“Every musician should know The Wall. If they don’t, they should be ashamed of themselves. It’s one of the greatest things written in rock.”
DEEP PURPLE

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AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH UNITED TALENT AGENCY
"Under that schoolyard bully affect, Roger was actually quite a sweet guy."

Pink Floyd p 44
Building The Wall: far more than just a concept album...
REGULARS

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Missives, musings and tweets from Planet Prog.

THE INTRO    pg 12
Nick Mason’s Saucerful Of Secrets tell us all about their forthcoming tour, plus all the latest news from Steve Hackett, Marko Hietala, Colin Edwin, The Orb, Virgil Donati, Toundra and more...

RECORD COLLECTION  pg 30
Jonathan Peters is CFO of celebrity restaurant empire The Ivy. He’s also a man who knows a bit about prog, if his record collection is anything to go by.

Q&A     pg 32
Field Music discuss their new album, Making A New World, and the concepts behind it

THE OUTER LIMITS    pg 74
He formed Valhalla in the 60s, American Tears and Touch in the 70s, and writes hits for Michael Bolton and Cher. But how prog is Mark Mangold is what we really want to know.

THE PROG INTERVIEW   pg 92
Steve Hogarth has been Marillion’s singer for 30 years. But he’s still looked on as the new boy by some fans. This is his story...

THE MUSICAL BOX    pg 98
Sons Of Apollo’s new one takes lead honours and there’s reviews from Henry Cow, King Crimson, Yes, Kevin Ayers, Twelfth Night, Marillion, In Continuum, Lee Penning & Rob Reed, and more...

TAKE A BOW    pg 116
Hawkwind’s 50th celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall take top billing and we’ve also seen Marillion, Dream Theater, Leprous, Steve Hackett, Steve Hillage and Gong, Snarky Puppy, and more...

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Kaprekar’s Constant__ Pg 82
The UK prog rockers are back with second album, Depth Of Field.

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Pete Trewavas and Eric Blackwood are back with a new album and line-up.

The Blackheart Orchestra___________ Pg 90
The melodic prog duo talk about touring with Hawkwind and their latest album.
In Stores 17th January 2020

The second studio album from the almighty Sons of Apollo; the union of Mike Portnoy, Derek Sherinian, Jeff Scott Soto, Ron ‘Bumblefoot’ Thal & Billy Sheehan. Mixed by Jay Ruston (Stone Sour, Black Star Riders, Coheed & Cambria)

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03 Mar – Edinburgh, The Mash House
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05 Mar – Newcastle upon Tyne, Riverside
07 Mar – Leicester, The Cookie
08 Mar – Huddersfield, The Parish
10 Mar – London, The Dome
11 Mar – St Albans, The Horn

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“There was a lot of bonhomie. It wasn’t pure hatred all the time. We got on because we were working on the same bloody project. You can’t keep walking off every time someone shouts at you.”

Gerald Scarfe
Hello and welcome to issue 105 of Prog Magazine. I know this reaches you between Xmas and the New Year, but the last issue was out in November and it just seemed too early to share our Xmas card with you. Here it is for your enjoyment now. Thanks once again to John Langton for his wonderful work.

Last issue we bade farewell to Deputy Editor Hannah. This issue I am delighted to introduce you to her replacement, Natasha Scharf. Natasha’s been with Prog since our inception back in 2009 and has been our News Editor for the past five years. She beat off very strong competition to land the job and I’m really looking forward to taking the magazine forward into a new decade with Natasha on board.

This issue we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Pink Floyd’s legendary double album, The Wall. It’s my favourite album of all time, featuring my favourite song of all time (Comfortably Numb) and my favourite guitar solo of all time (that second one of Gilmour’s in CN). I can bore for England on the record, but I’d rather you tucked into Daryl Easlea’s excellent reappraisal of the album (p 44), the live shows and the film, which sheds new light on the creative process and the album’s impact. It’s interesting to note how prescient some of it still seems today.

There’s also the results of the 2019 Readers’ Poll (p 34). Thank you to everyone who voted. There’s some very interesting results to be seen. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Enjoy the rest of the issue, too — Tull, Gentle Giant, Steve Hogarth, Sons Of Apollo, The Flower Kings and loads more.

And have a Happy New Year. Here’s to making 2020 a prog rocking year for all...

Jerry Ewing - Editor
**JANUARY**

**BRIAN DAVISON’S EVERY WHICH WAY**

**‘EVERY WHICH WAY, 50th ANNIVERSARY’ (REMASTERED CD EDITION)**

- Newly re-mastered 50th anniversary edition of the solo album by the celebrated Progressive Rock group Every Which Way. The band was formed by drummer Brian Davison upon the demise of his former band The Nice in early 1970 (caused by Keith Emerson’s departure to form ELP).
- This Esoteric Recordings edition celebrates this excellent, albeit short-lived, band.

**NEW STUDIO ALBUM NEKTAR**

**‘THE OTHER SIDE’ (CD EDITION)**

- Esoteric Antenna is delighted to announce the release of the stunning new studio album by the legendary band Nektar, featuring former founder members Derek ‘Mo’ Moon (bass, vocals), Ron Howatz (drums, vocals) & Mick Braddock (lyrics, visual conceptions) re-united along with Randy Dembo (bass, 12-string guitar), Tyicha Chandra (guitar, vocals) & Randall Scott (keyboards).

**DJABE & STEVE HACKETT**

**‘BACK TO SARDINIA’ (CD/DVD DIGIPAK SET)**

- Wonderful new studio album by Djabe & Steve Hackett: “Back To Sardinia”.
- The release also includes a bonus DVD disc featuring a 5.1 Surround Sound and 96 kbps / 24-bit stereo mix of the album, along with bonus visual features including the piece “When the Film Is Rolling” & live performances of tracks such as the Genesis classic ‘In That Quiet Earth’ and the Djabe and Steve Hackett tracks ‘Tears For Peace’ and ‘Turtle Tie’.

---

**FEBRUARY**

**ERIC BURDON & THE ANIMALS**

**‘WHEN I WAS YOUNG – THE MGM RECORDINGS 1967-1968’ (5 CD SET)**

- New boxed set featuring all of the albums recorded by Eric Burdon & The Animals for the MGM Records label issued between October 1967 and December 1968.
- The set features the albums “Wind Of Change” (both stereo and mono versions), “The Twists Shall Meet”, “Every One Of Us” and “Love Is”, all newly re-mastered from the original master tapes, along with ten bonus tracks drawn from the band’s single releases.
- Also included is an illustrated booklet with new essay and a replica poster.

**BE BOP DELUXE**

**‘MODERN MUSIC’ (5 DISC DELUXE LIMITED EDITION)**

- Deluxe 5 disc limited edition boxed set of the classic 1976 album by Be Bop Deluxe.
- Newly re-mastered from the original master tapes.
- Featuring an additional 55 bonus tracks drawn from new 5.1 surround sound & stereo mixes from the original multi-track master tapes, a concert recorded by BBC radio from October 1976, a previously unreleased ‘official bootleg’ recording of a concert at the Riviera Theatre in Chicago in March 1976, previously unreleased out-takes from the album sessions, along with a BBC TV Old Grey Whistle Test appearance from November 1976.

**STRAWBS**

**‘DEEP CUTS’ (REMASTERED & EXPANDED CD EDITION)**

- Esoteric Recordings are pleased to announce the release of a newly re-mastered and expanded edition of the classic 1976 album Deep Cuts by Strawbs.
- This edition features seven bonus tracks, including the sought after Blue Angel and the rare single mix of Charmers (previously unreleased on CD), along with a spoken word rendition of Beside The Rio Grande, and restores the original artwork and includes a new essay by Dave Cousins, making this the definitive edition of Deep Cuts.

---

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**SPIRIT**

**‘TWO SIDES OF A RAINBOW – LIVE AT THE RAINBOW’ (2CD REMASTERED EDITION)**

- Esoteric Recordings is pleased to announce the release of a new re-mastered 2 CD edition of Two Sides Of A Rainbow – Live at the Rainbow 1978 by the legendary psychedelic rock band Spirit.
- The set features the entire concert performed by the band at the Rainbow Theatre in London on 11th March 1978, along with the 9 tracks that comprised the US album release Live Spirit in 1978.
- Also features a new essay by Mick Skidmore and has recollections from Larry “Fuzzy” Knight.
- The package also features many photographs from the period.

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**Esoteric Recordings Remastering and Expanding the Classics**

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SCRIPT FOR A TEAR OF JOY
Just read your excellent Marillion feature in Prog 104, and it certainly brings back memories. I was at the Marquee when they supported Spider (Sunday, January 3 1982), and their first headline gig on January 25.

But they also played a gig at The Starlight Rooms, West Hampstead on January 27, with Pallas as support. That was where I got the demo cassette, and also this poster, which I’ve always loved.

I saw them 20 times in ’82 — would have been 21, but for an Asia show at Wembley Arena.

By a quirk of fate, I am also now married to a Margaret! Prog on!

Ian Hobbs

IN FREQUENCY
Generally a good mag to get one’s teeth into as it were. Been with you since the early days, so keep it up.

I recall a small article around 2009 promoting IQ’s Frequency. Not much for The Road Of Bones in 2014, some cursory gig reviews now and then, if you could be bothered. Yes, IQ play gigs in focused short bursts but regularly. Is this due to a certain big-wig having a somewhat dislike of the band perchance?

Now to this year’s offering: Prog seems to have gone the extra mile with

good billing in #102 and a special IQ Resistance-related cover with some nice little extras.

On the regular issue, still the band is billed down near the bottom left. Camel get major billing followed by two ageing behemoths, one with a great retrospective box set. Also a review of the album on page 107 and it is here I take issue with the reviewer. Reviews are subjective of course. We the readers don’t want obsequiousness or fawning or, dare I say, “raving and drooling” to coin a phrase. But let’s not do a band down please.

I have been listening to music in various forms since a small boy. Now in my mid-50s, Resistance is the one I have had an immediate emotional connection to since the opening chords. Not since the Musical Box or A Trick of Wind… have I had such a profound connection.

This is the release of the year and stands up with the much-trotted-out “greats” of which The Wake, Ever and Subterranea are to be definitely included in anyone’s playlist. Peter Nicholls’ writing is top notch and typically a mystery inside a conundrum hidden in an enigma, with his vocals raw with emotion in places. Mike Holmes guitar is equally sensitive, aggressive, driving and again emotional and beautiful, Tim Esau’s bass is sublime. Peter Cookie Cook’s drumming infills are just mesmeric. All are enhanced by Neil Durant’s keyboards. Production is great again.

Ian Hobbs
I'd argue that 2019 is one of the, if not the, best single year for prog ever. Sure, the early 70s may have boasted several years which held more impactful releases for the genre, but did any of them have the sheer quantity of quality releases that 2019 did? It would be an interesting article to compare if the beloved watershed years of '72, '73, etc... can stand up to the breadth of creativity and virtuosity that we found in 2019.

Scott Medina

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

The album is not in need of editing, far from it, the second disc shows how songs were given a chance to breathe and go where they wanted not what some corporate suit would want; benefited by an own label self-funded regime I think.

This band did not sell out like a certain other band in the mid-80s, after whose most famous and genre transcending song my daughter is proudly named, did IMHO. The music press turned their backs on them but they ploughed their own furrow playing to their base. Maybe this is the theme I take away when I look at The Odeon cover by long-time associate Nigel Lythgoe. It’s all going to ratbat in the subject, but elsewhere, and yet men is taking care of his little bit and by golly do they in spades.

Apologies for the full 20-minute-plus minute rant but needed to get my feelings out there.

Carl Jacobs

You’re obviously an impassioned fan Carl, but maybe that’s clouding your judgement. We ran a four-page feature on The Road Of Bones, and have always given IQ a lot of coverage. No “big-wig”, as you suggest, has any dislike of the band.

As for reviews, well, they’re subjective and without any context and so gave all the pleasure of a proverbial sore thumb.

Yes, extended solos can enhance a piece especially where they pick up on and dynamically develop the previous harmonic themes but as in most cases (and here especially) where they are just bluster and clumsiness they detract from the performance.

I imagine that there might be those who will write in with impassioned championing of the extended solo but at the end of the day, what would you really rather have: indulgent solos or another favourite track or two, perhaps even a rarely performed gem?

Richard Denham

DEVIN TOWNSEND

@devintownsend

Been strangely attracted to The Hu on this tour... keep coming back to their music.

MATT STEVENS

@matthewslopop

Younger people in bands seem to have lost all the hang-ups and are truly progressive. It’s always thought progressive was a good thing?

Nick Mason’s Saucerful Of Secrets are hitting the road again in April and May for what will be their biggest tour of the British Isles yet. Along with 14 dates across England, they’ll be taking in Scotland, Ireland and Wales as well, before heading out to mainland Europe.

Almost 20 years ago to the day, Prog’s Editor Jerry Ewing – then a contributing editor at Classic Rock – talked to Nick Mason about Pink Floyd in an interview to celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Wall. He said, “This is the second time a major member has left and you’ve gone on to even greater things.” Mason replied, laughing, “Oh, as soon as I get rid of Dave [Gilmour], such great plans.” Few could have predicted that two decades later that would be effectively what he’d do by forming Nick Mason’s Saucerful Of Secrets and playing Pink Floyd’s cherished 1967-1972 catalogue to adoring audiences. Few would have also imagined that the bloke (Gary Kemp) who was at the top of the UK Singles Charts with Spandau Ballet’s True when the Floyd were top of the Albums Chart with The Final Cut in 1983 would, 35 years later, be in a supergroup, not only singing Syd Barrett’s songs but also playing David Gilmour’s guitar solos with such élan.

As many Saucer watchers know, it was guitarist Lee Harris who mooted the initial idea to long-time Floyd bassist Guy Pratt in 2017. From the tentative gigs at London’s Dingwalls and the Half Moon that May, to a full UK tour that autumn, and an expanded run in 2018 that took in Europe and the US, the band are now returning for 17 UK shows opening with a gig at Guildford’s G-Live on April 23. One of the undisputed highlights will see the band switching up from their Roundhouse shows to the Royal Albert Hall in London on May 7. It’ll be 50 years and three months to the day that Mason last played there with Pink Floyd.

“As a member of our WhatsApp group,” says Harris, “I can confirm that we’re all missing the...
This month, Intro was compiled by
Joe Banks
Mike Barnes
Isere Lloyd-Davis
Malcolm Dome
Daryl Easlea
Jerry Ewing
Martin Kielty
Jakko Jakszyk
Dom Lawson
Rhodri Marsden
Grant Moon
Natasha Scharf
Sid Smith
Rick Wakeman

five-minute call for stage and can’t wait to tread the boards again.”

Nick Mason is clearly enjoying himself as well, and says the five-piece band – Mason, Harris, Kemp, Pratt and keyboard player Dom Beken – have energised him. “This isn’t something truly wonderful because it’s so different to Pink Floyd,” he says, “it’s actually wonderful because it’s very similar to a lot of the time with Pink Floyd. Particularly that Half Moon gig. The first few bars were so similar to playing 52 years ago in terms of camaraderie and the relationship with the audience.”

And that’s what the band offer, with faithful yet not slavish recreations of that precious repertoire including Arnold Layne and See Emily Play, but also a sense of bonhomie on stage that brings the songs to life. “It’s a good band – everyone contributes something different,” says Mason.

Adds Harris, “This time we’ll be bringing some new (old) songs along with us and a change in production too.” One can only wonder, but certainly there are several from the era that have not yet been attempted.

Nick Mason seems to be having the time of his life, surprised and delighted in equal measure with the success of his current venture. As the recipient of the Prog God Award at the 2019 Progressive Music Awards, it only seems right to ask him if winning it had changed him at all: “I’m hoping not, but it’s inevitable that it will,” he adds with his customary wit.

For the full list of dates, head over to www.thesaucerfulofsecrets.com.

**HACKETT RETURNS FOR SECONDS OUT LIVE SHOWS**

Twenty-two date UK tour announced for winter 2020.

Steve Hackett’s Genesis Revisited project reaches an end of sorts when he recreates 1977’s double live album Seconds Out next winter.

He left after the original tour, but, still in love with the music, will revive the full LP with additional material when he tours the UK in November and December 2020.

“It’s a very personal thing,” Hackett tells Prog of Genesis Revisited, which he started in 1996. It’s informed his solo work too, as he argues: “Artists continually have to keep giving themselves pep talks, no matter whether you’ve done incredibly well or you’ve struggled away for years and years. I might change the delivery, but I’m keeping the intention of the music.”

The tour hits many venues Genesis played in ’76, which Hackett says is a fluke of scheduling.

“But the music industry has changed so much since then,” he says. “It does make you think.”

For the full list of dates, head to www.hackettsongs.com.

**TOUNDRA OPEN DR CALIGARI’S CABINET**

Spanish instrumentalists revive the soundtrack to Expressionist film.

Toundra are back, on doctor’s orders.

Steve Hackett: this time it’s personal.

**PRESS/ SERGIO ALBERT**

Toundra are back, on doctor’s orders.

Steve Hackett: this time it’s personal.

**PRESS/TINA KORHONEN**

Toundra are back, on doctor’s orders.

Steve Hackett: this time it’s personal.
INTRO

INTRO extras

COLIN EDWIN: NEW SOLO ALBUM
Ex-Porcupine Tree bassist branches out.


“I’d been working on my own on a load of instrumental pieces and one of the problems is that you don’t have anyone to bounce ideas off,” he explains. “So I sent Rob a couple of tracks saying, ‘What do you think of this?’ And the reply I got was that they came back with vocals and guitar on them! It just carried on like that and the lyrical themes that he came up with all fitted what I had imagined really well, even though I hadn’t said anything to him.”

One of the most immediately striking things about Infinite Regress is that over Edwin’s moody “nocturnal” instruments, Peck addresses some dark lyrical subjects through sweet-toned and melodic vocal performances.

“I like that cognitive dissonance,” Edwin says. “It makes for something more interesting if you have this slight disconnect between what you are hearing and the mood that is being presented.”

Edwin records in a number of different contexts, including Ex-Wise–Heads with former Henry Cow saxophonist Geoff Leigh, and Burnt Belief with guitarist Jon Durant, who also recorded Edwin Durant Kovtun in 2019 with traditional Ukrainian vocalist Inna Kovtun. But Infinite Regress is a departure, in that it’s more overtly electronic than anything that Edwin has done before.

“I like to surprise myself,” he says. “There are a lot of electronics and there are things that you normally wouldn’t do on the bass, like Ebow textural effects that I use with [ambient project] Twincascapes and other people, and I process those even further. And some of the bass sounds more like a keyboard. I’m keeping the organic side but with an electronic atmosphere. A lot of the rhythmic parts are electronic and I have a big interest in drum programming. It’s a fascinating process.”

Edwin also plans to play the music of Infinite Regress live.

“I’ve discussed it with Rob and I like the idea of him singing and playing guitar, and me with the bass and laptop. If we get the opportunity we’ll certainly do it. I think it will translate well live.” MB

For more, visit www.colinedwin.co.uk.

STEVE HILLAGE AND BRIAN ENO ENTER THE ORB!
Ambient electronic outfit enlist star cast for latest album.

Steve Hillage, Miquette Giraudy and Roger Eno are just some of the collaborators on the forthcoming release from The Orb. Abolition Of The Royal Familia will be released via Cooking Vinyl on March 27.

The new album, the band’s 16th studio recording, is the first collaboration between Alex Paterson and new writing and musical partner Michael Rendall, who was previously a member of The Orb’s touring band and studio engineer.

Abolition Of The Royal Familia includes a tribute to cosmologist and fan Stephen Hawking (Hawk Kings) and is a companion album to 2018’s No Sounds Are Out Of Bounds, with its “anything goes” ethos.

Alongside Hillage, Giraudy and Eno, the 12-track also features guest appearances from Killing Joke bassist Youth, who worked with the band on No Sounds..., as well as 17-year–old trumpeter Oli Cripps and Paterson’s dog Ruby.

The Orb will tour the UK in May. For more, visit www.theorb.com. JE
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SOLO ALBUM FOR NIGHTWISH BASSIST
Marko Hietala releases the English language version of his “hard prog” debut.

Nightwish and Tarot bassist and vocalist Marko Hietala is set to release the English version of his solo album, Pyre Of The Black Heart, on January 24 via Nuclear Blast. Hietala released the Finnish version of the album in May under the name Mustan Sydämen Rovio.

Together with his friends and “long-term collaborators”, Tuomas Wäinölä (guitar) and Vili Ollila (keyboards), the trio wrote 10 eclectic tracks that may surprise fans who were expecting something more along the lines of Nightwish’s symphonic grandeur. Described by Hietala as “hard prog”, the new album spans myriad genres from metal and stoner rock, to traditional Finnish folk and 60s/70s-inspired rock.

“The album wouldn’t have been done like this if it wasn’t for the guys,” says Marko of his bandmates. “They brought in a lot of ideas for strong arrangements. It’s different, it doesn’t fall into a heavy metal category, which a lot of people were expecting. This is more of a statement of my musical history.”

Hietala, who reverts to the original spelling of his first name, reveals that he first came up with ideas for some of the songs as long as 10 or 15 years ago, but it was only when Nightwish went on sabbatical in 2017 that the time seemed right to finally record his first solo effort.

“I’d been writing songs during the years that I felt didn’t exactly go with Nightwish or Tarot,” he says of the sense of freedom that came with creating outside the limitations of his day jobs. “In both cases, I have to think about mainstream demands. It was nice, of his day jobs. “In both cases, I have to think about the established musical image of the band. With this, I didn’t have to think about mainstream demands. It was nice, I managed to do a lot more personal stuff than ever before.”

To promote the album, he’ll play 12 dates across Europe in February. As yet there are no UK dates planned, although Marko isn’t ruling out a visit to our shores in the future.

“There’s going to be a Nightwish tour and a Nightwish album, says Hietala. “But after that I’m going to have time off again. This solo stuff and playing with the guys has been fun, so I imagine we might be coming back to this. I would love to come to England. There’s a cradle there for heavier, more progressive rock because, as we know, it came from there.”

For more, see www.facebook.com/markohietalaofficial.

INTRO extras

CROPPREDY 2020 LINE-UP
Steve Hackett’s Genesis Revisited, Clannad, Trevor Horn Band and Rosalie Cunningham are among the acts confirmed for 2020’s Fairport Convention’s annual festival. Crowredy takes place between August 13-15 in north Oxfordshire and will include a 50th anniversary celebration of the hosts’ Full House. The album will be played in full with a line-up of Simon Nicol, Richard Thompson, Dave Mattacks and Dave Pegg, who’ll be joined by Chris Leslie. Thompson will also perform a separate solo set on Saturday. Get your tickets now from www.fairportconvention.com.

MOBIUS’ SECOND IS FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE
French five-piece swot up on their Sanskrit.

Mobius will release their second album, Kala, on January 30 via Bandcamp. It marks a significant departure for the French/Middle Eastern outfit, who explore the nature of death with a sense of confidence. “We were influenced by jazz and classical music on the first album, but the new one is much more modern,” vocalist Héli Andrea tells Prog.

She was inspired to the theme after the experience of finding the dead body of a relative, who’d been gone four days. “His body was decomposed, but not like in the films,” she recalls. “I thought I’d be traumatised, but instead I thought, ‘That’s how we become in the end. It’s not awful, it’s just recycling life.’ I thought it was really poetic, really inspiring. I’m a different person.”

To achieve her intentions, Andrea extended her language skills to include some Sanskrit – “Kala” translates to English as a concept including elements of time, destiny, fate and death. She describes her exploration as “beautiful,” adding: “As a vocalist, I’m very interested in how we can use the sound of words.”

Inspired by the Rotting Christ track Devadevam, from their 2016 album Rituals, she reached out to their Singaporean guest vocalist Kathir to help her discover Sanskrit.

She reports that the handful of Kala songs they’ve already played live have all gone down well. Although Mobius have no confirmed dates, they’re ready to hit the road when the chance arises.

To pre-order Kala, visit www.mobiusofficial.bandcamp.com. Now turn to page 103 for our review. MK

GOLDEN YEARS EXPLORED IN NEW BOOK ON PROG’S HISTORY
Prog writer puts the movement under a microscope.

More than 100 interviews with some of the biggest names in prog from the late 60s and 70s have formed the basis of a new book, published by Omnibus Press on February 27.

A New Day Yesterday, written by Prog’s Mike Barnes, includes interviews with Keith Emerson, Jon Anderson, Bill Bruford and Annie Haslam, plus previously unseen content.

“There’s so much received wisdom today about 70s prog that I wanted to get the real story of the decade,” says the author. “I’ve also added recollections from fans and I have written chapters on politics, youth fashion and tribalism, and attitudes to drugs and sex in the 70s to give a cultural context to the story.”

Weighing in at 608 pages, the paperback is packed with archive and contemporary material. Its title is taken from a track on Jethro Tull’s second album, Stand Up.

For more, visit www.omnibuspress.com. NRS
Christmas is a time of indulgence, which is why every day of the year is Christmas for me. But I do try and get things into proportion as the end of the year comes in to view. New Year is a special time when I can sit back and reminisce about all the things that have happened in the previous 12 months. Then, as I slip slowly into total depression, I can cheer myself up by making New Year’s resolutions that, deep down, I know are impossible to keep.

I found my previous year’s list a few days ago and it was interesting to note what a total waste of time it had been writing it in the first place. It read:

Resolution one: As you are about to turn 70 this year, try and act your age for a change.

This was a total failure, as I found it difficult not to continue to behave like a complete twat, and when I did reach 70 I found myself even grumpier. I ended up doing things like going to the doctor’s even though I didn’t think there was anything wrong with me. I just felt that, at 70, there should be. The problem was that when the doctor told me I had type 2 diabetes, I was really upset.

“I can’t have that,” I said. “I’m too young!”

“No you’re not,” he replied. “And you’re also too fat.” He told me I needed to lose weight and put me on a diet.

Resolution two: Lose weight… and keep it off.

This got off to a reasonable start as I ate sensibly for nearly a whole day. (Actually, I didn’t eat at all, as I had a bad tummy bug.) After that, I tried various diets including the ‘look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves’ diet. This is where you buy junk food that costs pennies, so you can pile on the pounds with consummate ease.

Resolution three: Exercise.

I took a good look at myself in the mirror, and listed all the areas of my body that I felt need exercise. These included: my legs, my arms, my upper body, my lower body, my back and bottom, my calves, my feet, and of course my brain. I prioritised this list, and so I’ve exercised my brain a lot, which I feel is certainly a step in the right direction.

Resolution four: Cut down on the foods that create flatulence.

I didn’t even attempt this, as this would have meant starvation.

So my wishes for 2020 are simply that everybody should have a very happy Christmas, and here’s to a wonderful prog New Year!
Faith Coloccia’s piano-led, avant-garde folk project sends light signals to the universe.

“SONG BY SONG, the album is a backward narrative of the journey I had to take to become an empowered woman,” says Faith Coloccia, singer-songwriter of Seattle experimental folk duo, Mamiffer, about the new album The Brilliant Tabernacle.

“I started working on the album from 2013 until 2018. During that time, I had a pregnancy, I gave birth and I was a new mother. The record encompasses that journey. The egg that created my child has been in my body my whole life, and when I was a foetus inside my mother, I had all of the eggs that I would ever have. I was trying to trace back the beginning of life from mother to mother. The album starts with my son’s birth and goes backwards to when he was an egg and when I was born,” explains Coloccia.

Based on a foundation of piano, organ, vocals and drums, Mamiffer is a collaboration between Coloccia and long-time partner and Isis co-founder Aaron Turner on guitar, with an array of contributors such as Jon Mueller on drums and Veronica Dye on flute, mixed by Randall Dunn, the producer for Sunn O))) and Anna von Hausswolff. The delicate piano melodies, accompanied by soft lyrical harmonies and emerging pattern of drums in each luminous track create an emotionally charged sense of interchanging feminine dominance and vulnerability.

“The album embraces vulnerability and joy,” Coloccia says. “In the past I have felt the need to express sorrow and disappointment, sadness and loss, but this record is connected to the erotic, pleasure, beauty and I guess all of the mess of life [laughs].”

The music video for All That Is Beautiful, directed by Lauren Rodriguez, is a heartfelt homage to the women in Coloccia’s family, depicting the singer in a field and making beds dressed in her mother’s, grandmother’s and great-grandmother’s old-fashioned clothes and jewellery.

“After I gave birth, I realised the power of my body,” she continues. “I wanted to carry those strengths with me into my new life and offer that strength to my child. All That Is Beautiful is a celebration of life and I wanted my son to know about the strength of women through the matrilineal blood line.”

Drawing inspiration from emotionally captivating artists, mud larking and archaeology, Coloccia’s music is a tribute to creativity and progressive thinking, each composition unearthing soundscapes of buried musical treasure.

“I’m inspired by novels by Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison and James Baldwin and visual artists like my good friends Kelly Akashi and Candice Lin. The visual aspect is the secondary reason why I make records, so that the artworks can go to people. The visuals are the vehicle to transfer ideas and I believe that’s where a lot of the magic is,” says Coloccia.

Embedded symbols in the album artwork enhance the spiritual and glowing aura surrounding Mamiffer. For instance, the back cover is highly reflective gold, so when you hold it, a golden light shines upon you.

“I wanted people to experience an inner light being shined on them. There are secrets hidden in my records,” Coloccia says. “I have created lifelong acquaintanceships with fans who have uncovered some of these aspects in the music. I think it’s cool to have a secret code that calls to people and allows you to find likeminded people.” ILD
“I used to be the sort of guy who thought cooking was a chore, but recently I’ve started to get quite into it. About three or four years ago, I went on a health binge and started picking up recipe books by the likes of Jamie Oliver, Nigel Slater and Nigella Lawson. Now I make a lot of pies and stews; I’m not really into salads or quinoa, I like old-fashioned food. I’m fond of bolognese and lasagne – anything that’s heavy on fat, carbs and starch!

Although I don’t sound like it, I’m Scottish in origin, and this recipe is a traditional Burn’s Night supper. The secret is to pour a dram of single-malt scotch over it. It’s something I learned from my grandfather, who was a Glasgow ship builder. He came up with this recipe one New Year’s Eve, and he passed it on to my dad who passed it on to me.”

**Ingredients (serves 4)**

- 450g ready-made haggis.
- For the neeps: 700g swedes, 1 tsp whisky, 1 tbsp cream, 20g butter, salt and pepper (to taste).
- For the tatties: 500g King Edward or Maris Piper potatoes, 25ml milk, 50g butter, salt.
- For the whisky sauce: 1 tbsp Balblair 90 Scotch Malt Whisky, 200ml double cream.

**Preparation**

First prepare the vegetables. Peel and dice the swede, then cook in salted boiling water until tender. This should take about 20-30 minutes. Drain and mash with the cream, whisky and butter. Season with copious amounts of black pepper.

Meanwhile, peel and quarter the potatoes and add to a separate pan of boiling salted water. Try to make the pieces of similar size so they all cook at the same time. Cook for 15-20 minutes then drain well, and mash with the milk and butter. I put the potatoes through a ricer to get a lovely smooth mash.

“The quickest way to cook haggis is to microwave it. Remove it from its skin and place in an ovenproof dish, cover with cling film and microwave for five minutes on full power. While it’s cooking, gently warm the ingredients for the sauce in a pan and serve in a jug at the table. Plate up and enjoy!

“So many people have misconceptions about haggis, but it’s really, really tasty, and the important thing about this recipe is that it’s got an alcoholic twist! Serve it for Burn’s Night or on special occasions.”

**BRANDON YEAGLEY**

When it’s time to face the music, the Crobot vocalist returns to his favourite ELO tapes.

“I was raised on progressive rock. My parents were pretty much into everything, and I inherited this box of cassettes from them when I was between the ages of eight and 10.

ELO’s Out Of The Blue really stood out. I’ve always been a fan of concepts. I grew up with Meat Loaf and I was a big fan of the rock opera; nobody has done it quite like Queen, Meat Loaf and ELO. They were such great songwriters.

And ELO were one of those bands that you never realised how many songs they had until you looked at a greatest hits. Man, what a catalogue!

Out Of The Blue is probably my favourite record by them, and it just so happens that was the one I got second-hand. They certainly took you on quite a trip. Mr Blue Sky is the song I always go back to. It’s such a feel-good track and it’s never really aged. It’s partially sentimental too. And the album still holds its weight. It reminds me of The Beatles’ White Album, where it touches on so many different styles.

When [file-sharing service] Napster rolled around, it opened up the floodgates, and I could go deeper. I was always the guy who was trying to find the weird stuff, and I would share it around my friends.

I found Protest The Hero that way – Fortress is still one of the progressive masterpiece albums, as far as I’m concerned. It was a daunting task to listen to it enough times so I could memorise every single change, turn and lyric.

It was like studying for a science test.

I tried to learn it on guitar and bass, although it was way above my calibre of playing. Those guys are nuts! Sometimes I have trouble counting to four, let alone 12/8.

I love the quirkiness of Primus, too, and had it not been for them I’m sure I wouldn’t have found Frank Zappa.

And Coheed And Cambria — their Good Apollo is still one of my favourite records of all time.

I’ve never had the chance to see ELO live. That’s the downside of being in a band that tours so heavily: we don’t get to see many shows. But ELO have been a big influence on me, for sure.”

Motherbrain is out now via Mascot. See www.crobotband.com.
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**INTRO**

Ihsahn is to release the first of two EPs inspired by his home country early next year. When we jam, and we want to keep it rough.”

**NICK CAVE AND THE BAD SEEDS**

**GHOSTEEN** (BAD SEED LTD, 2019)

When he first emerged as a leading light of the post-punk underground in the early 80s, Nick Cave could hardly have seemed further removed from anything remotely related to progressive rock. As drug-munching frontman with The Birthday Party, he made spiky swamp rock with malevolent overtones, before forming his own band, The Bad Seeds, for 1984’s *From Her To Eternity*. From then on, The Bad Seeds began to provide Cave with an extraordinarily versatile and distinctive vehicle for his always literate and emotionally supercharged lyrics.

Over the past 30-plus years, Cave and his band have recorded a huge catalogue of critically acclaimed and often wildly successful records, perennially hailed by the mainstream but never bland enough to become part of the furniture. Still, for Prog readers at least, genuine prog credentials have been hard to discern.

All that changed, albeit subtly, when Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds released Skeleton Tree in 2016. A more free-form and experimental record than any of its predecessors, it brought woozy ambience and elements of musique concrète into Cave’s amorphous formula, all of which added great atmosphere and woozy ambience and elements of musique concrète into Cave’s Skeleton Tree was a profoundly progressive record.

In 2019, Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds marched even further into prog territory with the surprise release of Ghosteen. Although it’s doubtful that Cave spends much time sitting around and listening to old prog records, the spirit of exploratory art rock is evident throughout the record’s 69 mesmerising minutes. The album’s first half is a rollercoaster of emotions, underpinned by an extraordinary versatility and distinctive vehicle for his always literate and emotionally supercharged lyrics.

