kings*, and Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*, in-depth interviews with Ian Anderson, King Crimson, Opeth and more, plus the 100 Greatest Prog Anthems – as voted by you.

It's been a hell of a ride over the last decade and it's fantastic that you're here with us today, so forgive us if we gave ourselves a pat on the back. Here's to the next 10 years.

Dave Everley - Editor

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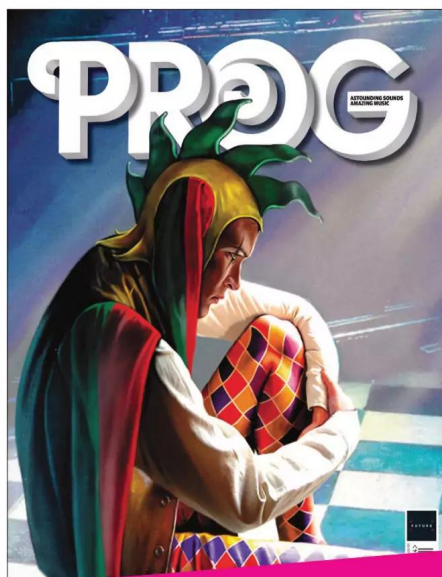
And the greatest prog anthem of all time is...

For the stories behind the best albums and
the bands that produced them...

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PROG

The Icons

As the 60s gave way to the 70s, a wave of maverick musicians began to twist rock music into weird new shapes: King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull and more. Join us as we celebrate the bands who built prog...

Game Of Thrones

King Crimson's big break came just six months after they'd formed in a remarkable support show to The Rolling Stones at Hyde Park in July 1969. And, according to Robert Fripp, Ian McDonald, John Wetton, David Cross, Jamie Muir and Keith Tippett, the Good Fairy was to cast her influence over prog's most inscrutable outfit in a way that no-one could resist for the next five years...

Words: Sid Smith

As Willie Christie parked up his BSA Thunderbolt just outside of The Beatles' Apple building in Savile Row he was feeling a little nervous. At the age of 18 he was about to have a close encounter with rock aristocracy. Earlier in the morning he'd received a phone call from his pal, writer BP Fallon, telling him to meet him at the Beatles HQ that day. Fallon was doing a piece for the *Melody Maker* and the editor wanted some pictures. Having got his gear ready, Christie met Fallon in reception and together they made their way into the basement to rendezvous with The Rolling Stones. "It was just a couple of days before the big free concert in Hyde Park in July 1969," Christie recalls. "I was really just a kid at the time and I didn't really have much of a clue. I'd been working as an assistant to the photographer David Anthony in Australia the year before. Although I'd taken a few shots here and there since returning to London earlier in the year, this really was something of a different order."

Their Satanic Majesties were encamped in less than palatial conditions easing in new recruit, Mick Taylor. Christie recalls Taylor kept his back to the photographer for most of the session, and Jagger was also less than happy at his presence as they worked through material that would make up the setlist for the event that

was originally intended to launch the new Stones – but following the death of Brian Jones on July 3, would now act as a commemoration of their recently-sacked colleague.

Relieved when the job was done, Christie ascended to the pavement, making his way past the ever-present group of star-struck young girls languishing at the doorway in the hope of seeing their idols. "I'd just packed away my gear and BP was making his way to Jagger's Bentley, because they still had an interview to do. Just then I looked up and saw Cliff Richard driving his rather sporty Jensen into Savile Row, passing by Jagger as he did so. I wish I'd had the camera out to grab what would've been a fantastic image. The old and the new guard there in one shot. You couldn't make it up."

With Cliff Richard making his way towards his slot in the light entertainment gulags of the BBC and ITV, the Stones travelled to their



"This was a remarkable creative explosion that happened despite the people involved and not because of it."

Robert Fripp

(Cat) food for thought: King Crimson perform for the cameras in 1970.



PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY

coronation in Hyde Park on July 5, kings of a youth culture that had undergone a radical transformation since Cliff's day – and indeed even in the seven years since the Stones had been together. Although the precise headcount varies, somewhere in the region of 650,000 young people filled one of London's largest parks to witness the new Stones line-up and their rebirth.



Sharing the bill that day were half a dozen support bands that represented an eclectic smattering of the nascent underground scene at different points in the musical compass and at different levels in their career. All were looking for the kind of leg-up that such exposure would undoubtedly give them; Screw, Roy Harper, Family, Battered Ornaments, Alexis Korner's New Church, The



"It seemed to me at the time that whatever we'd do will be wrong, but has to be done to get to the other side."

Robert Fripp

Third Ear Band... and King Crimson. It was only the eighteenth gig that Crimson had played, but their managers, David Enthoven and John Gaydon, knew how important the concert would be in furthering what they thought was the best band in the world. Enthoven, who has since guided Robbie Williams to solo stardom, looks back on that day in Hyde Park as a pivotal moment. "I knew we had to get on the bill come what may. I went to see Peter Jenner of Blackhill Enterprises, who was organising the bill, and I offered him a cash bribe," he laughs. "I'd taken a bag with some money in it, and I'd put it on the table, telling him he could have the lot if he would put King Crimson on the bill." Jenner was a little embarrassed at Enthoven's guileless attempt at bribery and refused to accept a note of the proffered cash. "Bless him, he put them on the bill anyway."

When Crimson took to the stage that day, their necessarily short set consisted of *21st Century Schizoid Man*, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, *Get Thy Bearings*, *Epitaph*, *Mantra*, *Travel Weary Capricorn*, and, to close, their raucously demonic interpretation of Gustav Holst's *Mars*.

A member of Crimson's road crew, Richard Vickers, recalled: "The high point of that gig was the whole audience rising to their feet and cheering Ian McDonald's solo during ...*Schizoid*. I remember the hairs on the back of my spine rising in unison as the roar from the crowd went up."

Enthoven, celebrating his twenty-fifth birthday, was underneath the stage cranking an old air-raid siren as the band above him churned through the closing moments of the thunderous *Mars*. "It was wonderful seeing what appeared to be hundreds of thousands of people standing up in awe and ecstasy at the song's finale. It was the best birthday present I could have had."

In among what Ian McDonald describes as a 'seemingly endless ocean of colour' stood Jamie Muir. The future Crimson percussionist was then part of the free improvisation scene in London, centred on players such as John Stevens and Derek Bailey. He was impressed by the force Crimson created. "Most bands come along and then develop, but Crimson just exploded with this very adult, intelligent, cutting-edge music. It was this whole package that went wallop!"

Also in the crowd, having dropped some acid but sadly minus his camera, Willie Christie marvelled at the sheer spectacle of it all. If the accidental crossing of Mick Jagger and Cliff Richard's paths that Christie had witnessed back in Savile Row a few days earlier represented the passing of the baton from one musical



generation to the next, then King Crimson's support of the Rolling Stones at Hyde Park undoubtedly signalled another.

"Even if the Hyde Park gig hadn't happened, I don't think it would have affected the popularity of King Crimson," argues Greg Lake, referring to the word-of-mouth campaign that had already succeeded in creating a buzz about the band. When Crimson rolled up to The Marquee the very next day, it was even busier than usual. Band lyricist – and their sound and lighting engineer – Peter Sinfield regards the show in the club as infinitely superior. "The Marquee the next night, now that was a humdinger!" Ian McDonald noted prosaically in his diary that the band certainly picked up a few new admirers. "Went to the Marquee. Did gig. Came back with nine chicks (!)"

Freeze-frame a point in the documentary *The Stones In The Park*, and you may catch a glimpse of a

PHOTO COURTESY OF DGM

Classic Crimson: the original line-up lounge in the grounds of Ewell Technical College, 1969.



"What was incredible was that Crimson just came on and exploded with this very adult, intelligent, cutting-edge music. It was just this whole package that went wallop!"

Jamie Muir

23-year-old Robert Fripp sandwiched between the potted palm trees and amp stacks at the side of the stage as The Stones play. In his diary written later that day, Fripp said: "Standing ovation. Mammoth success, of importance that will take time to appreciate. We'll look back to see this day in years to come and fully realise its significance."

Sitting in the kitchen of his offices located in the leafy country lanes of Dorset nearly 43 years later, Fripp has had plenty of time to ponder the repercussions of that day in Hyde Park and the extraordinary events of 1969 that catapulted King Crimson to the record-buying public's attention.

"Any group working together has to have a common aim. The '69 band's common aim was to be the best band in the world, whatever we understand by that. Not the most successful band in the world, not the most famous band in the world – the best band in the world. And while that is your primary focus together, things might happen." Things certainly had happened for Crimson since their inception, and at a dizzying speed. Just days after Lake, McDonald, Giles, Fripp and Sinfield

began rehearsing in the basement beneath a Turkish cafe on the Fulham Palace Road in January of that portentous '69, record companies were being invited down to hear their hybrid mix of folk, rock, jazz and symphonic-hued compositions. As word began to spread about the group's extraordinarily audacious abilities, one interested party was The Moody Blues, who fancied King Crimson might be the first outside signing for their soon-to-be-established Threshold label. "One or two of them came down with their producer Tony Clarke, and we played two or three songs, which impressed them," recalls Fripp. A few days later the entire band came to see Crimson play at The Speakeasy. "We were meant to be going on tour with them, and they came and saw us live. But they hadn't heard the heavy stuff such as ...*Schizoid Man* or ...*Court*... at that point." Suddenly, Crimson were dropped from the support slot. "They knew we'd blow them off stage," the guitarist concludes.

The association with the Moody Blues continued however, with Clarke as the would-be producer of Crimson's

Ian McDonald

"I felt it was comeuppance for leaving in '69..."

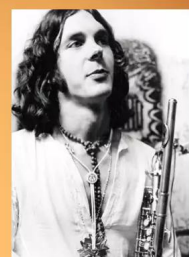


PHOTO COURTESY OF DGM

When McDonald and Giles told Fripp they were quitting the band at the end of the American tour, he was shocked, saying, "My stomach disappeared. King Crimson was everything to me." Years later, McDonald was invited for a guest appearance on 1974's *Red*.

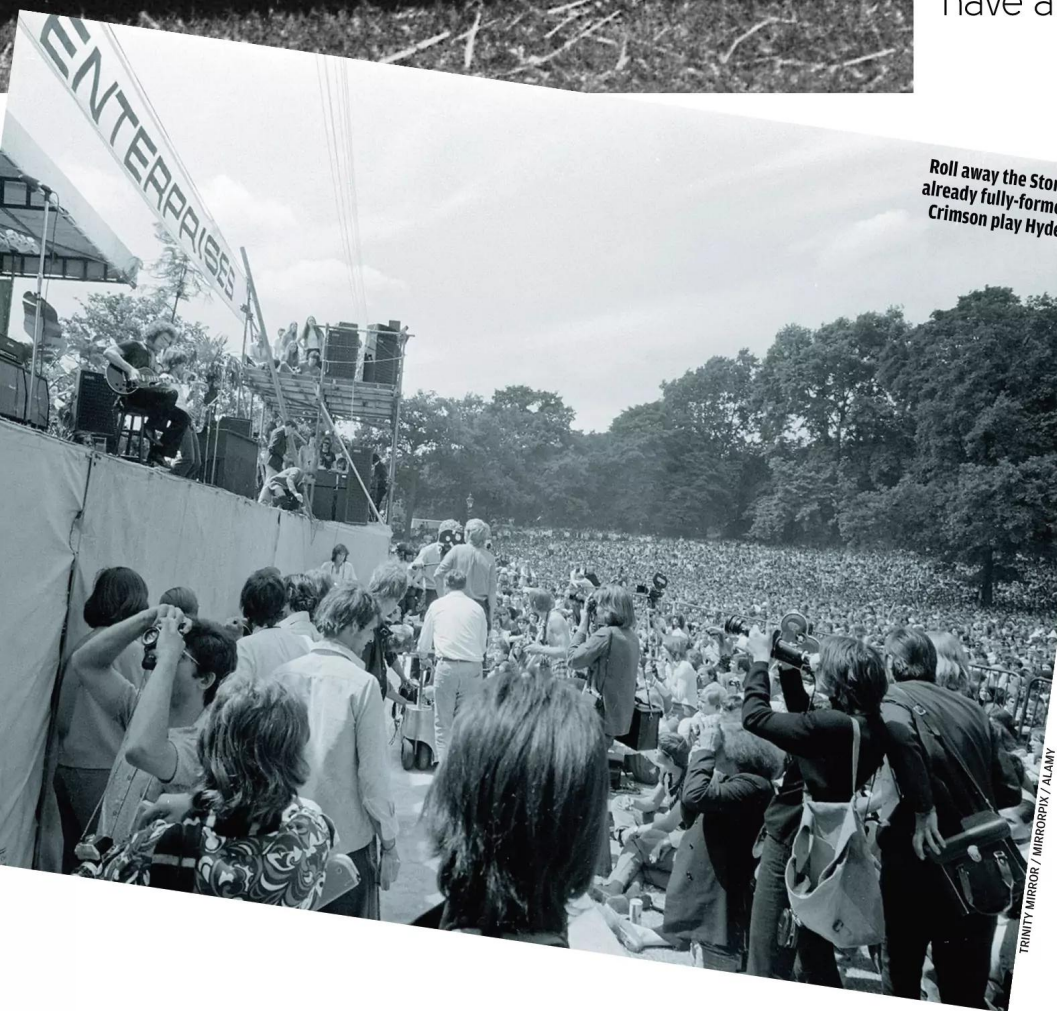
"I recall Fripp asking me if I wanted to go out on the road with John Wetton and Bill Bruford, and I said, yeah, sure. The next thing I knew Fripp had disbanded the group! To me it felt like he'd done that as a little bit of comeuppance or revenge on his part for me having left in '69. I'd got back there and now he was going to do the same to me." In 1997, Fripp contacted McDonald again with a view to forming a quartet of McDonald, John Wetton, Michael Giles and Fripp, focusing on the 1969-'74 repertoire. Though not quite King Crimson, the plan was to rehearse together for a week, play-in the group for a week in US clubs, and then visit Japan for a week. "Only the day before I'd spoken to Greg and told him as far as I was concerned, it should be the original band or nothing." **SS**





"Even if the Hyde Park gig hadn't happened, I don't think it would have affected the popularity of King Crimson."

Greg Lake



Roll away the Stones: the already fully-formed King Crimson play Hyde Park.

debut album. But after only a few sessions, first in Morgan Studios in Willesden and then Wessex Studios in Highbury, Crimson found themselves increasingly dissatisfied with the results. So they opted to produce themselves. Given that they still had only a handful of gigs under their collective belt, one can't help but think that this band must have had balls of steel to tell one of the best-selling producers in the country that his services were no longer required. "It wasn't balls of steel, it was just this wasn't right," Fripp recalls. "I believe we had a meeting in the EG Volkswagen Beetle and the decision was taken: 'If we produce ourselves we'll make mistakes but they'll be our mistakes and not someone else's.'"

"Tony Clarke would get me strumming rhythm chords to *I Talk To The Wind* for hours through the night. Well, through the night is not my best time for working. Strumming lots of chords is not the best use of me as a guitar player. In other words, he didn't see these artists; he didn't see this band. He saw what he obviously thought was a good band at the very



least, and it would be good for him as a producer and he probably gave it his best shot. But it wasn't the production for us. That's not a criticism of him as a producer," Fripp continues, "It was just a mismatch between producer and artist. I saw him a few years after that at Heathrow. I can't remember exactly what was said, but there was an edge there, something not resolved for him. For me it was clear he wasn't the producer for this band. It doesn't mean the band's bad or wrong or the producer; it's just not the match."

If you ever wanted proof that King Crimson were a band in a hurry, then consider this little morsel of trivia: by the time *In The Court Of The Crimson King* was released in October 1969, the band had been together less than nine months. The dynamic contents of the record, and its equally arresting cover art by Barry Godber, assured the album entered the Top 10 on both sides of the Atlantic. It was Fripp's idea to subtitle the album *An Observation By King Crimson*, lending the five pieces an implicit concept while retaining a slightly mysterious edge. It was also his suggestion that there be no print anywhere on the exterior artwork. John Gaydon, Crimson's co-manager at the time recalls Island Records were

album? There is no shortage of candidates emerging from the halcyon glow of psychedelia's hazy summer of liberated experimentation. Was it The Nice with 1968's *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*? Or was it the long-form exposition of Procul Harum's *In Held 'Twas I*, also from 1968?

On the other side of the Atlantic, Touch - the brainchild of Kingsmen keyboard player Don Gallucci released a *Sgt. Pepper*-inspired album which was about as far removed from the frat-rock chug of The Kingsmen's *Louie Louie* as it's possible to get. Of course, sooner or later, The Moody Blues' 1967 record *Days Of Future Passed* will be mentioned as the progenitor of them all. A concept album with a symphony orchestra and Mellotron aplenty, it snuck beneath the radar while retaining its psych-pop roots. Though there may never be a definitive, authoritative answer to the question, Crimson's debut is perhaps the first mature expression of the progressive movement, an incredibly focused distillation of elements slowly coalescing somewhere in all of the album's mentioned above. "One of the prime principles of King Crimson's *raison d'être* was progress - moving forward," notes their guitarist. "What was important was to honour the spirit

Keith Tippet
"I'd have only joined King Crimson for the money - and I had too much respect for them for that."



GETTY IMAGES

As well as leading his own sextet and fronting the celebrated Fripp-produced jazz-rock ensemble, Centipede, Bristol-born pianist Keith Tippett played on three Crimson albums between 1970 and 1971. After recording *Lizard*, on which Tippett is prominently featured, Fripp offered Tippett co-ownership of a new, large-format Crimson. It was tempting, but came to naught. "He rang me up in Buckingham, where I was living with my wife Julie [Driscoll] at the time, and said: 'Here's an offer,' and I said thank you! The terms would have been that I would have had musical input. He knew that I was a strong musical personality and I would have gone in and possibly taken it all in another way, but with his blessing because we would have been joint bandleaders. But I had too much love for my sextet and it would have taken me away from the jazz scene. There were lots of musicians I wanted to learn from and play with on the jazz scene, and I'd have only been joining Crimson for the money, and I had too much respect for the band and Robert to do that. May music never just become another way of making money. So, I've no regrets whatsoever." **SS**



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Peter Sinfield and Fripp during the *Court...* sessions at Wessex Sound Studios, London.

MAIN IMAGE/RIGHT: BARRIE WENTZEL

worried about objections from retailers who would be confused about the lack of information on the sleeve. "Fripp said: 'Well, it'll be the only record in the shop without anything down the spine on it, so they'll know which one it is.' Which was brilliant when you think about it."

There's surely no simpler way of starting a heated debate between fans of progressive music than to pose the question: what was the first prog rock

but not the form - you honour the spirit of the law, not the letter. Would we have sat in 1969 and articulated that a core principle is that we continue to 'progress'? Well, Michael Giles was probably the closest to articulating it. That's the word he would've used; whether you had the right attitude, you had to keep moving."

Fripp takes a moment to cut a couple of slices of rich Christmas cake made by his wife, singer Toyah Willcox. When he talks about those heady days, despite the passage of time, he is still affected and deeply moved as he recounts his exposure to what he firmly believes was a force that was distinct and independent of the players. It's a line that Fripp has argued since the very beginning. Back in the day, he always attributed the pace and the speed of their uncanny success to what he called their 'Good Fairy'.

Now 66 years old, Fripp remains unshakable in his view that the power he experienced as a young man was not the result of the musicians, but something ineffable and timeless. Crudely put, the album came about not because of the five individuals involved, but through what Fripp calls the Creative Impulse reaching back from a point in the future, pulling those players towards it. Fripp accepts that such esoteric expressions are viewed with suspicion, and are as deeply unfashionable now as they were then. "What you're writing about," **P**



"The high point of that gig for me was the whole audience rising to their feet as one and cheering Ian McDonald's solo during *21st Century Schizoid Man*."

Richard Vickers



"One of the prime principles of King Crimson's raison d'être was progress – the moving forward."

Robert Fripp

Freewheeling, Fripp backstage at the Stones show waits his turn to confound the crowd.

he tells *Prog* "is the visible history of King Crimson, fact and function, who did what and who said what and to whom. The invisible history is not the world of facts but the world of value. It's the qualitative world over the creative process. You can't prove anything. All you can do is bring forward a witness who said I was moved, were you? So how do you explain the invisible without appearing to be a loony?"

"For the '69 Crimson," Fripp elaborates, "the creative explosion was utterly remarkable, and anyone that got near the band came into a world where that creative power was present. This includes the people in the band, the management, the record company, BP Fallon, The Moody Blues, and all these characters. This was a remarkable creative explosion that happened despite the people involved and not because of it."

Fripp's idea is one that he's held fast to for decades. Is he really suggesting that events were less self-managed and more cosmically penetrating?

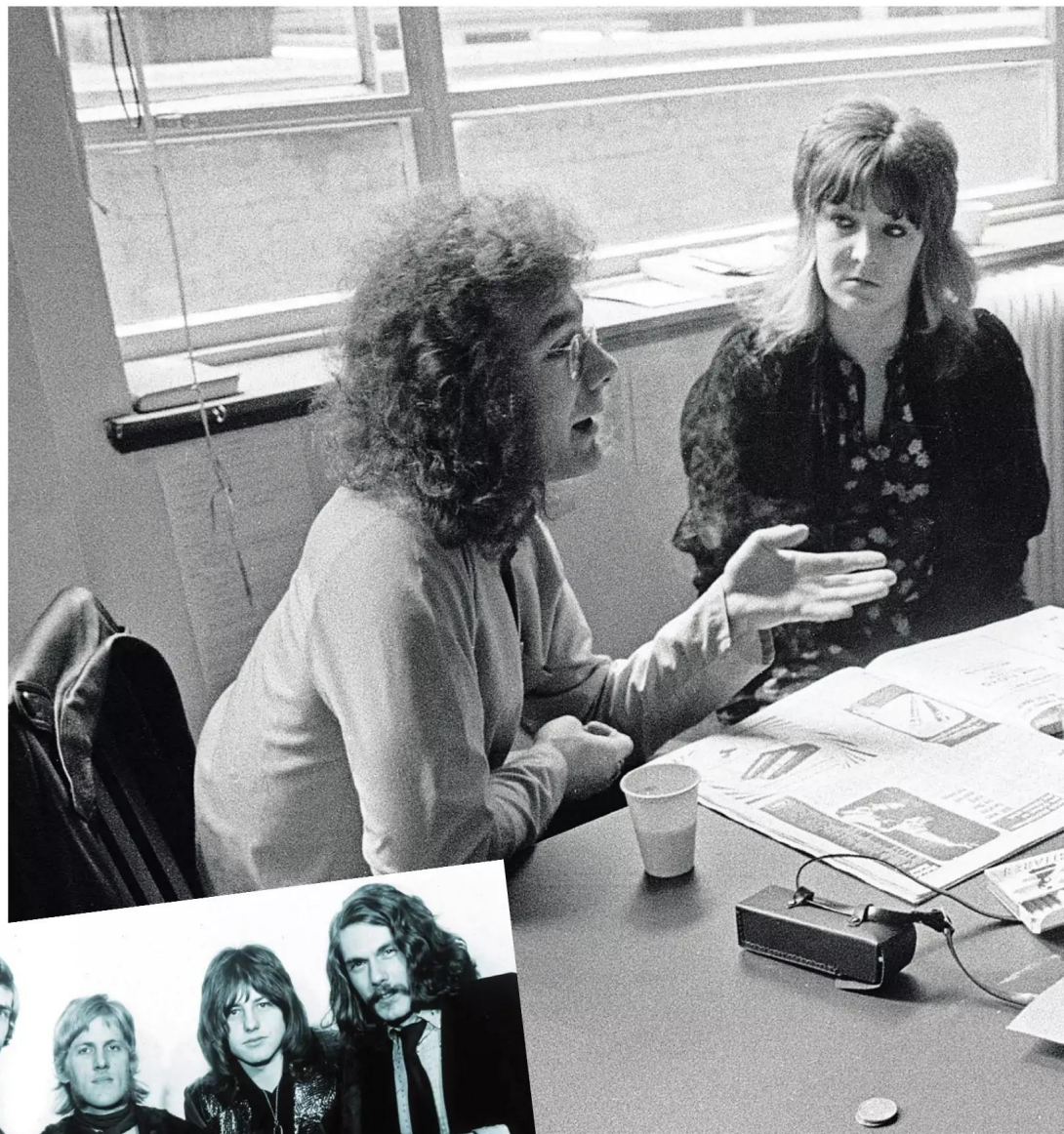
"Well, it's very difficult to argue for the notion of a benevolent creative impulse that so wishes to give itself away to the world that it sometimes calls upon the unlikely to give it voice — and unlikely characters to give it ears. Nevertheless I suggest that it's true," Fripp affirms. "The difficulty is after the event, when the juice seems to be in abeyance, or the Good Fairy no longer seems to bend over and whisper in the ear: 'What do I do now?'"

"At the time, the explosion was such that it carried everything before it. It changed not long after Hyde Park."

How so? "To begin with, the focus and commitment of all the players was completely on this. Then with the success, and for those who more interested in women, the attention moved a little and the focus on King Crimson began to disperse. But the moment was so strong that it kept everything moving until the band fell apart in December."

The shock departure of Ian McDonald and Michael Giles at the end of the American tour signalled the end of a band that had only played a little over 70 gigs, had produced just one album, and from start to finish, existed just 355 days.

In the early days of 1970, with Greg Lake soon to be on



HARRY GOODWIN / REX FEATURES



Court... recorded after only nine months together.

his way to form ELP, Fripp, along with lyricist Peter Sinfield, were left attempting to keep the momentum experienced and generated by the original Crimson going. *In The Wake Of Poseidon* aped the shape and form of its predecessor in ways that were rather too close for comfort, coming across as a slightly desperate attempt to replicate a successful formula. Such a criticism however cannot be levelled at *Lizard*, the third

Crimson album and the second to be released that year. Eagerly embracing the London jazz scene's innovative explorations by co-opting pianist Keith Tippett and members of his band, the abrasive textures of *Lizard* still has the capacity to polarise opinion amongst Crimson fans. Some, like Steven Wilson and Jakko Jakszyk, praise the square-peg-in-round-hole nature of the album as tempestuous free-jazz vocabularies are merged with the poignant melodies. Not until Wilson's revelatory remix in 2009 for the 40th anniversary reissues could Fripp disentangle himself from the emotional debris resulting from a falling out with bassist and singer



"It was fairly obvious to me that we needed two drummers to fill the one shoe."

Robert Fripp



I talk to the wind: Fripp leads the conversation at the Melody Maker offices as Maggie Bell, Colosseum drummer Jon Hiseman and the Maker's Richard Williams look bemusedly on.

BARRIE WENTZELL

he finished producing *Matching Mole's Little Red Record* he recorded the hugely influential *No Pussyfooting* with Brian Eno, initiating an artistic partnership that has endured for 40 years. There was also music bearing the smell and sound of King Crimson.

It wasn't until the announcement of what's become known as the *Larks' Tongues* quintet, consisting of John Wetton (bass and vocals), David Cross (violin and Mellotron) Bill Bruford (drums) and Jamie Muir (percussion and all sorts) in September 1972 that Fripp felt he finally had the team to get back to something approaching the formidable power of the '69 band. "The period at the beginning of the *Larks' Tongues*... span, July through to December, there was a lot of magic in the air – much of it was remarkable with hope and possibility. I was a happier camper. The point was there was music in the air, and whenever there's music in the air that only King Crimson can play, well where's King Crimson? It's a question of tuning in. We're now involved in the creative process. It's not simply that Robert Fripp hears this and gets someone. It's not sequential like that. It's more like here is *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*. It already exists, but a year ahead. How does it reach back and pull people towards it?"

On one level, Fripp's assertion of the Creative Impulse reaching out to draw players towards each other seems to be borne out in the way that John Wetton, whom Fripp had first met when they were at college together in the mid-60s, was recruited. "John, who was in Bournemouth visiting his parents, heard that that his old pal – myself – who he went to college with lived at Holt [in Dorset], not quite sure where. So he went out for a drive through Holt, and just as I was looking out of the window there was John going by. It was like that.

"Here's a man taking a drive through the country because this other man might live there, and that man actually happens to be there – which is wildly unlikely – and then looks out of the window as the car goes by. So that's how I re-met John."

It certainly is a *great* coincidence, if not more...

"Before John joined Family there was a discussion in 1970 about him joining Crimson just as Boz got the bassist's gig," Fripp continues. "It was possible that he might join, but not the right situation for John at the time. But 18 months later this seems fortuitous."

Although Fripp and Bruford had discussed working together when Crimson supported Yes in Boston earlier in the year, it wasn't until May that the pair had an exploratory jam. "I took my guitar around to Bill's and we had a play," says Fripp. "The story

Gordon Haskell and drummer Andy McCulloch, and the widening fault-lines in his partnership with Sinfield.

"It's interesting how we know things or have a feeling for things," says Fripp referring to the period. "It seemed to me at the time that whatever we'd do will be wrong, but has to be done to get to the other side. My sense at the time was that this was a two-year period."

Part of the process of getting to the other side of this divide saw the release of Crimson's fourth album, *Islands* in 1971. Much like the first incarnation, this studio album never quite caught what Mel Collins (sax, flute Mellotron), Boz Burrell (bass and vocals) and Ian Wallace (drums) were capable of. With the band falling apart at the end of an American tour in early '72 (commemorated on the sonically execrable *Earthbound*), it would take many years and several archive releases via Fripp's King Crimson Collectors' Club, and numerous official live downloads to rehabilitate that particular line-up's reputation.

That summer was an incredibly productive time for Fripp. Not only had

David Cross

"I could have died when I saw Jamie's onstage persona the first time."

"Robert said he was interested in doing what he called an Indian-type album, and asked if I'd be interested in playing with him and Jamie Muir. The first time I met Jamie was when I turned up at his flat and we spent a couple of hours having a jam. Fripp said he was setting up another session, but this time with Bill and John and he asked me to come along. It was that afternoon the project became King Crimson."

It wasn't just the punters who were shocked by Muir's performance art-antics of throwing chains about the place and spitting blood while glowering at the audience. "Jamie's onstage persona never manifested itself in rehearsals. I could have died when I saw him on stage for the first time. I thought it was wonderful, but we had no idea he was going to do it – it was completely out of the blue. Of the musical telepathy we shared, I think the music that came out of Crimson was purely a result of people being prepared to listen to each other, even though they didn't come necessarily from the same branch of the tree." **SS**





King Crimson Mk VI: (l-r) David Cross, Bill Bruford, Jamie Muir, John Wetton, Robert Fripp.



The talking drum: King Crimson start experimenting in the sessions that would later become *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*.

that Bill tells is that I said to him: 'I think you're ready for King Crimson' and Bill realised he'd been auditioned."

Jamie Muir, who had witnessed Crimson in full force at Hyde Park three years earlier, had been recommended by *Melody Maker* journalist Richard Williams as someone Fripp should talk to. Acting on this tip the guitarist and percussionist met and began a furious



"It was a magical band. It had the juice, but it didn't show it on the record."

Robert Fripp

musical workout. Muir's energy drew up the sensibilities of the avant-garde and a piquant sense of humour — most of the contents of Muir's kitchen implements drawer would end up touring as part of his arsenal of exotic and often quixotic percussion.

"It was fairly obvious to me that we needed two drummers to fill the one shoe," Fripp remembers. "The conceptualist that was Jamie, who had the ideas and the execution, and the enthusiasm of Bill and his insight into what was needed of the rock drummer at that time, as evidenced in Yes."

With Bruford feeling he'd gone as far as he could with Yes after the recording of *Close To The Edge*, Crimson in whatever shape or form it might be represented a chance to extend his creative vocabulary. The choice for Wetton was similarly pragmatic, knowing that there would finally be an opportunity to develop as a singer and composer, a role he was



In *The Wake of Poseidon* and *Lizard*, both released in 1970.

firmly denied as a member of Family who were then in the throes of finishing *Bandstand*.

In another curious, almost spooky coincidence, David Cross was a member of band who were rehearsing in the very same cafe basement where King Crimson had spent three years forging their canon. Urged on by David Enthoven, Fripp checked out the violinist and suggested they work together. Fripp insists he wasn't looking for players per se, but for the *right* players. "You have to have a balance within the band members. For example, in the '69 band Greg was balanced by Michael Giles. Sometimes Greg would move in one direction and you needed someone of Mike's personal



PHOTO COURTESY OF DGM

Jamie Muir

"I was as surprised as the rest of the band with what I got up to on stage."

Ask Muir how he came to join Crimson and he

offers: "I always assumed that my grounding in improvised music was why I was asked to join the band. Robert had an extremely experienced rock drummer with Bill, and if he'd wanted another straight rock drummer I wouldn't have been on the list really. The things Bill liked doing weren't really on my radar and vice versa. I took the view that I was there to bring in some new perspectives and other ideas. We just played around in rehearsals and tried a few different directions to see what would happen. Robert would eventually introduce more formal structures of things he'd had brewing for a while, so it worked quite naturally. In retrospect, I would have probably been as surprised as the rest of the band with what I got up to on stage. I had no plans to do any of that. It's just I was very pumped up with enthusiasm, having such a good time. Perhaps it was part of the improvisational thing that you respond to what's around you; just being creative and inventive is what I enjoy." **SS**

Tales From
Court



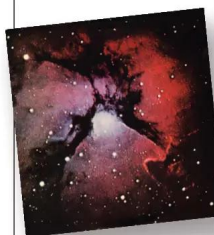
authority to hold the middle position," he explains.

"You had so much power in Jamie, essentially as the junior partner in the relationship, offset by Bill. And John was in the middle. David's contribution to the band was important but not pivotal. At the time I felt I'd had enough with saxes for now. But violin? Yes, please, with a little flute, which David played, and a little Mellotron. David provided colour rather than foundational strength."

When Muir left in February 1973 to join a Tibetan monastery in Scotland, all those carefully honed balances changed. "After Jamie, Bill and John were leading from the back, and David and I doing what we could to stay with them at the front – at that point the violin is not an instrument of hard rock, and you can describe Crimson's metalism as hard rock. When you're working in that improv area the violin

is fine. When you're playing the parts to ...*Schizoid Man* it's not."

The music conjured by the quintet in concert posited a remarkable fusion between long periods of freely improvised music that was unique in rock bands of the time. There was no vamping on a static sequence of chords or grooves. Rather, it was a tumultuous exploration of shifting moods, densely-wrought timbre and hair-raising tonalities that could be crashingly frenzied and apocalyptic in one beat, and sweetly pastoral the next.




1971's *Islands*, the last to feature Pete Sinfield's lyrics.



"At the time I felt maybe I'd had enough with saxes for now. But violin? Yes, please."

Robert Fripp

Inevitably, the attempt to capture this alchemical concoction in the studio was, Fripp suggests, not entirely successful. "It was a magical band. It had the juice, but it didn't show it on the record. That was partly to do with Command Studios, and it wasn't sufficiently played in. The band probably hadn't got to the point of the '69 band until Central Park in '74. The first Crimson band came from nowhere and then went. It began at the top and then disappeared. With the '72/'73 band it had to work its way through to a point where it could then play at a certain standard and probably *Starless And Bible Black* is the beginning of that. But in the *LTIA* sessions we weren't ready for it."

Being a member of Crimson for Fripp has always represented something of a crisis of conscience, asking the questions such as 'is this the right thing to do?' or 'is this true?' 



"King Crimson and Robert Fripp are not one and the same."
Robert Fripp

whenever the lures of commercial success or the machinations of the music industry conspire to blow things off-course. The conclusion from most observers, including some band members, is that that King Crimson and Robert Fripp are one and the same. It's a view that Fripp rejects. "No. They're always different. But nevertheless there has to be a connection," he says. "If you look at this as a creative act, that's quite different from how you look at it if it's a professional act.

"If you're looking at it as a professional undertaking then someone does something and that can be pinned down and simply described. But how do you explain these four

young players within an exceptionally short period of time becoming King Crimson and playing KC material? Well, you can't in the normal, professional terms of cause and effect. Something comes in from the outside.

When you say 'outside, what is it 'outside'? "For example, an Indian musician would say that they play music on behalf of God, but you couldn't possibly say that in the West," says Fripp. "All you can say is that you're the instrument for music; the instrument that music plays.

"My epiphany in music was that music is one language, speaking in many dialects. So there's no contradiction listening to the Bartok String Quartets or Stravinsky's *Rites Of*

John Wetton

"I'd never been in a band like it - it was almost telepathic."



GETTY IMAGES

John Wetton recalls his entry into the court of King Crimson. "One day the phone rang and Robert said: 'I'm round at Bill Bruford's and we're discussing the

possibility of doing something. Do you want to pop round?' So I did. We met and talked. It wasn't a jam or anything. I remember Bill came to the door with a carrot in his hand! I thought it felt good as soon as we started talking, so we put the ball in motion. I was actually in the studio with Family working on *Bandstand* and Bill was doing *Close To The Edge*.

Because the recording studio world is so incestuous and everybody knows everyone else's business, we had to co-ordinate things. It didn't matter that we hadn't played a note together because it was an ethos. In terms of improvisation, I've never been in anything like that before. I was talking to David Cross in Italy in 2010, and he agreed that he'd never been even vaguely close to what was happening on the stage with Crimson. It was almost telepathic at times." **SS**



"The period at the beginning of the *Larks' Tongues* span, there was a lot of magic in the air. I was a happier camper."

Robert Fripp



Larks' Tongues..., the chance for King Crimson to expand their creative vocabulary.

Spring, Elgar's Enigma Variations, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, McLaughlin - any of these enigmatic, ever evolving musical characters."

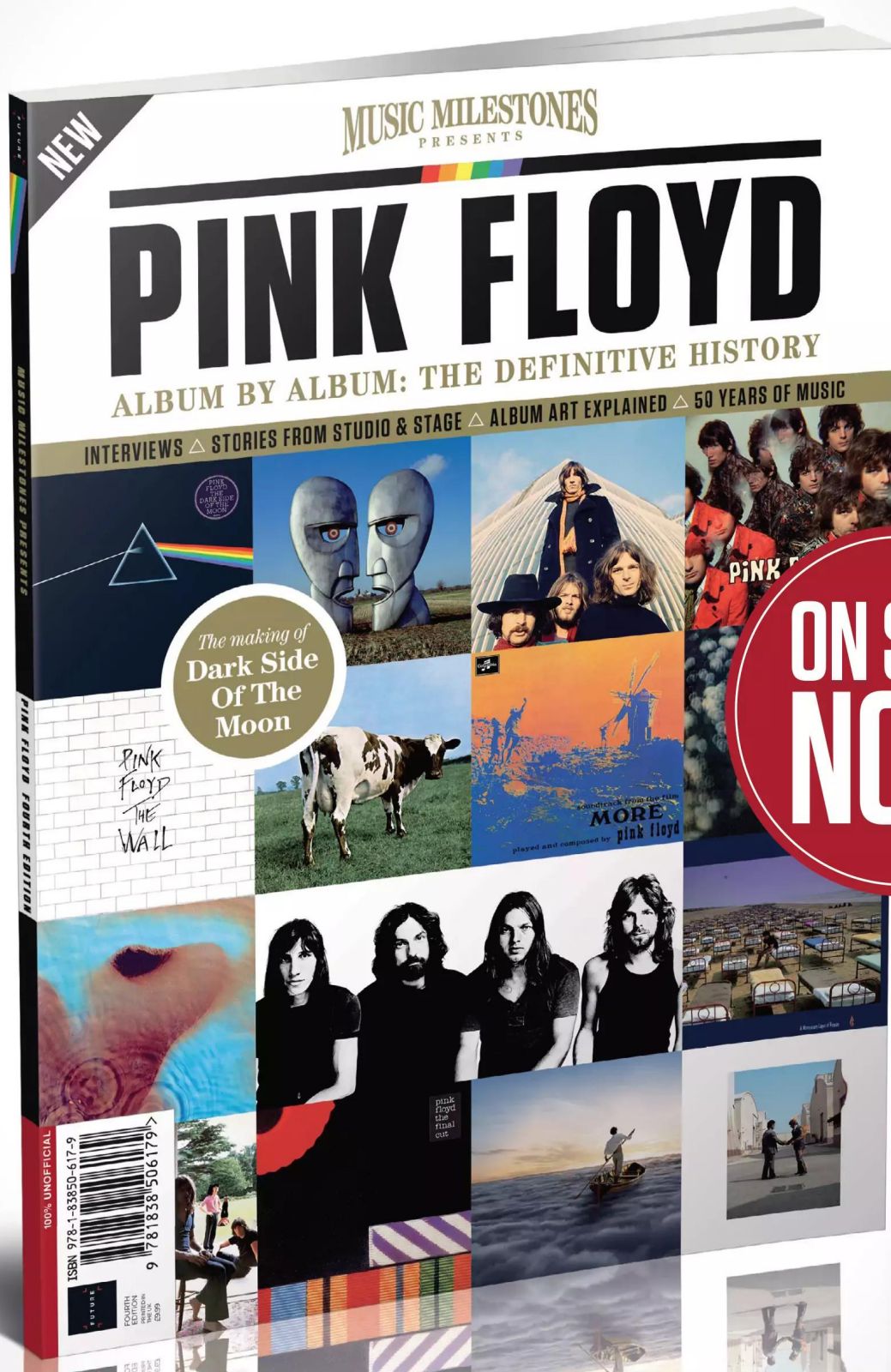
So in Fripp's, and King Crimson's world, since their beginning music has always been a divining line with members drawn to it, absorbing influences that may seem to conflict at times - but it's all natural. Fripp carries on: "There is only one musician in the world, but acting through many bodies and speaking in a number of dialects. That was my musical seeing. Through that sense of music is one but with many forms of expression, you can move forwards through Crimson as pop rock, Keith Tippett's Centipede, *Lizard* and Jamie... Then there's the world music which I became familiar with in 1976, what occurred in 1977 in New York, and eventually the guitar gamelan of *Discipline* in '81.

"There's no contradiction. They're all facets of the same jewel, it's the same oneness."

And the facets that materialised after Crimson's '69-'73 period yield even more stories from *The Court* for another time. **P**

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“You Gotta Get An Album Out...”

Did *Wish You Were Here* rip apart Pink Floyd?

Wish You Were Here marked the beginning of the end for **Pink Floyd**. Released in September 1975, their ninth album remains one of their most loved works and its genteel, glacial grandeur sounds as contemporary today as it did when it was first heard over 40 years ago.

Words: Daryl Easlea **Image:** Jeffrey Mayer/Getty



Its torturous gestation, recorded in increasingly indolent sessions at Abbey Road across half a year, almost broke the band apart; as Roger Waters said in 1999, "The whole thing had fallen to pieces during *Wish You Were Here*."

It certainly paved the way for Pink Floyd's third era – the final near-decade when Waters set himself up solely as bandleader, sidelining guitarist and co-writer David Gilmour, alienating drummer Nick Mason and ultimately dismissing founder keyboard player Richard Wright. It was the album on which, as Nicholas Schaffner spelled out so succinctly in his 1991 book *Saucerful Of Secrets*, "the Floyds, whether they realised it or not, were artistically at cross purposes. Gilmour and Wright were content that Pink Floyd's music should keep transporting listeners into advanced states of REM. Waters was now determined... to wake them up."

"The grimness *may* have been overstated as years have gone by," Nick Mason chuckles down the line from California. "It wasn't so much that it was truly grim, but we were just having great difficulty in getting to work on it."

"In this post-*Dark Side Of The Moon* period, we were having to assess what

we were in this business for," Gilmour said in 2011. Suddenly having enough money to fulfil even the wildest teenage dreams proved problematic. Thanks to the all-conquering success of *Dark Side...*, expectations grew, and more and more people came to see their light show and as a result, it became a period where people talked solely about how many tons of equipment the group had and numbers of staff they had to operate their projections, rather than the music. Waters subsequently surmised, "*The Dark Side Of The Moon* finished the Pink Floyd off once and for all." Gilmour was later to reply, "Roger has said that we may have been finished at that point, and he may have been right." But Waters knew why the band stayed together: "We were frightened of the great 'out there' beyond the umbrella of this extraordinarily powerful and valuable trade name, Pink Floyd."

Pink Floyd will forever now be seen in terms of the power struggle between Waters and Gilmour, and the period after *Dark Side...* saw the roots of this manifest themselves. All four of the group were coming to terms with their new-found success and a dawning realisation, as in some of the marriages that were breaking

up around them, that the individuals who made up the institution had little in common.

"WE SPENT AN AWFUL LOT OF STUDIO TIME FAFFING AROUND..."

After the release of *Dark Side...* in March 1973, the band had fulfilled a US tour, and for the first time they had a significant amount of time off. The group's lack of direction was underlined by their first post-*Dark Side...* experiment. This was a strikingly out-there project called *Household Objects*, and one which represented the band's last foray into the experimental approach of *Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict* and *Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast*. With engineer Alan Parsons, they tried to make music using, um, household objects. Sessions continued through to December, but the idea was finally abandoned as unworkable.

"I remember spending an inordinately long time stretching rubber bands across matchboxes to get a bass sound – which just ended up sounding like a bass guitar!" Gilmour told me in 2002. When I enquired whose idea it was, he replied, "Probably Roger's – it certainly wasn't mine. We spent an awful lot of hours of





Match of the day:
Floyd enjoying some
downtime in France.

wasted studio time faffing around.”

In fact, the next 18 months of Pink Floyd’s career could be encapsulated by the phrase ‘faffing around’. While Waters pondered the invisible world, the other members of the band grew their property portfolios, threw parties and generally bathed in the ennui of the newly rich. The Floyd brand was kept afloat with the release in early 1974 of *A Nice Pair*, a gathering of the group’s first two studio albums.

It was the long-arranged French tour in June that stirred the band, and as they decamped to the airless Unit Studios in London’s King’s Cross to rehearse, new material began to emerge. “It wasn’t really that oppressive,” Mason recalls. “I don’t think because you are making money you necessarily have to transfer into the Presidential Suite at the Holiday Inn — rehearsal rooms can be rough. I don’t think that’s ever been a bother for us.” It was here that Gilmour hit upon the four-note phrase that brought Waters to life. Inspired by Gilmour’s mercurial guitar work, Waters thought of Syd Barrett, the group’s original frontman, who had been dismissed six years previously and wrote a lyric about him, initially titling the song *Shine On*. At this time, the myth of Barrett had begun to grow

disproportionately as his old band finally achieved enormous success on the back *The Dark Side Of Moon*. It was perhaps ironic that this success had been achieved via a newly augmented sound featuring saxophone and backing vocalists, ideas that Barrett had himself suggested back in 1967.

And Barrett’s growing mythology

received a further boost around this time from a piece in the music press. In an era when journalists were only marginally less famous than the artists they wrote about, Nick Kent had written a lengthy feature, *The Cracked Ballad of Syd Barrett*, for the *NME* in April 1974, exploring the myths surrounding Floyd’s former leader.

The Band Is Just Fantastic: Five Classic *Wish You Were Here* Moments

GILMOUR’S GUITAR: *SHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND, PART II (3:54)*

Gilmour’s defining four-note phrase, which has colloquially become known as ‘Syd’s Theme’, is arguably the most recognisable motif of the entire Pink Floyd catalogue.

WATERS’ VOCAL: *SHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND, PART IV (8:42)*

As if to underline the theme of absence on *Wish You Were Here*, in the time it takes Waters’ vocals eventually to appear, you could have listened to the opening two-and-a-half tracks from *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*.

ELECTRONIC DISCORDANCE: *WELCOME TO THE MACHINE (0.24)*

As the second buzzer sound really disturbs the calm surface of previous track, combined with Waters’ menacing VCS3 throb, it is clear that *Wish You Were Here* is not simply going to be a straightforward chill-out pleasure.

GILMOUR’S VOCAL, WATERS’ LYRIC: *WISH YOU WERE HERE (1:18)*

Arguably the greatest combination of the salt’n’sweet of Waters and Gilmour, it demonstrates, despite whatever animosity there may have been between them, just how mutually beneficial their partnership was.

WRIGHT’S SYNTHESIZER: *SHINE ON YOU CRAZY DIAMOND, PART IX (12.08)*

The sheer poignancy today of one departed Floyd member (Wright), paying tribute to the other (Barrett) in the album’s mournful sign-off, playing a melody line from their Syd-penned Top 10 1967 hit, *See Emily Play*. As the sound drifts away, it marks the last time all four members contributed so evenly to a Pink Floyd album. **DE**





NIK WHEELER/SYGMA VIA GETTY IMAGES

By the end of the year, Harvest issued an LP set of Barrett's two studio albums. It was to give Barrett his only US chart placing.

"PINK FLOYD'S AUDIENCE WOULD GLIDE OUT OF THE VENUE..."

