

On Reflection

The Newsletter of the APEX

Summer brings new releases, tours

Lest anyone think that Progressive music is just a topic for discussion and not a living and active genre, a slew of new product has come out this past month. Both in record and video stores, and in clubs and concert halls, Progressive artists are closing out the '80s in style.

Despite reports that the street date was going to be kicked back a week, Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe came out on schedule. Talking it over with a few people, some think it's an unqualified success while others are less enthusiastic. I'll leave the debates to the Yes fanzines. My opinion is that, taken on the whole, it works. GRANTED: Howe is too reticent; Bruford is sometimes smothered in the mix; Anderson still sings love songs and shamelessly drops song titles like "South Side of the Sky," "Gates of Delirium" and "Roundabout" in "She Gives Me Love" (so where's the connection?); and Tony Levin is not given the recognition he deserves. BUT: Wakeman shines on acoustic piano and plays it strong and tasteful on electric keyboards, which is good considering he's given the spotlight; they assimilate technology well (I love the sampled trumpets in "She Gives Me Love"); the 9- and 10-minute tracks are full of music and not just hovering sound waves; and most of all, they have constructed malleable movements that should translate well in the live show. And isn't that what it's all about?

Pink Floyd's new 100-minute live video, *Delicate Sound of Thunder*, is a directorial masterpiece by Wayne Isham (any relation to film scorer, ex-Group 87 and Windham Hill artist Mark?). Eight cameramen captured Floyd at Nassau Coliseum last fall and the collage of images and angles is pure art. The films that are shown throughout the concert are clear and mixed in well with shots of the band. Sad that "Welcome to the Machine" didn't make it but there are four cuts here that aren't on the album: "Signs of Life," "On the Run," "Great Gig in the Sky," and "One Slip." At a suggested list price of \$24.98 (I found it for \$19.98), it makes a nice historical accompaniment to *Pink Floyd at Pompeii*.

A host of new record releases and supporting tours are upon us as well. Aside from the obvious one mentioned in the second paragraph, Adrian Belew is hitting small clubs to highlight his new *Mr. Music Head* album. The single and video, "Oh, Daddy," are a bit annoying after a while and from what I've heard, the rest of the album is clearly aimed at a pop-oriented audience. But in concert, anything can happen and any of several small species of guitar wizardry can appear without warning. I only have information on a July 18 date for Boston. It seems very feasible to me that he would play some Crimson songs as well. Talk, it's only talk....

Todd Rundgren is doing a two-month tour in support of his just-released *Nearly Human* album. This is the first time in several years that he has recorded and toured with a real band. For most of the 1980s, Todd has been the sole musician and vocalist on his records and has been performing with the accompaniment of pre-recorded tapes stored in his personal computer. While he is presently in more of a

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"The highest thing in the world is to make music."

- Brian Wilson

The Missing Piece(s)

Dear Jason,

Not mentioned in your article on Gentle Giant imports (issues 3-5) were the two volumes of *The Original Studio Gentle Giant*, released in Italy as Fontana 9286873 and 9286874.

Volume I consists of three songs from each of the first three albums: "Nothing at All," "Funny Ways," and "Alucard" from the first; "Pantagruel's Nativity," "Acquiring the Taste," and "Plain Truth" from the second; and "Peel the Paint," "Mr. Class and Quality," and "Three Friends" from the third. The cover displays the featured album covers side by side (the first two with gatefolds extended, *Three Friends* with front cover atop the back cover).

Volume 2 is even juicier, with three songs from each of the next three albums plus the track "The Power and the Glory." The other songs are "The Boys in the Band," "Knots," "The Advent of Panurge," "Experience," "The Runaway," "In a Glass House" (apparently the single [!!!] edit, being the last part only, starting with "Shadow fills the light..."), "Proclamation," and "Playing the Game."

The cover of Volume 2 also shows the respective album covers: a slightly edited Roger Dean *Octopus*, the window section from *In a Glass House*, and the front of *The Power and the Glory*. Release date not known.

