

On Reflection

The newsletter
of *The APEX*

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"To me, the eighties were a real drag; the eighties had nothing but limitations attached to it. The nineties look a lot like the seventies to me. It looks as though it'll be a very creative time again."

—Maurice White

Revisiting (& relishing) Renaissance

Do you remember when CDs first came out? When there were just a few hundred titles, 98% of them classical? When the audiophile's millennium supposedly began? When the promise of aural nirvana was as Pavlov's bell to those of us hungry to get on the CD bandwagon?

One of the features that impressed me the most when I was first experiencing CDs was the benefit of an extended dynamic range. I recall Telarc's release of Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" with the incredible gong, Flim & the BBs' "Tricycle," and Mannheim Steamroller's *Fresh Aire V* as being particularly intense examples.

With the knowledge that the CD would be the ideal medium for the eclectic instrumentation and liberal use of dynamics so typical of progressive music, I began my long wait for the "perfect" representations of my favorite works to be released. Up to now, there have been very mixed results or none at all.

This brings us (not too swiftly, I admit) to the recent release of a two-volume Renaissance compilation called *Tales of 1001 Nights* (Sire/WB 9-26129-2/9-26143-2). Nothing makes me listen to familiar recordings more closely than to hear them for the first time on CD, so it pleased me that the sound quality was quite good. The overall results of the compilation as a product (products really), however, are somewhat mixed—the result, no doubt, of a record company having to release product of a group that can't prom-

ise a return on their investment.

Listening to the CDs, I realized that much of the joy I felt came from the realization that Renaissance, being a classically influenced group whose sound and style incorporate excerpts from and respects to a number of 19th and 20th century composers (mainly Russian), has a large body of work that takes wonderful advantage of the extended dynamic range and clear sound reproduction afforded by the digital medium.

Before the release of this compilation, the only Renaissance CDs to my knowledge were *In the Beginning* (a single-CD pairing of 1972's *Prologue* and 1973's *Ashes are Burning*) and *Azure d'Or* (1979), the latter only available from the UK. News of this compilation, while nice to hear, made me uncertain of whether their full catalog would eventually be released. After scrutinizing the material included, my fears are far from allayed.

It was reported in last month's issue my assumption that the compilation would be a two-CD set. Well, it is and it isn't. There are two CDs but they are in two separate boxes. For some reason, this collection has been made into two distinct products, each sold separately. Did Sire think that Renaissance fans wouldn't shell out the bucks for a 2-CD set? It's not convenient for the consumer, nor does it seem economical for Sire. Fortunately, the two discs are "Super Savers" and can be purchased for \$10-\$13.

The artwork and packaging are

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Relayer

UPDATES:

HAPPY THE MAN

Cheers to *On Reflection* for giving Happy the Man the recognition they so richly deserve. I agree wholeheartedly—they are “the very best American progressive group ever!”

I gather from the article that you don't have *Happy the Man 3rd, Better Late....* on CD. If your local stores don't have it you can obtain it from a number of mail-order outfits (like the ones that advertise in *OR—ed.*). Most of the tracks have been remixed onto DAT by Kit Watkins, including two superb unreleased vocal tunes by Stanley Whitaker.

One of the tracks, “Who's in Charge Here?,” includes this lyric excerpt: “Spend your whole life waking to a world of neon/Do you feel life telling you that you're out of season?/Dance away, who's to see? Sing all day, who's to hear?/Are you tired of being told you won't sell unless.../If you play from the heart and just feed your soul/Fingers groping for some heartfelt music/All we want is for some ears to listen....”

I'm sure these words really hit home to *OR* readers. By following their hearts, Happy the Man has left behind a legacy of beautiful music unequalled by any American band I have ever heard.

I only got to see HTM once in concert but it was one of those

magical nights that stays with you forever. Before the show began, the audience was treated to pre-recorded music of the highest order, among which was King Crimson and selections from *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. I happened to glimpse Whitaker off to the side of the stage grooving to “The Lamb” and a thumbs up from me elicited the same response and a broad smile.

They hit the stage with an earthshaking version of “Service with a Smile.” Watkins and Frank Wyatt shared a common keyboard set-up with Wyatt coming forth occasionally for some excellent sax blowing. Coco Roussel was dwarfed by a huge drum and percussion set-up and Whitaker played the whole show on his beautiful double-neck Paul Reed Smith guitar. Rick Kennell most ably held down the bass end while doing his curious sideways step (if you've seen them live, you know what I mean). Highlights of the evening included “The Falcon,” “White Chrome, Yellow Shine,” and the encore, “Stumpy Meets the Firecracker in Stencil Forest.”

Sadly, it was shortly thereafter that they broke up. We can be thankful that their music is finally seeing the light of day on CD.