Meanwhile, Floyd had worked up another song, *Raving And Drooling* during the rehearsals, in time for the French tour. There were new members in the camp: The Blackberries, Venetta Fields and Carlena Williams, who'd come to Gilmour's attention singing with Humble Pie. Fields, who had no prior knowledge of Pink Floyd, noted the difference between the two groups. "The 'Pie were really rock and the audience would leave raging with lots of gusto," she says today. "The Floyd's audience would glide out of the venue, because the music mesmerised them." Dick Parry returned on saxophone. All three would stay with the band for the next year and make an invaluable contribution to what would become *Wish You Were Here*.

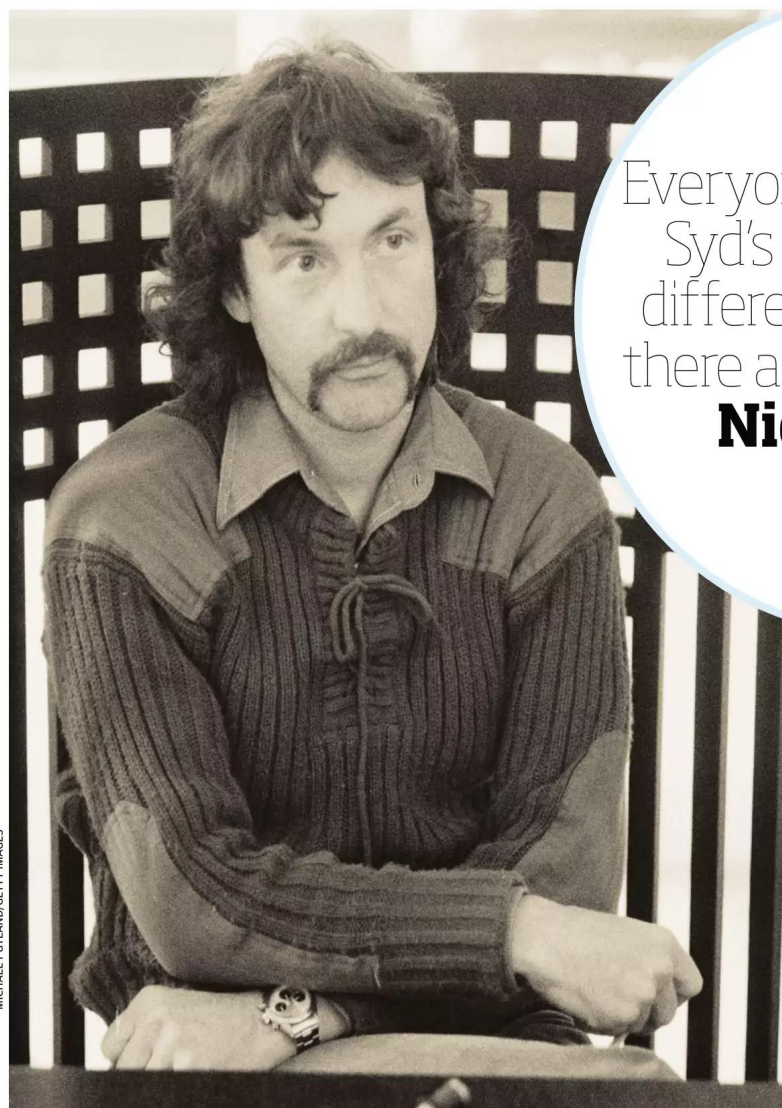
The main focus of the year was the UK tour in November and December. By this time another new song had been written, *You've Got To Be Crazy*. The first half of the show was these three new numbers, the second half would be *Dark Side...* The group spent three weeks in Elstree and a further

week in King's Cross rehearsing and getting to grips with the new projections that formed the now-famous film backdrops.

A 20-date tour ran from November 4 until the December 14, the last time they visited provincial cities such as Cardiff, Stoke-On-Trent and Bristol; they played three key London gigs in mid-November at Wembley. The Blackberries served to lighten the mood on the tour. "*20 Feet From Stardom* [a 2013 documentary about backing singers] is so typical," Nick Mason laughs. "They were so good at riding the storm; if there was uproar, they were the ones who could sleep through it in the band room."

It was the singers' ability to rise above it all that impressed (after all, Fields had worked with the Stones and had been an Ikette).

"I was not into their politics," Fields says. "I was so excited to be with a group with their music and popularity. I was used to singing with groups that sold out 15,000-seaters. Pink Floyd filled football stadiums throughout the world." Reviews of the tour were mixed, including most notably, Nick Kent's scathing *NME* report, which poured scorn on the band and called the three new songs "a dubious triumvirate". Spirits in the Floyd camp going into the Christmas season were not joyous.



Everyone's story about Syd's appearance is different. But he *was* there and it was *weird*.

Nick Mason

"THERE WERE ISSUES WITH OUR PERSONAL LIVES..."

Recording sessions for *Wish You Were Here* began on Monday, January 6 1975 in the new Studio Three at Abbey Road. If there was any sort of epiphany appropriate to this date in the band's history, it was only that the sense of ennui that they had experienced on the road had followed them into the studio. Brian Humphries – who'd first worked with the

band on their 1969 soundtrack album *More* and had come in to look after the sound on their 1974 UK tour – was to be the album's engineer. It was one of the first times EMI had worked with a freelancer. Because it was Pink Floyd, *anything* was allowed. "At first, I felt uncomfortable," Humphries says. "I and the band were guinea pigs, being the first working in the new Studio Three, so we probably knew more about their desk than the boffins did, plus I wasn't trying to outdo Alan Parsons, their blue-eyed boy."

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Humphries had worked with bands such as Free and Traffic: "I've always said that Traffic were my favourite band, but as for professionalism, the Floyd were the best, because the music was always going to be memorable when you heard the finished article."

The problem was, simply, whether or not a finished article was going to happen. There were days when little happened at all. Mason was not happy about the isolation that multi-track recording offered, and how it drew out the process. Rick Wright, whose sound was so central to the band, seemed away in his own world. All four would take it in turns to arrive late.

"I don't think they knew what they wanted to do," Humphries told *Sound On Sound*. "We had a dartboard and an air rifle and we'd play these word games, sit around, get drunk, go home and return the next day."

"It got a little desperate," Mason recalls in 2015. "There were a few other issues with our personal lives."

"Roger was taking on more of the way he wanted the band to go," Humphries adds, "but David did have a lot of input in the decisions



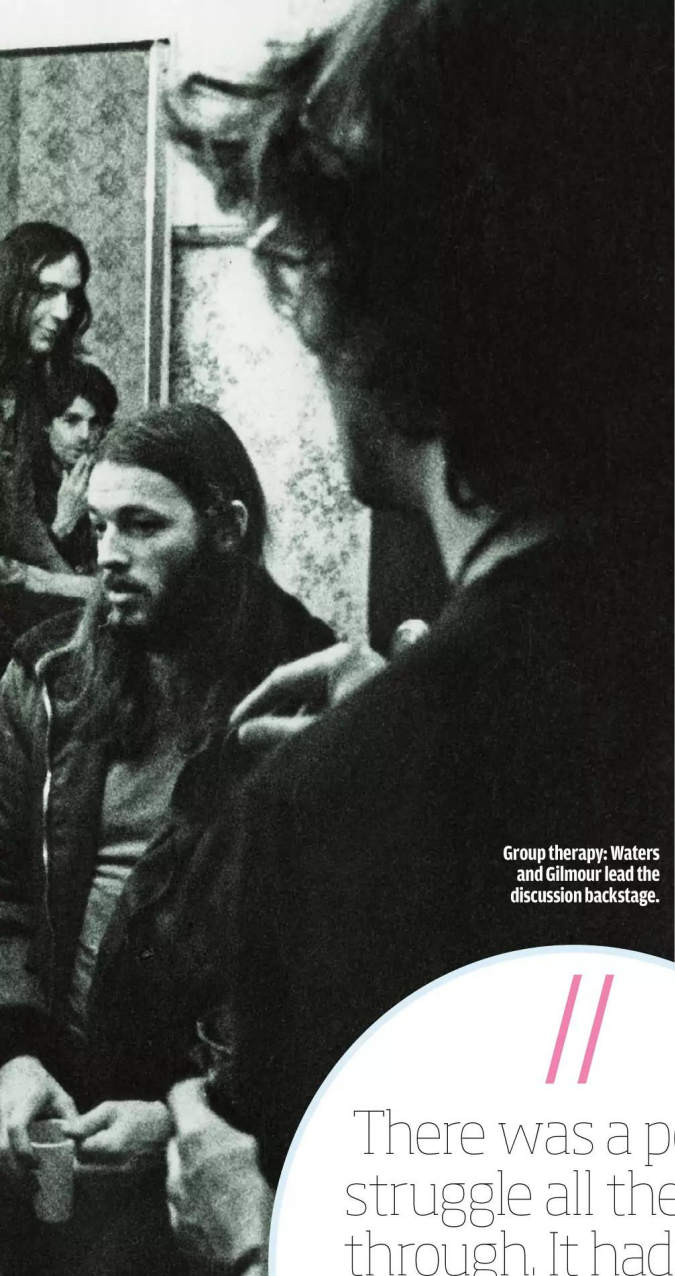
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

that were made."

"It was clear to me that both Dave and Roger were in charge," Fields recalls. "I loved Rick! He was quiet but very friendly. I loved the way he played piano. Nick was quiet as well."

Gilmour wanted the record to be simply the three songs that they had been working on, making *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* as it was now known, a whole side of the vinyl. Waters thought it would sound cobbled together, and wanted it to be coherent.

"Dave wanted to make a completely different record, so we had a struggle about that, which I won eventually," Waters told *Prog* Editor Jerry Ewing for *Classic Rock* in 1999. A band meeting, where Waters took notes, found him victorious — new material was to be written, and *Raving And Drooling* and *You've Got To Be Crazy* were mothballed (they were later resurrected as *Sheep* and *Dogs*, respectively, on 1977's *Animals* album). *Shine On...* was to bookend the album and new material was to be added in between. And in referencing Barrett and the current state of the band, the theme was to be about absence. Storm Thorgerson,



MICK GOLD/GETTY

Group therapy: Waters and Gilmour lead the discussion backstage.

There was a power struggle all the way through. It had been going on for years.
David Gilmour

a frequent face at Abbey Road ("Argumentative, grumpy but a great ally when things got heated and a great sleeve designer," – Humphries) set to work on the iconic designs that would so define the album.

It was once *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* got fully underway that the band began to coalesce. Like the way all four Beatles got together to demonstrate their professionalism when Billy Preston arrived at Apple to add keyboards on the *Get Back* sessions, so too did Floyd gather around Syd, their fifth member, although he wasn't actually there. The new material matched the pre-written song. *Welcome To The Machine*, Waters' scathing attack on the industry around him was written in the studio, while *Have A Cigar*, another swipe at music business fat cats was added. Frequent studio guest Roy Harper sang vocals after Gilmour and Waters failed to

nail it, much to Waters' later chagrin. Providing the humanity on the album was the title track, a bluesy confection that was accomplished in conveying feelings of longing. Waters' failing marriage to Judy Trim fed into the lyrics, as did the state of the group and the now-legendary apparition of Barrett in the studio. Venetta Fields was thrilled with what she heard.

"I was impressed and amazed. Their music was mostly in minor keys, which made it dark and eerie."

There were also some laughs to be had. The group-sanctioned visual gags that ran through their sleeves and projections, and also the cartoon programme for the 1974 UK tour demonstrated that Pink Floyd had a not-always-obvious funny bone.

"One of the nice things about the band was that there always was a sense of humour," Mason says. "Although we were taken very seriously by the world at large, there was always an edge of fun. We were never known as a comedy quartet, the Crazy Gang make records, but within the band I think we had a lot of laughs."

"Roger was the alpha-male but we

all joined in quite heartily with the teasing,"

Gilmour told *Mojo* in 2011.

"I don't think we realised that some people took it to heart a little more than others."

There was a great deal of banter, often directed at outsiders such as Humphries. ("It was

always me versus them!" he laughs.) Jill Furmanovsky's pictures from the sessions alternate between jollity (Waters eating her fairy cakes) and ennui (everyone looking a bit bloody miserable). Amid the laughs and the tears of the sessions, the band departed for an American tour in April 1975, and recording recommenced for one concerted month in May.

"NOBODY REALLY RECOGNISED SYD. I DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE WAS..."

Syd Barrett's unannounced arrival at the recording sessions provided, in some ways, the ultimate affirmation that Waters had taken the right course with the album's theme of absence. So troubled an individual was he by this juncture – a clear five years after the band had last seen him – that he was there, but not there. Barrett's return to Abbey Road on June 5 1975, allegedly during the playback of *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, is the single event that defines the recording of *Wish You Were Here*.

As Mason said in his personal account of his time in Pink Floyd, *Inside Out*: "It is very easy to draw parallels with Peter Pan returning to find the house still there and the people changed. Did he expect to find us as we had been seven years earlier, ready to start to work with him again?"

"They never told me about Syd," Venetta Fields, present on that day, says. "I read everything I know about him. Nobody really recognised him. I didn't know who he was. They spoke to him for a while, and we got on with the session. I could see the impact he had on them that day. They were shocked to see him there, and really shocked at the way he looked and acted."

So much has been said about his



MICK GOLD/GETTY

Rick Wright: *Wish You Were Here's* secret weapon.



appearance. Mason adds in 2015, “Everyone’s story is fractionally different. Whether he came once, or twice, what he said, all the rest of it. All I can say is that he was definitely there, and it was weird.” The fact that Barrett was there at all is one of the key touchstones in the whole Pink Floyd story.

“THE BAND THOUGHT THEY NEEDED A BREAK. I KNOW I DID...”

With most of the album now finished, the band headed off for a tour of the US, culminating in their fabled Knebworth appearance in July 1975, which was dogged by technical issues. On the Monday after Knebworth the band returned to Abbey Road where they added the final touches to the album and mixed it.

Wish You Were Here was finally released in September 1975 – remarkably, and absolutely unheard of

today, the band did no touring to support the release at all. “We did two tours during its recording,” Brian Humphries concludes. “So perhaps they thought they needed a break. I know I did.”

Its reviews were infamously unkind. In the US, Ben Edmonds in *Rolling Stone* singled out *Shine On...* and said, “The potential of the idea goes unrealised; they give such a matter-of-fact reading of the goddamn thing that they might as well be singing about Roger Waters’ brother-in-law getting a parking ticket.” *Phonograph Record* said that the album was, “Well crafted, pleasant, and utterly without challenge, it’s mood music for a new age.”

//
Dave wanted to make
a different record, so
we had a struggle
about that, which I won.

Roger Waters
//

In the UK, *Melody Maker* said “the Floyd amble somnambulant along their star-struck avenues arm in arm with some pallid ghost of creativity.” However, it mattered little what reviewers

said. It went to Number One on both sides of the Atlantic and remains an enormous favourite.

So, can *Wish You Were Here* be seen as the album that ripped Pink Floyd apart? The real rip may have happened a decade later, but it was here the first tears were made.

“There was a power struggle all the way through. It had been going on for years,” Gilmour told Jerry Ewing in 1999. “Roger wanted to be the leader and the boss and in charge – which he,

A field of their own:
Floyd onstage at
Knebworth in July 1975.

de facto, was. But that didn't prevent me, who did not want to be the leader, from thinking that I had a better knowledge or music sense in musical terms than he did. A better musical judgement. So my side of the supposed power struggle was to stubbornly try to cling on to certain musical values through all of this. But that obviously presented difficulties all the way through. But it certainly didn't become an unworkable relationship."

In retrospect, Nick Mason knows what the solution should have been. "Being wise after the event, what we should have done was to have done more touring of *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which I personally don't think we did enough of, and then gone in much later, rather than going in soon afterwards and trying too hard at the time."

"WISH YOU WERE HERE IS OUR MOST COMPLETE ALBUM IN SOME WAYS..."

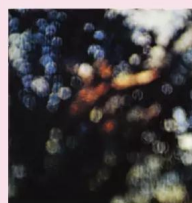
All of Floyd's inter-band tension and self-mythologising of this period was tremendously good for business and today, the appeal of *Wish You Were Here* simply grows and grows. It is the second album that new Floyd listeners tend to pick. Time has been very kind to the work: Gilmour has called *Wish You Were Here* Pink Floyd's "most complete album in some ways", and Waters has said, "It's full of grief and anger, but also full of love."

And now, on its 40th anniversary, Nick Mason – the only member of Pink Floyd who was there from the beginning to the end – concludes with this thought.

"I'd say happy birthday to myself, as I think it's a lovely record. It's so spread out after the intensity of *Dark Side Of The Moon*, it's very of its time, and interesting that it remains one of our most popular records." 🎧

Choppy Waters

For such a heartfelt, poetic and occasionally romantic lyricist, in *Welcome To The Machine* and *Have A Cigar*, *Wish You Were Here* contains two of Waters' baldest attacks on the hand that fed him. Here are five more of Waters' vinegary vignettes...



FREE FOUR (OBSCURED BY CLOUDS)

Although *Corporal Clegg* from 1968 was the first time Waters' father's World War II career and passing was referred to obliquely, this seemingly cheery, on-the-road number was the first to deal with it seriously.



MONEY (THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON)

One of the factors that fed into his mood recording *Wish You Were Here* was Waters' disillusionment at his burgeoning wealth clashing with his staunch socialist principles. This rail against the trappings of high finance was misunderstood by swathes of the group's newly found audience, who clearly thought riches were a good thing. Their reaction formed the basis of virtually everything Waters was to subsequently record.



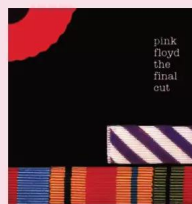
PIGS (ANIMALS)

On an album that railed against everything, *Pigs (Three Different Ones)* looked at figures representing all the worst elements of the establishment; the 'dragged down by the stone' businessman from *Dogs* reappears; a 'ratbag' that Waters had spotted at a bus stop near the band's Britannia Row Studios, who may or may not be Margaret Thatcher, the then-leader of the opposition Conservative Party; and finally, the unloved moral watchdog Mary Whitehouse, the head of the National Viewers and Listeners' Association.



THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF OUR LIVES (THE WALL)

Although almost any track could be selected from Waters' two final Pink Floyd albums, the first anti-school song on *The Wall* is one of Waters' most manic, heartfelt performances. Inspired by his time at Cambridge High School For Boys, Waters spat bile at the teachers, who had treated him shabbily at a period in his life when he desperately needed a father figure. Waters' schoolmaster impression was heavily copied in playgrounds around the country in the early 80s.



THE HERO'S RETURN (THE FINAL CUT)

The burning anger and sadness of *The Final Cut* makes it one of the most fascinating Pink Floyd albums, and one that when properly rediscovered, gives untold pleasure. Nonetheless, it is a certainly difficult listen: *The Hero's Return*, written first as *Teacher*, *Teacher* for *The Wall* goes some way to explain the reasons for the bitterness behind the schoolmaster from *The Happiest Days Of Our Lives*. **DE**



The Fab Two: Gilmour
with Paul McCartney
backstage at Knebworth.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Life Is A Long Song...

A maverick, a mogul and the maestro of his own destiny, **Ian Anderson** has approached his career as a conductor would his orchestra, bringing together disparate elements to create astonishing results. As he was annointed Prog God the Progressive Music Awards in 2013, the man himself sat down with *Prog* to look back on his life and ahead to his future, with or without Jethro Tull...

Words: **Chris Roberts** Photo Illustration: **Ian Naylor/Will Ireland**

Fifty one years since he first joined a band, Ian Anderson is still, it seems, always touring, writing, or recording. If you commend the 65-year-old on his durable drive and incredible work ethic, he says, "If you have a pretty good job that you enjoy doing, then a work ethic isn't difficult to find! If I was an airline pilot or brain surgeon or nuclear physicist or astronaut, I like to think I'd have the same work ethic because those are pretty good jobs too. But if I was stacking shelves at a supermarket I might not have that same enthusiasm. Or maybe I would – who knows? I could definitely do a better job of organising their product display than they tend to do!"

You get the impression he *would* make a pretty good fist of it. Since Jethro Tull broke through in the late 60s the versatile singer-writer-musician has explored a wide range of styles and genres, winning acclaim in the realms of folk, blues, world music, hard rock and of course prog. He still tours the planet, with the recent shows featuring the classic *Thick As A Brick* and its 40-years-on sequel *TAAB2* a triumph. Along the way, albums as characterful and diverse as *Aqualung*, *A Passion Play*, *Minstrel In The Gallery*, *Heavy Horses* and *Roots To Branches* have cheered, chastised and been argued over. In 1987 Jethro Tull – controversially, some might say bafflingly – won a Grammy for Hard Rock/Heavy Metal Vocal Performance with *Crest Of A Knave*. Anderson was appointed an MBE in 2008. In whatever time he has found away from music, he has thrown himself into other projects, organising charity concerts and finding success with a salmon farming business on the Isle of Skye that proved extremely profitable.

The dirty raincoat and capricious codpiece that defined his image in Jethro Tull's heyday have gone, but the eccentricity has not. His live shows this year have incorporated surreal

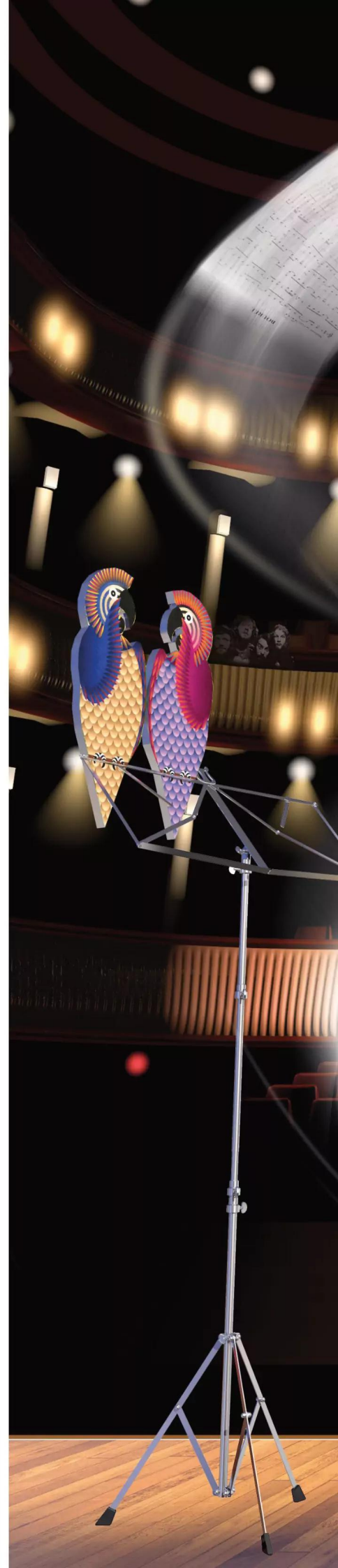
Baton down the hatches! Right: Ian shot exclusively for *Prog* in London, July 2013. Below: the young maestro 40 years earlier.



JORGAN ANGEL/GETTY

"It's been the voyage of a restless soul..."

Ian Anderson







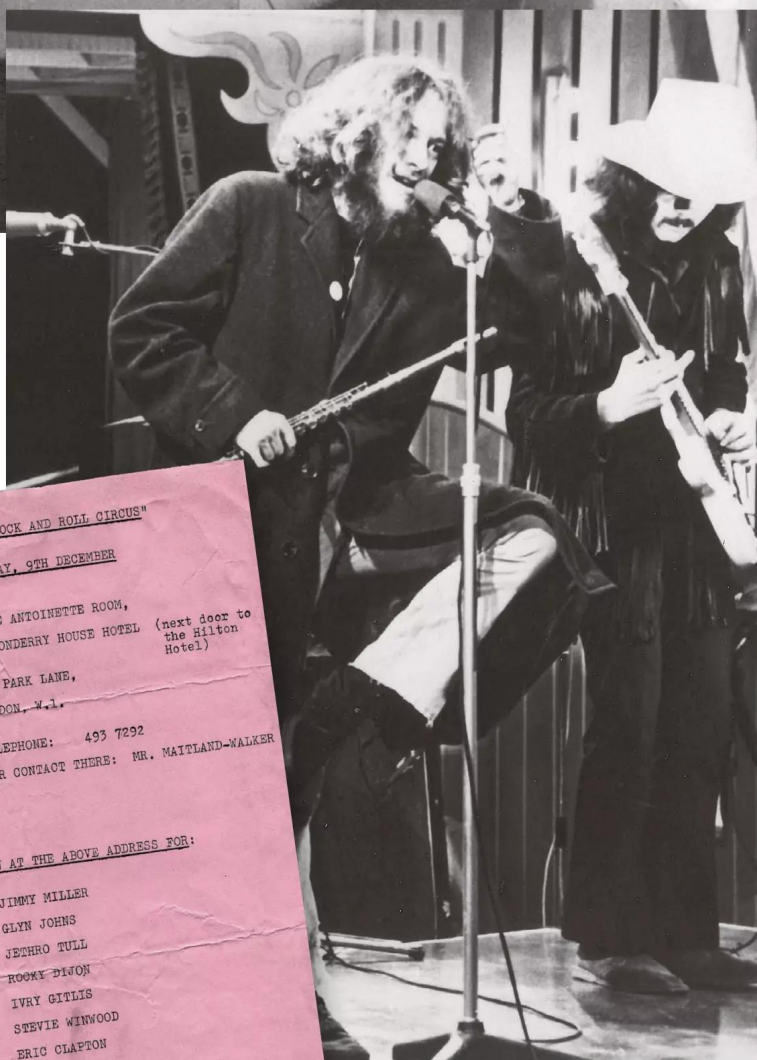
JOHN EVANS BAND

Photograph by Studio 'D' Blackpool — Reproduced by Service Press Blackpool

nod-to-the-past appearances onstage by frogmen, Skype and YouTube clips on big screens and a comedy skit advising men of a certain age to get their prostate checked. In conversation he's almost absurdly articulate and eloquent, surging forth with paeans, monologues and rants on everything from religion to art to acting to the internet. His knowledge of music history is broad and boundless, and Heaven help the interviewer trying to interrupt him! Through an accidental screw-up our chat begins later than planned, and he suggests we are now pushed for time. As he opines and muses from his hotel room in Phoenix, Arizona, it becomes evident that he's happily forgotten that caveat, and over nearly two hours we cover much of his life story and, for good measure, those of some others.

Born in 1947 in Fife, Scotland, Anderson moved with his family to Blackpool when he was 12. He recalls first falling in love with music upon hearing his dad's big band and jazz records. "It was the rhythmic nature of it, the syncopation of swing jazz, which immediately caught my attention. You don't find that in church music growing up in Scotland. There was something energising about it. As an eight-year-old I started to listen to music seriously. I paid attention to what was going on, tried to make sense of it. So when I began to play as a teenager, rock music like Bill Haley, early Elvis and their British imitators like Billy Fury, Marty Wilde and dear old Cliff, seemed light-hearted, a bit of fun. I guess in the post-war years the Brits were in love with everything American. Rock music really became rock music from the mid-60s onwards.

Above: Evan 'elp! With The John Evan Band, which evolved into Tull. Right: Tony Iommi jams along at the Stones' Rock And Roll Circus in '68 (original running order below).



"THE ROLLING STONES ROCK AND ROLL CIRCUS"
CALL SHEET FOR MONDAY, 9TH DECEMBER

LOCATION: MARIE ANTOINETTE ROOM,
LONDONDERRY HOUSE HOTEL (next door to
the Hilton
Hotel)
OLD PARK LANE,
LONDON, W.1.
TELEPHONE: 493 7292
OUR CONTACT THERE: MR. MAITLAND-WALKER

CALL AT 12 NOON AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS FOR:

JIMMY MILLER
GLYN JOHNS
JETHRO TULL
ROCKY DJON
IVRY GITLIS
STEVIE WINWOOD
ERIC CLAPTON
THE WHO
MARIANNE FAITHFULL
THE ROLLING STONES

"But it was the music towards the end of the 60s, when I really began, that suddenly changed everything in a big way. By now it wasn't just imitation. It wasn't enough just to be a blues band or play Americanised rock'n'roll. It really was the era of experimentation. In the pop sphere, it began in a big way with *Sgt Pepper* and *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, which was a breakthrough album, something completely different. And that really opened up what by '69 was being termed in the press 'progressive rock'. Eventually it became a dirty word, a desultory phrase to those who weren't enamoured of complex instrumental expertise. And yes, there was some self-indulgence which didn't do anybody any favours. Then in the mid 70s came the refreshing back-to-basics blast of punk, as a direct repercussion. I actually went out and bought *Never Mind The Bollocks* – I thought it was quite fun. Later in life of course John Lydon admitted that *Aqualung* was a strong influence. My Richard The Third-meets-Quasimodo look on that album sleeve clearly was! It was a strange choice of image by me; that hunched trampy guy in an old overcoat – bearing in mind I was only 23 at the time!"

Yet Anderson perhaps always seemed wiser than his years, a deeper thinker than most, famously responding to the rise of prog by penning the wilfully over-the-top *Thick As A Brick* and then, ever the provocateur, reacting to press snipes by releasing the even more extreme *A Passion Play*. Reviews of the latter led to "Tull Quit!" headlines, though in fact what appeared a hissy fit ("maybe I overreacted a little") was a publicity ploy by their label, and the band continued apace with, arguably, more direct rock and folk albums. ("I long ago got used to being slapped down," he says now.)

Prior to his sustained success, Anderson's first band The Blades (formed 1962) had become The John Evan Band, then Jethro Tull (named after a 17th century agriculturalist who also played the organ – but notoriously misprinted as Jethro Toe on their first single). It became clear to all that he was the pivot and frontman, the one with the ideas and the vocabulary, and



COURTESY OF MARTIN WEBB/GLENN CORNICK/TULL ARCHIVE

This Was: Tull back in '68, the year of their debut album. The band quickly caught the imagination of the good old British press.



Don't knock Jethro Tull – remember Jesus



the willpower to assert them. Early on, they'd keep changing their name to get more bookings. Still, they built up a live following. The launch of the Chrysalis label gave them their initial leg-up. Yet as late as '67, as Tull conceived their debut album, Anderson had a day job cleaning cinema toilets in Luton where the band were then based. He'd already committed youthful acts of rebellion, having been 'asked to leave' Blackpool Grammar School.

"Ah, yes, there was a misdemeanour. To be very open about this, I was engaged in an act of what I thought was cheerful 'ragging' towards another boy. He was a good kid, just a few months ago I finally tracked him down to apologise for the embarrassment I caused all those years ago by taking a 'jolly jape' a bit too far, unaware that he was an epileptic. He had a fit as a result. I and another boy were carpeted by the 'beak' to be punished.

"And you see, although *Thick As A Brick* was half-serious and half Monty Python-influenced surreal comedy, the serious part was about that

The Minstrel In His Gallery

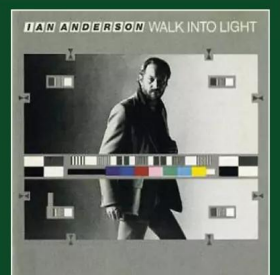
The Maestro goes solo...

WALK INTO LIGHT (1983)

With Anderson working closely with then-Tull keyboard player Peter-John Vettese, this was his first solo work (though Tull's A had been originally mooted as such in 1980; Chrysalis urged the use of the band name to boost sales).

"I suppose the first thing here was to embrace the changing world of technology in the early 80s," he muses. "Sequencers and samplers and computers became a real prospect in music as a songwriting and performing tool. So, rather than just ignore it, I thought I'd better try to get to grips with this, because it probably will be the face of change. And, of course, it was, just as Fender and Gibson guitars and the Hammond organ changed the face of music in the 50s and 60s. And I thought I'd better do this outside the orbit of Jethro Tull, rather than set out with a band identity, which people might not like if the little experiment didn't work out. The context of a solo album made more sense."

Shrewdly, the album didn't jettison all recognisable Tull tropes, marrying electronica and folk-rock stylings together with flair and customarily darkly witty lyrics. The band's *Under Wraps* followed its form and, to put it mildly, divided fans. **CR**



"The acting headmaster said either I accepted the caning or he had to expel me. Well, I said, you give me no choice. So I was despatched. I never went back."

Ian Anderson

confused transition of boy to post-puberty and adolescence. The values those children of my generation faced growing up were rather distorted, post-World War II, as highlighted in the boys' comics of the day. I mean, Billy Bunter was very cruel! So it was a commentary on how boys can be cruel to each other, and how the weaker tend to get stamped on. Gerald Bostock had a lot of addled views of the adult world he was about to enter. If not autobiographical, it was stuff I knew about as a schoolboy.

"Anyway, I was to be caned. But I politely refused. I said I wouldn't accept a beating from an older man. I volunteered for some other form of punishment, because I recognised my guilt in the matter, but the acting headmaster was placed in an awkward position. To have a boy refuse corporal punishment threw him. My biggest fear wasn't being caned, it was the indignity of it. So there was an impasse. He said either I accepted the caning or he had to expel me. Well, I said, you give me no choice. So I was



PHOTOGRAPH

Above: Lady And The Tramp! Movie star Julie Ege models Tull's 1971 gold disc
Right: Bad Santa! (Cranberry) sauce on Island Records ad.



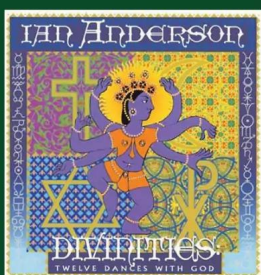
COURTESY OF GLENN CORNICK/TULL ARCHIVE

The Minstrel In His Gallery

The Maestro goes solo...

DIVINITIES: TWELVE DANCES WITH GOD (1995)

Anderson's second work under his own name, this ambient, instrumental album is strong on melody, and influenced by a plethora of ethnic traditions. As such it is the type of album often consigned to the 'world music' section of the record shop.



Sometimes lazily lumped in with the then-voguish genre 'new age', *Divinities* sees Anderson looking far afield for inspiration. The music ranges from the African styles of *En Afrique* to Spanish touches of *In The Pay Of Spain*, and is perhaps at its most credible when close to Celtic roots, as on *In The Grip Of Stronger Stuff*. Tull's Andrew Giddings provide keyboard arrangements that complement Anderson's primary instrument well.

"That was made for EMI's classical music division," he recalls, "and was effectively a flute album, exploring the instrument."

Reviews have praised the way in which the album avoids the pitfalls of the 'rock star turns musical tourist' routine, displaying real imagination in its changes in tempo and technique, and its genuine sense of atmosphere. **CR**

despatched. I never went back. To my relief, my parents didn't overreact, and so, halfway through my A-level course, I had to look for something else to do."

There followed 'a little non-musical moment' of trying to join the police force, then one of attempting to enlist as a cub reporter at the Blackpool evening paper. A career in forestry was also considered, "But it was to art school that I went". He spent a year

college register and a blind eye would be turned. "And so I spent most of my time reading the *Melody Maker* and trying to learn to play guitar. Which I did, but only to a limited degree."

Which explains, to an extent, why he picked up, of all things, the flute.

Mention Jethro Tull to most people and to this day that flute is one of the first things they think of. It became, by accident as much as design, the multi-instrumentalist Anderson's iconic USP. Anderson thought "it looked kind of sexy".

"My guitar skills, such as they were, weren't up to the Eric Clapton standard. I could improvise bluesy solos, but by then Eric had burst upon the scene with the John Mayall Band. We were aware he was at the forefront, and according to *Melody Maker* there were a few hotshot gunslingers right behind him like Jimmy Page, Richie Blackmore, Jeff Beck. They were ahead of the game. So this caused me, oop north in the summer of '67, to abandon my Fender Stratocaster and part exchange it for a microphone and – for no particularly good

reason – a student-model flute that was hanging on the wall. I have no idea to this day what made me choose it. It was just... shiny. Sexy. A glittering object. It had a lot of moving parts, and looked like it was meticulously and carefully made. The physicality of it appealed somehow: it was small, compact, and easy to carry around

"Aqualung was a strange choice of image; that hunched trampy guy in an old overcoat. Bear in mind I was only 23 at the time."

Ian Anderson

and a half learning to paint and draw, "During which time music became the more immediate and exciting outlet for these embryonic creative skills". Again, the staff sniffed trouble, telling Anderson he had to 'buckle down' or be asked to leave. "Well," he confessed, "I'm afraid I'm going to have to give music a go." He praises a tutor who agreed with him that if he showed his face once a week he could stay on the

if you were an itinerant musician. Which I now became."

The band headed south. "I didn't actually learn to do anything with the flute for another few months, until the end of '67. Then I was able to coax a couple of notes out of it. Three or four weeks later I was playing it on stage. When Jethro Tull became Jethro Tull, in spring '68 at the Marquee Club, there I was with this flute!"

"Anything I did, or do, onstage,
has got to come from me.
It's part of me. I'm not an actor."

Ian Anderson



Promoting Tull's
War Child album and
helping schoolchildren
safely cross the road
back in '74...



COURTESY OF TULL ARCHIVE
ROGER BAMBER/TULL

Fortunately, Anderson had a leg to stand on. "I'd adopted the stance of standing on one leg when I played harmonica. But the very first press comments about Jethro Tull went, 'This new band had a singer who played harmonica, flute and stood on one leg'. Which was technically correct, but gave the impression that I played the flute standing on one leg too. Which I didn't, to begin with.

sat down to play. Jon Anderson of Yes had his very girly high-tenor voice. Nobody else sounded like Jon. Possibly nobody wanted to, but these things stood out. You didn't sound like everyone else."

Anderson seemed to apply this point-of-difference idea visually too, developing flamboyant personae from the raincoat-tramp to the whiskery codpiece-sporting minstrel to the

Above: even the biggest bands were hit by the tour bus strike of '73. Right: Giving the 'journos death stare' for 1983's *Walk Into Light*.

"I actually went out and bought *Never Mind The Bollocks* – I thought it was quite fun."

Ian Anderson

Then I thought: well, I'd better give that a try as well, since it's caught somebody's attention! And of course it became a trademark, a point of difference. That's an important thing to have. Zappa had the goatee beard and big moustache. Beefheart had the larger-than-life character. Even King Crimson had a strange guitarist who

English country squire. You might think these striking characters freed him from self-consciousness, allowed him to be larger-than-life.

"I don't think it was that, because it always felt to me like anything I did, or do, onstage, has got to come from me. It's got to be part of me. I'm not an actor. I can't pretend to be people or

characters that I'm not. It has to take on some aspect of my personality.

"We're all multi-dimensional creatures. We don't grow up as just: what you see is what you get. Well, most of us don't. There *are* people like that, bless 'em, but most of us are a bit more complex. So I just tend to draw on things that I have some experience of, and then blow them up a little. I press the button that expands them. Larger-than-life, yes, because you've got to kind of overcook it. It may then be overdone for the people in the front row, but to reach those way at the back of the auditorium you have to deliver it in an over-the-top way. In the same context, I suppose, as a Shakespearean actor. On the screen, it's different, I'm told. My son-in-law, [actor] Andrew Lincoln, runs around killing zombies in *The Walking Dead*. Real actors underplay it on screen: you've almost got to contract a little bit, because the screen sees *too* much. On a live stage, you have to open up and become bigger in the way you present your character.

"All this sounds like I am a person of thespian aspirations! I'm not. I just do what I do because what's in the songs is saying: okay, my turn to come to the fore. That's how I write, too. I take something of me as a starting point, and then I develop an observation. Occasionally, if it's something in the first person, it has to have that authority of being sung as if you really are that person."

Ian Anderson may not be an actor, but neither is he what would generally be classified as a rock'n'roll animal. The man who sang *Too Old To Rock And Roll*, *Too Young To Die* in 1976 (a concept album about how styles of music come in and out of fashion), was never really one for trashing hotel

"It's a series of snapshots about... us."

Anderson's new solo album explores humanity, 'from the Ice Age to the future'.

"There's a new album on the way next year; that's something I've already written.

My window of opportunity, when I gathered my resources after a busy year of touring, suggested to me a starting point [for writing] of January 1, 2013. It's rather exhilarating to have a deadline, to say: this is it, I'll start here and finish there. So I gave myself three weeks to come up with it. Obviously not to 'complete' it, but to substantially write the lyrics, the tunes, the general shape of a whole new album. It was a good thing to do.

Then in February I made simple demos of all the material and sent them out to the guys in the band. And we have all promptly put them under the pillow and forgotten them! But we'll re-examine them in November and prepare for the serious recording that we start in December, and wrap up after Christmas. This mirrors what we



The solo band: proof it's not all doom and gloom...

did with *Thick As A Brick 2*.

It's an album which explores certain aspects of humanity across a huge period of time, from around the Ice Age to the future, and clearly

reflects what's going on in the world today. It's a series of snapshots about... us. I do like drawing parallels between the events of the past and the present, as well as thinking how they're going to

resolve themselves up ahead. It's not all doom and gloom, but it does touch on subjects of a worrying nature.

There's little point in me talking too much about it, as I reserve the right to scrap the whole thing and start again, which I'm known for doing! While I do have an album that I'm excited about, sitting there waiting to be delivered, as midwives go, I may fail to turn up for work on the day, or turn up with something completely different!"

Anderson has since announced a 21-date 2014 UK tour - starting April 28 at Brighton Dome and finishing with May 24 and 25 at Shepherd's Bush Empire - to support the release of the forthcoming, as-yet-untitled album, which is a concept piece that he now describes as "folk prog metal".

Bookmark www.jethrotull.com for more info, and keep a look out for updates in *Prog* and on our own website, progrockmag.com. **CR**

COURTESY OF TULL ARCHIVE

rooms and partying till dawn, even at the height of Tull's considerable international popularity. Was it again the need to work and create that helped him to eschew hedonism?

"I eschew it in terms of personal involvement, but some artists like to observe it, to write about it - Andy Warhol, Frank Zappa. I never use real people in my lyrics, I only write about imaginary people, but within that

In fact the closest this minstrel ever got to a drugs bust may have been a curious incident at Madrid Airport about a decade ago. "One of my hot powders concocted from my chilli-pepper experiments was in a little plastic bottle. It was an evil-looking reddish-brown colour. I wasn't breaking the law, but the customs official thought this was his lucky day; discovering this serious drug

"My show in Kansas City next week is to be picketed by an outfit of buffoons. According to them Obama is the Anti-Christ, so I'm in good company."

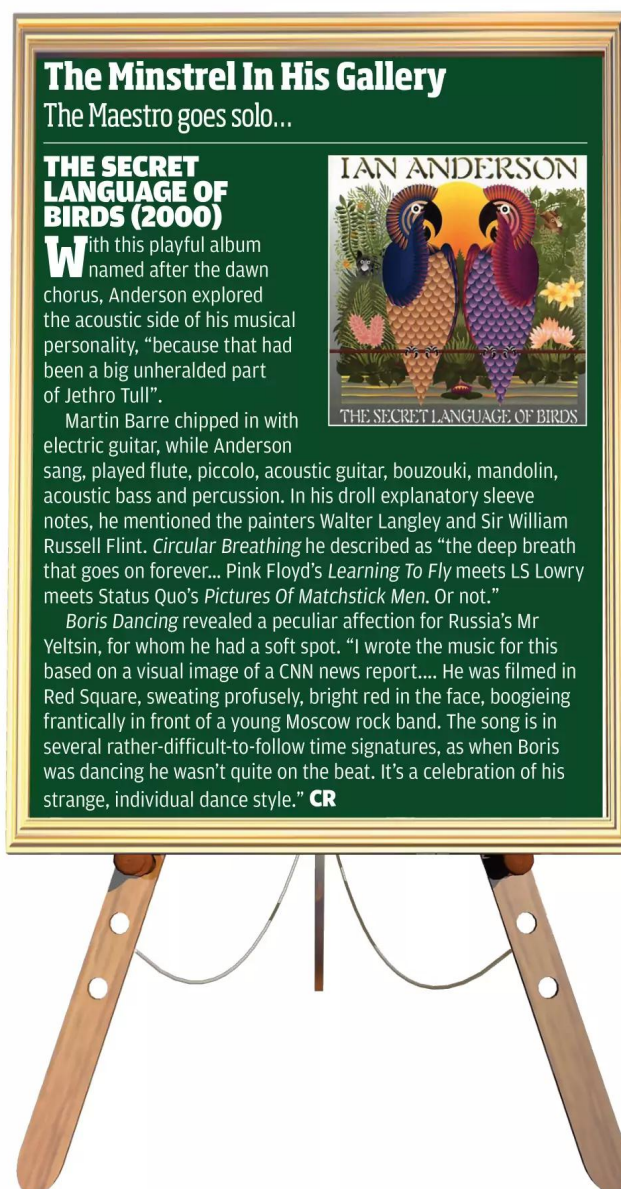
Ian Anderson

there's usually some observational experience. At least I hope I've never written about anybody identifiable, or who would feel upset or used.

"Hence, no sex or drugs or rock'n'roll in my life! Better to just observe and mull it over than be a participant. Even as a teenager, it struck me that I might be one of those people who had what we later learned to describe as 'an addictive personality'. I mean, it took me many years to quit smoking; I know exactly what that grip of neediness is like. It's a bad thing. So I thought to myself: if I'm a 40-a-day smoker, I'd better not risk doing anything from marijuana onwards. I guess I realised from other people I was around that it was a very short step from 'trying' other things, with that self-assured idea that it was just an 'occasional' recreational experiment."

would mean promotion for sure. In spite of my trying to dissuade him with every word I could think of in a number of languages, he insisted on doing what he'd seen narcotics officers do in the movies and licked his finger and tasted it. And then his face started to go red and he literally just ran off. We were left there with our suitcases open, stuff all over the counter. After several minutes he hadn't come back. I assume he was in the loo trying to wash his mouth out. So we picked our stuff up and left. I wonder if he ever did come back...?"

Anderson is something of a renaissance man and polymath. His chilli-pepper experiments were small fry next to his years of Strathaird salmon farming. He and his wife Shona owned several such farms, based around his Isle of Skye estate, until



"I'm not a Christian, but I like to do things for the Church. There are certain aspects of our society which, while anachronisms, are worth preserving."

Ian Anderson



Only Solitaire?

With talk of a new solo album and tour, what of the future of Jethro Tull?

It is fair to say I see things panning out as Ian Anderson rather than Jethro Tull from now on. It doesn't mean there won't be some concert in the future that says 'Jethro Tull' on the ticket. It's just that right at the moment I'm well aware of my age and my mortality. So, while the spirit and body are willing, it is appropriate to tackle the bigger, more challenging jobs rather than just go riding on my own sordid coat-tails. It'd be easy enough to play the odd tour around the major countries and just do the 20 best-known Jethro Tull songs. That would not be a 'bad' thing to do; it'd be quite enjoyable. But there's other stuff out there I rather like taking on.

What excites me most now is the prospect of an album - or two, or three - yet to come, and a few more intellectually-challenging tours. Writing in a more symphonic style

appeals to me now, more than just doing 'Best Of' tours. That said, we've done a few things this year with the Jethro Tull repertoire, and it is a lot of fun going back to it. It's my music!

Regarding the corporate band identity, I'm the only guy who was there from the beginning, so the degree to which a show is under that identity depends largely on the repertoire. If I'm doing other material - even *Thick As A Brick 2* - I don't want to suggest to the less knowledgeable people that it's a generic Jethro Tull concert. Some of them might get bent out of shape if they're not hearing the spectrum of material they'd associate with the band's history. Honestly? I don't give it all that much thought. When I'm on stage it doesn't feel any different to me if I'm doing it as Ian Anderson or Jethro Tull. That's the reality."



Tull's 2007 incarnation:
"It is a lot of fun going back to it, but..."

He's been a vocal critic of the dark side of organised religion, but Anderson's views on the subject are fittingly complex.

COURTESY OF TULL ARCHIVE

selling some off in the late 90s, at which time their value surpassed £10 million. To the layman that seems a peculiar business for a musician to go into – and to excel at. What led to the leap towards salmon?

"I suppose in my interests, from school onwards, I was always split between the sciences and the arts. I enjoyed music and painting but I was better at, say, maths and physics than I was at history or Latin. So – it's like choosing the flute. That was mechanical, detailed, carefully designed like a Swiss watch. That attention to precision appealed, and it appeals to me about some of the applied sciences like aquaculture. They're biological sciences but you actually *do* something with them which is very pragmatic, tangible. Heavy engineering, laying moorings, boats, cages, marine farming – it's all 'man's work'! It's not quite being a rigger on a North Sea oil rig, but it is a man's job. You roll your sleeves up. So while it seems to you perhaps at odds with the flimsy world of songwriting and performing, it's a part of me that obviously is out there. It's the same part that wanted to join the police force or fly a fighter jet when I was 17, I suppose!"