Cheers,

Michael P. Dawson

R E L A Y E R

I was already a record collector when I came across Progressive music. In fact, it was the Beach Boys that first made me want to collect and search out original and valuable copies of albums by a group or groups that I liked. When I first got their two platinum compilations, *Endless Summer* and *Spirit of America*, I was one hooked 13-year-old. Something inside moved me to find the original studio albums. I realized that reissues were not genuine enough for my collection. I understood

"...many of the artists I cared about...listened to things I had never been exposed to."

the importance of an original label, inner sleeve, album package. I discovered used record stores. Simply put, I had found something so important to me that I felt a need to collect.

That was my first breakthrough. The second came when I got into Progressive music, not more than two years later. Aided by my introduction to the partying lifestyle, Progressive music got my mind involved. I enjoyed the challenge of digesting music that went against the grain of a typical rhythm, melody and time signature. I appreciated the virtuosity of the musicianship, the content of the lyrics, the emphasis given to original arrangements and cover art, and the varied elements that came together to form a whole.

As my passion for music soared, I immersed myself in the world of music publications. Some were arrogant, written by frustrated musicians that couldn't approach the ingenuity of the artists they reviewed. Some were enlightening and still others merely pandered to popular tastes. One had a feature in which artists listed some of the albums they had been listening to

recently. I noticed that many of the artists I cared about (mostly Progressive) listened to things I had never been exposed to.

I fantasized about meeting Robert Fripp and inviting him back to my room to see my record collection. I would proudly show him that I owned all of King Crimson's albums and his own. I then imagined he would be duly unimpressed, as I would be if I was the musician and a fan showed me *his* collection. I would rather see Gentle Giant albums in his collection than my own works; at least that's what I would want to listen to.

That got me to thinking about how in tune I was to the world of music that was reaching me in the form of Progressive music. I wanted to share in my favorite artists' influences. Listening to ELP's *Pictures at an Exhibition* made me want to hear the classical version. Likewise with Yes opening their shows with an excerpt from the finale of Stravinsky's "Firebird Suite;" I wanted to hear it all. Hearing Giant's violin/cello/recorder/vibraphone arrangements opened me up to chamber music. The saxes, flutes and improvisations of King Crimson urged me to take in jazz. And discovering fusion tied everything together.

For me, Progressive music is a holistic genre that is both a springboard to and a composite of the great history of African and European musical forms. Loving any form of music involves an appreciation of the forms that preceded and influenced it. And the world of Progressive music offers a uniquely expansive realm of expression to enjoy. ☺

NOTE:

Enclosed in this issue, as promised, is the subscriber list as of June 18, 1989. It is naturally expected to grow this summer, as so many of you have generously offered to distribute flyers for OR at A/B/W/H shows. So I will update and publish this list TO SUBSCRIBERS ONLY in OR on a quarterly basis. For those of you who have purchased OR at a store or got a copy from a friend, please send a SASE and ask for the APEX subscriber list, a very enlightened slice of humanity indeed.

ON REFLECTION: The Newsletter of The APEX, is published each month by The Aficionados of Progressive Excellence (APEX).
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The Canterbury Scene by Harald Luss

Canterbury, Kent isn't just a nice city in the southeast of England but also serves as nomenclature for a major link of Progressive music. It is uncertain who coined the term "Canterbury Rock/Scene" but it stands as always for innovative, witty tunes paired with an apparent ignorance of the broad audience. This attitude is found in almost all band formations and artists of the Canterbury scene.

And then there are some renown musicians who jumped in and out of Canterbury bands. These include Mike Oldfield, who started off as bassist in Kevin Ayers' Whole World Band, and Bill Bruford, who drummed for Gong and National Health after his first split with King Crimson. In any case, as a connoisseur of the scene, I will report on the old and the new of Canterbury-based Progressive rock and I hope that some of my recommendations and reviews create interest and lust among some of you.

I'd like to start by introducing a present-day band, The Nits. One might

argue that this Dutch formation is neither a direct representative of Canterbury nor a typical Progressive band, but once you listen to some of their tunes, you will find enough references to justify ranking them in the Avant Garde/Art/Pop camp. European critics call them the "European Talking Heads" or "New Beatles," and both attributes are truly fitting.

Founded in 1974 by Henk Hofstede, an art student who is still their frontman, it was six years before they had a sound and a formation that got them signed to a contract. Keyboardist Robert Jan Stips, who got them signed to CBS, is their indirect link to the Canterbury scene; from 1970-74, he played for Supersister, who were considered the Dutch Soft Machine.