The second half of Ghosteen is just devastating. The 12-minute title track combines the romantic orchestration that Cave has long employed with the otherworldly sheen of Bowie’s Berlin period, before morphing into a twinkly eyed psychedelic vista worthy of imperious, late-60s Scott Walker. The closing, 14-minute “Cold War,” says the band’s bassist James Varghese, “so we went to our cellar and jammed like we did at university. The music didn’t have to fit a certain format – it could be weird, if it needed to be.”

Holm’s debut album, *Through Windows*, is indeed weird in places, notably Giannelli’s effects-soaked percussion improvisation “Glazed Over,” and Käch’s haunting solo Resound performed on a baritone guitar played with a bow. But then there are the title track’s My Bloody Valentine-esque torrents of echoing guitars, the funky groove underpinning Spoon’s ever-evolving arpeggios.

If there’s much here for fans of Jo Quail’s atmospherics and Mogwai’s instrumental explorations, Holm took inspiration from eclectic Texan trio Khruangbin. “It’s more their mindset than their music,” says Varghese. “A three-piece doesn’t have to just make big, loud music, if it’s minimalist you can still find an audience. But we don’t discuss our music much. We get a certain energy when we jam, and we want to keep it rough, spontaneous.”

This year Holm played Bergmal, Switzerland’s premier post-rock festival, and their second album is also on the way. With their three respective plates already full, the band are in this for the long haul, but never want Holm to ever feel like work. “We have to enjoy it,” says Varghese. “Over the next 30 years we plan to keep playing, to keep adding entries to our musical diary together.”


**HOLM**

Bassist James Varghese ushers us into a fallout shelter in Switzerland to meet his experimental three-piece.

**PROG IN BRIEF**

The Seventh Wave Festival of Electronic Music returns to Birmingham on March 6-8. The 2020 edition features performances from Tangerine Dream’s Ulrich Schnauss and Thorsten Quaeschning, as well as Teeth Of The Sea and Theo Travis.

Ideals is to release the first of two EPs inspired by his home country early next year. Telemark is out on February 14 via Candlelight. It contains new songs that return to the folk-influneced roots of Norwegian black metal and are inspired by a traditional Norse fiddle.

**DOM LAWSON**

We take you now to a nuclear fallout shelter beneath the headquarters of the Union Bank Of Switzerland in Zürich. This is where instrumental trio Holm have been refining their intoxicating mash-up of post-rock, shoegaze and sound experimentation for the past three years. “Every building in Switzerland had a bomb shelter, because of the Cold War,” says the band’s bassist James Varghese.

Varghese met Holm guitarist Dimitri Käch and drummer Alessandro Giannelli more than a decade ago when they were studying music at Zürich’s University Of The Arts. Together they conjured sophisticated sounds, but subsequently took separate musical paths. “We wanted to get back to the three of us experimenting,” says Varghese, “so we went to our cellar and jammed like we did at university. The music didn’t have to fit a certain format – it could be weird, if it needed to be.”

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ARP

From New York’s sound-art scene, meet this jazzer creating live sounds in his home studio.

ALEXIS GEORGOPOULOS, AKA Arp, has been making waves in the sound-art and electronic music scene in New York and beyond for well over a decade. Unashamedly eclectic in his approach, his evolution as an artist operating initially within the airy textures of analogue synths of 2010’s The Soft Wave or the same year’s deeply textural acoustic-ambient collaborations with Slapp Happy’s Anthony Moore, have all marked him out as someone keen to explore different worlds and alternative directions. That wanderlust saw 2018’s Zebra embarking upon a more overtly jazzier area. “I don’t even know what ‘jazz’ means in a way,” he says, “I’ve always been most into people like Don Cherry, Alice Coltrane; people that are I suppose closer to the cosmic jazz side of things or what they used to call ‘world jazz’ – people that were into either intentionally breaking confines or just being natural and not letting preconceptions about what you’re supposed to do actually guide what you do.”

Zebra was, he says, his most rounded, satisfying release, a result of finally having built a home studio. “Maybe it was the first time I was able to synthesise a lot of different influences to something that felt authentic to me. This was the most, complete, thing that I’d done and part of that very much came from having the home studio to work in at my leisure.”

His latest album, Ensemble – Live, was another product of that bespoke studio space with Georgopoulos assembling some of Zebra’s personnel, including sax player David Lackner, to tackle arrangements of those compositions and new tunes in an extended live-performance setting. The results hover somewhere between the chilled undergrowth electro-whispers of Jon Hassell’s Fourth World constructions and softer explorations of electric-era Miles Davis. “I’d never thought I would make a record that leans so heavily in the direction of ‘jazz!’ And I use jazz in quotes because, certainly, I think this is more of a left-field variety. But since we were making a live experience albeit in the studio, why not lean a little bit in that direction?”

Alongside the down-tempo strands of jazz and hints of an elegant funk influence in some of the music, what also shines through the music is Georgopoulos’ impeccable minimalist credentials. “If you were to be at the mixing console of this new live record and were to solo out some of the piano pieces, you still hear influences like Charlemagne Palestine in the mix. But then you add a horn, and add a ride cymbal and all of a sudden it sounds like jazz,” he laughs. “I wanted to let the group play music, which is something that I don’t see a lot of live ensembles or groups these days. This felt like a rare moment to really let something breathe and ebb and flow as it felt natural. I have always been attracted to artists that are somehow able to be approachable and generous, but also be experimental. So that’s what I’m trying to do.”

SS

PROG FILE

“I try to be approachable and experimental.”

ALEXIS GEORGOPOULOS

arp

LINE-UP

Alexis Georgopoulos

(piano, Minimoog, tinglek, marimba, harmonizer), TJ Malani (drums), John Thayer (percussion, effects), Benjamin Campbell (double bass, electric bass), David Lackner

(electronic wind instrument, flute, saxophone, electric piano)

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Alexis Georgopoulos: making waves.
What appeals to me about surround sound is the immersive experience. It’s the three-dimensional nature of being right at the centre of the music. In the early 70s, various attempts were made to market quadraphonic recordings on eight-track cartridge and vinyl. As successful as some of those early mixes were, the problem emerged when it came to deliver them. Competing systems required the consumer to fork out serious money for unique playback alternatives to the basic record player or cassette deck.

Like the audio equivalent of the war between VHS and Betamax, it’s only when one format emerges as the ‘winner’ that any commercial foothold and future can be determined. In the 70s, the fight for quad never happened, so why is it that, more than 40 years later, surround sound has come back from the dead? It’s all down to the demand for home cinema and its affordability; these days, a whole system can be bought for under £300, which is why surround mixes have enjoyed an infinitely more successful return.

So how do the modern 5.1 mix actually work? You place two speakers in front of you, like a standard stereo set-up, and then two behind, with an extra central speaker. The point-one bit is the sub-woofer, which brings out the big bass frequencies. In cinema mixes, the sub gives life to the bass. The middle speaker is for the dialogue, separating speech from the rest of the audio. In the world of album reissues, we mix in quad, but piggyback on to the 5.1 platform. The use of the sub, for music remixes in particular, can be rather tricky. I use it sparingly, edging the bass drum and bass guitar into it slightly.

Over the years, I’ve seen home systems with unbalanced speakers: one by the telly, the other by the sofa, or two speakers next to each other, or even wired out of phase. It’s rather dispiriting to have mixed an album in a space that’s been acoustically designed, only for playback to be in a horrible-sounding room, with speakers placed at random and the sub turned up too high!

Gentle Giant’s recent box set Unburied Treasure has been mixed in 7.1. With that, the additional two speakers are placed to the listener’s immediate right and left. But would it be significantly better than 5.1 or quad? I’ve not ventured into this yet, but I’m not sure if, in a musical context, it would be that significant. To truly work for the home consumer, the speakers would have to be set up correctly. The listener would need a bigger space for the system to appreciate the full benefit, and that system would probably be more expensive too. And of course all our favourite albums would need to be remixed again! I can’t see it catching on right now. Frankly, there are times when I wonder whether those fans buying the remixes I do even have a 5.1 system, or if they’re just completists!

“Big Big Train were the first band to send me a cassette,” recalls Kev Rowland. “Final Conflict were the first to send me a CD, and Vertical Alignment were the first band to send me a download…”

When talking to this veteran music writer, anecdotes about obscure bands — Milky Way Gas Station, Different Trains, Mice On Stilts, Mastermind — whiz overhead. Back in 1990, the self-professed music addict was pulling shifts as a night manager at Sainsbury’s in Cobham, and by day writing Feedback, a specialist rock music newsletter, on his electric typewriter. His thick contacts list and prolific reviewing and interviewing made Feedback an invaluable resource for prog fans in the pre-Google, pre-Prog, age.

“If someone had told me back then that there was going to be a regular glossy magazine just about progressive rock, and sold in newsagents, I’d have called them mad! When I started there was no internet or email, just a handful of magazines like mine in the UK and Europe. It was hard to know what was going on. The mass media hated progressive rock. A few bands cut through — Marillion, Pallas — but mostly people didn’t say positive things. For those of us who did know the scene, it felt like a family.”

Rowland left Feedback (later renamed Amplified) in 2006, when he and his family emigrated to New Zealand. He has a smallholding, and is (aptly) a chief information officer by trade, but he still writes copiously about prog (and jazz, and rock and other genres) for numerous websites. His three-volume book series The Progressive Underground collects all half a million words of his prog writings from his Feedback days. The second volume, which is out now, includes reviews from I to S (Icon to Syzygy). The third is due in 2020.

“I want to encourage people to use them like a guide,” he explains. “Go and find, say, The Wizard by Ablinioosty. If you like jazz rock, try Sphere and Spaced Out. Try Box by [Northern Irish band] Winter is a brilliant piece of music. I’m still trying to shine a light on these bands.”

GRM

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## November 2019

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<td>25</td>
<td>LEPROUS</td>
<td>Pitfalls</td>
<td>INSIDEOUT</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>MOON DUO</td>
<td>Stars Are The Light</td>
<td>SACRED BONES</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>KATE BUSH</td>
<td>The Other Sides</td>
<td>BMG</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>DREAM THEATER</td>
<td>Distance Over Time</td>
<td>INSIDEOUT</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>PERIPHERY</td>
<td>IV - Hall Stain</td>
<td>CENTURY MEDIA</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>IQ</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>GIANT ELECTRIC PEA</td>
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Find out more at [www.officialcharts.com](http://www.officialcharts.com)

### What got us all grooving this month...

**US, THEM & YOU**

### WIN!

**A Bundle of Special Editions Including Tull and Marillion**

- **Jethro Tull's Stormwatch** has been remixed by which acclaimed musician?
  - A) Steve Rothery
  - B) Steve Albini
  - C) Steven Wilson

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** This competition will be open from December 31, 2019 – February 4, 2020. By entering the competition you agree to our competition rules (available at www.futureplc.com/competition-rules). The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition.

For your chance to win this special bundle, visit [www.bit.ly/ProgBundle19](http://www.bit.ly/ProgBundle19) and answer the following question:

**Now our turn...**
Jorja Chalmers: classically trained, but inspired by films and early electronic music.
“WHEN I WAS 12, I had a guitar teacher who gave me a video of John Petrucci playing two Dream Theater songs. I played it over and over again, and I practised like mad,” says Jakub Zytecki. “Then I started getting into Allan Holdsworth and Eric Johnson, and I’m now really interested in production.”

The uplifting Nothing Lasts, Nothing’s Lost is Polish guitarist Zytecki’s second solo release, and it’s a world apart from the prog metal grooves on his debut, 2015’s Wishful Lotus Proof. The vibrant 11-track album takes its title from a quote by US psychonaut Terance McKenna, and works in influences from psych and jazz. “I was smoking quite a lot of weed while making it,” he laughs.

Helping him realise his eclectic vision is Polish singer Paulina Przybysz, whose soulful vocals caress lead track Bonsai, and Meshuggah guitarist Fredrik Thordendal, who contributes what Zytecki refers to as a “sick solo” to the trip-hoppy Creature Comfort.

“Right after my first album, I started to become more interested in electronic and dance music – basically, anything that’s not progressive metal,” Zytecki says. “I’ve been really inspired by Bon Iver, The 1975 and Tycho, who are amplifying the nostalgic feel, and also by weird psychedelic stuff like [experimental electronic and IDM artists] Flume and Jon Hopkins. I really enjoy the weirder elements of music.”

“I’m 26 now, and I feel like I’m having a midlife crisis, so I wanted to make this record representative of this moment in my life.”

Although he’s still of relatively tender years, Zytecki has been making music for more than a decade. He was just 14 when he formed prog metal outfit DispersE, although he quit last year, citing a lack of chemistry and a desire to pursue his solo career. More recently he became part of Australian guitarist and songwriter Plini’s European touring band, which has helped him learn how to deal with some of the challenges of being a solo artist.

“We’ve been friends for a long time, and I played with him at UK Tech-Fest in 2015,” he explains. “When we meet up for coffee we exchange ideas, and I try to use the opportunity to get some knowledge on what he’s doing creatively, both musically and business-wise. We talk about a bit of everything, from the business side to the really nerdy side to just talking about life. I really love this guy.”

Zytecki will be using some of that knowledge next year when he tours his own album. Although the dates are still to be confirmed, he’s also hoping to release some more new material and flex his remixing muscles in the interim. Then there’s a top-secret project with Mariusz Duda from fellow Polish proggers Riverside. “We’ve been talking about it for some time,” he reveals. “I’m just really excited to be working with other people, because I spent so much time working alone with this album. I want to do something with others now.” NRS
DOONE RECORDS PRESENTS

DON'T PANIC

THE NEW STUDIO ALBUM FROM US PROG ROCK ENSEMBLE IZZ

"IZZ's Don't Panic is a remarkable work... that steers well clear of lazy retroism while pushing at the boundaries of symphonic prog... This is masterful prog." — DPRP.net

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When I was little, I lived in a village in Leicestershire, and I had a portable radio that went everywhere... we get the best of both worlds.”

“Later on, I was in a kibbutz. I was sharing a room with someone who was away. I saw he had a whole bunch of records, and one was Yes’ Close To The Edge. I was attracted by the cover, and when I put it on it sounded like it was from another planet, extraordinary. It still sticks with me no matter how many decades later.

“Pink Floyd came at a similar time. I’d already heard Dark Side Of The Moon, when I was going for an interview for a place at Oxford University. You spend the evening before with a bunch of people who are also being interviewed, and we’d all gone out and got absolutely trashed in a bar where Dark Side... was playing. I thought: ‘This is interesting,’ but wasn’t super-into it. In Tel Aviv I heard all the other albums, and it was Animals, a slow-burner, that stood out for me. Seeing him [Roger Waters] play it live in Hyde Park [in 2018] was phenomenal. And I never went to Oxford uni. I wanted to go to Manchester, and I did, and loved it.

“The first time I heard King Crimson was in Tel Aviv too, and it was the 80s stuff — I loved Discipline. Then years later I got into Thrak. I’m one of the few people who really, really likes The Construkction Of Light. That’s in my top five Crimson albums. So it’s almost impossible to choose a favourite, but purely for the iconic image I’d say In The Court Of The Crimson King. I’ve seen them live four times, and the best was in 2005. That’s what they’re about, the live work. The records are just a small part of them.

“I stuck with all the oldie favourites for years and years. Then I took a job in Italy, and while sat in my office, bored and missing things from the UK, and I’d see reviews that would switch me on to new things, or what other customers were buying. I started spreading the net, and found bands like Dream Theater. Over a very short period of time I bought a stupid amount of CDs by people such as Transatlantic, Liquid Tension Experiment, all of the Dream Theater offshoots, and taking other chances. The name Beardfish came up, and they were supporting Flying Colors for the first album. I’d never heard of them, so I looked into their back catalogue. I bought everything, and started absolutely loving their stuff, especially The Void. To suddenly see young energy in a prog band again was brilliant. And then I saw pretty much all of these bands at Progressive Nation At Sea [alludes to the T-shirt from the festival].

“Frank Zappa came from buying stuff randomly on Amazon. I bought a ‘best of’ and it was okay, obviously commercial. Then I bought Hot Rats and I was blown away. Like Crimson, he’s all about the live stuff, so I pick Roxy & Elsewhere as my Zappa album, particularly the tracks Echidna’s Arf and Don’t You Ever Wish That Thing? This is stuff you have to listen to about 50 times before you realise what’s going on.

“Before I was at The Ivy I was at Everyman Cinema. Steven Wilson and Lonely Robot remind me of putting events together with both artists; Steven had a night centred around the directors of his videos for The Raven That Refused To Sing, and John Mitchell showed all the wonderful films that he’d had made for Under Stars. For me, the films that accompany the songs on The Raven are so perfect, and if I want to hear the album I put on the films to watch as well. Drive Home and The Raven are unbelievable. Being able to do an event with those, up on a big screen in 5.1 surround sound, was a dream. Tears were shed. I’d found Lonely Robot through Prog Magazine. Then I got into Arena afterwards. I love Under Stars, and hearing that he’d made films was something I knew I had to commemorate.

“The future for me is things like Sons Of Apollo and the Cruise To The Edge event. We have to mix the old with the new — we get the best of both worlds.”

FIELD MUSIC

Back with their most ambitious album to date, Peter and David Brewis talk about its conception and creation, and how they found themselves as songwriters.

Words: Joe Banks  Portrait: Manox

In January 2019, art rockers Field Music played a pair of shows at the Imperial War Museums in Manchester and London, performing as part of the IWM’s ‘Making A New World’ programme of events reflecting on the legacy of the First World War. Having specially written a suite of songs and instrumental pieces for the performance, brothers Peter and David Brewis realised that they had “accidentally made a new album”, and a concept album at that, with Making A New World covering such widely diverse topics as social housing, gender reassignment, the Dada art movement, Tiananmen Square and sanitary towels.

How did the IWM commission come about?
Peter: The guy who does our visual stuff had a friend at the Imperial War Museum, and she asked if she could get in touch and put an idea to us. I think they just wanted us to do a gig, originally.
David: We took it far too far, didn’t we!
Peter: We had the idea initially that we might top and tail a semi-improvised instrumental piece with a short song. But when we got into the research, we started writing songs about everything. And when we started properly rehearsing it with the band, we thought: “This sounds good. Maybe it’s a proper Field Music album.”

Your starting point was a ‘sound ranging’ recording that visually depicts when the guns fell silent and the war ended.
Peter: Yeah, that was one story about the end, and we thought: “What other stories can you trace back to the end of the war, and where do those stories lead? Let’s imagine these lines from the sound ranging recording going on for the next hundred years.” That is a concept, let’s be honest!
David: Once we came up with our rules for it — for instance, we weren’t going to write too much about the war experience itself — we realised that actually the subject matter could be as broad or as tight as we wanted, depending on what we found most interesting.

You’ve said: “We felt we were pulling the war towards us — out of remembrance and into the everyday.”
Peter: We wanted the performance to seem like there was a chronological element to it, bringing it into the present. We don’t want to be disrespectful, but there are certain elements of how remembrance is approached now that dilute the importance of that sacrifice.
David: It was a liberating turning point for me when I realised I needed to choose whose perspective the song was being told from, and that became the modus operandi for the album — we’re not writing a dissertation, we want it to be a personal story.

Paul Nash’s painting We Are Making A New World, from where the event and the album take their name, depicts a devastated battlefield.
Peter: It’s a very provocative painting, and the title is ironic, ambivalent. And that’s what we wanted to do with some of the record. Some of the stories are about a positive technological or sociological change that’s been brought about by the war, but some things are still the same: chemical weapons are still here and being used — mustard gas is still being used. The League Of Nations failed because people didn’t participate properly in it. And now we’re at the point where we really need the United Nations, and people aren’t participating in that properly either. We’re still making this new world, and it’s still got huge problems.

What are the challenges you face when writing something like this?
Peter: I don’t think either of us had ever written songs in that way before. I’ve never really considered myself a songwriter, not in that classic way, I always thought of myself as being a rock musician, who happened to make songs. Now I’m starting to feel that I need my lyrics to be more crafted.
David: Because we do so much of the record-making process in-house, there’s always been that sense that, yeah, we are songwriters. But that’s only a small part, because we’re also arrangers and producers and mixers and band leaders. But I think that we’ve found ourselves — accidentally — as songwriters on this record.

You usually record as a duo. What difference did it make recording the album with a full band?
David: The main reason we generally don’t have a live band come and play with us on a record is because we’ve only just written the songs. But here, we had the opportunity to rehearse it, and do some of the arrangement with the band, which was a nice process. We went into the studio, did two run-throughs, came back the next week to put acoustic piano on, and then me and Peter just tinkered with it. It was certainly quicker recording that way. To get three-quarters of an album done in one day is very unusual.

Were you influenced by any albums or artists from the prog world when making the record?
David: I feel like with a record like this, A Wizard, A True Star by Todd Rundgren is casting a shadow over how we’ve done things. And with [Genesis’] The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway, there’s ideas about how you can do this kind of thing and things that you might want to avoid.
Peter: I approached some of my guitar playing here using a volume pedal and more distortion than I usually would, a sort of Fripp-y kind of thing. I still listen to [King Crimson’s] Larks’ Tongues In Aspic.
David: And we quite often have our [KC] Discipline moments.
Peter: I’ve also been thinking about Soft Machine as well. I really love those first two albums... Normally if we’re thinking about proggy stuff, we’re coming from a Van Dyke Parks, Sgt Peppers, George Martin angle, but with this album it’s much more like a rock band.

Making A New World is out now on Memphis Industries. Field Music will be performing the album around the UK in February. See www.field-music.co.uk.
Peter Brewis and David Brewis got a little carried away with their IWM commission.
The PROG READERS’ POLL 2019

I t’s that time again: last issue we revealed to you the Prog Critics’ Choice of 2019 and in December you, the Prog readers, had your say. As always, it makes for some very interesting reading.

Sometimes just releasing an album in the given year will propel you into the public consciousness and into the polls. Sometimes mobilising your fanbase through social media will do it. Others are simply just evergreens. I do enjoy going through the results and drawing my own conclusions. I’m sure you do, too.

Thank you to everyone who voted, and congratulations to all our winners and everyone who features. Enjoy before we turn our attention to a new decade. Long live prog in 2020.

Jerry Ewing - Editor

BAND

1. BIG BIG TRAIN
2. OPETH
3. MARILLION
4. LEPBOUS
5. TOOL
6. KING CRIMSON
7. DREAM THEATER
8. IAMTHEMORNING
9. BENT KNEE
10. GONG

“Thank you very much to all of the readers. We’re truly honoured and humbled that you’d choose us as best band when there are so many great bands out there. The music we treasure is resonating and the hard work’s paying off. We couldn’t do this without all of you. The support of our fans and passengers is the fuel in our engine. Thank you Prog team for this amazing platform.

Big Big Train
“Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We’re collectively chuffed!”

Opeth
MALE VOCALIST

1. DAVID LONGDON (BIG BIG TRAIN)
2. EINAR SOLBERG (LEPROUS)
3. MIKAEL ÅKERFELDT (OPETH)
4. STEVE HOGARTH (MARILLION)
5. MAYNARD JAMES KEENAN (TOOL)
6. DANIEL TOMPKINS (TESSERACT)
7. JAMES LABRIE (DREAM THEATER)
8. JAKKO JAKSZYK (KING CRIMSON)
9. TIM BOWNESS
10. DANNY ESTRIN (VOYAGER)

“Thank you to those who voted for me. It is an absolute honour and I truly appreciate it.”
David Longdon

UNSIGNED BAND

1. A FORMAL HORSE
2. WARMRAIN
3. HAYLEY GRIFFITHS BAND
4. EMPEROR NORTON
5. THIS WINTER MACHINE
6. HATS OFF GENTLEMEN, IT’S ADEQUATE
7. MILE MARKER ZERO
8. KEOR
9. IN PRAISE OF FOLLY
10. CLOUD OVER JUPITER

“Thanks so much to the Prog readers for this – we wouldn’t have been around long enough to make an album if it wasn’t for your support. Here’s to a great 2020 together!”
A Formal Horse
“I feel very humbled to be in the company of such wonderful talented ladies and I’m very grateful to everyone who voted for me. 2020 promises to be very exciting as I’m releasing my first solo album and this is such a lovely starting point. Thank you!”

Marjana Semkina
Thank you so much to the readers of Prog Magazine and all who voted for me! It’s very humbling and such a tremendous honour to be recognised in this way. Only makes me want to practise more!

John Petrucci

---

**GUITARIST**

1. **JOHN PETRUCCI**  
   (DREAM THEATER)

2. FREDRIK ÅKESSON  
   (OPETH)

3. ADAM JONES  
   (TOOL)

4. STEVE HACKETT

5. STEVE ROTHERY  
   (MARILLION)

6. ROBERT FRIPP  
   (KING CRIMSON)

7. STEVE HILLAGE

8. MATT STEVENS  
   (THE FIERCE & THE DEAD)

9. SIMONE DOW  
   (VOYAGER)

10. DAVE BAINBRIDGE  
    (LIFESIGNS/CELESTIAL FIRE)

---

**BASSIST**

1. **NICK BEGGS**

2. GREG SPAWTON  
   (BIG BIG TRAIN)

3. JOHN MYUNG  
   (DREAM THEATER)

4. MARTIN MENDEZ  
   (OPETH)

5. PETE TREWAVAS  
   (MARILLION)

6. JONAS REINGOLD  
   (STEVE HACKETT/ 
   THE FLOWER KINGS)

7. JUSTIN CHANCELLOR  
   (TOOL)

8. COLIN EDWIN  
   (O.R.K.)

9. TONY LEVIN  
   (KING CRIMSON)

10. JON POOLE  
    (LIFESIGNS)

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“Thank you so much to the readers of Prog Magazine and all who voted for me! It’s very humbling and such a tremendous honour to be recognised in this way. Only makes me want to practise more!”

John Petrucci
“I’ve done nothing but mince through the year like a work-shy fop and still you voted for me? What could I have possibly enunciated to deserve this accolade? However, in light of the over-arching circumstance, I accept your obeisance and request a flagon of absinthe be dispatched to my premises by sun-up.”

Nick Beggs

“This is rather unexpected, but I am very pleased to be on this list again. Thanks to all the listeners who supported me this year. And of course, a huge respect for all the musicians who are mentioned here, it is a great honour to be on the same list with you.”

Gleb Kolyadin

KEYBOARDIST

1. GLEB KOLYADIN (Iamthemorning)

2. JORDAN RUDESS (DREAM THEATER)
3. JOAKIM SVALBERG (OPETH)
4. MARK KELLY (MARILLION)
5. RICK WAKEMAN
6. JOHN YOUNG (LIFESIGNS)
7. GEOFF DOWNES (YES)
8. ROGER KING (STEVE HACKETT)
9. DANNY MANNERS (BIG BIG TRAIN)
10. RICCARDO ROMANO (STEVE ROTHERY BAND)
DRUMS

1. GAVIN HARRISON
(KING CRIMSON/ THE PINEAPPLE THIEF)

2. CRAIG BLUNDELL (STEVE HACKETT)
3. DANNY CAREY (TOOL)
4. IAN MOSLEY (MARILLION)
5. NICK D’VIRGILIO (BIG BIG TRAIN)
6. PAT MASTELOTTO (O.R.K./KING CRIMSON)
7. MIKE PORTNOY
8. MARTIN AXENROT (OPETH)
9. NICK MASON
10. MIKE MANGINI (DREAM THEATER)

“It is indeed a pleasure to win this award again. It’s nice to feel appreciated, thanks for the vote.”

Gavin Harrison

DISAPPOINTMENT

1. EFFECT OF BREXIT ON TOURING MUSICIANS

2. CLOSURE OF THE CITADEL, ST. HELENS
3. IT BITES OFFICIALLY CALLING IT A DAY
4. IAN ANDERSON TOURING AS JETHRO TULL
5. NO NEW MUSIC FROM YES FEAT. ANDERSON, RABIN, WAKEMAN
6. STILL NO GENESIS REUNION
7. ABSENCE OF PROG MUSIC FROM THE MAINSTREAM
8. CLOSURE OF THE BORDERLINE
9. PINK FLOYD’S THE LATER YEARS
10. STEVEN WILSON PLAYING ARENAS
“Once again, huge thanks to our global family for voting the Marillion Weekends Number 1 Best Event in Prog Readers’ Poll. You’re right! They were brilliant! Love and handstands.”

Steve Hogarth

“Huge thanks to the readers of Prog for their continued support. We wouldn’t still be doing this 40 years after Marillion started without the passion and belief of our fans. We are not worthy!”

Steve Rothery

“Prog is part of the Hall’s DNA, from Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa, to the 50th anniversary of King Crimson in June. It’s so exciting to win Venue Of The Year again, and particularly rewarding to do so via an audience vote.”

Lucy Noble, Artistic and Commercial Director, Royal Albert Hall

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**EVENT**

1. MARILLION WEEKENDS

2. BIG BIG TRAIN TOUR
3. NEW TOOL ALBUM
4. NICK MASON’S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS TOUR
5. RICK WAKEMAN’S JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH 40TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW
6. PROGNOSIS FESTIVAL
7. ROSFEST
8. NIGHT OF THE PROG
9. HAWKIND 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
10. 2 DAYS PROG +1 FESTIVAL

---

**VENUE**

1. ROYAL ALBERT HALL, LONDON

2. TRADING BOUNDARIES, FLETCHING
3. ROBIN2 , BILSTON
4. DE BOERDERIJ, ZOETERMEER
5. FRIARS, AYLESBURY
6. ACAPELLA STUDIOS, CARDIFF
7. THE MET, BURY
8. O2, LONDON
9. THE STABLES, WAVENDON
10. THE 1865, SOUTHAMPTON
READERS POLL 2019

1. MARILLION AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT DELUXE EDITION REISSUE
2. GENTLE GIANT UNBURIED TREASURE
3. VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR THE AEROSOL GREY MACHINE
4. FRANK ZAPPA HOT RATS
5. GONG LOVE FROM THE PLANET GONG
6. JETHRO TULL STORMWATCH: THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY FORCE 10 EDITION
7. EDDIE JOBSON THE GREEN ALBUM
8. THE BEATLES ABBEY ROAD
9. HENRY COW COW BOX REDUX
10. CARAVAN THE DERAM YEARS

UNSUNG HERO

1. NELLIE PITTS (THE MERCH DESK)
2. LUCY JORDACHE/STEPHANIE BRADLEY (MARILLION)
3. OCTAVIA BROWN (2DAYS PROG + I/PROG + ALL ROUND PROG CAMPAIGNER)
4. RACHEL WILCE (PENDRAGON)
5. GRAHAM HARRIS (STAGE MANAGER/TECH WIZ)
6. STEPHEN LAMBE/HUW LLOYD-JONES (WINTER/SUMMER’S END)
7. KRIS BROCK (HAWKWIND)
8. CLIFF PEARSON (PROGZILLA RADIO)
9. DANNY MAYO (DANFEST)
10. KEVIN O’NEILL (PROG IN THE PARK)

“I’d like to accept this prestigious accolade on behalf of Neil Potts, who can’t be here tonight. Genuine thanks for all the love, it makes it all worthwhile.”
Nellie Pitts

PERSON OF 2019

1. STEVE HACKETT
2. ROBERT FRIPP
3. STEVE HILLAGE
4. MATT STEVENS
5. STEVE ROTHERY
6. STEVEN WILSON
7. RACHEL FLOWERS
8. RICK WAKEMAN
9. NEAL MORSE
10. DAVE BROCK

REISSUE

1. MARILLION AFRAID OF SUNLIGHT DELUXE EDITION REISSUE
2. GENTLE GIANT UNBURIED TREASURE
3. VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR THE AEROSOL GREY MACHINE
4. FRANK ZAPPA HOT RATS
5. GONG LOVE FROM THE PLANET GONG
6. JETHRO TULL STORMWATCH: THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY FORCE 10 EDITION
7. EDDIE JOBSON THE GREEN ALBUM
8. THE BEATLES ABBEY ROAD
9. HENRY COW COW BOX REDUX
10. CARAVAN THE DERAM YEARS
“Thank you to everyone who took part in this poll. I’ve always been really interested in and enjoyed readers’ polls, and once again I’m reminded of how great our fans are, so thank you all.”

Pete Trewavas

“Well, that’s wonderful news. Thanks again to the most amazing fans in the world for voting for us.”

Ian Mosley

“I’m touched and thrilled to hear that I’ve won Prog Person Of The Year in the Readers’ Poll again. A big thanks to Prog Magazine and to all the readers who support the extraordinary music that we all love.”

Steve Hackett
Appalled by the behaviour of Pink Floyd's audiences, in 1977 Roger Waters hit upon the idea of building a wall between them and the group. By the end of 1982 The Wall had become a multi-platinum album, a ground-breaking live show and an acclaimed film. Prog talks to Nick Mason, Gerald Scarfe, Bob Ezrin and Bob Geldof to assess the cultural impact of an album whose message seems more relevant than ever...

The Wall is arguably the most debated album in Pink Floyd's canon. It splits opinion in the way, say, The Dark Side Of The Moon (universally loved) or The Final Cut (universally unloved) never could. But, love it or loathe it, The Wall is absolutely impossible to ignore. And, lest we forget, 40 years ago it gave Pink Floyd a Christmas No. 1 – now a feat impossible to think of from a band who at the time hadn’t released a single since 1968. At Christmas 1979, my group was top of the pops. Four decades on, Prog felt it was time to tell the story once again. Like the great tales of yore, it’s worth repeating, to learn of its absolute audacity, and how its mere 31 performances in four cities fundamentally reshaped the concept of the stadium concert.

Going back, we return to that time when the music scene relied on the press and whispers from gurus such as DJs John Peel or Nicky Horne to glean what was happening. Pink Floyd had simply disappeared. Their last album had been released at the very start of 1977. The punk rock explosion that the release of Animals coincided with was over, mutating into new wave, and angry, intelligent people like Elvis Costello and The Boomtown Rats leader Bob Geldof prowled the charts; Pink Floyd seemed like something from a very, very long time ago.

On November 11 1978, the ever-scurrilous Thrills section of NME had been told by a ‘reliable source’ that the title of the “new Floyd waxing is Walls”, and that to present the piece live the Floyd were planning to delve deep into the realms of ‘environmental theatre’ (Beats lasers – Ed.). This was the first word anyone heard about the concept the band had been working on since mid-summer. Fresh from becoming a father for the second time, Roger Waters was thinking big.

We have to go back 17 months earlier for the genesis of The Wall. As Floyd’s US shows to support Animals got bigger, the disconnect between Roger Waters and his audience grew ever more pronounced. The final show of the In The Flesh tour was at Montreal’s Olympic Stadium on July 6 1977. The stadium, nicknamed the “Big O” because of its resemblance to an oversized donut, had been built for the ’76 Olympics, and had been open a week short of a year when Pink Floyd played the stadium’s first paying concert, in front of 78,322 people. In the huge, soulless arena, with its high-banked seats and arcing floodlights, combined with security unused to gigs, fans who had been waiting several hours were getting restive, some letting off firecrackers.