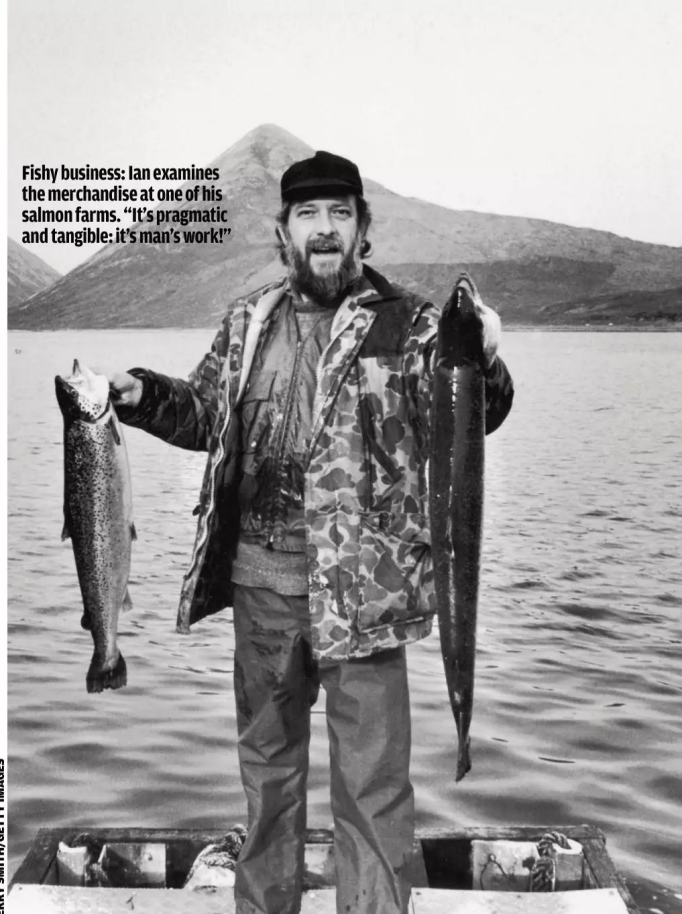
"So for nearly two decades of my life, I was involved with all that. Then, to put it bluntly, when I hit 50 I realised I had to make decisions. Either I'm going to spend the rest of my life coming home smelling faintly of fish, or coming home as a slightly whacked, breathless musician, having pushed the limits for a couple of hours onstage. And I think that probably is the more healthy option at my age: to keep up those two hours of aerobics as long as I can!"

References to mortality come frequently from the philosophical Anderson. "I think it's good to keep pedalling," he told *Prog* earlier this year. "At my age, if you take your feet off the pedals and free-wheel, there's a danger you'll just slow down and fall off." If he gets time to relax at home 'being Family Guy', it's usually around Christmas and after. Although his penchant for festive benefit shows in cathedrals (the last Tull album, back in 2003, was *The Jethro Tull Christmas Album*) usually sees him ringing out a solstice bell or two. Again, there's an interesting potential paradox here: the man who heatedly criticised organised religion on *Aqualung* has a fondness for churches and cathedrals.

"I'm not a Christian, but I like to do things for the Church. There are certain aspects of our society which, while anachronisms, are worth preserving. As a non-Christian,

Fishy business: Ian examines the merchandise at one of his salmon farms. "It's pragmatic and tangible: it's man's work!"

ERRY SMITH/GETTY IMAGES



The Minstrel In His Gallery

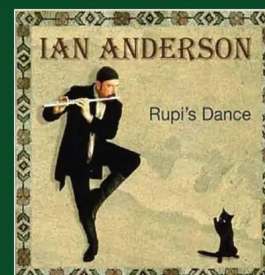
The Maestro goes solo...

RUPI'S DANCE (2003)

"A round the turn of the millennium," Anderson recalls, "I'd decided I'd like to make a couple of albums in this acoustic, singer-songwriter context. The brand name Jethro Tull suggested something more 'rock' and band-oriented, so this was an opportunity to stretch out from that. Often, tracks had started as just me singing and playing live in the studio, from the *Aqualung* album onwards. So from *The Secret Language Of Birds* on, I was increasingly doing things as Ian Anderson."

Rupi's Dance was 'progressive folk', not in truth utterly unrecognisable from Tull, and occasionally the album recalled *Minstrel In The Gallery* or *Heavy Horses*. The 'world music' elements that characterised his previous were used sparingly and tastefully. *Griminelli's Lament* honoured the Italian flautist Andrea Griminelli, while the title track took inspiration from Anderson's beloved cat.

Emerging just before *The Jethro Tull Christmas Album*, the closing track here – *Birthday Card At Christmas* – also opened that album. Fans began to hail Anderson's reinvigoration and new lease of life. **CR**



RICHARD YOUNG / REX FEATURES

Queen And Country: The Prog God receives his MBE for services to music in 2008. (It must easily be his second-favourite award ever...)



I support the Christian Church and the places Christianity is worshipped, because they won't make any more of them. When I stand by a pulpit or altar, a holy area, to perform, I'm mindful of there being a right and wrong way to do it. You shouldn't cross a line in being too light-hearted or dangerously disrespectful. The majority of the people there may not be regular church-goers, but to bring them into that environment – to sense a spiritual-social inclusiveness – that is a good thing. If a few of them then decide they want to partake in Christian worship, that's fine. I'm not trying to get them to do that. I'm just trying to relieve them of their 30 quid or whatever to try to keep the building's roof on.

"We're not out there telling people to fall under the spell of Jesus Christ or Anglicanism. We're just saying: come in and feel the atmosphere, the spirit, the groove. There's an ambience in those buildings and it's an option which should be kept open for future generations. That's why I do it. And there's possibly a little guilt as well,



Above: Duetting with NASA astronaut Cady Coleman live from the International Space Station. Right: Scotch, bonnet – a chilli, the bane of the Spanish customs official...



COURTESY OF TULL ARCHIVE

like these make me feel more positive about tea-and-cakes Anglicanism. I have very harsh views about those who mindlessly use religion to divide."

There are few topics the erudite Anderson isn't happy to discuss, from David Bowie's 'chameleon-like unpredictability' ("which I think is rather good, when the Rolling Stones have become a cosy blue comfort blanket") to the digital age. "Social media, the internet: it's the world we live in now, the facts of life. As a writer, I've got to touch on that. The positive is that my generation are the first homo sapiens on Earth who don't have to just close down the shutters and fade away. People can go out with a huge benefit of communication, of knowledge-gathering, of staying mentally alive. My parents never had that opportunity. I'm going to make use of all these facilities; keep involved, keep learning."

And, of course, keep writing. "Yes. I paint people in a landscape. I'm not a portrait painter; I like them to be in a context. I want to know about those people, but also the context in which they exist. And we're blessed with this wonderful language, the language of poets and playwrights and novelists, so let's not be afraid to use it! It seems strange to me that pop and rock lyrics use such a tiny vocabulary. I use our language fully, unashamedly. I like to throw spanners in the works in terms of linguistics and semantics. There's a joy in words."

That work ethic shows no signs of abating. "Either you curtail the journey at half-time and say I'm perfectly happy here, let's just break out a picnic and stay put, open a couple of beers and eat some smoked salmon sandwiches. Or: there are other folks, like me, who want to continue the journey and see where it takes us. That defines me. Happily, I'm never content with what I've already done. I'm still

having been a fierce critic of organised religion. Which I still am!"

If this all sounds rather righteous, the singer is nevertheless still drawing flak from extremist evangelicals Stateside. "Apparently my show in Kansas City next week is to be picketed by an outfit of buffoons with an outpouring of hate and vitriol towards homosexuals. They're the web presence of a Baptist church calling

"Either I'm going to spend the rest of my life coming home smelling faintly of fish, or as a slightly breathless musician. That probably is the more healthy option at my age."

Ian Anderson

themselves God Hates Fags. They think I'm an 'adulterer' and a 'fag enabler'. It's quite extraordinary. According to them Obama is the Anti-Christ, so I'm in good company. I can only try to be amused rather than disturbed. They're not suggesting I'm a homosexual, just that I 'enable' them by waving them through. I emailed Marc Almond this morning to say it seems I am doing something useful in life! Seriously though, hatemongers

searching for that elusive sense of: This is my masterpiece, my crowning glory. The flagship that we have to sail in the wake of is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In the final years of his life he came up with the all-time complete symphony, and was even halfway through the Tenth, which of course we'll never hear. So, for some folks, towards the end, the candle burns brighter. And I think I'd like to try to be one of those." ☺

The Minstrel In His Gallery

The Maestro goes solo...

THICK AS A BRICK 2 (2012)

Four decades on from the thrilling *Thick As A Brick* came the justly acclaimed *TAAB2: Whatever Happened To Gerald Bostock?*. "I wonder what the eight-year-old Gerald would be doing today?" Anderson pondered. "Would the fabled newspaper still exist?"

And so he ingeniously traced five possible life routes for the now middle-aged Bostock, from avaricious banker to homeless man, from soldier to preacher, to 'ordinary' corner-shop owner. A lonely gloom potentially awaited all five personae, but that didn't prevent Anderson gaining his first Top 40 album in quite a while.

"I suppose it was something of a calculated risk," he suggests. "It leaves people with a slightly enigmatic rather than despairing feeling. I'd say. There's a note of optimism and defiance conveyed in the final elements of the music. I can only judge by the approval we seem to get for it when we play it. I'm glad I took the risk, and I'm glad we have the kind of audiences that not only accept that but revel in it. As you become older and more reflective, there is such a wealth of material to work with: nearly every morning I'm tinkering around with some idea or other." **CR**





Ian Anderson on winning the Prog God Award in 2013.

"I've won something? Oh! Well, you're telling me something I didn't know! I had a date in my diary to go to the Prog Awards, but wasn't sure what it was about.

It's not that I'm ungrateful in any way, it's just that awards things are something I'm not very good at. But if I am to be the Prog God for a night, it will be taken in good spirit

and good heart by me, and hopefully by others as well.

"I have no problem with the term 'prog'. I would've done 20 years ago, possibly even 10, but the term has now taken on an avuncular affection, the affection of a young niece for an affable uncle. It's a friendly term now, one you're pleased to say hello to. In the later 70s and early 80s it became used, usually by fairly negative people, as a sneering, derogatory term.

Having spoken with the guys in ELP or Yes, I know they have a sense of humour about it. They all recognise it got a bit over the top here and there, and that not everything they did was great, but they are fiercely proud of their heritage, and quite rightly so.

Most of the prog musicians back then were a little tongue-in-cheek about it. ELP could see the 'theatre of the absurd' that they were engaged in. There was a degree of showing off, of trying to impress other musos. *Thick As A Brick* was written as a bit of a parody of the over-the-top concept albums, taking it to the extreme and into a rather surreal, comedic area.

Prog aficionados are often to be found in unlikely places. Marc Almond wanted to be a singer in a prog rock band in his college days, but unfortunately there weren't too many around

when he came of age so he had to join a synth-pop band instead! Penn of [magician duo] Penn & Teller actually bought a ticket to our show in Las Vegas a few days ago, so he's my new best friend!

I meet people from all walks of life – politicians, sportsmen – where you think: 'What? You like prog? How did that happen? You're from a different school of thought! Come on!' It's interesting to hear their take on it. It's always fun to see people entering into that world of looking at things in a more detailed way, rather than simply just absorbing the repetition of so much of rock and pop music. There are folks who are looking for a bit more spice, more fascination and variety. It isn't all just meat and potatoes – you can have a few exotic green vegetables to sprinkle around the side.

The Prog God Award honours my exploratory career of intelligently crafted music, you say? Well, whatever it's been, it's been the voyage of a restless soul. The people I respect don't do generic music. There are plenty of bands out there with whom you know exactly what you're going to get, so I think it's rather good if I'm hard to pin down!" **CR**

**"I've won something?!
This award will be taken
in good spirit and
good heart!"**

Ian Anderson



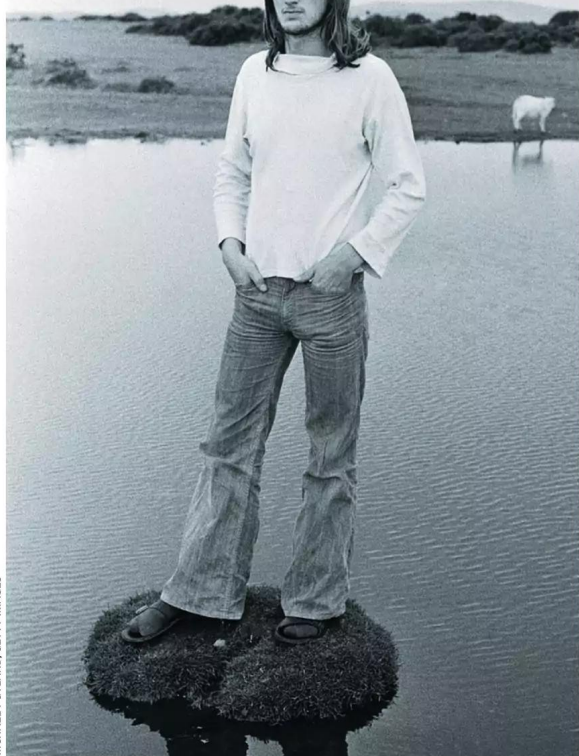
Hello, squire:
Ian Anderson, our
Prog God for 2013, at
Prog HQ in July.

Magnum Opus

"It's got that Monty Python silliness..." So says **Mike Oldfield**, the prog wunderkind behind the legendary **Tubular Bells**. In 2009, **Grant Moon** heard the story of its creation straight from the mouth of the man who made it.

It's Autumn 1972. John Cale is vacating the studio. A picturesque residential studio nestled in the Oxfordshire hills, The Manor is a recent acquisition by one Richard Branson, a hirsute, budding music impresario. The next artist booked in is a wan, taciturn 19-year-old unknown called Mike Oldfield.

Mike Oldfield on Hergest Ridge in 1974.



Noticing a shining silver set of tubular bells among Cale's equipment, he asks if he can add it to the two dozen instruments he'll use to record his one-man symphony, tentatively titled *Opus One*. Released the following year, that album, redubbed *Tubular Bells*, would become a commercial and cultural phenomenon, launching Oldfield as one of the UK's most acclaimed composers, bankrolling Virgin Records for years to come and setting Branson on course to become the country's most recognisable captain of industry.

Thirty six years on and with the rights to the album now his again, Oldfield, the arch-tinkerer, has remixed it again. Surely it's hard for him to remain objective about an album he knows inside out?

"It's actually easier now. Listening back

on an even psychological keel. A loner since childhood, Oldfield suffered with a sense of otherness, amplified by his mother's mental illness and alcoholism. He himself came to rely heavily on the bottle, and one extremely damaging acid trip led to decades of crippling panic attacks.

'Young Mike', as he was known, discovered his talent for music early on. He began his career on the 60s folk circuit in acts including The Sallyangie, a duo with his vocalist sister Sally, and later joined Kevin Ayers' Whole World Group as bassist and guitarist. By that time rock's horizons were expanding.

"In the late 60s progressive music was what everybody wanted to make. There was experimentation all over the place; we were all pushing boundaries seeing what

"In the late 60s progressive music was what everybody wanted to make. We were all pushing boundaries."

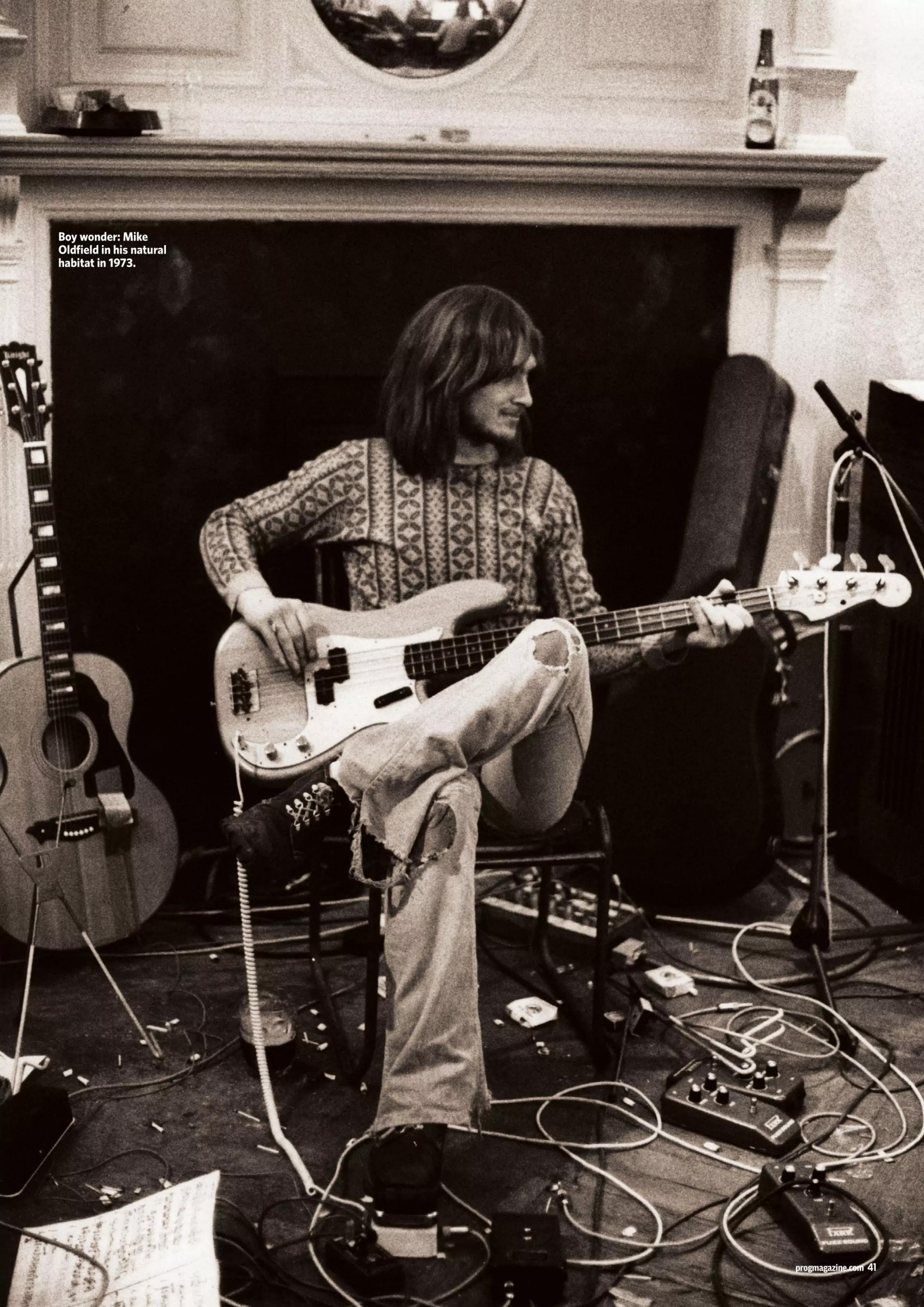
the sound quality is actually great, and the most amazing thing about it was that it was all first take. Nobody, myself included, would dream of doing that now. One of my first decisions about this remix was to leave it as played. There's a spontaneity about it, a dynamic drive that would've been lost, so I left in the squeaks and pops and the few bad notes. They're far overshadowed by the power and purpose of the playing."

Back in the day the music's main purpose was to keep the troubled teenager

could be done. I was very much part of the live music scene, going up and down the motorway, and we'd often be on the bill with groups like Pink Floyd, Free and even Black Sabbath. I never set out to absorb any influence, it was all just there."

Oldfield absorbed eclectic musical ideas however: classical structures, minimalism, unusual scales and odd time signatures. A rough demo he recorded was rejected by every record label, but when he first set foot in The Manor in 1971 as bassist for Jamaican singer Arthur Louis, resident

Boy wonder: Mike
Oldfield in his natural
habitat in 1973.





Oldfield in serious mood (above) and displaying a little of that "Monty Python silliness" (right).

"It's not a concept album. It has extremes, but I think people miss the humour in it. There's been nothing like it before or since."

engineers Simon Heyworth and Tom Newman heard promise in the youngster's recording. They passed it on to Manor owner Richard Branson and his business partner Simon Draper and a year later, with a disillusioned Oldfield contemplating a move to Russia for a career as a state-funded musician, he was invited to record the piece properly for Branson's fledgling label, Virgin Records, at The Manor.

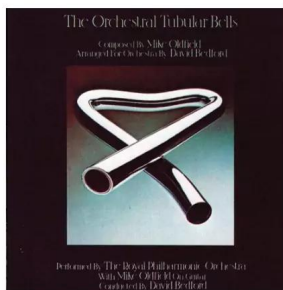
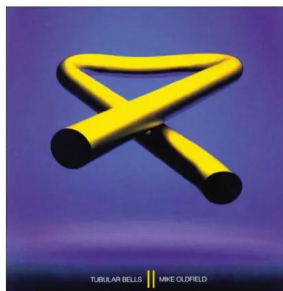
"It was a lovely big country house with a complete recording studio," remembers Oldfield. "Lots of people running around doing things, we had a cook so I'd get great big plates of wonderful food, and I made lots of new friends."

With instruments ranging from organs to mandolins to Cale's bells, Oldfield set about recording his *Opus One*, filling 16 tracks of tape with thousands of overdubs to achieve the sound in his head. *Part One* was finished in one manic week, with the voice of the 'Master of Ceremonies' provided by Vivian Stanshall of the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band, who'd arrived early for their own recording sessions. *Part Two* came together slowly during studio downtime over the coming months, and for its creator the whole process was cathartic.

"You can hear it in the music. It was the only time I felt sane and vaguely happy. I suppose it describes in a nutshell the anguish of teenagerhood, which most people can relate to. It personifies all that."

"Nothing can take away from the fact that I'm very, very proud of the composition, the way one idea runs into another idea and the variations of ideas scattered around the place. It's got a great introduction, great riffs, lovely little tunes. It's fortuitous that Viv Stanshall was there at that time, and what a good idea to put the bell in there. It all seemed to fall into place, as if some wheel of fortune had swung in my favour at that time."

Artist Trevor Key was commissioned to design its iconic cover, and the album, now redubbed *Tubular Bells*, became the inaugural release for Virgin Records on May 25, 1973. Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* had landed that March, and with it the progressive era was in full flow. Oldfield's inspired, one-man symphony earned rave reviews in the press and won fervent support, notably from Radio 1's John Peel. *Tubular Bells* entered the Top 10 and stayed in the album charts for five years straight. Worldwide sales were



Ring the changes: *Tubular Bells II* (1992) and David Bedford's *The Orchestral Tubular Bells* (1994).

spurred further when William Friedkin selected the haunting opening section for the soundtrack of his movie *The Exorcist* (a film Oldfield claims not to have seen until years later), and this earned its composer the Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Composition in 1975.

Still plagued by the panic attacks and a morbid fear of flying, Oldfield refused to take the album on the road at home or in the States, despite Branson's pleas. He did agree to one concert though, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, but only after his boss gave him his vintage Bentley as an incentive. Oldfield also prepared a tourable, orchestral version of

the album. "I didn't like it too much," he says now. "It was Virgin's idea because at the time I didn't want to go on tour."

He subsequently tempered his demons through Exegesis therapy [the root of which is based on the idea that one's own problems are self-caused and not the fault of others] and his distinguished career has innumerable highs – the cracking 1975 album *Ommadawn*; his Number 4 single *Moonlight Shadow* with Maggie Reilly in 1983; his underrated soundtrack to Roland Joffé's harrowing movie *The Killing Fields*, right up to last year's acclaimed classical suite *Music Of The Spheres*. Yet it's *Tubular Bells* – and its franchise – for which he'll forever be known. When his

original,

contentious contract with Virgin Records expired in 1992 Oldfield delivered *Tubular Bells II* for Warner Bros. Co-produced by Trevor Horn it was a UK Number One hit, and just six years later the brand continued with *Tubular Bells III*, itself a Top 5 success. In 2000 he even saw in the New Year by performing the specially commissioned work, *The Millennium Bell*, in front of an audience of thousands in Berlin. The nerves were conquered then, but it hasn't all been a success.

"The re-recording rights for *Tubular Bells* came back to me in 2003, which encouraged me to re-record it, for its 30th anniversary. That was great fun to me, but nobody else seemed to like it. I'm scared to listen to that now in case I think it was a big mistake!" That re-recording flopped, perhaps because the so-called flaws in the original had become part of its very fabric. Four years later *the Mail On Sunday* did a deal with EMI/Virgin to give away the CD free with the newspaper. Oldfield was furious at the time but is rather philosophical now: "It devalued it in a way. It was like saying, this music's so old that we'll just give it away. On the other hand it marked the end of that era and gave me the impetus to really want to remix it."

That opportunity arose when the album's absolute rights devolved to him last year. Now 55 years old and with no new music planned, Oldfield is busy remixing his back catalogue, starting with that iconic debut. The squeaks, pops and duff notes may have survived, but there's been one high-profile casualty.

"The original bell had some distortion on it, which was impossible to get rid of. In the mid-70s I was convinced to replace the bell with one that didn't have distortion and I foolishly agreed, and we rubbed it off.

We haven't been able to track down the original multitrack master – I've been working from a copy. I was pulling out my hair thinking, what can I do? In the middle of *Part One* there's a simple flute tune and in the background is the same bell. It was playing some of the right notes, so I spent days reproducing exactly the original bell using that, and with some jiggery pokery I think it's even better than the first one now, and it hasn't got the distortion."

Yet he is mindful of keeping the mix in balance with the classic version.

"The beginning has a spooky feel that reminds you of things like *The Exorcist*, and if you clean it up too much then it doesn't have that. I didn't duplicate some of the production, the phasing and flanging; we were trying to be modern in 1973 now it didn't seem necessary. I hope I've done it as best as I could, I certainly enjoyed doing it. I was listening to [his 1982 album] *Five Miles Out* recently and I didn't like it. I seem too tense, I was trying too hard. *Tubular Bells* is trying too hard, but succeeding."

With almost four

TOM CATTIN'

Prog tracks down original *Tubular Bells* producer Tom Newman.

"I think it's an album that everyone's heard at some time or another," says *Tubular Bells* producer Tom Newman. "I feel a lot of young people have used it as a way of getting an introduction into the world of modern classical music."

Newman came to prominence as rhythm guitarist of UK psychedelic outfit July, but by 1970 he was working with youthful owner of Virgin Records Richard Branson, helping to build the now legendary Manor Studios in Oxfordshire. It was during this time that Newman became acquainted with an 18-year-old musician, Mike Oldfield. Oldfield passed Newman his demo, thus helping to forge one of the most successful, if unheralded, production teams in musical history.

"It was one of the first albums to explore multi-track recordings," says Newman of *Tubular Bells* today. "We used the 16-track facility to its greatest extent, and beyond. The number of overdubs we had was incredible. It always amazes me that, 10 years after we did the album, you could buy exactly the same 16-track set-up for about £2,500. It cost us £25,000!"

Newman continued his own musical endeavours with 1975's *Fine Old Tom* and has continued as a musician in his own right ever since. His 1977 solo album *Fairie Symphony* has just been re-issued on the Esoteric label. As a producer he continued his work with Oldfield, collaborating on *Hergest Ridge*, *Platinum*, *Islands*, *Amarok* and *Tubular Bells II* and he also produced Hatfield & The North's 1974 debut album. He is currently working with The Tomcats.

"The Tomcats were a skiffle band that went very psychedelic in the late 60s and became July. Anyway, we've reformed, and we're doing an album. I play guitar, keyboards, and also do the vocals. We've no release date yet. The aim is to get it finished, then sort out the rest." **JE**



decades of perspective, its creator has definite view on the reasons for its enduring success. But just be careful what you call it.

"I've got no patience for people who call it new age or who go on about it being a concept album. It's not telling a story, there's no concept of anything. What it does have is extremes – delicate mandolin sections, the pounding rock of the 'caveman' section, the next section is the dreamiest little piece. Also I think people miss the humour in it. There's a honky-tonk piano with drunken people humming along, the *Sailor's Hornpipe*, it's got that Monty Python silliness. There's been nothing like it, before or since." **P**



MIRROPIX/GETTY IMAGES

“We were all up for the adventure...”

Rush's seminal fifth album *A Farewell To Kings* celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2017. To mark the occasion, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and producer Terry Brown recalled recording *al fresco*, the literature and films that inspired the album's creation, Minimoogs, double-neck guitars and the epic one-take wonder that is *Xanadu*.

Words: Philip Wilding **Image:** Fin Costello/Getty **Colourisation:** Steve Woods

It's a rare day of sunshine in the Welsh countryside. Since the band had arrived it had been slabs of grey skies and low clouds over the green hills.

Seen from above, the residential Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire is a block of buildings – the old stables, filled with glass sheets, act as a real echo chamber – set as a quadrangle around the main courtyard.

Spotting a rare interlude in among the constant drizzle, drummer Neil Peart is quickly out on the cobbles, toying with some percussion blocks, their repercussive zing bouncing sharply off the surrounding bricks.

Somewhere above the collective heads of Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and producer Terry Brown, a light bulb sparks into life.

Brown brings a stereo mic out to the centre of the courtyard and wires it up as Lifeson looks on, strumming his acoustic guitar. It's quiet,

“It was quiet at Rockfield, to be sure – very conducive for working, except for the constant bleating of sheep...” **Alex Lifeson**

birds chirrup, and in the distance, a nonplussed herd of sheep stand at the fence. “Those knocking sounds at the beginning of *Xanadu*,” says Lee, rapping on the oak table between us for effect, “that’s the sound of the courtyard, the natural sound of that square. We got such a nice reflection off the buildings, we knew we could use them in some way.

“The guitar at the start of *A Farewell To Kings*, the title song, was recorded outside too. The acoustic was recorded out there to get that really crisp sound and I remember Alex was walking around this mic that Terry had set up while he was playing. He was just like a troubadour – he was playing as he

walked around and, naturally, every troubadour has his guy trailing behind him playing a Minimoog!

“So I’m playing the Minimoog outside and Neil’s hitting the twinklies or whatever he was hitting off the front of that – he was always hitting something – and Alex is walking around this mic recording the opening to *A Farewell To Kings*, so it was quite fun. You can hear the Welsh birds singing in the background, unless they flew in from somewhere else – they could be accidentals, as they’re called in the trade.

“*Farewell...* was quite a different piece for us, because of the way the intro’s structured, and then it





Rush in 1977, L-R:
Neil Peart, Geddy
Lee, Alex Lifeson.

comes in with a bang and there's this weird time signature going on. It's a tough song to play."

"We set up on the cobblestone courtyard with a pair of mics and created our own stereo spread," says Lifeson. "I do recall walking back and forth, trying to concentrate on my playing while not crashing into Neil. It was a complex song to write. In many ways, it's simple and direct, but we could never accept that, so dropping a note here or inserting a weird note there made things more interesting for us and for the listener. Odd time signatures were a great way to keep the listeners scratching their heads and counting on all fingers."

"I liked the organic nature of that recording and it was one of the few days that it didn't rain... though I think it did start again later."

It had been a tumultuous ride up to *A Farewell To Kings*. Rush were following the acclaimed 2112 album, which they had released after the poorly received *Caress Of Steel* and the threat of being dropped by their label. The success of 2112 had given them their creative freedom, and the quickly assembled live album *All The World's A Stage* was their stopgap. Lee reveals: "...*Stage* was definitely something we used to buy us more



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

FREDRIK ÅKESSON, OPETH

"I remember listening to the title track on *A Farewell To Kings* for the first time and hearing Alex Lifeson's acoustic intro and it was spellbinding. A friend of mine played the album to me while air drumming intensively, really close to my face, along with Neil Peart's extraordinary playing. It was quite annoying but worth the sonic experience! ...*Kings* is a masterpiece and an innovative musical journey. We recorded our last two albums at Rockfield Studios in Wales and just to be there, knowing that *A Farewell to Kings* and *Hemispheres* were recorded there, was inspiring to say the least."

Favourite song: *Cygnus X-1*

"I've always had a soft spot for epic tracks and this one is definitely that! Geddy is singing at the top of his lungs and you get a spooky vibe, a feeling of loneliness in space." DL

"*Xanadu* was one of the greatest live songs we've ever done: it was a tour de force, it was a moment for the lights, it was a moment for the double-neck guitars. It was a big moment!"

Geddy Lee

time."

Though ...*Kings* was to be their fifth studio album, the band members were still barely in their mid-20s.

So how do you follow a concept album about a dystopian future where music is banned, civilisation is domineered by a hierarchy of priests and the lead protagonist commits suicide in order to free society? Good question. For Rush, you create a record informed by socialist polemic, the movies *Mr Deeds Goes To Town* and *Citizen Kane*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry, a nod to *Don Quixote* and what passed for a fiery death in the heart of a black hole. And in *Madrigal*, they even wrote a love song, albeit one



Double Vision: Alex Lifeson [left] onstage with the famous double-necked guitar.



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

GRUTLE KJELLSON, ENSLAVED

"To me personally, *A Farewell To Kings* marks the beginning of their best period, Rush at the very top of their game, together with *Hemispheres*, *Permanent Waves* and *Moving Pictures*. They were marvellous before and after too, of course, but this quartet is sacred for me. I think Rush really found themselves on this album. *2112* was just an introduction, this one was more refined. I also enjoy the production – it's rough and crystal clear at the same time. And that nasty Rickenbacker... oh man, no one plays it like Geddy! Simply fantastic. I even excuse the extensive use of church bells..."

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

"*Xanadu* has all the qualities of a really long and epic song. It's interesting all the way through, and all the different parts work seamlessly together. It has one of the coolest Rush riffs of all time in it and every Rush fan in the world knows exactly what riff I'm talking about! It's the signature Rush song and just maybe the Rush song." DL

that referenced dragons. It was a Rush album, after all.

It was springtime in Toronto and Rush were wondering what to do next. The band were toying with going back into work at Terry Brown's Toronto Sound Studios (where they'd recorded their four previous albums), but as the band's success escalated, so did

circumspect: "Did I mention the rain? I mean, all the time. That said, it was exciting to be in another country for an extended period and focus on making the record. I don't think we took any days off, but we never really wanted to. Living together, working together, it's what you dream of when you're young and starting out with

"Odd time signatures were a great way to keep the listeners scratching their heads and counting on all fingers."

Alex Lifeson

demands on their time.

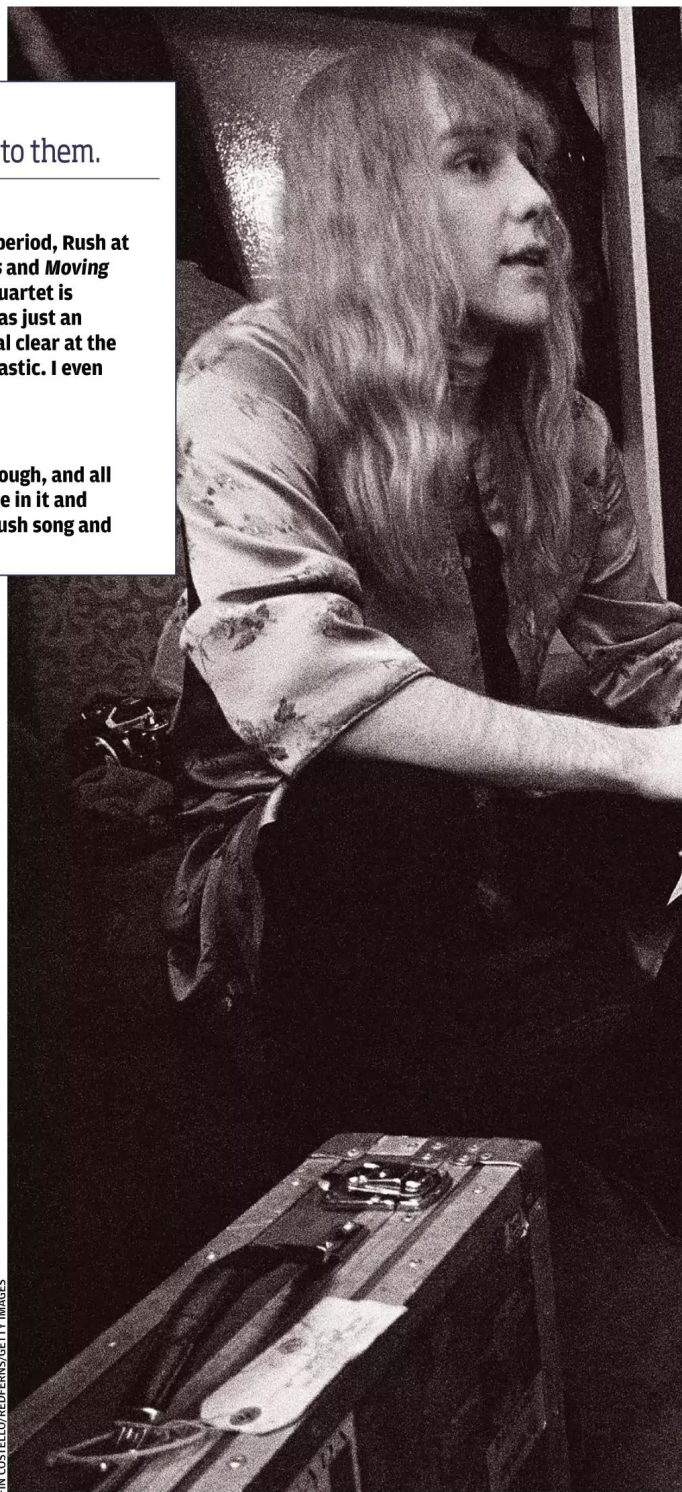
"We were doing well in Canada," says Lee, "and things were getting more hectic. Frankly, we wanted to go somewhere where there were less distractions. Rockfield was our first residential record – we'd never done that sort of thing before – so Terry suggested: why don't we look for a place where we could stay and work. We were all up for the adventure."

For his part, Lifeson is a little more

a band. It was so much fun."

"You have to remember, we were these dazzling urbanites at the time!" says Lee, laughing so hard he almost spills his glass of Riesling. "And here we are on the farm in Wales. It was... how do I put this? It was quite different. I remember when we first arrived, we had a bunch of our crew guys helping us load in, and one of the guys who worked for us at the time, his nickname was Lurch – he was 6'11."

FIN COSTELLO/RED PENS/GETTY IMAGES



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

KAVUS TORABI, KNIFEWORLD/GONG

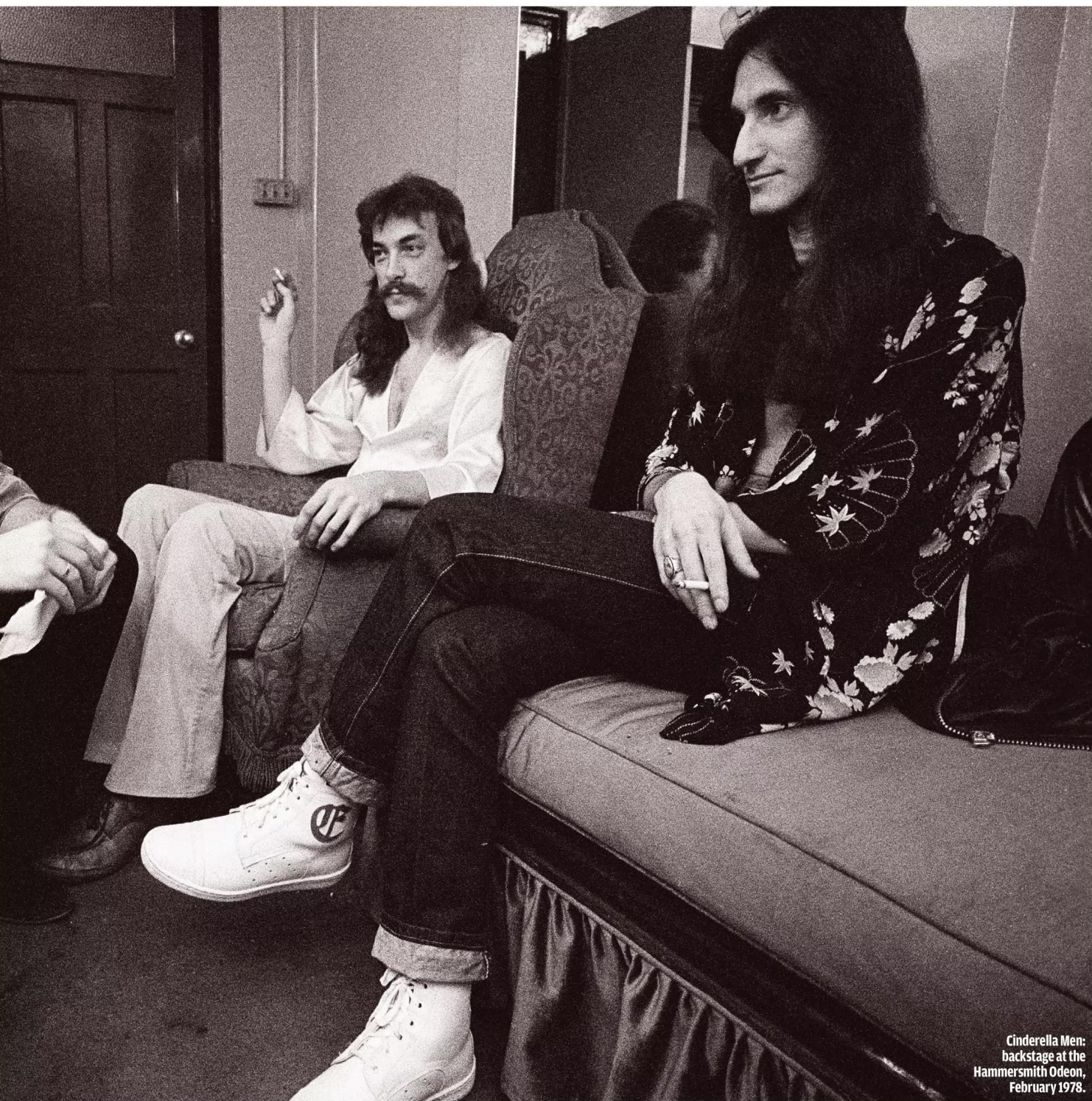
"It was 1985, I was 13 years old and beyond Black Sabbath, I had little use for 70s rock. It was plodding, bluesy and meandering. But this album exploded with colour, light and revelation. Significantly, this may have been the first time I knowingly heard music in 7/8 time. Over 30 years later I still haven't managed to shake that epiphany off. Was this really being made by only three people? Like any thrill seeker with a gateway drug, I naturally went on to the harder stuff, but it was *A Farewell To Kings* that opened my ears."

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

"*A Farewell To Kings* was my doorway into Rush, and Rush, perhaps more than anyone else at this point, were my gateway band into a strange, psychedelic world from which I would never return. Like the protagonist of *Xanadu*, I had dined on honeydew and drunk the milk of paradise and there was no going back." DL

"The weather was warm, wet but warm, but road crew tends to wear shorts whether it's warm or not. Anyway, some of our guys went to town with Lurch and you know, maybe it's changed, but back then you didn't see a lot of men wearing short pants, just children usually. Grown-ups didn't wear short pants a lot. So they're walking down the street with this guy who was a tough-looking character, is nearly seven feet tall and wearing short pants, and every time they passed someone, people would turn and giggle and laugh and point.

"So it was a bit of a culture shock for us. It was June, but you'd never know



Cinderella Men:
backstage at the
Hammersmith Odeon,
February 1978.

it was summer — it was Wales. I think we had three sunny days the entire time. It was perpetually grey, and the schedule started fairly normally: we'd start at midday and then we'd work, we'd take our meals together and they cooked for you and that was our first experience of anything like that... it was an adjustment.

"After about three weeks, we were working later and later into the night and sleeping later and later until eventually we got our schedule completely back to front, where we were having breakfast at supper time and working all night long and crashing after the 'baa, baa' [he offers a



WILL IRELAND

I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

JOHN MITCHELL, LONELY ROBOT

"As a young lad in my first school band, I used to listen to literally *nothing* but Iron Maiden. Not so my bandmates, brothers Phil and James Hearley. They bowed at a different altar, one belonging to Rush. As a kid, the most important part of developing a loving relationship with music is down to the act of discovering it yourself. I'm not suggesting that I was forced at gunpoint into the world of Rush by my bandmates, but I'm not sure that *not* appreciating the music of Rush was an option either. My first indoctrination? *A Farewell To Kings*. This was Rush arguably at the height of their powers, not long before they descended into their sometimes unfairly maligned 80s synth-pop phase."

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

"An 11-minute prog rock epic featuring bells, a Lydian guitar motif and lyrical references to Kublai Khan — what more can you ask for?" DL

full-throated and pretty convincing impression of a sheep] was happening in the morning. The birds and the baas! That was bedtime for us. That's why you hear so many birds when we recorded outside. I'm amazed there aren't any sheep on the album."

Lifeson adds: "It was quiet at Rockfield, to be sure — very conducive for working, except for the constant bleating of sheep..."

As a band that averaged around 250 shows a year, Rush, as was the case with their three previous albums, had very little material worked up before they went into the studio. Lee says: "You get 10 years to write your first album, 10 days to make every one after that. It's the same for every band."

That said, they had road-tested a few of the songs before going into the studio, including one that would become the record's cornerstone and a live staple for the rest of their careers — and it was recorded in one remarkable take.

"We had played *Xanadu* before we recorded it," says Lee dryly. "You know, the easy songs an audience can take in and appreciate without knowing what the hell they are. We certainly had the parts of that and I think *Closer To The Heart* might have been written. Not much else beside that — the rest of it was done on the spot. It was sort of how we were working back then, because we didn't have time — you're on the road all the time, so you have to write as you're moving."

"*Xanadu* was well rehearsed before going to Rockfield, I remember that," adds Lifeson. "On the day we recorded it, Pat Moran, the resident engineer, set all the mics up and we ran the song down, partially to get balances and tones. Because it was a long song, we didn't need to complete that test run."

"We then played it a second time from top to bottom and that's what you hear on the album. Needless to

Movie Magic: the two films that inspired the album, *Mr Deeds Goes To Town* and *Citizen Kane*.



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

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ROSS JENNINGS, HAKEN

"In 1998 I bought a copy of [UK power pop crew] Silver Sun's single *Too Much, Too Little, Too Late*, which also contained a version of *Xanadu*. I loved the tune instantly and once I realised it was a cover, it led me to check out the original, which is how I discovered Rush. At the time I only really cared for *Xanadu* and *Closer To The Heart*... I was so naïve! It wasn't until I heard *Tom Sawyer* on an episode of *Futurama* that I was encouraged to explore their entire back catalogue. It became apparent quite quickly that *AFTK* would stand out as one of my go-to Rush albums."

Favourite song: *Closer To The Heart*

"Back when my wife and I were dating, I used to make her a lot of mix tapes and she singled that track out as one of her favourites. I'm so lucky to have a wife that really appreciates prog music!" DL



SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

say, Pat was shocked that we ran an 11-minute song down in one complete take. Practice doesn't always make perfect, but it sure helps!"

Did they realise how magical and inventive *Xanadu* was?

"*Xanadu* was too difficult to play to feel magical at the time!" Lifeson says. "But it did feel like we were moving on into another direction and this whole other level of performance."

"I don't think we ever think of our music in that way — maybe later," says Lee. "You have an idea and you have a soundscape you're trying to create. With *Xanadu*, I'm not sure people realise this, but even though it's loosely based on Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, it's also very influenced by *Citizen Kane*."

"If you look at the opening of the newsreel of *Citizen Kane*, they quote that poem: [he adopts the opening tone of the original voiceover] '*In Xanadu the pleasure dome did decree...*' and that whole sort of animated opening to that, so I kept that in mind when we created the soundscape to the opening of that song. I always had that visual in my brain as we were making the music, I always had a connection to that whole thing. They're intertwined for me."

"*Xanadu* was also one of the greatest live songs we've ever done, it was tour de force, it was a moment for the lights, it was a moment for the double-neck guitars. It was a big moment! Though not so much for my poor back."

Those double-necks took on a life of their own: on the *R40* tour, there was a sort of happy pandemonium as the band strapped them on.

"Frankly, we've never lived those guitars down," says Lee. "Can't get past it, mate! And you're right, when we brought them back on the last tour, people lost their minds — the double-necks, they're back, alert the media!"

"But form follows function, right? We had those double-necks for a reason, because it was always imperative for us to be able to reproduce our records as accurately as we could. And we were doing more overdubs and experimenting with sounds, so we needed more strings on stage, we needed more flexibility. Alex



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MICHAEL ROMEO, SYMPHONY X

"The first album I ever heard from Rush was *Moving Pictures* and it was life-changing. After that, I went to the record store whenever I had money and bought an older Rush album. Eventually I found *A Farewell To Kings* and for a long time it would never leave my turntable. It's probably the most overlooked and underrated album in the Rush collection, because it came after *2112* and before *Hemispheres*, two monster albums. It's unfortunate, because there are some really great songs and some amazing playing on this record."

Favourite song: *Cinderella Man*

"Although Rush are known for their great arrangements, this song captures me with its simplicity and feeling. That was the beauty of Rush. Their emphasis was great songs, and they knew when to make them simple or difficult." DL

plays a six-string and a 12-string in *Xanadu*, so he needed that guitar.”