Since 1979, they have released nine albums and nearly 20 7" single outtakes. But despite excellent reviews, their records didn't sell outside of Holland until 1987's *In the Dutch Mountains*, their eighth album, made the European charts.

Fortunately, this unexpected success didn't spoil their creativity but rather inspired them to continue their concept and strengthen their live performances.

With the present line-up of Henk Hofstede (guitar, vocals), Robert Jan Stips (keys), Rob Kloet (drums), and Joke Geraets (bass), they recorded their ninth album, *The Hat*, and started an extensive European tour this spring which led them as far as Moscow. July will lead them to various destinations in America and whenever you have a chance to see one of their gigs, take it and be dazzled. For armchair music lovers, I recommend *Omsk* or *The Hat*. ☺

Discography (all on CBS as LP/CD)

Tent - 1979

New Flat - 1980

Work - 1981

Kilo - 1983

Omsk - 1983

Adieu, Sweet Bahnhof - 1984

Henk - 1986

In The Dutch Mountains - 1987

The Hat - 1989

Twelfth Night by Phil Satterley

Like their contemporaries Marillion, IQ, Pallas and Pendragon, Twelfth Night is one of the great "New Progressive" bands that has emerged from England in the 1980's. In the Progressive tradition, their recordings are hard to find and little or no ink has been given them. To help you in your understanding and appreciation of this group, I offer this brief history.

Reading University students Brian Devoil (drums) and Andy Revell (guitars) formed The Andy Revell Band in 1978. After winning a talent contest, they were joined by two members of their road crew, singer Geoff Mann and keyboardist Rick Battersby. They changed their name to Twelfth Night,

after the Shakespeare play. Bassist Clive Mitten joined in 1979.

In January of 1980, Twelfth Night recorded their first demo tape album, *Skan*. Shortly afterwards, Geoff Mann quit and the band continued doing brief tours as an instrumental band. But by their second tape album, *Early Material* in October of 1980, American singer Electra MacLeod joined the band. As more people begin to hear Twelfth Night, however, Electra left and they went back to being an instrumental group.

Even with lots of fan support, Twelfth Night had still not been signed to a major label. And so another self-made album was released in early 1981, the live

Live at the Target. It sold reasonably well, all things considered. Around the same time, they released *Smiling at Grief* with original vocalist Geoff Mann. The songs were shorter to try and attract the record companies.

In December, 1982, Twelfth Night released *Fact and Fiction*, considered by many, including myself, to be their best. The tracks are very powerful, both lyrically and musically. After the album's release, they played their first gig as a headliner at the Marquee Club in London. Less than a year later, Twelfth Night returned to the Marquee, where Geoff Mann played his last gig with the band before leaving again to pursue a solo

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Leave it to Michael Dawson to show
me up and tell me about two Giant
albums that I don't own and never
heard of (see page 1)!

This will not do!

Big reward for whomever can locate
those albums for me. Send info to:

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A scene from the film, "The Return of the Secaucus 7"

[J.T., a country singer, and Jeff, his best friend, are sitting with two women in a bar. The first woman has just told J.T. that she hates country music.]

JT: "So listen, what kind of music *do* you like?"

Woman: "Oh, Progressive rock, mostly."

JT: "Which is that?"

W: "Oh, King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, Rush..."

JT: "Right, right. Heavy metal goes to college. (Pause.) Just kidding, just joking."

W: "Well you know, it's the only thing playing now with any kind of sophisticated melody line that still has its innocence."

[Jeff now adds his two cents against country music because of its repetitiveness. Then he explains what he likes about Progressive rock. It's meant as a tease to Progressive people who take their music "too" seriously but it sure sounds familiar.]

Jeff: "...whereas Progressive is existential. You got these chromatic melodies to use like for a springboard into all kinds of experiments. Even the backbeat is full of nuances. You know that there's a central rhythmic idea going on but you're never quite sure when it's going to pop up. You put your counterpoint on top of that, your passing tones, your arpeggios, your polyrhythms, your parallel scales, your vocal harmonies, and it's uncertain, right? It's exploratory. Like life."