This ‘gesture’ affected Waters deeply, and he wanted to turn this alienation into art.
Roger Waters at London's Earl's Court, August 4, 1980.
After a summer break, while other band members were working on recording and production, Waters began writing. *Bricks In The Wall*, as it was then known, was demoed at Waters’ home. On a roll, he also wrote another suite of music entitled *The Pros And Cons Of Hitchhiking*. Deciding he wanted an outside collaborator on the project, Waters reached out to Scarfe, whom he’d known since before *Wish You Were Here*. Waters and Scarfe became fast friends, and Scarfe did an animation for *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*.

“He began to talk during our snooker games that he was writing this big piece,” Scarfe recalls. “He didn’t say much about it, but said: ‘When I’ve done it, I want you to work on it with me.’”

Waters was vexed with Storm Thorgerson for taking credit for the sleeve of *Animals*, which had been a Waters idea through and through. Scarfe was in. Thorgerson/Hipgnosis were out.

Our story begins in earnest in July 1978, when Waters brought the fruits of his labour to the group, manager Steve O’Rourke and Gerald Scarfe. Although the band had heard the tapes at Britannia Row studios, Mason remembers hearing “whatever he’d done off a multitrack machine in his studio in Richmond.

Roger tended to over-modulate everything. It’s not a natural way of working to have that multitrack and be DI-ing into it. I am fairly certain Steve heard it before us.” O’Rourke indeed had, and liked *Pros And Cons*, whereas everyone else favoured *The Wall*. There is a skeletal charm to them, and it’s amazing how fully formed a lot of his ideas were.

The autobiographical, beleaguered rock star at the heart of the project was originally to be called Punch. “Then Roger phoned and said: ‘I’ve been thinking about Punch. I don’t think it’s right,’” says Scarfe, who drew many initial illustrations of the puppet. “I said: ‘It was your idea,
“The images are my interpretation of Roger’s vision. When we talk about the mother, the teacher, the judge, they are all my personal feelings about those things.”

Gerald Scarfe

Roger, you wanted Punch.’ And Judy. I don’t know if it’s got to do with his first wife, Judy [Trim].” Soon, Pink, the “shell-less prawn of a creature” began to emerge.

Waters brought in Bob Ezrin, who he’d met through his wife Carolyne, as a producer on the new Floyd album, as well as young engineer James Guthrie. Ezrin was entranced by Waters’ wit and demeanour. “I thought it had the makings of a brilliant piece of grand theatre with a fabulous soundtrack,” Ezrin says. “To me, it was always going to be the soundtrack to an ‘eyelid movie’. I could close my eyes and conjure up the places and people about which they were singing.”

The demo was pulled apart and put together again, Ezrin rewriting Waters’ narrative and jettisoning some of his precious material.

“I could see that it was going to be a long and complex process, and I needed a collaborator,” Waters told Classic Rock in 2009. “I needed somebody like Ezrin, who was musically and intellectually in a more similar place to where I was.”

“He’s a sort of magician,” Ezrin says today of Waters. “He materialises whole worlds in language that bathes the melody carrying it — which is always pretty simple… a bit folky really — and matches every syllable to every note perfectly and naturally. Everything he has written sounds as natural and effortless as a conversation with a mate, even while it is highly literate, inventive and dramatic. I really admired that special talent. Plus he has a razor-sharp mind and nothing escapes him, so he kept me on my toes. And made me laugh often.”

In the region of five million dollars had been stumped up by Columbia Records in the US and by Harvest/EMI in the UK for the new Pink Floyd record, which was to be their first studio double album. It was just as well they did, as for the first time the band were heading towards a serious financial crash. The Dark Side Of The Moon had generated a huge amount of money, and the group invested with finance company Norton Warburg in a range of schemes including...
skateboards, security firms, stables and restaurants. It wasn’t that they weren’t aware of what Norton Warburg were doing.

“We certainly had it fairly clearly explained,” Mason says. “The problem is, they were so inept that even if they had a good idea, the way the deals were structured, we were never there for any of the winning ones. Some of them were downright scams that Norton Warburg hadn’t seen through, so it was pretty messy. Not only were Norton Warburg being profligate with our money, but if the Inland Revenue had decided that a lot of that money was not tax-deductible, we would be looking to pay tax on money that had already been lost. There was a real panic on that we could be bust.”

The scale of the Norton Warburg problem was revealed by accountant Norman Lawrence early that year. It soon became apparent that the band would need to spend a year in tax exile. As a result, in April 1979 they moved to France, to work first at Super Bear Studios in Berre-les-Alpes, where both Gilmour and Wright had recorded their first solo albums. “France concentrated everyone’s minds,” Nick Mason says. “Working at home is a much slower process than being somewhere when the only reason to be there was to work. Super Bear was very comfortable, but after a while you could go stir crazy. It was a bit like being back at boarding school.”

Also, its location high in the Alps created problems for the vocals, so secondary recording began at Jacques Loussier’s Miraval studios at La Val, where engineer Patrice Quef worked with Waters. “Roger rented L’Ustraine, a ramshackle house,” Mason recalls. “‘Funky’, I think, would be the word.”

Gerald Scarfe was a frequent presence in the studio and at Waters’ house. All the time, the two would be collaborating on ideas. “Although they are his vision, naturally, they are my images,” Scarfe says. “They are my interpretation of his vision. When we talk about the ‘mother’, the ‘teacher’, the ‘judge’, they are all my personal feelings about those things.”

The music began to be sculpted, fleshing out Waters’ ideas, with Gilmour and Waters working closely together. Ezrin was most impressed: “Under that schoolyard bully affect,” he says, “Roger was actually quite a sweet guy… to his children and his wife, Carolyne, who was a friend of mine and someone I cared about deeply. I had the privilege of spending time with them at home and seeing that side of things. We worked shoulder-to-shoulder on every aspect of the piece.”

“I love David too,” Ezrin continues. “He speaks in words and music, and he can pick up any guitar in the world and make it sing divinely. It’s an astounding talent. He’s articulate and highly principled. Nick is a beautiful human being and one of the Wittiest people I’ve ever met, and a unique and immediately identifiable musician.”

Of the late Rick Wright, a rather controversial figure in the story of The Wall, Ezrin says: “My sweet friend Rick has left a hole in everyone’s heart. In a way, he was that — the heart of the band. His gentle and evocative voice brought life to so many of their classic songs. He was also a sensitive soul, and at the same time a real innovator of contemporary keyboard playing.”

Not everyone shared that view. It was at Super Bear that the tensions simmering for years between Waters and Wright began to come to the boil. Wright wasn’t keen on Ezrin coming in in the first place, and wanted his production credit as per other Pink Floyd albums; Waters was clear that that wasn’t the case and that Wright wasn’t pulling his weight. While the band would keep regular hours, Wright, who was living at the studio, and missing his family, would often go in and record his parts at night.

“It was very hard if Roger or Bob were there,” Wright told Prog’s now Editor Jerry Ewing in 1999. Waters had said that Wright would increasingly spend more time in the studio in order to get his production credit. “This idea that I was sitting around, wasting my time, is not really fair,” he continued. “But on the other hand, I was… depressed… and I didn’t contribute as much as I should.”

Nick Mason took shelter from the coming storm: “I’d done my part really, so I went off and raced at Le Mans. Couldn’t ask for anything better.”

Matters came to a head when Columbia offered the group an additional percentage on the record if they delivered for Christmas 1979, which meant convening in Los Angeles earlier to complete the recording. The music began to be sculpted, fleshing out Waters’ ideas, with Gilmour and Waters working closely together. Ezrin was most impressed: “Under that schoolyard bully affect,” he says, “Roger was actually quite a sweet guy… to his children and his wife, Carolyne, who was a friend of mine and someone I cared about deeply. I had the privilege of spending time with them at home and seeing that side of things. We worked shoulder-to-shoulder on every aspect of the piece.”

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Wright was on holiday with his children. He is alleged to have told manager Steve O’Rourke to tell Waters to “fuck off.”

“I didn’t tell Roger to fuck off. I wouldn’t say that,” Wright said in 1999. “And that was the last I heard of it, until I arrived in LA and Steve O’Rourke said to me: ‘Roger wants you out of the band’.”

“Rick had been forced to hang around, really, not doing anything for months,” Mason says. “So he’d got to the point where he had gone stir-crazy and just said: ‘No, I am not giving up my summer holidays.’ As Columbia had just offered us extra money if we would finish the thing, there was a general fury with Rick. Roger really just said: ‘That’s it. If you won’t do it you shouldn’t be in the band.’”

But in a quiet and gentlemanly way, Roger really just said: “That’s it. If you won’t do it you shouldn’t be in the band.”

“By October 12, the final edit was done, and perhaps the greatest song in Pink Floyd’s canon was finished. Two weeks prior to the album, Another Brick In The Wall, Part 2 was released as a single. It became a phenomenal success, reaching No. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. Ezrin, encouraged after hearing Chic at the Power Station, looped the short song twice. Another Brick In The Wall, Part 2 leaned heavily on disco — something well off Pink Floyd’s collective radar. Gilmour recalled that Ezrin told him to go to clubs and hear what was happening, “So I forced myself out and listened to loud, four-to-the-bar bass drums and stuff. Then we went back and tried to turn one of the Another Brick... parts into one of those so it would be catchy.”

“We thought that might be fun,” Mason adds. “I don’t think we thought so much about the disco feel as the disco tempo.”

But it was the ‘gimmick’ of getting schoolchildren from Islington Green, adjacent to Britannia Row, that proved the master stroke. Nick Griffiths recorded them, and sent the final tapes to Waters in LA. On receiving the tape, Waters commented: “Hearing all those kids singing... it felt like pure gold.”

Nick Mason took to racing to keep out of the way of the studio fireworks.

The most notable dispute between Gilmour and Waters was about the track Comfortably Numb, which would arguably become the song of both men’s careers. Various versions were recorded, embellishing the chord sequence that Gilmour had composed. Waters, whose lyrics and verse melody added to its now-legendary status, favoured an orchestrated version, while Gilmour preferred a grungier, pared-down one. It all came to a head at an LA restaurant, where Ezrin saw it unfold.

“The string line in the chorus is one of my signature motifs (see Lou Reed’s Sad Song, from Berlin),” he says. “I just had to use it. David felt that the song should be more rock. Roger and I felt that it needed the larger sound. In the end, since we had earlier agreed that we needed to be unanimous on contentious decisions, we reached a compromise, and the body of the song has the greater orchestral presence, while the back half is dominated by the rock band and David’s second magnificent solo. So we compromised and agreed, and the song took the form it is in now. Argument? Well, I suppose so. But in a quiet and gentlemanly English fashion.”

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The success of the single was also helped a lot by Gerald Scarfe’s hastily shot video, put together as the record was shooting up the UK chart.

Having cost $700,000 to make, The Wall was released on November 30, 1979. Although the media response was mixed, the album reigned high in charts around the world and quickly became one of the best-selling double albums ever. It seemed impossible to be anywhere and not hear the music or catch sight of Scarfe’s exaggerated artwork. Whereas The Dark Side Of The Moon had been a slow-burning but long-lasting
success, The Wall was an immediate commercial triumph.

The moment had come to test whether Waters' long-held desire to build a wall between himself and his audience could be carried out. Twelve shows were booked in the US, beginning on February 7 at the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena. Rehearsals began at Culver City Studio, where, while Gilmour marshalled the live band, now increased to an 11-piece, Gerald Scarfe looked at art direction, and Jonathan Park and Mark Fisher came in to assist with the logistics.

"We were committed to the arena. A lot of tech stuff needed to be done for the whole wall-building system," Mason recalls.

The expanded line-up included the 'surrogate band': four players that would open the show in Pink Floyd life masks. And still there was Rick Wright. "I shut off the whole idea that I was leaving the band," he told Jerry Ewing. "I put everything into it. The pictures look like we’re all together." Wright, famously, became the only member of the group to make money from the shows, as he was now 'only' on a wage.

Sadly, Bob Ezrin was not be part of the live set-up, having fallen out rather spectacularly with Waters: "I was really upset by our estrangement, though I completely understood why Roger was so upset," Ezrin says. "I got snookered into talking about the show with a supposed friend, who then submitted the conversation to Billboard as if it was actually an interview. When Roger saw it, he was apoplectic. And he bloody-well should have been."

By the time the huge production reached London’s Earl’s Court in August 1980, the group had spent their tax year away. For this writer, then 14 years old and in the audience, I knew my life would never again be the same. Also present on one of those nights was an even younger Lee Harris, who nearly 40 years later would encourage Nick Mason to get behind his drums again.

The show was a truly amazing spectacle, right down to the crazed MC introducing the show, whipping up the audience. In London, it was US voice artist Gary Yudman, saying things as un-Floydian as: “First, please no fireworks. Believe me, watching the show there’ll be enough explosions in your mind.” With its aircraft, Scarfe’s inflatables... oh, and an enormous wall, for many the show...
was bewildering. When Gilmour appeared atop the wall, singing and playing *Comfortably Numb*, and its now iconic solo, you just knew you were watching rock history in the making. “It didn’t feel that peculiar,” Mason says. “We had already got used to the idea of trying to do big things. Obviously it was really unusual in the States, because there was the thing of having the show behind the wall for the second part. We had done shows where things happened on screens rather than on stage. I don’t remember thinking: ‘This is quite extraordinary,’ more thinking: ‘I hope this works.’”

The final part of Waters’ trilogy, the film *The Wall*, was where the wheels really fell off the juggernaut. Although Gilmour looked after the musical side of things, Waters and Scarfe had a key vision that they wanted to see through. More shows were arranged in 1981 for the film’s director, Alan Parker, to shoot, but it became clear that this would be unworkable. A dramatised version incorporating Scarfe’s animations would instead be the course to take. Waters himself screen-tested for the lead role of Pink, but, as Parker said later, he was “closer to Albert Speer than to Albert Finney”. Parker had someone else in his sights to play Pink: Bob Geldof. Geldof was of course aware of Pink Floyd, but not a fan. “I bought *See Emily Play* and *Arnold Layne* when I was a kid,” he recalled. “They were fantastic pop records. Then I heard *The Piper At the Gates Of Dawn*. I thought it was very unconvincing. ‘Piss-poor At The Gates Of Yawn’, we called it. ‘I’ve got a bike, you can ride it if you like,’ which now I think is a fantastic thing, but back then I just thought: ‘Fey English nonsense.’ The Floyd, liquid gel and all that. My association with that was these people around my area I thought were twats. I was a mod, for fuck’s sake, not some platypus-collared, flowery-shirted faux-hippie!”

But Parker was very much out to get him. A fabled argument in the back of cab between Geldof and his manager, Fachtna O’Kelly, resulted in Geldof railing against both the Floyd and the film. Unbeknown to him, and unbelievably, the cab driver was Waters’ elder brother, John. Geldof was summoned to meet Waters. “It was in some restaurant,” Geldof recalls. “You know if you meet a hero, you’re very intimidated, you gabble or you’re silent. I wasn’t, because they weren’t really my guys, like, say, the Stones. He was pleasant enough, but he wasn’t ‘all hail fellow well met’, he was quite chippy. We went back to his beautiful house and played snooker. I kept winning, much to his annoyance. We kept playing until he won a game. “He asked me at one time to write a piece for something about the meeting at the restaurant. I remember his opening gambit: ‘I really like *I Don’t Like Mondays*.’ He said: ‘There’s some great ideas in there. You should have extended them out into a longer form.’ I replied: ‘Thank you very much. *The Wall* is a really good album. Maybe you should have reduced it to a three-minute single.’ He says he didn’t say it, so the piece didn’t appear anywhere. I think we’re quite like each other — y’know, chippy, smart-arsey, a bit of ego in there — just a little bit, obviously. And of course he’s annoyingly a tad more...
successful. What a songwriter, though. We’re friends, which I like.”

Intrigued by the process of filmmaking, Geldof signed on, and shooting of *The Wall* began at Pinewood Studios in September 1981. Twenty minutes of Scarfe’s animation would be used. “Parker was always very laudatory about my work,” Scarfe says. “He was quoted as saying that the reason he wanted to make the film was because of my flower sequence.”

Almost at once, fissures opened up, with Waters and Scarfe on one side, and Alan Parker and Alan Marshall, the producer, on the other. There would be several hissy fits, all in the name of the art. Parker encouraged Waters to take a six-week holiday. It also became clear that new music would be required: Geldof recorded a new version of *In The Flesh*, teasing James Guthrie and Gilmour with a cod-Irish accent every time they went for a take.

Geldof immersed himself in the role, and his blankness and wild, staring eyes brought Pink into his numb, alienated existence. Geldof remembers one scene with tremendous affection: when he throws a TV out the window in *One Of My Turns*.

“I went to Parker: ‘Listen, if I throw

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Bob Geldof

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Bob Geldof
the telly out the window and it doesn’t break, can I keep it?’ He said I could. So I put two mattresses underneath the window. It looks like a skyscraper, but it’s only a few feet off the ground. If you look at the scene, you see me chucking it out the window very gingerly. So it lands on the mattresses, and I still have that Sony Trinitron at home in Kent.”

One of the classic scenes in the film is the fascist rally, for which the extras brought in were the infamous Essex skinheads, the Tilbury Trojans. “I worried about the skinheads,” Scarfe says. “They were cutting the hammers into their hair and having it tattooed onto their arms. I thought: ‘Shit, have I started a new movement?’”

Some of the most amazing sections are when something that Scarfe had illustrated is brought to life, such as the armchair and the battlefield. “I called it the alien landscape,” Scarfe recalls. “It used to amuse me when people working on the film would say: ‘Where’s Bob gone?’ ‘Oh, he’s gone up the alien landscape.’ This thing that had been in my mind was suddenly a real place.”

“There was a lot of bonhomie,” Scarfe adds. “It wasn’t pure hatred all the time. We got on because we were working on the same bloody project. You can’t keep walking off every time someone shouts at you.”

At the end of the film, the props were sold off. Waters and Scarfe went to the sale. “I have got Bob’s lamps from the room he went crazy in,” Scarfe says. Parts of The Wall — along with Geldof’s Sony Trinitron — are kept in houses in the south of England. 

Pink Floyd – The Wall debuted at Cannes on May 23 1982. The film was released in the UK on July 14 at London’s Empire Theatre with a World Charity Premiere in aid of Nordoff Robbins, attended by the band, Geldof, Pete Townshend, Andy Summers and Superman Christopher Reeve, among others. It opened in America that August. In LA, instead of seeing the film Geldof and Waters went off and played pool.

Record Business said of the film: “Roger Waters’ view of mankind is totally and morbidly hopeless.” But it made respectable money. The VHS home-video boom carried it through Christmas that year, and it would become a student favourite.

Initially, there was talk of a soundtrack album, but there was hardly a great deal of material: However, when Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands in April 1982, and Margaret Thatcher responded by sending a task force to the South Atlantic, Waters suddenly had subject matter. And so the soundtrack mutated into The Final Cut.

The Wall lives on. The most poignant version was the concert Waters put on in Berlin seven months after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990. “I was so very impressed with Roger Waters’ speed in putting this on so soon after the Berlin Wall’s collapse — it was rather like doing Wagner’s Ring with only one rehearsal,” James Galway, one of the many stellar guests who joined Waters at that show, said in the Sunday Telegraph in March 1991.

By the 00s, Waters took the show on the road again, and made an album and film of it. It had become a far wider-reaching spectacle, looking at the desire, as Waters told the BBC, “to break down the walls between ethnicities, religions, nationalities”. In 2011, for one night only, David Gilmour stood atop that wall again, at London’s O2 Arena, singing Comfortably Numb and playing that spine-tingling solo. Nick Mason joined him and Waters in the ruble at the end. An immovable object it remains: an ambitious piece with a compelling back story with all the feuds, falling-outs and friction; memorable songs, spoken-word passages that have passed into the language-franca of Men Of A Certain Age and, in Comfortably Numb, Pink Floyd’s definitive one-song anthem.

“Roger’s a great songwriter, as is Dave. Much as they may argue about the content of the record, and who did what, it’s just one of those things,” Bob Geldof concludes. “It’s a great band despite everything. They are just too good not to make an astonishing record.”

Gerald Scarfe, for one, is delighted that Waters keeps forging ahead, playing the very stadiums that once had so revulsed him: “Last time I saw him, he said: ‘Well, what’s not to like? I’m playing to thousands of people all the time.’ I am certainly glad I worked on The Wall. I am mostly known for working with Pink Floyd, because they are universal.”

The three fronts of The Wall were testament to Waters’ collaborative process. Could Waters have made it without the rest of Floyd? “Not this album,” Bob Ezrin says. “And he couldn’t have made it without me or James, either. Everyone’s personality and ideas adorned the work, and the band’s distinctive sound and style permeated the whole piece, even in places where we introduced other players, orchestras, choruses and, yes, schoolkids. Everybody got out on that ledge together during the recording and took risks.”

“Roger is not very dictatorial,” Scarfe concludes. “He was always that brilliant person to work with for an artist. He was very easy to get on with in that way.”

“It was a privilege, a joy, sometimes a real challenge to work on The Wall with them,” Ezrin adds, “and the result remains remarkably relevant today.”

The last word goes, perhaps surprisingly, to James Galway, who said simply after he’d played with Waters in Berlin: “Every musician should know The Wall. If they don’t, they should be ashamed of themselves. It’s one of the greatest things written in rock.”

Gerald Scarfe’s work can be found at: www.geraldscarfe.com
Aubrey ‘Po’ Powell, who worked on many of Pink Floyd’s iconic visuals, and Floyd collaborator Andy Jackson talk to Prog about the band finding a direction after Waters’ departure, and the new box set _The Later Years 1987-2019_.

**Words:** Chris Roberts  
**Andy Jackson interview:** Natasha Scharf  
**Image:** Rob Verhorst/Redferns/Getty Images

**After Roger Waters left Pink Floyd, David Gilmour and Nick Mason had wondered which direction to take the band. As we now know, they found a way, and it’s compiled and documented in the hefty new box set _The Later Years 1987-2019_.**

When Aubrey ‘Po’ Powell, co-founder of Hipgnosis with the late Storm Thorgerson, was looking through old files as he designed the artwork for it, he came across a photograph he’d taken in Iceland in the 70s, of two men in silhouette, studying a map. Eventually it was used as the cover image on a ‘sampler’ version of the box set.

“It was originally an idea related to _Animals_,” Powell says of the photo, “but was never used, though I had always loved it. It had lain dormant ever since. I showed it to David and Nick. They immediately said: ‘That’s exactly it! Back then, after Roger left, we were wondering which way to go next… where do we go from here?’

So it’s highly appropriate, and has a potent atmosphere.”

Potent atmosphere is something Floyd’s music has always possessed, and _The Later Years_ cranks every last ounce from its source material. _A Momentary Lapse Of Reason_, _The Division Bell_, _Delicate Sound Of Thunder_, _Pulse_ and _The Endless River_ are complemented by films (and audio) of their Venice 1989 and Knebworth 1990 shows, footage of Pulse rehearsals, and other mixes and memorabilia including a 60-page Powell-designed book. “You remember the old days of buying the vinyl and studying the cover?” he asks. “I’ve tried to reinvent that world now with this box set. So while you’re playing the music, you become absorbed within its world. If a person enjoys it on that level, then we’ve succeeded.”

Regarding the music, you’ll have your own opinions as to how highly it rates among the hallowed Floyd canon built up over 50-plus years. “I mean, _The Dark Side Of The Moon_ is probably the milestone by which everything else they’ve done is judged,” Powell acknowledges. “_The Division Bell_ may be different, but it’s still a masterpiece. David is slightly less inclined towards the political influences that Roger brought to bear, but at the same time his guitar and voice are unsurpassed in the last few decades.”

Long-time Floyd collaborator Andy Jackson, who mixed and produced much of this work, knows a thing or two about the music. While _The Division Bell_ “hasn’t really got a time stamp on it, it’s just a classic Floyd album”, he and Gilmour perceived flaws they wanted to address on the relatively unloved _A Momentary Lapse Of Reason_.

“We started off with a certain philosophy,” he tells Prog. Efforts at the time to make it sound “current” led to it becoming “dated”. “It has that big, bombastic sound — a very 80s thing. We were always aware that we’d made a regrettable decision. So we started the whole updating project about 10 years ago. Firstly we re-recorded the drums with Nick [Mason]. Bob Ezrin was there — I remember we were looking at each other, thinking: ‘This is great!’”

The project was put to one side, until more recently they hit on a way to give it a further organic warmth. “After Rick [Wright] died we went back through live recordings from the tours, and picked up on his Hammond playing. With the 80s drums now gone, space had been freed up for some of this newly sourced stuff. Also, we redid some of the 80s synths. We then mixed it more as...
a classic Floyd album, so that it sits in there rather than being the odd one out. It’s really reignited my enthusiasm about the album. It’s a very different experience now.

For the films, Jackson started from scratch on audio mixes, just as Powell and his team did with the original 35mm footage, of which there were “hundreds” of cans. The Delicate Sound Of Thunder film “was edited in a ramshackle, montage, way,” Powell says, “because at that time they didn’t have the technology to recreate how the concert should really look. So I’ve spent over a year doing that, digitising it, resulting in this extraordinary film of Pink Floyd at their absolute finest, playing at Nassau Coliseum. David and Andy’s remix of the sound is magnificent. Fans of Floyd will be overjoyed to see this… its clarity, its beauty.”

There are previously unseen clips too — “half a dozen bits of film from the studio”, according to Jackson. “They’re jamming ideas, and you get a feel of the people and musicians that they are. One of the jams turned into Marooned, from The Division Bell. It’s a loose vibe, but shows them off as great players”.

Powell has known these players for 53 years. He recalls meeting firstly Syd Barrett, secondly Gilmour, in Cambridge in his teens, then sharing a flat with Barrett in London’s South Kensington for a long time, “until he unfortunately went off the rails”. He was briefly even a Floyd roadie, “for something to do,” he says. “Their show then was so small that we could fit all the lights in my Mini Van. Hysterical when you compare that to the scale of the shows you see here, in Venice or on the Pulse tour.”

Powell brought this shared history into play on the box’s cover image. “We shot it in California, in Joshua Tree”, he explains. “It’s actually a composite of seven different photographs I took. But I shot them all on location. Once, to set a man on fire for Wish You Were Here, yes, we actually set a man on fire. Nowadays it’d cost considerably less do that digitally. And yet… if you do things for real — for example, flying pigs over power stations — it becomes a piece of sculpture, of land art. You get true emotion. I believe that’s the best way to do things. There’s a trust now between David and Nick and me. I take note of their suggestions and we walk hand in hand.”

Elaborating on The Later Years’ new iconography, he says: “A small child walks down a deserted road, and as she passes all these streetlights they twist and cavort into strange shapes. It’s a symbol of the guys moving on, going forward, with the unique power of Pink Floyd. It looks otherworldly. There’s a sense of something about to happen.”

And happen it did, as Floyd flourished where many bands would have struggled to find and follow new paths. Coming back to life.😊

The Later Years 1987-2019 is out now via Pink Floyd Records.
Dan Briggs: a man who wears many different hats.

From prog metal to jazz blow-outs, there’s not much in experimental music that Between The Buried And Me bassist Dan Briggs hasn’t touched. But his solo project, Nightmare Scenario, is reaching new peaks.

Words: Chris Cope
“Ding the Nightmare Scenario stuff, I can go into full psycho mode at home, working 12 hours a day producing this thing, then do some artwork, or some video installation stuff to go along with it. It’s nice and different to have that sort of immediacy.”

Full psycho mode suits Dan Briggs. The bassist-turned-multi-instrumentalist lives alone in the woods in Greensboro, North Carolina, with no roommates around to roll their eyes if his amplifiers reach boiling point.

This fertile ground for creation is perhaps partly why he has become so prolific in recent years, with new solo project Nightmare Scenario just another colourful planet in Briggs’ odd but undeniably classy universe. Menacing yet melodic prog metallers Between The Buried And Me are the focal point – the ‘day job’, if you will – but then there’s the intricate fusion of Haken offshoot Nova Collective, the warped jazz of Trioscapes and the indie-speckled Orbs. They’re all interlinked, but each wears its own identity as a badge of honour.

But Briggs is Nightmare Scenario, and Nightmare Scenario is Briggs, from the writing and production to the mixing, artwork and videos. A couple of introductory songs were followed by the daring EP Beyond What Is Real, which feels like Twin Peaks prog; majestic, unsettling, cerebral, manic.

“I live alone and I’m in the woods, so I can get loud at night. I can record heinous feedback or just experiment with sounds.”

It’s a blackened rainbow of cinematic soundscapes and avant-garde instrumental exploration, with vocals peppered through, and there’s a pot of gold awaiting at the finale for the listener if the mind’s door is left ajar.

“Imagine it’s another colourful planet that I’ve taken in and been influenced by over the years,” Briggs surmises. “From growing up with the music teacher mom, with musicals in the house or Tears For Fears, to what was my first real connection – 90s alternative rock.

Beyond What Is Real was written in about 10 days in May this year, and the six tracks recorded and mixed in a matter of weeks. It’s set to be the precursor for a full album – surprisingly, already written but sitting on the back burner.

“So here’s an insight into how my brain works,” Briggs says, throwing out an invitation to go further down the rabbit hole.

“I’d had this full-length written for years. And it’s ridiculous because I hate it, because now I feel like there’s this big build-up, and the music that I’m putting out now is really this need to get something off my chest.

“Or in terms of the EP, I was looking at the Between The Buried And Me year, and the Between The Buried And Me year, and record heinous feedback or just experiment with sounds.”

“I thought it’d be really great to actually have something out before I really commit to recording this full-length. It’s like I keep accidentally pushing the full-length to the side, and further pushing myself into these great creative adventures where I’m learning so much.”

The conjuration tends to happen upstairs in Briggs’ office, where artwork from inspirational albums adorn the walls, with King Crimson and Genesis known to have graced the space.

“I don’t do anything else in that room,” he explains. “I don’t go in that room and watch YouTube videos. I live alone and I’m in the woods, so I can get loud at night. I can record heinous feedback or just experiment with sounds.”

Briggs has been dipping in and out of Nightmare Scenario whenever he can, taking bites out of the cake when the gods of time play ball. The rest of his universe continues to revolve, but doing so at different paces.

“As we’re talking about the fact that I’ve got this full-length that’s been written for years and these new projects I’m trying to start, and a new Nova Collective album, new BTBAM next year [2020], it’s like there’s already not enough time,” he says, reflecting on a life which is divided between being either on or off tour.

Briggs is now in his mid-30s. He joined Between The Buried And Me in 2005. His musical origins, however, span right back to when his music teacher mother was a guiding influence.

“She got me started when I was nine on what’s been nice is I have done work that

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“The paintings represent another embodiment of the creative soul, another splash of the experimental ethos which seems to course through Briggs’ veins. You certainly don’t envisage him having a drought of inspiration any time soon.

“When I finally had a room open downstairs, I threw down some drop cloths, got some supplies, put on Ornette Coleman and just went for it,” he says.

“I think my motto has been ‘no mistakes’, because unlike music, I haven’t taken art classes. I am not trying to do realistic landscapes or figurative paintings. It just seems like it’s another extension. When my ears are fried from doing music all day, but my creative brain is still going, I like that I can go downstairs and put some music on or a podcast on, then just experiment in a different way. I think what’s been nice is I have done work that I would want no one to see. It’s my thing to fumble around with.”

Beyond What Is Real is out now on Hogweed & Fugue. For more information, see www.nightmarescenario.bandcamp.com.
With the release of the 40th-anniversary box set of *Stormwatch*, the album that completed Jethro Tull’s folk-rock trilogy along with *Songs From The Wood* and *Heavy Horses*, Ian Anderson looks back at a prescient record tinged with personal sadness.

Words: Mike Barnes  Portrait: Martyn Goddard

Jethro Tull were given their name (that of an 18th-century agriculturist) in 1967 by Dave Robson, a booker at the Ellis-Wright agency, who dealt with the young band. If they had not been booked into the Marquee club soon after this christening, Ian Anderson, who didn’t particularly like the name, reckons that it would have been changed again. But as he was the group’s frontman, the writer of almost all of their material and the one who engaged most in the business side, he himself went on to become synonymous with the name, to the extent that some people actually referred to him as Jethro Tull. In the States in the mid-70s, this was even shortened by some to the both inappropriate and rather over-familiar ‘Jet’.

Many had noted that the figure in the cover painting of Tull’s 1971 album *Aqualung* bears more than a slight resemblance to the band’s singer, flautist and occasional guitarist, as does the depiction of Ray Lomas, the album story’s character on 1976’s *Too Old To Rock ‘N’ Roll: Too Young To Die!*. But on *Songs From The Wood* (1977) and *Heavy Horses* (1978), Anderson was actually photographed, firstly done up to look like a character from Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders*, and then like a Victorian ostler. These bucolic images broadly reflected Anderson’s recent move to the English countryside and his practical interest in forestry and farming. He then acquired a salmon farm on the Isle of Skye.

The cover painting of 1979’s *Stormwatch* features another Andersonian figure, his beard flecked with ice, set against a night sky, with forks of lightning reflected in the lenses of his binoculars. There was now a feeling of impending catastrophe, of benign natural forces that had begun to veer out of control. Some claim it’s the final instalment in a kind of trilogy of folk rock albums.

...to our future and, more importantly, to the future of our grandchildren, and that of our great-grandchildren.
“With Stormwatch it was a swing to a darker expression and a lot of things to do with the environment. It was a dark album.”
Although Jethro Tull are perennially cited as being quintessentially English, this overlooks the fact that Anderson was born in Dunfermline. And certainly a Celtic feel pervades some of the music on *Stormwatch*.

"Here and there it undoubtedly has," Anderson concurs. He mentions the instrumental *Warm Sporran*. The musicians also evoke the lonely grandeur of Skye on *Dun Ringill*, whose title comes from the name of an Iron Age hill fort on the island, set in spectacular coastal scenery.

On the tough, punchy *North Sea Oil* he examines that fossil fuel’s discovery, which in the 70s was seen as a kind of panacea for the UK’s economic problems. But Anderson was specifically wondering: “What would this mean to Scotland in its share of North Sea Oil, and opposed to the bit that Westminster gets?” On *Flying Dutchman* he takes the legend of the cursed phantom ship that can never make port and is doomed to sail the oceans forever as a metaphor for a Scottish fishing fleet ‘Gone to chase away the last herring/Come empty home again’ due to depleted fishing stocks and increasing levels of marine toxicity. The turbulent, nine-minute *Dark Ages*, on which drummer Barrie Barlow sits tight on all the time changes, and Martin Barre occasionally produces flamboyant outbursts on lead guitar, sees Anderson quite poetically detailing an increasingly dysfunctional society.