“That’s certainly where it began in earnest,” says Lifeson, “but I’d been incorporating 12-string since the first album, and to have the flexibility to switch between the 12- and six-string opened other doors to our sound and songwriting. It’s funny because we didn’t use them much, yet they became these iconic images for the band. I probably see at least as many double-neck photos of us as regular ones.”

Orson Welles’ iconic *Citizen Kane* wasn’t the only cinematic note to be introduced into the *A Farewell To Kings* mix. In terms of songwriting credits, *Closer To The Heart* was co-written with poet Peter Talbot, while Lee brought in the lyrics for *Cinderella Man*.

“That was inspired by one of my favourite movies, the original *Mr Deeds Goes To Town*, where he’s referred to as a Cinderella man. I was a big film guy as a teenager, and as a young man, I was really a film buff – I watched films all the time. I studied directors because I sort of secretly wanted to be a film director. It was just one of those dreams for when I grow up. And when I realised that most directors have to be part megalomaniac, I think I sort of went off that idea. But I loved film, I still do. The old films, my wife and I used to watch them all the time together, and so the Capra movies were big with me – lot of heart, lot of soul, lot of showing the best and worst of America and its people.

“So that song is really just about that movie and the kind of themes that movie resonated with. It was my thing that I brought in and Neil helped me clean it up a bit. One thing in Rush is that we’ve always allowed ourselves to go where we want to go as individuals and see it how flies. We all have to be behind it to use it. But there were no real boundaries in our band.”

Much later, the band would record their albums in shifts, Lee during the daytime and Peart and Lifeson late into the evening, Lifeson cracking open his Tupperware box of weed and going to work on his guitar parts. In the 70s, though, all three members would crowd into the studio to study the others’ work and throw ideas

“You get 10 years to write your first album, 10 days to make every one after that. It’s the same for every band.”

Geddy Lee

KINGS QUESTIONS

Production maestro Terry Brown looks back at the creation of ...*Kings*.

Producer Terry Brown, or Broon as the band would later dub him, worked with Rush, remixing their debut album and then producing all of the band’s subsequent releases through to 1982’s *Signals*. His résumé also includes production stints with everyone from Voivod to Cutting Crew, Fates Warning and Blurred Vision.

Farewell... was the first studio album after 2112. Did that add any extra pressure on the band and you given its breakthrough success?

If there was pressure, I wasn’t aware of it. I always had confidence that the boys would write a new batch of killer material – and, of course, they did!

It was your first residential studio experience as a band/producer, and it took you all the way to Wales!

The residential thing was excellent – other than the pub, there really wasn’t anything else to do in the village, so we worked all night and slept most of the day.

The band recorded the title track and some other tracks outside in the quadrangle because of the crisp, ambient sound...

Yes, the weather was beautiful so we switched it up to daytime recording in the quadrangle for the title track and the intro for *Closer To The Heart* – Alex wandering around like a travelling minstrel with his acoustic guitar slung over his shoulder.

It was the first Rush album that really started exploring the Moog and synth sounds (and bass pedals). Do you remember that switch in the way they were doing things, or was it just a natural evolution?

We had dabbled in keys on 2112 with Hugh Syme on the intro, but this was the first time we had different keys to choose from during the whole recording. We were able to colour things in the high end, highlight the fat pedal notes and add leads. It opened up a whole new world for us.

The band work in a more solitary way in the studio now, but back then they were all for one, one for all. What do you remember of those recording sessions and the camaraderie in the studio?

It didn’t take long before our hours of working were 7pm to 5am and it proved to be very productive – no distractions from staff or the office. The camaraderie was always on point. We started our ‘day’ (night) by convening for dinner at 5pm in the dining room – meals full of banter and great home-cooked food. Great memories.

Did they have much material coming in?

As I remember, most of the material was in pretty good shape, but certainly the seeds were there – not least of all lyrically from the Professor [Peart].

The album ends with the very ambitious *Cygnus X-1*...

I remember putting together the complex tape delay loops that gave the space sections the depth and sci-fi quality. It was done using at least eight tracks fed into each other with control of feedback, level, EQ and panning.

Do you think of it as a pivotal album for the band, not least sonically?

Farewell... was another major progression for the boys – really, that never stopped. They were always pushing the envelope of musicianship and playing ability, pulling it off in spades. **PW**



Rush with Terry ‘Broon’ Brown, second from right.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

around, producer Terry Brown keeping a watchful eye through the glass.

“Back then it was all for one and one for all,” says Lee. “We were always in the room at the same time, we were always leaning over each other and making comments and it was very congenial and we were super involved. Whereas 30 years later you want more space and you’re less nervous about leaving Alex alone to do his guitars! It was fun. In later and more recent years, we each have our own hours we like to work, like I don’t like to work in the evenings, but Alex does because he can smoke a joint and get lost in the underworld!”

“Ged and I generally worked together

during the days but I always enjoyed the quiet of the evenings on my own to catch up on tracking and exploring other layers for what we had written,” says Lifeson. “Over the years, we’ve developed a great deal of respect and trust in each other’s strong points during our writing sessions. We give each other space to initiate and develop our individual ideas within the partnership and that’s rare. You’ll hear of the petty arguments and jealousies that can tear bands apart, but we were never those guys. It takes a level of maturity and confidence to rise above that and accept a partner’s ideas and how to improve them for the good of the song. And we were always about”

what was good for the song.”

And *A Farewell To Kings* had them in spades. It would be their first gold album in the US and would give them their first hit single, in the shape of *Closer To The Heart*, the polar opposite of *Xanadu* in scale, scope and structure, but destined to become as much a part of their live show as the Coleridge-inspired epic.

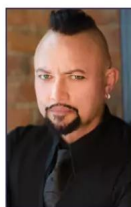
“I remember when we had to bring it back into the set for the Rio shows, as there was such a demand to hear it and we’d stopped playing it for a while,” says Lee. “It’s always resonated with people for some reason, and it was a hit as far as we’ve ever had a hit. It got us on the radio, the kinds of radio that would never normally associate with us, so it was as close as we ever came to a pop song, especially at that point. Over here in the UK it had that effect, and in the US too.

“It has that folk protest song vibe too. That’s the first time Neil had collaborated with another writer, Peter Talbot, so it was pretty pivotal in all sorts of ways. I don’t recall how we met Peter — he lived on Vashon Island in the Pacific North West, and he had a real West Coast, hippie lifestyle. He was married with a little kid and we’d go visit them on the island and watch them smoke dope with their kid, and I thought that was really strange, being high with a young kid. That just seemed different somehow...

“Neil and Peter got real close: they became real pals, they had lots of things in common,” Lee continues, “they thought about a lot of things in the same way. He gave some poems to Neil and Neil took them away with him and one of them he eventually hammered into *Closer To The Heart*. So really, *Closer To The Heart* was inspired by that guy.”

The album also saw the band’s ever-escalating interest in synthesisers and Minimoogs bearing fruit. Electronic instrumentation was adding colour and textures to the band’s songwriting.

“That’s true, and it was liberating



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

GEOFF TATE, OPERATION: MINDCRIME

“When that album came out, it captured my imagination because it was one of those with lots of sound effects and atmosphere, and that put you in the mood of the stories. Things like *Xanadu* and *Cygnus X-1*, those tracks were fantastic. They had a lot of interesting audio scenes that they painted, and with this incredibly complex but melodically catchy and precisely played music. It was played well and the production is fantastic. It’s a great album to listen to on headphones — it really places you in the scenes that Neil Peart was writing.”

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

“I absolutely love that track. The type of melodies they were experimenting with, that Middle Eastern influence, I wasn’t familiar with that and it really opened my eyes to world music for the first time. Then that becomes a life’s journey. Rush were one of those bands that influenced me the most.” DL

“There were protest songs on the album, sociopolitical comment, songs about space!”

Geddy Lee

and exciting to hear more sounds and textures coming from the band,” says Lifeson. “That grew to become a monster in the ensuing years, especially when we played live and Ged would be stuck at his keyboards at some points in the show, but it was always satisfying to come off stage knowing you worked extra hard to

From *Xanadu* To Birmingham: Rush on their UK tour, February 12, 1978.



FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

BENT SÆTHER, MOTORPSYCHO

“I heard *A Farewell To Kings* and *2112* as a 15-year-old in the mid-80s. These were my first close encounters with conceptual thinking in rock music and with the idea of making an album be more than a collection of individual songs. It blew my mind. Rush were flag-bearers for oddballs and weirdos everywhere, the perfect rabbit hole for a 15-year-old brainy metal kid to fall into. They showed me I wasn’t alone in liking the things I did. Rush and *A Farewell To Kings* were my gateway drug into the wonderful world of prog rock, and I’m eternally grateful.”

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

“*Xanadu* is probably my favourite Rush song overall, but *Cygnus X-1* runs a close second: A 10-minute mind-movie about a spaceship entering a black hole? ‘To be continued...’? Come on! It just doesn’t get better than that! It didn’t when I was 15, and it still doesn’t.” DL

create that wall of sound and hear the appreciation from the audience.”

“We were in the embryonic stage with the synths at that point,” says Lee, refilling our glasses of wine, swirling his gently, taking a sniff and then a gulp. “There’s definitely more Minimoog on ...*Kings*, but it’s mostly bass pedals, synths and some white noise, not a whole lot of string sounds by this time. We did attempt a couple of things in some of those songs, but not much. So it’s pretty Minimoog-y. That’s a technical term, right?”

“The bass pedals opened up the possibility of a second guitar at





Festive Farewell: Geddy Lee live at the Public Auditorium in Cleveland, Ohio, on December 17, 1977.



Testing Times: Alex Lifeson soundchecking at the Birmingham Odeon, February 1978.

times, which is what happened in *Xanadu* — there were definitely more colours going on and it opened up Alex to play single lines a bit more, melodic lines, because I could fill in the background with guitar or bass pedals. So that was a big sort of change in the way we thought and the way we approached our songs and the way we wrote.

“That’s partly why I think *Farewell* was an important album for us. We did go into new territory with that record and it was a big step down a road, sonically, that we didn’t really ever let go of. Two albums later we’d make *Permanent Waves*!

“When you open that door of the synthesiser and the keyboard world, that was a Pandora’s box for us, and after we’d opened it, all kinds of stuff



TOP: FIN COSTELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Neil Peart (left) with Thin Lizzy guitarist Brian Robertson at the Hammersmith Odeon, London, on February 19, 1978.

came out over the next few years, but that’s what made it glorious as a guy who was in the middle of it all.

“I learned a lot; I was learning a lot,” Lee continues. “I was always

challenged and I was very stimulated and the end result was *A Farewell To Kings*, so I guess it was a pivotal record in that regard.”

It was also the only time in the band’s career that the lead-out track would act as the introduction for the record that would follow it (though the By-Tor character that had appeared on *Fly By Night* did reappear on the follow-up *Caress Of Steel* album). Ask Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee now if they had any idea that *Cygnus X-1* would be the spark that fanned the flames for the *Hemispheres* record and you’ll get a bewildered shrug.

“No, we didn’t know it was going there,” says Lee. “Neil may have had that in the back of his mind, this bigger thing brewing, but at the time it was just what came along.”

Listening back to it now, it’s still a dazzling, complex affair that appears to end in disarray, with the Rocinante spaceship perishing at the heart of a black hole.

To describe the arrangement as dense would be to undersell it somewhat. It’s a grandstanding example of archetypal middle-stage Rush — music that’s sublime, histrionic, fantastical and musically daunting, but still, strangely, very listenable, and almost impossible to play. It’s also a prime example of why you still see so few Rush cover bands — imagine trying to jam through



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

DOUG OTT, ENCHANT

“A friend played me an excerpt from *2112* and I thought it sounded really interesting so I went to the record store to look for Rush. I didn’t know what my friend had played me or which album it was from so I just bought the album that had the most interesting cover and that was *A Farewell To Kings*. I absolutely fell in love with the music on this album. I was hooked. It has a certain magical quality, kind of an old-world feel, from another time. It takes you on a journey, from the medieval/Renaissance feel of *A Farewell to Kings* to the futuristic *Cygnus X-1*.”

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

“Something about the dynamics and build of the guitar just made me fall in love with the song. It’s so intricate and powerful.” DL



I HAVE DINED ON HONEYDEW...

Top prog stars tell us what *A Farewell To Kings* means to them.

TOM PRICE, GODSTICKS

"The first time I heard the songs from ...*Kings* was while listening to the very first Rush album I bought, *Exit... Stage Left*. That album has fantastic live versions of *Closer To The Heart* and *Xanadu*. I'd also started learning to play the drums around that time so they were hugely influential on me. I picked up a copy of *A Farewell To Kings* not long after that and it's been one of my all-time favourites ever since. I always think of this record as Rush at their proggiest. It's still mind-blowing to think that only three guys made all this incredible music."

Favourite song: *Xanadu*

"It's my all-time favourite Rush epic, and I have to say my all-time favourite epic in all of prog rock! It's the quintessential 70s Rush sound and it stills gives me goosebumps when I listen to it." DL

that track in a rehearsal space! That, though, is exactly what Rush did.

"That was something we jammed out," confirms Lee casually, as if he's talking about a 12-bar blues riff the band might have worked up, "I think that grew from all three of us sitting in a room together, trying to work it out. I had an idea for the opening and Neil started playing the drum part and then, just as any band does, and perhaps that's the organic nature of a band like Rush, you figure out the part and you put it together.

"Neil had this story in his mind and we loved it — it was really expressive for us. That whole idea of using sci-fi stuff really worked for Rush because there are no boundaries, there are no limitations, you can use all your



***A Farewell To Kings'* classic cover art by Hugh Syme.**

destroys you. You have to wrestle with it, and I think artists of every stripe have had to do that since the beginning of time.

"Painters, your paints are your technology, your brushes, so you have to work out a way to use those things to express what you want to express, so it's easy to go over the top, but you don't know you're going over the top until you've got there! It's like anything — when you're trying to get your idea down, you can't edit at the same time, you have to put it down and let it be overblown and then take a step back and see if it is or isn't.

"And you have to remember, it wasn't a brutal record to make, it was fun, things came together relatively quickly. We ended it up by going into

"We then played *Xanadu* a second time from top to bottom and that's what you hear on the album."

Geddy Lee

goofy, weird sounds because that's what's happening out in space. Didn't you know that?! There are all kinds of echoplexes out in space — they're dotted around like star systems. There are always Marshall stacks and Serbian guitarists making noises through echo machines in space."

"It was an intense jam," reveals Lifeson, "and I loved the heaviness and dynamics of the track as it came together. I also remember being very high while we put the intro atmospherics together and, let's be honest, it wasn't for the first or last time!"

"Those things are always fun to do," says Lee. "You do have that serious side that wants it to be right — like, 'How do you know that weird sound is better than that weird sound?' You have to have a modicum [of restraint] — this is my serious face — you have to do that, otherwise it's just chaos. You have to have parameters to an extent, because technology is the tool and it can be the thing that

Advison Studios in London to mix it and I was so excited because that's where all those great Yes records were made, and those ELP records. It was well respected and a well-used place by a lot of the guys that we admired, so that was a thrill for us, and it was nice to get out of the country and into London for a few weeks."

Given the mix of songs on the record, the epically long and overblown juxtaposed with shorter and more succinct material meant that balancing

Fit For A King: the deluxe 40th-anniversary edition of *A Farewell To Kings*.



two sides of vinyl was something of a challenge: the grandiose abutting the understated, but also making the whole thing fit and flow.

"But that's the thing I really miss," says Lee. "Back then, one of the great pleasures, and one of the toughest things, was sequencing. That was an art back then — you had two sides, you had two chances, you had a beginning and an end twice, and so that was cool because you had 15 to 20 minutes to work with and you had this whole feel, and then you could change this feel in the second half if you wanted to. And we were the kind of band who revelled in that way of expressing things. I think that really came to bear on *Farewell...*, the way it sits together as an album."

As much as the band and Terry Brown played their part, long-time collaborator and cover artist Hugh Syme's depiction of the clown king, lost and alone in the urban wasteland, gave the whole album an unsettling undercurrent.

"That worked for us because there's a subtle theme that goes through part of the album that's all about loss," says Lee. "We have this thing: where are the next people we want to look up to going to come from? Which is not an uncommon theme in Rush music — it's something that comes and goes with us. It's like everybody needs people to look up to, everybody needs people to emulate or be inspired by, and they're hard to find. And so it's that whole 'trying to find the positive point of view when all around is not so positive', shall we say?"

He sits back, one more swirl of the glass, a final gulp.

"The whole concept of the album is disintegrating right now, but they're very much time capsules — where you were at musically, socially and what kind of things you were talking about. They're frozen in time, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't have said what you said — you can't take that back. There were protest songs on there, sociopolitical comment, songs about space!"

The following summer they'd be back at Rockfield to try to recapture the magic of *A Farewell To Kings* on *Hemispheres*, their last album of the 1970s, and what would become a real turning point in their music and how they made it. 1980's *Permanent Waves* sounded like a band renewed, but its seeds had been sewn with *A Farewell To Kings*. Though that was all to come, Geddy recalls their return trip to Wales as they tried to capture that elusive magic one more time.

"We enjoyed our time there a lot, so much so that we went back, like idiots. Never go back. You can't do that — history doesn't repeat itself..." 🍷

THE EPIC SAGA OF THE BAND THAT CHANGED PROG

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PROG

The Cult Heroes

The likes of Floyd, Yes and Genesis ruled prog for decades. But in the margins, a host of radical artists were weaving their own magic. From the mad genius of Robert Calvert to the groundbreaking noise of Voivod, these are some of the genre's great unsung mavericks...

S Icarus Flew Too Near The Sun

He was the maverick genius who conceived the Space Ritual and embodied Hawkwind's progressive spirit in the 70s. But **Robert Calvert** played with fire for the sake of his art.

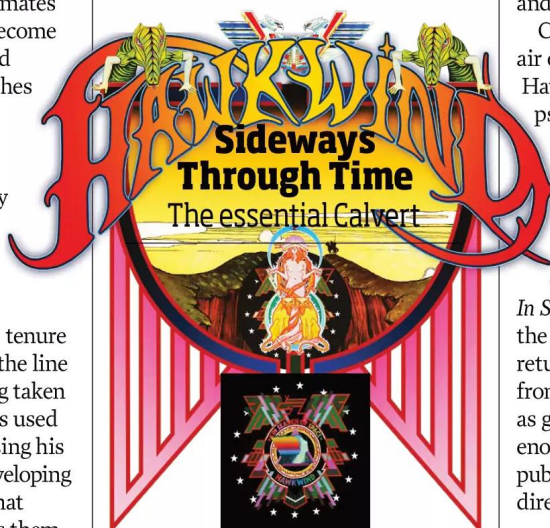
Words: Joe Banks **Portrait:** Barry Plummer

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

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

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

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



In Search Of Space (1971)

After the folk blues and barbarian psychedelia of their debut, this is where Hawkwind really achieve lift-off. Clad in an astonishing Barney Bubbles-designed sleeve, *ISOS* showcases their mantric, anti-authoritarian space rock sound on *You Shouldn't Do That*, while *Master Of The Universe* is their first sci-fi classic and one of Brock's greatest riffs. Elsewhere, *We Took The Wrong Step Years Ago* is an eco anthem that sounds increasingly prescient. **JB**

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

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

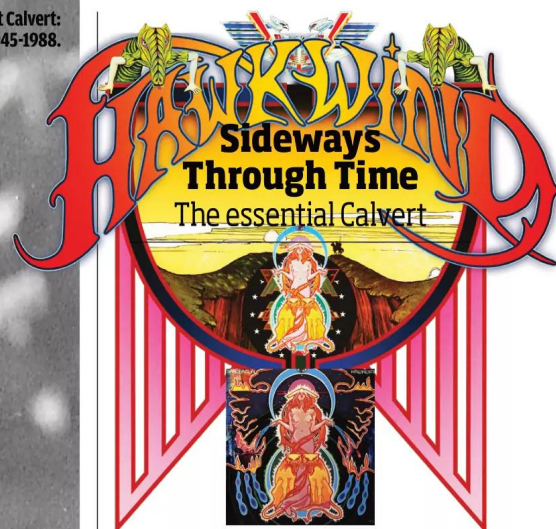
Calvert's sci-fi oratory injects an air of menacing theatricality into Hawkwind's propulsive, cosmic psychedelia, and he becomes an official member in October 1971.

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

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



Robert Calvert:
1945-1988.




Space Ritual (1973)

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

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

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

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

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

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

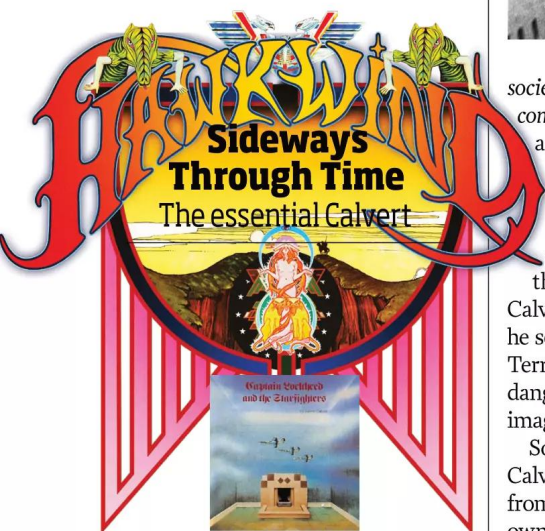
Throughout this period, Calvert is subject to regular hospitalisation for manic depression, though the treatment is not always successful. Doug Smith, Hawkwind's manager at the time, remembers, "Robert had been sectioned to Roehampton Hospital, and in the next room was Spike Milligan, and of course,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

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

Calvert in the studio with Hawkwind, 1973.



BARRY PLUMMER



Captain Lockheed And The Starfighters (1974)

It would take a special talent to construct a concept album out of the story of 159 crashed jet fighters. Robert Calvert was the only man for the job. Like a great cult film, his debut solo album is a flawed work, but the brilliance and dazzling invention so outweigh the defects that you can't help but fall in love with it. And in the snarling *Ejection*, it includes one of the great lost classic rock'n'roll songs of all time, **TU**

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

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

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

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

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



BARRY PLUMMER

Calvert making astounding sounds and amazing music on tour.



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

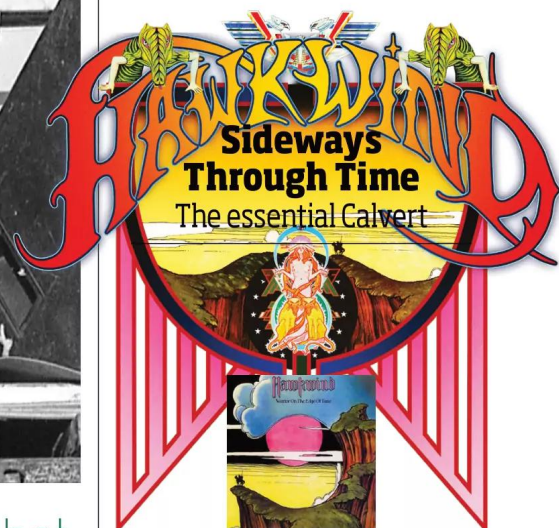
Lemmy

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

In June 1977, Hawkwind release *Quark, Strangeness And Charm*, perhaps the definitive Calvert-era album.

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

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



Warrior On The Edge Of Time (1975)

Hawkwind deploy the full armoury of prog – Mellotron, synth, violin, flute etc – to produce a brain-frying sword and sorcery spectacular, loosely based on Michael Moorcock's *The Eternal Champion* novels. *Assault And Battery* and *The Golden Void* are future staples of their live sets, while *Opa-Loka* is a good illustration of why some considered Hawkwind a British equivalent to Krautrock. **JB**



ERICA ECHENBERG/GETTY

Gentlemen, start your engines: Calvert and Nik Turner (left) rev it up.

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

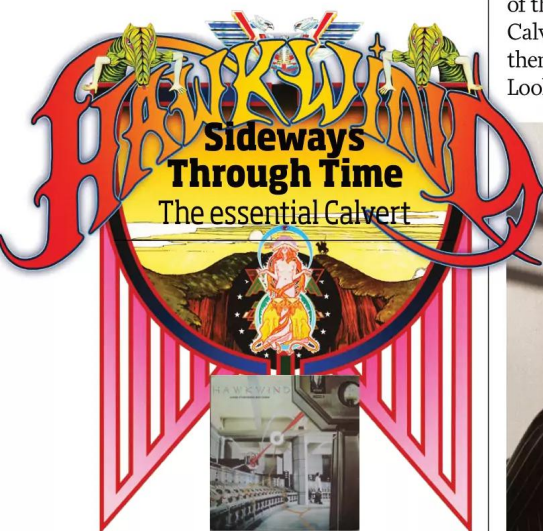
Suffering from insomnia and hooked on books about guerrilla warfare, Calvert becomes convinced that the heads of various terrorist organisations are in the audience at the Palais Des Sportes in Paris. When tour manager Jeff Dexter tries to calm him down after the show, Calvert attacks him with a sword. The band are used to his

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

Doug Smith

sometimes demanding behaviour, but judging this to be a full-on psychotic episode, they elect to cancel the rest of the tour – and leave France without Calvert. However, the singer discovers them mid-escape and gives chase... Looking back on the incident, bassist

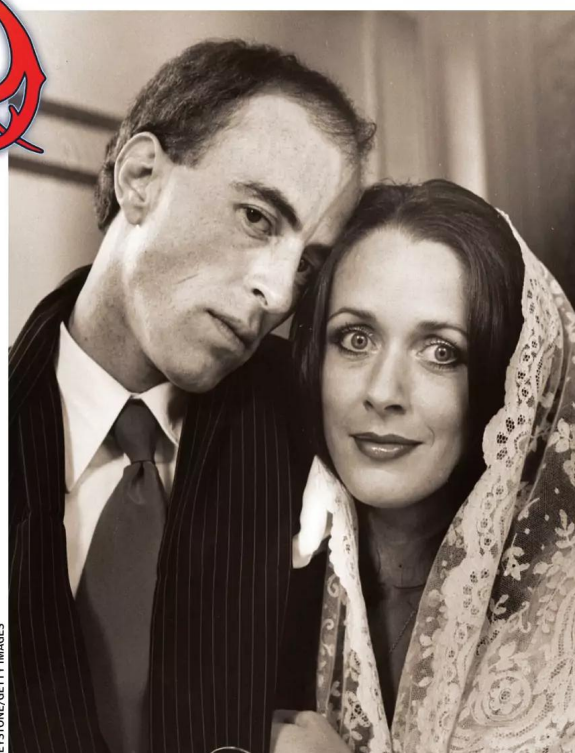
Robert Calvert and Pamela Townley on their wedding day at Caxton Hall, 1977.



Quark, Strangeness And Charm (1977)

With Calvert at the conceptual controls, this is Hawkwind's smartest album, casting a satirical eye over everything from cloning and quantum physics to Middle Eastern terrorism and nuclear apocalypse. After the hazy stoner funk of 1976's *Astounding Sounds, Amazing Music*, *Quark...* is bracingly up to date, tracks such as *Spirit Of The Age* and *Damnation Alley* sounding taut, polished and chromium-plated. **JB**

KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES



BARRY PLUMMER





Glissa backie! Calvert with Noel Redding in June 1976.



Hawklords / 25 Years On (1978)

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

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

at the time Adrian Shaw is contrite: "It was tragedy and farce, but not something I'm proud of. You don't leave sick friends behind."

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

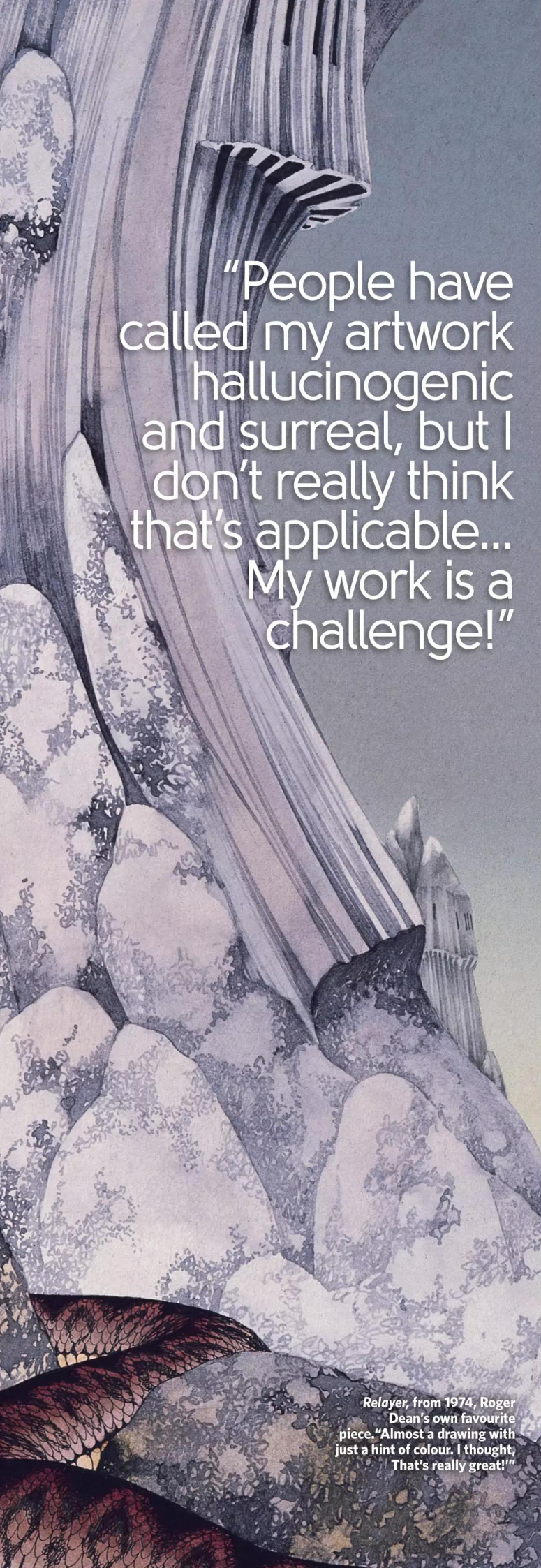
In 1988, at the age of just 43, Robert Calvert died from a heart attack. He was one of rock music's great talents – a spellbinding frontman, visionary writer, and much imitated singer. Stacia Blake calls him, "An incredible person, a genius," and Michael Moorcock says, "He was a brilliant rock'n'roll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

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

The background is a surreal, painterly illustration. In the foreground, a large snake with a brown and orange patterned body is coiled on a rocky, textured ground. The snake's head is raised, and its tongue is flicking out. In the background, a city with a tall, pointed tower is visible through a hazy, atmospheric setting. The sky is filled with large, stylized, fan-like structures that resemble giant ears or wings. The overall color palette is muted, with shades of purple, blue, and grey, giving it a dreamlike quality.

When it comes to the art of
the progressive world one
name immediately springs to
the fore: **Roger Dean**.
Mick Wall uncovers an
amazing career.

Sound Chaser



"People have called my artwork hallucinogenic and surreal, but I don't really think that's applicable... My work is a challenge!"

Relayer, from 1974, Roger Dean's own favourite piece. "Almost a drawing with just a hint of colour. I thought, 'That's really great!'"

The most famous album cover artist of all, Roger Dean actually began his career in the late

1960s designing furniture – albeit futuristic household

objects like his "sea urchin" chair; a foam sphere which moulded to the shape of individual sitters. Consequently, his "retreat pod" chairs were used in Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange*. However, it was a commission to design what he now describes as "freeform landscape seating" for Ronnie Scott's jazz club in London which led to him designing his first album sleeve – for acid rockers The Gun (featuring the Gurvitz brothers, Adrian and Paul, and, briefly, vocalist Jon Anderson), whom Scott's management also looked after.

This led to a succession of commissions for covers by jazz artists like Keith Tippett and Nucleus. His first well-known cover, though, was for Osibisa's self-titled debut in 1971, for which he also hand-drew the logo. "I wanted to do more in terms of defining the identity of the band, something much more painterly."

He got his chance with Yes, beginning with the cover of their 1971 album, *Fragile* – an actual painting of a 'fragile' planet Earth. Over the years, Dean's increasingly out-there Yes covers would become intrinsically linked with both the group's visual identity – incorporating his designs into their live stage shows – and their earnestly abstract music. Though he would go on to work with other rock artists, from Uriah Heep to Greenslade and Asia, it was his work with Yes which now defines a whole era in album cover art.

"People have called my work surreal but I don't think of it as that at all," he says. "People have called my work hallucinogenic but again I don't really think that's applicable."

What would he call it then? "Well, there's the challenge. I did think of my work really fitting into three areas. One of it is unambiguously landscape, and a lot of my Yes work really fits into that category, from *Fragile* to *Tales From Topographic Oceans*."

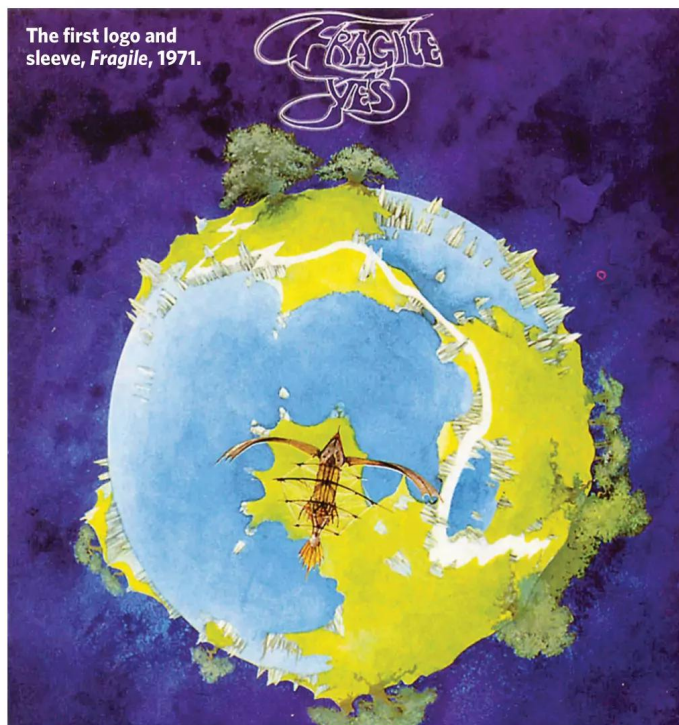
The only other artist then working in the rock idiom that he admits being influenced by is the late San Franciscan poster and sleeve designer, Rick Griffin, who "broke all the rules."

Like Griffin, and unlike the vast majority of today's album sleeve designers, Dean not only based his work on original paintings, he also hand-drew images, including what is still the official Yes logo, now regarded as one of the most famous – and, crucially, instantly recognisable – squiggles in rock history.

Years later, when an autograph-seeker asked him to draw the Yes logo, Dean couldn't remember how he did it. "He got really upset, saying, 'I'm not an artist and I've done it a thousand times!' I said, 'You did it a thousand times but I only ever did it once.'"



The first logo and sleeve, *Fragile*, 1971.





Steve Howe's
Beginnings, 1975.



Uriah Heep's *Demons and Wizards*, 1972.

Interestingly, he says his principle inspiration was never the music, more the "literary ideas, poetical ideas, visual ideas... philosophical ideas" that he would pick up from sitting around chatting with the band. "I would get a lot of visual direction from the same ideas they were getting musical direction from."

With *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge* he also had the album titles to work with. "With *Tales From Topographic Oceans* and *Relayer*, the titles came after I'd done the artwork."

With the era of gatefold artwork, not only did you have music that required you to sit and listen, you had sleeves that you could open like a book and gaze at while listening to the music – pastimes rendered impossible by CD cases.

"I agree," Dean affirms. "The jewel case... what a piece of rubbish." These days, though, he says, "companies are focusing on doing really beautiful replicas of the original gatefolds. I've been working, in particular, with a company called Repertoire, in Germany, and they've released 16 of my very early pieces – beautifully restored artwork – on five-inch gatefold editions, and we're going to be selling them on my website at www.rogerdean.com."

The Japanese company Disk Union have also commissioned Dean to "do a couple of box sets of Yes product," including the *Yessongs* triple album "as it was originally designed, so it opened up like a book." This should partly make up for the terribly mangled

original 70s vinyl edition of the US album which Dean describes as "that horrible zigzag that had the paintings out of sequence."

Perhaps the greatest sign of the impact his work continues to have is that although we may not all be familiar with the music everyone knows what is meant when something is described as being "a bit like a Roger Dean cover." He chuckles wryly. "Sometimes it's too much like one for comfort. If you look on TV today you might see an ad for Euro Disney's Christmas Special, which owes a great deal to *Yessongs*. Then there was a car ad just recently which was heavily borrowed from *Tales From Topographic Oceans* – the art director acknowledged that."

He says his own favourite Yes cover is *Relayer*, "because it was almost a drawing with just a hint of colour in it... the amount of watercolour in there is so minimal it's almost just dirty water instead of paint."

He recalls finishing it at four in the morning, standing it by his bed, "thinking: that was really great!" Then waking in the morning to find it had been raining and "the picture wasn't quite far enough away from the window to avoid a splash or two." But then, as he says, "I work in a studio, it's not a laboratory."

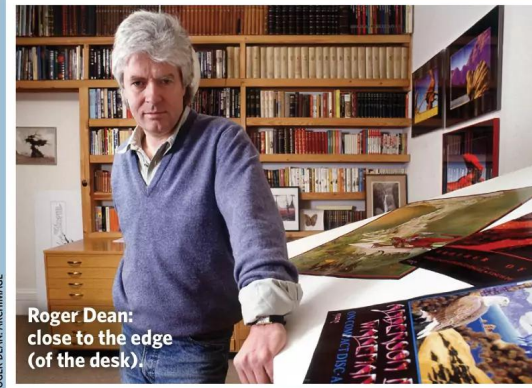
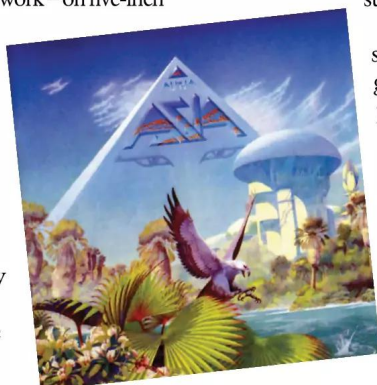
Hence, he says, oddities like the main painting for *Yessongs*, which his cat walked across before the paint dried. "I painted it out with clouds but by the time it had dried and I had to take it to be photographed the cat prints showed through – we sold millions of posters of that image!"

In the 80s, "a lot of people were inspired to do albums covers because of what I did, but they had what might be a disadvantage of doing it through the graphic design course at their art school." Dean feels this then led to "a strong tendency to make something that should have been fun and radical surprisingly conservative."

Dean, however, is still going strong. As well films, computer games, books and several other projects, he has also "just been asked to do the covers for new studio albums by Yes and Asia."

Let's hope the cat stays outside when he does... ☹

Find out more on Roger Dean's art, news and activities at www.rogerdean.com.



Roger Dean:
close to the edge
(of the desk)

GOING FOR THE ONE

The creator of the Yes and Asia logos on how a band's name should be presented.

As the man who designed ident for both Yes and Asia, Roger Dean knows how important logos are, describing them at their best as "creating street heraldry."

Of course, this is not the kind of talk that impresses hard-nosed record label bosses more intent on the bottom – than the seductively wavy – line.

He recalls Asia's then label chief, John Kalodner, originally rejecting Dean's Asia logo. "He said, 'No good, I can't read it'. I said, 'It's not meant to be read; it's meant to be recognised'. It's an intuitive and primeval recognition much more than legibility."

Because the first Yes logo – for *Fragile* – was not something he felt "entirely happy with" he went back to the drawing board for *Close To The Edge*. "I wanted a kind of a universal Yes logo."

He got it after doodling a sketch in his notepad and showing it to the band – and the latest Yes album's logo is still based on the original version.

With the Asia logo, things were very different.

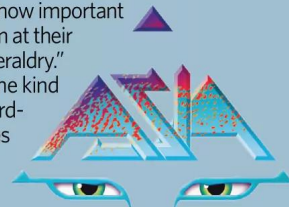
"When Asia was created that the guys in the band – especially the guys that weren't from Yes – didn't want a Yes lookalike."

So much so, originally the decision had been taken to find someone else to design both their album covers and logo. "That was fine with me, but as Steve [Howe] was a friend I was in the studio with them when they were recording, so I saw what proposals they had. I said, 'You guys are still struggling for a cover.'"

They agreed and Dean came up with the spectacular 'dragon sleeve' for their self-titled debut 1982 album. "It was very much the sort of thing I would do, but I'd never do it for Yes." And the logo? As with Yes, this was actually Dean's second go at it. "The first design was like an Asian script but I had this one as a back-up." With its "very angular pyramidal shape, it was about as unlike Yes as you could get."

He describes the Asia logo as being something created "in three parts. It's a word done in a distinctive way, it's a heraldic device, and it's an overall shape. After the first album, it was combined with eyes, and was incorporated in the last album [in 2008] with the phoenix."

Hand-drawn, with the aid of ruler this time, what Dean likes best is being able to "ring many changes with it. I like it with the eyes." MW



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This Is A Journey Into Sound...

German electronic boffins **Tangerine Dream** navigated their Moog-powered voyage to the outer reaches via the UK pop charts. In 2010, Edgar Froese and Peter Baumann looked back at their strange trip.

Words: Rob Hughes. **Lead Image:** Michael Putland/Getty

It's April 1974 and *Melody Maker* can hardly believe the news: weirdo German eggheads Tangerine Dream are in the official Top 20 Album Chart with a strange piece of instrumental work called *Phaedra*. Its placing is even higher in the *Maker's* own listings. Not only are there no vocals, there are no hooks and precious little guitar. Instead there are Moogs, hulking great synths and 11-minute drones with titles like *Mysterious Semblance At The Strand Of Nightmares*. Affronted by such flagrant disregard for rock'n'roll protocol, the music weekly duly lays in. "As far as I'm concerned," wrote critic Steve Lake, "*Phaedra* is gutless and spineless, devoid of inspiration, imagination or plain old-fashioned funk. But maybe a few hundred thousand potential record buyers can't be wrong." He went on to compare Tangerine Dream's history to "a B-Movie script. It's all the brainchild of Edgar Froese, a failed heavy guitarist."

Such journalistic venom was common. It was, lest we forget, the era of David Essex, ABBA and The Wombles. Alice Cooper was still considered edgy. To most ears, the music of Tangerine Dream seemed as forbiddingly foreign as it was unfathomable. Which is all well and good when nobody's buying your records, but now they were a success. "We didn't have a great open-minded crowd in our early days," Froese tells *Prog* today. "There was a rejection attitude all the way through 'til we reached Number 10 with *Phaedra* on

the *Melody Maker* charts. I remember the first ever LP review in Britain was half a page in *Melody Maker*. Steve Lake opened the review with the headline 'Eat more shit – 100,000 flies can't be wrong.' But that was our breakthrough into the international market, even if Lake would have done everything to protect the market from the 'German knob-turners'. He hated us."

Fellow band member Peter Baumann, on the line from his home in California, recalls that same review. "I remember that '100,000 flies' line well," he says with a faint chuckle. "When Virgin picked up *Phaedra* we had chart success. But there were obviously still a lot of people saying, 'What the hell is that?'"

Tangerine Dream were already used to all that though. They had started out in Berlin in 1967, when Froese corralled some fellow Academy Of Arts students into forming an experimental rock band to play parties and happenings. They became known in Berlin underground circles, once performing for German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys. Salvador Dalí saw them too, inviting them over to play at his villa in Cadaques, Spain. He was intrigued by what he called this "rotten religious music". Froese and Dalí became friends for a time, though their artistic and political beliefs weren't always mutually sympathetic. "During one of our longer conversations in his olive garden in Cadaques," explains Froese, "Dalí was saying that he decided to be against everything the public like and adore. So if the masses



Tangerine Dream chill out in London, 1974. (l-r) Christopher Franke, Peter Baumann, Edgar Froese.



I AM CURIOUS ORANGE

How Tangerine Dream branched out.

Tangerine Dream emerged from Berlin's Zodiac Free Arts Lab in the late 60s. It was there that Edgar Froese hooked up with Klaus Schulze – erstwhile drummer in a freakoid rock combo by the name of Psy Free – and fellow musician Conrad Schnitzler. When Schulze left the band in 1970, he founded electronic pioneers Ash Ra Tempel. The group format didn't suit him though. By 1972 he was releasing solo albums, beginning with *Irrlicht*, a work now considered a foundation stone of the proto-ambient scene. Schulze is many things – musician, composer, performer, producer and label owner – and has recorded over 60 albums since then. His latest is *Big In Japan: Live In Tokyo 2010*.

For a short spell Schulze and his Ash Ra buddies shared a freeform improv band, *Eruption*, with Schnitzler. But the latter's immediate concern, post-Tangerine Dream, was indistro-experimentalist outfit, Kluster. Schnitzler, often referred to as the Godfather of European Electronic Music, truly found his forte as a solo artist, issuing a prolific spate of albums that continues to this day. Famously reclusive, the travel-shy Schnitzler once devised an elaborate means for his music to tour, without need of him being there. Breaking down his compositions into individual tracks and recording them onto cassette tapes, these were then played together. Using different start times and manipulation of separate components, the idea was that no performance would ever be the same. His philosophy was simple. "Make horrible noises with instruments and microphones and echo-machines," he told interviewer Carlos M Pozo in 1998. "Just do it and produce as much noise as you want. If you organise this noise it's not just pure chaos. It can grow into music." **RH**

like democracy he stands for dictatorship and the other way round. 'If you're a divine individual, you have to think and behave outside every rule the Bourgeoisie tries to dictate,' he explained in his mixture of Catalan, English and French.

"As an artist and cosmopolitan being, he was absolutely fascinating. On August 8 1967, we performed *The Resurrection of Rotten Christianity – Music for a Sculpture*. It took place at a happening in the olive garden behind his home and atelier in front of a sculpture built out of Coca-Cola cans, some flotsam he found in the sea and olive tree branches."

Froese readily acknowledges the influence of Dalí on his music. Suddenly, everything was possible. He decided to "do the same thing as he did in painting, in music." Tangerine Dream's debut LP, *Electronic Meditation*, arrived in 1970. Froese's partners at that point were Klaus Schulze and Conrad Schnitzler, who joined him in freeform experiments with tape collage, percussion and rock guitar. When his bandmates left for pastures new, Froese brought in fresh blood, including drummer, flautist and synth player Christopher Franke. This marked a crucial shift in emphasis. The following year's *Alpha Centauri* was more reliant on electronica and keyboards, prompting Froese to dub this new adventure in sound 'kosmische musik'. The band took on its definitive form later that year with the arrival of 18-year-old Baumann.

It was a time of sweeping innovation in the German music scene. There was the esoteric, through-a-hedge-backwards rock of Can and Faust, the post-hippie imaginings of Amon Düül, the gliding electro pulse of Kraftwerk and the cosmic wanderlust of Ash Ra Tempel, to name but a few. Did Tangerine



Fab gear: Tangerine Dream with their synths.

Dream feel part of all that? "Not at all," says Baumann. "The Amon Düül guys and the Kraftwerk guys felt like they were all isolated. We were totally self-absorbed. There wasn't much hanging out at all."

Froese has a slightly different angle, suggesting that, even among the marginal so-called 'krautrock' clique, Tangerine Dream were outsiders: "There was a strong musical community in Germany during that period, but we weren't a part of it. We couldn't even invite others for a jam session, or jam around with others, because when we were switching on the knobs everybody became very suspicious. It was as if we were just starting a rocket for a one-way space exploration. There was one experience during a gig in Berlin with Amon Düül II. Before we started I gave the keynote of our philosophy by saying: 'Dear friends, it's December 6 1971 at 8pm in the city of West Berlin. Please be kind enough to improvise with us in a way that never can be repeated.' They stared at me as if I had taken my head off and put it under my arm."

But Tangerine Dream didn't need anyone's blessing. "It was strange," recalls Baumann. "When the three of us were together, it felt like there was a fourth person there, a fourth energy. It was unique. We felt like we didn't have personal profiles, we were a unit. We'd get together and stay up all night and listen to music – from Italian classical music to the first Pink Floyd record. We never watched TV; we'd just hang out, smoke a joint and listen to music until the early hours of the morning."

By 1973 they had a strong cult following. Their music was now a pioneering mix of synthetic textures and ambient moods. Their prime European stronghold was the UK, where John Peel had declared *Atem*, the Dream's fourth LP, his album of the year. Richard Branson's fledgling Virgin label – then specialising in imports from the continent – sold more than 15,000 Tangerine Dream albums, largely on the strength of Peel's repeated airplay. It swiftly led to the offer of a record contract, with Froese,



Peter Baumann today: "It wasn't fun anymore."