W: "Right. Exactly...with Progressive, it's like you're going into unknown territory. Exactly."

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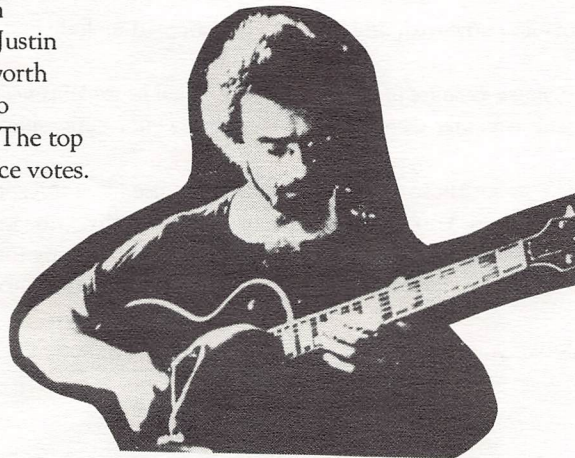
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Echoes... Echoes... Echoes... Echoes... Echoes...

The Progressive Dream Band: TOP 3 GUITARISTS

Tallied from your votes for the best three Progressive guitarists. First-place votes count as five points, second-place as three points and third-place as one point. So even though Alan Holdsworth got four points and Justin Hayward got five points, Holdsworth received four third-place votes to Hayward's one first-place vote. The top three each received five first-place votes.

1. Robert Fripp - 44



2. Steve Howe - 31



3. Steve Hackett - 29



Other vote-getters:

- 4. Greg Lake - 8
- 5. Martin Barre - 6
Frank Zappa - 6
- 6. Justin Hayward - 5
Bill Nelson - 5
- 7. Allan Holdsworth - 4
- 8. Andy Latimer - 3
Jimmy Page - 3
Todd Rundgren - 3
- 9. Dave Gilmour - 2
- 10. Daniel Fichelsher (Popul Vuh) - 1
Steve Hillage - 1
Phil Miller - 1
Steve Morse - 1
Anthony Philips - 1
Robin Trower - 1

Voters: Scott Gold, Jason M. Rubin, Clark Faville, Kathy Grimm, James E. Clay, Michael P. Dawson, Jerry Kunny, Marc Rains, Frank Jarvis, Jon Hanauer, Tony Arnold, John Collinge, Randy W. Berkes, Jeff Hackworth, Marcy Hackworth, Larry Crasnick, Mark Norton.

Remember, if you didn't vote don't complain if your opinions aren't represented. Let me know who should be in the Progressive Dream Band.

**NEXT
MONTH:
3 Best Bassists.
Vote today!**

ethos (ardour): Yankee ingenuity

I am sure that I am not the only one of you who have purchased an album simply on the basis of the cover art and/or the instrumentation. This method got me into Focus (the original cover of *Focus 3* that changes colors as you move the album around) and also into what has to be the best American Progressive band, ethos (ardour).

Here is what I saw when I first noticed their 1976 self-titled debut in the "Miscellaneous E" section of a used record store: a color illustration of a god of some sort standing in a cosmic, heavenly kingdom, holding the earth in suspension over one open palm. In his left hand he firmly clenches a staff bearing a winged serpent. The areolae of his nipples are six-pointed stars and one also appears on his forehead with a crescent moon. The only word on the front cover is "ethos."

Turning it over, I see the earth, Africa forward, with the words "ethos ardour" above and below it. There is also a definition, as follows: "Ethos (ardour)\the universally recognized essence of a work of art, the consummate passion the artist infuses into his creation." Below that is the names of the musicians and their tools: Michael Ponczek: chamberlin, organ, moog & effects; Mark Richards: percussion & effects; Wil Sharpe (composer and lyricist): guitars, mandolin & voice; Brad Stephenson: bass guitar, pedals & voice; L. Duncan Hammond: mellotron, piano, moog; organ, clavinet & voice. Greg

Riker is also credited with mixing and sounds. The album is on Capitol Records (ST-11498).

So I bought it.