Anderson explains the main impetus behind the way he writes lyrics, with particular reference to *Stormwatch*:

“The songs come from visual references most of the time — looking out of a bedroom window, or standing on a shore looking at oil rigs or fish-farm cages. I’m interested in people in that landscape in the same way as actors on a stage. It’s not just the stage set. It comes alive when you populate it with people. That’s when the narrative begins. Or it might be a cultural landscape like *Too Old To Rock ‘N’ Roll: Too Young To Die!* or in *Aqualung*, and you use imagery that I try to illustrate in words. I start off with visual images probably because, like many of my peers, I started off at art school.”

The new *Stormwatch* (*The 40th Anniversary Force 10 Edition*) box set features the album remixed by Steven Wilson and includes a 15-track ‘Associated Recordings’ CD, also remixed by Wilson, of finished songs, instrumental templates, and some quirky oddities such as *Lyricon Blues* played on the Lyricon wind synthesiser, while others are rather more serious.

“I have said many times there is nothing left in the tape vault, only to be confounded time and time again,” says Anderson. “And when I look at the songs that didn’t make it [on to the record], there are a couple of things that are even darker, and when you have a bunch of music you do try to balance it.”

**Would *Man Of God* fall into that category?**

“Exactly,” Anderson replies. “There were things that were a bit too pointy. I probably didn’t think that particular song belonged, as it was bit too snidey about priests, although it was a specific example of an individual. I’m not in the business of being nasty to people, and I think that was a bit too adolescent and critical.”

*Stormwatch* is inevitably, in Anderson’s words, “forever tainted” by sadness. Due to suffering from a congenital heart defect, bass guitarist John Glascock was unable to play on more than three of the tracks that made the final cut. Although keen to contribute, he’d recently had major surgery. He died just two months after the album was released. And although keyboard player David (now Dee) Palmer’s closing instrumental composition on the record, *Elegy*, was written for his own father, in context it feels like a fitting epitaph to Glascock, even more so as it’s one of the tracks on which he played.

Anderson couldn’t bear to replace Glascock with another bassist, as it would have felt like a “horrible rejection”, but they had to complete the album somehow. And so he took up the bass himself.

“Barrie felt, as I did, very awkward, and it was constantly in the back of your mind that this was not the way that it was supposed to be,” says Anderson. “We musically grew together in that process, and it’s evident on the quite detailed interlinking between the bass and the drums on

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*The Stormwatch line-up on a previous tour in 1978, L-R: John Glascock, Barriemore Barlow, Ian Anderson, David Palmer, John Evan and Martin Barre.*

*The Stormwatch line-up on a previous tour in 1978, L-R: John Glascock, Barriemore Barlow, Ian Anderson, David Palmer, John Evan and Martin Barre.*
Warm Sporran. It’s intricate stuff, almost jazz funk. I think we did a good job.”

Glascock’s successor, who played on one of the Associated Recordings, was former Fairport Convention bassist Dave Pegg, who would continue to play on and off with Jethro Tull until 1995. He also appears on a full live concert recorded at Den Haag in Holland in March 1980, which is spread across two of the box set’s CDs and features some fine performances. Anderson explains that the tape of that show was found in a vault. And although it was recorded front-of-house, they still aren’t sure why, although he speculates that it might have been for a radio broadcast. It seems surprising, though, to hear Jethro Tull tackle Dave Pegg’s Fairport Convention instrumental Peggy’s Pub.

“All the bandmembers, when they come to the band we tend to give them a little spotlight,” Anderson notes. But this line-up would soon disband, and as a studio statement Stormwatch marked the end of an era for what was essentially still Tull’s classic 70s line-up. With hindsight, it seems that the mood in the band was beginning to fracture.

“It didn’t feel like that at the time,” Anderson counters. “But it was beginning to feel like everyone’s mind wasn’t necessarily on the job — [keyboard player] John Evan in particular, who I think had grown tired of the whole thing of touring and recording. Barrie was interested in doing other things, and [keyboard player] David Palmer had his extra-curricular activities, writing and arranging and doing orchestral stuff. So it was a feeling, at the very least, there should be some hiatus.”

Given that 2019 marks the 40th birthday of Stormwatch, are there any songs from that album that Jethro Tull might include in their live set?

“We started playing Warm Sporran on stage a few months ago — we’d never played it live at all,” Anderson says. “We also recorded a piece back then [on the Associated Recordings CD] called King Henry’s Madrigal. Its real title, as written by King Henry VIII, was Pass Time With Good Company. David Palmer put it forward as an instrumental tune, so we dutifully learned and played it, and it was a bunch of fun. It’s a bit Blackmore’s Night, kind of spoof renaissance rock, and it’s in the stage set at the moment. So there are a couple of songs from the Stormwatch album and box set that are out and about.

“But I’d have to remember that there are some songs on there that are quite long songs, and where you put something in the stage set, you have to be thinking on what to take out. Every few months I have a clear out with setlists, and it’s a bit heartbreaking, really, like falling out with old friends. You feel like you are cheating on a song by smooching with another one.”

Stormwatch (The 40th Anniversary Force 10 Edition) is out now via PLG UK Catalog.
Sons Of Apollo is definitely a five-headed beast,” Mike Portnoy declares dramatically, in reference to the band’s lengthy 2018 tour. “Each and every one of us, each night on stage, regardless of how small the place was or how many people were there, delivered as if we were the heavyweight champions of the world. It was a five-ringed circus of musical muscle, and I think the crowds at each gig reacted to that.”

The musical muscle that Portnoy describes is not merely optimistic hyperbole. As well as Portnoy’s drum credentials with Dream Theater, Transatlantic and a raft of other side-projects, the talents of Derek Sherinian (keyboards, ex-Dream Theater), guitarist Ron ‘Bumblefoot’ Thal (Guns N’ Roseq), Mr Big bassist Billy Sheehan and singer Jeff Scott Soto (Yngwie Malmsteen, Journey) are a musical force few bands can compete with.”

Sons Of Apollo’s debut album, Psychotic Symphony, possessed an enviable swagger, mixing hard rock in the vein of Van Halen with progressive metal to produce something truly innovative. Their tour showcased that talent in a live arena. But with the band name being unfamiliar to many, they also had to hit some smaller venues, which, for veterans who have been touring for more than three decades in various bands, could have been a struggle.

The Return Of The Five-Headed Beast

Does the world need another side-project supergroup? Well, when you look at who’s in Sons Of Apollo and listen to the music they’re making, you’d be a fool not to say: “Yes!”

Words: Rich Wilson Images: Hristo Shindov
“Yeah, I mean there are two levels to that,” Portnoy explains. “On one level was the business side, which was having to swallow your pride and start from scratch, going to clubs and playing to smaller audiences and do the groundwork to build it up. That has been the case with any of these bands that I work with. When it’s your first time out, you’ve got to really dig your heels in and get to work. It was no different for Sons Of Apollo. Regardless of how big any of the individual names were, the band name was brand new, so we had to really get out there and work our asses off.

“The other side of the coin was the great fan reaction. I knew this band was going to be a monster on stage, and I think we were. It’s not a traditional prog band, where everybody is just playing their music with their heads down, concentrating on their instruments. That’s not the case with this band. This band brings the spectacle of Van Halen or Guns N’ Roses into the prog platform. It’s definitely a colliding of two different kinds of world.”

As might be expected, that elongated tour created an on-the-road camaraderie, with a tightening of their sound and the band becoming even more aware of their collective capabilities. Consequently, the writing process for their, second, latest album, MMXX, became a somewhat simpler task than the first one.

“Oh, for sure,” Sherinian exclaims. “I didn’t even know Ron until the first day of recording Psychotic Symphony, so for all the music that I’d written for the studio, I had no idea how Ron played. Now, after doing a hundred shows with him and knowing how amazing he is, it opens a lot of compositional possibilities for me. The sky’s the limit. There’s nothing this guy can’t play.”

“That’s the case with any band that you do a second album with,” Portnoy says. “I’ve been finding that over recent years, as I’ve started so many bands from scratch. The first album is usually the experiment. Then you go on tour and spend time together where you get to really gel and get to know each other. So when you get around to making the second record, there’s a familiarity...”
The five-headed, nine-necked, beast that is Sons Of Apollo.

"[The new album] is heavier, more progressive, and the songs are better written, with more time being put into it."

Derek Sherinian

Unlike numerous acts that have suffered from the debilitating and career-stalling 'second-album syndrome', MMXX advances Sons Of Apollo's already distinctive sound and approach. There are tracks such as Goodbye Divinity, Wither To Black and Fall To Ascend which, given good fortune, could succeed on radio. That aspect of their sound is counterbalanced by the more ambitious and elongated tracks New World Today and King Of Delusion, which have all the hallmarks of future classics. That upward trajectory and sparkle on this new album isn’t lost on Sherinian.

"I really feel that the new record is a continuation of the last one, but everything is more," he offers. "It’s heavier, more progressive, and the songs are better written, with more time being put into it. I’m really pleased with the writing, and I’m really getting more comfortable in the production chair with every record I produce."

If we’re being honest, there are certain prog bands’ ‘epics’ that sound contrived, with ill-fitting segments of music seemingly stapled together clumsily. So how do Sons Of Apollo succeed in putting together a seamless lengthy track, such as the 16-minute New World Today?

“We would just put it together slowly,” says Sherinian. “Mike would arrange it, and as a team we figured it out. It was like making a building; we got to the top, and it was done. That is another cool thing about Sons Of Apollo, and actually Dream Theater as well. I want to give them and Mike the credit, in that they had a willingness to be fearless and the audacity to go into unknown territory. They take a chance, with no regard for whether it is commercial, and that willingness really comes across in Sons Of Apollo.”

With MMXX, and a recognition that their shows are quickly building the band’s reputation, they seem destined to continue progressing their sound and building a fan base. At the time of their debut, in unguarded moments some of the members suggested that the band might become a full-time operation, rather than a part-time side-project. Given their development, do they still believe such a switch could be possible?

“Well, the politically correct answer – and the answer that the label would love for me to give – would be: ‘Sure. Yes, that would be great,’” Portnoy says, laughing. “But if I’m being honest, I can’t picture it. A band like Dream Theater started when we were teenagers, and it took 20 or 30 years of building and development to get to a level where you could literally just sustain yourself as one band. Sure, with a hypothetical dream of if we’d started this band 20 or 30 years ago and just focused for two decades, then the potential is limitless. It’s just not a reality, though, as we don’t have the time.”

“I was talking to Zakk Wylde about this,” Sherinian says, “and his band has built up over 20 years, to the point now where he’s playing great shows and is doing killer business. The problem is that we are all in our 50s, so by the time Sons Of Apollo is kicking ass we’re going to be old men. That’s the issue there. So we’re just going to do the best that we can.”

MMXX is released on January 17 via InsideOut. For more details visit www.sonsofapollo.com.
THE CLASS OF 2019

Featuring the following stink bomb throwers & milk monitors:
Geoff Downes (Yes) Nick D’Virgilio (Big Big Train) Rachael Hawnt (The Beautiful Secret)
Dave Meros (Spock’s Beard) Ollie Hannifan (Synaesthesis) Lynden Williams (Jerusalem)

Deckchair Poets: A Bit Of Pottery
Available on CD/Digital

Additional glazing by…
…Sue Lord (The String Beans Quartet)

“If Monty Python’s Flying Circus was a prog-rock band…” - Dave Ling

Zorbonauts: Tall Tails
Available on CD/Digital

Extra tail-wagging by…
…Bob Cooke (Jerusalem)
Rachel Hall (Big Big Train)
Will Wilde (Will Wilde Band)

“Let’s go walkies!” - Alfred Wainwright

Deckchair Poets: Always Piste At Christmas
Available on CD/Digital

More piste-taking by…
…Bob Cooke (Jerusalem)
Rachel Hall (Big Big Train)
Will Wilde (Will Wilde Band)

“Christmas will never be the same” - Hic!

Good vibrations supervised by the ultimate beach noise: Rob Aubrey

www.deckchairpoets.com
Cover paintings by Sarah-Jane Szikora

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In an age of luxury, expansive, in-depth box sets, a new one from the progressive world might have trumped them all (so far). And no, it isn’t from prog a heavyweight such as Pink Floyd or King Crimson, it’s the colossal, 30-disc *Unburied Treasure*, quite rightly celebrating its awe-inspiring creators, Gentle Giant. Vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Derek Shulman lifts its lid…

**Words:** Sid Smith  **Archive Images:** Press/Gentle Giant Archive
You know what it’s like when you need to find an item, you rummage in your cupboards and it’s not there. Or at least it’s not where you thought you’d left it. Photos, tapes, trinkets... all seem to have a life of their own when it comes to evading the search for one’s memorabilia. Accruing ‘stuff’ seems to be one of the things that comes with getting older. As is forgetting where you put it – or whether you really had it in the first place.

So imagine what it’s like if you were once a member of Gentle Giant. The band broke up in 1980 after an amazing decade-long career that produced a clutch of albums with some of the most adventurous and distinctive rock music of the 70s, in a crowded and highly competitive field. It was Ian Crockett, the man behind the Madfish label’s recent spate of deluxe box sets by Steve Hillage, Wishbone Ash and Family, who made the calls that had the members of Gentle Giant putting their hands down the backs of their sofas in search of rarities that would eventually be included in the recently released Gentle Giant 30-disc box set, Unburied Treasure.

“Ian was incredibly diligent in putting his time and energy into this,” explains former GG vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Derek Shulman, at home in New York. “When he said we were going to do the box, he asked us all to start looking around for various bits and pieces like tapes, posters and so on. In the end, I think it was Gary [Green, guitarist] who had more stuff than anyone else in the band. It was from him that most of the photos and tapes — and the multi-track tapes of their debut album Gentle Giant that Steven Wilson would remix — came from.”

Nearly 40 years after notes from Gentle Giant’s last live performance had faded away, at the Global On-Reflection Giant Gathering fan convention in New Jersey in October 2019, drummer Malcolm Mortimore, Gary Green, keyboard player Kerry Minnear and Derek Shulman gathered together around a table to unveil the contents of Unburied Treasure, a huge collection brimming with all the band’s studio output newly remastered, and hours of previously unreleased in-concert recordings.

Obviously aimed at the collectors’ market, it’s limited to just 2,000 copies worldwide, and includes a 156-page hardback book chronicling the life and times of the band, a signed photo, and numerous items of ephemera. Watching the four former members as they pull out the contents in front of fans in New Jersey, it’s evident that even they are surprised at how extensive it is. Holding up the coffee-table book, Shulman looks astonished as he turns the pages. Later, as Green looks through the accompanying 96-page tour history book, he exclaims: “I took this photo,” holding it open at a full-page photo looking down on to a stage. “I climbed up the lighting tower at Montreal Alouettes’ Stadium when Mahavishnu Orchestra opened for us. Can you believe it?” A burst of incredulity from his bandmates shakes Green’s resolve. “Oh, hang on...” he says. “No, it wasn’t Mahavishnu Orchestra, it was Weather Report!” Even then he doesn’t sound entirely sure.

There’s greater certainty, however, about the contents of the 30 audio CDs in this box set, 15 of which are previously unreleased gig recordings that chart the band’s progress across the stages of Europe and the US between 1972 and 1980. Some artists are understandably wary about issuing live recordings in which there are some notes awry or beats astray. Others, such as King Crimson’s Robert Fripp, have long maintained that there’s a valuable lesson in releasing recordings of

“The way we looked at it was that the original recording was the sketch, but the live show was the painting.”

Derek Shulman
performances where things haven’t always gone exactly to plan, for both band and audience alike. “I’m a little bit in-between, to be honest,” Shulman muses. “But to tell you the truth, I’m quite impressed as to how we played as precisely as we did.”

The reason Gentle Giant were as tight as they were, he explains, came down to sheer bloody hard work: “We worked our asses off to make sure our presentation on stage was as good as it could be. The songs we performed in-concert were always very different from the studio recordings. The way we looked at it was that the original recording was the sketch, but the live show was the painting, if you like. We expanded whatever recorded music we put into the live show and brought different factors and factions into it. It was a very different way to express ourselves.”

What is also eloquently expressed in those live performances, where instruments are nonchalantly – and impressively – swapped and circulated between bandmembers during complex and nuanced medleys, was that here was a band with a white-knuckle grip on dynamics, brimming with character and can-do attitude.

Perhaps the real jewel in this overflowing box stuffed with gems is Steven Wilson’s surround-sound mix of the band’s self-titled debut album from 1970. As with their other 5.1 titles, the contrasting arrangements and textural detail that was the band’s ambitious default setting is sensitively explored and extrapolated into a mesmerising listening experience by Wilson’s expansive mix. It was originally recorded at a time when they were sleeping on producer Tony Visconti’s floor, and the future for the band was by no means certain. In this respect, that first album is testimony to a remarkable leap of faith, not just by the musicians, but also their management, as the newly formed Gentle Giant made the transition from the soul/pop that brothers Derek, Ray and Phil Shulman had been playing in Simon Dupree And The Big Sound (one-hit wonders in 1967 with the psychedelic Kites), to become something light years away from the pop world that had seemed to be their fate.

Another leap of faith was required of the band after the departure of Phil Shulman after 1972’s Octopus.

“It was a shock for the band, yes, but more a shock for me and Ray because we were brothers,” says Derek. “Phil wasn’t a focal point, but he’d do all these bits and pieces very well indeed. When he said he was leaving, we were upset, to say the least. Octopus was a very well-received album, we felt we were on our way. Then he said: ‘I can’t do this anymore.’
Understandably, in retrospect, because he had family and he had to choose between one or the other. I take my hat off to him to have done the right thing for his own life. We didn’t quite know what to do. I remember me and Ray walking along the street, talking to each other about what we should do - if we should just break up or not.

“The stress and the fracture and the regrouping are shown on the next album, *In A Glass House*, which was a very hard record to make. It was very intense. I couldn’t listen to it for two or three years after we made it, because emotionally it was hard. The others in the band were hit by it, of course, but they were less impacted than we were, perhaps. But we found our way, dusted ourselves off and probably became much bigger.”

All of that personal history and experience, both public and private, is etched deep into every inch of *Unburied Treasure* and the music it contains. There are other precious musical commodities in there as well: originality and authenticity. “We weren’t trying to be King Crimson or Jethro Tull or The Eagles or Zappa or Black Sabbath or Elvis or whoever. We were trying to be ourselves,” says Shulman.

After the band called it a day and the members went off to carve out different lives for themselves, moving house, changing jobs, creating different opportunities, it would be easy to think that interest in Gentle Giant would, understandably, have waned. Yet nearly four decades later, the band’s artistic stock and value has risen rather than declined. While guitarist Gary Green and drummer Malcolm Mortimore founded Three Friends in 2008 (joined briefly by keyboard player Kerry Minnear) as a vehicle for performing Gentle Giant’s music, the prospect of a full-blown reunion remains a forlorn hope. Derek Shulman, for one, has never been tempted to try to get the band back together.

“There’s a saying that you can never go home again. I didn’t go back to Portsmouth, where I grew up. I left there when I was 24. It’s not where I belong any more. Gentle Giant was home at that point in our lives. To relive something that we closed the book on would feel spooky, and we would be doing it for a different reason to the reasons we did it originally. The risk is you end up a parody of who you are, and I don’t ever want to be that.”

Although Shulman definitely rules out returning to the stage, one wonders whether Gentle Giant’s custodians aren’t missing out on the opportunity for some truly niche merchandise, namely marketing the ‘Shulberry’, a bespoke three-stringed instrument invented by the band. “Anyone can build one. Get a piece of wood, put three strings on it, give them violin tuning and you’ve got a Shulberry! It’ll cost you a tenner,” Shulman says, laughing. “You know what happened to the original? Gary chopped it up for firewood. He needed a fire to keep him warm. True story!”

As our conversation draws to a close, he mentions that he’s been renovating his apartment, in the process revealing some discoveries that suggest *Unburied Treasure* may not be the last word on Gentle Giant. “I’ve found things that I’d completely forgotten about, including a couple of live tapes that are not part of this box. They sound very well recorded, so we’re going to put them out next year. One is going to be called *The Missing Tape*. Owning something that you can handle and see is a good thing, rather than something that is just peripheral. I think fans want to hold something that’s not just ones and zeros.”

“*I’m quite impressed as to how we played as precisely as we did.*”

Derek Shulman

Unburied Treasure is out now. See [www.madfishmusic.com](http://www.madfishmusic.com).
Miracle Workers
Six years after the last official Flower Kings album, Roine Stolt’s prog royals are back with two talented new members, a thrilling new double album and one very happy leader.

Words: Grant Moon  Portrait: Lilian Forsberg

We’re sounding great and it’s getting better and tighter by the gig. We’re in a good place.”

Roine Stolt

Mirkko DeMaio has been The Flower Kings’ drummer for more than a year, but he’s still in awe of the boss.

“Roine’s a miracle,” says DeMaio. “He’s the healthiest guy I’ve met in this business. I mean, he eats a lot, but it’s all healthy stuff. When he walks in he’s like a king. He’s a man who lives for his art, and everything he does is driven by passion. And he looks younger than any of us.”

The enviably well-preserved Roine Stolt is 63. DeMaio is 35, and Zach Kamins (who replaced the Kings’ long-serving keyboard player Tomas Bodin) is just 32.

“Zach and Mirkko came in with so much enthusiasm,” he says, “so many ideas, and a will to do something extraordinary. Working with them made me remember what it was when you were young and hungry and wanted to do something fantastic.”

Stolt had already had a Damascene epiphany while working with Prog God™ Jon Anderson on their 2016 collaboration Invention Of Knowledge. “Jon’s 75 now, but like a kid still in his enthusiasm, wanting to do things and explore. I had a wake-up moment when I was working with him – it can be like this, so why was I in this band with people who just wait for the pay cheque?”

Stolt first met Zach Kamins in 2009, when Kamins asked him to produce his band’s self-titled debut album, An Endless Sporadic. He had first been turned on to The Flower Kings in 2005 while studying at Berklee College Of Music, with the albums Retropolis and Unfold The Future particularly piquing his interest.

“I grew up listening to older prog but also metal, but when my room-mate introduced me to The Flower Kings they reminded me of ELP, Yes and Genesis but in a more modern way,” Kamins says. Their music had so much to it, interesting textures and harmonic and melodic ideas, and I wanted...
to be around these guys. I never imagined I’d be in the position of joining the band.”

DeMaio and Stolt had been Facebook friends for years. Stolt would ‘Like’ the videos DeMaio would post of himself playing drums, both solo and with Mind Key, his progg metal band back home in Naples. When Stolt texted to ask if he’d like to join The Flower Kings, DeMaio’s first thought was that a friend was pranking him. His second was to say yes immediately.

“I’d heard some of their music in the past,” says DeMaio. “I said yes, but when I checked out the material and realised how technical it was I thought: ‘Oh my God, what have I done?’ But I liked Transatlantic, also Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd and Gentle Giant since I was a kid, so the general vibe was very familiar.”

DeMaio and Kamins joined Stolt, Fröberg and Reingold for last year’s dates in South America and Canada and their European shows with Spock’s Beard. DeMaio says he and Reingold locked together quickly, both as people and as a rhythm section. Both newcomers would email Stolt a stream of suggestions for fresh ways of replicating the album music live.

“They’re ideas were a huge help for me,” says Stolt. “It was like a vitamin boost. And those shows made me appreciate the old music more; coming back to Stardust Are We and The Truth Will Set You Free made me appreciate our music in a new way, and that maybe helped with the new album.”

Waiting For Miracles was recorded in Stockholm in June at RMV Studios, owned by ABBA’s Benny Andersson. Tales of pirate ships (Black Flag) mingle with 60s-flavoured psych pop (Wicked Old Symphony), harmony-rich prog epics (Miracles For America, Vertigo) and instrumental. Haunting opener House Of Cards and orchestral piece Ascending To The Stars were both written by Kamins, while The Rebel Circus was based on drum work by DeMaio. The old guard seem keen to prove they can keep pace with the young pretenders, and Reingold’s sterling playing is galvanised, notably on the very Yes-sounding We Were Always Here; there’s a swagger to Stolt’s gutsy rock’n’roll guitar solo for The Bridge, and his thick retro tone on Steampunk.

Some of Stolt’s stream-of-consciousness lyrics draw on circus imagery, illustrated by the elephant perched precariously on a house of cards on the album’s cover. This instability reflects deeper concerns in hand.

“A song like Black Flag is just fun,” says Stolt, “but we do have real pirates on the coast of Africa. Are they bad, or just poor? And America does need a miracle now — day by day you that means a lot. If you have great players but someone’s grumpy and putting a lid on the joy, you shouldn’t do that for a long time. The best possible environment for me is having happy people around me.”

Kamins had built up a large bank of classic Kings sounds while prepping the live shows, and that helped him in the studio.

“I did try to stay close to what Tomas did,” he says. “I put a lot of pressure on myself to ensure the keyboard parts would appeal to the fan base. I love what Tomas did. Because I’ve listened to them for years, that sound is ingrained in my brain. To me that is the Flower Kings sound.”

Stolt’s brother Michael also plays some bass to the record, and Roine noticed new life in the band that’s been going for 25 years. “He really appreciates that something that’s been missing from the band is back again,” says Roine. “I’m probably too close to it to tell, but I can say I’m really enjoying playing live again. I really enjoyed the recording of the album and am looking forward to seeing how the fans connect to it.”

While he can’t see The Sea Within moving again “for the foreseeable future”, Stolt’s other supergroup, Transatlantic, recorded their new album in October, with release planned for 2020. With Kamins and DeMaio now full-time members, The Flower Kings will follow December’s 12-date European tour with Cruise To The Edge in March, and there are dates in Australia and Japan on the cards too.

Add this schedule to the artistic strength of Waiting For Miracles, and all really does seem rosy in the realm of The Flower Kings.

“I’ve had people close to the band who have seen us many times,” says Roine Stolt, “and they say this is the happiest-looking version of the band ever. We’re sounding great and it’s getting better and tighter by the gig. We’re in a good place.”

Waiting For Miracles is out now via InsideOut. See www.roinestolt.com.
Do you want to advertise in a magazine at the forefront of the modern day progressive music revival?

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For a casual rock fan, the best-known fact about Mark Mangold is that he was once part of a group (Touch) whose bass player, Doug Howard, swallowed a bee while performing at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock Festival at Donington Park in 1980. But there’s far, far more to this Florida-born keyboard maestro than just pub-quiz trivia.

A professional musician since the age of 13, Mangold has had his songs performed by a variety of A-listers including Cher, Michael Bolton, and Paul Rodgers and Kenney Jones with their short-lived 90s band The Law. And yes, he was very much raised on progressive music. Not only did the young Mangold appreciate the early work of keyboard players Rick Wakeman, Tony Banks, Keith Emerson and Deep Purple’s Jon Lord, he also considers himself a contemporary of such artists. “I was doing this even before some of the names you just mentioned,” he says proudly.

For Mangold it all began with a Long Island, New York-based band named Valhalla, who were signed to United Artists Records, and released a now-hard-to-find self-titled album in 1969. With that album full of flamboyant, symphonic rock-flavoured material such as Overseas Symphony, this was a group ahead of its time.

“Nowadays you’d call Valhalla a prog band, but 50 years ago we considered it pop music,” he says, laughing. “Like so many of the diverse bands from that era, we were trying to carve out our own sound. I was a regular at a Long Island club called the Action House, where I saw Jethro Tull, who did amazing things with the flute. Vanilla Fudge and Buddy Miles played there... the list goes on. That encouraged me to play whatever I liked.”

The idea of American Tears was to be a virtuoso band — we had bass solos and huge drum kits, and I was the singer. We got to open for Gentle Giant, John McLaughlin, Peter Frampton, Alvin Lee...”

With Valhalla failing to find an audience, Mangold bounced back with another group, American Tears. Despite making equally challenging music as an instrumental guitarless trio, they signed a major-label deal with Columbia.

“The idea of American Tears was to be a virtuoso band — we had bass solos and huge drum kits, and I was the singer,” Mangold recalls. “We got to play as an opening band for, among others, Gentle Giant, John McLaughlin, Peter Frampton, Alvin Lee and Gary Wright. That was very educational.”

While Keith Emerson wowed audiences by stabbing his Hammond organ keyboard with knives, Mangold developed a gimmick of his own: performing handstands on his Hammond, surrounded by an armoury of 12 keyboards. “That was fun. I wish I could still do them now,” he says, laughing at the memory.

Eventually, with a breakthrough still elusive, American Tears reached the point of no return. “Yeah, after two records [Branded Bad and Tear Gas, released in 1974 and ’75] we decided to add a guitar, and I wanted to share some vocal responsibility,” Mangold explains. “I suppose you could say we sought some level of commercial acceptability, though we continued to apply the progressive rules, only with shorter songs.”

Frontman/guitarist Craig Brooks was added to the line-up for one further album, 1977’s Powerhouse, before American Tears evolved into the group for which Mangold is probably best known: Touch. Having been taken under the wing of Deep Purple’s manager Bruce Payne, in 1980 Touch released a self-titled album of masterful pomp rock that spawned the singles Don’t You Know What Love Is and When The Spirit Moves You. Ahead of Yes and Asia, who later the same decade brought progressive rock to the pop charts, Touch’s success was due to first-rate musicianship and canny, very memorable tunes.

“Oh, I don’t know about that. All we were really doing was trying not to suck,” Mangold says modestly, with a chuckle. “We used what we had to write some good, accessible songs. In fact we’re in the process of making...”

Songwriter to stars including Cher and Paul Rodgers, this US keyboard player spent his youth in thrall to Tony Banks, Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman, playing in bands supporting some of his biggest prog heroes. Did it all end in tears? Partly, with one group in name only. Then there was the Monsters Of Rock incident that nearly overshadowed everything. So we have to ask: How prog is Mark Mangold? Words: Dave Ling
Mark Mangold: keytar hero.
a brand new Touch record, and it was so cool to have everybody in a room and revisit the harmony that we had back then.”

Touch did get as far as making a second album, but when their record label elected to shelve it the band’s goose was effectively cooked. Mangold tiptoes around the reason for what happened, trying hard not to blame producer Todd Rundgren.

“That album just wasn’t recorded very well, unfortunately,” he sighs. “There’s some distortion and other weird things going on, which the engineer, Bob Clearmountain, was able to rescue in the mix. The same thing happened to the band New England; just like us, Todd was working with them for the money. I don’t want to bash Todd, but it was a shame, as he’s one of our idols.”

Boardroom disagreements finally spelled the end of Touch.

“Business-wise there was a Mexican stand-off between the American label and the one in Europe, and in the end we simply surrendered to that,” Mangold relates sadly. “I really wish we hadn’t, but that’s what happened.”

The Rundgren sessions finally emerged in 1998 as part of a double album titled The Complete Works, but in retrospect Touch deserved far better than the moderate success that came their way. It’s regrettable that to many, the insect-swallowing incident at Donington is better known than their music. Mangold now at least derives amusement from what happened that day.

“It was the second or third thing we joked about when we got back together recently,” he says, smiling. “But I agree. We worked so hard for years to get to that place, and all that some people remember is the bee.”

During the mid-1980s, Mangold began collaborating with other artists, including writing and performing with a pre-mullet-era Michael Bolton. In 1987 his co-write with Bolton, I Found Someone, was a global hit for Cher. Mangold’s byline also appeared on music for Jennifer Rush and Laura Branigan. More recently he has written hit songs for R&B singer Jordin Sparks. When asked whether that must be financially very beneficial yet artistically restrictive, he quickly quashes such a suggestion.

“Not at all, it was wonderful,” he replies. “There was plenty of hours in the day for my own projects as well as working for others. My time wasn’t monopolised.”

As the 80s ended, Mangold teamed up with singer Al Fritsch in the much-loved but ultimately ill-fated AOR band Drive. She Said. Given the elaborate musical ideas that bounce around in Mangold’s head, it might be expected that that band was somewhat stifling?

“No, because I managed to work some of those crazy elements into Drive, She Said,” he muses. “If you give me 30 seconds to show off, I’m going to have my moment. Man, some of those songs were like mini-symphonies, only with anthemic choruses.”

However, readers of Prog are more likely to appreciate the pair of hugely under-appreciated albums made during the current millennium by Mangold as member of The Sign, along with bandmates including Kansas bassist Billy Greer, guitarist Randy Jackson of Zebra, Terry Brock, the sometime frontman with Anglo-Scottish melodic rockers Strangeways, plus bit-part alumni from Blue Oyster Cult and Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

“Right from the beginning, we told the record label that The Sign would do whatever the fuck we wanted to do, which was to create a sequence of moments,” Mangold enthuses. “Randy is Jimmy Page incarnate, so a Zep riff would be followed by some lush, harmonic chorus and then a weird keyboard solo. Stylistically it was all over the place, but in a nice way. I mean, the second album [The Second Coming] was a rock opera about a girl called Aryon who is molested by a priest that she later kills.”
I was a regular at Long Island club the Action House, where I saw Jethro Tull, who did amazing things with the flute.

Okay, let’s go back to the question we asked right at the beginning: how prog is Mark Mangold?

Since moving to Stockholm to be closer to its thriving pop scene, Mangold has thrown himself into myriad projects of unusual diversity. Besides using the alter-ego 12:12 to collaborate with younger Scandinavian artists such as the pop star Anniela and American Idol winner Jordin Sparks, until fairly recently he flew home for The Radian, a now-abandoned alternative rock act often compared to Coldplay and Keane — and who are, tellingly, another guitarless band.

“I’ve done a lot of stuff, and I don’t apologise for that,” Mangold laughs, throwing his hands into the air. In rock terms, Mangold’s current priority is American Tears, who were brought back to life for their 2018 album Hard Core, which they followed with White Flags back in June.

“The original American Tears was the product of a politically charged era, which possibly inspired me to start thinking of that band again,” Mangold affirms. “You know, the environmental issues and the sheer mental pressure that everybody is now under.”

This time, however, American Tears is very much a one-man operation, with Mangold singing and playing all of the keyboards, drums and bass parts in the studio, as well as producing and engineering. How very prog! Again there’s no guitar in American Tears. Also, and for reasons that he can’t fully explain, he chooses to use only instruments available during the 1970s.

“Working in such solitude, you have no fucking idea whether anyone else will like what you’re doing,” he says. “And I wouldn’t say that was scary, but I look at music in the same way as giving a gift. My goal is to make the hairs on your arms tingle. But I’ve no fear of rejection. It’s only rock’n’roll.”

As a reader of Prog Magazine, Mangold is as thrilled as anybody by the genre’s commercial rebirth. An original fan of Yes, King Crimson and Genesis, he admires the purity and musicianship of a relatively newer group such as The Flower Kings, as opposed to those who fabricate their sound with sequencers.