Franke and Baumann inking the deal on the stairs of Branson's Virgin Records shop in Notting Hill. It was the beginning of a fruitful, if slightly unconventional, relationship. The courtship involved games of chess on Branson's houseboat ('he lost three and won two against me,' says Froese) and, in Baumann's words, "chasing girls and playing tennis at his house. It was hot, so we'd just play in our underwear."

Then there was the time the band went to renegotiate their deal. "We went to a building in Vernon Yard, just off Portobello Road," remembers Baumann. "And Richard Branson was in the first office. We negotiated our contract, then suddenly he jumped out of the window. Somewhere he managed to find crutches and came back walking on them, pretending he was injured, that it was all over and he would have to close the offices. That he just couldn't deal with us anymore. We had a strange reputation; we really were seen as 'the Krauts' at Virgin – we made bizarre music and had strange accents. We were like the weird kids on the block. Quite frankly, Richard didn't have a clue why anyone would want to listen to our music. He wasn't really a music fan. He liked the



Tangerine Dream: blanket coverage at the Royal Albert Hall, June 7, 1976.



Forever in electric dreams: Edgar Froese, 2007.

"We never watched TV. We'd just hang out, smoke a joint and listen to music until morning." **Peter Baumann**

noise and the idea of doing big things, but he didn't have the nerve or the patience to sit down and listen to our records."

It was nevertheless a successful time for both parties. *Phaedra* was groundbreaking in its ambition and scope, the trio using Moogs and sequencers to sculpt a symphonic world of cosmic trance. "It goes back to my early years as a pupil of classical music, when I realised that everything in musical structure is bass-oriented," explains Froese. "We were the first band to ever use the Moog modular system as a standalone sequencer. The programming of those [*Phaedra*] sequences was time-consuming but it gave the endless freedom to improvise on top of those basslines. Without exaggerating our musical capabilities, we were very much ahead of our time."

1975's pulsating *Rubycon* offered much of the same, albeit with more of a groove. That

too was a commercial success, peaking at Number 12 in the UK album chart. But live gigs were a different matter. Tangerine Dream would later incorporate laser projections and the odd burst of pyrotechnics into their shows, but those early 70s audiences were often baffled by the band's improvised musical excursions into anti-rock. The faithful lapped it up, of course, but there were also frequent walkouts and abuse.

"We were never physically attacked, but we were attacked mentally and emotionally very often," says Froese. "The mass audience was and still is kind of an unconscious animal who never would leave home without a guaranteed safe return. As far as our early performances are concerned, the stage after a performance looked like a weekly vegetable market rather than a concert stage. People had fun throwing bad

apples and bananas towards our early electronic gear and were laughing their asses off. You need a lot of trust in your beliefs and even more patience that one day it will be over. And I was right, fortunately. The worst and most intolerant country was, and still is, my homeland in Germany."

The classic Tangerine Dreamteam lasted until 1977, when Baumann left the band after he had performed a very offensive and egocentric affair about developing his solo career after our two US tours in 1977. Also my relationship with Christopher Franke was quite strained."

Froese, for his part, states that "I had to ask Peter Baumann to leave the band after he had performed a very offensive and egocentric affair about developing his solo career after our two US tours in 1977. Also my relationship with Christopher Franke was quite strained."

When Franke finally quit 10 years later, Froese pressed on, releasing a dizzying array of solo albums and soundtracks alongside stewardship of Tangerine Dream, where he remains today. But it's those Virgin albums of the 70s – reissued now by EMI – that showcase the band at its peak.

"We were always on the lookout for anything that made noise," reflects Baumann. "I mean, I was crushing glasses against the wall and recording that before the synthesizer came along. It was all about sound and exploration." 🎧

From Thrash To
Prog: Canadian
pioneers Voivod.



BERTRAND ALARY/PHOTOSHOT/VALON

THE BIRTH OF PROG METAL

Many assume that progressive music was going through something of a lull in the 1980s. But over in the US and Canada, a new, exciting scene was bubbling into existence. *Prog* goes in deep on the history of **progressive metal**...

Words: Dave Everley

Voivod drummer Michel 'Away' Langevin remembers the first night his band opened for Rush. It was March 20, 1990, in Edmonton, Alberta, and the iconic Canadian trio were touring their home country in support of *Presto*, a record that found them gently rowing back from the synth-heavy furrow they'd been pursuing during the previous decade.

By contrast, Voivod were heading in the opposite direction, relatively speaking. The Quebec quartet had begun life as a primitive thrash metal band, all white hi-top sneakers and flailing hair. But their recent albums

"That was a huge moment for us," says Away now. "Rush were so influential. The fact that the drummer wrote the lyrics and the concepts was big for me. And Alex Lifeson was one of [Voivod's then-six-stringer] Piggy's favourite guitarists."

But there was much more significance to that bottle of bubbly than just the best wishes of one of prog rock's great bands. Consciously or not, it was a baton being handed down from one generation to the next — an acknowledgement that the future, or one strand of it, belonged to Voivod and their ilk.

Voivod's support slot with Rush was one of the key stepping stones in the upward

"We wanted to take the music as far as it would go, take the instruments as far as they would go, take the composition to extremes." **Mike Portnoy**

had seen them introducing more complex musical and lyrical themes into their music. Their latest, the previous year's prog metal landmark *Nothingface*, had even included a cover of Pink Floyd's space cadet anthem *Astronomy Domine* — something that would have been unthinkable for their 80s thrash contemporaries Metallica or Slayer to do.

As Away and his bandmates walked backstage that first night, they found a bottle of champagne waiting for them. Accompanying it was a note signed by Rush's Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart wishing them luck.

trajectory of prog metal, a genre that had risen from nothing in a handful of unconnected hotspots across North America less than a decade before to become an emerging musical force. There was Watchtower from Texas and Fates Warning from Connecticut, Queensrÿche from Seattle and Crimson Glory from Florida. And there was a band named Majesty from Boston, who had recently changed their name to Dream Theater and would eventually go on to be the most successful of them all.

Charlie Griffiths, guitarist with British prog metallers Haken, is a diehard fan of the

early prog metal pioneers. "The music I hear in my head is definitely shaped by those early formative years listening to bands like Watchtower and Fates Warning," he says. "They were totally ahead of their time."



Contrary to received wisdom, prog wasn't on the ropes in the 1980s — it was evolving. As Genesis, Yes, Rush and the other giants of the previous decade dressed themselves up in pop drag and reinvented themselves, a group of British diehards were marrying the old values to new ones under the banner of 'neo-prog'.

But the most interesting grassroots developments were happening in the US, in the unlikely confines of the heavy metal scene. Talking to the prime movers of the nascent prog metal movement three and a half decades on, it becomes clear that it was as much a product of coincidence as it was forward-thinking.

"We were just filling a void," says former Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy. "We wanted to take the music as far as it would go, take the instruments as far as they would go, take the composition to extremes. If we thought there was a gap, we knew there had to be an audience for it."

The idea of progressive rock and heavy metal coming together wasn't new. Rush and Yes played to as many long-haired, denim-clad rockers as they did professorial prog fans, while young bands such as Iron Maiden

Connecticut's
Fates Warning.

were prog connoisseurs underneath the denim and leather, their record collections filled with Jethro Tull and Gentle Giant albums alongside Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin.

But by the early 80s, metal was accelerating, literally and philosophically. Proponents and fans alike were more interested in speed, heaviness and outrageousness than they were musical complexity. In the US, 1982 saw the birth of the thrash metal movement, in which everything was sacrificed on the altar of velocity.

"It wasn't like you had to keep quiet about your love of progressive rock," says Jim Matheos, guitarist and linchpin with prog metal pioneers Fates Warning. "We were totally open about it. But there was definitely a slump in interest in prog at that time among rock musicians. People were more into the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal."

Matheos founded Fates Warning in Hartford, Connecticut with original vocalist John Arch in 1982. They took their influences from both sides of the musical coin: in their heads, Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Danish occultists Mercyful Fate happily co-existed with prime Genesis, Jethro Tull and Yes.

Fates Warning's first album, 1984's *Night On Bröcken*, was standard issue 80s heavy metal, distinguished only by John Arch's helium-pitch vocals — a characteristic shared by many of the prog metal bands who followed.

"The first record stands alone — there's a lot of the Maiden influences there," says Matheos. "But after that we became more confident as musicians, we became better writers. We

wanted to expand our sound a little bit. We wanted to challenge ourselves as musicians and as listeners."

By their second and third albums, 1985's *The Spectre Within* and the following year's *Awaken The Guardian*, Fates Warning were beginning to shake off their rudimentary musical approach. The songs were becoming bolder and more complex, wearing their progressive influences on their denim jacket sleeves. It was the sound of a band liberating themselves.

"I don't think we felt like we were being held back by anything," says Matheos. "It was the whole experience of exploring new things, especially when you're that age."

The period between 1982 and 1985 represented the first stirrings of what would go on to become progressive metal.

"We were aware of something because we subscribed to all the magazines," says Matheos. "But at the same time, coming from where we did in the backwoods of Connecticut, we were isolated from the whole thing too. That drove what we were doing. We didn't want to get folded in with the rest of them."

Nearly 2,000 miles away in Austin, Texas, another group of like-minded musicians were thinking exactly the same thing. Watchtower had been put together by Rick Colaluca, bassist Doug Keyser, guitarist Billy White and singer Jason McMaster in 1982 — coincidentally the same year as Fates Warning.

The two bands didn't become aware of each other until much later, but there are vivid parallels to their stories. Like

their north-eastern counterparts, the members of Watchtower grew up listening to contemporary rock and metal outfits like KISS, Aerosmith, Iron Maiden and the emerging NWOBHM bands before gravitating to the more challenging end of the prog spectrum: King Crimson, Van der Graaf Generator, Frank Zappa.

"When we started, it wasn't really a conscious decision to do what we ended up doing," says Rick Colaluca. "It wasn't like, 'Okay, we're going to do all this technical math stuff.' It was more, 'We love this heavy, fast stuff and we love this other, more complicated stuff — let's do something different and incorporate both parts.'"

Like Fates Warning, Watchtower started out as a route-one heavy metal band but rapidly became something else. Between 1982 and the release of their debut album, 1985's remarkable *Energetic Disassembly*, they didn't so much jettison their heavy metal beginnings as warp them out of recognition. Marrying the velocity and violence of the newly birthed thrash metal scene to the complexity of prog and jazz rock, they forged an unlikely missing link between Metallica and Mahavishnu Orchestra. Even more than Fates Warning, Watchtower were a band ahead of their time.

"Once we latched on to the concept of what we wanted to do with our music, we were just driven to do it," says Colaluca. "It wasn't about competing with anyone or trying to outdo anyone. It was just about doing the same thing we all seemed to be of the same mindset about, and we pressed forward with it."

Austin had long garnered a reputation as a hothouse for mavericks, and Watchtower's horizon-expanding approach was embraced by the city's rock community. It helped that their shows were visual spectacles, more in tune with the frantic energy release of thrash metal than prog's studied musicianship.

"For some people, progressive rock is boring and kind of stuffy live: 'Okay, we're going to be this perfect thing,'" says Colaluca. "We decided to lay it all on the line and go crazy. If we made mistakes here or there, fine.

"There wasn't really any great collective of people demanding a sound that mixed progressive rock and heavy metal. So we weren't consciously aiming ourselves at them. We weren't aiming ourselves at anyone." **Jim Matheos**



Queensrÿche in 1983. L-R: Eddie Jackson, Geoff Tate, Chris DeGarmo, Scott Rockenfield (back), Michael Wilton.

When we were hitting on all cylinders, it was a fucking thing of beauty. It wasn't just out there playing a record. It was like, 'Holy fuck, that was fucking awesome.'"

Having built up a loyal following in Austin, Watchtower began to venture further afield, testing the water for their new prog metal hybrid.

"Most of the other bands we played with were straightforward metal bands and there were some people who just didn't get it," says Colaluca. "It felt like we were definitely out there on our own."

Half a continent away, Fates Warning were going about things in a different way. They found it harder to play gigs — partly because of their geographical location, tucked away in the north-eastern corner of the US, but partly because, unlike their southern counterparts, no one knew quite what to make of them.

"We didn't really do a proper tour until 1988," says Matheos. "Before that, we would

play local gigs, go to New York, maybe play as far out as Cleveland, but we were really doing 10, 12, 15 gigs a year for the first three or four years of this band's existence. When we did tour, we'd get paired up with some odd groups — Motörhead or Anthrax. People were a little bit baffled by us."

Instead, they existed on the record sales that came on the back of the buzz built via appearances in heavy metal magazines such as *Kerrang!*. But the prog community, such as it was, seemed largely oblivious to their existence.

"There wasn't really any great collective of people demanding a sound that mixed progressive rock and heavy metal," says Matheos. "So we weren't consciously aiming ourselves at them. We weren't aiming ourselves at anyone."

One person who was paying attention was a teenage New Yorker named Mike Portnoy,

a precociously talented drummer and rapacious devourer of new music. Portnoy had put together his own band, Majesty, at the Berklee College Of Music with guitarist John Petrucci and bassist John Myung. They shared a vision of uniting the prog music they'd been weaned on in the 70s with metal's contemporary new styles.

"At that time the pure prog scene was pretty much non-existent," says Portnoy today. "I was missing those kinds of bands, but I was also a full-on metalhead into Slayer and Exodus and all that stuff. When I met the other guys, we all wanted to combine the two things, like a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup."

Portnoy was heavily involved in the thrash metal tape-trading scene — a pre-internet network of fans swapping new music via the post. "I knew of Fates Warning and Watchtower and Crimson Glory and all those kinds of bands because of tape trading," says Portnoy today. "I remember Watchtower's first American tour — a couple of the guys stayed at my house. They were like Rush on steroids. I went to see Fates Warning whenever they came to New York."

As Majesty's de facto manager, he was the one who would send out their own tapes to promoters, labels and other bands. One of these, the semi-legendary Majesty Demos, came into the hands of Jim Matheos.

"Oh, I totally heard the potential," says Matheos. "I knew something was going to happen. I listened to their tape over and over again. I was amazed at what they were doing. And I was a huge fan of Voivod, who were already putting out albums. Especially the guitar playing."

Like Fates Warning and Watchtower, Voivod came from a metal background, but the Canadians' transition was an even bigger jump. Their debut album, 1984's *War And Pain*, was a brutal, punk-influenced assault, and the follow-up, *Rrröööaaarr*, was only marginally more refined. By the time of 1987's *Killing Technology*, though, they were beginning to incorporate more complex musical explorations in their thrashy sound, while a central concept themed around an intergalactic warlord would provide an overarching narrative not just for the album but for their entire career.

It was no coincidence that Voivod had toured the US with Swiss avant-gardists Celtic Frost a year earlier, and the opening band in Austin was Watchtower.

"They were one of the first thrash bands I'd seen playing prog rock," says Away, who grew up listening to VdGG and King Crimson.

It was an approach that Voivod themselves began to take onboard, inspired partly by their own developing musical skills.

"Between 1983 and 1988 we rehearsed every single night," Away says.

"We were ready to add a little bit more of the prog rock thing into our music. When we toured in 1987, we noticed the metal audiences were a little puzzled by our style."

Voivod's new approach reached fruition on 1988's



Dream Theater with new singer James LaBrie (centre).



VILLALONGA/PHOTO SHOT/AVALON

Dimension Hatröss, a fully fledged prog metal concept album. Jettisoning the 100mph thrashings of old, its complex musicality, shifting rhythms and science fiction leaning positioned the Canadians as the Van der Graaf Generator of metal. Its follow-up, 1989's *Nothingface*, was even more assured, ramping up the prog aspects and throwing in a cover of *Astronomy Domine*, just in case anyone hadn't got the message.

"1989 and 1990 were great for us," says Away. "The video for *Astronomy Domine* had a lot of airplay on MTV, we got offered big tours with bands like Rush and the album sold quite a lot. To us, it felt like justification that what we were doing musically was right."

In New York, Mike Portnoy wasn't having as much luck. His band had changed their name from Majesty to Dream Theater and signed a deal with major label offshoot Mechanic Records, who released their debut album, 1989's *When Dream And Day Unite*. That record — featuring singer Charlie Dominici — was a fine calling card, tempering its intricate metal riffing with swathes of keyboards.

The band had, not unfairly, been marketed as "Metallica meets Rush" — only the masses weren't quite ready for that combination yet, and the record sank without trace.

"We never went on tour, never made a music video, which was absolutely crucial back then," says Portnoy. "We were watching Voivod and Queensrÿche doing

really well and going, 'Wait a minute, we're different but not that different.' We started to get discouraged."

Rather than quitting, the band doubled down on their initial gameplan. They fired Dominici and spent the next two years working on the music for what would become their breakthrough album, *Images And Words*.

"We were working day jobs every day, going to band practice every night, looking for a new singer, looking for a new record deal," says Portnoy. "It was a very hard time. I'm shocked we made it through. But we persevered and we finally got the payoff with *Images And Words*."

Released in 1992 and featuring new singer James LaBrie, *Images And Words* was more than just a lifeline for Dream Theater. The single *Pull Me Under* gave them a bona fide hit, dragging the album along in its wake.

"We were plastered all over radio and MTV with an eight-and-a-half-minute song," says Portnoy. "That hadn't happened since the days of Yes and ELP in the 70s."

Dream Theater had finally blown the doors off, allowing prog metal to step through into the mainstream. The only problem was that many of their peers either weren't ready or weren't able to step through with them. Voivod had faltered with *Angel Rat*, the follow-up to *Nothingface*. A shifting line-up and lack of laser-sharp ambition meant that Fates Warning had never made the leap from cult to

mainstream acceptance. And Watchtower — the band who brought together prog and metal like no one else — had simply fallen apart after their astonishing second album, 1989's *Control And Resistance*.

"We took four years between albums, which didn't help us," says Watchtower's Colaluca. "But we had line-up problems and we just hit a barrier so we decided to shut the whole thing down. We did continue writing piecemeal after that, but real life got in the way."

"Watchtower are the band from that scene that should have made it," says Portnoy. "They were the most extreme ones from that genre. And Fates Warning too — as well as they did, they should have had the success Dream Theater had, especially with the *Parallels* album, which came out about a year before *Images And Words*."

"Maybe there were missed opportunities back then," says Fates Warning's Matheos. "I don't know why the guys from Dream Theater became superstars and we didn't. But they were an amazing band, and they worked hard and deserved it."

Dream Theater and Queensrÿche — whose 1988 album *Operation: Mindcrime* remains a landmark of the genre — may have been the only two bands to have emerged from prog metal's primordial soup who went on to genuine success, but the legacy of those early innovators resonates down the years. It's there in everyone from Meshuggah — who have taken Watchtower's prog thrash to sometimes unfeasible new levels of extremity and complexity — to new-school heroes





Watchtower: the great forgotten band of prog metal.

PRESS

"It wasn't like, 'Okay, we're going to do all this technical math stuff.' It was more, 'We love this heavy, fast stuff and we love this other, more complicated stuff – let's do something different and incorporate both parts.'" **Rick Colaluca**

such as Leprous, Between The Buried And Me and Haken.

"When I think about how they recorded all those parts without all the computer and studio tools we have today, it blows my mind," says Haken's Charlie Griffiths. "When Haken played Prog Power USA last year, Fates Warning played the *Awaken The Guardian* album with the original line-up, so it was a real 'full circle' kind of feeling."

Today, Dream Theater remain the flag-bearers for the original prog metal scene, though they don't stand alone. Despite having gone through many ups and downs, Voivod have

continued to innovate and the Canadians are set to release a new album this year. Fates Warning still put out albums and play live on a semi-regular basis, while Watchtower reunited and have released a slow but steady drip of songs this decade, culminating in 2016's *Concepts Of Math* EP.

"I don't want to say Dream Theater created a new market, because bands like Fates Warning, Watchtower and Voivod were all doing it before us," reflects Mike Portnoy. "But I think collectively we all definitely created something that did change music and kept prog's spirit alive in a radically different form." 



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PROG METAL



Fates Warning – *Awaken The Guardian* (1986)

The Connecticut pioneers' third album was the one where they truly came into their own. "We reached a peak with that one," says guitarist Jim Matheos. "It's innovative and musical and somewhat commercial."



Queensrÿche – *Rage For Order* (1986)

Operation: Mindcrime two years later was their magnum opus, but *Rage For Order* was arguably more revolutionary at the time: laser-tooled art rock that predicted a bleak digital future in which no one comes out on top.



Voivod – *Dimension Hatröss* (1988)

The one-time thrash savages reached full prog metal velocity on their fourth album, a dizzying, juddering behemoth as fearsome as the intergalactic warlord that gave the band their name.



Metallica – *...And Justice For All* (1988)

The metal giants' fourth album tore up their thrash metal blueprint in favour of complex time changes and long songs. The most commercially successful prog metal album, even if no one admits that it is one.



Crimson Glory – *Transcendence* (1988)

They started out as a Queensrÿche knock-off, but by their second album, they'd found their own voice. *Transcendence* was prog at its most vaulting and operatic.



Watchtower – *Control And Resistance* (1989)

Their debut album sounded like nothing else before it, but the Austin visionaries followed it up with something even greater. Prog thrash, math metal – call it you want, but its echoes still resonate today.



Dream Theater – *When Dream And Day Unite* (1989)

They went on to bigger things, but DT's debut album remains both a prog metal benchmark and a cult classic.



Sieges Even – *Steps* (1990)

Watchtower's influence was under the radar at the time, but those who caught on really picked it up and ran with it – none more so than Germany's Sieges Even, whose complex thrash made them sound like the Texans' European cousins.



Atheist – *Unquestionable Presence* (1991)

By the turn of the 90s, even death metallers were getting with the programme, including Florida's Atheist, who folded elements of prog, jazz and the technical brilliance of bassist Tony Choy into the mix.



Cynic – *Focus* (1993)

After Watchtower, Cynic were arguably the apex of prog metal's early incarnation – their debut was technically astounding without losing any of its razor-edged heaviness. A real tipping point. **DEV**

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PROG

The New Generation

A thrilling new wave of musicians such as Opeth, Anathema and Big Big Train have ensured prog is stronger and healthier than it has been in decades. These are the bands proudly carrying the genre forward into the future...

When modern progressive giants **Opeth** celebrated their 25th anniversary in 2015, we thought there was no better way to celebrate than to join the Swedes on the journey to their very first live performance with a full-blown orchestra, and to get the inside story on all things Opeth, from their tumultuous history to a bright future...

Words: Isere Lloyd-Davis

Images: Stuart Wood

Briskily ushered out into the blackened night, carrying what seems like an endless procession of heavy equipment and instrument cases, the motley crew of darkly dressed characters with whom we are about to share a three-day adventure gather into a pack of first-time greetings and friendly embraces.

Prog's most intimate journalistic journey with Opeth yet begins in

a humid Bulgarian car park amid a scattering of empty airport trolleys and road dirt. And before we know it, keyboard player and latest Opeth recruit Joakim Svalberg snakes a conspiratorial arm around our shoulder and asks with a wry smile: "Do you like beer?" And we're off...

It's been 25 years since frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt joined Opeth and turned them into the musical marvel they are today — a convention-



THE GRAND- CONJUR

breaking collaboration of ideas, based on a profound passion for music and proficient musicianship, as testified through the band's impressive 11 prog metal albums.

Akerfeldt admits: "When you say it's been 25 years, it makes it sound old and veteran-like, but physically I don't feel old, and as a band we collectively do not feel old. Right now we are not rehashing anything and we don't feel nostalgic. We are not trying to

recapture the spirit of the old days but if I look back and think of what we did 25 years ago when I was only 16, then yes, I guess it feels like a long time."

Prog gets packed into an airtight van amid the band, crew, concert gear and tour manager, where beers are cheered and heads nod appreciatively to *Sad Wings Of Destiny* by Judas Priest, which is playing on the portable stereo. Conversely, this album is somewhat linked to Opeth, as it was recorded in

Rockfield Studios in Wales. Forty years on, this was the same place Opeth recorded their most recent album, 2014's *Pale Communion*. "The crew do everything with the band," adds charming guitarist Fredrik Åkesson as the Bulgarian countryside rolls by. "We are like a family and we want you to feel included."

Between laughter and cigarette breaks, there's a sense of excitement all around as no one knows what is to

Opeth, exclusively shot for Prog, September 2015, in Plovdiv.



ration



"The recording process for the band has been the most fun it has ever been with this current line-up – I was able to lean back and enjoy it while drinking wine."

The Drapery Falls to reveal Opeth at their best.



come of this exotic voyage. For the first time in the band's career, they will be playing a concert with a full orchestra, the Plovdiv Philharmonic, and a choir, in a dramatic venue: the Ancient Theater, Plovdiv.

It's an exciting time for the band, but much like the bumpy road to our hotel through Balkan no-man's land, Opeth's path was not always a smooth one. The latest line-up could easily be described as their most stable yet. After a tumultuous start and multiple member changes, Åkerfeldt has found the most musical stability since he first joined the band in 1990.

Blurred lines: the most "fun" line-up of Opeth yet share a laugh.



"I think other bands in Sweden at the time thought we were shit because of the first Opeth singer David Isberg's reputation," Åkerfeldt remembers of the early days. "Although we hadn't done that many shows, the ones that we did were not a success at all..."

Åkerfeldt met Isberg at the heart of the emerging death metal scene in Sweden when he was a young teenager. "David was the boss, even though he was a year younger than me," says Åkerfeldt. "We first met through skateboarding and because we went to the same school. I was into Scorpions and he was into heavier stuff like punk, hardcore and grindcore. Those were terms I had never even heard of until I met him, so I guess it's thanks to him that I discovered heavier music."

"He always used to call me a poser because of the fact I didn't listen to music that was heavy enough for his taste," Åkerfeldt admits. "Even though we didn't really get on, he did make me discover different music and I would absorb everything he showed me like a sponge."

Åkerfeldt's first interaction with the band Opeth, meanwhile, started off

awkwardly. "David was having issues with his band and then he said that he was going to fire the bass player," explains Åkerfeldt. "David could do this because he was the boss, like a kind of Jon Bon Jovi or something! So he told me to show up at the rehearsal where he was going to fire this bass player and I would replace him."

"I didn't really want to play bass, but I really liked the band's logo and the devil imagery so I thought, 'Why not?' When I got there, everyone was looking at me like, 'Who the hell is that guy?' The whole band started to have a massive argument, which basically

resulted in David firing everyone in the band! I was still waiting outside while all of this was happening and when he finally came out, he said, 'I've fired everyone – what do you say you and me are Opeth from now on?' So luckily I never had to play bass and went straight to guitar!

"The two of us were writing songs and looking for other musicians, but he had a bad reputation so I was the one bringing in musicians, including my bandmates from Eruption [Åkerfeldt's first group, a five-piece death metal band]. This was going to be Opeth version 2.0."

"We started getting shows and about a year later we went on a ski trip in Zell Am See, but I don't remember doing any skiing because the trip was more

about drinking Stroh Rum, which is 90 per cent alcohol. What I do remember, however, is that David left the band while we were on the bus back home."

"I wasn't that displeased to be honest, because at that time we already started having a recognisable Opeth sound and I felt although his screams were good, his rhythm was bad and he did not fit in. This was when I became the singer of Opeth."

So began the band's journey in developing their unique sound, starting with 1995's *Orchid*. Åkerfeldt is adamant that Opeth's emergence from the genre stemmed from his wide interest in different kinds of music.

"I didn't even know that prog existed up until I heard Yes for the first time and I thought to myself that the album must only be an EP or something because it only had three songs," he says. "They were long tracks, with a beautiful dynamic and lots of acoustic parts, which I have always loved. From then on, I was really intrigued by the dynamics of symphonic rock and progressive music. I also loved the switch between styles. Some parts sounded a bit jazz; other bits were harder and had extracts of Renaissance music."

"I was always less impressed with the instrumental side of heavy stuff and more into the rawness of the music because I honestly didn't think those guys really knew how to play their instruments. For some reason, I always liked the screaming bits though, because they made me realise I could be a singer, even though I couldn't sing!"

"The first time we received any recognition was not until we released our first album with producer Dan Swanö," he continues, "who was blown away when we started playing. After we had just finished recording *Orchid*, a famous death metal band called Unanimated, of which drummer Peter Stjärnvind is a friend of mine, came into the studio after us. They laughed when Dan told them that Opeth had a record, but then when they heard it, they were in shock. In fact, he told me later that they had to have a band meeting afterwards to discuss what they had just heard!" he chuckles.

"There were no demos in those days, so the first thing you recorded was your first album and at the time there were no bands that sounded like us. We had long songs, no blast beats, lots of acoustic arrangements, clean vocals and harmonies."

"Despite the fact we had long songs, we didn't have anything that made us stick out because we didn't really have an identity yet. Along came Dream Theater, which was a new and



"David Isberg said: 'I've fired everyone – what do you say you and me are Opeth from now on?'"

modern band that sounded like what I wanted to do, but we were nowhere near that field of music because we were a death metal band. This is when things started to materialise for our band.”

After the success of 2001's *Blackwater Park*, their first album produced by Steven Wilson, Opeth embarked on a world tour in 2001. This period marked a crucial turning point for the band, in which their new-found success allowed Åkerfeldt to push the experimental boundaries even further by releasing two albums at the same time, one soft and one heavy. The titles given to both 2002's *Deliverance* and 2003's *Damnation* offered more than clever imagery as the recording experience proved to be the most challenging Opeth had ever endured, despite the triumphant acclaim the albums received upon release.

“Opeth's creative side has always been good and interesting, but other things have sometimes made the band difficult,” Åkerfeldt reminisces. “*Deliverance* and *Damnation* were difficult to record because of internal band shit. Without saying too much, there were things coming into the band that did not belong there...”

Åkerfeldt is alluding to the anxiety attacks that plagued him at the time, and of the substance abuse issues that would eventually see the departure of drummer Martin Lopez, who went on to form Soen. One wagers at the time that the band never expected they would be selling out the Royal Albert Hall 10 years later.

As Eurythmics plays on the kitchen radio in the background, a euphoric medley of red wine, whiskey and outlandish local dishes lie before us in the hotel restaurant in the early hours, fuelling the friendly and easy-going atmosphere among the band members. It's clear that Opeth's stellar reputation as a respectful, intelligent and approachable band is true. The deadpan Swedish sense of humour is evident and the conversation always revolves around music.

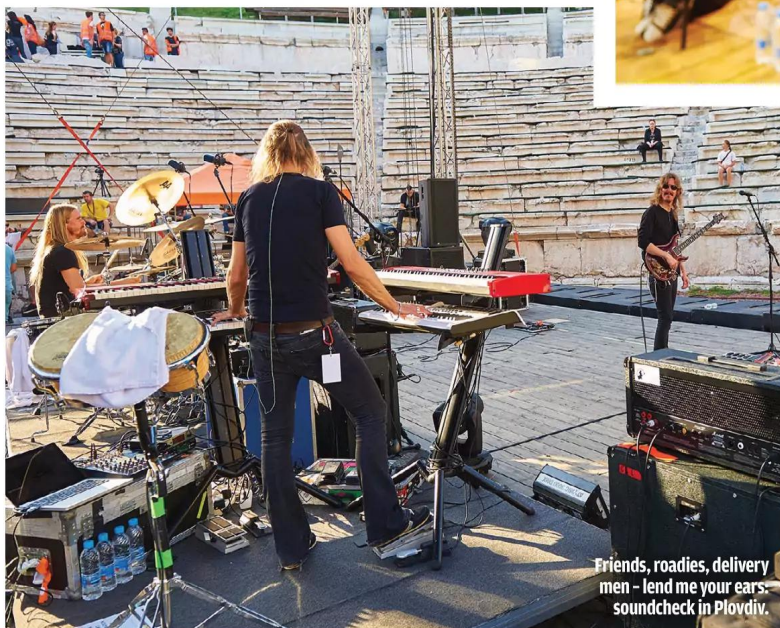
Today, they seem truly content. “I feel that the recording process for the band has been the most fun it has ever been with this current line-up and during the making of the last album, *Pale Communion*,” says Åkerfeldt. “It was really fun, and I realised that I had never had fun recording before that album. I always enjoyed working hard and seeing the music through tunnel vision, but it was never fun and I was dispensing an insane amount of energy.”

“For the latest album I was able to lean back and enjoy the process while drinking wine, beer, and it was all very chilled. I think this is because, if I may say so, we are such a good band together right now. There are some

Buzz conductor:
Åkerfeldt leads the band
and orchestra in an
electrifying rehearsal.

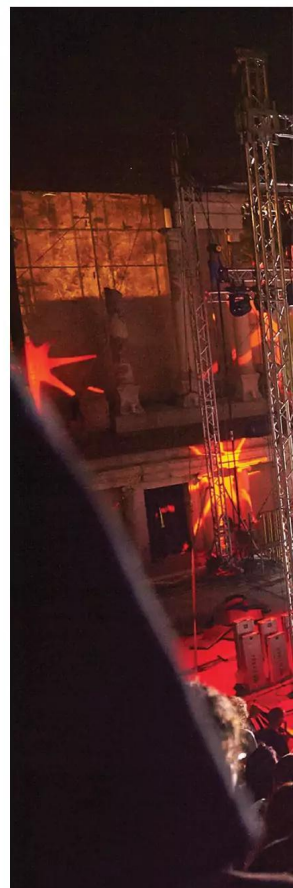


**Symphony for the
Devil's Orchard:**
rehearsal time.



**Friends, roadies, delivery
men - lend me your ears:
soundcheck in Plovdiv.**

**The band backstage
before their orchestral
extravaganza.**





seriously great musicians in this band and I am definitely the worst musician out of all of them!"

Opeth's second longest serving member, bassist Martin Mendez, who joined the band during the recording of *Still Life* in 1999, adds, "We were younger then and we have evolved as musicians today. We are a much better band now than we were 15 years ago."

As the sun rises high above the amphitheatre in Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city, Opeth are mid-rehearsal for the sold-out show they'll be playing in front of 4,000 fans. The calmness surrounding the band in the empty historic monument echoes the serene and psychedelic feel of Pink Floyd's 1972 film *Live At Pompeii*.



Opeth hanging out with a few friends at Plovdiv's Ancient Theater.

Opeth's live shows are one of the most impressive aspects of the band, as Åkerfeldt interacts with the crowd and proves his charm as a frontman. The intricate nature of Opeth's sound, combined with the simplicity of the vocals, fill the auditorium with enough emotion to make even the hardest of metalheads swoon.

The setlist for this show has been carefully selected to represent the band's full discography, featuring hits like *The Grand Conjunction*, *The Devil's Orchard*, *Demon Of The Fall*

and *Cusp Of Eternity*. Having heard these songs being played on a loop during rehearsals to achieve a perfect correlation between band and orchestra for the past two days results in an extraordinary live music experience.

The charismatic singer says: "The glitches that make a show bad, as opposed to good, are so tiny that it's usually only us that hear them. Generally we're a pretty consistent band when we play gigs so it's never a complete train wreck the whole way through. I absolutely love it when there's a total disaster and the live music is totally fucked. No one notices, but we're all looking at each other wondering what the hell we're doing. I love those moments because you have to find a way out of them and come back together, then once you do, it's like, 'High five, guys!'"

"On a scale of one to five, I would say that we're usually a three, and when it's a five, the whole band has to agree that it's a five. Out of 100 shows, that probably happens only once or twice."

As the audience give Opeth a standing ovation, the band crawl off the stage, exhausted. Åkerfeldt sits hidden behind a stone wall, drained but still feeling the after-effects of the show's adrenaline. He's clutching an envelope in his hand, a gift from a fan, which he opens. "He forgot to put my cheque in here," he laughs.

This incredible event marking 25 years of Opeth serves as the greatest assurance that the band are still making relevant, innovative and exciting music, while selling out concert halls and amphitheatres across the world. They remain one of the most captivating and successful prog bands in the modern music age.

Ultimately, Åkerfeldt explains what success means to him. "Our last album didn't sell as well as the one before, and of course you always care about selling albums and tickets to shows, but I don't care about any other kind of success. For me, we are truly successful when the five of us are able to write music that is relevant and that is good, as well as playing good shows. Doing a killer show means almost everything to us and we wouldn't have a career if nobody had listened to Opeth."

"At the end of the day, it's about the dynamics between the five of us, how we play live and what our records sound like — not album sales." ☎

Fan's-eye view: the band soundcheck in the historic setting.

Alright on the night: Opeth blow away the Plovdiv fans.

Dreaming Light

With their brilliant and groundbreaking 2017 album *The Optimist*, **Anathema** sealed their place at modern prog's top table. For brothers and bandmates Danny and Vinnie Cavanagh, it's been a rocky road to get there. *Prog* spoke to both brothers about the Liverpool group's past, present and future, from their turbulent childhood to the band's extreme metal past, to mental health issues and family conflict, to the creation of arguably their best album yet.

Words: Dave Everley **Studio Images:** Will Ireland

The day Anathema released their eleventh album, *The Optimist*, Danny and Vinnie Cavanagh were in different places. Not physically – the brothers were gearing up to play a show that evening in Russia, one of the many overseas strongholds their band has built up across their sometimes turbulent, frequently triumphant 28-year career.

But mentally, they were in separate headspaces. Danny, the band's guitarist and chief songwriter, was online, scanning reviews of the new album. He was keen to see what people were saying about an album that he had poured heart and soul into. Most of the notices were positive, but there were one or two bloggers who were unimpressed.

"Yeah, I looked to see what people were saying," he says, his Liverpool accent undimmed after several years of bouncing between other cities and other countries. "And anyone who doesn't like it, I think they're stupid. Because I know it's brilliant. But at the end of the day, there are far more important things in life. Like health, family, mental well-being. They're the things that really matter."

By contrast, Vinnie – Anathema's vocalist and guitarist, and Danny's younger brother by 10 months – wasn't remotely interested in what anyone else had to say. He knew the band had produced their best album yet, one that was simultaneously epic

and intimate, tumultuous and cathartic.

"I have a different outlook," he says. "No nerves. If I'm happy with a record, I'm bulletproof. We try to make albums that are a reflection of who we are and where we are and what we can do. If we can get that right, I'm happy. And I know we got it right."

That's as perfect a snapshot of the relationship at the heart of Anathema as you'll get. Danny is Anathema's emotional core, a man who wears his heart on his sleeve and gives the band the personal edge that many of their peers lack. Vinnie is the one who helps make those emotions real, the pragmatist who keeps things anchored, who holds things together when they threaten to fly apart (and they have threatened to fly apart more than once over the years).

It's a combination that has worked for them. *The Optimist* isn't just the best album in a career that has been marked with great records, but it's also the best album of the year according to our *Prog* Readers' Poll (see page 34).

But their journey hasn't been without its trials. There have been periods of personal and professional darkness, when it looked like they weren't going to make it through. *The Optimist* itself was born of a troubled time in Danny Cavanagh's life, though like the character at the centre of the record, both he and Anathema have emerged stronger and better.

"There's personal pain and anguish,

sure," says Danny. "It doesn't have to be about that. It can also be songs about gratitude for life – I've done them before. This one had that pain, cos the songs are all autobiographical. So if we're singing about being in *Springfield*, feeling lost, that's because I actually felt lost."

We're sitting in a pub in Paddington, just around the corner from the *Prog* offices. As we talk, Danny nurses a coffee. He gave up alcohol around 2005. "It was really easy," he says of the initial decision behind his abstinence. "I just decided to have a month off. I'm still living in that month."

Danny, Vinnie and co-vocalist Lee Douglas have just finished their photo shoot (the remaining three members of the band, drummer/keyboard player John Douglas, keyboard player Daniel Cardoso, plus Danny and Vinnie's younger brother, bassist Jamie Cavanagh, are absent). The guitarist recalls a moment during the shoot that struck a chord.

"There's one bit we did, a staged photo, where our hands are interlocked and Vinnie is pulling me up," he says. "He's literally done that at times in the past. John and Vinnie, they've saved my life. Where would I be without them?" He laughs. "And where would they be without me..."

The Optimist is a continuation of the events of 2001's *A Fine Day To Exit*, the album that found Anathema shaking off their extreme metal past, expanding their horizons and their

"We've always had fun, despite the hard times. You shouldn't think we've had years and years of misery, because it's not like that. We've had an incredible laugh."

Vinnie Cavanagh



ambitions. Its picks up where *AFDTE* left off, with its troubled central character dragging himself out of the sea where he'd planned to end it all, then charts his physical and mental journey from the brink of oblivion to some kind of redemption. Its central theme is bleak, undoubtedly, but there's hope in there too.

But *The Optimist* is really Danny Cavanagh's story. Its moments of darkness and moments of light reflect his own life. "I had a couple of dark years on a personal level," he says, then pauses. "It was a breakdown, basically. I was addicted to Valium, and it was

fucking horrible." He breathes deeply then exhales slowly. "That's the most candid thing I've ever said in an interview, it really is."

Danny says he doesn't want this to be "a depression interview". He's done a lot of those recently, especially on the back of his recent solo album, *Monochrome*. Still, it's hard to avoid the subject that weighs most heavily on *The Optimist*, and on Danny himself.

In the period between Anathema's last album, 2014's *Distant Satellites*, and the new record, Danny found himself struggling, mentally. He became a father for the first time just over four

years ago, and the combination of parental responsibilities and the pressures that come with being an ambitious musician began to take their toll.

"I had pretty permanent anxiety, I couldn't sleep, my mind was racing all the time," he says. "I got prescribed these pills, but instead of a week it was for a month. And then I stopped taking them, and it was even worse — there was a rebound. So I got some more. And that was it for a couple of years."

This wasn't the first time Danny has struggled with mental health issues. In the late 90s, he suffered an LSD and magic mushroom-induced breakdown. ("It was an accident, but it was horrendous," he says now.) But sleeping pills, he says, caused another level of anguish.

"It was the most addictive thing I've ever known," he says. "It never stops feeling good, but if you haven't got it, if you run out for a couple of days, it's fucking horrible. It's like having a mini-nervous breakdown."

He reached rock bottom in 2016. "I went to the doctor and said: 'This is happening, help me out,'" he says. The doctor gradually reduced his dose. "I just tapered off over the course of a few months," he said. "It got less and less, and it just stopped."

He broke free of his addiction around Christmas 2016. These days he's on anti-depressants, which help both his state of mind and his general levels of optimism. "Things have definitely taken a step in the right direction since then," he says. "Health and happiness is on the up. I feel much better, cleaner and leaner."

Vinnie Cavanagh can remember watching his brother going through his personal hell. Even though he was the younger of the two siblings, he says that he felt protective of Danny.

"There are no two brothers who are closer than Danny and I," he says. "So it was important for him to realise that I was there for him as a brother and as a mate before we even thought about doing music together."

It was music that helped set Danny on the road to wellness. In late 2015, at Vinnie's behest, the band's management cleared their touring and promo schedule. The singer then set up a studio for the pair to play music simply for the sake of playing music.

"It got him out of the house, it gave us something to do," says Vinnie. "Danny and I would meet up and have coffees and talk about everything. But actively working together as well, it was a form of therapy. And that was the beginning of *The Optimist*."

Prog is speaking to Vinnie a couple of days later, in a hip, concrete-chic café in East London, close to where his artist girlfriend has a studio. Where

Vinnie Cavanagh:
Anathema's frontman.
Or is he!?

"We try to make albums that are a reflection of who we are and where we are and what we can do. If we can get that right, I'm happy."

Vinnie Cavanagh

Danny is candid and unfiltered, Vinnie is serious and thoughtful. He chooses his answers carefully, though there's spikiness just below the surface (his response to whether he's planning a solo album is an amusingly sharp: "You'll know about it when I'm ready. Until then it's none of your business.").

When asked to describe his brother's strengths, Danny doesn't even pause to think: "Vinnie's got insight, intelligence. He's pragmatic and practical. He's caring and loyal. He's talented and supportive. And he's daft and funny. He's fucking amazing."

"I'm just a brother, mate," says Vinnie with a shrug, when it's brought up. "Just a good brother. I hope I am, anyway, to both of them. And to my friends as well."

Vinnie concedes that he's less emotional than his older brother, and he's managed to avoid the mental health issues that have plagued Danny. "I've always been the strong type — more self-reliant and self-contained," he says. "Danny lives and breathes music, it's in his every pore, it's in his soul, and I'm the guy who facilitates it because I've got the studio. He's sitting there, recording bits on his phone, but they're going to stay on his phone unless he comes and meets me and I go, 'Right, let's do something...'"

The Cavanaghs' closeness isn't surprising. They have certainly endured more hardship than most family members. They and Jamie were born and raised in working class Liverpool. Their mother was an alcoholic, and their dad was frequently violent.

"Our childhood, our whole lives, was absolute chaos for a long time," says Vinnie. "But I was able to deal with it in a certain way, which was by being self-reliant. It was a sort of defence mechanism to begin with. I remember just being able to deal with the chaos around me a lot easier."

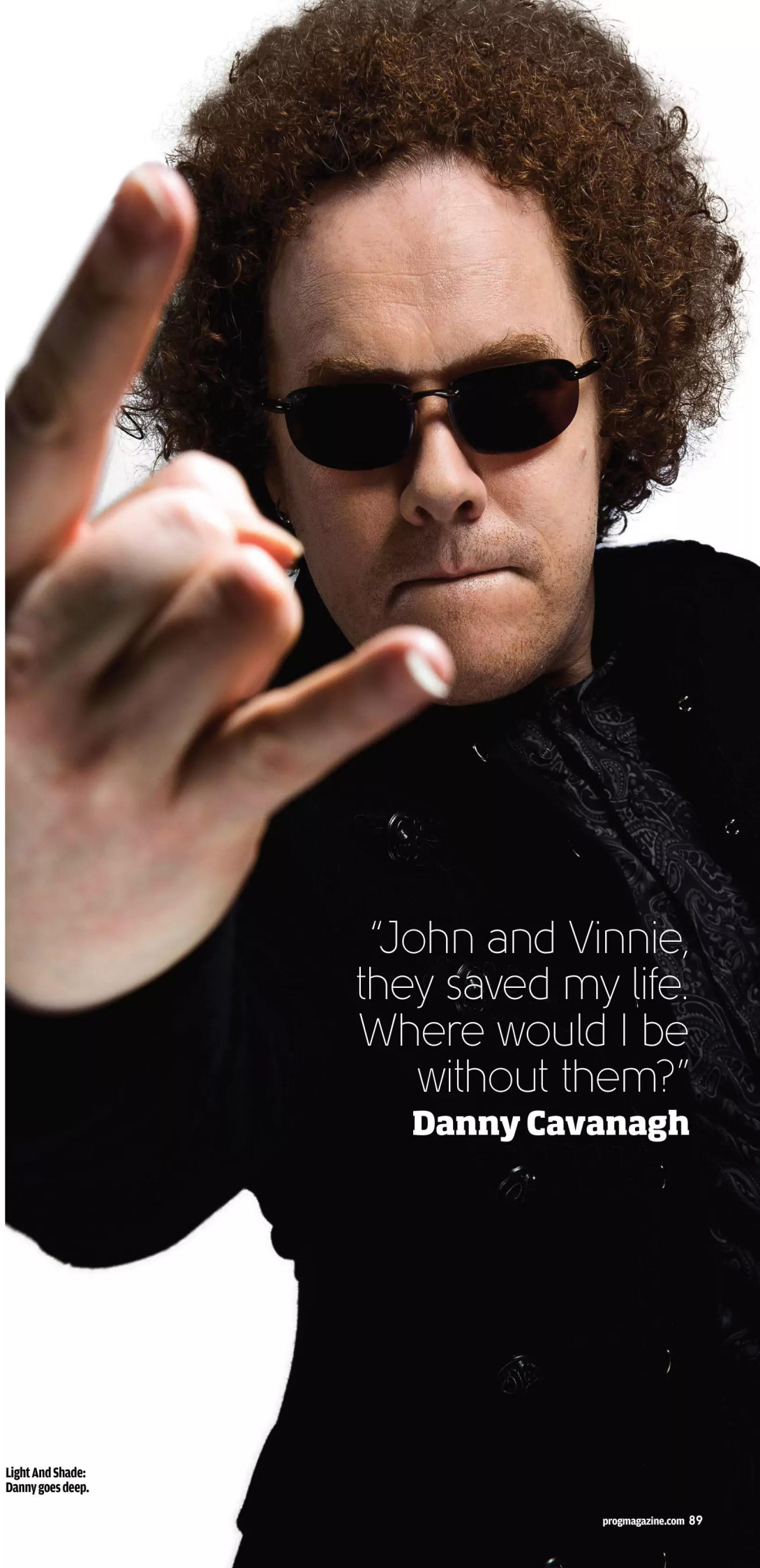
Anathema was an escape from all that. Before the band formed as Pagan Angel in 1990, Vinnie had never been "more than two hours' drive from Liverpool — I literally had no money to do anything". The first time he stepped on a plane was in 1994, when the band flew to Romania to play some shows and generally act like a rock band in their early 20s should.

"We were kids acting like dickheads," he says. "Innocent dickheads, but dickheads. But we were just having fun."