The music is exquisite. ethos consists of some very good musicians and the arrangements are complex but not obstructive. The album has a jazzy feel, even with the mellotron and the cosmic and confusing Genesis-ish tales spun in the lyrics of such tunes as "Intrepid Traveller," "Space Brothers," the two-part "Everyman," and "The Dimension Man."

Some of the best moments come in the track "Atlanteans." Rising from the background of waves that flow to shore sleepily as if after a big meal, the song is a mournful ode to Atlantis and its people. The music is solemn through the first verse and then becomes what could be the funeral dance in a mythical undersea world. Another short verse and then a very jazzy jam with scat vocals in harmony with a plucky guitar line. That breaks into a Genesis-ish bridge that carries the song back to the main theme and the rush of the waves.

The inner sleeve features the lyrics and an address to write for more information (Fort Wayne, IN). Mind you, the album came out in 1976 and I didn't come across it until 1982 or so. Needless to say, I wrote and it was returned to me unopened.

Consulting one of my main reference books, *Rock Record*, I found that they had only made two albums. I

eventually found the other one, *Open Up*. Released in 1977 (Capitol ST-11616), the album's cover is far less interesting and so is the music. They seem well-intentioned, the instrumentation is as full and interesting as before (even with the departure of Hammond), but the music doesn't travel as far. From the lyrics to the album's opener, "Pimp City," the fault may be with the record company:

*Now will you clap your hands
no applause, no apparent cause
I guess it must be the band
They've been hypnotized, mesmerized,
their minds are circumcised
Patronized, fraternized, open your eyes
you'll find
Things ain't pretty
When you're done...
I'm never coming back to erase another
track in that city
I'm never coming back to Pimp City.
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Open Up is clearly Progressive but pales next to the first album. On the whole, it rocks a little harder, which is fine, but the lyrics hold no promises and the music strikes me as directionless. This album is far more group-composed than the first and the lack of a single vision may be the main problem. Still, it's good and since there's only two (and no other known recordings by these musicians), if you're going to get one you may as well get the other. Good luck hunting, I've only seen one copy of the first and only one other copy of the second. ☺

BIRTHDAYS

July 19	Brian May (Queen)	b. 1947
July 20	John Lodge (Moody Blues)	b. 1945
	Carlos Santana (Santana)	b. 1947
July 23	Andy Mackay (Roxy Music)	b. 1946
July 25	Jim McCarty (Yardbirds/Renaissance)	b. 1943
July 27	Kim Fowley ("Nutrocker")	b. 1942
July 28	Mike Bloomfield (Electric Flag, et al)	b. 1943
	Richard Wright (Pink Floyd)	b. 1945
July 30	Jeffrey Hammond-Hammond (Jethro Tull)	b. 1946

Summer '89 Progresses nicely

rock mode than Progressive, Todd's musicianship, personality and performances are consistently exciting, interesting and impressive. The tour only runs through July and August so keep your eyes open.

Lastly, Hawkwind has a new album out, *The Xenon Codex*, which was reviewed in the June 30 issue of Goldmine. They are touring small clubs and I know they will hit Somerville, MA on June 29 and with a little luck (and a few bucks) I'll be there. It should be interesting to hear what they sound like after all these years. This sudden burst of activity is to celebrate their 20th anniversary. So it looks like a good season for new Progressive works by past masters. It's summertime, and Progressive living is easy.... ☺

Twelfth Night, cont.

career. *Live and Let Live* was later released, recorded at the final two gigs with Mann.

An ad in Melody Maker resulted in Andy Sears being chosen as the new lead vocalist. To introduce Andy's talents, Twelfth Night released a mini-album, *Art and Illusion*. The tracks are shorter but very strong, and Andy's voice adds a new edge to the band. The album was produced by Gil Norton (Echo and the Bunnymen) and did well for the band, hitting 83 on the charts of Sounds magazine.

Finally in December of 1985, a door opened. Virgin Records signed them and the first official major label album, *Twelfth Night*, was released. It is more commercial than previous releases but

not a sell-out. The band played on "The Old Grey Whistle Test" but then, unfortunately, they broke up.

While they never had the opportunity to gain decent exposure, Twelfth Night was a committed and talented group that made some excellent recordings. Their name belongs with the better known '80s Progressive rock bands. ☺

The APEX

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"Because Catalogs Aren't Forever"