And of course he admits frustration at the irony of being recognised within several strands of music — AOR, pomp rock, pomp and now pop — yet distinctly under-appreciated by the genre that he cherishes most of all.

“Yeah, but it’s not about the ego, I just want to keep doing this,” he sums up. “Playing some shows might take us to a higher level — and I’m talking to two incredible musicians about making that happen — but if it doesn’t, then hey… I’m happy to keep on going behind the scenes.”

Hard Core and White Flags are available now via www.escape-music.com.
The Monastery Of Sound...

From the humblest beginnings in an ex-servicemen’s club to becoming the hotbed for prog and psychedelic rock just outside of the M25 – including being an influential performance spot for King Crimson, Genesis, Van der Graaf, local boys Marillion and some bloke called David Bowie – the now-legendary Friars club turns 50 in style, as documented by eye witness, participant and biographer Kris Needs.

**Words:** Kris Needs  **Images:** Friars Aylesbury Archives

June 2, 1969: prog rock hopefuls Mandrake Paddle Steamer squeezed onto the stage of a home counties ex-servicemen’s establishment and made history as the first band to play Friars Aylesbury, the legendary club currently celebrating its 50th anniversary year.

Mandrake didn’t get beyond one single but Friars became a progressive rock stronghold as its unusually enthusiastic crowd embraced names such as King Crimson, Van der Graaf Generator and East Of Eden, all but adopted the early Genesis, encouraged Bowie to unveil Ziggy Stardust and ignited the ascension of Marillion.

Flying by the seat of its pants from week to week, Friars survived through sheer musical passion, echoed by regulars prone to judge that week’s act by what limb-flailing reaction was sparked in ‘Leapers’ Corner’. John Peel liked it so much he waived his DJ fee so the following week’s first hundred punters could get free admission and then recently launched Zigzag magazine called it the UK’s best club.

The idea to start Friars came from Aylesbury Grammar School teacher Robin Pike. The first his pupils heard about Friars was when Mr Pike engaged one to design its membership card. A veteran club-goer, his vision came seeing the likes of Cream, Otis Redding and Nina Simone at Brixton’s funky Ram Jam Club and Peel hold weekly court at Mothers in Erdington, Birmingham.

“We all sat on the floor and he played records,” recalls Robin.

David Stopps, then managing a local blues band who played at 1968’s dance. “I said, ‘Why don’t we start a club in Aylesbury?’ I felt sure there was an audience. There’d been a friarage in Aylesbury? I felt there was an audience. There’d been a friarage in Aylesbury and it lent itself to an image.”

Toes guitarist Brian Godding, “a safe haven as most UK venues could be quite dangerous to work in. It was the Mecca of the musical movement of the period. Bands felt safe in the knowledge they were among ‘likeminded people’... You could go and try out all your weird and wonderful ideas without getting thumped or threatened!”

Weekly flyers revealed coming attractions, accompanied by David’s hippie expounding. “Next week we have King Crimson,” said July 21’s new sheet. “It’s now quite clear that this band is going to be enormously big very soon.”

He was, of course, right. The following week’s Crimson visitation birthed the ‘Friars Band’, those acts the crowd loved instantly and who regularly returned. The buzz around Crimson was building after the Stones’ Hyde Park concert three weeks earlier, Robert Fripp, Greg Lake, Ian McDonald and Mike Giles drawing 400 punters into a venue comfortable with half that.

“I heard them on Peel [John Peel’s BBC Radio Show],” recalls Stopps. “Everyone was saying they were fantastic. Next we’d got them for 30 quid! It was the most people we ever had in that venue. They were incredibly impressive.”

East Of Eden became the next ‘Friars Band’ in August, returning three times and launching larger events at the Borough Assembly Hall. Playing the recently released Mercator Projected, EOE epitomised progressive rock, mixing jazz, rock and classical elements into roof-raising blow-outs, transforming Friars into a mass barn-dance when violinist Dave Arbus resorted to...
Reaching for the stars: Curved Air’s Sonja Christina, August 7, 1976.

The legendary David Bowie at Friars, July 15, 1972.

Pink Floyd playing a ‘foreign’ gig in Dunstable.


Fans queuing up, hungry for prog in 1975.

KRIS NEEDS

Reaching for the stars: Curved Air’s Sonja Christina, August 7, 1976.
Irish jigs in the encores (inspiring 1971’s hit Jig-A-Jig). Week-by-week, the club witnessed the birth of ‘prog’, through organ colossus Graham Bond, Third Ear Band, Principal Edwards Magic Theatre, Writing On The Wall, Keith Relf’s Renaissance, Caravan, High Tide, Quintessence and Hawkwind (whose debut album was still months away).

Van der Graaf Generator joined the ‘Friars Bands’ after debuting that November, Hammill stalking the tiny stage snarling Necromancer with rare intensity, flanked by thermonuclear sax titan David Jackson simultaneously playing alto and tenor. Undeniably, the heaviest band that first year (including an unknown Black Sabbath playing to 50 people). “They immediately connected with the Friars audience,” says Stoppes. “It’s the audience-artist symbiotic relationship; we’d set up the infrastructure for that to happen, and it certainly did with Van der Graaf.”

VdGG consolidated Friars’ burgeoning relationship with nascent Charisma Records, soon to release The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other, also solidified by Rare Bird’s sole appearance in January 1970 (before Sympathy became a hit). It exploded when Genesis debuted in April (supposedly supported by Nick Drake); love at first sight as, nervously approaching his mic and foot-operated bass drum, Peter Gabriel riveted the crowd with surreal introductions before guitarist Mike Rutherford and Anthony Phillips, and organist Tony Banks, launched into songs ready for recording on 3/4" tape, including Stagnation and the storming The Knife.

Genesis were received so well they were rebooked for June, appeared at that year’s school dance, Friars’ satellite gigs, and in its 1971-1975 location, the Borough Assembly Hall. “Friars is the best gig in the country,” said Gabriel.

“We were told Genesis would be suitable and they were fantastic,” recalls David. “We paid them £10, then £15, 30, 40, 50 and 75, until I gave them 100 at Bedford Corn Exchange. Peter shook my hand onstage and said, ‘I want to thank this man; he’s the first person who’s ever paid us £100.' Then he started the set! One of the most extraordinary gigs was Princes Risborough British Legion Hall in 1970; the equipment broke down so Gabriel did this chant while they tried to fix the gear. Years later, it evolved into Biko.

“One time they were doing so badly I thought they were gonna split so we had a Genesis convention at Watford Town Hall. Gabriel gave out rosettes saying ‘Genesis Convention’. Melody Maker’s Chris Welch wrote this fantastic review that inspired them to move forward. In retrospect, I probably could’ve managed them; an opportunity I didn’t see, even though it was staring me in the face.

“In June 1971, Gabriel leapt four feet off the Friars stage and broke his ankle. That audience seemed to excite people! He thought people would break his fall but everyone parted and he landed badly. The audience threw him back onstage and he finished the set on his knees. When the rest of the band left the stage, he couldn’t move. To this day, he says: ‘Those bastards just left me there!’ I remember him sitting in agony waiting for the ambulance. Later, he wrote in our magazine, ‘I’ll always remember Aylesbury very fondly; I got the best two screws I ever had. They’re four inches above my heel and will be with me until the day I die’.”

“Genesis were great in every way. When they came back in 1980, fans queued outside for three days. We had cricket matches and wheelbarrows full of porridge. We presented them with a cup that night.”

Friars held “foreign” gigs in nearby towns like Watford, Bedford, High Wycombe and later Dunstable (where Pink Floyd had rescued the club in November 1969). New supergroup Emerson, Lake And Palmer opened Friars’ Watford Town Hall satellite gig on September 24 (two months before their debut album) having recently played 1970’s humongous Isle of Wight Festival. “That was their moment,” recalls David. “I announced them and there was this huge reaction from the audience. Friars was on the circuit now. If a band went on tour and weren’t playing Friars they wanted to know why. You had to do Friars Aylesbury.”

After relocating to the larger Borough Assembly Hall and shifting to Saturdays in April 1971, three landmark Bowie gigs “really put us on the world map. We had lots of publicity in America. We were just in a great place really.” Along with returning early favourites, Friars presented names including Queen, Hawkwind, Can, Focus, Gong, Man, Roxy Music, Camel, Spirit and many more until moving to...
Aylesbury’s new Civic Centre, opened by Greenslade in September 1975.

Riding punk’s impact, Friars continued presenting Tangerine Dream, Steve Hillage, Renaissance, King Crimson, Camel, Procol Harum, Curved Air, Peter Gabriel and Manfred Mann’s Earth Band. But the club’s 80s success story came from the local pub circuit: Marillion.

Pete Trewavas was a familiar local face who’d worked in Stopps’ Earth Records and local bands including Orthi, the Robins and the Cameras. Arriving from Scotland, Fish was soon another familiar character, seeking to reinstall the lyrical qualities of Peter Hammill into a music business shying from prog until Marillion led its resurgence.

“This fish used to come to Friars and invited me to see them in the local Britannia pub,” recalls Stopps. “They were very good; very early Genesis. They had so much enthusiasm, were doing original material, Fish’s lyrics were great and the music was dynamic. It was a great band to have come from this area. They always say Friars was a massive influence on their career.”

Marillion started by supporting punk poet John Cooper Clarke in May 1981, then Spirit in August, John Martyn in October and John Otway the following February. By June, they merited their first Friars headliner. A year later Hammill was supporting them, followed by Otway when Marillion played the last show of Friars’ first run before it stopped for 25 years because Stopps was busy managing Howard Jones.

“We put them on a lot in those early days,” recalls Stopps. “I managed them for six weeks in summer ’82 after Fish begged me to. I was very busy with Friars but really did my best; got them a residency at the Marquee and talking to EMI. Then Fish decided I wasn’t spending enough time on them. They had this rule everybody in the band had to agree on every decision. All the band wanted me to carry on, apart from Fish and they went to John Arnison. Market Square Heroes was the first song they released – dedicated to me because they felt bad about firing me.”

There’s no need to explain what happened next. “Everyone thought it was over when Fish left but Steve Hogarth came in and they started building it again,” says David, who restarted Friars in 2009 at the Civic Centre before the Waterside Theatre became its modern home, Marillion selling it out in 2013 and 2017 (Hogarth instrumental in the successful campaign for a Bowie statue in that much-fêted Market Square).

King Crimson returned in 2015 and 2016. “That was Jakko [Jakszyk], basically,” says Stopps. “He says seeing [Crimson] at Watford Town Hall in 1971 was the start of his career. After that he knew he was going to be a musician. He contacted me, they did two nights in 2015, the band loved it and it was the only two British dates they did in 2016. Kate Bush came and, rumour has it, Bowie came in, saw the gig and left, but that’s not proven.”

2018 saw Camel return and 2019’s 50th celebrations were dropkicked into the cosmos by Nick Mason’s A Saucerful Of Secrets last April (49 years since Floyd appeared at Friars Dunstable). “That was just amazing,” says Stopps. “I can’t believe he’s out there still doing it, or I’m out there still doing it. It’s extraordinary; I’d just turned 21 when we started Friars. I’m 71 now and it’s 50 years. Obviously, there was a gap when we didn’t do anything but I always thought somebody else would take over and they never did. It’s bizarre. It really is driven on enthusiasm for music.”

November saw the return of Steves Hillage and Hackett, the latter playing Selling England By The Pound on his Genesis Revisited jaunt. “I’ve good memories of playing Aylesbury many times,” says Hackett. “It was the sure-fire gig that was always going to work for us. Of course, we had a long way to go, but there was a sense of Friars being ahead of the rest of the world.”

“Fish used to come to Friars and invited me to see them in the local Britannia pub,” recalls Stopps. “They were very good; very early Genesis. They had so much enthusiasm, were doing original material, Fish’s lyrics were great and the music was dynamic. It was a great band to have come from this area. They always say Friars was a massive influence on their career.”

Marillion started by supporting punk poet John Cooper Clarke in May 1981, then Spirit in August, John Martyn in October and John Otway the following February. By June, they merited their first Friars headliner. A year later Hammill was supporting them, followed by Otway when Marillion played the last show of Friars’ first run before it stopped for 25 years because Stopps was busy managing Howard Jones.

“We put them on a lot in those early days,” recalls Stopps. “I managed them for six weeks in summer ’82 after Fish begged me to. I was very busy with Friars but really did my best; got them a residency at the Marquee and talking to EMI. Then Fish decided I wasn’t spending enough time on them. They had this rule everybody in the band had to agree on every decision. All the band wanted me to carry on, apart from Fish and they went to John Arnison. Market Square Heroes was the first song they released – dedicated to me because they felt bad about firing me.”

There’s no need to explain what happened next. “Everyone thought it was over when Fish left but Steve Hogarth came in and they started building it again,” says David, who restarted Friars in 2009 at the Civic Centre before the Waterside Theatre became its modern home, Marillion selling it out in 2013 and 2017 (Hogarth instrumental in the successful campaign for a Bowie statue in that much-fêted Market Square).

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“I remember hearing [King Crimson] on Peel. Everyone was saying they were fantastic. Next we’d got them for 30 quid!”

David Stopps
When your debut album gathers as much praise and award nominations as *Fate Outsmarts Desire* did, a band might worry about album number two. But not savvy Londoners Kaprekar’s Constant. *Depth Of Field* goes widescreen on an almost mythic landscape of lost Britain... and its scale even tempted Ian Anderson into the frame too.

**Words:** Sid Smith  **Images:** Sean Kelly

“We didn’t know how it would go down. We put it out and what came back was wonderful really.”

Nick Jefferson
At a time when physical sales have been declining, to embark on the not inconsiderable challenge of writing material, corralling a team of busy musicians to record the music, and then release the results on CD into an uncertain and chronically overcrowded marketplace could be seen either as an act of heroic endeavour or hubristic folly. Jefferson and Nicholson, who’ve been friends and colleagues since the early 1970s, accept that in truth it’s probably a bit of both. Being in Kaprekar’s Constant is never going to put a Porsche on the drive, as Nicholson quips, but it’s something they feel impelled to do.

For some groups, the all-important follow-up to a debut can be a trying and difficult process. Not so for this seven-piece outfit which, though guided by the pair, nevertheless acts very much as a collective. “Perhaps if the first album, Fate Outsmarts Desire, in 2017 had stiffed we might have walked away from it all and said, ‘Well, that’s that,’” admits Nicholson. “But even before there was any notion of a release, we got an inkling that we might have had something.”

That ‘something’ netted them generous reviews, decent sales and a nomination in the Limelight category for 2017’s Prog Awards. When they talk about it you can tell they are still a bit taken aback by the reaction.

“We knew that the album had been done to a very high standard of quality in terms of production and so on,” says Jefferson. “But we didn’t know how it would go down.
“When we’re on stage we look across and see David playing away, and then look at each other and say, ‘Are we dreaming?’”

Nick Jefferson

Several of their songs consciously evoke a former Britain, an almost mythic landscape lost to progress and remorseless change. The technological and social spoils of Victorian and Edwardian ‘golden age’ of expansionism may not be the usual fodder for material but it’s an area that Kaprekar’s Constant feel very comfortable exploring, as Jefferson explains: “I felt there were enough people doing generic love songs. I have an interest in history but it wasn’t a conscious decision to go toward but something that had happened gently along the way. I just felt that it opened up so many options of introducing characters and project something onto them. Without trying to sound pretentious, it’s a bit like writing a small play or a short story.”

With some in contemporary politics talking about recapturing Britain’s imperial past, might there be a subtext in the band’s music about that comment upon contemporary events.”

The band’s dramatic use of voiceovers as a device to underscore a historical detail or provide an aural footnote is something they’ve thought long and hard about, says Jefferson. “We were told that some of the voiceovers that featured on the first album were a bit overused and that we could have left it more to the music to create the atmosphere. The only bits of voiceover that we use on the new album are the actual people involved in the action as its being played out, which I hope gives in a greater authenticity.”

Rosherville, an elegy to a Gravesend pleasure park that in its heyday received a million visitors a year from London, contains a guest reading from Jethro Tull’s Ian Anderson. “Nick had written a great lyric and this poem exists that is really an important part of the song," explains Nicholson, who cites Tull’s A Passion Play as one of his favourites. “We needed somebody to read the poem with a great voice. After we each made a list of people we wanted, we discovered we both had Ian Anderson at the top of the list.” With no real expectation that Tull’s frontman would respond, they sent Anderson a letter asking him to record the poem. The pair had all but given up hope but after several weeks without any word an email turned up out of the blue. “We couldn’t believe it when he wrote back and said, ‘Job’s done, boys. It’s in the post.’”

While Nicholson and Jefferson generate the material and its symphonically inclined direction, it is very much shaped and changed by the team who come together in the studio and on stage as Kaprekar’s Constant. “From conception to birth the songs change completely as a result of the contributions of the band. What I might think of as being a quiet section ends up being anything but after people have put their individual stamp on it,” laughs Nicholson.

Joining the pair are Mike Westergaard (piano, keyboards) Bill Jefferson and Dorie Jackson (vocals) Mark Walker (drums) and ex-Van der Graaf Generator saxophonist and hat-wearing prog rock icon, David Jackson. “When it comes to the others doing the parts for the album we just say, ‘Do what you do.’ We’ve asked them to do it because we like their work and trust them. With someone like David Jackson, that’s a red rag to a bull and we get back 10 versions that go from a scale of completely unlistenable to wonderful, and it’s down to us to chose the version that works best,” explains Jefferson.

Though it was never intended to be a live project, such has been the demand for the band to perform in concert, they admit they’ve had to up their game. Presenting their intricate and nuanced music with its rich palette of textures and sounds is no easy feat, especially given their expressed desire to avoid bulking out their sound with a pre-recorded track.

“It felt like we’d be cheating an audience if you suddenly pressed play on some device somewhere with the band accompanying. That would be the obvious way of recreating the record. We don’t do that,” says Jefferson. With more new music already in the can set to appear as bonus tracks when Depth Of Field is released as a double LP, Jefferson happily admits they can’t quite believe how well things have gone for them. Having someone like Jackson, who they first saw live at London’s Drury Lane in 1976 as teenagers, in the band never loses its exhilarating novelty. “Sometimes when we’re on stage we look across and see David playing away, and then look at each other and say, ‘Are we dreaming?’”

Depth Of Field is out now via Talking Elephant. See www.facebook.com/Kaprekers for info.
To celebrate, we’re giving you 60% off a digital subscription

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After a five-year gap, *Edison’s Children* are back with a new album and an expanded line-up. Co-founder Pete Trewavas talks about space, climate change and the band’s future.

*Words:* Natasha Scharf  *Portrait:* Wendy Darling Blackwood
When Marillion bassist Pete Trewavas and Blackwood & Foti’s Eric Blackwood formed Edison’s Children in 2008, they never imagined that one day they would be writing, recording and performing with Rick Armstrong.

“If I could go back in time and tell my 10-year-old self that in 50 years I’d be in a band with [first man on the Moon] Neil Armstrong’s son…” says Trewavas, his voice trailing off as he searches for the right words. “It’s pretty humbling stuff, actually.”

When Prog catches up with Trewavas at his home studio in Aylesbury, he’s making final adjustments to his parts on Marillion’s surprise 2019 release With Friends From The Orchestra. Although Marillion is still his priority, he speaks fondly of his Edison’s Children colleagues, and it’s clear that the project is very important to him.

“Eric’s been the creative thinker over the years, and Rick’s a pretty good creative force as well,” he explains. “He’s a guitarist and bassist as well, and he’s very good at reminding us of the kinds of things that are good about Edison’s Children.”

Armstrong has been a big supporter of the sci-fi rock band since their inception — he’s name-checked as one of the first 20 people to order their 2011 debut In The Last Waking Moments... — and became a full-time member of the band in 2013. It was Armstrong who secured their support slot with Alan Parsons, which took place on Florida’s ‘space coast’ in July 2019 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11’s lunar landing.

“It was unbelievable, and I feel very proud and honoured to have been a part of it. We had an exclusive tour of the Kennedy Space Center as well, which was amazing because we got to see the landing pads and parts that most people don’t get to see,” says Trewavas, his voice full of passion. “The lunar landing was an iconic moment of the 60s for me. I stayed up especially to watch it on TV and remember it vividly. I was 10 years old and interested in sci-fi, but when you actually realise that people are travelling in space and landing on the Moon far from mind-blowing.”

The bassist is comparatively modest about the show, but in reality it was Edison’s Children’s first full outing since 2014, and included guest appearances from Porcupine Tree’s John Wesley on guitars, drummer Mark Prator (ex-Iced Earth) and UPF’s Lisa Wetton on keyboards and percussion. It also gave the band the perfect opportunity to premiere some new material.

But the future hasn’t always looked so rosy for them. Despite the team having written around 100 songs together, Edison’s Children have taken a back seat over the past five years partly due to Trewavas’ commitments with Marillion, Kino and Transatlantic, but also because of Blackwood’s health. The singer-guitarist suffered what Trewavas refers to as a “devastating injury” and also contracted Lyme disease, which left him on a drip for the best part of a year. Despite the release of 2015’s interim album Somewhere Between Here and There, and last year’s reissue of their sold-out debut, rumours began to circulate about whether Blackwood would be well enough to return to the project. What fans didn’t realise was that work had already begun on what would become Edison’s Children’s official third album.

The recording was shrouded in secrecy. So much so that when, back in June, Trewavas made a video statement on the future of the band, the high number of fans logging on to view it crashed the band’s website.

“The album takes its title, The Disturbance Fields, from the project’s original moniker, and revisits some of the themes that came up while they were recording their debut. It even includes a version of the very first song that Blackwood and Trewavas wrote together, called A Cold Gray Morning.

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“The album started out as a concept that I had,” Trewavas explains. “While we were recording our first album, in Ocean Pines [in August 2011], Hurricane Irene hit. The area was going to be evacuated; we had the police knocking on our door, and the letting agency told us we had to leave, but we decided to stick it out. The house we were staying in shook quite violently at one point and a few trees blew down, but it wasn’t as bad as we thought it would be.

“Then we found out that further up the coast there was massive flooding, so I had this idea of a concept called Washed Away, which was about everything you knew being washed away so you lost that sense of who you are. We changed the title, but it’s still loosely based on the idea of Mother Nature fighting back through

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“We almost need to be like The Wombles and have people dressing up in Edison’s Children suits!”

Edison’s Children touring the Kennedy Space Center in Florida in 2019, L-R: Eric Blackwood, Rick Armstrong and Pete Trewavas.

Edison’s Children’s lead singer and keyboardist Pete Trewavas has revealed how climate change is understood to have inspired their new album, The Disturbance Fields. Trewavas, who also performs with progressive rock band Marillion, said: “It’s quite calm in many places, but that’s how weather is,” Trewavas says. “There’s a lull every now and again, which carries with it a false sense of security both in real life and on our album. It’s funny, because although this is a concept that we put together, it’s born out of quite a lot of things that have happened to us since.”

Although climate change has been a big topic this year — rarely a day goes by without reference to it in the news — Edison’s Children do seem to have had first-hand experience of rather a lot of it. As well as their experience in Ocean Pines, their other recording sessions have been affected by earthquakes, tornadoes and even a heavy blizzard. Could it be a coincidence that, on the day this interview takes place, most of the UK is experiencing heavy storms and flash floods?

“Climate change is very much at the forefront of everybody’s minds right now, as it should be, and that might have swayed our decision to release the album now,” Trewavas admits. “We’ve only got one world, and I think we’re being very flippant with the way we’re treating it at the moment. It really disheartens me. The corporate world still isn’t taking our climate seriously enough. But that’s another story.”

If there’s one thing that Edison’s Children aren’t short of, it’s creativity, and over the years they’ve gathered enough material for at least two more albums. The only barrier in their way seems to be time itself. Trewavas’ tour schedule with Marillion is filling up again, and he confirms that they’ve already begun working on music for their 10th studio album. There are also rumours of some new Transatlantic recordings. But in spite of his schedule, he hopes that Edison’s Children can still keep up the momentum of their latest release.

“There’s some exciting stuff that’s possibly going to happen, but I wouldn’t like to talk about it at the moment,” he teases. “We’d really like to grow the band in people’s minds. We do want to do live shows, and the next album will hopefully come out a little sooner as well, but I’m stupidly busy at the moment. We almost need to be like The Wombles, and have people dressing up in Edison’s Children suits and be us!”

He pauses and adds: “We don’t know what’s round the corner, but we’re certainly not running out of ideas.”

In The Raw

Prog Award nominees and Hawkwind tourmates The Blackheart Orchestra present their most personal work yet in their new, third album, Mesmeranto.

Words: Isere Lloyd-Davis  Images: Sam Eddison

Opening for a legendary prog band on tour is an opportunity that most bands could only dream of. But for Manchester duo The Blackheart Orchestra, they’ve had the honour of doing it twice. After supporting Hawkwind on their In Search Of Utopia – Infinity And Beyond tour in 2018, including a sold-out performance at the London Palladium, The Blackheart Orchestra’s Rick Pilkington and Chrissy Mostyn opened for the space rock legends’ UK tour again in November 2019, including a highly anticipated performance at London’s award-winning Royal Albert Hall.

“During the tour, Dave [Brock] told a story about how in his younger years he used to be busking outside the Palladium, and years later he’s on stage there two nights in a row,” smiles Mostyn. “A year ago, we were asked where our dream place to play was and, lo and behold, a year later, that’s where we will be. Playing the Royal Albert Hall was a dream come true. It shows you should never give up dreaming.”

Pilkington adds: “[Touring with Hawkwind] was an incredible feeling. I’ve been a Hawkwind fan most of my life. In Search Of Space was such an iconic album for me. They’re lucky to have such a wonderful audience that are so open-minded and who were willing to accept a bunch of weirdos like us.”

“When we started the tour, I thought this could be fantastic, or an absolute disaster for us,” laughs Mostyn. “The audience could have thought: ‘What on earth have they brought along with them? But they were great, and we’ve noticed a few Hawkwind T-shirts in the crowd at our gigs now!’

After the release of their second album, Diving For Roses, in 2014, The Blackheart Orchestra were nominated in the Limelight category at the 2018 Progressive Music Awards. From here, their exceptional musicianship and sincere lyrics exposed them as strong contenders in the progressive world.

“The support from Prog has been incredible,” Mostyn says. “We’ve always struggled to figure out where we fit musically, because we don’t really belong anywhere, but now we feel completely embraced by prog fans.”

“We’ve been a little village tucked away in the trees somewhere, but Prog put a signpost on the main road saying: ‘This way...’” says Pilkington. “Progressive music is progressing every day, and that’s what we are a part of.”

The Blackheart Orchestra have just released their new, third album, Mesmeranto, and it’s their most personal collection yet.

“Every album has been honest, because we don’t have the ability to write superficially,” says Pilkington. “We write about the way we feel and experiences are changing us. This album has been a journey of 18 months of extreme joy and extreme sadness. All the songs on Mesmeranto make up a long diary of what we have been through over the last 18 months – it is one hundred per cent raw emotion.”

The album is a beautiful and heartbreaking kaleidoscope of emotions and thoughts of someone who has recently suffered the devastating loss of a loved one. The extremely moving opening track, Ennikur, sets the tone for Mostyn’s deeply personal and cathartic lyrical ode to her late mother.

‘Over the horizon, out of view/A melody is waiting to rescue you, and carry you home...’

“At the time, I wasn’t really allowing myself to understand what the song was about, but in hindsight I knew that Ennikur was about learning to let go of somebody,” says Mostyn. “It seems so obvious now that’s what it was about, but I guess you only let in what you can cope with at the time.”

The duo’s signature powerful crescendos of harmonies and atmospheric melodies are accompanied by some darker and more assertive tones than on previous albums.

“This is our first album where it touches upon a bit of anger, in the songs Drown Me Out and Good Weather,” Mostyn says. “I’ve never considered myself an angry person, but I’m starting to accept that it’s okay to get angry about things. When something tragic happens to you, you stop caring about what’s around you and sounding more like: ‘Here I am. If you don’t like it, I’m not going to apologise for it.’

Mesmeranto’s anthem for hope, Left To Right, is a musical climax between a combative drum melody and Mostyn’s powerful high notes.

“It’s a song about the futility of war,” she explains. “We are still killing each other now and it doesn’t fix anything, but we march on regardless. We are not meant to be experiencing such horrible things and I believe it hurts us a lot.”

“We’ve been having wars since the beginning of time and we’ve never learned anything,” adds Pilkington. “It seems 40 or 50 years ago, people were more inclined to think: ‘Let’s do something about war.’ I think we need that in society today more than ever.”

Their use of unusual instruments and onomatopoeic vocal techniques add a charming sense of uniqueness to the music. In the song Wolves, Mostyn uses her vocals to emulate the howls of a wolf, and in Violet the use of a bowed bottom string of a guitar tuned down to D creates a darker and raspier sound than a cello.

“Violet is about admitting the power that someone has over you when that person leaves,” Pilkington says. “When you’re left by yourself and forced to admit that you’re devastated. The sounds of the bow guitar add to the dark undercurrent of the song and feel like the emotion moving through somebody.”

“I love using my voice as an instrument,” Mostyn says. “It’s almost more expressive than singing words, because you’re not tethered to anything.”

Pilkington adds: “Chrissy’s vocals are not inhibited by any technique, style or influence, it’s as though her voice and heart are connected by a cable.”

Accordingly, the last track on Mesmeranto brings the album’s musical elegance of life and death full circle.

“Another Lifetime is trying to express the passage from this life and into the next life,” Pilkington explains. “My ambition was to create that feeling of emergence into the next life. The orchestration was trying to say: ‘I’ve just arrived in Heaven. Here we are.’”

Mesmeranto is out now via Esoteric Antenna. Head to www.theblackheartorchestra.com for more information.
“WE’VE BEEN A LITTLE VILLAGE TUCKED AWAY IN THE TREES SOMEWHERE, BUT PROG PUT A SIGNPOST ON THE MAIN ROAD SAYING: ‘THIS WAY…’ PROGRESSIVE MUSIC IS PROGRESSING EVERY DAY, AND THAT’S WHAT WE ARE A PART OF.”

Rick Pilkington

The Blackheart Orchestra’s Rick Pilkington and Chrissy Mostyn have found a home in prog.
With Marillion defying the odds to be at the top of their game following their 2016 album *F.E.A.R*, their frontman looks back on 30 years of the group's changing fortunes, his worries about alienating their fan base, dragging his bandmates to play at the Royal Albert Hall, and always looking for the path least taken.

Words: David West  
Portrait: Anne-Marie Forker

“I never want to be comfortable. I don’t think good art comes from comfort,” says Steve Hogarth. It’s now 30 years since Hogarth turned down the offer of playing keyboards with The The in favour of joining Marillion. “I remember my old publisher saying: ‘Give it a couple of years,’” he says. “I still don’t really think forward that much into the future. It’s an uncertain world we live in, and who knows when it’s all going to come crashing down. I’m reminded of Ringo [Starr], when somebody asked him how long it [The Beatles] was going to last, he said: ‘Maybe a year or two, and I’ll open a hairdressers.’”

When Hogarth came on board, Marillion were signed to EMI, enabling them to record 1989’s *Season’s End*, his first album with them, in a manor house near Henley-on-Thames. It was an experience the singer describes as a blissful time. “The sun used to shine every day, and I used to swan around in a big shirt feeling like Lord Byron while girls brought me club sandwiches and Pimm’s.”

The band parted ways with EMI after 1995’s *Afraid Of Sunlight*, and they became, albeit perhaps unwittingly, pioneers in crowd-funding when fans raised the money for them to undertake a US tour in 1997. Since then they’ve become a model for how to thrive as independent artists, and have continued to grow musically and commercially, earning rave reviews and numerous Prog Awards for 2016’s *Fuck Everyone And Run*, and putting on their own weekend-long Marillion conventions.

“Playing with the same five guys for 30 years must lead to some sense of creative comfort. Is it still possible to surprise one another musically?” Well, they’re all fairly mad, so we’re constantly surprising each other. Certain members are less predictable than others. I can usually take an educated guess, for instance, at what Steve Rothery is going to get off on and what’s going to leave him cold. I know them well enough to know what is the well-trodden path for them and, rightly or wrongly, I’ve always thought that my job is to stop them treading it. My job is to find the stuff that surprises them rather than allow them to do the stuff that they could naturally do in their sleep. Whether that means I’ve denied the world a lot of great music that otherwise might have happened, I don’t know. I don’t know if they’ve done that to me. Maybe they haven’t. Maybe they should have. The people who produced the records have occasionally kicked me off my well-trodden path, and I think that is...”

“I reckon I’ll stick around with these guys.” Hogarth in 1991.
Hogarth keeps an eye on the direction Marillion are heading.
a producer's job. The producer's job, to some extent, is to see where something could go and how something could be in the end. It's the vision thing. Nine times out of 10 I've got all of these words and things I want to express, and so I have to determine the shape of something in order to say what I need to say. You can paint a picture of where you think something is inevitably going to land. What you're seeing on TV, reading in the papers, experiencing yourself in daily life, you don't have to be Nostradamus to imagine where that's going to lead. If you end up painting a totally dystopian picture, then I think that's going to be born out of pretentiousness to some extent.

Maybe I'm a human weather vane. Maybe I can see where it's going, I can sense what perhaps the sum total of what our society has become is going to lead to. You can paint a picture of where you think something is inevitably going to land. What you're seeing on TV, reading in the papers, experiencing yourself in daily life, you don't have to be Nostradamus to imagine where that's going to lead. If you end up painting a totally dystopian picture, then I think that's going to be born out of pretentiousness to some extent.

we were working on it: what are people going to make of this? Are they just going to think it's a load of pretentious twaddle or is it going to resonate with them? I was scared of the reaction to it.

But I was scared of the reaction to Brave. I remember when we were mixing Brave, thinking: "Oh my God, nobody is going to get this. We're going to lose the fan base overnight when this comes out!" And we did lose a lot of people when it came out. Now, the accepted wisdom when you talk to people is that it's this amazing masterwork, a watershed in the band's creative development and blah, blah, blah. But at the time, we all thought: "Jesus Christ, this could be the

much about the music, your mission on earth is to get all these words and thoughts out of your system and to tell these stories. I need the other guys to say: "Yeah, but this has to be interesting musically, you can't just do this over one chord for 10 minutes," which I would quite happily do because I'm busy telling a story, I don't give a fuck about the chords. There's always that tension between a lyricist and a bunch of musos. I say that with the greatest respect! [Laughs.]