The brothers grew up listening to The Beatles and Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Queen, Black Sabbath and U2. But their initial incarnation — featuring Danny and Vinnie, John Douglas, singer Darren White and bassist Duncan Patterson — was a



Light And Shade:
Danny goes deep.



"John and Vinnie,
they saved my life.
Where would I be
without them?"

Danny Cavanagh

world away from those bands, and just as far from what they themselves would eventually become. Anathema's first few releases found them pinning their colours firmly to the extreme metal mast, but there were occasional glimpses of a different future, such as the 23-minute ambient-leaning track *Dreaming: The Romance*, which closed their 1993 debut album, *Serenades*.

"Our influences were evolving rapidly, but our music wasn't following suit to begin with," says Vinnie. "But eventually you strip away those layers of adolescence and get to the truth of what it is you're trying to do. It was natural that the more experimental would come to the fore."

Anathema began to change direction after the departure of Darren White in 1995. Previously just the guitarist, Vincent took over vocals duties on their second album, *The Silent Enigma*, but it was the follow-up, 1996's *Eternity*, that marked a watershed. That album found them starting the process of phasing out their extreme metal past in favour of a more expansive sound that nodded to their beloved Pink Floyd. Vinnie was a reluctant singer at first. "I was learning on the go, and you can hear that," he says (Danny is less critical: "Vinnie becoming the singer changed everything," he says).

Anathema's metamorphosis continued with 1998's *Alternative 4* and the following year's *Judgement*, but three things happened in quick succession that threatened to derail things. First, John Douglas left the band due to personal issues (Douglas doesn't do interviews, but he rejoined the band before *A Fine Day To Exit*). A year later, longtime bassist Duncan Patterson followed him out.

Between these two events, something even more devastating happened: the Cavanagh's mum died. It's an understandably emotional subject, and in this case a complicated one too, but Danny doesn't shy away from it.

"It wasn't the death, it was the 10 years before that," he says. "She was very, very badly psychiatrically ill, and she was a horrendous alcoholic. But it was cos me dad battered her like fuck for 15 years and put her down and persecuted her. She had all these kids, no phone, no money and nowhere to go. In October 1990, three days after my 18th birthday, she had a complete mental and emotional breakdown. She died then. It took eight years to die of alcoholism after that." (He's less sympathetic towards his father, who passed away a few years ago: "Fuck him, I barely cried for him.")

The Cavanagh brothers dealt with their mother's death in their own individual ways. The healing process was long and sometimes painful.

Inevitably, it impacted on the band.

"After our mum died, we tried to rebuild, but it took us a few years to get there," says Vinnie. "But then any bad times you go through in life, it's important to recognise how you react to it and learn from that reaction, and to understand that if anything like that was to happen again, you're more mentally equipped to deal with it."

Vinnie says he's the only one who has "never spent any time out of Anathema".

According to the singer, Danny walked away from the band for a few months between *A Fine Day To Exit* and its follow-up, 2003's *A Natural Disaster*. Ever the pragmatist, Vinnie wasn't about to let his brother's (albeit temporary) absence ruin things. He did what he did best: started organising things.

"I got a studio together in Liverpool and said, 'Okay lads, let's get some music together,'" he says. "Cos the focus of this band has always been the music. That's what we do, that's what has got us through some of the tough times."

Danny returned, of course, though the mid-00s were a strange time for Anathema. Between *A Natural Disaster* in 2003 and 2010's semi-comeback album, *We're Here Because We're Here*, the band stepped back from recording. This was in part due to the fact that their record label at the time had been closed down and they had no management. But there were other reasons too.

"The musical chemistry was disrupted, and I couldn't really function within the group," says Danny. "A manager or a record label could maybe have sorted that out. The

wisdom at the time was that we didn't need them. Fucking big mistake."

"I think it was bravado," says Vinnie. "We were still writing music: 'Yeah, we'll be alright.' It wasn't stubbornness, it's just that we were on our own."

It wasn't quite a hiatus — they still toured, and even released an album, *Hindsight*, that featured acoustic versions of older songs — and both Cavanagh brothers are insistent that the band never split. But the impetus they had built up began to dissipate. "It held our career back big time," says Danny.

There was one unexpected positive that emerged from Anathema's years in the wilderness. In the mid-00s, Danny started to see a therapist in order to try and help untangle his past mental issues, his complex family background and the death of his mother.

"I was still drinking at the time, and I'd started reading this book about alcoholism, and how it runs in the family," he says. "I had breakthrough therapy in 2005, it was wonderful. It was a beautiful, cathartic experience. Then I quit drinking. I started writing all the material that appeared on *We're Here Because We're Here*. It just took five years to get that out..."

When it did emerge in 2010, *We're Here Because We're Here* was the sound of a band replanting their flag on top of the mountain. More than anything that came before it, that album set them on the path that brought them to *The Optimist*. There was barely any trace of the band they were a decade-and-a-half before left. Now, they were truly channelling the visionary spirit of the great acts of the past — from Pink Floyd to Tangerine Dream — and adding real life emotion to it.

Above: Anathema, circa *The Silent Enigma* album (1995).



Internal Landscapes

For *The Optimist*, Anathema once again turned to artist **Travis Smith** to add the necessary visuals...

When it came to providing a set of visuals to accompany the physical release of *The Optimist*, there was only one man for the job: Travis Smith.

The California-born graphic artist made his name designing artwork for 90s metal bands such as Death and Nevermore, but he'd branched out into prog via the cover of Opeth's 1999 album *Still Life*. His working relationship with Anathema began with *A Fine Day To Exit*, for which he designed and photographed the striking booklet.

"I'd been a fan of them forever," he says. "I discovered them when *Pentecost III* came into my friends' record store. With *A Fine Day To Exit*, they were looking to do something different."

The label put Smith in contact with the band, who told him their ideas. The album's striking cover, featuring an abandoned car and a trail of clothes leading into the sea, was shot on Silver Strand near his home in San Diego. *The Optimist* returned to the character at the centre of that album, and once again Smith was enlisted to add an extra visual dimension.

"Danny told me he wanted to start at the beach, and then chart a journey through the locations that told the story of *The Optimist*," says Smith. "I immediately started thinking of places I knew between San Diego and California."

Over the ensuing weeks and months, he hit the road, travelling to various towns, cities and remote locations to shoot the images that appear in *The Optimist*'s inlay booklet. One of the most striking images is of the original beach just before a massive thunderstorm strikes.



Stormy Solitude: one of Smith's shots for the inlay booklet.



"I went back to the beach to shoot, but it turned out to be severely stormy," says Smith. "It was dark, the sand was blowing everywhere. It was hard to shoot. But then I heard what they were doing with the music, and it fitted perfectly."

Unsurprisingly, Smith laments the decline of conceptual cover art in the digital age. "Think about all those classic albums, like *Dark Side Of The Moon* - the artwork was integral to the album. If it visualises the story, it adds a whole new dimension to the experience." **DEV**

"That core of emotion is exactly what this band's about," says Vinnie. "If you were to have one definition of what this band is, it's emotional music. There's a melancholy in there, which can be joyful at the same time. You interpret the big things, the big emotions through music."

There are other emotions you could associate with Anathema, and with the Cavanaghs specifically. At various points over the years, there has been plenty of conflict between the brothers, even if it's never quite hit Noel and Liam Gallagher levels.

"Yeah, the relationship has been fairly combustible," concedes Vinnie. "Especially in our 20s. Danny and I didn't get on for many years. But then we grew up and we realised that we had more in common than not."

"It got much better after I got clean," says Danny. "And as we got older. If we have a slanging match now, which isn't that often, it's gone the next day."

Have Anathema ever properly split up?

"No," says Danny. "It's not even come close. It's just a way of life. There's been times when it's been a strain, and I've thought, 'I could do

without this bollocks.' But you get over it, cos this is the best thing in the world."

Would they still both be in the same band if they weren't brothers?

Vinnie: "It's possible. It all depends. I don't think there's anyone better to sing Danny's songs than me, apart from himself."

Danny is less cautious. "No," he says simply.

Why not?
"Some of the things that have been said in private over the years. The kind of things only brothers can say and get away with."

When the band played London's Shepherd's Bush Empire last autumn, there was a moment when the tension between the brothers appeared to be playing out in public. At one point, there was an onstage conversation between the two of them about who was the band's frontman, while the show ended with a song from Danny's solo album. While it wasn't testy enough to count as an argument, it still suggested that it's a question that preys on their minds.

"Ah, that was a joke," says Danny emphatically. "Banter."

So who is the frontman in the band?
"[Laughs] Well, officially it's Vinnie, but really it's me."

Will he agree you on that?

"No, of course not."

So is Anathema your band? He's suddenly serious.

"No, it's our band. Not just mine and Vinnie's, but John's and Jamie's and Lee's and Daniel's. We've been through too much together for it not to be."

A pause and a smirk. "But I'm behind it all."

Despite Danny's reservations, Anathema's period away from the frontline in the oos turned out to be a smart decision on more than one level.

"2005 to 2009 were magic years for me," says the guitarist. "I'd come out of therapy, stopped drinking. I'd got out of a bad relationship. It was the first time I felt free."

That sense of freedom fed into Anathema. By the time of their comeback, *We're Here Because We're Here*, they sounded like a band reborn, utterly unrecognisable from the "dickheads" who had crawled out of Liverpool 20 years earlier.

"David Bowie put it best," says Vinnie. "He always said that he liked to walk out into the ocean - he knew where the shore was, but his feet weren't quite touching the floor. He was out of his comfort zone but not too far. That's fucking spot on. You shouldn't pander to your record company or the radio or even your audience, cos that's fucking dangerous if you want to stay true to yourself as a creative person. That's the true spirit of rock'n'roll."

Subsequent albums have built on the artistic success of *We're Here...* Commercially, too, each one has outsold the one that came before. Yet Anathema still find themselves in a strange place in 2018. Their career is on an upswing - the album sales, chart placings and gigs all say as much. But Anathema haven't quite made the leap to the next level of acceptance in the way that Opeth or Steven Wilson - two artists who started out at roughly the same time and broadly exist in the same musical space - have. Sure, it's not a competition, but it's odd that they're lagging behind in commercial terms - their music is more emotional, more welcoming, more direct than either of those bands. Are they happy being under the radar?

"No," says Vinnie emphatically. "I don't think our music is so complicated that a mainstream audience wouldn't find something in it. A song like *Untouchable* (from 2012's *Weather Systems*), for example, there's a huge audience for music like that. When we were kids, we grew up on songs



Three's Company:
the Cavanagh brothers
and Lee Douglas.

"I don't think our music is so complicated that a mainstream audience wouldn't find something in it."

Vinnie Cavanagh

with great melody, and melodies are always the most important thing for us. We write catchy music as far as we're concerned. Granted there are experimental parts, but on the whole it has broader appeal."

Vinnie has a theory about why Anathema aren't more successful in mainstream terms. He thinks that people still judge his band by their distant past. "I think there's a stigma around us because of our earlier records," he says. "You never get away from it. Even the name makes us sound like a 1990s metal band. Ironically if we'd have stayed on that path we were on years ago, we'd have been much bigger than we are now. The metal scene is fucking massive. But you paint yourselves into a corner."

Vinnie says that he pushed for the band to change their name in the long gap between *A Natural Disaster* and *We're Here Because We're Here*, to no avail. "I couldn't get enough support for the idea from the people around us at the time," he says. "Every fucking year I'd bring it to the table: 'Just change the band name.' But no one was having it."

Danny insists that the band did talk about changing the name "years ago", but couldn't find anything that would have worked. Anyway, he gave up on the idea of Anathema connecting with a broad mainstream audience a long time ago.

"There's a glass ceiling for this band," says the guitarist, "and it's the Royal Albert Hall. To do a headlining show in that place and fill it is about as good as it's going to get."

That's a bit unambitious, isn't it? He shrugs.

"I'm just being realistic. I think it dawned on me about 2005, around the time I stopped drinking. It used to make me unhappy trying to break through all the time. When we did *A Fine Day To Exit*, it was like, 'When are we gonna tour with Muse?' or 'When are we gonna tour with Radiohead?' Never, is the answer to that. I just chilled out and gave up trying to be Radiohead. I think it was Lemmy who said that unless you're in the right place at the right time, no matter how good you are, it won't happen. And we weren't, and it didn't."

Do you feel like outsiders?

"I don't think we're outsiders as such, but I am not as connected as some of those other people. They manage their careers better than I do.

[Laughs] They have less to put up with. But on the other hand, we're better than anybody else in this scene. Nobody else can touch what we do. Fucking no one. Name one."

Steven Wilson?

"Too clean."

Opeth?

"They're great at what they do, but nah. Radiohead are better than us. U2 at their best. Nirvana. Pink Floyd. Led Zeppelin. The Beatles. Kate Bush. Dire Straits. All the greats — they're all better than us and always will be better than us. But in this scene? Nah."

That kind of bullishness would sound ridiculous if it didn't have a ring of truth to it. Even in a year in which prog's new gods have served up an array of stellar albums — from Steven Wilson's *To The Bone* to Big Big Train's *Grimspound* — *The Optimist* certainly stands out. Few bands in recent memory have matched its emotional resonance, the way it displays its moods — desperation, hope, everything in between — so openly without actually feeling the need to spell everything out.

"Yeah, it's not black and white," says Vinnie. "Anyone can interpret how they want, but the way I see it, there's some resolution, finally, but *The Optimist* character has to go through some very intense... things before he can get there. You've got to go there to come back."

"Is it an optimistic album?" says Danny. "I would say so, yeah. I've never really said the way I think it ends, but I personally think it's a happy ending — to be continued, anyway. He didn't dive in the water at the end and sink."

It's a typically open-ended and ambiguous finale, one that would lend itself to an extension of *The Optimist*'s story. This is something that both Cavanagh brothers have thought about.

"I was considering an EP to close up the story, about *The Optimist*'s childhood — our childhood," says Danny. "What made him this person. But I don't know if that will compromise the next album. You might end up putting songs on it that are good enough for a full album. That's what happened with (2012's) *Weather Systems*. It was gonna be an EP, and it turned into an album cos we thought, 'We need to put more songs on it.'"

If they do go down that route, they already have one potential song in the

bag. There's a secret track hidden in *The Optimist*'s intro track 32.63n 117.14w, or at least a snippet of one — as the title character fiddles with a car radio, an Anathema song suddenly comes into focus, then disappears just as quickly. This is *Dreaming In Reverse*, recorded for *The Optimist* then held off at the last minute. It takes confidence for a band to do that.

"That's a full fucking song," says Vinnie. "We spent a good few days on that, putting it together, recording it, then we just put it on the radio for 10 seconds."

Another potential future could see Anathema playing the album from start to finish, maybe even with an orchestra. Given *The Optimist*'s narrative structure and ambition, it would make sense. "I think we will at some point," says Vinnie. "We've played virtually every song so far — the only one we haven't played so far is *Close Your Eyes*, the jazzy one. We haven't done that one yet. But if we go down that route, we'll have to do something special musically and visually."

If the future isn't quite carved in stone, then the recent past is. Last September, *The Optimist* was crowned Best Album at the Progressive Music Awards, a culmination of the respect that Anathema had gathered over the past few years. While he's happy with the accolade, Danny insists that it's not the be all and end all of everything.

"It's not that I don't care," he says. "I am proud of the recognition, and I am proud that people like it. And I'm proud that even in the difficult years, the band managed to keep creating these things. But that's not the most important thing. The biggest deal to me would be health and happiness."

The Cavanaghs are keen to dispel the idea that life in Anathema has been a quarter century of doom and gloom. "The start, when we were all innocent and a bunch of kids, yes, that was amazing and fun and eye-opening, especially for a bunch of kids coming from where we came from and the life that we came from," says Vinnie. "But we've always had fun, despite the hard times. You shouldn't think we've had years and years of misery, because it's not like that. We've had an incredible laugh."

For Danny, life in Anathema — and out of it — is better now than it has been in a long time. "Right now, I feel some contentment with how it's going," he says. "The music's getting better and better, the togetherness of the group is incredible. Music is healing for me, and it's healing for people who listen to it. But it's also the healing power of family. It's the band that's healed me, not the music. It's being with them that's cathartic." 🎧



“Big Big Train is not standard.
It’s not a run-of-the-mill thing.
It’s different just by the very
nature of what we do.”

David Longdon



Let the Grand Tour commence!
But first, a little prep...

With their 2019 album, *Grand Tour*, **Big Big Train** take the listener on a fascinating expedition through history and art. As the British band continue their rise to the top of the UK prog scene, *Prog* takes stock of their journey.

Words: Dave Everley
Portraits: Sophocles Alexiou

Grand Designs

July 8, 1822, Italy. The body of Percy Bysshe Shelley washes up on the shores of the Gulf Of La Spezia. Shelley's boat, Don Juan, was caught in a sudden storm and he drowned. Shelley was one of the great Romantic poets of the age, a shooting star whose journey had taken him from sleepy Horsham and English manners to fame, notoriety and, ultimately, tragedy, half a continent away. He wasn't even 30 when he died, but his name still echoes two centuries later...

November 1, 1611, London, England. The first recorded performance of William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* takes place at Whitehall Palace in Westminster. This dreamlike fable sets rationality against magic on an unnamed island in the Adriatic. At the play's denouement, one of its central characters, the spirit Ariel, is freed from imprisonment by the island's magician-ruler Prospero to ride the air until the end of his days, a metaphysical journey of a different kind...

August 20, 1977, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida. The Voyager 2 probe is launched. Sixteen days later its twin, Voyager 1, follows it into the furthest-flung reaches of this galaxy and beyond, the greatest journey in the history of humankind. Both ships carry copper records containing information about their home planet: music, sounds, images. The spacecrafts are due to lose contact with Earth sometime in the 2020s, though scientists say that they may potentially re-enter the solar system 250 million years in the future, completing an almost unimaginable loop...

Three journeys that are very different yet fundamentally the same. All three are intertwined on Big Big Train's new album, *Grand Tour*, a musically bold and conceptually dazzling masterpiece that establishes the seven-piece as one of the pre-eminent progressive rock bands of the 21st century. It takes the idea of the journey — physical, spiritual, intellectual, metaphorical — as its central conceit, spinning off into any number of wondrous and intricately structured worlds, real and imagined.

"It's physical travel — physically going out of your environment and experiencing different cultures,"

says David Longdon, Big Big Train's singer/flautist/multi-instrumentalist. "But there's also the idea of travel in terms of time and longevity, things lasting through time, things voyaging through time."

BBT's own journey has brought them today to Peter Gabriel's Real World Studios, a beautiful converted mill set in a bucolic valley a few miles outside Bath. Or at least it's brought Longdon and bassist/BBT founder Greg Spawton here. The singer is working on an extra-curricular project — a collaborative album with Judy Dyble. When *Prog* arrives, he's laying down the foundations of a new song, the folky, Gabriel-esque *Obedience*, as Dyble sits and takes notes.

"It's a fantastic place. The isolation means there are no distractions," says Spawton as he gives *Prog* a guided tour of Real World's grounds, via paths, ponds and a giant greenhouse-come-potting shed on a miniature hillock that turns

out to be Peter Gabriel's writing room. "We've never met him," says Spawton with a twinge of disappointment. "I don't think he spends much time down here these days."

Big Big Train themselves have plenty of history of their own at Real World. They've recorded parts of

all of their recent albums here, using the large main studio and the more intimate wood room to capture different aspects of their sound. It's here, too, that they

"There's no political message to it at all. It's about people, it's about culture, it's about learning, it's about discovery."

Greg Spawton

Greg Spawton: guitars, backing vocals, keyboards, bass.



Dave Gregory: guitars.



Rikard Sjöblom: keyboards, guitars, backing vocals.



Nick D'Virgilio: drums, backing vocals, percussion, guitars.



David Longdon: lead vocals, flute, keyboards, guitars, bass.

filmed *Stone And Steel*, the live DVD that would act as a precursor to their landmark 2015 shows at Kings Place in London, a pivotal moment in the band's history.

Ironically, given our very English surroundings, *Grand Tour* is the least Anglocentric album Big Big Train have made, thematically at least. Where previous albums have looked inwards, weaving conceptual webs inspired by the culture, folklore, society and great figures these isles have produced, this time they're turning their gaze outwards, looking towards far horizons both real and imagined for inspiration.

"The Grand Tour was a 19th-century tradition of young people of means going off into Europe to travel and experience life," says Longdon, his day's work done, as the three of us settle down on a sofa in one of the studio's many lounges. "In many cases, it was pretty much people going out and sowing their oats before they came back to the drudgery of marriage and inheriting titles and things like that."

"This was post-Renaissance, after the scientific revolution," adds Spawton. "In theory it was partly a way of understanding the classical history of Europe. In reality, it was a bit of a riot."

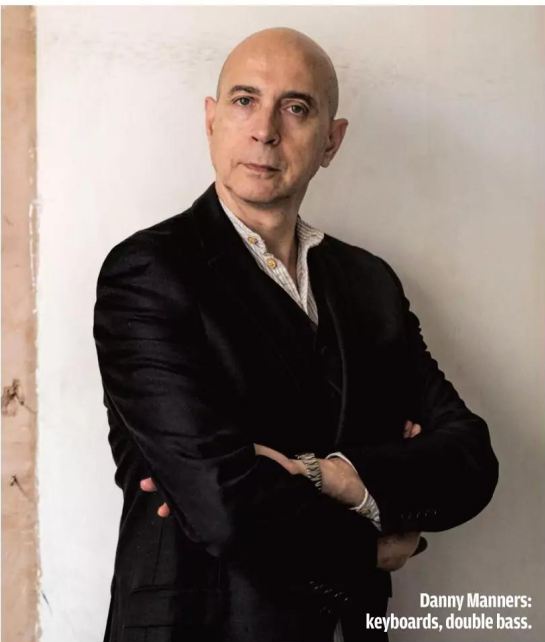
The idea of travel and momentum – if not riotous behaviour – provides the spine that runs through *Grand Tour*. *Theodora In Green And Gold* takes as its basis the real-life story of a 6th-century Byzantine bear-trainer's daughter who rose to become the most powerful empress in the history of the Roman Empire, while *The Florentine* was inspired after Longdon viewed Leonardo Da Vinci's handwritten notes in a museum exhibition in his native Nottingham (Roman and Italian culture deeply inform several of the album's songs). Penultimate track *Voyager* goes even further, using the eponymous spacecrafts' travels as an allegory for mankind's grandest ambition and also its ultimate destiny.

But perhaps the most revealing song on the album is *Alive*. At just under five minutes, it's one of the shortest tracks, but it bristles with a sense of joy and urgency.


"Life is to be lived, and lived well, and it's up to us to experience the time we have," says Longdon. "Greg and I are both 53, and we're at the point in our life where we want to enjoy what we have while we've got it. There's definitely a feeling of *carpe diem* in that song, and across the whole album."

There's a defiance there, too, not least in the very first line that Longdon sings, on opening track *Novum Organum*: 'For science and for art.'

Those five words act as a guiding light for the album. It's a resolutely intellectual message – one that's at odds with prevalent cultural and



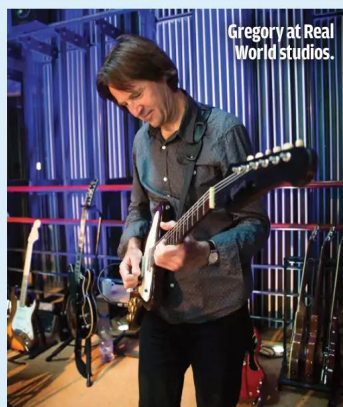
Danny Manners: keyboards, double bass.



Rachel Hall: violin, vocals.

"I get to live out my prog fantasies!"

Former XTC guitarist Dave Gregory on being part of BBT.



Gregory at Real World studios.

How did you end up playing in Big Big Train?

It's all thanks to David Longdon. He and I met in 1996, working with a French singer-songwriter called Louis Philipe. We stayed in touch, and then in March 2009, he called me to ask if I felt like playing guitar on something. That turned out to be the song *Last Train* from *The Underfall Yard*. It was the first time anyone had asked for a solo of that length from me in years: "You can't be serious! No one wants to hear that!"

How did you end up becoming a full-time member?

I just got morphed into it. Really the only full-time members are Greg and David. The rest of us are called upon when needed. I don't need mean that in a negative way. It's just a pragmatic way of looking at it.

You're all based in different places. How does the writing process work for you?

I'll get a basic track, with Nick's drums and usually a guide vocal and a title or sense of what the song is about. Then I'll load it into my system at home and start thinking what guitars would sound best. The downside is that I'll come up with something and half of it won't be used, so I've wasted a lot of time, that's become a bit of an issue. But for the most part everything works.

The band weren't a live proposition when you joined. Was that scary?

I'd listen to *Victorian Brickwork* and think how fantastic it'd sound in a concert hall. But part of me wondered if we could ever reproduce those songs onstage. We did, of course, but it involved a lot of work.

How are Big Big Train different to what you've been involved in before?

The quality of the musicianship has made me raise my game. Plus you've got two seriously good songwriters who are getting better and better. And it means I finally get to live out my prog fantasies and they don't mind. **DEV**

political trends. In fact, given its timing and its desire for exploration of cultures and ideas beyond the borders of the British Isles, *Grand Tour* could be read as an anti-Brexit album. It's a suggestion Spawton bats away instantly.

"There's no political message to it at all," he says. "It's about people, it's about culture, it's about learning, it's about discovery. My background is in archaeology and I'm very aware that we, as humans, have incredibly narrow time frames in terms of things we consider to be important. Whatever you think of Brexit, this album has a much longer time period – it stretches from the Romans through to 250 million years in the future, when the Voyagers could potentially return to this area of space. I wouldn't want us to get locked into a two- or three-year period of madness in British political history, which will one day feel very tired. This is a timeless album."

In other respects, it's a very timely one – *Grand Tour* arrives at a crucial point in Big Big Train's career. It's the first album without founding guitarist Andy Poole, the only other member aside from Spawton who has been with the band since their inception in 1990.

"Andy and I stuck together through thick and thin for a long time," says Spawton. "In recent years, we grew apart and it became clear that Andy had a different vision for the band to the one that David and I share. His departure was a bit like a divorce in that there was a fair bit of unhappiness for a while. I assume he has now retired from music and we wish him the best of luck for any future endeavours."

It's not all about absences, though. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of *The Underfall Yard*, the first Big Big Train album to feature Longdon and a watershed for the band. Tomorrow, the pair will begin recording a new track, *Brew And Burh*, for inclusion on an anniversary edition of the album, which is also set to feature a rerecording of *The Underfall Yard*'s 23-minute title track alongside the existing version.

"A 'burh' is an Anglo-Saxon settlement," says Spawton of the new song's title. "And brew is obviously a cup of tea. I was trying to find a slightly more poetic way of saying 'tea and history'."

"It's about the companionship of the seven of us," adds Longdon. "It's the story of the band and the fans."

On the surface, the two men appear completely different. Spawton is measured and professorial, Longdon more energetic and more demonstrative. But they're flip sides of the same coin,



SIMON HOGG / PRESS

The magnificent seven, out standing in their field.

not least when it comes to the band: both equally passionate and simpatico in their view of everything from what Big Big Train stand for to the musical and lyrical themes that connect their songs and albums.

Ironically, the two men had no idea who the other was prior to that. Spawton had founded Big Big Train at the start of the 90s with Poole, releasing a string of albums with a rotating cast of musicians, taking it seriously but never too seriously. Spawton describes the band as "a hobby for the first decade – a very expensive hobby".

Longdon himself had charted a more wayward career path. He began playing flute for a folk rock band at the age of 14, before passing through numerous bands, getting burned at the hands of various labels (he even auditioned for the vacant role of Genesis singer in the 1990s). The turning point came when he recorded vocals for two tracks on *The Old Road*, the swansong album by Martin Orford, IQ keyboard player and founder of Big Big Train's then-label Giant Electric Pea. It was GEP's in-house engineer, Rob Aubrey, who spotted Longdon's talent and joined two dots that no one knew needed joining.

"Rob rang me that evening and said, 'I've got the guy that will lift your band



up several levels,” recalls Spawton. “We had a singer [Sean Filkins] at the time, and I’m quite a loyal person by nature so I was a little bit sceptical. We spent several weeks, if not months talking on the phone, just chatting to each other twice a week.”

BBT were already on an upward trajectory, benefitting from both the work they’d already put in and a slow but steady resurgence of interest in prog. But it was what Spawton describes “as a bit of a health scare” that prompted him to seize the moment and ask Longdon to join.

“It was a *carpe diem* moment,” he says now. “I thought, ‘Fuck this, I’ve been dabbling with this band for so long and I owe myself an attempt to achieve big things.’ At that point it was just for my songs to be heard more widely. I didn’t even know that David was a songwriter at that point.”

The first three albums they released with Longdon – *The Underfall Yard* and the two-part *English Electric* set – each built on its predecessor, artistically and commercially. Big Big Train slotted neatly into the heritage



“In the last two years, we’ve had every major label in progressive rock get in touch with us. We’ve been politely disinterested in them all, because we’re stubborn bastards.”

Greg Spawton



of classic British progressive rock, a bridge between the genre’s illustrious past (Genesis and Yes were clearly an influence) and its increasingly bright future. In Longdon, they finally had a singer whose voice and songwriting matched their ambition.

What they didn’t have was any shows under their belt. The last time BBT had played a gig was in 1997, at the now-demolished Astoria in central London. Spawton had subsequently considered it, but any number of factors had prevented it from happening, from the cost of getting a large, multi-national band together to a reluctance to “drive hundreds of miles to play a gig for 20 people.” He admits that there was an element of fear, too.

“Andy, particularly, was extremely worried that we built a good reputation and we were selling quite a few albums in an era when it’s not easy to sell albums, and we were potentially going to damage the brand by not being great live,” says Spawton.

“When I joined, the band were in the red,” says Longdon. “We did fantasise about doing something live, but we knew

it would need a small army to do it. [Laughs] Which it has done.”

Were they not tempted to do it on a smaller scale?

“What’s the point?” replies Longdon. “I’ve done gigs on a smaller scale, and, let’s put it like this, joining a rock band is not a get-rich-quick scheme. Big Big Train is not standard. It’s not a run-of-the-mill thing. It’s different just by the very nature of what we do. And we decided to approach it like that.”

That changed in August 2014, when they recorded *From Stone And Steel* here at Real World. That performance would be a dry-run for three shows the following year at Kings Place, an ‘arts hub’ near King’s Cross station in London. Those shows bagged the band a Prog Award for Best Live Event. Since then, they’ve played five more shows: three at London’s Cadogan Hall in 2017, one at The Anvil in Basingstoke and a headlining appearance at the Night Of The Prog Festival at Loreley, Germany.


“That was a real challenge for us,” says Spawton of the latter. “We were playing to an audience that wasn’t our own, and it was very much, ‘Will this work? Will we fall flat?’ It was a high wire act, but we won people over.”

It also changed something within Big Big Train themselves. Fittingly, given the title and theme of their new album, they undertake their first tour this year – six UK shows this October. Granted, it’s hardly up there with Dylan’s Never Ending Tour in terms of scale, but it’s still a huge step for this once gig-shy band – and a hugely expensive one.

“Putting a band the size that we are on tour, you’re probably looking at six-figure sum,” says Spawton. “It’s not something to be undertaken lightly. But we feel like we’re investing in our own future. We’re not sitting here thinking, ‘How can we penny pinch to make a few hundred quid more?’”

The impressive thing about Big Big Train’s success is that it’s all been on their own terms. There is a self-contained mini-music industry in which they remain masters of their own destinies.

“In the last two years, we’ve had every major label in progressive rock get in touch with us,” says Spawton. “We’ve been politely disinterested in them all, because we’re stubborn bastards. I don’t want some label telling us when we can or can’t release an album so that it fits in with their release window. We spent a long time slaving over what we do – we’ll do what we do in our time, and we’ll do it as well as we can.”

Almost 30 years after their own journey started, Big Big Train continue to move forwards and upwards, gaining momentum, mass and experience as they do it. Long may their own Grand Tour continue. 

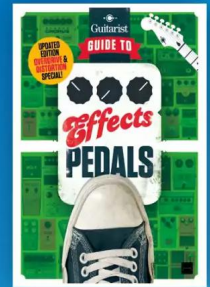
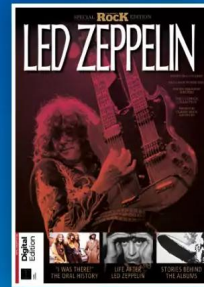
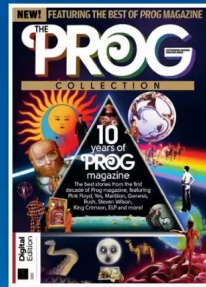
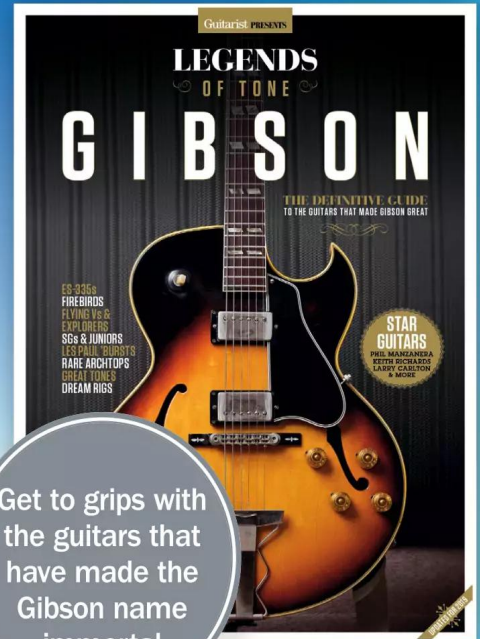
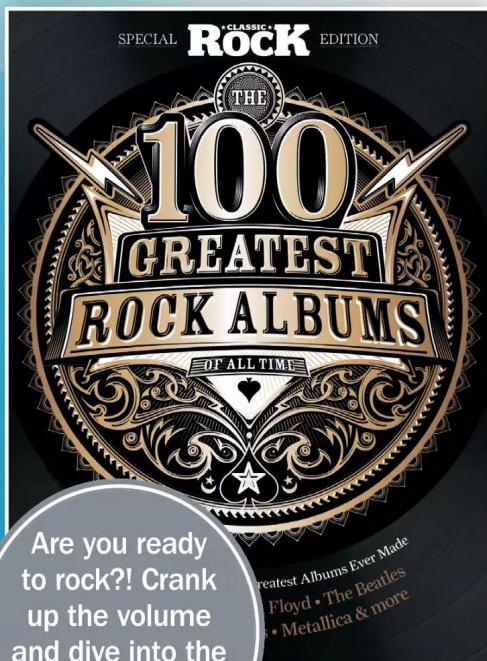
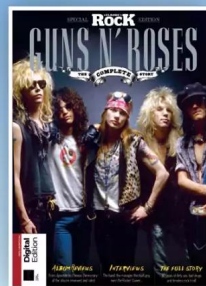
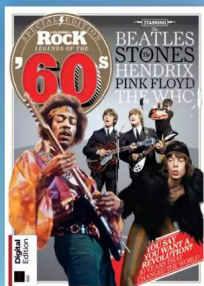
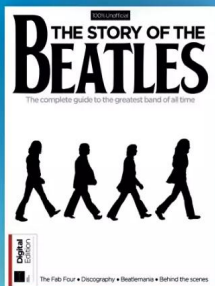


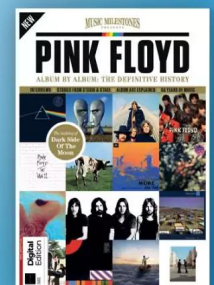
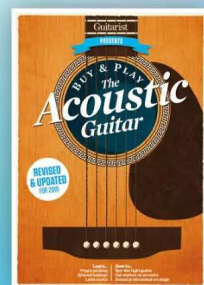
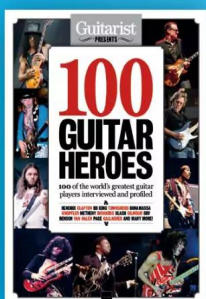
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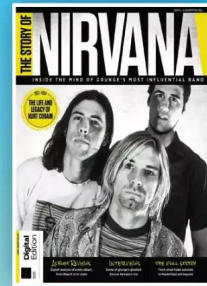
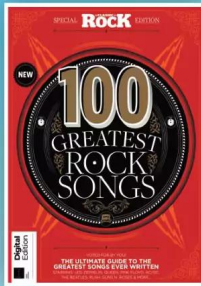
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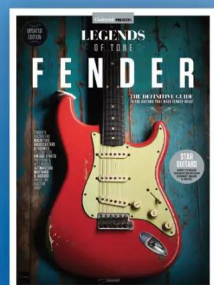
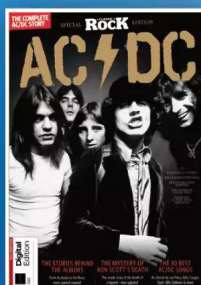
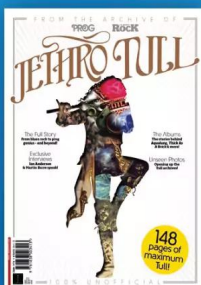
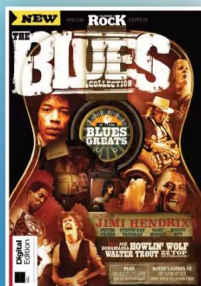
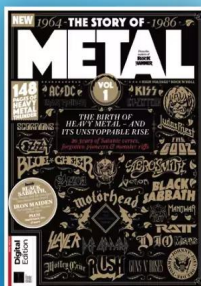


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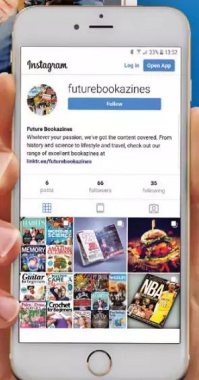
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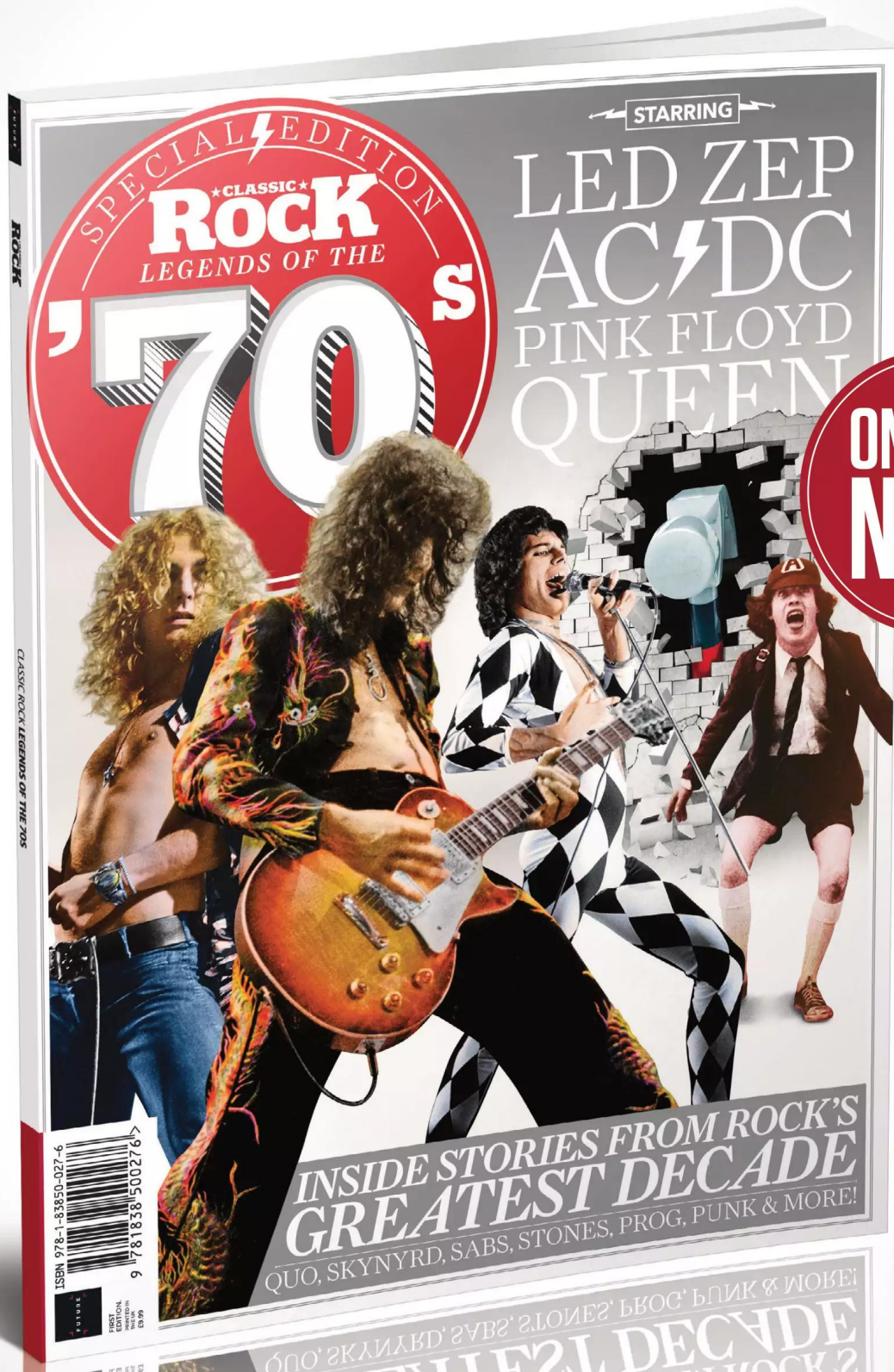
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What is the greatest prog anthem of all time? Will a classic steal the top spot, or is it time for a new generation of proggers to take over? *Prog* turned to you, the readers, to answer this very question, and we were overwhelmed by the response. Did your vote count? Read on...

The 100 Greatest Prog Anthems Of All Time

Words:

Mike Barnes (MBA), Mark Blake (MBL), Malcolm Dome, Daryl Easlea (DEA), Dave Everley (DEV), Dom Lawson, Grant Moon, Chris Roberts, Johnny Sharp, Sid Smith, David West

100

Inca Roads

FRANK ZAPPA & THE

MOTHERS OF INVENTION

from *ONE SIZE FITS ALL* (DiscReet, 1975)



'On Ruth!' Catchy, complex, sweet, sarky and surreal, the fan favourite that kicks off *One Size Fits All*

encapsulates everything good about 70s-era Mothers, including their marimba/xylophone/vibes player, the incomparable Ruth Underwood. **GM**

You say: "Outrageous musicianship, complicated playing and a sense of humour... It doesn't get any better than this!" **Andrew Hapeman**

99

The Life Auction

STRAWBS

from *GHOSTS* (A&M, 1975)



From sinister tone poem into raucous prog rock *j'accuse!*, Dave Cousins spits out his caustic rebuke to

metaphorical vultures picking over a life lost. Strawbs at their fiery, abrasive best. **SS**

You say: "Who thought a song about auctioning off a deceased old lady's belongings could be so powerful?"

John Shaw

98

In The Cage

GENESIS

from *THE LAMB LIES DOWN*

ON BROADWAY (Charisma, 1974)



With an intro by Gabriel, Banks' keyboard themes and Rutherford's looming bass-led section, this

co-written song, a dramatic account of fear and paranoia, remained a live favourite long after the vocalist's departure. **MBA**

You say: "The peak of one of the greatest and perhaps underestimated bands of all time." **Haroldo Teixeira**



In A Land Of Grey:
Caravan nine feet
overground.

97

Nine Feet Underground

CARAVAN

from *IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK*

(Deram, 1971)



Stately time signatures, smooth, sunny harmonies and Dave Sinclair's signature-sound fuzz

organ set a mellow and sometimes melancholic tone on this side-long journey into Canterbury-style whimsy and intense, blissed-out noodling. **SS**

You say: "I was introduced to this in Edinburgh, Scotland in the early 70s. When I listen to it now, it reminds me of those days." **Peter Hackzell**

96

Bohemian Rhapsody

QUEEN

from *A NIGHT AT THE OPERA* (EMI, 1975)



Unless you've been held prisoner in North Korea for the last 40 years, you may have heard this one. Yet its ubiquity doesn't detract from its status as a masterpiece of genre-hopping, cod-operatic progressive pop. **JS**

You say: "Bombastic, energetic, smart and yet incredibly catchy, this song manages to captivate everyone from the hardcore prog fan to pop lovers." **Jonas Wilmers**

95

Script For A Jester's Tear

MARILLION

from *SCRIPT FOR A JESTER'S TEAR*

(EMI, 1983)



Wistful playground metaphors harden into abrasive rancour on Marillion's tale of love gone

sour. A benchmark neo-prog anthem – and the first sighting of Fish as prog's great doomed romantic. **DEV**

You say: "An amazing song from their first album. Beautifully written lyrics." **Scott Smith**

94

Journey To The Centre Of The Earth

RICK WAKEMAN

from *JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE*

OF THE EARTH (A&M, 1974)



Based on Jules Verne's bizarre fantasy tale, one of the keyboard player's childhood favourites,

this narrated orchestral epic – like a compelling movie in sound – is one of prog's most famous conceptual compositions. **MBA**

You say: "The concept, the Moogs, Mellotrons, Clavinet, the gold lamé cape! It's got it all!" **Sean Timms**

93

Discipline

KING CRIMSON

from *DISCIPLINE* (EG, 1981)



The title track of Crimson's eighth album is an astonishing exercise in er, discipline. Each member

features equally in a dense mêlée of fluctuating time structures, while maintaining remarkable restraint. **DEA**

You say: "I don't know how they pull this off. If you're going to be someone... be Robert Fripp. If you can't... then be mediocre." **Paul Bilyea**

92

Creepshow

"Cyril Has-Or-Might-Have-Been must fill his lust,
they let him bayonet robots as his morning constitutional..."

TWELFTH NIGHT

from **FACT AND FICTION**
(Twelfth Night, 1982)



The late Geoff Mann's finest hour sees him offer this neo-prog gem everything from spine-chilling falsetto to malevolent spoken monologues to hollering psychosis, as something wicked this way comes over 11 shape-shifting minutes. **JS**

You say: "Why weren't Twelfth Night bigger? Creepshow is as good as anything Marillion wrote."

Michael Staunton

91

Drive Home

STEVEN WILSON

from **THE RAVEN THAT REFUSED TO SING (AND OTHER STORIES)** (Kscope, 2013)



A car crash and a ghostly apparition inspire one of *The Raven's* many highlights, with

a hauntingly clever chorus and heart-rending guitar solo from a peak-of-his-powers Guthrie Govan. **GM**

You say: "A fantastic backflash of later Pink Floyd sound." **Lothar Hadlich**

90

Kayleigh

MARILLION

from **MISPLACED CHILDHOOD** (EMI, 1985)



Taken from the classic *Misplaced Childhood*, this UK No.2 hit single should be play-worn by now, but its musical elegance and Fish's lovelorn lyrical honesty make it a timeless gateway into the prog world. **GM**

You say: "Still the perfect prog pop crossover song after all these years."

Kev Ranson

89

Refugees

VAN DER GRAAF

GENERATOR

from **THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS WAVE TO EACH OTHER** (Charisma, 1970)



A song about loss and loneliness, this combines an off-kilter melody with a beautiful sense of quirkiness within a widescreen atmospheric perspective. It represents why the band are visionary. **MD**

You say: "One of the few times VDGG

went down the more classical route, and it paid off." **Art Brooks**

88

Hocus Pocus

FOCUS

from **MOVING WAVES** (Blue Horizon, 1971)



A hit on both sides of the Atlantic when re-released in 1973, *Hocus Pocus'* heavy metal rondo encapsulates Focus' classical and rock fusion. And premium deployment of yodelling and whistling. **DEA**

You say: "Though it is a shame that this is the only Focus track that ever really gets played these days, it is such a classic that it can't be ignored."

James Sawyer

87

Shadow Of The Hierophant

STEVE HACKETT

from **VOYAGE OF THE ACOLYTE** (Charisma, 1975)



The lengthy song that shows Hackett could replay his trademark guitar motifs from his Genesis days, yet still stretch out beyond prior confines. On this, Hackett emerges from his previous band's shadow. **MD**

You say: "The greatest song Genesis never recorded, by the most underrated guitarist in prog." **Page Pearce**

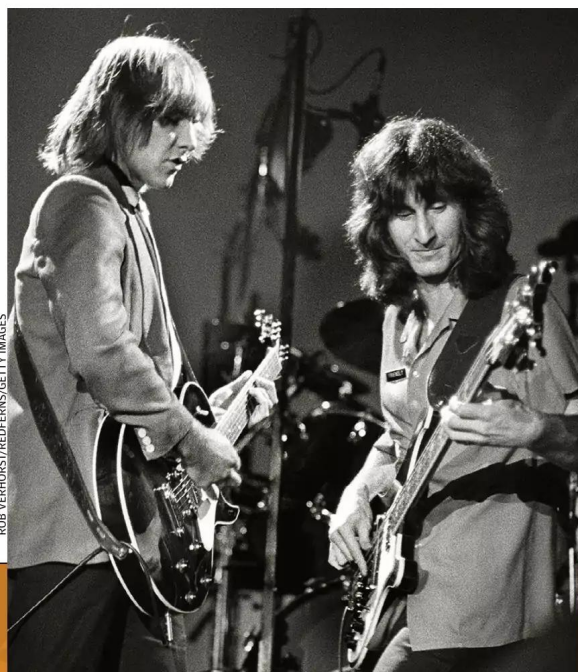
86

Subdivisions

RUSH

from **SIGNALS** (Anthem/Mercury, 1982)

Signalling Hard:
Rush work on
their subdivisions.