**Fuck Everyone And Run seems very prescient now. Are you disappointed to have been right about the direction current events have taken?**

You're letting your own idea of yourself and what you ought to be saying and what art should do drive the car, instead of just trying to keep it true and honest and instinctive. When I was working on the album, I was genuinely worried the whole time about what I was saying, mainly because I didn't want to be Bono. I didn't want to be standing on a box with the wind in my hair, trying to put the world right, because I didn't want people yawning, going: "Oh, so it's a protest record." That was my big worry, the whole time thing that finishes us. It's weird and we don't even know what it is." EMI didn't know what it was. They didn't know what to do with it. It was the death knell, really, for the band with the major label, because they had no clue how to sell it, so they lost interest. It was dropped from EMI at the same time as Blur was happening. Suddenly there was Britpop, this new movement, and what had we got to do with any of that? They just lost interest at that point. Sometimes, more often than not, when you're creating the music that people
look back on as being hopefully startlingly good, you’re mixing it shitting yourself, basically, because you think: “What on earth are people going to make of this?” And that’s how I felt.

**Marillion provide a model of how to function independently without a major label. Has the demise of the traditional record industry been a bad thing?**

I think the problem with the record industry was the A&R departments. Every now and again there was a very good A&R man. We had one when I joined the band, a guy called Nick Gatfield, and he was great. Then he left and other people, who shall remain nameless, arrived and they didn’t know their arse from their elbow. Despite not knowing that, they’re given this omnipotence to massively influence the direction that artists are lent on to lead towards. That process usually happens via a producer. They’ll go: “Why don’t you use this producer?” If they can talk you into that, they’ve got someone whose ear they can whisper into without you knowing. That’s the mechanism by which a record company can change the direction of an artist. Sometimes it works — where would Diana Ross be if she’d never worked with Nile Rodgers? She certainly didn’t enjoy the process, from what I’ve read, but she had the biggest hit of her career. Bowie: of all the albums he ever made, *Let’s Dance* was his least favourite. That was the one that sold a bazillion copies and bought all his houses and helicopters. It’s really the job of the label to try to find a way to make an artist commercial. The mistake they always make, of course, is they try to make you sound like something that was great last year. By the time you’ve sat down, recorded it, packaged it, mastered it, wrapped it in a ribbon and released it, it’s going to be a year from then. So you’re trying to create something that was done much better by someone else two years ago. That’s when everything stagnates. The A&R departments had the power to create impure, dishonest, stagnant music, and very few A&R men were bright enough to just leave them the hell alone. If you’ve signed Radiohead, why would you
back to your live performances. But doesn’t being a frontman require the person to be a bit of a narcissist? I think I was a narcissist when I was younger, and with good reason, because I was pretty damn good looking. When I was younger I wasn’t singing nearly as well as I am now, so I couldn’t bear to listen back to myself because I wished I’d been a better singer. As I’ve gotten older I’ve become a better singer, but I look in the mirror and go “Oh my Christ!” [Laughs] The problem has shifted. I don’t know. I think I’m too old to remember the answer to that question. You grow up, you get uglier, you put a few pounds on, narcissism fades away. That’s probably the answer. Not only that, but I am a perfectionist. I think any half-decent artist is a perfectionist, because that’s why they’re half-decent most of the time. Unless they’re one of those White Stripes bands that sounds like a car crash and that’s the whole point but they’re really good at it. That’s fine, that’s brilliant. In which case you’ve got to have the guts to let it out there knowing that it’s not right, because that’s the point of it. We [Marillion] are not like that. We’re all craftsmen and we have to fight that a bit. If you’re a perfectionist you’re never going to be happy with anything, all you’re going to hear is what’s wrong with it. When you make studio albums, you’ve got a better chance of getting happy because you can dick about with it until the cows come home, but live, there it is. It’s out there, warts and all, and when you watch it or hear it, all you hear or see is the warts. That’s all you hear. You just hear what’s wrong with it.

In which case it’s even more surprising that you’ve released so many live albums. I don’t listen to any of them! [Laughs] A lot of our live albums, the more official...
One's, have had an element of craft, they've been multi-tracked, our genius producer Michael Hunter has mixed them and he's presenting us in our very best light. But even so, it's not something I would go home and put on. The focus has to be on the next thing. That's where your energy needs to be. There's nothing you can do about what you've already done. You can sit and bask in it and go: "Ooh, aren't we great?" But you've got to be a pretty sad character to want to do that. What you should be doing is going: "Actually, we're not very good at all, are we? We need to get better." Marillion put on their own weekend-long festivals. Would you ever want to do something like play at Glastonbury? Oh, Christ, in a heartbeat. I'd love to do Glastonbury, absolutely. But even that question isn't a simple question, because Glastonbury is a complex thing. It's loads of stages all over the place. There's a thing that takes place in America called South By South-West, in Texas, and all the cool, up-and-coming bands do it. The reality of it is, when you get there, there are bands everywhere, in every club, every theatre, every space, and Glastonbury is a bit like that. It has that amazing atmosphere, of course, for the people. But from a band's point of view, if you're not on one of the big stages or one of the big nights, then it's a gig. If you're on one of the big stages, then it's a trip, it's something career-changing, or it can be. If it doesn't change your career it certainly leaves you with an amazing memory. But we've never been

"I remember when we were mixing Brave, thinking: 'Oh my God, nobody is going to get this. We're going to lose the fan base overnight when this comes out!'"

That said, Marillion seem to have hit another sweet spot in their career, playing two nights at London's Royal Albert Hall. When the deal with EMI ended, could you have imagined filling two nights at a venue like that at this stage of the game? Perhaps we should have thought more carefully about all of it, but we didn't. We just cracked on and got on with it. We've focused, always, on the music: "Let's try to make a great record." It was never: "Let's try and sell out this slightly bigger place." Having said that, ever since I joined the band I've been bitching on at them to do the Royal Albert Hall, and they've been going: "Why would we want to do that?" I've been going: "What do you mean, why would you want to do that?" "We'd rather do Wembley Arena." "Wembley Arena's a shithole!" "What?" But they never got it. I dragged them reluctantly towards the Royal Albert Hall. It took me 28 years, we finally did it, and it was incredible. If we'd have been a bit brighter, we could never have imagined doing the Royal Albert Hall when we parted company with EMI. We did our 10, 15 years in the wilderness that most artists do at some point. People like Sinatra, you just thought he was always huge. He wasn't. At one point he didn't have a pot to piss in. Nina Simone was nearly on the street at the middle period of her life and now she's this goddess, and rightly so. Van Morrison. All of them. You've got to do your time in the wilderness, and if you get through that and you arrive in some kind of sweet spot, as you say, there's always this assumption that's where you've always been. But it ain't. The reality is, it does ebb and flow, and at the moment we've had a couple of great years, probably because of that album [F.E.A.R.]. That album has lifted us. The five-star review in the Guardian probably made a few of us sit up and go: "What?!" Maybe a few people who otherwise would have completely written us off thought: "I'll check that out, then. That might be worth at least having one ear on it." I'd like to think if anybody has one ear on us, they're going to be well shocked in a positive way, they're going to go: "Christ, I had no idea there was this much to them." That's what I hope and pray for, because I think that's what we deserve." Marillion With Friends From The Orchestra is out now. The band will play Cruise To The Edge 2020. See www.marillion.com.
SONS OF APOLLO

Here comes another chops-busting, riff-shredding outing from Mike Portnoy’s supergroup. Sons Of Apollo undoubtedly celebrate the best of two worlds: classic metal and classic prog. But do they have the songwriting to match?

Words: David West  Illustration: John Langton

Mike Portnoy and Derek Sherinian’s supergroup follow up their 2017 debut Psychotic Symphony with... well, more of the same. The band toured fairly heavily off the first album, playing some 83 shows, so they’ve had some time to establish and build the chemistry between the five members: Billy Sheehan on bass, Bumblefoot on guitar and vocalist Jeff Scott Soto alongside Portnoy and Sherinian. But the band have yet to assert their own unique identity as a collective to the same extent that Flying Colors, another of Portnoy’s all-star projects, accomplished this year on their excellent third album.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the main musical point of reference for Sons Of Apollo is Dream Theater, the band that first brought Sheehan and Portnoy together, and MMXX often sounds like the two former Dream Theater men are trying to beat their old band at their own game. It’s big, busy progressive metal, full of muscular musical workouts from a cast of players willing and able to bust some serious chops. But whether the songwriting carries quite as much heft as the musicianship is another question.

Portnoy, Sherinian and Bumblefoot share the writing, with Soto penning his own lyrics. Sheehan’s not having any writing input might explain why the bass doesn’t have the same sort of forward presence in this group as it does when Sheehan plays in The Winery Dogs or any of his instrumental projects, although he does take a standout solo in Resurrection Day and a short break in New World Today just as a reminder that one of rock’s premier masters of the low end is in the house.

Since his departure from Dream Theater, Portnoy seems to have developed an aversion to drum solos, and he’s spoken in interviews about preferring to play another song rather than a solo in live situations. But while he never takes a moment alone in the spotlight on MMXX to really stretch out, his signature is all over this music: there’s plenty of machine-gun double kick playing on Goodbye Divinity and King Of Delusion, there’s a wickedly sharp drum intro to Fall To Ascend, and the grooves always sound huge and heavy. The real instrumental star is Sherinian, who uncorks a series of rousing solos throughout the album. It’s certainly a side to his playing that’s different from his solo work, which tends to lean more towards ’70s fusion. On this album, Sherinian gets to enter full prog god mode, giving Bumblefoot’s guitar playing more than a run for its money for sheer energy and bravado. The only potential downside to having so many big hitters in the group is that it all ends up being very dense, and without much space around Soto’s vocals. Whenever he’s not singing, someone immediately jumps in to fill the gap with a flurry of notes.

Goodbye Divinity kicks off the album with some weighty riffage, establishing that the Sons have one foot in prog and the other in classic metal. It’s certainly headbang-friendly. Soto has a commanding presence as a singer, having the power to project his vocals through the mix, and in King Of Delusion he channels James Hetfield with his ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah’s. At times his lyrics can sound perfunctory, as though he had to write something so he just rattled off some rhyming couplets. Among the offenders on this front is Asphyxiation: ‘I’m your creation, your new sensation/’I’m your temptation, ’cos I’m your asphyxiation.’ Is he throttling someone, or merely stifling them? Will this be prog’s #BlurredLines moment? (No. The answer is no.) The lyrics to Resurrection Day are disappointingly banal, Soto declaring: ‘It’s coming your way, it’s your judgement day/It’s coming to stay, it’s resurrection day.’ It makes you miss Ronnie James Dio weaving his tales about dragons and mountains, although Soto does throw in a reference to a demon being crucified. Admittedly what he’s trying to say in the song is made no clearer, if he’s even trying to say anything at all. There’s an art to writing great nonsense – listen to half of James Hetfield with his ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah’s. Of Apollo are in danger of creating prog metal simply as a reminder that one of rock’s premier masters of the low end is in the house.

Among the offenders on this front is Asphyxiation: ‘I’m your creation, your new sensation/’I’m your temptation, ’cos I’m your asphyxiation.’ Is he throttling someone, or merely stifling them? Will this be prog’s #BlurredLines moment? (No. The answer is no.) The lyrics to Resurrection Day are disappointingly banal, Soto declaring: ‘It’s coming your way, it’s your judgement day/It’s coming to stay, it’s resurrection day.’ It makes you miss Ronnie James Dio weaving his tales about dragons and mountains, although Soto does throw in a reference to a demon being crucified. Admittedly what he’s trying to say in the song is made no clearer, if he’s even trying to say anything at all. There’s an art to writing great nonsense – listen to half of James Hetfield with his ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah’s. Of Apollo are in danger of creating prog metal simply as a reminder that one of rock’s premier masters of the low end is in the house.

The album’s requisite epic is New World Today, which features tempo changes and instrumental fireworks during its 16 minutes. It’s emblematic of the whole album that Soto has a belter of a voice, the playing is top-notch and the soloing always extravagant, but there’s a shortage of great hooks, and the writing is solid rather than inspired. Where Flying Colors sound fresh and original, Sons Of Apollo are in danger of creating prog metal by numbers.
DAVID CROSS & PETER BANKS

Crossover

UK prog titans hook up and spark three years before Banks’ departure.

In the five years since IX, core duo Conrad Keely and Jason Reece took time away from the band they formed in 1997 to follow individual quests. While drummer-singer Reece pursued musical projects, singer-songwriter-multi-instrumentalist Keely relocated to Cambodia, released a solo album and worked on the sci-fi novel that informs several tracks on their 10th album, also hatching a mission to explore his vision of modern pop music. With underlying themes of loss, the duo’s traditional influences (Sonic Youth, Rush) are joined by, they say, Killing Joke, Talk and Laurie Anderson compounded by Keely’s earnest, US-indie vocals (bolstered by drummer-guitarist Jamie Miller and bassist Autry Fullbright). After Opening Crescendos’ electronic intro, All Who Wander ignites recurrent alt-style guitar drama with the title track, veering into grungy power-pop (Don’t Look Down), balladry from ethereal to windblown arena (Who Haunts The Haunted, Gravity) and bombastic hovercraft prog (Blade Of Wind), finishing grinding and grandiose with Through The Sunlit Door. Hugeness, at last, should beckon. KN

ANDERS BUAAS

The Witches Of Finnmark III

Norwegian guitarist/composer brings his trilogy to a close.

Metalheads may be familiar with Anders Buaas due to his involvement with Iron Maiden’s Paul Di’Anno and Judas Priest’s Tim Ripper Owens, as touring guitarist on respective projects. He’s also played with various noise bands in his native country. Of late, however, he’s embarked on a solo journey inspired by the notorious Vardø witch trials in Arctic Norway during the 17th century, a sustained act of persecution that serves as the Scandinavian equivalent of Salem or Pendle. The final volume in Buaas’ Witches Of Finnmark trilogy consists of a series of instrumentals that change mood like low winter clouds. As with Jan Akkerman’s recent Close Beauty, the album works best when Buaas favours nuance over noise, reaching a peak with the delicate prog-fusion runs of Lisbet. March in 5/4 begins with the toll of a bell, a heartbeat and drummer Henrik Madsen’s military figure, before Buaas places strategic guitar arpeggios over the top. There are echoes of Nucleus or John McLaughlin at times too, though Buaas can’t resist rocking out on the bombastic (and less interesting) closing epic, Requiem, with Guntry Aspaas on wordless vocals. RH

CITIZEN BRAVO, RAYMOND MACDONALD AND FRIENDS

Return To Y’Hup: The World Of Ivor Cutler

The late poet and musician’s work interpreted by an all-star, mainly Scottish cast.

The title refers to Cutler’s 1959 debut EP Ivor Cutler Of Y’Hup, about a mythical island he claimed to hail from. But he was born in Govan, Glasgow, and had such an idiosyncratic delivery in a soft yet precise Scottish lilt, often simply accompanying himself on harmonium, that many septuagenarians are aware of the likelihood of the human race dying out but keep it to themselves ‘out of decency’. The musical backing is mainly sparse and subdued so Cutler, who was a member of the Noise Abatement Society, would probably have approved. MB
If Field Music’s last two albums have seen the Brewis brothers leaning towards a more funk-pop sound, Making A New World firmly locates them back in art rock. Nothing new here but a clever and engaging suite of Cape-wearing grandiosity here, they’ve ever been. We’re not talking a performance piece commissioned under his own name. 2018’s emer Sonia’s orchestral space opera and ultimately it’s hard to tell exactly where the bass and percussion is coming from, band or orchestra. However, other cuts, such as the expansive and bittersweet Feeling Yourself Disintegrate play both to the band’s strengths and the acoustic constraints of the event, and its gauzy production is gorgeous and emotive.

**THE FLAMING LIPS**

*The Soft Bulletin: Live at Red Rocks* (BELLA UNION/WARNER BROS)

Recorded in 2016 at the Red Rocks outdoor auditorium in Morrison, Colorado with the Colorado Symphony orchestra, this LP celebrates the 20th anniversary of The Soft Bulletin, which the band perform in full. The opening of the record has always been a thrill, and so it proves here, with the one-two knockout of breakthrough single Race For The Prize and A Spoonful Weighs A Ton. Like other live albums recorded with an orchestra, there is occasionally a tension that comes from trying to seamlessly mix rock instrumentation and an orchestra.

On a live video, it’s easier to identify elements, while studio albums allow for greater control of the sound-stage. The combination of live sound with dense, wall-of-sound arrangements means that at times, like on The Gash, it’s hard to tell exactly where the bass and percussion is coming from, band or orchestra. However, other cuts, such as the expansive and bittersweet Feeling Yourself Disintegrate play both to the band’s strengths and the acoustic constraints of the event, and its gauzy production is gorgeous and emotive.

**FIELD MUSIC**

*Making A New World* (WHELP DESIGNED)

Sunderland’s finest deliver “is this prog enough for you?” ultimatum. The instantly intoxicating, with crackles of ambient noise adding to the immersive vibe, and touches of fluttering Nyman-esque background melodies further teasing our ears. The mix is further coloured on Figure Ground as feather-soft plucks of strings create deft percussion to offset swirls of electronica in the background. It’s no surprise that Dragazis is a veteran of numerous TV and film scores, and this set is particularly symphonic in feel, but on the seductive downhil lclassical coast of For The Learner and the slow swell of Wavelet it becomes a piece to drift off and lose yourself in.

**ANDY DRAGAZIS**

*Afterimages* (LIGHTWELL RECORDINGS)

Having established a reputation for downtempo electronica under the banner Blue States, multi-instrumentalist composer/producer Andy Dragazis has recently emerged from behind that moniker to put out music under his own name. 2018’s atmospheric mini-album Stills nestled snugly within the Eno-esque tradition of ambient music, and it was quickly followed by the piano-based EP, Cipher, but this first full-length LP nods towards a more classical tradition, full of widescreen soundscapes and string-laden orchestral moods. The wintry cello that introduces Butterfly Mind is immediately intoxicating, with crackles of ambient noise adding to the immersive vibe, and touches of fluttering Nyman-esque background melodies further teasing our ears. The mix is further coloured on Figure Ground as feather-soft plucks of strings create deft percussion to offset swirls of electronica in the background. It’s no surprise that Dragazis is a veteran of numerous TV and film scores, and this set is particularly symphonic in feel, but on the seductive downhill classical coast of For The Learner and the slow swell of Wavelet it becomes a piece to drift off and lose yourself in.

**RACHEL MANN**

This makes Olias Of Sunhillow sound earthbound. Part Two of Acceleration Theory – in which Alien A is abducted by her species for giving Kai the means to save the human race from annihilation – is both less starry and more focused than Part One. Yes, there are guest appearances, from Marco Minnemann, through to guitar maestros John Wesley and Randy McStine, but the absence of prog gods like Hackett and Rothery means Kerzner lets the story and the music flow more easily. The chemistry between Agudo and Wolf takes centre-stage and deepens on tracks like the heart-wrenching You Don’t Know How It Feels, which also features a top turn from Saga’s Michael Sadler. Props should also be given to Jon Davison, whose vocal performance on the trippy Made Of Stars is pure aural magic. By allowing the vocal artists to be front and centre, Acceleration Theory Part Two feels much more of an ensemble effort than its predecessor and it’s all the better for it. While Part Two retains Kerzner’s uncanny ability to effortlessly blend elements of Genesis, It Bites and Steven Wilson, tracks like The Path channel Momentary Lapse-era Floyd. Even more delightfully, All That Is makes Olias Of Sunhillow sound positively earthbound. The album’s centrepiece, the 20-minute Annihilation, brings together Kerzner’s masterly grasp of prog, past and present. It is a mini-opera in itself, deploying Ruti Celli’s cello and Kaitlin Wolfberg’s violin ensemble alongside sinister space-metal riffage to devastating effect. In less skilled hands, it could all become sub-Hawkwind pastiche, but Kerzner’s use of layered vocals, loops and washes feels like what Dave Brock might do if he got into mad space musicals.

Just when it looks like Acceleration Theory is going to conclude in misery and sadness, Annihilation positively spews malice, darkness and menace – Kerzner and co conclude with interstellar Reunion. It is a slice of Anathema-esque prog magic in which the cast sing, ‘We are all made of stars’, as Agudo’s Kai remembers his love for Alien A. It is hopeful and joyous and completes a space epic with beauty and style. Side by side, Acceleration Theory parts one and two represent a stunning piece of work.

**IN CONTINUUM**

*Acceleration Theory: Part Two: Annihilation* (RECPLAY)

Dave Kerzner’s interstellar epic comes to a terrific conclusion. It has been less than a year since ex-Sound Of Contact keysmister Dave Kerzner dropped his remarkable Acceleration Theory: Part One: Alien A. Its tale of interstellar love between earthing Kai (voiced by Bad Dreams’ Gabriel Agudo) and Alien A (sung by Letitia Wolf) was, by turns, exhilarating and beautiful. Kerzner’s debut space opera was also boosted by stand-out guest slots from the likes of Steve Hackett, Steve Rothery, ‘Uncle Tom Progley and all’.

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**RACHEL MANN**
When properly employed, a string quartet can add instant class and credibility to pretty much any music. These qualities were already abundant in the nine songs Marillion have chosen to revisit and reimagine here, and they do so in very good company. Youthful, outward-facing, and enthusiastic for genres beyond the classical sphere, the Brussels-based quartet In Praise Of Folly are a great fit for Marillion’s ambitious, layered compositions. They’ve played with the band already — at their Weekends, at their triumphant debut concert at the Royal Albert Hall in 2017 — and along with French horn player Sam Morris and flautist Emma Halnan they were the ‘Friends’ on the recent, rapturously received Marillion With Friends From The Orchestra tour.

This valve-warm, live room-present album was recorded earlier this year at Marillion’s own Racket Studios and at Real World. While many of the orchestral parts across their catalogue were convincingly conjured by Mark Kelly, his synth’s are regularly replaced or augmented here by real cat-gut and wood. Estonia (from This Strange Engine) opens with a mournfully melodic piece from strings and flute, who later double up on Kelly’s busy, harp-like lines in the middle section. The trick’s repeated throughout. Beyond You (almost a minute shorter than the original on A Fraid Of Sunlight) sees violinists Margaret Hermant and Maïa Frankowski, violinist Nicole Miller and cellist Anammi Osborne adding richness to the song’s mid-point breakdown.

Marillion’s music has always been dense and detailed, so producer Michael Hunter had plenty to work with when writing these string arrangements. His sensitive, tasteful notations have given the Friends plenty to work with, whether their chords are drifting over The Hallucination or adding staccato power and hypnotic lines to Seasons End.

There are some subtle changes. The first half of the beautiful read of The Sky Above The Rain is in a lower key to the original on Sounds That Can’t Be Made; Marbles’ Fantastic Place is a BPM or two pacier. But this is an exercise in refinement, not an overhaul, and tentpole moments (Steve Rothery’s shimmering arpeggios on Seasons End, the wailing sax solo on This Strange Engine) are left well alone. Indeed, Rothery (the ever-underrated king of tone) and the band seem re-energised by the work. When A-B’ing this with the actual albums, it’s clear how much Steve Hogarth’s voice has matured, embellished now by a huskiness and an actor’s maturity. hogarth has steadily forged his way as a solo artist in recent years. This successor to 2015’s Contrepoint arrives in the wake of soundtrack duties for the French Netflix series, A Very Secret Service. As with his Bach-inspired debut, Concrete And Glass is based on a thematic premise. This time round he uses architecture, the subject he studied in Versailles, as a foundation for sleek, synth-led compositions lined with subtle embellishments. There are plenty of guests too, none more impressive than Californian singer Kadja Bonet, who’s pure, haunted tones turn We Forgot Love into a rapturous thing of Kate Bush-like wonder. Echoes of Supertramp are evident, particularly on空间 ballad Back To Your Heart (featuring Russian artist Kate NV) and the glistening prog-pop of The Foundation, with Cola Boyo helping to fashion a piece celebrating West Coast architect Pierre Koenig. Everything is carefully weighted and measured, dreamily melodic and unhurried. The standout is the magnificent Cité Radieuse, its fidgety synth pattern echoing the great German experimentalists of the early 70s. RH

Marillion: With Friends From The Orchestra
With strings attached, Marillion get by with a little help...

GRANT MOON

Rothery and the band seem re-energised by the work.

Proof that you really can dance about architecture.

With Air on indefinite hiatus, at least in the recording studio, Nicolas Godin has steadily forged his way as a solo artist in recent years. This successor to 2015’s Contrepoint arrives in the wake of soundtrack duties for the French Netflix series, A Very Secret Service. As with his Bach-inspired debut, Concrete And Glass is based on a thematic premise. This time round he uses architecture, the subject he studied in Versailles, as a foundation for sleek, synth-led compositions lined with subtle embellishments. There are plenty of guests too, none more impressive than Californian singer Kadja Bonet, whose pure, haunted tones turn We Forgot Love into a rapturous thing of Kate Bush-like wonder. Echoes of Supertramp are evident, particularly on space ballad Back To Your Heart (featuring Russian artist Kate NV) and the glistening prog-pop of The Foundation, with Cola Boyo helping to fashion a piece celebrating West Coast architect Pierre Koenig. Everything is carefully weighted and measured, dreamily melodic and unhurried. The standout is the magnificent Cité Radieuse, its fidgety synth pattern echoing the great German experimentalists of the early 70s. RH

Nicolas Godin: Concrete And Glass
With strings attached, Marillion get by with a little help...

GRANT MOON

With new music in such plentiful supply, finding a gem these days is never easy. However, Gurafone’s debut is such a glittering gem of an album that it’s hard to avoid its dazzling sparkle. Formed in 2012 when they were still teenagers, the twin-guitars supplied by James Burns and Ollie Snell, Robin Breeze’s bass and keyboards and Joe Burns’ drumming are channelled into vibrant instrumental-only tunes that radiate joyful energy. Dominated by guitar-driven melodies, there’s also beautifully crafted filigrees variously decorated by guesting flutes, strings, vibraphone and recorder, whose effect is to broaden not only the overall texture but add elegance to Gurafone’s musical constructions. Notwithstanding an occasional nod to times past, much like The Fierce And The Dead, Gurafone is Free of the retro-itis that plagues so many bands today. Each song offers a suite of thematic ideas that might feature heavy body blows of punchy rock or contemplative thesis, although some of the titles are willfully inscrutable – does anyone know what Karu Vatsarin means? Ultimately, it doesn’t matter, merely adding the layers in what is an assured and admirably fearless studio outing. $5

Gurafone: Sum Of Erda
Uplifting debut from Norwich psych-progsters.

GRANT MOON

Nicolas Godin: Concrete And Glass
With strings attached, Marillion get by with a little help...

GRANT MOON

Simon Goubert: Nous Verrons...
Magma keyboard accomplice creates ecstatic jazz masterpiece.

GRANT MOON

Gurafone: Sum Of Erda
Uplifting debut from Norwich psych-progsters.

GRANT MOON
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There’s no mistaking the sound of a band with lofty creative goals. Although the core is... of Brazilian psych-rockers Garotas Suecas. A garden of delights rooted in minimal rhythms and ethereal harmonies.

Well established as a symphonic rock heavyweight, Nightwish’s bassist and bombastic co-vocalist should probably have clocked up several solo albums by now. Frequently found singing on other people’s records, Hietala’s versatility is a matter of record, which means that Pyre Of The Black Heart was by no means easy to predict. There are definite shades of the Fins’ day job on pomp(ed)-up opener Stones, but after that, his debut LP takes a more adventurous route. Songs such as The Voice Of My Father and Dead God’s Son are relatively traditional in structure and mood, but there are countless delicate keyboard touches and moments of refined oddness that provide Hietala’s voice with a consistently enticing backdrop. Elsewhere, For You is a wistful, tear-eyed blues jam, while I Am The Way is an esoteric march through industrial thrub, doom metal thunder and gleefully overwrought power balladry. For those craving straighter thrills, Runner Of The Railways is a futuristic folk metal Purple homage and Death March For Freedom is a Hammond-drenched prog metal knees-up. It all hangs together on the unbending monolith of Hietala’s extraordinary voice. DL

MOBIUS
Kala SELF-RELEASED

Evocative Irish flautist/producer Eoin O’Callaghan returns to the solo game with Kala, an album that eschews the conventional. Sonically, it is a record of very high standards. The production is top-notch, with a local, organic feel and a sense of depth that is absent from many contemporary releases. The compositions are well thought out, each track carefully crafted to create a cohesive whole. The themes explored are diverse, ranging from personal reflections to reflections on the natural world. The highlight of the album is undoubtedly the title track, which features an exquisite instrumental interlude that builds to a climactic moment. Overall, Kala is a beautiful and compelling piece of work that will undoubtedly draw comparisons to the likes of Bon Iver and Sigur Rós. It is a testament to O’Callaghan’s talent and dedication to his craft. DL

PSYCHEDELIC PROG
Take a trip with Rob Hughes as he seeks out the latest mind-expanding music.

Swedish’s Siri Karlsson certainly talk a good game. “We descended among the lava snakes of the underground, up in whirlwinds, from cavernous waters to new continents and mythical parties,” says Maria Arnbquist and Cecilia Osterholm, referring to the epic title track of Horror Vacui (Tombola Records). Thankfully, it’s as fantastical as it sounds, the duo creating a dizzying processional piece that shifts from ringing psych-folk and fusionist jazz to synthetic ambience and esoteric space-rock. The rest of the album, their fifth in total, is just as impressive, particularly the nervy sax slither of Drone To The Bone.

On a whole other tip, Planchettes are a New Orleans trio who mine the classic tropes of rockabilly, surf and 60s garage-punk on effervescent debut, The Truth (Rise Above). They’re clearly fans of Nuggets, as evinced by She’s So Violent and Empress Of Fools, the latter sounding like a growing successor to The Seeds’ fuzzed-up lunacy, with vocalist/guitarist Kevan doing his best Sky Saxon. For sheer verve and immediacy, it doesn’t get much better than the Crampesy Snow Pig.

Not altogether dissimilar are Parisian quartet Os Noctambulos, whose Silence Kills (Stolen Body) offers a feast of heavily reverbd’ guitars and acid-rock twang. Led by singer/guitarist Nick Wheeldon, they summon the spirit of the late Roky Erickson on the Elevators-like Tuned and the rampaging Goodbye, while Flowers Of Evil reimagines The Byrds as a nervily surf band. Curiously too, there’s a post-punk sense of melodrama at play here, most notably on You Wielded Away.

US singer/composer Sondra Sun-Odeon returns after a long silence with Desyre (Graveface), a belated follow-up to her much-fancied 2012 debut, Aetheria. The product of a painful break-up and a period of depression, the album uses texture, distortion and drone to transpose her deepest emotions, aided by Swans’ Thor Harris, guitarist JR Bohannon, A Place To Bury Strangers’ Lia Simone Braswell and harpist Mary Lattimore. The effect is both intense and strangely uplifting, highlighted by prog-psych epic, Drowning Man: An Invocation For The Demise Of Patriarchy.

Deaf Radio are only marginally less dramatic in their approach. Modern Panic (Shavedrum), the Greek quartet’s second effort, refines the hard rockisms of 2017 debut Alarm into something darker and more melodic. They’re still capable of full-on assault (Death Club), but it’s the delicate details of the psych-tinged Animals and Astrapology that really grab the attention.

Meanwhile, cosmic jazz and trippy tropicalia are the defining features of Grandeza’s (Boiled), the arresting solo debut from Sessa, co-founder of Brazilian psych-rocker Garotas Suecas. A garden of delights rooted in minimal rhythms and ethereal harmonies.

MARKO HIETALA
Pyre Of The Black Heart NUCLEAR BLAST

Nightwish bassist and co-vocalist finally goes it alone.

MOONSHOT
Worlds Of Yesterday: A Moonshot Retrospective BURNING SHED

Classic progres compilation curated by Tim Bowness... or is it?

Moonshot were a vintage prog band (Camel meet Genesis) who flourished in the early 70s before attempts to move with the times saw them losing their mojo. Latterly, struggling to stay afloat, they became a tad forlorn. Except: this is all bunk. Moonshot are the imaginary friends that their frontman “died of complications related to excessive rice pudding consumption”. A spoof and a satire then, with a dash of Thotch. And yet it’s more. Such is the genuine affection here that it transcends pastiche to become... really rather good. It’s an off-shot of sorts of Bowness’ fine 2017 album Lost In The Ghost Light, and those who love that record will get the joke instantly. Then, Bowness inhabited the character. Here, others “cover” his Moonshot-related numbers, such as the title song (‘You’ve forgotten your aims’) and Moonshot Mancild (‘You’ve lost your golden touch’). It works so well because of its authentic appreciation of the original. If the original existed. Confused? You might be. But also impressed. Moonshot were/are/would be magic. CR

Sonde Sun-Odeon returns after a long silence with Desyre (Graveface), a belated follow-up to her much-fancied 2012 debut, Aetheria. The product of a painful break-up and a period of depression, the album uses texture, distortion and drone to transpose her deepest emotions, aided by Swans’ Thor Harris, guitarist JR Bohannon, A Place To Bury Strangers’ Lia Simone Braswell and harpist Mary Lattimore. The effect is both intense and strangely uplifting, highlighted by prog-psych epic, Drowning Man: An Invocation For The Demise Of Patriarchy.
CLASSIC Rock
HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK’N’ROLL

www.classicrockmagazine.com
A stunning set at ArcTanGent this year, Norwegian two-piece Aiming For Enrike release their debut album, Music For Working Out (Pekula). It’s a rest blend of electronic post-rock in the Battles and Three Trapped Tigers mould, with elements of punk and dance and nods to mathcore. It doesn’t have the same visceral impact as their live show, but with foot-stompers like Hard Dance Brain and riff-workouts like Infinity Rider there’s a great deal of variety on offer on this excellent album.

Real Terms, rising from the ashes of Liverpudlian math-rock four-piece Vasco Da Gama, boast three uniquely talented musicians in the line-up. Together, the yearning vocals of John Crawford, sparse, skitter-stop guitar paying of Chris Lynn and virtuoso drumming of David Kelly make them currently the most exciting experimental rock band in the UK. With only one track online, they booked a show at 2017’s ArcTanGent, and the new mini-album, Housework (Vested Interest), delivers on the promise of those early tracks. If the chorus of Esperantu doesn’t bring a smile to your face and spring to your step, then nothing will.

After releasing their mini-album Rhombus Now (Holy Roar) in 2014, Body Hound became a staple of the experimental guitar circuit, racking up a cult fan base. Perfectionists to the last, they’ve finally released their first full-length album, the sprawling No Moon (self-released). Completely uncompromising and utterly unlike anything else, it’s been worth the wait. Imagine a math-prog King Crimson for a new generation and you’re in the ballpark. It’s an album that needs to be experienced as a whole, in all its alternately moody, dissonant,chromatic and gut-punching glory.

Jakub Zytecki, who was originally an instrumental guitarist in the same vein as Plini or Intervals, has charted his own course, with increasingly atmospheric lo-fi trip-hop releases. His new album, Nothing Lasts, Nothing’s Lost (self-released) is his best yet, and features a surprising guest appearance from Mesuggah’s Frederik Thordendal on Creature Comfort.

At the doomier-end of the post-rock shallows there’s Turtherun, a new project from Lake Bhatia, the former guitarist with electronic post-rokers From The Kites Of San Quentin. Turtherun is the self-titled first release from the group, and it’s an expansive, proussy beast, with enough punchy riffs to keep the listener hooked. Finally, there’s a new album from French electronic post-rockers Quadrupède. Their previous record, 2014’s TOG O B A N, was a master class of instrumental electronic rock, and follow-up Interiors (Santé) is equally strong, doubling down on the electronic elements while keeping enough of an organic, percussive drive for it to still be identifiable as a ‘rock’ record. The lead track, Central Massif is a good place to start exploring.
**LES PENNING with ROBERT REED**

Return To Penrhos [TREASURE]

A sentimental journey to that Hergest Ridge sound.

Probably best known for his contributions to Ommadawn, Les Penning had first played with Mike Oldfield prior to that 1975 release when the young Tubular Bells tyro, disorientated by success, elected to get his head together in the country and play “simple folk tunes” with Penning in the small restaurant Penhos Court in the Hergest Ridge region. He had a role, then, in recharging Oldfield’s muse, and was distinctly audible on his light-relief singles In Dulci Jubilo and Portsmouth. Perhaps less recognised is the fact that, by contrast, he played the woodwind instruments on Echo & The Bunnymen’s dark, driving Heaven Up Here. In recent years he’s collaborated frequently with Robert Reed, on Reed’s Oldfield-homaging Sanctuary albums and his own 2017 piece Belerion. That album seemed to describe idyllic summer evenings in Ye Olde English countryside. This one springs from similar sources but feels, in places, more autumnal, wistful.

*If folk is your bag, you’ll relish its rustic ruminations.*

While the recorder may be a sound most of us associate with rubbish music lessons and inept renditions of Frère Jacques, Penning proves it’s capable of rather more. He also plays crumhorn and bowed psaltery, among other devices, Gryphon fans. His spoken-word sections assure you that this will have a very 70s Oldfield feel, while there’s even a bubbling of “the bells”. Master’s apprentice Reed, for his part, handles all the guitars, bass, keyboards and some vocals, as well as producing. It’s clear that the pair have a shared love of these well-trodden sounds and textures and make no apology for their escapism from the here and now. When all’s said and done, this is no two ways or newly invented sub-genres about it, Folk, full on, capital F. If you are allergic to West Of Albion, thoughts of Morris dancers, ling whistles of crumhorns and finding your car stuck in a jam may be what led Daniel Knowler, latterly of tricky, jazz-friendly drone-rockers Infinite Three, to also make music with Slunq, whose natural habitat is, to quote their Bandcamp site, “spiky rock music”. On the basis of their latest release, their spikes are becoming more staccato, and more geared around stuttering, uneasy time-signatures. But such jerks and quips aren’t allowed to hobble memorable, Porcupine Tree-style riffs on Ohms and Like A Mouth. The angular chords and grating fretgrind of Shambolism and Vortex have the grinding, industrial noiseprint of a Fugazi-ish post-hardcore influence, but ultimately you can tell their instinct is to rock with a booming, emotionally charged sense of drama. Meanwhile, they’re never scared of a big, hooky chorus either, as Shell it proves in addictive, breathless fashion. JS

**SLUNQ**

Dirty Signals [ACTUAL SUSE]

Infinite Three man’s satisfyingly hard-hitting side-project.

Few progressively minded musicians can fully scratch their creative itches via just one project, and even the most well-established prog bands end up being open marriages when it comes to side-projects, solo excursions and collaborations. Likewise, artists not usually encroaching on our world sometimes feel the need to indulge their proggy instincts. That may be what led Daniel Knowler, latterly of tricky, jazz-friendly drone-rockers Infinite Three, to also make music with Slunq, whose natural habitat is, to quote their Bandcamp site, “spiky rock music”. On the basis of their latest release, their complexity with Guinevere. The modern region. He had a role, then, in recharging Oldfield’s muse, and was distinctly audible on his light-relief singles In Dulci Jubilo and Portsmouth. Perhaps less recognised is the fact that, by contrast, he played the woodwind instruments on Echo & The Bunnymen’s dark, driving Heaven Up Here. In recent years he’s collaborated frequently with Robert Reed, on Reed’s Oldfield-homaging Sanctuary albums and his own 2017 piece Belerion. That album seemed to describe idyllic summer evenings in Ye Olde English countryside. This one springs from similar sources but feels, in places, more autumnal, wistful.

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**SONAR WITH DAVID TORN**

Tranceportation Vol 1 [ENIGMOSSE]

Mathematical precision meets spontaneous improvisation.

Swiss band Sonar have been pursuing their guitar-driven minimal groove aesthetic since 2011, honing and adjusting it like a piece of finely-calibrated machinery. However, adding “wild card” guitarist David Torn into the mix - who’s played with artists as diverse as Bowie, Madonna and Jan Garbarek - has produced some interesting results and perhaps Sonar’s most accessible work to date. Given the picked, echoing notes and muted harmonics of opening track Labyrinth, it’s no surprise to discover that Sonar’s Stephan Thelen is a classically trained mathematician who’s previously studied under Robert Fripp. This is the sound of something being intricately woven, the gradual unwinding of an elegant formula, but the snap, wail and lurch of Torn’s guitar builds both tension and heat. The heavy footprints and twinkling lights of Paritions conjures the type of jazzy nocturnal landscapes once inhabited by Terje Rypdal, while the chiming, almost bluesy note clusters and hypnotic rhythms of Red Sky are quite trippy. Finally, the ominous drone and punchy bass of Tunnel Drive is a shadowy take on Discipline-era King Crimson, the drums like blades hacking away at the Earth’s mantle. JB

**THE JINSY BOYS**

Moolameeno [BRAIN & CHUBB]

This is Whimsy! The sitcom stars continue their Sonic Journi...

Running for two seasons on Sky Atlantic earlier this decade, This Is Jinsy was a warmly surreal sitcom set on its eponymous island featuring major British comedy stars such as Stephen Fry, Olivia Coleman and Alice Lowe. Much of the show’s quirky charm was down to the songs composed and performed by Jinsy’s creators and leads, Justin Chubb and Chris Bran. Last year the pair released their sweet debut album Tynegest, and they continue their eccentric quest here. From its fuzzily friendly intro Sonic Journi, Moolameeno is a gentle set of lovingly made, fantastical tales (Magic Trousers, Great Aunt Maud, Secondhand Dentures), Chubb and Bran assume different character voices amid a bucolic soundworld ripe with strummed ukes, picked acoustic guitars, electronic washes and parpy horns. The folky vibe here is more Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band than Mighty Boosh, more Monty Python than Matt Berry, served with a dash of Bowie’s formative silly-psych. The duo’s child-like positivity (Somebody, Mummy Mole) is tempered by a subtle adult melancholy, notably in the wistful title track, the stark Moira’s Theme and Hoople-lite closer Mrs Rain. A winning mix of whimsy and substance. GRM
THE NATURE CENTRE

Never Not - Self Released

A miniature avant-pop masterpiece.

Variety is very much the spice of life on this impressive debut from this Birmingham-based trio. What initially appears to be a collection of jaunty pop tunes, genial in nature and light in style, becomes something subtly complex and altogether deeper with every single listen. With most tracks on the album clocking in at little more than three minutes apiece, they prove that brevity is no curb on artistic expression. While some songs are folk-tinged and glistening with banjo and bucolic harmonies, others are subject to abstruse, cracked waltz-times and other rhythmic devices. That they take a mix of jangling high life-style guitar and freewheeling vintage Moog work seamlessly together is another testament to a carefully crafted set. The presence of wistful clarinet or recorder, along with lyrics whose default setting is fixed somewhere between weird and the downnight dark, brings with it a strong whiff of the eccentric paths beaten by William D Drake or the earlier through-the-looking-glass musings of Spinozya’s Martin Cockerham. It’s worth noting that Beth Hopkins’ vocals possess that same careworn angel quality that took flight whenever Kirsty MacColl raised her voice. S5

VARIOUS ARTISTS

A Prog Rock Christmas - Purple Pyramid

What’s your idea of a Prog Rock Christmas? Rather cosier, we’d hope, than the image depicted on the Roger Dean-style cover of this compilation, wherein a solitary figure wanders into a desolate, snow-covered, slightly post-apocalyptic landscape. Still, if that seems baffling, wait until you hear the music on this curious comp. Jon Davison’s cover of Chris Squire’s Run With The Fox and the late John Wetton’s faithful version of Happy Christmas (War Is Over) make strong bookends, but have you ever tried listening to the Twelve Days Of Christmas all the way through? Suffice to say that Annie Haslam trying it, with gooey, synthetic studio sounds accompanying her, doesn’t make it any easier. And can anyone make Paul McCartney’s Wonderful Christmas Time more bearable? Not Billy Sherwood and Patrick Moraz, it seems, who add cheesy keyboard effects to an already twee composition. But if Christmas is all about family, then that at least excuses an ear-catching guest spot from Malcolm McDowell on You’re A Mean One, Mr Grinch – should keep the kids amused when stuck in motorway traffic as the frozen dystopian wastes loom in the distance. JS

YYNOT

Resonance - yynotband.com

The former Rush tribute prove they’re no fly-by-night band on album two.

California quartet YYNot have hit stages across the USA as a Rush covers band, but two original albums and 17,000 Facebook followers in, they’re evolving into their own thing. The self-titled 2018 debut showcased their chops; Resonance is another step forward. But as opening instrumental Synergos shows, certain Rush-isms are now so ingrained that they’re probably here to stay. Bassist Tim Starace’s bright, bold Rickenbacker sound and agile lines are very Geddy; guitarist Billy Alexander’s tone and playing style owe much to Alex Lifeson, and Joel Stevenet’s fondness for a Rototom is further proof of their roots. But this isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Chemical Burn’s opening ostinato riff borrows from Spirit Of The Radio, but still has its own absorbing twists. YYNot’s not-so-secret weapon is singer Rocky Kuner, whose vocal approach is often more modern country than prog, bringing a fresh dimension to commercial tunes (Wildest Dreams, She Said I Love The Rain) and funk-rockers (Bully, Open Book) alike. Alexander’s songcraft is strong throughout too, with the mid-tempo Heart And Soul and epic closer Precious Time on a highly enjoyable record. GRM

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the Prog sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Best known as the keyboardist for cult Italian proggers La Locanda delle Fate, Michele Conta brings us Endless Nights (AMS), his first album of original music since that band finally fizzled in the mid 2010s. It’s a welcome return – a proggy symphonic statement, old-fashioned yet with a modern gleam. Conta’s beautiful keys-kel pieces also feature dizzying guitar from Max Arminchardi, smooth vocals from Ermanno Brignolo, and among the drummers here is Gavin Harrison, no less. Another Italian pianist, Francesco Gazzara pays affectionate tribute to Genesis’ 70s catalogue on his latest record as Gazzara Plays Genesis. Here It Comes Again includes piano/orchestral arrangements of The Musical Box, Supper’s Ready, Dance On A Volcano and more of prog’s defining moments. As ever, Gazzara is a talented and sympathetic interpreter of his subject. Former Opeth keyboardist Per Wiberg now plays bass for Swedish hard rockers Kamchatka, and HooDoo Lightning (Heavy Psych Sounds) is another another sludgy sack of 70s-tinged psych rock. No tricky time signatures or concepts here, just plenty of catchy, Mastodon-sized riffs and trippy, funky grooves. The likes of Blues Science and Fool really get the blood pumping.

Float past Kamchatka, head further into the outer cosmos, and you’ll soon pass Cambridge’s Psychic Lemon. Their huge five-tracker Freak Mammal (Drone Rock) harks back to Hawkwind, Amon Düül II and Gong, with the trio firmly in command of their massive, echoing guitars and mesmerising rhythms. Seeds Of Tranquillity and Afrotopic Bomb fully justify the dimensions of their titles.

Multi-instrumentalist Aleksandr Smirnov started Karina Madeya as a solo act in Moscow in 2014, but a collective has since grown around him. The self-released EP Ring And Linger is short, if not truly sweet. To chiming electric guitars, cellos and piano, RI Vinogradova brings her uncompromisingly emotive and dramatic vocal to four tracks dealing with domestic abuse in Russia. It’s a tough listen, but there’s a clear progressive impulse here, in both the composition and performance.

And as we say goodbye to this decade, let me wish you a very Happy New Year and assure you that Raphael Weinroth-Browne will help sweep away those January blues. The Canadian cellist plays for Leprous, and on the 24th releases his solo album Worlds Within. It’s a truly beautiful 40-minute piece drawing on modern classical, minimalism and prog, and at times it’s hard to believe the otherworldly sounds and beats here were all made on his cello. Along with Jo Quail, Raphael’s making the cello cool, even if it’s still a bugger to get into the boot.
HENRY COW
Henry Cow Box Redux: The Complete Henry Cow

Studio, demos and live recordings, plus a DVD of prime Cow.

Drummer Chris Cutler’s early influences include Keith Moon, whereas guitarist Fred Frith is a fan of Zappa, Jeff Beck and of Roger Waters’ bass playing. But extrapolate those influences and then add Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra, Stravinsky, Lifetime, Soft Machine and John Cage and you might be getting closer to the picture. This all gave rise to some complex compositions – Frith’s Ruins from Unrest, for example, is palindromic in form and based in part on the Fibonacci number series, although the results are typically evocative. But the studio albums don’t tell the whole story.

Onstage, the group demonstrated a penchant for improvisation rare in progressive rock. This approach was brave but not always successful and the all-improvised Trondheim concert from 1976 found the musicians engaged in rather desultory instrumental conversations. And on the compositional side, sax and keyboard player Tim Hodgkinson’s severe, serialist 16-minute composition Erk Gah from the DVD shot live in Vevey, Switzerland in 1976 and never recorded on album, is a very tough nut to crack. But when it all gelled, Henry Cow made some extraordinary music. On a 1975 Peel session broadcast, Nirvana For Mike rides out on bold, colourful wind themes that lead to an astonishing full-throttle group improvisation, which disintegrates before building again into a high-velocity staccato unison finale.

A half-hour chunk from a show in Halsteren, Holland from 1974 is structured around Hodgkinson’s melodic themes with improvised links. It works brilliantly, and from a performance in Bremen in 1978, Frith’s New Suite displays a mix of cerebral composition and rock band power.

In an Amsterdam concert from 1977, four women played in an expanded Henry Cow line-up – not much less than in the rest of the entire 70s UK prog scene. They played a selection of ‘greatest hits’ like Bittern Storm Over Ulm and Teenbeat with a kind of animated joy and in a brief pause after one tricky passage, an audience member shouted out, “Fucking great!” A little impertinent, perhaps, but then it’s hard to disagree.

MIKE BARNES

BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME
The Great Misdirect (vinyl remaster)

Tenth anniversary rebirth for a furious prog metal milestone.

It was the final track on Between The Buried And Me’s fourth album Colors (2007) that definitively set prog klausons blaring. White Walls was an extraordinary 14 minutes of often extreme but extremely unpredictable progressive metal, full of glorious melodies and virtuoso wizardry. Having previously been associated most routinely with the adventurous end of the US metalcore scene, BTBAM arrived at their fifth album with a huge potential new audience to dazzle, not to mention a loyal fanbase that was already more than used to theatrical leaps. Originally birthed in 2009 and now newly remixed and remastered for a fresh vinyl release, The Great Misdirect wasn’t exactly a radical departure from its predecessors, but it was the first record to bear the BTBAM name that was legitimately prog-to-the-bone, in both conception and execution. From the hazy, mellifluous drift of opener Mirrors onwards, it took the ambition and fearlessness of White Walls and welded them to what was then the most ingenious and barking mad material of their careers.

Today, the multi-layered and monstrous likes of Obfuscation and Disease, Injuy, Madness might seem lacking in dynamics or restraint when compared to the sophisticated intricacies of recent albums Coma Ecliptic and Automata, but therein lies the significance of The Great Misdirect as a milestone in BTBAM’s wayward journey: this was an eruption of confidence and mad ideas that paved the way for everything that followed. Audio nerds will doubtless find tiny details within this new remix to obsess over, but most people will simply relish the chance to hear something as comically extravagant as 17-minute closer Swimo To The Moon sounding the absolute high-fidelity bollocks on shiny new vinyl. Meandering in on some plinky-plonk percussion, this album’s sumptuous closer offers a wild hybrid of polyrhythmic churn, electro-punk clatter, riotous jazz-metal detours and berserk post-Dream Theater showboating. They really were (and are) quite the band.

CURVED AIR
The Curved Air Family Album

Double CD set of album tracks, rarities and unreleased material.

From Curved Air’s inception in 1970, through its various incarnations and to the present day, their music has always been the product of musicians with diverse interests. And on _Family Album_ many of the group members’ projects outside the band are put in the spotlight. It’s difficult to see quite who it’s aimed at. Although it contains some quality material, it’s not really a ‘best of’ or an entry point into the group’s music for newcomers, and completists will be faced with a number of tracks they already have: for example four cuts from 2014’s North Star appear on CD one. One song that might have gone under the radar but is well worth a listen is a sweet, sensual version of Soon from Yesterday And Today - A Tribute To Yes, released in 2018. And of the nine unreleased tracks, two that particularly stand out are Midnight Wire (Orchestral Version) from the 2008 Reborn sessions, with Darryl Why’s lush multi-tracked violin and keyboards adding to the drama, and Ichiban for drums and orchestra. It’s a capricious piece but where and when was it recorded? Having Robert Norton’s solo piano composition Boundless Optimism next to the unreleased Moonbeams, his duet with Kristina, makes sense, but Shame by guitarist Kirby Gregory and En Masse is a bit of blues-rock ploddle, while Chris Harris’ One Step Forward features three overdrubbed bass guitars. We also get Francis Monkman on harpsichord playing the Ouverture from Handel’s Suite No 7 In G Minor.

It’s such a curious mix of material as it is, that having little information on the provenance of these tracks becomes frustrating. It’s like trying to make sense of an unsorted box of snapshots.

DL
KING CRIMSON

In The Court Of The Crimson King:
An Observation PANEGYRIC

Prog’s first super-missile; expanded and refried in high-tech sauce.

IRMIN SCHMIDT

Villa Wunderbar

The 2013 compilation of Can founder’s solo career on four LPs.

Markus Stockhausen on trumpet and Schmidt’s ghostly electronics providing the backing. In a completely different style is Aller Tage Abend Waiz with exquisite off-kilter piano and barroom accordion. Zicke Zick is a particular curio with Schmidt bea-thoovering electronics and prepared piano, and on Solo Bruno Spoer plays smoky sax over Schmidt’s electric keys and single repeated piano note.

Schmidt’s early solo albums, some with ex-Can musicians in tow, carry on the curious mix of avant-shank with hints of exotica that the group produced on Soon Over Babaluma – particularly Come Sta, La Luna – and Schmidt takes a similarly quizzical vocal approach on Roll On Euphrates.

His collaborations with Kumo produced tracks like Fledermenschen, a mix of electronics, beats, and expansive piano playing. But then a recent solo piano composition, the minimal, austere Klavierstück V has been included, which both perpetuates the enigma and adds to Villa Wunderbar as a beguiling and immersive experience.

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Villa Wunderbar

The 2013 compilation of Can founder’s solo career on four LPs.

J ust when you think you’ve got all the Miles Davis albums you will ever need, up pops a ‘new’ recording that makes you go a bit weak at the knees. No, we’re not talking about the warmed-over scraps and scrapings of Rubberband served up by Warners last year. Rather The Lost Quintet will satisfy your Davis cravings with a feast of fine performances from Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette, who’d all been part of the wider team of players that had been enlisted to stir the pot for Bitches Brew. While this quintet failed to make a studio recording in their own right, hence this album’s title, they were captured on the road, where they positively blaze with restless, incendiary creativity. Hailing from a November 1969 tour date in Holland that’s not included on the officially sanctioned 1969 release, Live In Europe 1969: The Bootleg Series Vol 2 adds further urgency and incentive to snap this one up.

While we think of this period as part of Miles’ escalating love affair with all things electric, with all the textures and dynamics that would naturally sit within a rock band of the time, there’s also a sense of unfinished business with some of the work of Miles’ pre-electric quintet featuring Tony Williams and Herbie Hancock. At times the music hovers between two contrasting worlds. Shorter’s fluttering, mercurial entrance midway through a shuffling Bitches Brew recalls some of the astonishing baton-passing that featured in venerable recordings such as Live At The Plugged Nickel, while on the opening Directions the saxophonist who would go on to co-found Weather Report the following year exhales a jet-stream of raw, undiluted John Coltrane at his savage, atom-blasting best. As Corea’s grunny clusters and chords constantly interact with Holland and DeJohnette’s spirited dialogues, Davis binds everything together as the head of a thrilling and rightly feted combo that regards risk-taking as its default setting. Some might ask, ‘But is it prog?’ The answer is yes. Prog. As. Fuck. S£
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Old turns…

**FRANK ZAPPA**

**The Hot Rats Sessions UMC**

Blow-by-blow account of a classic.

Frank Zappa once wrote that failure is one of the things that “serious people” dread. He also observed that failure was “nothing to get upset about”.

While Hot Rats was conspicuous by its absence from the US charts 50 years ago, record-buying punters put it inside the UK’s Top 10. Lacking the trenchant parody or overt stoner japes that were very much a part of his previous releases, Hot Rats is free of that kind of cultural carbon dating. Recorded in the summer of 1969, it’s all about starting anew, an artistic statement that’s about reinvention and a steely purpose, coming off the back of Zappa’s divorce from his band The Mothers Of Invention. It also marks the break with the Verve label and the founding of his own imprint, Bizarre, and (bizarrely?) a partnership with the Frank Sinatra-founded Reprise Records. That bracing sense of renewed commitment and vigour is front and centre in the music, which benefits enormously through his ingenious use of then relatively new expansive 16-track technology, essentially using it as a compositional tool.

These six discs provide unparalleled access to Zappa’s creative processes as he coaxes and coaches performances from players whose impeccable pedigrees are rooted deep in session-world excellence. He knows what he wants, and they’re the guys to give it to him. “Instead of doing those rolls at the beginning coming in, Ron, won’t you like a pass on the last two beats of the bar,” we hear Zappa tell drummer Ron Selico after a broken take six of Peaches En Regalia. The result of Zappa’s sudden light-bulb moment leads directly to take eight, the point at which what we now recognise as the ‘correct’ feel and structure of the piece looms into sharp focus. “Much better. More fills! Get loose,” he urges.

In the context of the new world he’s busy forging, Willie The Pimp seems to call back to Zappa’s earlier output, with Captain Beefheart’s sandpaper vocal rasp also heard here in splendid isolation. Better still, a 14-minute instrumental version highlights Don ‘Sugarcane’ Harris’ buzz-saw violin, as does the 32-minute jam Big Legs. Ian Underwood, who’d survived the cull when Zappa broke up the Mothers, is a vital presence throughout. His unaccompanied piano rendition of Peaches stresses a luscious romanticism behind the principal melody’s chordal backing. Even stripped of its pomp and, ahem, regalia, it’s a stone-cold classic.

More than anything, this 50th-anniversary set showcases Zappa’s fastidious nature, revealing a composer urgently homing in on the inventive essence that animates dots on the page and transforms them into a living, breathing entity.

**SID SMITH**

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**THE DUKES OF STRATOSPHERED**

Psurroundabout Ride: The Complete Recordings

LSD? Just XTC. Partying like it’s 1967.

For Oliver Wakeman, the death of Yes bassist and former bandmate Chris Squire in 2015 was a call to action. The loss of Squire resurrected a nearly forgotten 2009 project: the two men had shared. From A Page is the result, and it offers a tantalising taste of what might have been. Band. Fans of Gordon Giltrap and Wakeman’s collaboration Ravens & Lullabies project will recognise From The Turn Of A Card, which was originally written for David and sung by him on that album. David’s vocals have been lifted from the Ravens recording and mixed into a new piano arrangement. The Gift Of Love draws extensively on parts written by Wakeman and Squire. It’s a mid-tempo smoker that soars and glides beautifully, and arguably matches anything recorded by post-70s versions of Yes.

Some people will complain that 25 minutes of new material packaged alongside the previously available Live From Lyon does not add up to a album. However, Wakeman’s labour of love for Squire deserves its chance to shine. Both the live album and the new tracks reveal what Wakeman brought to this version of Yes: precision, melody and a brilliant eye for detail. His sleeve notes are insightful and the brand-new Roger Dean cover art is gorgeous too.

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**YES**

From A Page/In The Present: Live From Lyon

YES RECORDS

A tantalising taste of what might have been.

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The Dukes Of Stratosphear wasn’t some impulsive side project. Andy Partridge had floated the idea of recording a bunch of psychedelic songs to Dave Gregory as early as 1978, during the playback party for their band XTC’s Go 2, but it was another six years before they had a gap in their schedule. With XTC’s original producer John Leckie in the chair, Partridge, Colin Moulding and Dave and Ian Gregory sought to recreate the halcyon glow of psychedelia with a minimum of fuss and as much vintage gear as possible. Vignette Chords were only too keen to promote The Dukes Of Stratosphear as a mystery band locked in a paisley-patterned time-slip, and so the 1985 mini-LP 25 O’clock (released on April Fool’s Day, naturally) was recorded by Sir John Johns (Partridge) Lord Cornelius Plum (Dave), The Red Curtain (Moulding) and E.J.E. Owen (Ian). The big surprise was that the album outsold the most recent XTC record by two to one.

This must-have collection, which also includes demos and instrumentals on Blu-ray, features sympathetic new stereo mixes by Steven Wilson. You can’t help but marvel at the detailed level of affectionate mimicry on both 25 O’clock and its 1987 follow-up Psunspot: the acid-garage of 25 O’clock’s title track is The Electric Prunes in all but name. With its swimmy Mellotron, The Male From The Ministry reshapes The Beatles’ I Am The Walrus for the post-punk age. There’s plenty of Syd-era Floyd too (Have You Seen Jackie?, Collideascopoe), plus some 1967 Byrds (You’re My Drug) and a whole heap of Beach Boys spooned into Pale And Precious.

Yet the true brilliance of The Dukes Of Stratosphear lies not in pastiche, but in their ability to assimilate the exploratory spirit of psychedelia for their own purposes. Bike Ride To The Moon, Brainiac’s Daughter and Little Lighthouse (the latter written for Partridge’s daughter, Holly) all point the way out of the commercial slumpl XTC were experiencing at the time, and on towards career-reviving classics Oranges & Lemons and Nonsuch.

While the project the two men had forgotten 2009 Yes resurrected a nearly complete recording and mixed a whole heap of Beach Boys spooned into Pale And Precious.

**THE HOT RAT SESSIONS**

Blow-by-blow account of a classic.
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Kevin Ayers sadly died in February 2013. He’d released his last album, the critically lauded The Unfairground back in 2007. At the age of 68 when he passed, it’s debatable whether this mercurial veteran of the original progressive rock era might have made another album, given his reluctance to always embrace the spotlight whenever fame shone nearby. However the music he did leave behind is celebrated in this lovingly compiled collection of lyrics, family photographs, the odd recipe for his beloved fish stew and an evident passion for the vino collapse. Indeed, as he’s quoted: “If I did anything else professionally I would be a fisherman in the Mediterranean or a wine shop proprietor.” Fortunately for us, Ayers followed his muse to create some wonderful music and some amazing albums. Not all of them – even an ardent fan such as this writer might struggle to make a case for some of his 80s output - but many instilled with his laissez-faire approach which merely added to his charm. Daughter Galen has undertaken this project, which approaches her father with the idiosyncrasy he deserves. Robert Wyatt weights in with some delightful memories of his old Soft Machine compadre too. JE

The Pretty Things
The Final Bow
WACMASH

Filmed at London’s O2 Indigo venue in December 2018 at the Pretty Things’ farewell concert as an electric band, The Final Bow, is presented as a celebration of “55 years of the greatest band most people have never heard of,” which is harsh but not completely inaccurate. At their early peak in the mid-60s, they were contemporaries and equals of the Rolling Stones, and the first part of the set sees them powering through R&B stompers such as ‘Don’t Bring Me Down’ with easy fluidity. But their reputation these days rests on their visionary 1968 psych/ prog/heavy rock masterpiece S.F. Sorrow, from which they play a number of tracks with assistance from long-time friend David Gilmour, clearly relishing being outside of the Floyd bubble - his playing on She Says Good Morning is fast and gnarly (go to YouTube and watch it now), and he really digs into the groove of Cries From The Midnight Circus. Later on, the band are joined by Van Morrison, who’s come along as a glam rock gangster, but delivers a properly rocking Baby Please Don’t Go. With two concert film DVDs, two CDs, a 10-inch and a 52-page book packed with pix, it’s a handsome package and a fitting tribute. JB

The Scarfolk Annual
Richard Littler
William Collins

If you’ve missed the cult of Scarfolk online and yet have leanings towards horror, satire and the disturbing public information films and educational government literature of the 70s then this book is for you. With the generic town of Scarfolk at its centre - a comparison to “the syphilitic twin of Royston Vasey” by comedian Robin Ince can’t be bettered so I won’t even try - writer and designer Richard Littler has been viewing modern Britain through the prism of paranoia, political oppression and downward weirdness for the last decade. If you thought Steven Wilson’s interpretations of late-20th century British children’s telly in his videos for The Raven Who Refused To Sing and beyond were dark, this is the Upside-Down of that – and bloody funny with it. Following his 2014 book Discovering Scarfolk, where a holidaying family is trapped in the town, this retro-looking, stocking-filler-style annual remolds what would usually be fun, fluffy content into a wonderful, warped catalogue of grim features such as ‘Surviving A Nuclear Thing’ next to horrifying quizzes and nightmarish ads. Littler’s detail, artwork and tone are superlative, even down to marginal sections of handwritten text – a child’s cry for help - and its blood-smeared pages. JK

The Pretty Things
The Final Bow
WACMASH

Performing in front of huge video screens and expertly lit in pulsating reds, icy blues and eerie greens, the band visibly rise to the occasion – Andy Revell and Clive Mitten roam the stage like black-clad martial warriors while Mark Spencer is wired but jubilant throughout, miraculously singing his heart out despite having lost his speaking voice prior to the gig. In contrast, a relaxed Brian Devoil looks like he’s just come back off his holidays.

With a set that features all of Fact And Fiction and most of Live At The Target, the vibe is celebratory and the sound is tremendous – in particular, explosive opener The Ceiling Speaks could be the definitive version. It’s a fine reminder that songs such as the achingly poignant Human Being and the frighteningly prescient We Are Safe should be canonical in prog circles — the former allows keyboardist Dean Baker to shine on grand piano while the latter feels more than ever like an experimental play set to music. And though the presentation isn’t as theatrical as in Mann’s day, Spencer’s appearance in a bloodstained lab coat during Creepshow is suitably macabre.

Mitten still makes stage announcements in the manner of a slightly eccentric schoolmaster, introducing early instrumental Over To West as being written at a time “before they’d invented vocalists” – along with Für Helene, it highlights the formative influence that krautrock artists such as Manuel Gottsching had on Twelfth Night’s sound. What’s also apparent is that, despite going on to forge successful careers outside of music, both Mitten and Revell are still incredible players, and the interaction between the whole band is really rather special.

Inevitably, the epic, rousing climax of Sequences ends the main show, but it’s the final encore of Love Song that brings the night to an emotional conclusion, Mann’s words of hope and redemption more relevant and needed than ever.

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The flags are out tonight. Literally. Onstage, there are upright standards bearing the cover art to several releases in Hawkwind’s catalogue, while every seat in the venue has a mini edition laid upon it, ready to be waved just like the audience do for Rule Britannia at the last night of the Proms. It’s a nice touch, indicating how proud Hawkwind must feel to celebrate their Golden Jubilee.

From Group X to Hawkwind Zoo to the line-up we see now, Hawkwind’s journey has been eventful, to say the least (The sax! The drugs busts! The Brock and roll!). Band founder and leader David Anthony Brock grew up with 50s rock’n’roll, played in trad jazz and blues bands in the mid-60s and busked his way around the continent in bands such as Famous Cure as the psychedelic scene bloomed and mutated, playing his first gig here at the Royal Albert Hall, in the Buskers’ Concert of January 1969. By the end of that year Brock had assembled the first incarnation of Hawkwind, where the blues met LSD and electronica, and space rock was born.

But more of that later as up first are labelmates The Blackheart Orchestra. This writer last saw the Manchester duo play a year ago at the London Palladium, supporting Brock and co when 2018 album Road To Utopia saw the band team up with producer-orchestrator — and most importantly Wombles pop act creator — Mike Batt for a symphonic extravaganza that came over brilliantly live, and was less well-received on record. The Blackhearts might have felt a little overawed then (but played very well, in-between declarations of nerves); tonight they might be two small figures on a huge stage in a (roughly) 6,000-cap venue, but the confidence is upped, and with a 30-minute set based around latest album Mesmeranto, they sure fill the sound-space with their acoustic-electronic mix. Rick Pilkington takes keys and bass as Chrissy Mostyn’s folk soprano soars above dreamy Britannia at the last night of the Proms. It’s a nice touch, indicating how proud Hawkwind must feel to celebrate their Golden Jubilee.

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synth and twinkling guitar filigrees, looking very Incredible String Band in a boho gown. It’s a showing made more impressive by the fact the notoriously partisan Hawkwind crowd have taken to the melodic duo.

Taking a cue from the second night of Marillion’s recent two-day booking, the seats have been removed from the stalls and the floor is filled with a lot of tie-dye tees, grey ponytails, military boots and patched khaki or denim jackets. This is the Hawkwind Army; no-nonsense, non-IPA sorts with a strong penchant for politics, pot and psychedelic rock. They’ve come from up the road, down the country, Sweden, Australia... it’s fascinating to tune in on conversations about being with the band from the beginning, or finding them through free festivals, biker meets, student and squat parties. It’s a hall full of free-thinkers, counter-culturally connected. And they are up for a party.

So are Hawkwind, who plug in with smiles on their faces for a revved-up, Krautzy start with Levitation tune Motorway City. Weirdly, the sound isn’t great, and Prog’s heart sinks; having seen them blow the roof off several shows in 2018, is this how 50 years will be marked? Rescue comes in the form of terrific back-projected films and a really superb laser show (other bands have visual techs with names such as Optic Nerve and Fruit Salad. Hawkwind’s lights maestro is called Brian).

And then things start to improve. Born To Go/ You Shouldn’t Do That builds momentum; Spirit Of The Age is a singalong triumph.

Last night, Brock’s old busking pal Eric Clapton played with the band in Guildford. Tonight we have Lemmy-by-proxy, with Motörhead guitarist Phil Campbell beefing up The Watcher and Silver Machine, where drummer Richard Chadwick gets his star spot, singing, and the Blackhearts return to guest on The Golden Void. This is Hawkwind heartland and, in spite of one Spinal Tap-like moment of radio mic wonkiness (“We only got them today, so we could roam around the stage!” cries Brock, whom we always forget is 78 years old), we’re now firing on all rockets.