ROB VERHORST/RED PEARNS/GETTY IMAGES



After 1981's *Moving Pictures*, Rush further explored their electro side on *Signals*, and their facility for merging prog smarts with new technology is in evidence on this infectious protest against conformity. **GM**

You say: "The fact that it mirrors the human experience of the listeners is what makes it such an enduring gem."

Regan Fox

85

Schism

TOOL

from **LATERALUS**

(2001, Volcano Entertainment)



Living proof that music can be both smart and emotional, Tool have never sounded more

powerful than on this dark ballad from *Lateralus*. From Justin Chancellor's unmistakable bass riff onwards, it's prog perfection. **DL**

You say: "Very hypnotic basic theme, constantly evolving until it blasts the listener away with that furious finale."

Stefan Kamphausen

84

A Day In The Life

THE BEATLES

from **SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND** (Parlophone, 1967)



Take a wryly observational song, add a kaleidoscopic pinch of Stockhausen-style atonality, throw them into the blender, press play, and then stand back as pop music's ambitions are irrevocably altered. **SS**

You say: "The Fab Four at their proggiest. Every band listened and learned from it." **Sal Ashcroft**

83

Lucky Man

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER

from **EMERSON, LAKE AND PALMER** (Island, 1970)



Lake recorded the bittersweet folky ballad alone; Emerson returned from the pub and

whacked that enormous Moog solo over the end. Somehow the opposites meshed and a melancholy monster was born. **CR**

You say: "A wonderful track – beautiful and thought-provoking at the same time." **Ken Lamb**

82

The Light

SPOCK'S BEARD

from **THE LIGHT** (1995, Metal Blade)



Fifteen minutes of wildly melodic symphonic prog, the first track on the first Spock's Beard album went gleefully against the mid-90s plod rock grain and established a true starting point for prog's 21st-century resurgence. **DL**

You say: "This song just radiates joy. For all of its complexity, it sounds effortless." **Niels Hazeborg**

81

The Four Horsemen

APHRODITE'S CHILD

from **666** (Vertigo, 1972)



The Greek myths' epic album 666 was inspired by Sgt. Pepper, Tommy and the apocalypse. Its thrilling stand-out cut quotes Revelation 6 and graduates from wind chimes to that ever-escalating wah-wah solo. **CR**

You say: "Who'd have thought Demis Roussos could make such epic prog?" **'aligordon'**

80

The Human Equation

AYREON

from **THE HUMAN EQUATION** (2004, InsideOut)



A full-blown 102-minute prog metal symphony with an all-star cast including Devin Townsend and Heather Findlay, *The Human Equation* is also an immersive, elaborate psychodrama with a really skewed sci-fi twist. None more prog, basically. **DL**

You say: "Arjen Lucassen is a genius, and this proves why." **Billy Munns**

79

A Passion Play

JETHRO TULL

from **A PASSION PLAY** (Chrysalis, 1973)



If *Thick As A Brick* is the 'mother of all concept albums', *A Passion Play* is the daddy, a fantastical account of a soul after death, crammed full of baroque instrumental ornamentation. **MBA**

You say: "Oh, Mr Anderson, you spoil us with yet another album-length epic." **Joseph Standing**

78

Starship Trooper

YES

from **THE YES ALBUM** (Atlantic, 1971)



As the band hit their stride and save their career on *The Yes Album*, this nine-minute three-part changes moods repeatedly, climaxing in fantastic flanged Steve Howe guitars which never stop astral-travelling. **CR**

You say: "It shows off the virtuosity of all the band members, especially in the lengthy instrumental sections." **'jimperkins'**

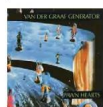
77

A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers

VAN DER GRAAF

GENERATOR

from **PAWN HEARTS** (Charisma, 1971)



Shining a piercing light into the existential dark, Peter Hammill and company explore the essence of being human; looking for meaning and hoping for connection. It's manic, malevolent and majestic. **SS**

Below: Van der Graaf Generator at Reading Festival, 27 June 1971. L-R: Hugh Banton, Peter Hammill, Guy Evans, David Jackson.



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

You say: "Majestic, dissonant, and intense. Also, playing it drives roughly 94% of the people I know out of the room." **Richard Dansky**

76

Ice

CAMEL

from **I CAN SEE YOUR HOUSE FROM HERE** (1979, Decca)



Camel's seventh album may have been a showcase for a rejuvenated line-up, but its closing track reaffirmed that guitarist Andy Latimer was the true star of the show. Ten minutes of heart-breaking melodic genius (with added Moog). **DL**

You say: "Andy Latimer at his finest. Why more people don't sing his praises is beyond me." **Keith Winston**

75

Concealing Fate

TESSERACT

EP (Century Media, 2010)



The monumental six-part epic that saw the Milton Keynesians mainline their way into the heart of metal's progressively-minded djent set. Tough, relentless, melodic, funky, and not for the faint of heart. **GM**

You say: "It showed that djent isn't just another 'hand/mind-wanking' genre, but a deep new universe of songs." **Luka Martino**

74

When The Water Breaks

LIQUID TENSION

EXPERIMENT

from **LIQUID TENSION EXPERIMENT 2** (1999, Magna Carta)



The sprawling centrepiece of the second self-titled LTE album, *When The Water Breaks* is every bit as mind-boggling as you'd expect a collaboration between three members of Dream Theater and legendary bassist Tony Levin to be. **DL**

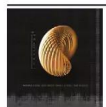
You say: "The finest thing that Mike Portnoy has been involved in (that isn't Dream Theater)..." **Gabe Rambo**

"There, coming over Charaton Bridge - look, do you see the man who is poor but rich?"

73 Gaza

MARILLION

from **SOUNDS THAT CAN'T BE MADE**
(Ear Music, 2012)



Veteran prog band in edgy political statement shocker! *Gaza's* riveting reflection of young lives ruined by war and hatred is a stunning but unsettling musical journey with furious humanity in its big, big heart. **DL**
You say: "Seventeen minutes of barely suppressed anger." **Syd Bentham**

72

The Count Of Tuscany

DREAM THEATER

from **BLACK CLOUDS & SILVER LININGS**
(Roadrunner, 2009)



Based on a day trip to a vineyard but retold through a gothic prism, thundering drums and flashes of lightning-fast guitar illuminate an extended rumination upon mortality. **SS**
You say: "For being able to keep creativity during a full, 18-minute instrumental song." **Kilian Beyly**

71

The Knife

GENESIS

from **TRESPASS** (Charisma, 1970)



With its jaunty, irresistible folk prog swagger, *The Knife* was one of the highlights from Genesis' writing sojourn at Christmas Cottage in 1969. It became their first show-stopper. **DEA**
You say: "One of the earliest, best prog rock tunes that doesn't forget the 'rock' part." **Ramin Meshginpoosh**

70

Deliverance

OPETH

from **DELIVERANCE** (Music For Nations, 2002)



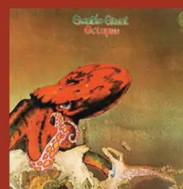
There's a reason why Opeth often close their live sets with this lithe, marauding epic: that closing riff is an absolute beast. Remarkably, the preceding 12 minutes are every bit as good. An undeniable anthem. **DL**
You say: "The prog ending is absolutely sublime." **Yves Chauvel**

69

The Advent Of Panurge

GENTLE GIANT

from **OCTOPUS** (Vertigo, 1972)



Inspired by *Gargantua And Pantagruel* by Francois Rabelais (a tale of two giants, geddit?), *The Advent Of Panurge* offers a concise breeze through all of the much-loved group's

talented-genre hopping. **DEA**

You say: "Wonderful multi-voice parts combined with the more powerful aspects of GG in one song." **Stefan Kamphausen**

"WE DIDN'T STRAY INTO SELF-INDULGENCE"

Gentle Giant's Ray Shulman on Rabelais and exploding drummers.

New Adventists:
Gentle Giant in 1970.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Why do you think *The Advent Of Panurge* is so loved?

"At our best, we didn't stray too much into any of the self-indulgent tendencies that gave prog a bad rep. Instead, we tried to concentrate on unique instrumental and vocal arrangements."

What are you memories of its recording?

"Our drummer at the time, Malcolm Mortimore, was in a motorcycle accident (or perhaps he just exploded!). So we were forced to recruit. We'd known John Weathers from his Eyes Of Blue days and heard he'd left the Grease Band, so we invited him down to Portsmouth. As soon as we heard his heavy, straightforward style, we knew it would work. It definitely influenced our writing style and that can be heard clearly in the 'funky' bits of *Panurge*. It's very much musically a Kerry [Minnear] composition. He'd bring in tightly arranged parts that we'd rehearse individually, yet leave room for studio improvisation. The basic track was usually bass and drums with the others just playing guides. We then overdubbed the fixed arrangement parts and, eventually, the more experimental bits. I'd say the acoustic piano parts were studio creations."

Its title is from Rabelais. Were you all well-read?

"This is [elder brother] Phil's influence. He is very well-read. As soon as we adopted our name, he thought of incorporating the mythology of giants into the lyrics; *Giant* on the first album, *Pantagruel's Nativity* on the second and this. Tolkien had his resurgence of popularity during the hippy period, but we liked the perverse, humorous bawdiness of Rabelais."

Martin Rushent engineered the track with you – did he show any signs of his future punk and pop skills manning the desk?

"Martin was an incredible engineer. He was always looking for different FX ideas. Everything then was physical manipulation either with tape or acoustics. You'd see the light bulb go off above his head and he'd drag in a spare eight-track, plug in an oscillator and create something special. Part of his extra-curricular work at Advision was putting together pop songs using tape loops. He got John to record lots of fills that he edited together. It was no surprise that with the advent of computer technology, he'd be a pioneer."

Which Gentle Giants track would you choose for the poll?

"*Knots*. I think it sums up our uniqueness." **DEA**

68

The Architect

HAKEN

from **AFFINITY** (InsideOut, 2016)



the best moment in the history of music." **Neil Ballas**

80s synths meet crushing djent riffs in Haken's lament about isolation in the digital age, with guest growls from Leprous' Einar Solberg making this the heaviest cut from 2016's *Affinity*. **DW**

You say: "The last 45 seconds is

"ANTIQUES ROADSHOW INSPIRED THE RIFF!"

Haken's Charles Griffiths on the birth of a modern prog masterpiece.

Was your intention with *The Architect* to craft a proper prog epic?

"It wasn't really the initial goal. Other songs on the album are more traditional intro-verse-chorus-middle-eight, so with this one we gave ourselves free rein to go wherever the music wanted to go without any preconceived ideas. The very first thing you hear in the song is this keyboard riff. I remember writing that riff not on the guitar, but on a laptop in Logic. Weirdly enough I was sitting on the sofa and *Antiques Roadshow* was on TV — Fiona Bruce probably inspired that riff. When I presented it to the guys, Diego on keyboards added these lush soundscapes, and Connor and Ray in the rhythm section did these glitchy, trip-hop rhythms that don't really repeat themselves. From my initial idea, I could never have guessed where it would have gone. That's the fun of working in a band, these guys have great ideas you'd never have thought of."

Who influenced your songwriting approach?

"For this album, we were looking at the 80s albums from King Crimson, and we listened to Toto a lot. We'll always have that 70s Gentle Giant influence but also film score composers like Hans Zimmer and John Williams, we take a lot from them in terms of the epic scale they create with just a couple of chords and a well-chosen melody. We love Vince DiCola, he wrote the *Rocky IV* soundtrack and his other claim to fame is *The Transformers: The Movie*, the cartoon version in the 80s. That has one of the most amazing soundtracks ever. I rewatched it again recently and the actual movie was not as good as I remember but the music is still phenomenal. We've messed

around with it in the past just for fun, we say to Diego, 'Do the Optimus Prime theme.' It's so prog, it's just amazing."

Do you feel a responsibility to carry the torch for prog?

"Yeah. We're still fans at the end of the day, that's really what we are, just fans of the music that have fun playing it. Mike Portnoy brought us out on tour with The Neal Morse Band, so we try to help upcoming bands by giving them gigs or trying to help them in any way we can. We do feel that responsibility to nurture the genre in the same way that someone like Mike Portnoy did." **DW**



PRESS

67

Once Around The World

IT BITES

from **ONCE AROUND THE WORLD** (Virgin, 1988)



This 14-minute, day-in-the-life opus puts these Cumbrian prog pups' earlier pop flirtations to bed on their all-grown-up second album, but it's still pinned together by a cracking riff hook and

swoonsomely melodic climax. **JS**

You say: "If you love prog you should love It Bites, who showed with this that beneath their pop leanings were a true prog band." **Dave Wallace**

66

Milliontown

FROST*

from **MILLIONTOWN** (InsideOut, 2006)



The moment when these fervent prog modernists set out their stall in no uncertain terms,

Milliontown is 26 minutes of densely-layered musical ideas and deftly expressed disquiet. The last eight minutes are simply spectacular. **DL**
You say: "It's melodic, it's upbeat, it's thoughtful, it's energetic, it's complex, and most importantly, it's fun." **Chapel Collins**

65

Stardust We Are

THE FLOWER KINGS

from **STARDUST WE ARE** (InsideOut, 1997)



The Flower Kings have never bettered this dazzling 25-minute explosion of razor-sharp melody and electrifying ensemble bravado. Roine Stolt sings of 'The cry of love, the spark of life...' and existential angst never felt so good. **DL**

You say: "Who said the 70s had all the biggest and best tunes? Roine Stolt was keeping the flag flying throughout the dark times of the 90s."

Cal Collinwood

64

Blind Curve

MARILLION

from **MISPLACED CHILDHOOD** (EMI, 1985)



Misplaced Childhood's intimate confessions reach white heat on the five-song suite which anchors its second half. Fish covers death, drunkenness, journalists and other horrors of existence on neo-prog's lush yet fiery masterpiece. **CR**

You say: "I'd rather nominate the whole of *Misplaced Childhood*, but if I have to pick one track alone, *Blind Curve* it is." **Stefan Kamphausen**

63

Yours Is No Disgrace

YES

from **THE YES ALBUM** (Atlantic, 1971)



From the opening 'Big Country' chords, this song left behind the group's cover versions and post-psychedelic vamps, and with its juggernaut bass and elongated intricate melodic structure, introduced the real Yes. **MBA**

You say: "The very first prog rock track I heard and it stopped me in my tracks and blew my mind."

Ken Lamb



GETTY IMAGES

62 Natural Science

RUSH

from **PERMANENT WAVES**
(Anthem, 1980)



The imperious climax to 1980's *Permanent Waves*, this elaborate study of mankind's deathless pursuit of progress bridges the gap between Rush's wizard-friendly prog rock past and their streamlined radio rock future. **DL**

You say: "Probably one of the prettiest openings for a Rush song. The musicianship and writing in this are absolutely top-notch." **John Speicher**

61 Wish You Were Here

PINK FLOYD

from **WISH YOU WERE HERE** (Harvest, 1975)



The whistling AM radio, the laconic 12-string guitar, Gilmour plaintively delivering Waters'

devastating lament for their lost friend Syd. Everything that made this partnership work in five-and-a-half perfect minutes. **GM**

You say: "A bittersweet track, lamenting for the good times had with Syd Barrett while he was still in the band. Very beautiful..." **Jeff Haas**

60 Ghosts Of Perdition

OPETH

from **GHOST REVERIES** (Roadrunner, 2005)



The zenith of Opeth's progressive death metal phase, *Ghost Reveries*' opening salvo combines

the juddering complexity of post-Meshuggah metal with the melodic finesse of prog's golden age. Simply glorious. **DL**

You say: "The perfect blend of death metal, classic prog and psychedelic rock." **Geert van der Plas**

59 Visions

HAKEN

from **VISIONS** (Sensory, 2011)



Passing the 20-minute mark for the first time, Haken proved their credentials as modern prog heavyweights with this idiosyncratic sonic sprawl. Both pleasingly authentic and joyously subversive, it's modern prog done right. **DL**

You say: "It moves so quickly, covers so many moods and tones, and rounds out both the song and the album with an incredibly satisfying finale."

Chapel Collins

58 Ancestral

STEVEN WILSON

from **HAND. CANNOT. ERASE.**
(Kscope, 2015)



At first, *Ancestral* twitches and whirrs with post-industrial menace, all rumbling bass and tense, isolated voices shimmering in the foreground. Then it erupts into whole-hog progressive splendour: a master at work. **DL**

You say: "Wilson reinvents himself, and to a certain extent the genre, with each new album. This is his masterpiece bar none."

Jonathan Watkiss

57 The Leavers

MARILLION

from **FEAR** (earMusic, 2016)



19 minutes of elegant disquiet and hazy beauty, *The Leavers* provided last year's *FEAR* album with a vivid, densely-layered centrepiece. It also reaffirms that Marillion are undisputed heavyweights of the modern prog era. **DL**

You say: "Such an amazing track from *FEAR*. The last part will take you all the way back to 1985." **Tony Furringer**

56 Cassandra Gemini

THE MARS VOLTA

from **FRANCES THE MUTE**
(Gold Standard Laboratories, 2005)



On *Frances The Mute*, Omar, Cedric and the band channel the long-form exploration of Crimson and Miles with this breathless, half-hour explosion of sustained creativity. Whatever 'A Mink handjob in sarcophagus heels' is, we're game... **GM**

You say: "A blistering maelstrom of 8/8, 5/8, 6/8, 7/8 and 9/8 assaults your mind within the first 12 seconds!" **Harrison Crane**

55 Shadowplay

FISH

from **INTERNAL EXILE** (Polydor, 1991)



A grand example of Derek Dick at his fuming, articulate best, *Shadowplay* is an act of incensed

retaliation, blessed with a neatly insistent refrain and a truly spine-tingling mid-song breakdown. **DL**

You say: "The big man proves that there was life after Marillion. His solo career never sounded better."

Iain McMillan

54 Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence

DREAM THEATER

from **SIX DEGREES OF INNER TURBULENCE**
(Elektra, 2002)



Not so much a song as a full-blown 40-minute symphony in eight neatly interlocking parts, *Six*

Degrees Of Inner Turbulence strikes a sublime balance between melody, bombast and poetic pathos. When Dream Theater go big, they go huge. **DL**

You say: "I may be shunned for this, but for me it is *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence*. It has everything I have ever wanted in a prog epic."

Dave Miller

"Faucet leaks in shadows, spilling from morgue lancet,
caressed your fontanelle..."

53 Epitaph

KING CRIMSON

from **IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING** (Island Records, 1969)



This despairing view from the apocalyptic edge seems as relevant now as when it was first released. Brooding musicality and Greg Lake's superb vocals lend Peter Sinfield's pessimistic lyrics an astonishing potency. **SS**
You say: "What more can be said. The firstest and the bestest? A masterpiece. That will do. At a meager 8:47, pretty darn short." **Alex De Luca**

52

Atom Heart Mother

PINK FLOYD

from **ATOM HEART MOTHER** (Harvest, 1970)



The Atom Heart Mother Suite

provides the fulcrum for Pink Floyd's catalogue, as they left the space rock shadows behind and stood on their own two feet. It created a template for both *Echoes* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. **DEA**

You say: "The cow gets more love than the album, but this showed Floyd had more ambition than the competition."

Roy Parsons

51

Arriving Somewhere But Not Here

PORCUPINE TREE

from **DEADWING** (Lava, 2005)



*Arriving Somewhere... is the brooding, thematic heart of Porcupine Tree's *Deadwing* album. A cinematic contemplation of uncertain fate, it's by turns moody and atmospheric, hooky and heavy, with guest Mikael Åkerfeldt adding a compelling guitar solo. **GM***

You say: "Floaty, but menacing as hell... and the lyrics sound like what you think when you are dying."

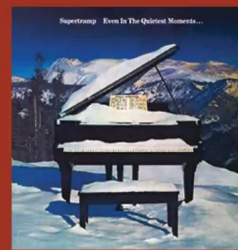
Andy Thunders

50

Fool's Overture

SUPERTRAMP

from **EVEN IN THE QUIETEST MOMENTS** (A&M, 1977)



"The art of being an artist is to get out of the way and let something greater than our small little selves take control and run the show," says Roger Hodgson, the man behind Supertramp classics including *The Logical Song*, *Dreamer*, *Breakfast In America* and *Fool's Overture*.

The latter song stands as the most ambitious work in Supertramp and Hodgson's impressive catalogue. *Try Again*, from their 1970 debut, might be slightly longer, but *Fool's Overture* has a far grander scope and sweep, composed of three movements bound together by William Blake's hymn *Jerusalem* and the voice of Winston Churchill.

"It was unlike other songs I've written, where I have a seed of inspiration that comes to me and then for two or three weeks I'm consumed by it – I have to play it every moment I get and it slowly becomes the completed song," says Hodgson. "But with *Fool's Overture*, I had various pieces of instrumental music for a few years that I didn't really know what to do with. They weren't songs within themselves and then one magical day I realised these pieces of music belong together."

The track reveals the breadth of influences that inform Hodgson's writing, from being a teenager

watching The Beatles conquer the world, to the classical music on the curriculum at school. "You talk about progressive, they were the first progressive band," says Hodgson about the Fab Four. "Every album was so courageous in its experimentation. They changed my life when I saw what they did for the world."

On the classical front, Hodgson picks out Debussy and Holst as inspirations. "Holst's *The Planets*, I remember listening to that whole thing many, many times thinking, 'Wow, what a concept!' There's a piece stolen from Holst on the introduction of *Fool's Overture*," he says. "*The Planets* sowed the seeds in me for seeing albums as a whole complete journey, a listening experience."

The song was written and recorded using an Elka Rhapsody String Machine, an early synthesiser whose distinctive sound was a vital element in Hodgson's creative alchemy. "I love just letting myself go into the sound of an instrument," he says. "I just sink into it and before I knew it there was nothing of me there. It was almost like meditating before I even knew what the word meditation meant. That's when magic happens."

There's a distinctly British flavour to *Fool's Overture*, although the song and the album it appeared on, *Even In The Quietest*

Moments, were recorded after the band relocated from the UK to California.

"My songwriting was always very personal," says Hodgson. "I was born in 1950, the aftermath, the after-aura if you like, of the Second World War, so I remember hearing Churchill when I was young. I remember singing *Jerusalem* at boarding school and loving it, and wondering if Jesus ever set foot on the English shores like the hymn spoke about."

Hodgson's lyrics rival William Blake for grandeur, dealing with the decline of humankind in truly Biblical fashion – '*History recalls how great the fall can be*,' is the cataclysmic opening line.

"Looking at *Fool's Overture*, I realised I don't want to really put a meaning on it," he says. "It really was a collage of ideas, of different historical events and everyone gets something different out of it. I don't want to limit it to my interpretation because even my interpretation will change weekly."

Forty years after he recorded the song, *Fool's Overture* remains an integral part of Hodgson's live sets, whether he's playing with his own band or backed by a full orchestra as part of *Night Of The Proms*. "I remember when I wrote it, I dreamed of one day playing it with an orchestra so every time I do it's electrifying. There's nothing like it. It sounds just humongous," he says.

The passing decades have done nothing to diminish Hodgson's enjoyment in performing his magnum opus. "Music is one of the most powerful forces in the world and you can do anything with it. I witness it every tour. I go out and play these songs, I never get tired of them and they don't feel old, they feel very current and alive and relevant. They have a quality to them, I can feel the audience really has a relationship with them beyond 'Oh, that's a nice song I listened to 30 years ago.' I love to design a set that's going to take people from how they feel when they come in the hall and then unify them and take them on a journey. *Fool's Overture* is like a journey in itself within the show and it takes me on a journey every time. It still gives me goosebumps to this day." **DW**

You say: "They are forgotten as an excellent prog group before becoming (too) commercial."
Aernout Bok

49

The Baying Of The Hounds

OPETH

from **GHOST REVERIES** (Roadrunner, 2005)



A ferociously devilish cut, summoning hell's most cantankerous canines via its slaverling growl — testament to the prog metallers' return to breathtaking metallic form after a mid-noughties acoustic diversion. **JS**

You say: "The sound of a band on the tipping point of becoming fully-fledged prog heroes." **Illie Vasile**

48

Ocean Cloud

MARILLION

from **MARBLES** (Intact, 2004)



Steve Hogarth takes the true tale of a transatlantic rower battling nature and man's own limitations, and injects a sense of escape from romantic travails and male insecurities. And as the sky grows darker towards the end of a suitably ebbing and flowing 17-minuter, you'll share the satisfying buzz of a misfit's revenge. **JS**

You say: "Like a prog epic out of the mid-to-late 1970s. There's no denying it would be considered a bonafide masterpiece of prog, had it been released then." **Michael de Socio**

47

Cockroach King

HAKEN

from **THE MOUNTAIN** (InsideOut, 2013)



An absolute monster of a track from a band tipped to carry the prog flag for the next generation, *Cockroach King* is practically a compendium of progressive rock from the 1960s to the present. There are the Queen-style acapella vocals [*Surely you mean Gentle Giant? - Ed*], a jazzy dialogue between piano and bass, Frank Zappa-style weirdness, and drop-tuned, djent-inflected riff crunching. *Cockroach King* epitomises the essence of progressive music — the desire to test the limits of players and genre alike. **DW**

You say: "Haken take prog metal on a complete different journey to that of Dream Theater, Devin Townsend, Opeth, etc..." **Phil Hindle**

46

Stranger In Your Soul

TRANSATLANTIC

from **BRIDGE ACROSS FOREVER** (Metal Blade, 2001)



From their second (and, for many, best) album *Bridge Across Forever* comes this typically understated

30-minute, six-part prog tour de force from Morse, Portnoy, Stolt and Trewavas. Rich harmonies, odd time signatures, dazzling instrumental passages, Mini Moogs and mandolins bring colour, as Morse enjoins you to achieve spiritual fulfilment through knowing thyself. **GM**

You say: "It has the build-up, the breakdown, the instrumental madness that all prog epics should have, but it's far from a painting-by-numbers job."

Joost Nickus

45

East Coast Racer

BIG BIG TRAIN

from **ENGLISH ELECTRIC PART TWO** (English Electric/GEP, 2013)



Don't try to explain Big Big Train's unique appeal — just drop the needle on the 15-plus minute epic that opens *English Electric Part Two*. Here they take the story of the Mallard — the steam train that set the world record speed in 1938 — and from it engineer an exhilarating, wistful, lovingly detailed masterpiece. **GM**

You say: "Big, big sound with brass and strings. English storytelling at its best with an amazing climax." **Tim D**

Below: all aboard the Big Big Train!



BBTPRESS/ADAM PROSSER

44

Routine

STEVEN WILSON

from **HAND. CANNOT. ERASE.** (Kscope, 2015)



Wilson chooses a softly Floydian lament to reflect the way we cling to daily habits to fend off deeper fears and anxieties. After a wistful opening, an understated yet still sublime Guthrie Govan guitar solo somehow makes ennui sound beautiful before guest vocalist Ninet Tayeb raises the emotional pitch with a vocal crackling with disquiet. **JS**

You say: "Amazing vocals added to beautiful lyrics." **Lori Hull**

43

Neverland

MARILLION

from **MARBLES** (Intact, 2004)



Amid an album full of angst, this track from *Marbles* is a rare beast — an unashamed love song. Then, slowly but surely, the guilt and self-doubt creep back in. Thankfully, we have a gorgeously drifting soundtrack to accompany it, sweetened by some gobsmacking instrumental cloud-surfing from Steve Rothery. **JS**

You say: "That big crash at about 4:30 is the most incredible thing live. Deep, real emotion and Steve Hogarth really lives this song." **David Dyte**

"His words are flies, swarming towards the true insects..."

42

Larks' Tongues In Aspic, Part One

KING CRIMSON

from **LARKS' TONGUES IN ASPIC** (Island, 1973)

"IT'S CHALLENGING STUFF."

King Crimson violinist Dave Cross recalls making *LTIA* pt 1...

Larks'... came about from various group improvisations and ideas.

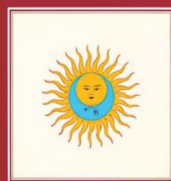
Did you wonder how audiences might react to your sound?

"When that band kicked off it was very much about doing something new. It was only as the first date was imminent that everybody started thinking about what the audience might think of it, but by then, it was too late to worry."

Percussionist Jamie Muir came up with the title of the track.

What was he like to work with?

"Jamie's onstage persona never manifested itself in rehearsals so it wasn't just the punters who were shocked by his performance art



The first of a four-part work, this instrumental is heavily inspired by Vaughan Williams' classical masterpiece *The Lark Ascending*. From the lengthy percussive intro to Robert Fripp's prominent guitar passion bordering on metal, and David Cross' violin virtuosity, it encapsulates Crimson's early 70s imagination. Typical of the band's educated fire. **MD**

You say: "The template for prog metal, djent and experimental rock. As vital as ever." **Marc Malitz**

antics. He was fond of flailing heavy chains across his kit and spitting fake blood over the audience. Wonderful stuff but it came out of the blue."

This was your first time recording an album...

"It was a great learning experience just to be around what was going on. I'd never been in a major studio with people who knew what they were doing. Bill, John and Robert, they'd all been there before."

What do you recall about the recording of the track itself?

"I think there was an element of it being grown. I remember it being constructed in short bursts. In all sorts of ways I think that was quite difficult. Could something that worked on stage be sustained on record? Those long intricate guitar passages are quite complex and quite hard... it's challenging stuff to listen to."

Were you happy with the outcome?

"It has a kind of thinness in some senses, things like Fripp not wanting to put too much reverb on. He was fairly insistent on doing that with the violin, for instance. I fought against that but he kept trying to persuade me how much better it was without reverb. I guess he felt that it sounded more in your face and more powerful, more direct."

That incarnation of Crimson is famed for its musical telepathy...

"I think the music that came out of Crimson was purely a result of people being prepared to listen to each other even though they didn't come necessarily from the same branch of the tree." **SS**



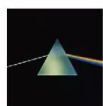
DGM/LIVE/KING CRIMSON PRESS

41

Time

PINK FLOYD

from **THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON** (Harvest, 1973)



An opening cacophony of horological chiming reminds us that Floyd weren't afraid of being

literal with their sound effects. A drum machine, Nick Mason's octobans and tolling chords mark out the tempo, before it gearshifts into one of their most impassioned songs. **MBA**

You say: "The chiming clocks are guaranteed to interrupt anybody's mellow moment. Typical Floyd."

Faris M

Above: King Crimson with David Cross (second from right).

40

The Raven That Refused To Sing

STEVEN WILSON

from **THE RAVEN THAT REFUSED TO SING (AND OTHER STORIES)** (Kscope, 2013)



The album which established Wilson as prog's current leading light, with Porcupine Tree paused,

explored dark, supernatural themes. Engineered by Alan Parsons, its diverse art rock nuances culminate in this finale: a soulful piano ballad which deepens with strings and guitars until the atmosphere feels like Lennon singing for Spiritualized. Poe-tent. **CR**

You say: "Mr Wilson's singing is the best it has ever been (so far). Almost Frank Sinatra-like." **'demondebs'**

39

The Revealing Science Of God (Dance Of The Dawn)

YES

from **TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS** (Atlantic, 1973)



This 20-minute-plus epic combines religious imagery with lyricism about the ongoing Vietnam War. The

band are in a highly experimental state, with Jon Anderson building his vocals into a Gregorian choral chant, while Steve Howe's fluent guitar solo has an existential feel. Breathtaking and bold, this is inspired. **MD**

You say: "Greatest lyrics and possibly the greatest Mellotron song ever."

Alexi Kaltto

38

Mocking Bird

BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST

from **ONCE AGAIN** (Harvest, 1971)



Who says prog rock can't do yearning love songs? John Lees' plaintive piece might be a lullaby to a child

or a stormy epic about a relationship pulled apart. Though initially intimate, Robert John Godfrey's rhapsodic, orchestral fantasia lend the song a surging, widescreen drama.

A cornerstone of BJH's career. **SS**

You say: "Absolutely beautiful – the first and greatest symphonic prog song." **Francis Sorren**

37

Crystallised

HAKEN

from **RESTORATION** EP (InsideOut, 2014)



A prodigiously sprawling work from the London sextet, expressing the breadth of their influences

and the scope of their ambitions. Like a prog black hole absorbing everything around it, *Crystallised* pulls in Canterbury folk, weird funk, and heavy syncopated riffs worthy of Tool, all bundled up with a mammoth chorus. **DW**

You say: "Everything from emotionally-moving lyrics and lightning fast but still melodic guitar solos, to complex experimental passages and beautiful vocal harmonies." **Herman Klug**

36

Carpet Crawlers

GENESIS

from **THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY** (Charisma, 1974)



Intimate yet apocalyptic, the way Peter Gabriel creates a surreal image of the main character Rael



Dream Theater: "One of modern prog's true standard bearers."

dealing with ascending through mental levels towards a mirage of aspiration is astonishing. Gabriel's vocals are sparsely parched, set against a lilting piano background from Tony Banks. It has a cunningly simple pop tune. **MD**

You say: "They most beautiful and haunting song Genesis (and I'm tempted to say anyone) have ever made." **Pablo Alvarez**

35

Fugazi

MARILLION

from **FUGAZI** (EMI, 1984)



Prophets, visionaries and poets everywhere heard Fish's rallying call as Marillion's gold-certified

second album found a way to bring fresh 80s attack to classic prog complexity, drama and wordplay. Music hadn't witnessed melodrama like this since Gabriel was wearing fox heads. Impeccably indulgent, and at the vanguard of prog's second coming. **CR**

You say: "The classic line-up of Marillion at their angry, claustrophobic best." **Simon Cask**

34

Metropolis Part 1: "The Miracle And The Sleeper"

DREAM THEATER

from **IMAGES AND WORDS** (Atlantic, 1992)



A defining early statement from one of modern prog's true standard bearers. Initially, they channel

power metal melodrama with help from James LaBrie's piercing operatic howl, before Mike Portnoy's scattergun bass drum and John Petrucci's sparky fretwork show us something more intriguing is afoot, and by the time they waded into hopscotching jazz rock waters, anything seems possible. **JS**

You say: "Nowhere is Dream Theater's musical interplay demonstrated better than this. It's nine-and-a-half minutes of pure progressive extravagance."

Matthew Sielaff

33

La Villa Strangiato

RUSH

from **HEMISPHERES** (Mercury, 1978)



Subtitled *An Exercise In Self-Indulgence*, this is Rush's first purely instrumental track.

Divided into 12 sections, it is inspired by a dream Alex Lifeson had. It rises from a gentle guitar opening through increasing complexity, climaxing with a phased rhythmic drive that ends abruptly, rather like waking from a dream. **MD**

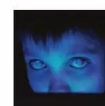
You say: "One of the most powerful musical moments in the band's history with Alex's soulful guitar solo taking centre stage, and crazy cool, finger snapping jazz breaks for good measure." **James Davies**

32

Anesthetize

PORCUPINE TREE

from **FEAR OF A BLANK PLANET** (Roadrunner, 2007)



A supremely moody piece digs into the emptiness at the heart of a technologically spoilt,

emotionally starved generation in the 17-minute centrepiece of *Fear of a Blank Planet*. Alex Lifeson's guest solo adds an extra touch of class, but Wilson bleats 'I'm totally bored but I can't switch off.' In contrast, we're pretty much consumed from beginning to end. **JS**

You say: "One of Porcupine Tree's most epic songs. It takes the listener from a calm but dark melody to an angry metal anthem and back to a sorrowful gentle tune."

Daniel Jaramillo

"Son watches father scan obituary columns in search of absent school friends
While his generation digests high fibre ignorance."

31

The Whirlwind

TRANSATLANTIC

from **THE WHIRLWIND** (InsideOut, 2009)



Modern prog's premier supergroup return from their hiatus with Neal Morse's religiously charged

lyrics more prominent than ever on a 77-minute super-suite. Yet the transcendent choruses and gobsmacking instrumental mazes retain infinite depths that can stir even the most secular of souls — no bland or preachy 'Christian rock' here. **JS**

You say: "Neal Morse's writing, the meaning behind it, and it all coming together at the end is nothing short of genius." **Phil Windle**

30

Grendel B-side

MARILLION

from **MARKET SQUARE HEROES 12"** (EMI, 1982)



Sure, it might be a little too close structurally to *Supper's Ready*, but Marillion's epic update of

the Beowulf myth has a manic spirit all its own. Originally released as the B-side to the band's debut single, *Market Square Heroes*, the intricate, 17-minute *Grendel* is the polar opposite of that song's compact modern-day angst. Intricate and mystical, it remains legendary in every sense. **DEV**

You say: "My introduction to Marillion when I heard it on Tommy Vance's Rock Show on Radio 1. I bought the 12" single the next day, and have continued to buy just about everything they have released since."

Ken Lansdowne

29

The Musical Box

GENESIS

from **NURSERY CRIME** (Charisma, 1971)



Pastoral elements embodied by the rippling guitars and wistful flute belie the horror buried below the



Seeing Red: Tool.

surface in this complex allegory of sexual repression and attempted spectral incest. Like all the best ghost stories, Genesis skillfully guide us from a sense of unease into a sudden fall and climactic resolution. **SS**

You say: "From Peter Gabriel's theatrics and imagery to the construction of the song, this set the template for the rest of the Gabriel-era Genesis material." **Eric Beaudin**

28

Dogs

PINK FLOYD

from **ANIMALS** (Harvest, 1977)



A composition that Pink Floyd first started work on in 1974, this was originally going to be titled

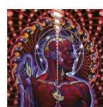
You've Got To Be Crazy. But this was altered to fit into the concept on *Animals*. This tackles the way in which big business turns people into raging dogs. It manages to be both dispassionate yet also angry. At a time when punk was high profile, Floyd successfully merge progressive notations with bile and vitriol. **MD**
You say: "So dark and dreamlike at the same time." **Jeremy McMillan**

27

Lateralus

TOOL

from **LATERALUS** (Volcano, 2001)



Only Tool could pen a labyrinthine skronkmetal exploration inspired by mathematical phenomenon, the Fibonacci integer sequence. As Maynard Keenan urges us to "swing on the spiral of our divinity", his band stretch out across nine mesmerising minutes of vivid geometric hallucinations. Maths + prog = triumph. **DL**

You say: "Math and Tool make for one proggy combination." **Manas Sharma**

26

And You And I

YES

from **CLOSE TO THE EDGE** (Atlantic, 1972)



One of the last times Yes all wrote together in the same room, *And You And I* is a prime example of their ability to create coherent structures

from disparate elements. Steve Howe's acoustic chord sequences — the first step for many a budding progger — and Jon Anderson's vocal lines come up against Squire and Bruford's slow monolithic *Eclipse* section, inspiring the ensemble onto spectacular melodic peaks with synth, mellotron and sweeping pedal steel. **MBA**

You say: "Almost the pinnacle of prog." **Paul Swanton**

25

The Invisible Man

MARILLION

from **MARBLES** (Intact, 2004)



Take what you will lyrically from *Marbles*' opening track — a relationship of neglect, the impersonal, powerless

nature of modern life, or a timeless sci-fi concept of a dead man walking. Either way, its sense of alienated yearning and gentle despondency makes for one of the band's most emotionally stirring quarter-hours. **JS**

You say: "A multi-sectioned song which takes one on a journey of despair, hopelessness and loss."

Wilton Said

24

Xanadu

RUSH

from **A FAREWELL TO KINGS**

(Mercury, 1977)



Be careful what you wish for is the message behind Rush's cautionary tale of the unlucky fellow who

discovers the secret to eternal life only to long for death. It's a gloriously ambitious composition with the group adding tubular bells, a glockenspiel, and synthesisers aplenty to their power trio sound. **DW**

You say: "Who needs Samuel Taylor Coleridge when you've got Lee, Lifeson and Peart? Kublai Khan would be proud at the luxury of this classic."

Steven Morton

23

Lady Fantasy

CAMEL

from **MIRAGE** (Deram, 1974)



One of the band's most renowned compositions, it tells the story of an unrequited love interest.

"And after a while, you can work on points for style, like the club tie and the firm handshake..."

Now, this might seem a trite notion for band of Camel's sensibilities, but it's used as a framework on which is built a majestic musical journey. Andrew Latimer's thrusting guitar evocation is a counterpoint to his softly mournful vocal tone. And Peter Bardens' keyboards have a dream-like quality, helping to shape a signature triumph. **MD**

You say: "I love everything about this track: all four members' playing, the lyrics, the hard rocking finale. Grade A prog." **Jonathan 'JS'**

22 Roundabout

YES
from **FRAGILE** (Atlantic, 1971)



Bookended by Steve Howe's acoustic guitar, powered by Chris Squire's knotty bass line and newcomer Rick Wakeman's chunky keyboards, *Roundabout* took Yes into bold, new territory — namely the singles chart. It's hardly surprising; the structure may be labyrinthine and the musicianship shamelessly grandiose, but the refrain is hugely, irresistibly infectious. **DW**

You say: "It contains musical complexity while continuing to be the perfect introductory song into the fantastic world of prog..."

Regan Fox

21 A Change Of Seasons

DREAM THEATER
from **A CHANGE OF SEASONS EP**
(EastWest, 1995)



Originally mooted for inclusion on the band's breakthrough album *Images And Words*, Dream Theater's *A Change Of Seasons* more than holds its own as a stand-alone work. Inspired by the death of then-drummer Mike Portnoy's mother, it's a meticulously crafted exploration of prog metal's outer limits, embellished with dialogue taken from the film *Dead Poet's Society* and executed with Dream Theater's customary grace and precision. **DL**

You say: "The epic prog piece against which all others ought be measured. Masterfully crafted, both musically and lyrically, it conveys to the hearer a message of loss and hope." **Chris Files**

20 Tarkus

ELP
from **TARKUS** (Island, 1971)



Tarkus is ELP in excelsis, a 20 minute suite with Keith Emerson's Alberto Ginastera-inspired 5/8 instrumental passages linking three Greg Lake songs. It features some of the trio's most spontaneous playing on *Mass* and the majestic King Crimson-ish ballad, *Battlefield*. This musical tale of the life and death of a heavily armoured armadillo — that's prog for you — is vividly captured by engineer Eddy Offord on the group's most exciting recording. **MBA**

You say: "Super musicianship. Not one single note too many."

Jean Claude Van Crae

19 Cygnus X-I Book II: Hemispheres

RUSH
from **HEMISPHERES** (Mercury, 1978)



This six-part 18-minute suite was a continuation of *Book I: The Voyage* on previous album *A Farewell To Kings*. The second season didn't disappoint. Our explorer emerges from a black hole into Olympus, witnessing conflicts between Apollo and Dionysus. After fleet-footed power trio dynamics and what might briefly be a 19/8 time signature, he winds up as Cygnus, the God of Balance. A prog watershed: after this, Rush went radio-friendly. **CR**

You say: "The 'rock-out' at the end with the two off-beat China Cymbal smashes and the final flails around the kit is simply air-drummer heaven."

Jon Dahms

18 Karn Evil 9

ELP
from **BRAIN SALAD SURGERY**
(Manticore, 1973)



Arguably ELP's pivotal composition, this is close to 30 minutes long. The title is a variation on 'Carnival', and is divided into three parts. The first is about a futuristic world, where evil has been eradicated, but its memory is preserved in a travelling carnival. The second is

THE THRILL OF THE CHASE

How did we discover classic songs and albums in prog's pre-internet early days? Sid Smith looks back...

Here in the age of the mouseclick, being a music fan has a lot going for it: one tap and an entire discography can be ready to start filling your ears in a matter of seconds. Another click and you can read just about every single fact there is to know about a band you've just discovered perhaps only minutes before. Want to know what they're like in concert? There's a video for that! There's never been as much music available as there is now. In the age of plenty it's all there on a plate. The downside to these unprecedented amounts of near-industrial acquisition can be a jaded palate and musical indigestion.

During a typical week in the life of a music fan in the 1970s, things were much slower and subject to chance. Aside from *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, progressive music on television was a rarity. Stumbling across the Mahavishnu Orchestra performing tracks from the recently released *The Inner Mounting Flame* on a 1972 edition of *BBC In Concert* one evening felt like a religious experience. Seeing Hawkwind's *Silver Machine* landing on *Top Of The Pops*, a show we normally detested for its middle of the road menu, felt like a victory for the underdog. There was no inkling that these things might occur. To witness them felt special, bordering on the surreal.

Grabbing off-air recordings of in-session appearances on John Peel was a common occurrence because not every band you liked had a record contract. Nearly two years passed between my taping of National Health's appearance and the release of their debut album. And when they did arrive, aside from Virgin's stunts with albums that cost the price of a single, buying LPs was not cheap. A combination of cost and limited access meant things had to be savoured, usually while standing in your nearest hippie-orientated record shop where they didn't mind playing you side two of *Foxtrot* in its entirety. There's nothing like scarcity to make you really savour what's in front of you.

OK. This could be all be dismissed as an old fart droning on about 'the good old days'. However, there's something about the thrill of the chase. Finding new music was like a blind date that blossoms into an intense, passionate love affair. There was always a sense of anticipation that came from such chance encounters that just might change your life forever. **SS**

virtually an instrumental section, leading to the final passage which tells of a war between humans and computers. It is remarkably verbose and charismatic. **MD**

You say: "A song that managed to have a FM classic extracted from it that works on its own."

Garrett Lechowski

Below: Emerson, Lake & Palmer are staking their claim in this list...



THE PROG INTERVIEW

STEVE ROTHERY

The *Prog* Interview is just that: an up-close and personal grilling of some of the biggest names in music. This time around, and to celebrate their placement throughout the 100 Greatest Prog Anthems, it's Marillion's Steve Rothery. The guitarist talks soundtracks, photography, his relationship with Fish and keeping your sanity in the music business...

Words: Mark Blake **Portrait:** Kevin Nixon

Steve Rothery nearly caught fire the first time he played a gig with Marillion. "The career could have ended there and then," he says matter-of-factly. That was 37 years ago. Marillion were still called Silmarillion, and making their debut appearance in front of one man and his dog (and a teenage Steven Wilson) at Berkhamsted Civic Centre in suburban Hertfordshire. But more on that story later...

In 2017, Steve Rothery and Marillion are still intact, and their impressive showing in the Top 100 Greatest Prog Anthems list illustrates the level of affection in which they're held. "I think Marillion appeal to people who are looking for something a bit more... maybe a bit deeper," offers

Rothery. "Something you can sink your teeth into."

An uncommonly grounded musician – the term 'rock star' feels inappropriate – Steve Rothery has manned his corner of the Marillion stage with understated efficiency and gentle virtuosity since 1980. Not for him the drink, drugs and divorce papers that have felled some of his heroes and contemporaries. "Everything has a price," he says philosophically.

Rothery is talking to *Prog* from Aylesbury, the Buckinghamshire town celebrated in Marillion's debut single, 1982's *Market Square Heroes* (that one's not in the Readers' 100). The 57-year-old guitarist, songwriter and, one suspects, Marillion's prog rock conscience, is a man still charmingly fascinated by music:

his own and other people's – especially Genesis and Camel's. But where did it all begin?

You were born in South Yorkshire and lived in North Yorkshire until you were nearly 20. Do you still consider yourself a Yorkshireman?

Deep down I probably do. I lived in Whitby until I was 19. But I've moved around so much since then, it's all started to get a bit blurred. My daughter and now my son were at university in York, and I spend a lot of time there. It's still one of my favourite places in the country.

What was the first music you remember listening to?

Like every one of my generation, I was exposed to The Beatles. My uncle still has a reel-to-reel tape recording of me singing a Beatles song, when I was three or four. Yes [puts on faux-serious voice], my earliest recording. But then I got really into film music when I was about 11 or 12.

What specific films?

I started listening to all the John Barry soundtracks for the James Bond films, and the score for *The Dam Busters*. I went deep into this stuff on vinyl. I also had an album called *Space Experience* by John

Keating. I think it was one of the first synthesiser records. That record got me really interested in synthesisers.

Are you a frustrated keyboard wizard, then?

Yes. I originally wanted to be a keyboard player. My parents considered buying a piano, but they couldn't get one – it wouldn't have fitted in the house. But after the film soundtracks and John Keating I got into rock music and guitars when I was 15 [in 1974].

What converted you?

I fell in love with Genesis after I heard *The Knife* on Alan Freeman's Saturday Rock show. After that, I discovered Camel, Yes, King Crimson...

Don't you think that Camel are the great unsung heroes of 70s prog rock?

Absolutely. Especially those early Camel albums. There's something magical about those records – a very special chemistry. They were a big influence. Really, my guitar playing is a mix of [Camel's] Andy Latimer, Steve Hackett and David Gilmour.

So you're not shy about mentioning those influences.

I have no problem being compared to them at all. They're the people whose music I grew up with. It's funny, because I know Andy Latimer and Steve Hackett really well now. David Gilmour, though... ummm...

Gilmour's a bit more remote, isn't he?

Yeah, he's up there in the stratosphere.

What was the first song you ever wrote?

I can't remember the name. I wrote bits when I lived in Whitby. I had a band with a friend of mine who had a complete Beatles fixation. We were

17

This Strange Engine

MARILLION

from *THIS STRANGE ENGINE* (Castle Communications, 1997)



It's ironic that while Marillion largely steered away from the traditional double-digit prog epic during the Fish years (*Grendel* aside, of course), the Hogarth-era has brought a whole clutch of them. Sitting at the top of the pile is *This Strange Engine*, which marries slowburning musical shifts to Steve Hogarth's emotional autobiographical narrative. At 15 minutes and 41 seconds, it's not a second too long or too short – and 'H' has never bared his soul quite so much. **DEV**

You say: "It has it all: narrative, key changes, tempo shifts... This is the song that cheers me up, that makes me cry with musical excitement and belief in humanity whenever I hear it." **Silje Haarr**

“There are still
some people
who think
Marillion are
a Scottish heavy
metal band.”



In His Element:
Steve Rothery.

The 100 Greatest Prog Anthems Of All Time

never going to get signed. I didn't really start writing until I moved down south to Aylesbury and joined Marillion.

What was the first piece of music you remember writing in Marillion, then?

Probably a song called *Close* which later became *The Web*. Then there was another track called *The Tower* which became part of *Grendel*.

What was your debut Marillion gig like?



MARILLION PRESS

Marillion with "the missing piece" Fish, centre.

It was in Berkhamsted [in the Civic Centre, March 1, 1980] and a very young Steven Wilson was in the audience. This was when we were still a four-piece before Fish joined. Our original bass player Doug [Irvine] was also the singer.

Were you any good?

It was... er... great. There were only a handful of people there. Something went wrong with the pyrotechnics. There was too much and I felt this sheet of flame shoot up my back. I was just happy to be gigging. That was the dream then – just to play live.

Aylesbury Friars was one of the great music venues. Bowie and

Genesis played there in the 70s and Marillion in the 80s. What was it like when you first arrived in town?

It was still in its heyday when I moved down. The music was incredible, and there was a real sense of community. You would go there even if you weren't nuts about the band playing that night. I remember seeing Camel on the *Nude* tour and King Crimson on the *Discipline* tour. I also saw The Police there a couple of times. The bands playing there were sometimes out of all proportion to the size of the venue.

What was your first impression of Fish?

Very tall and very Scottish. I had no problem understanding his

days nobody assumes the role of leader. Marillion really has become a democracy.

You mentioned your son and daughter. How important is family to you?

Very. My daughter Jennifer is a songwriter and recently moved to Brighton. My son, Michael, is in his third year studying computer science. My wife Jo and I celebrated our 30th anniversary last year.

Thirty years is going some in the music business. What's your secret?

Many things. Behaving yourself? Yes! [laughing] I married the right person, which is always a plus. Jo gave me a lot of love and

accent but not many people in the band could follow it. Obviously, he was very self-confident and very driven. You could hear his influences, but there was something distinctive about the way he blended them together. Even then he was a great lyricist. We knew we'd found the missing piece.

If Fish was very self-confident and driven, where did you fit into the band? How would you define Steve Rothery's role in Marillion?

In the early days I suppose I was the main musical writer, but I'm not naturally a pushy person. I'm not ego-driven. My focus has always been the music. These

support. Sometimes, when you're away on the road, and you've got a young family, it's like your partner becomes a single parent, and it takes someone quite dedicated to pull through that.

But is she a Marillion fan?

Yes, she really is. My son and daughter are as well. You get the sense everyone in the family understands the sacrifice. They get it.

You've always seemed like a very clean-living musician.

I've never been seduced by the rock'n'roll fantasy. That's not what's real for me. That's not what life's about.

"I originally wanted to be a keyboard player. My parents considered buying a piano, but they couldn't get one – it wouldn't have fitted in the house."

"Midnight suns bid moors farewell, retreats from charging dusk..."



You published a Marillion photo diary, *Postcards From The Road*, in 2016. Photography seems to be your only vice.

Yes. I've been interested in photography since I was about 14, when I used to wander around Whitby taking pictures. I had an old Zenit B SLR. Once I started earning a bit of money around the time of [Marillion debut album] *Script For A Jester's Tear*, I got myself a Pentax. I don't know what drives me to do it, but it's something I love.

Are you like everyone else these days, though, taking pictures on your iPhone?

I try to take a camera with me. But I've dragged huge camera bags around the world over the years, and you get sick of that. There are many times when the best camera is the one you've got with you — and that happens to be your phone. It's OK, as long as the light's good. If not, you will struggle.


You mentioned your love of soundtrack music growing up. Is it true Marillion were offered the soundtrack to *Highlander*? You turned it down and Queen got the gig instead?

Yes, apparently, that's what I was told. It was a management decision not to do it. We were touring the world at the time on the success of *Misplaced Childhood*. So there was no time. Fish got offered an acting role as well around then. It was one of those great 'What if's.

Would you still like to do a soundtrack?

Yes. I did some music for an American PBS documentary about bullying [the Emmy-winning *From The Heart* in 2014]. So it would be great to do another soundtrack. It doesn't have to be a big budget film — something interesting, maybe an art film.

What's it like being mates with Steve Hackett when you're an old Genesis fan?

We only became good friends about three years ago, and it's very strange hearing these stories about Genesis' old days when he's one of the reasons I picked up a guitar. We go to dinner quite regularly, and it often ends up with my wife Jo and his wife Jo down one end of the table and me and Steve at the other, talking guitars and world domination. 

GETTY

Marillion played *Cruise To The Edge* in 2014 and 2015. How is it being stuck at sea with a bunch of prog rock fans?

It's surreal — a bit *Twilight Zone*. Our fans are fantastic, but you are on a boat with all these people who share a common passion for this kind of music. And, let's face it, there are not that many of those people in the world, so to put them all together on a boat does warp the fabric of reality. But at the same time, it's a lot of fun, and we've met some lovely people.

Have Marillion ever had a mad fan or a stalker?

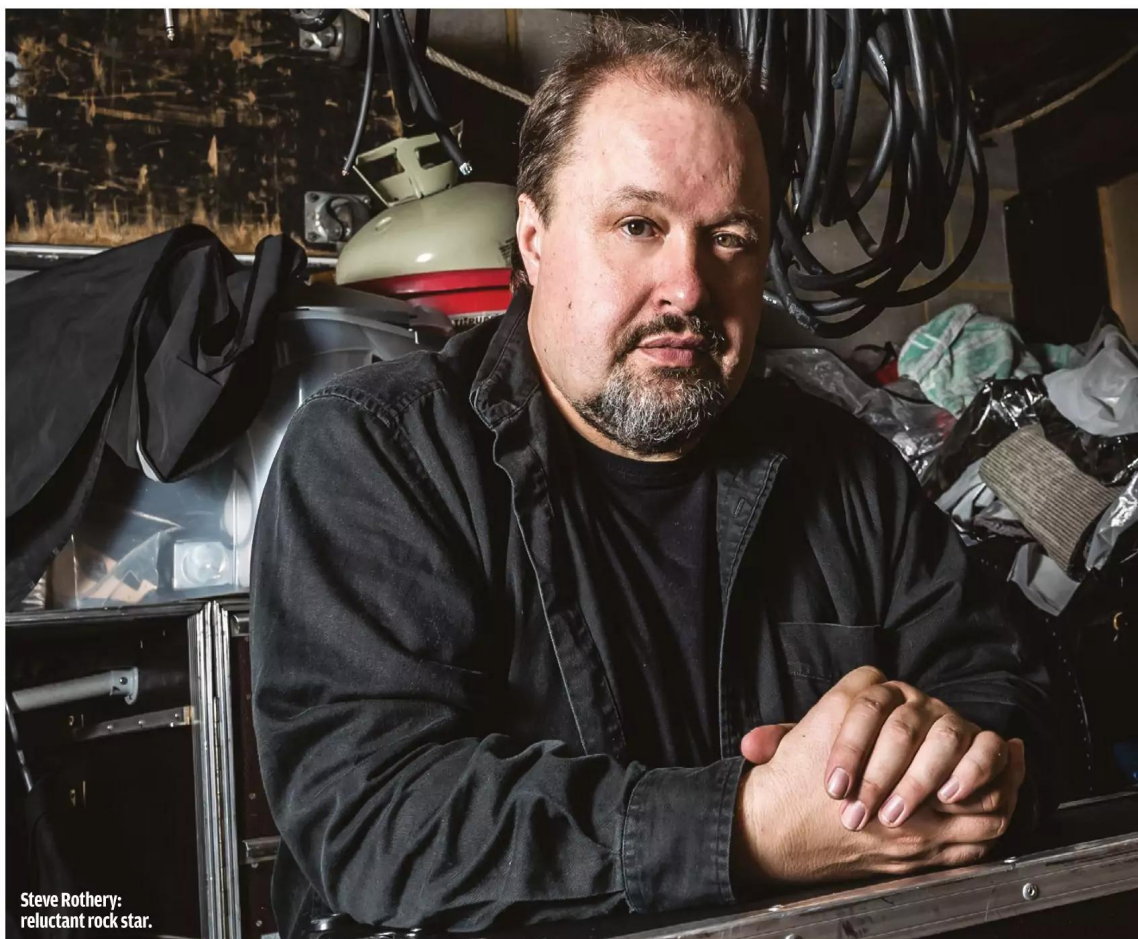
Very occasionally you get the scary ones. There was a girl in the 80s who used to write Fish letters in her own blood, and there was an American fan who you could imagine... er... having a John Lennon moment with. You have to be careful, but we been incredibly lucky.

It's been almost 30 years since Fish left. There was bad blood and recrimination at the time. But what lessons have you learned since then? Is there anything you'd have done differently?

Funnily enough, not so much to do with when Fish left. But more to do with what happened a few years later after we sacked our manager, John Arnison. This was around the time we were signed with Castle Communications [in the late 90s and 2000s]. I made a point of trying to understand the music industry, because when you're a musician in a band, that isn't the priority — the music is. So I read a few books about how this industry I'd been working in for 20 years actually worked.

What did you discover?

It gave me some perspective on how crazy our situation was in the 80s. We were selling out stadiums and having gold and platinum albums, but we'd seen very little of the money. There were various frustrations and things happening that could have been resolved by someone



Steve Hogarth:
reluctant rock star.

with a bit more vision and a clearer head.

So what you're saying is your manager let you down and you should be richer than you are?

Yes. We sold something like 10 million albums. We should all be in living in country piles with crunchy drives... But at the end of the day you have to look at where you are in your life, and put it all in perspective.

That must have hurt, though?

Yeah, at the same time, you can't help but feel a little... annoyed.

What was your first impression of Steve Hogarth?

Steve's music publishers Rondor sent us a cassette tape, and his voice reminded me of Paul Buchanan from The Blue Nile. When he came in though, we were rehearsing in [bassist] Pete's [Trewavas] garage. Pete has cats and Steve is allergic. So there was this short period when he sang a couple of things, and we were blown away by his voice, and then a lot of time spent talking outside in the freezing cold. When he was offered the job, he

had to go away and think about it — which we found quite strange and more than a little arrogant.

Don't you think his arrogance turned out to be a positive, though? Surely, better that than some Fish clone desperate to join Marillion?

Absolutely — and we auditioned enough of those to know that's not what we wanted. But Steve had also had an offer to play keyboards for The The — who were ultra-cool back then [1989], whereas we were as far away from ultra-cool as you could get.

If Marillion are having an argument does Hogarth ever lose his rag and go, "Christ! I could have been in The The"?

Ha! I'm sure he can imagine an alternative reality. But I think he'd gotten to the point where he was so disillusioned with the business he was thinking about walking away and becoming a postman in The Dales. In the end, it all worked out. We went down to the mushroom farm near Brighton to give it a go [write and demo 1989's *Season's End*], and the rest is history.

“

"I've never been seduced by the rock'n'roll fantasy. That's not what's real for me. That's not what life's about."

”

If music hadn't worked out as a career, what job would you have had?

Probably photography. It's the only other thing that's called to me in a similar way to music. When our original

"And ever since I was a boy I never felt that I belonged, like everything they did to me was an experiment to see..."



KEVIN NIXON

base player left, just before Fish joined, I went for a job interview at the National Film Archive in Aston Clinton [in Buckinghamshire]. That's the thing that could have diverted me off this path.

There are several Marillion songs in the Reader's Top 100. But if you were trying to convert a non-believer, what album would you play them?

The new one [2016's *F.E.A.R.*]. Of course [laughs]. I honestly think it's one of our best-crafted albums. *Afraid Of Sunlight* is another one of my favourites — a fantastic collection of songs, each one so different and not a weak song on there. A lot of people also like *Marbles*.

F.E.A.R. was your highest charting album since *Clutching At Straws* in 1987. Is the tide finally turning for Marillion?

We have seen things slowly turn around. Maybe because we're almost like the last men standing in the prog world. But I think you'll always have that thing if you had big success 30 odd years ago. Some people will always associate Marillion with Fish. There are still some people who think Marillion are a Scottish heavy metal band.

When you first heard Radiohead's *OK Computer* in 1997, did you not find it galling? There wasn't much difference between, say, *Karma Police* and some of the songs on '94's *Brave*. [Long pause] Yeah, it's funny isn't it when you see that photograph of very early Radiohead and there's a Marillion poster in the background...

But you can see the comparisons? No offence, but you're both groups of earnest men playing the same sort of music with what sounds like a lot of repressed emotion.

I know. But Radiohead managed to encapsulate whatever that 'student band' cool thing is, and it never seems to go away. I thought their new album [2016's *A Moon Shaped Pool*] had some great songs on it, and there is a great creative force there. But it's funny how some bands can do no wrong.

I get the impression that Marillion being called a 'prog' band doesn't bother you?

For me, there's only good and bad in music. Labels are meaningless, and the true meaning of 'progressive' is music without any self-imposed boundaries. It's having the freedom to work outside the constraints of conventional song structure — almost like a soundtrack type approach to creating songs. It's whatever you want to call it.

Almost every Marillion album since 2001's *Anoraknophobia* has been crowdfunded. Were you always convinced it would work?

It was unheard of. But we had to try. Our deal with Castle Communications ended, we had to decide — do we sign with another small label or try something else? That's when

Mark [Kelly, keyboard player] had the idea: Let's take control ourselves, mail the fans direct and see if they'd be willing to pay upfront. It's one of the reasons we're still around. Our fans want it — they want the ultra-edition of the new album.

Will there be another Steve Rothery solo album?

Yes. I will do another solo album next year, but this year I have another project I can't talk about yet. It's very exciting but I've got to make sure it's going to work before I announce it. *Prog* will be the first to know.

When was the last time you spoke to Fish?

Quite recently, actually. We get on a lot better these days. We're older and wiser and we all have a different perspective. Everybody's calmed down, and everyone knows that the whole reunion thing is just not going to happen.

It's never going to happen?

No, it couldn't ever happen. I understand why people keep asking, because of what it represents to them and their lives, but no. Steve Hogarth has a T-shirt — 'The New Boy Since 1989'. We did four albums with Fish, but we've done 14 with Steve.

What's next then?

Apart from my incredibly secret new project [laughs], the Marillion Weekends are coming up [in March], in Holland, Poland, Leicester... and Chile.

Hang on, so Marillion are officially big in Chile?

Yes. There's a radio station in Santiago that plays us all the time. We're holding the convention in the same theatre we play in — the Teatro Caupolicán. Every time we play there, there are 4,000 people going crazy from the first note.

And you're still big in the holiday parks?

We're doing Center Parcs in Holland. We did our first Marillion Weekend at Pontins, then we slightly upscaled to Butlins. Now we've gone completely upmarket to Center Parcs. We're going up in the world. ☺

Still Going Strong: Rothery and Steve Hogarth on the F.E.A.R. tour.

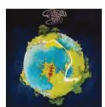


DUNCAN EVERSON/FUTURE

16 Heart Of The Sunrise

YES

from **FRAGILE** (Atlantic, 1971)



Arguably the point where Yes became more ambitious than “just” a rock band, with Wakeman introducing structural techniques like recapitulation (*Close To The Edge* came next). The climax of the vibrantly varied *Fragile* is almost 12 minutes of mercurial invention and intensity. From Chris Squire’s beefy riffing to Jon Anderson’s angelic sighing, it collates every emotion until it gets so heavy it levitates. The most muscular moment of Yes magic. **CR**

You say: “Organised chaos contains the seeds of everything that followed; superb, dangerous, brilliant live.”

Sam Spencer

15 Tubular Bells

MIKE OLDFIELD

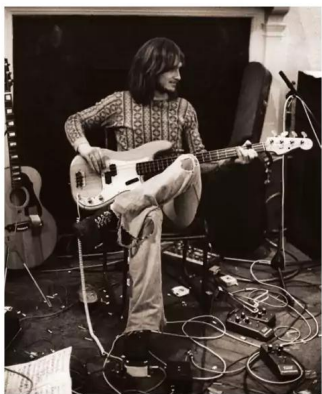
from **TUBULAR BELLS** (Virgin, 1973)



Partly inspired by witnessing the spectacle of Keith Tippett’s 50-piece band, Centipede, in action in 1970, and absorbing the cyclical patterns emanating from within Terry Riley’s music, Oldfield’s debut opus immediately draws the listener in with the intriguing, slightly sinister 15/8 piano motif. It’s an unlikely but nevertheless powerful hook that stays in the head long after the piece reaches its sustained and somewhat whimsical climax. Given the extent to which the album inculcates itself into the DNA of 1970s pop culture and beyond, it’s all the more amazing when you consider that Oldfield was just 19 years when he recorded it. **SS**

You say: “A complex prog rock symphony that immerses the listener into a meditative atmosphere, built with every addition of a new instrument as the time passes.” **Rodrigo Bravo**

Below: Mike Oldfield.



14 Comfortably Numb

PINK FLOYD

from **THE WALL** (Harvest, 1979)



If most of *The Wall* is Roger Waters making a massive stretch to channel a tortured, isolated, embittered rock star, this is where David Gilmour brings the more mellifluous side of Floyd’s music to the fore. Its forlorn chords and epochal guitar soloing – both blistering and blissed-out – give the astonishingly popular album its heart amid the cerebral and jagged, jittery musings of Waters’ self-therapy. Few are numb to its charms. **CR**

You say: “To me, this song is the reason music was invented.”

Tassos Kollintzas

13 The Cinema Show

GENESIS

from **SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND** (Charisma, 1973)



A grandiose yet tender love song, trickling with Steve Hackett’s ravishing runs, there’s a moment between choruses that harks back to the bucolic idyls within *Supper’s Ready*. However, with a newly acquired synthesiser amidst the array of keyboards, change is in the air and Genesis’ aural palette enters a new phase. Showcasing Tony Banks’ yearning, melodic soloing, classic status is effortlessly achieved via bass pedal heaven and exultant Mellotron choirs. **SS**

You say: “The song that takes *Selling England...* to another level. As it winds down into *Aisle Of Plenty*, the ‘end of prog album satisfaction score’ is mighty high.” **Ron Chakraborty**

12 The Court Of The Crimson King

KING CRIMSON

from **IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING** (Island, 1969)



Originally set in a sub-Donovan folkish strum, Peter Sinfield’s baroque lyrics were rescued after meeting multi-instrumentalist, Ian McDonald, who elevated the words

into one of progressive music’s most enduring anthems. Decorated with twinkling acoustic guitar harmonics and sparkling flute in the cloister-like verses, when the piece opens out into the full chorus it’s akin to stepping into a grandly appointed choir-filled cathedral. A foundation cornerstone for the church of prog. **SS**

You say: “A monumental masterpiece. A game changer.” **Doug Schober**

11 The Gates Of Delirium

YES

from **RELAYER** (Atlantic, 1974)



Like the *Drama* album, 1974’s *Relayer* was a one-off outing for a Yes line-up which, given time, might have laid more golden eggs. Still the high watermark of Swiss keyboard player Patrick Moraz’s short tenure, *The Gates Of Delirium* is a side-long suite based on *War And Peace*. To begin with, it sounds like *Close To The Edge*’s lost sibling. Then Moraz’s manic synth arpeggios lead it into a musical black hole, climaxing with Jon Anderson and drummer Alan White banging pieces of scrap metal together to recreate the cacophonous din of battle. Seventies Yes at their most outlandish. **MBL**

You say: “A tremendous song off a tremendous album. And the closing ‘Soon’ section, especially Steve Howe’s guitar, is incredibly moving.”

Nick Bohensky

10 2112

RUSH

from **2112** (Anthem/Mercury, 1976)



From the otherworldly ARP sounds that usher it in to the Solar Federation losing control to the Elders (spoiler!), rock doesn’t come much proggy than the conceptual, seven-piece suite that takes us to the dystopian land of Megadon. This dramatic piece of music resonates deeply with a whole generation – just sit in an auditorium and watch Rush’s audience punch the air and ‘Hey!’ along to the *Overture* (then try to sing along to helium-high *The Temples Of Syrinx*). A timeless sci-fi story celebrating music and humanity, with supernatural performances from Lee, Lifeson and Peart – there’s nothing not to like. **GM**

“And the sand-castle virtues are all swept away in the tidal destruction, the moral melee...”



GIUSEPPE HANER/ROOT/CITY IMAGES

You say: "Perhaps the type of subject matter that earned prog its lyrical scorn but a chill still runs down my spine when we get to the 'Attention all planets of the Solar Federation' climax." **Kenneth Lowe**

9 *Starless* KING CRIMSON from *RED* (Island, 1974)

The closing track on *Red*, the final King Crimson album of the 70s (and at the time, thought to be their last ever), *Starless* is a tour-de-force. Written initially by John Wetton as the title track for *Starless And Bible Black*, the 12-minute opus returns to the Mellotron-led balladry of *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, before beginning its descent into the free form metal jazz then favoured by leader Robert Fripp. With just a minute left to spare, the main theme of *Starless* returns as a powerful coda, as if to play out the end credits on Crimson's film. **DEA**
You say: "If you don't get this track, you don't get progressive music at all. Particularly a version from the recent tour." **Keith Collyer**

8 *Thick As A Brick* JETHRO TULL from *THICK AS A BRICK* (Chrysalis, 1972)

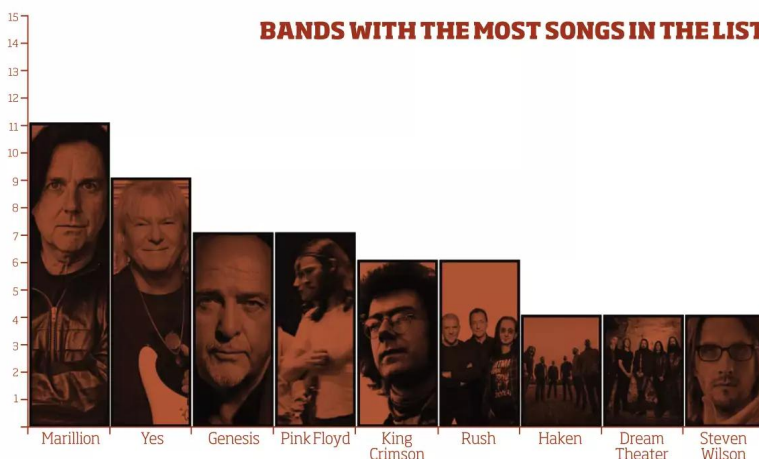
Irked that people were calling previous album *Aqualung* conceptual, Ian Anderson decided to send up the whole notion of the concept record. It's based on a supposed epic poem from the fictional eight-year-old Gerald Bostock. By attempting to poke fun at the subject of the concept, Tull create one of the finest examples of this oeuvre. The music is peripatetic, constantly shifting the ground to suit multiple instrumentation. By taking away artistic road blocks, the band are free to open up their horizons. A parody that seriously works. **MD**
You say: "It is the embodiment of everything grand and exceptional, and expresses in spoken word the anxiety that fuels the very nature of progressive music." **Calvin Merseal**

Thick As Thieves:
Jethro Tull.

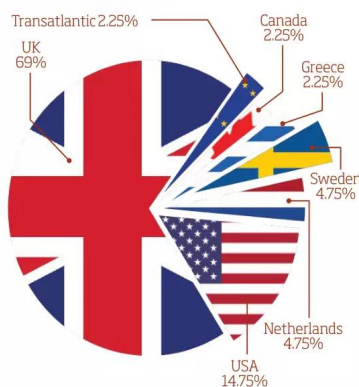
PROG BY NUMBERS

The facts and figures behind the list...

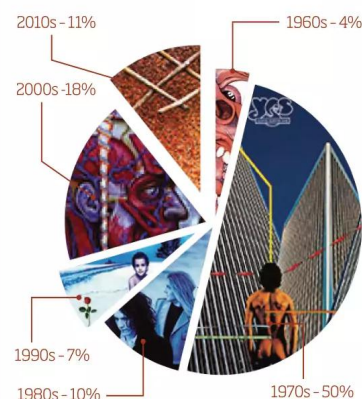
BANDS WITH THE MOST SONGS IN THE LIST



BANDS BY COUNTRY

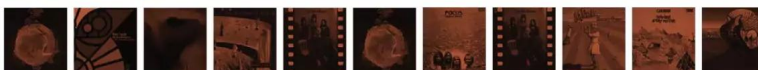


SONGS BY DECADE



THE MOST POPULAR YEAR

1971 - 11 songs



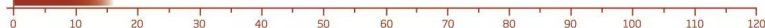
LONGEST SONG (by length of original studio version)

Ayreon - *The Human Equation* - 102:14

SHORTEST SONG

Emerson, Lake & Palmer - *Lucky Man* - 4:36

AVERAGE SONG LENGTH 16 minutes 15 seconds

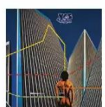


SONGTITLE WITH THE HIGHEST SCRABBLE SCORE



7 Awaken YES

from **GOING FOR THE ONE** (Atlantic, 1977)



Yes regrouped three years after *Relayer* – Wakeman returning to the fold – with a reaction to music's late 70s evolution. Relatively short, sharp "pop" songs like *Going For The One* and *Wonderous Stories* delivered hits; the clean, modern, geometric lines of *Hipgnosis* replaced Roger Dean's floating islands. All was shiny and new until the 16-minute closer *Awaken*, which is very much Yes doing Yes, and then some. Written by Anderson (inspired by Rembrandt and Vivaldi) and Howe (whose frenetic guitar interjections are dazzling), it cruises through piano pathos, harps and choirs, attaining a transcendent beauty. Yes were wide awake, but still dreaming. **CR**

You say: "A free-flowing, euphoric creation from start to finish... and all the better for sticking up a massive two fingers to the 1977 punk bandwagon." **Geoff Mather**

6 Echoes PINK FLOYD

from **MEDDLE** (Harvest, 1971)



Some Floyd aficionados might still feel their pulse race at the prospect of late-60s sound experiments such as *The Grand Vizier's Garden Party*. But for others, 1971's *Meddle* is the album where Floyd stopped noodling around and started pulling together as a group. Exhibit A: *Echoes*. Classic Pink Floyd begins with a 'ping', the sound that ushers in *Echoes* and sets the tone for such future Floyd standards as *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* and *Comfortably Numb*. *Echoes* is the first great Pink Floyd 'journey' song. The band's vocal dream team, David Gilmour and Richard Wright, guide the listener through still and choppy waters: past Roger Waters' thoughtful lyrics, a plea for greater human understanding, and into that eerie mid-section breakdown with its sinister 'crying seagull' sound effects. *Echoes* is early-70s Floyd in



DOMLIVE/KING CRIMSON PRESS

excelsis. And who can listen to it without visualising that era-defining filmed performance at Pompeii: the dust, the sun, the hair, Nick Mason's vest... **MBL**

You say: "From the leslied piano intro to the nightmarish middle section and the uplifting finale, this track has brains, brawns, feeling, imagination, everything. In fact, I'd like this song to play at my funeral."

Eric Beaudin

5 21st Century Schizoid Man

KING CRIMSON

from **IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING** (Island, 1969)



King Crimson were only six months old when they played the Hyde Park Festival in July 1969 to 500,000 people on a bill with the Rolling Stones. In one of the defining moments of prog, they opened with *21st Century Schizoid Man*. The aggressive, near metal verse contained barked-out warnings of dystopian nightmares, then the musicians hare off together playing a be-bop like theme, leading to guitar and saxophone solos over a 6/8 rhythm. Robert Fripp had composed an intricate guitar figure, which ultimately became the high velocity, whole band unison 'tutti' section. Few would have heard anything remotely like it before. Even sax and keyboard player Ian McDonald found himself disorientated by the group's new creation during the rehearsal process: "I took the tape of ...*Schizoid Man* home and I thought, 'What is this?' It was new to me too." **MBA**

You say: "Thundering in on a riff that would have been at home on a heavy metal record, even today, King Crimson landed with an intensity of will like no one else. This track is a masterclass in virtuosity and takes no prisoners in its ambitious march forward."

Dean Barrett

Above: King Crimson, with Greg Lake (centre).

4 Shine On You Crazy Diamond Pt 1

PINK FLOYD

from **WISH YOU WERE HERE** (Harvest, 1975)



If ever a piece captured a band at the peak of a creative curve, it's this one. Roger Waters'

increasingly despondent lyrical themes loom ever larger, but at the same time, the opening bars of this album-bookending track are where we hear David Gilmour's guitar playing truly coming of age. That inimitable warm tone envelopes melancholic figures before a chiming motif puts one of the key building blocks of the album in place. Finally, Waters' vocal comes in, introducing the chorus, which, along with the title track, would crystallise the Syd-influenced theme of innocent inspiration and aspiration soured by 'reaching for the secret too soon'. **JS**

You say: "The most beautiful song Pink Floyd ever made and played. Much more than a swansong for Syd Barrett." **Aernout Bok**

3 Firth Of Fifth GENESIS

from **SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND** (Charisma, 1973)



Genesis' 70s catalogue offers an embarrassment of prog rock riches. But few are as rich as *Firth Of Fifth*.

All Genesis life is here: Tony Banks' patented classical piano runs; a yearning Peter Gabriel lyric (*"The mountain cuts off the town from view..."*), and, around the 5:50 minute mark, the bit where Steve Hackett escapes his manacles and plays *that* guitar solo. Like the best Gabriel-era Genesis songs and those from Phil Collins's early years as lead vocalist, *Firth Of Fifth* has an irresistible melancholy. It's beautiful and sad and, when Gabriel intones that final line, *"The sands of time were eroded by the river of constant change"*, it's oddly profound. What's it about? Whatever you want. It's soul music, through the prism of a bleak English public school education, too many childhood piano lessons and too much choir practice. And *Firth Of Fifth* is deeply soulful – albeit in that strange Genesis way. **MBL**

You say: "This, to me, is about as perfect a song there is. The stage is set by Banks' piano intro. And there's no better prog climax than Steve Hackett's guitar solo." **Bill Pompilii**

2

Close To The Edge

YES

from **CLOSE TO THE EDGE**
(Atlantic, 1972)



Although they'd had run-ups at extended pieces before, this is their first side-long effort. Inspired by the structural detail found in Sibelius' 5th symphony and the electronic textures of Wendy Carlos' *Sonic Seasonings*, Jon Anderson's eclectic listening habits form the basis for their grandest musical statement to date. Charged with making his vision a reality, the band, operating at the pinnacle of their collective creativity, oblige. From the surging overtures, hymnal diversions and all the way to the transcendent coda, every second is vital and vibrant, every section a crowning triumph. Anderson observes that,

"It had nothing to do with radio, nothing to do with rock'n'roll, nothing to do with the business... It had everything to do with music." Even the departure of Bruford at the end of the recording sessions fails to take the shine from what remains one of the brightest moments in the entire Yes catalogue. **SS**
You say: "It is the centerpiece of the greatest album of all time, prog or otherwise. It is one of the best examples of rock musicians adopting symphonic ideals and really making it work naturally. It is incredibly emotional, and is really a timeless work of art that can stand on its own." **Matt Barnhill**

"HOW JON ANDERSON SANG IT ORIGINALLY IS JUST AMAZING."

Yes guitarist Steve Howe on the unrepeatable magic that created *Close To the Edge*...

What were the origins of *Close To The Edge*?

"There was a hungry period when Yes used to live on rice, tuna and onions in a communal house and I remember sitting down and writing the chorus partly on a piano. It's an easy chordal thing in the key of C on a piano. I'm sitting there singing, 'Close to the edge down by the river...', because I was living right on the Thames at that time. I also had the *In Her White Lace* song which at that point had kind of jazzy chords, really. There was quite a lot of mine that Jon could work on and vice versa. I think that what happened with our writing was that Jon would hear me singing, 'Close to the edge down by the river', and wouldn't necessarily think of the Thames. He was more of a universal sort of guy so he took those ideas on and developed them."

What are the origins of that opening guitar solo?

"We were all sat round and humming ideas. So we played it and it became the key to a lot of sections. The keyboards were playing it twice as fast like an arpeggio and then Chris Squire was playing the ascending riff, which I was also sometimes playing. When I start with the climbing, jumping away notes, that seemed like a cool thing to start with. I'd never played anything quite like that before. I was really playing the same notes all the time but they were in four different octaves. They appeared to be ascending and descending for a while. That was the idea. There was a static moment but then I just went off

a church organ in the middle with no drums. Having that expanse of space was really good."

Bill Bruford says it's a masterpiece, but that making it was torture.
"Typical Bill! [laughs] I remember that when Bill left he said that *Close To The Edge* was about as commercial as he wanted Yes to be."

Does it still surprise you even after all these years?

"I'm proud that we managed to do so much. I've no idea how we were so focussed but we had the enthusiasm and I am surprised at the way we took on such projects because we were also touring a lot. No one told us we couldn't do something so we just did as much as we could."

Why do you think it's lasted so well?

"There's a powerful quality in that music which I think started with *The Yes Album* and *Fragile* which established Yes on both sides of the Atlantic. With *Close To The Edge* it was like, 'You're ready for us now so we'll give you... this!' It was a powerful feeling that we had in the studio. We were cocky and felt we could do what we wanted. We were getting into the pattern of success but we hadn't all bought houses and smart cars. We were still at that transition, feeling the sense of achievement, that we were going to get respect and that we had to make a record to qualify for that. We had to show that *Fragile* wasn't a



Yes, L-R: Steve Howe, Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman, Bill Bruford, Chris Squire.

and everything on that solo was played live with just Chris Squire, Bill Bruford and myself in the studio. So it began with an improvisation."

As a song, it covers a lot of ground musically and conceptually.

"When we thought of starting it with an improvisation, that was the turning point to make this a very adventurous piece. Hence we went to

one-off. We wanted to do something highly musical and adventurous."

How much of a challenge is it playing it in concert?

"Every time we've played it we've had to lower the last verse and chorus because even Jon couldn't sing it in G minor. How Jon Anderson sung it originally in the studio is just amazing!" **SS**

"A seasoned witch could call you from the depths of your disgrace, and rearrange your liver to the solid mental grace..."

1

Supper's Ready

GENESIS

from **FOXTROT** (Charisma, 1972)

'The frog was a prince, the prince was a brick, the brick was an egg – and the egg was a bird. Hadn't you heard?'

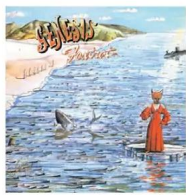
Well, 45 years on from the creation of *Supper's Ready*, you probably have heard this invaluable information. You've heard the 23 minutes and seven sections of the definitive Genesis track – indeed the definitive prog track, as voted for by you, our readers – and been transported by its breathtaking ambition. Its carefully cohesive meanderings lash together symphonic rock, heartbreaking melodies, surrealist lyrics and sky-high drama to build 'new Jerusalem'.

Those involved were trying to conjure up previously-unheard music, while taking detours to rifle through the book of *Revelation* and pay visits to *Lover's Leap* and *Willow Farm*. Oh, and to soundtrack an apocalypse... in 9/8 time.

"We wanted to go further," says Tony Banks. "We'd all been wanting to push away from the regular structures." With a very English, very Genesis reserve, he adds, "It turned out better than we'd thought."

Foxtrot, the fourth Genesis studio album and the second with the classic line-up of Peter Gabriel, Mike Rutherford, Phil Collins, Steve Hackett and Tony Banks, was where that ensemble fully coalesced and realised how far they could go.

"It was about creating a film for the ear rather than the eye," says Hackett. "We felt that we were underway," says Banks, "that we were heading



somewhere different. *Foxtrot* was where we started, in my opinion, to become significant." As the song goes: 'We've got everything; we're growing everything.'

While the album sounds like a meticulously confident execution of a master plan, it actually came to be in a loose, relatively rushed manner. The band's touring schedule was exhausting, and Hackett recalls that whereas with the band's previous record, *Nursery Cryme*, they'd taken the summer to bond as a group, writing and recording together, for this one they were darting in and out of the studio.

"I remember flying back from Italy to be there a day or two ahead of the others, who were travelling by road, just to finish off my guitar parts over the end of *Supper's Ready*," he says.

Various locations were used for rehearsals but the bulk of *Supper's*

"We felt that we were underway, that we were heading somewhere different. *Foxtrot* was where we started, in my opinion, to become significant."

Tony Banks

Ready was crafted – prior to the absent Gabriel adding the words later – in, of all places, the Una Billings School Of Dance in Shepherds Bush.

"We were below this dance studio, in a former refectory, with a counter and a gobstopper machine. There were girls upstairs learning their tap dance and what have you. The sound of those rhythms would come down through the ceiling," Hackett says. "It was all a bit strange, and the atmosphere influenced our subsequent efforts. You couldn't be too serious for long, because you'd hear them with this: clumpety clump clump. We'd break into smiles."

While *Foxtrot* is more than just a series of appetizers leading up to the main course – there's social comment and sci-fi along the way – it's indisputably the old Side Two which steals the show. Hackett's instrumental

Horizons is, in his words, "an hors d'oeuvre, an introduction", and then it begins. The ascent of Everest. Even the sometimes lukewarm Gabriel remains a loyal fan of the work.

"It does feel like we captured some emotion there, particularly at the climax," he says. "For my part, it was influenced by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as, later, was *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. It was that idea of a journey. Also we were then trying, consciously, to break out of tradition. We were tossing together different ideas and influences to see if there was a fresh way of putting them all together. I still enjoy it now; I'm still attracted to it."

Indeed he counter-intuitively considered performing it live a few years ago, but admits, laughing, that it proved incredibly tough for his band to learn. "We didn't get far. There was



BARRIE WENTZELL

"I will make my bed with her tonight, he cries – can he fail armed with his chocolate surprise?"



Outstanding In Their Field: Genesis.

some resistance — it's not easy!"

This uneasy listening embraces, within its scale and scope, short sweet pastoral songs, longer more savage cuts, trembling dreamscapes and jolting blasts of reality. Gabriel sings — though it's more than singing, it's also a delivery, an acting performance — of good versus evil, love, religion, Winston Churchill dressed in drag, firemen, farmers and — somehow — the link between walking across the room to turn the television off and the Antichrist. And then of course there's a flower. (A flower?)

Genesis' only side-long song cycle isn't afraid to lull you into a cosy sense of security then jump out from behind the curtain. "*Supper's Ready*," Mike Rutherford has mused, "was a great moment... of luck. Because, sometimes, you don't quite know what you are doing."

So what were they doing? "We were not one of those boring bands that went

diddly-diddly-diddly on the guitar," Phil Collins says, suggesting — as the members of Genesis often do — that if they were prog they were not at the noodling, indulgent end of the spectrum.

"We did not do that!" Rutherford says similarly. "Some of the progressive bands were more about musicianship, but even though we did long numbers, they were very much song-driven. That's the key to longevity."

Banks also "never liked being lumped in with anybody. We felt a slightly different ethos. King Crimson, Yes and ELP were selling technical proficiency a little more than us. Technique got displayed in the early 70s, but it was never our motivation."

Hackett suggests astutely that one of their USPs was what he calls "lead chords". "Genesis constructed melodies from chords. We'd have that "swirly-cloudy" feel. That impressionistic feel characterises much

of *Foxtrot*, where you're not entirely certain what you're listening to."

Banks recalls that they'd debate the very "rules" of music. "We'd say: why have you got to go verse-chorus-verse-chorus, etc?" They decided that was "fine for some, but it's nice if you can go somewhere else. And you can tell more of a story that way, without the repetition".

The band initially thought they were writing "a kind of follow-up to *The Musical Box*, from *Nursery Cryme*". That was coming along well but, according to Banks, there was also "this 'pretty-pretty' song called *Willow Farm*, all on its own, and we thought: what if we suddenly went from there into this 'ugly', descending-chords sequence? Nobody would be expecting that. That then brought in all the louder, electric instruments, and once we got into that... well, we were there now, so let's carry on! With freedom. See where that leads us. When we put the whole

thing together and heard it back for the first time, we went: 'Oh, this is actually pretty good.'"

If there's one man more prone to English restraint than Banks, it's Rutherford. "That end section

Below: Flower Power!
Genesis onstage during
the *Foxtrot* era.

Genesis fans would agree: "That half-minute or so is probably our peak."

Gabriel's lyrics are a splendour of the fantastical and the intimate. He's described them as being both a "personal journey walking through scenes in the book of *Revelation*" and inspired by nightmares his wife had. (A line in the Bible reference mentions "the supper of the mighty one".) Gabriel was a fan of King Crimson lyricist Peter Sinfield, and perceived in

whatever you do, there's always a left and right, an up and down, a good and bad."

Sombre as that sounds, and as gloriously melodramatic and occasionally macabre as much of *Supper's Ready* is, there is lots of leavening humour to keep the journey both palatable and unpredictable. The scene where Narcissus is turned into a flower (OK, you can do the response here if you like) takes its title *How Dare*



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

happened effortlessly, as good music often does. The act of doing *Supper's Ready* seemed quite easy. If things take too long, it's a bad sign. When Pete put that '666' vocal over that passage, that felt a bit special. The voice going over that strong instrumental wasn't how you'd imagined it at all. The game got raised."

Needless to say, quietly competitive school friends Gabriel and Banks took time to accept that they were on the same page in this brewing book of revelations. Banks had most of the *Apocalypse In 9/8* section down as keyboard solos.

"But then Peter started singing over them, because his lyrics required more information to get out. Initially, I have to say, I was pissed off," he says with a laugh. "'You're singing on my bit!' Then I realised it now had all the excitement we'd been hoping to create. Especially the '666' bit. There's a lot of drama in the chords themselves, but then what he did on top just took it to another level."

And then he makes a very specific call, with which many long-term

his work an intriguing blend of British eccentricity and raging psychedelic visions. At the time of *Foxtrot*'s release, the singer agreed that there was an element of escapism, but denied it was anything to do with drug culture.

I Be So Beautiful? from a catchphrase of the band's erstwhile, not then yet discredited mentor, Jonathan King. In *Willow Farm*, there are flavours of Monty Python and The Flowerpot Men, and Gabriel's onstage,

"Sometimes, you get a great crystallisation. You may not fully recognise it at the time – as musicians you may still be searching. But the audience, the true owners, will see it as a Mona Lisa. They'll say: 'Look no further, we've found it.'"

Steve Hackett

"I don't think drug-induced states are valuable," he said, while allowing that he was no stranger to mental anguish. "One of the great troubles with the mind is that it's always lost between two extremes," he said back then. "That's partly what *Willow Farm* is about. Wherever you are and

in-character storytelling tendencies run riot throughout. You can of course take the young man's purple verbiage as seriously or as lightly as you wish, but as effective as those "lead chords" are, his vocals are our indispensable guide, our narrator, our beacon to the far shore. 'We will rock you, rock you,

"There's Winston Churchill dressed in drag, he used to be a British flag, plastic bag, what a drag..."

In Bloom:
Peter Gabriel.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



little snake/ We will keep you snug and warm.'

All these years on, *Supper's Ready* has survived the slings and arrows of fashion and stands as the matchless, majestic monolith of prog. Every progressive band worth their salt since, from Marillion to Big Big Train and many more inbetween, have used it as a touchstone. Hackett recalls that Genesis did in fact think of it as "futuristic" in '72.

"I can't remember whose idea it was, but we came to the conclusion that you could join any two bits of music together, no matter how disparate the styles, provided the bridge or atmospheric link was strong enough," he says, laying out one of the definitions of prog. "It creates for the listener an adventure, an odyssey. You've got the stuff of concertos and symphonies, which nod to the past, but it was also futuristic at that point. Bands just weren't creating pieces of music like that. I think it was then the longest piece that any rock band had ever played live."

Phil Collins retains his enthusiasm for the song. "*Supper's Ready* was great!" he says. "The music and imagery worked so strongly together. And then on stage the visuals boosted

it too." (So fond of it was Collins that you can hear him subtly quote the lyrics – 'There's an angel standing in the sun' – on the fade-out of *Los Endos*, the closing track on *A Trick Of The Tail*, his debut album as the band's vocalist after Gabriel's departure. He also sang *Supper's Ready* beautifully on live album *Seconds Out*.)

Audiences at first were equal parts bewildered and exhilarated by *Supper's Ready*. "We'd gone out on a limb," remembers Hackett. "It was labyrinthine. It was like when The Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and then they worried whether they'd gone too far and might get the thumbs-down. Except we didn't have their number of fans!"

"In the early 1970s we were lucky. The Beatles had started to go a bit further, then pulled themselves back. But they'd opened a door," says Banks. "We – and Pink Floyd, King Crimson, and others – all thought: 'We can do what we like now!'"

They knew what they liked. Evidently you do too, voting *Supper's Ready* as the consummate, nonpareil banquet of prog.

"Sometimes," ponders Steve Hackett, "you get a great

YOU SAY:

"Hearing this played live by Mr Hackett and band not that long ago reminded me just how good this is."
'demondebs'

"Every time I play *Foxtrot* in my car I spend the full 23 minutes of *Supper's Ready* singing along and having a shitload of fun. The best of the best."

Pablo Alvarez

"The humour, drama, action, horror and adventure. It has everything!" **Alexi Keltto**

"I remember listening to this with my earphones on in the family room when my mom and sister were watching TV. I threw down my earphones and said to them, 'You have got to hear this!' I played the section over for them but they never got it. Some people just never get to be part of the magic." **Paul Bilyea**

"The bizarre images from the book of *Revelation* fit perfectly into an epic prog song, putting a cap on the psychedelic lyrics that thread their way through the entire piece." **Chris Files**

"The classic prog epic – the structure of this has been copied by many others over the last 40-plus years, but few have done it as well." **Ken Lansdowne**

"Genesis never forgot how to weave an emotional web around their listener, and the song will have you laughing one minute while crying from its sheer beauty the next."

Dean Barrett

"Mad then, mad now and still a work of utter genius, showcasing the talents of the whole band like they were going on a bear hunt (but weren't scared)!" **Sam Spencer**

"Genre defining, the template for so many bands that followed." **Tim D**

"This is the best of the best of the side-long epics. It just astounds me how a band could come up with everything that's packed into this track." **Jonathan 'JS'**

"Long and flowing, tells an interesting story with many Biblical allusions, classically inspired and includes some Orwellian imagery and social commentary." **Jeff Haas**

"This is the ultimate prog rock song as it has everything... Complexity, dynamic, intensity, whimsy, melody, atmosphere..." **Bill Pompilli**

"It isn't so much the individual sections that make it so great; it's the way its themes and mood build and build upon each other, a mounting surreal darkness that culminates in the jaw-dropping *Apocalypse* section, and the denouement at the end. It's so much more than the sum of its parts. Plus, it's completely bonkers."

Niels Hazeborg

crystallisation. You may not fully recognise it at the time – as musicians you may still be searching. But the audience, the true owners, will see it as a Mona Lisa. They'll say: 'Look no further, we've found it.'" **CR**

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C O L L E C T I O N

Welcome to our second volume collecting together some of the finest interviews that *Prog Magazine* has conducted over the past decade.

We have Pink Floyd on the making of their 1975 classic *Wish You Were Here*, Rush talking us through the creation of *A Farewell To Kings*, Mike Oldfield telling us the story of the groundbreaking *Tubular Bells*, and King Crimson revealing all about their early years.

Plus Tangerine Dream, Ian Anderson, Big Big Train, Anathema, and more. The best of 50 years of prog, from the first 10 years of *Prog Magazine*.
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