Tim Blake, Crystal Machine wizard, is keytar king, playing a lot of lead guitar lines and adding wild and expressive Theremin. Our hearts swell as Magnus Martin takes up an acoustic to strum Hurry On Sundown, first demoed in ’69. This is a rarity and both band and fans revel in its cyclical sunniness, the buskin’ roots bursting through.

“Hawkwind has the best fucking fans in the world,” says Brock, before Master Of The Universe closes the show.

Missing ex-members, fallen comrades, eccentric additions (no Sam Fox tonight)... 50 years on. Hawkwind life is still eventful, but they still fly high. Happy birthday, chaps.

JO KENDALL
Repeat viewings of a favourite movie often yield new insight. Sometimes, it’s in regard to subtleties — say, an extra in the background who previously went unnoticed — while other times, you might pick up on a theme you’d never previously considered.

Repeat viewings of a concert tour can be similarly enlightening. Earlier this year, we had the chance to see the first leg of Dream Theater’s Distance Over Time tour, during which the veteran progressive metal act are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their influential concept album, Metropolis Pt 2: Scenes From A Memory. The show was undeniably impressive, but excitement over seeing the band revisit the landmark 1999 release overshadowed the maiden performances of material from their latest album.

That’s not the case tonight. Don’t get us wrong — it’s still an incredible thrill to hear Scenes... performed again in its entirety — but now, and perhaps as a result of several months of being played regularly, the Distance... tracks sound noticeably more potent. Muscular opener Untethered Angel is taut and focused, with the first of the evening’s numerous how-do-they-do-that? synced solos between guitarist John Petrucci and keyboardist Jordan Rudess. Paralyzed, meanwhile, demonstrates the extent to which vocalist James LaBrie has evolved in recent years as a live performer.

Surprisingly, the expansive and cinematic Barstool Warrior sees the usually unassuming John Myung spring to life, as he frequently turns to the side, bends from the waist and chops the head of his bass to the ground in unison with the rhythm. Petrucci, meanwhile, adds a soaring, singable solo that further accentuates the song’s dramatic nature.

The sneering Pale Blue Dot somehow manages to make a polyrhythmic riff headbangable. The song features a mad scientist intro by Rudess before Petrucci joins in on a seven-string guitar, and the pair soon team up for an impressive dual solo that earns another round of rabid cheers. It’s performances like this that emphasise that this is more than just a nostalgia tour. It’s performances like this that add to the two decades’ worth of praise the album justice onstage.

Singling out highlights is akin to pressing the shuffle button. In other words, take your pick. To name just a few, watching Petrucci bend his guitar to his will on Fatal Tragedy feels like watching a strongman perform a feat of strength, and Home proves once again to be an exhilarating, buckle-up-and-enjoy-the-ride knockout. And since no reasonable review of Scenes... would omit mention of The Spirit Carries On, we’re happy to reconfirm that it the band do a fair better job now presenting it live. That’s not a commentary on the person behind the drum kit, but the production value of the group’s concerts has increased exponentially over the years, and it’s a joy to watch today’s band have the resources to do the album justice onstage.

Follows a brief intermission, the group’s airing of Scenes... begins, exactly 20 years and one day since the album’s release. There isn’t much to add to the two decades’ worth of praise the album has already (and rightfully) received, but compared to its initial performances in 2000, there need to compartmentalise almost

**The production value of the group’s concerts has increased exponentially over the years, and it’s a joy to watch today’s band have the resources to do the album justice onstage.**

**Rick Wakeman**

**Venue**

**Wheeltappers And Shunters**

**Date**

**06/12/2019**

At The Grumpy Old Christmas Show, you need to compartmentalise almost as well as Rick Wakeman does. There’s a whopping contrast between the elegance of his piano-playing and the rambunctious naughtiness of his shaggy dog stories. One minute you’re enjoying his precision and dexterity as he tinkles through a popular or classical piece, the next you are clutching your sides as he morphs into a shuffling stand-up telling well-worn anecdotes about insecure donkeys, golf-related hanky-panky or where the first Christmas fairy stuck the first fir tree. The school nativity it ain’t. It’s like Chopin playing at the Wheelers And Shunters. Nonetheless it’s a highly pleasant two hours in which to digest your mince pies. Ambling on in a baggy beige suit and massive red and white (festive?) trainers, Wakeman begins by pretending to moan about the cheapness of the seasonally dressed stage set, then sits at the Steinway Grand to remind us of how he made his name before he doubled as a blond Les Dawson. There’s a liberal scattering of carols and Christmas tunes, but he avoids over-eggining the figgy pudding by stirring in a medley of Amazing Grace and Morning Has Broken, samples from The Six Wives Of Henry XIII and Yes’ And You And I. “I like to throw in a Yes number occasionally,” he

**Jordan Rudess:** mad scientist.

**Mike Mangini:** going for gold.
In November 2007, Tal Wilkenfeld was in Jeff Beck's backing group for his residency at Ronnie Scott's. Twelve years later, she returns to the jazz club as a bandleader to play songs from her debut vocal solo album, Love Remains. While the show is sold out and Wilkenfeld is thrilled about returning to the famous setting, it's a slightly incongruous venue choice as her sound draws heavily on 90s alternative rock, recalling Belly or Throwing Muses, while the reverential atmosphere of Ronnie's means there is almost silence whenever she swaps instruments between tunes. The dead air could easily dampen the mood but between the strength of the material and the calibre of the musicians, Wilkenfeld keeps the energy buoyant.

Jeremy Stacey's punchy drumbeat kicks off the opening Killing Me, which sets the lyrical tone for the night as Wilkenfeld sings about failed relationships and dashed dreams. She plays every track from Love Remains, but while some are performed much as they are on the album, others provide a platform for extended jams and exploration. The moody and melancholic Under The Sun is transformed with energising solos from guitarist Owen Barry and Wilkenfeld, and the band get creative with a cover of The Beatles' Happiness Is A Warm Gun that ventures into parts unknown by the Fab Four. "That was fun, thanks for indulging us," beams Wilkenfeld afterwards. The only other cover is The Smiths' How Soon Is Now, given some real musical muscle with keyboardist Chris Price switching to a lap steel. Wilkenfeld launches into an extended bout of interplay with Stacey, swapping phrases back and forth between bass and drums with an adventurous spirit worthy of any jazz luminary. Other highlights include Fistful Of Glass, a smart, snappy rocker, and Counterfeit, which builds from a gentle melody to a pummelling coda. In contrast to the big jams, the ballad Haunted Love is a stripped-back showcase for Wilkenfeld's voice and truly impressive musicianship as she accompanies herself on bass. Likewise, the first encore is One Thing After Another, with Wilkenfeld on acoustic guitar in fine voice on another bittersweet love song. She closes the evening with the grungy blast of Hard To Be Alone, letting Barry rip out a fiery solo as Stacey digs in hard on the drums. It's a bracing, rowdy conclusion to a performance that quelled any possible doubts about Wilkenfeld's ability to make the switch from hired gun to frontperson. She's taken her time before stepping into the spotlight, but tonight proves it was absolutely worth the wait.

DAVID WEST

Still stands tall as arguably the genre's loveliest and most profound song.

Encores on this leg of the tour feature the band tackling the Distance... track At Wit's End for the first time. Its vocal phrasing recalls the group's early years, namely A Fortune In Lies, and another vicious Petrucci solo sees him command his instrument with ease. It's a truly transcendent ending that reminds you that even after all these years, there are still none better. Don't leave me now, indeed.

CLAY MARSHALL

James LaBrie has evolved into a stunning live performer.

John Myung springs to life.
There’s a moment during The New Kings, towards the end of Marillion’s main set tonight at the Royal Albert Hall, when Prog is truly struck by the horrible prescience of Steve Hogarth’s scathing lyric, as the line ‘Why is nothing ever true?’ flashes repeatedly on a screen high above the stage, Hogarth himself repeating it mantra-like below. It was bad enough when their FEAR album was released in 2016, into a world then-recently hit with the twin barrels of Donald Trump and Brexit. Almost four years down the line, with the world’s precarious political state and the looming threat of a British government intent on crashing the country out of Europe in the harshest manner possible (by the time you read this we’ll know if that’s a reality) bearing down upon us, it seems scarier still.

There are other pointed moments tonight, too: opener Gaza’s reflection of life in the refugee camps of the West Bank, which prompts some calls from one of the boxes and the waving of an Israeli national flag, Estonia’s emotive telling of the effects of the 1994 Baltic Sea disaster, and the climate change presaging Season’s End all carry with them a sombre lyrical heft.

While that might seem to suggest that Marillion’s first of two nights in this prestigious venue at the end of a triumphant trek around the UK was heavy going, it was in fact far from it.

Hogarth is at his impish best, toying coquettishly with the audience, who lap up every overture. We’re not certain that the cricket bat he holds during a ballsy encore of Separated Out actually does anything, but it all adds to the sense of bonhomie as the night gets even more boisterous.

Everything aligns perfectly for the epic finale of This Strange Engine. Mark Kelly’s keyboard runs make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, while Steve Rothery’s plangent guitar tone soars ever higher. On the other side of the stage the more stoic Pete Trewavas and Ian Mosley are locked into the most solid of grooves that underpins everything Marillion do tonight.

It’s beaming grins all around the hall as Hogarth flamboyantly laps up deserved riotous applause. Tonight Marillion offered a timely reminder that, 40 years on, they can still soar to the kind of heights most bands can only dream about. This was a five-star showing, and no mistake.
It’s IQ’s Legendary Christmas Bash, the venue’s heaving, and Pete Nicholls is in a chatty mood between songs. “Can you write a cheerful, optimistic prog track?” he ponders, before concluding, “No, it just doesn’t sound good!” So while we’re here tonight to celebrate what’s been a great year for the band, IQ deliver a set of modern progressive rock that’s both serious and slick, it certainly isn’t a gloom fest, though - this isn’t ‘party music’ in the most facile sense, but it’s bursting with passion and the feeling of uplift that comes from being taken on an exciting journey, even if we’re required to stare into the abyss along the way.

On saying that, the show starts with a couple of early presents for all the old stages in the audience, with a one-two of For Christ’s Sake and It All Stops Here from their debut tape album - the former’s rave metal retooling of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen is entirely appropriate, while the thumping piano-driven middle eight of the latter still packs a punch. But then we’re into From The Outside In, more indicative of where the band are now, its meaty riff and relentless bass pulse building an atmosphere of brooding power, before the breakdown sees Nicholls reaching out to the crowd, a master storyteller swathed in red. The Hammond and Mellotron riffs of Sacred Bond and its respectful nods to prog’s past, and it remains a dramatic, rousing number, but the slow-burning Shallow Bay, the first of four songs from Resistance, ably demonstrates that IQ are on a different track now, both tonally and dynamically more mature. From its lyrical piano opening to some serious guitar heroics from Mike Holmes, it unfurls at its own pace, reminiscent at times of a heavy duty Floyd or Motorpsycho at their most reflective. Nicholls is understandably proud of Resistance and hits back at critics who’ve said the new album is too long, commenting, “After nearly 40 years, we’re still being creative.” And this of course gets to the heart of why IQ remain relevant and command such a dedicated following: they refuse to just trade on past glories.

It’s faintly ironic then that we get a full-length rendition of The Last Human Tonight - it’s another treat for long-standing fans, and yes, it’s Christmas, but it’s ultimately a nostalgic gesture, its pokiness and ponderous arrangement no match for more recent compositions. It gets a huge cheer anyway. However, it’s the unhurried intensity of For Another Lifetime that really impresses, while The Road Of Bones is just tremendous, its monolithic propulsion like a super-heavy Massive Attack.

The encore delivers the night’s big visual, the curiously ageless Mike Holmes strapped into a pair of gigantic wings and returning to the stage as an angel, albeit to lead the band and audience through a throbbing, clapalong Ten Million Demons. Wonderful stuff.
When Gong take the stage and Fabio Golfetti begins playing shimmering, ethereal glissando guitar, it feels like a way of gently clearing the mind for what is to follow. Kavus Torabi’s just-heralding guitar riffs lead the band into the lengthy Forever Reoccuring accompanied by Fruit Salad’s stunning, head-spinning visuals, and as the music gains momentum there’s the feeling that this is the beginning of a mind-blowing psychedelic space-prog voyage.

Torabi, also the band’s main vocalist, has said in Prog that he doesn’t want to be thought of as the “prick that has taken over from band founder, the late Daevid Allen”. But that’s not likely; clearly the audience love the current Gong, and after one particularly tricky and powerful instrumental passage they burst into spontaneous applause. Certain melodic structures and sax motifs nod back to Gong’s 70s heyday, but apart from a highly charged run-through of You Can’t Kill Me tonight is all new material with an individual, 21st-century stamp.

Back in the 70s, Daevid Allen’s surreal humour could deflect attention from the fact that Gong were comprised of such stellar musicians, particularly their constantly changing rhythm section. The current line-up carry on that tradition through Dave Sturt’s mobile, incisive bass playing, while drummer Cheb Nettles plays with a speed and imagination that is at times breathtaking. These energy levels carry straight through into the evening’s second set, when Gong become the Steve Hillage Band.

Early on we get an exultant version of ‘The Beatles’ It’s All Too Much, followed by The Salmon Song, with three guitarists and backing vocalists giving it extra heft, while Hillage appears galvanised and reminds us what a fabulous guitarist he is, with his upward-arcing, point-me-at-the-sky soloing.

They play substantial parts of Solar Musick Suite and Lunar Musick Suite, including the serpentine Dervish Riff section, and on a lengthy Ether Ships Hillage explores the echoic looping patterns that were initially inspired by Manuel Göttsching of Ash Ra Tempel, and which pointed towards the cosmic techno that he explored with his partner Miquette Giraudy in System 7.

Beginning with Fear Inoculum - to the delight of the crowd - Tool naturally pay significant attention to their latest opus. They replicate that opening gem perfectly, as well as the renowned Schism. As for 10,000 Days, it comes late in the set, when the brutally bouncy Jambi precedes the brutally bouncy Jambi precedes the record’s immensely gripping starter, Vicarious. The biggest surprise is Swamp Song, an industrial assault from Tool’s debut, Undertow, that purportedly hasn’t been played live in more than a decade. No Tool gig would be complete without mind-altering imagery, and aside from displaying the music videos for several tunes, they use a translucent curtain and lighting effects to project spellbinding patterns. The most captivating aspect, however, is the abundance of cosmically macabre three-dimensional depictions (flames, eclipses, horizons, sentient shapes and the like). Naturally, there are album-specific designs that add to the cumulatively enrapturing experience, too.

Tool’s performance is fascinating. In reproducing some of their most beloved material alongside a psychotropic visual spectacle, they establish themselves as masters of their craft. As strong as ever, they nail every element of what’s always made a Tool concert so transformative.

MICK BARNES
“I can’t stay in the dressing room,” admits bassist Andy Marlow just before the band are due onstage. “My fingers are numb from the cold!”

This does not bode well for tonight’s performance. Thankfully, though, as soon as Marlow picks up the bass, those numb fingers become nimble and fluid, perfectly complementing Gary Chandler’s fluent guitar chimes and narrative vocal style on the opening track, “Let It Happen.”

The set comes from right across the band’s extensive catalogue. “We are gonna do a bit of everything,” explains Chandler, before quipping, “So, expect a cosy nine hours!”

Chandler’s sense of humour and ability to chat with the audience is never less than engaging. At times, he reminisces, musing on the time when the band’s heavy truck once flew in from Norway. Their ongoing banter is lighthearted, at no point does it undermine how serious he is about the music. Yes, this is a nostalgia trip, but the band inform the audience of how the band’s heavy truck once crashed a gas main.

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The musicians eagerly feed off each other. Sensational.

When Marlow and dynamic drummer Stephen Christey rejoin the others, the atmosphere is lifted up another notch, as the band celebrate such masterful tunes as “Isolation,” “The Great Outside” and “G13.” It reaches a notable climax with a startling cover of Pink Floyd’s “Comfortably Numb.”

The musicians eagerly feed off one another, and also from an appreciative audience, including someone who’s flown in from Norway. Their ongoing ability to swoop and sweep across the musical spectrum is always informing these songs to be admired.

The band are obviously having so much fun. Jadis’ journey as it is for those onstage.

First up, more family members. Support comes from Lucy Woodward and Charlie Hunter, who, along with drummer Keita Ogawa, have all contributed to Snarky Puppy albums, Purveyors of spirited pop jazz, they’re remarkable for Hunter’s guitar — he somehow conspires to play lead and bass parts at the same time — and Ogawa’s “perkestra,” a squeaky solo played on toy rubber pigs. Best of all is a slow, sultry burn through John Travolta and Olivia Newton John’s “You’re The One That I Want,” with the brilliant Woodward — whose father conducted two Proms here back in 1994 — dancing like a bridesmaid at a hen do.

If Snarky Puppy specialise in anything, it’s excitement. Their music is a feverish hybrid, assembled from all sorts of raw material, from Pink Floyd and King Crimson to Oscar Peterson, Kool And The Gang, Tonto’s Menahan Street Band and David Axelrod, and it all comes together to simmer on the edge of boiling transcendence.

Add a lightshow that synchronises perfectly with the music’s peaks — beams arcing slowly around the venue every time a new high is attained — and the cumulative effect is intoxicating. Intelligent Design ends in a whirl of shrieking brass, Bigby Strictness sounds triumphant from start to finish, and Sleeper is an intoxicating climax.

Lead puppy Michael League talks movingly about an encounter with music lecturer Atar Shafighian that led to their first UK show, then leads one of the bravest experiments in audience participation you’ve ever likely to witness. For Xavi, the rhythm is augmented by the audience, with half clapping in threes, the other in fours. Against all the odds this doesn’t fall apart, and it’s exhilarating.

Everyone gets multiple opportunities to showcase their instrumental prowess, but the solos are always rendered in the service of the song rather than to merely reaffirm each musician’s brilliance. The music swings out in tangents with almost baffling ease, and Snarky Puppy still come across as a group of men still absolutely in awe of the noise they’re able to create with each other. Sensational.

MALCOLM DOME
Steve Hackett has really stumbled upon something with the Genesis Revisited shows. Each year he capitalises on another birthday – two years ago it was the 40th anniversary of Wind & Wuthering, in 2020 it’s the same for Seconds Out – and by 2023 he’ll be able to start on the half-centennials, with Nursery Cryme celebrating its big 5-0. By 2024 he’ll presumably be trooping The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway up and down the nation. Somehow, the man whose original tenure in the band lasted less than seven years has become the most convincing torchbearer for the entire Genesis franchise. Phil Collins and a diminished proposition, Peter Gabriel is building apps, the most convincing proposition than it does either Zed’s or Wilson’s taste, but the singer is that there’s room for an interesting artist. Multi-talented – she also models and sings a track that wouldn’t sound out of place on a TLC album. Zed has a tendency – like many modern singers – to insert more syllables into a word than is strictly necessary, but there’s no doubting the quality of her voice, nor her precision in hitting the high notes. Vincent to Kiwi multi-instrumentalist- cum-quirky-studio-geek Kimbra, pop’s quality of her voice, nor her precision in hitting the high notes. Vincent to Kiwi multi-instrumentalist- cum-quirky-studio-geek Kimbra, pop’s, an act of bravery in a room so sparsely populated. But in the end, it’s Zed’s piano arrangements that linger in the memory. From the gorgeous flurries on Against The Rising Sun to the jazzy extended instrumental breaks, Zed’s an interesting artist. Multi-talented – she also models and sings for alt-metal act Until Rain – her solo output is less prog rock than it is artfully presented pop, which means she’s operating in a crowded field. From Kate Bush to the relentlessly inventive St. Vincent to Kiwi multi-instrumentalist-cum-quirky-studio-geek Kimbra, pop’s more interesting corners are stuffed with musicians stretching modern music’s possibilities in a way rock musicians like can see why Wilson likes her. Steve Hackett has really stumbled upon something with the Genesis Revisited shows. Each year he capitalises on another birthday – two years ago it was the 40th anniversary of Wind & Wuthering, in 2020 it’s the same for Seconds Out – and by 2023 he’ll be able to start on the half-centennials, with Nursery Cryme celebrating its big 5-0. By 2024 he’ll presumably be trooping The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway up and down the nation. Somehow, the man whose original tenure in the band lasted less than seven years has become the most convincing torchbearer for the entire Genesis franchise. Phil Collins and a diminished proposition, Peter Gabriel is building apps, the most convincing proposition than it does either Zed’s or Wilson’s taste, but the singer is that there’s room for an interesting artist. Multi-talented – she also models and sings a track that wouldn’t sound out of place on a TLC album. Zed has a tendency – like many modern singers – to insert more syllables into a word than is strictly necessary, but there’s no doubting the quality of her voice, nor her precision in hitting the high notes. Vincent to Kiwi multi-instrumentalist- cum-quirky-studio-geek Kimbra, pop’s, an act of bravery in a room so sparsely populated. But in the end, it’s Zed’s piano arrangements that linger in the memory. From the gorgeous flurries on Against The Rising Sun to the jazzy extended instrumental breaks, Zed’s an interesting artist. Multi-talented – she also models and sings for alt-metal act Until Rain – her solo output is less prog rock than it is artfully presented pop, which means she’s operating in a crowded field. From Kate Bush to the relentlessly inventive St. Vincent to Kiwi multi-instrumentalist-cum-quirky-studio-geek Kimbra, pop’s more interesting corners are stuffed with musicians stretching modern music’s possibilities in a way rock musicians like
A Sunday afternoon in an east London cinema is an unusual time and place for an album launch, but Led Bib don’t seem to be the sort of band to worry about conforming to expectations. The tone for the day is established by the short film that precedes the group’s appearance. Picture The Light, directed by Rebecca Salter with a soundtrack composed by Max de Wardener, is a series of splashes and smears on the screen accompanied by what sounds like a string quartet trying to saw through their instruments, so it’s clear it’s going to be an avant garde sort of afternoon.

Led Bib’s performance marks the official launch of their new album, It’s Official, which comprises their entire set, accompanied by a generally indecipherable film playing behind the band that screams “I went to art school!” There are lots of time lapses of flowers opening intercut with people in jump suits. On the musical front, there are long sections throughout the gig wherein Toby McLaren manipulates his keyboards to produce dissonant drones or sputters of electronic noise and that’s how they kick off into Atom Story. There’s a joke among jazz musicians that if you don’t know the chord changes to a song, you play whatever you want – outside the melody. With Led Bib, there’s really a melody to hold onto and everyone plays out all the time, resulting in a cacophony. There’s a lot of screaming saxophones from Pete Grogan and Chris Williams as they compete to see who can play the shrillest, loudest notes – think Coltrane circa Interstellar Space or John Zorn. One couple leaves after the first song, but everyone else stays the course, although there’s no applause in the lulls to a song, but everyone else stays the course, although there’s no applause in the lulls. There are lots of screaming saxophones from Pete Grogan and Chris Williams as they compete to see who can play the shrillest, loudest notes – think Coltrane circa Interstellar Space or John Zorn. One couple leaves after the first song, but everyone else stays the course, although there’s no applause in the lulls. Throughout, The Pineapple Thief do a superb job of accounting for every note and nuance of their studio versions; that said, a few renditions feel even heavier and livelier (thanks, in part, to Harrison’s emblematically astounding syncopation and Marios’ articulately advanced guitar solos). Frontman Bruce Soord’s voice is a touch raspy and low at first – which is more of an observation than a complaint – but he quickly achieves the smooth falsetto fragility for which he’s known.

Without a doubt, The Pineapple Thief make the most of their first ever stop in Philadelphia. Complemented by mood-setting coloured lighting shifts and humorous yet humble banter from Soord, their set fittingly favours their last two LPs while also giving longtime devotees enough classic material to satisfy. Hopefully, they’ll return to America as soon as possible.

DAVID WEST
LEPROUS

VENUE ULU, LONDON
DATE 16/11/2019
SUPPORT THE OCEAN

It’s a long wait in the rain outside a sold-out ULU tonight and the line moves so slowly that people are still in the queue when The Ocean appear — well, appear isn’t quite the right word. From Germany, the collective take the stage immersed in a swirling fog, which seems to be their natural habitat. Their light show frames the band as silhouettes, lending the players an anonymity worthy of Ghost, and vocalist Loïc Rossetti’s keyboards are set up behind guitarist Robin Staps, often making him completely invisible from the front. It’s an unconventional presentation but The Ocean’s music is compelling and immersive, drawing from post-rock, metal and prog.

They’re clearly fond of a heavy, half-time feel, a motif they use liberally, but there are great dynamic shifts in tracks like Impasses and Devonian:

“Solberg’s voice rings like a bell and his control of his upper range could give Adele a run for her money.”

Einar Solberg on top form.

As previously noted in the pages of Prog, the Courtyard Theatre is neither a courtyard nor a theatre. On this occasion, the featureless underground box located on Old Street is a mere substitute for the now-defunct Borderline (RIP). Its facilities are functional at best — scarcely a deserving platform for an attraction as colourful as Pavlov’s Dog.

This Missouri-based combo crafted some of the best hard rock-meets-prog of the 70s, specifically their Sandy Pearlman/Murray Krugman (Blue Öyster Cult)-helmed debut Pampered Menial and a follow-up, At The Sound Of The Bell, which featured Bill Bruford on drums and Roxy Music saxophonist Andy McKay. This is a band who could and should have been massive but, following disappointing sales, Columbia Records had no idea what to do with them and washed its hands of a third album, which posthumously emerged in bootleg form.

With many of the original members now deceased, vocalist/guitarist David Surkamp has pressed on with a variety of replacements since pulling Pavlov’s Dog back from the abyss two decades ago. It’s to his credit that the current seven-person incarnation holds its own alongside any of their predecessors. In the three years since the band’s last appearances in the UK, Pavlov’s Dog have defied old age to birth a quite brilliant album – Prodigal. From The Flame, off 2017’s Malina, is a monster of an anthem, and Observe The Train shows how far they have come from their roots in progressive metal with its haunted melody sung by Surkamp framed by a halo of lights. Stuck is a song waiting for an arena to fill, and the synth section sounds like it comes from some awesome 80s John Carpenter film. They finish the night with the tumbling polyrhythms and emotional drama of The Sky Is Red, exiting to loud, sustained applause. A riveting performance by a band who have most likely not even reached their peak yet. Masterful.

DAVID WEST

PAVLOV’S DOG

VENUE COURTYARD THEATRE, LONDON
DATE 20/11/2019
SUPPORT

As the heritage artists who built prog near the 70s, specifically their Sandy Pearlman/Murray Krugman (Blue Öyster Cult)-helmed debut Pampered Menial and a follow-up, At The Sound Of The Bell, which featured Bill Bruford on drums and Roxy Music saxophonist Andy McKay. This is a band who could and should have been massive but, following disappointing sales, Columbia Records had no idea what to do with them and washed its hands of a third album, which posthumously emerged in bootleg form.

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DAVID WEST
Among Talk Talk devotees before this show, there was anticipation but also slight trepidation: the group’s later, more enigmatic music was never road-tested live, and wouldn’t be easy to recreate. There was also the question of whether the evening should be melancholy, to honour Mark Hollis’ death last February, or uplifting, as the music lives on. In the end, it proves a joyous triumph, the music taking care of both happiness and sadness. Everyone here is in love with those songs, and warmth fills the hall.

Importantly, the musicians – a kind of house band, directed by Grammy-winner and Hollis collaborator Phil Ramon and featuring players from Talk Talk pinnacles such as David Rhodes, Martin Ditcham and Ian Curnow – not only understand what’s required but inhabit the sounds, whether on the earlier pop grooves or the transcendent prog-soul from Spirit Of Eden. In front of them a diverse list of singers tackles the vocals. These revolving-microphone concerts can be a bit hit-or-miss, but the evident fact that all involved bring both heart and talent wins the day. They all want to do one of Britain’s cult greats justice.

Hollis’ is no conventional voice to emulate, so dividing the vocals between males and females works. My Brightest Diamond opens with My Foolish Friend and the first set includes Hot Chip’s Alexis Taylor singing The Colour Of Spring and Joan As Police Woman, at the piano, delivering Myrrhman somewhat in the style of Nina Simone, in a peak moment. Former Wild Beasts frontman Hayden Thorpe rises to the monumental challenge of Eden and Wealth, while Orlando Weeks, once of The Maccabees, gauges the tones gorgeously on I Don’t Believe In You. Close your eyes and it’s Hollis. Ride’s Mark Gardener and Andy Bell then offer strong versions of The Rainbow and Living In Another World, complete with Gardener hitting the harmonica motifs.

After the interval, original keyboardist Simon Brenner and his young power-pop band homage the early years. This shifts the mood but raises the energy. Turin Brakes excel themselves on Ascension Day and Give It Up, while TheCharlatans’ Tim Burgess takes a tentative stab at Such A Shame. As the home straight, Joan As Police Woman powerfully leads a communal It’s My Life and there’s a valedictory Life’s What You Make It. Jane Weaver’s voice is perhaps too soft to send this anthem out of the park, but the band swell and surge, as do our hearts. Mark Hollis’ unique legacy was remembered with respect and reverence on a night which was moving and often magical. Fruits of the spirit.

CHRIS ROBERTS

PERIPHERY

Main support to Periphery tonight is the Australian prog guitarist Plini. Perhaps the most interesting thing about his band is the inclusion of virtuoso guitarist Jakub Zytecki for this tour. An accomplished musician and composer, Jakub’s debut album Nothing Lasts, Nothing’s Lost is one of the more innovative guitar records of the year. The band play two tracks off of the Sunhead EP, Kind and Flâneur, though most material comes from the Handmade Cities LP. Live, Plini and his band are kind of like the djent scene’s house jam band. Their grooves are solid, and in the pocket. The riffs are tasty and melodic, and particularly in his newer material, restrained. At the end of his set, he thanks everybody for coming, before explaining that as Jakub is one of his favourite guitarists, they’re going to jam for a bit. They trade licks for a while, and it’s obvious that while they like each other a lot, whether they have that much musical chemistry is unclear.

After a brief changeover, Periphery take the stage, down two members. Bass duties have been covered by a backing track since Nolly left, and guitarist Mark Holcomb had to return to the US mid-tour due to a family emergency, so remaining guitarists Misha Mansoor and Jake Bowen have to work double time to make up for the missing energy and riffs. At times, the PA mix doesn’t sit quite right, as if the volume of everything assumed three guitars. Solo lines cut through fine, but while it’s only natural that Mark’s guitar should be missed on a song like Scarlet, even on a simpler, heavier number like Remain Indoors everything feels flatter. That said, the band should be congratulated for not letting the fans down – these are, after all, minor issues for what turns out to be an excellent set. During Reptile, they invite Plini and Jakub onstage to throw down a solo, complete with a synchronised harmony, while on Marigold, Jake and Misha manage to cover pretty much every part, with the whirlwind frenzy of the main riff tearing through the venue.

It’s Only Smiles is slightly jarring in a setlist that leans towards the heavy, with more cuts in the Blood Eagle and CHVRCHES BVRNER vein, but it’s a reminder that Periphery have always trodden the line betweennerdy, incredibly niche prog metal and accessible, almost radio-friendly fare. Psychosphere is a welcome inclusion, a more cerebral and percussively heavy cut, that somehow doesn’t need the extra guitar. After the briefest of breaks, the band encore with Lane, their excellent homage to White Pony-era Deftones. As a set, it’s short, punchy and sweet, and doubly impressive that it’s so slick despite the adversity behind the scenes.

ALEX LYNHAM
The 4th Voyage Has Set Sail
Rick Wakeman & Dave Brock
John Lees' Barclay James Harvest Focus
The Spacelords
The Skys
Nth Ascension
Franck Caracciolo
Bram Stoker
The Room
Psychic Lemon

Saturday 17th October 2020
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Sunday 18th October 2020
Sheffield O2 Academy

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The End
Threshold
Ozric Tentacles Live PA Set
Featuring Ed Wynne & Silas Neptune
The Crazy World of Arthur Brown
Atomic Rooster
Moon Safari
Magenta Lifesigns
Gandalf's Fist
Monkey Trial
Hats Off Gentlemen
It's Adequate
VIP PRIORITY EXCLUSIVES
SONIC TRIP PROJECT
Tiger Moth Tales

The 10th Anniversary Voyage Is Boarding

Neil Innes · Roger Spear
“Legs” Larry Smith · Rodney Slater
Vernon Dudley Bowhay-Nowell

Bonzo Dog Banned
and friends

Da-Da?
Doo-Dah!

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THE-ARISTOCRATS-BAND.COM
I was really into metal when I was 13 years old, and then I heard about ‘concept albums’…

Ever had a prog date?
[Laughs] No, never!

Who do you call in the prog community for a good night out?
[Renowned prog artist/designer] Paul Tippett. You definitely want him for a good night out to talk about prog or go see a band.

What’s the most important piece of prog music?
Either *At The End Of The Day* by Spock’s Beard or *Firth Of Fifth* by Genesis.

Which prog muso would you most like to work with?
John Petrucci. He’s an amazing, creative guitar player, and his tone just gets better with every album.

Which proggy album gets you in a good mood?
*Toto XIV* would be good for that. It’s a very nice place to play.

Your specialist subject on Mastermind?

Favourite prog venue?
In March, Galahad played a venue called Backstage At The Green in Kinross, Scotland. A lot of prog bands are going there — Lifesigns, Arena, us. It’s a very nice place to play.

Guilty musical pleasure?
I love good country music. I went to Nashville this year and watched bands in bars all day long, I was in heaven! I’m enjoying an album called *Southernity* by A Thousand Horses, and I really enjoy Lady Antebellum’s music too.

Your prog here?
Neal Morse is a real all-rounder. He’s got a great voice, he’s a great keyboard player and a fantastic songwriter.

Your favourite prog album cover?
I really like those painted covers from the 80s, like Mark Wilkinson’s cover for Marillion’s *Script For A Jester’s Tear*.

I was really into metal when I was 13 years old, and then I heard about ‘concept albums’…
STEVE HACKETT
GENESIS REVISITED

SECONDS OUT + MORE!
UK 2020 TOUR

NOVEMBER
01 BRIGHTON DOME
02 CARDIFF ST DAVID’S HALL
03 STOKE VICTORIA HALL
05 LONDON THE PALLADIUM
06 LONDON THE PALLADIUM
08 EDINBURGH PLAYHOUSE
09 DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
10 CARLISLE SANDS CENTRE
12 NEWCASTLE O₂ CITY HALL
13 SCUNTHORPE BATHS HALL
14 BRADFORD ST GEORGE’S HALL

16 SOUTHAMPTON MAYFLOWER
17 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
18 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
20 GUILDFORD G LIVE
21 BEXHILL DE LA WARR PAVILION
23 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
25 MANCHESTER O₂ APOLLO
27 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
28 BASINGSTOKE ANVIL
30 LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC

DECEMBER
01 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL

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