—Greg Katona

UNSIGNED PROGGERS

Another unsigned progressive group has reached the APEX pipeline. From Boston comes Architectural Metaphor (Arcmet, for short), who recently opened for Hawkwind when they came to town.

Arcmet consists of Paul Eggleston—synthesizers; Debbie Young—percussion, drums, voice, and violin; David Gorrill—percussion, electronics, and voice; Bill Buitenhuys—guitar; and Chris Green—guitar.

Their influences are “primarily Hawkwind and Tangerine Dream, but others include Gong, Gentle Giant, King Crimson, Genesis, Yes, and Amon Duul (Pink Floyd, *Ummagumma*, too). We usually play Boston, Cambridge, and surrounding areas.

“Paul and Bill began experimenting with guitar and analog synths back in 1984. We sounded more like Throbbing Gristle back then; now our sound is soothing yet sinister. Listening to Arcmet is like plugging yourself into the timeless well of the cosmos. It's a real trip, if you know what I mean.”

Arcmet has a forthcoming album called *Odysseum Galacti* that will be released this summer. Contact Paul at 33 Sweetser Street, Wakefield, MA 01880; phone (617) 581-0614.

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“Nothing is better than music; when it takes us out of time, it has done more for us than we have the right to hope for.”

—Nadia Boulanger

Pictures at an Exhibition

EMERSON, LAKE & POWELL

(PHOTOS BY MARK MARGERUM)



Gentle Giant

(photos by Bolle Gregmar and friends)



Market Value

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It is clear that fans of progressive music are not
dullards, ignoramuses, or couch potatoes;
what's not clear is why more of said fans aren't
going out of their way to express themselves to
their peers via *On Reflection*.

From the start, *OR* has sought to be common
voice, not a monologue or a tea party. It can
only succeed in its goal if its readers participate.

We want to hear from **YOU!**

Peter Hammill brings his music to life

by Robert McDermott

On March 7, Peter Hammill played The Nightstage in his first Boston appearance in four years and only his third area gig in the last ten years. The near-capacity crowd of 200 radiated an expectant air, with some journeying from as far away as Hartford, CT and Albany, NY for the concert. They were not to be disappointed.

Joining Hammill on stage were longtime associates Stuart Gordon on violin and ex-Van der Graaf Generator bassist Nic Potter, with Hammill accompanying himself on synthesizer and acoustic guitar. This trio format was a most welcome surprise since Hammill's last visit to the States had been a solo affair.

The three immediately brought the crowd to a fever pitch by launching into "The Wave" from the VDGG album *The Quiet Zone/The Pleasure Dome*. Hammill's voice was

in fine form, clearly articulating his evocations of melancholia and bitter-sweet memories amid sparse and concise keyboard ministrations, amply setting the tone for the entire concert.

The evening's two sets proceeded through a mix of VDGG and solo Hammill work, though conspicuously absent were songs from his newest album. Songs like "Just Good Friends" from *Patience*, "Vision" from *Fool's Mate*, and "Shell" from *Skin* conveyed his hauntingly eerie trademark falsetto awash in abrupt cadences and discordant jangles.

Hammill also plumbed the lower octaves of his vocal range in songs such as "The Comet, the Course and the Tail" (*In Camera*) and "The Uncensored Life" (*Enter K*), exploring the tortured secrets we all carry. His choice of material covered the spectrum of human emotions and relationships culled from his prodigious

recorded output, ranging from placid ballads of wistfulness to brooding ruminations on the endurance of love and self through changing tides and times.

On songs such as "Other Old Cliches" (*And Close as This*) and "Something About Isabel's Dance," Gordon's violin effortlessly suggested the sound of seagulls soaring over the audience's head and then rolled into a rollicking gait. Other compositions like "The Last Frame" (*The Quiet Zone*) and "Careering" (*PH7*) highlighted Potter's rich bass textures and pithy nimbleness underscoring the crashing aural juggernaut produced by his cohorts.

These three musicians exhibited the exacting precision combined with stark simplicity characteristic of VDGG's and Hammill's best work. Throughout the evening, Hammill examined the

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SET SALE

(take \$1.00 off the price by sending your *On Reflection* mailing label!)

45s

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 (a promo EP with three other pop artists and edited versions of "Follow You, Follow Me" and "Your Own Special Way.")
 PHIL COLLINS—In the Air Tonight/The Roof is Leaking \$15.00
 (much sought after booklet picture sleeve drawn by Phil's brother!)

LPs

- ICONOCLASTA—*En Busca de Sentido* (MEXICO/sealed) \$8.00
 (instrumental progressive tour-de-force with scorching guitar and soaring keyboard work.)
 QUASAR—*Fire in the Sky* (UK/new) \$12.00
 (superb symphonic rock with spacey tendencies; come off a bit like a cross between Genesis and Pink Floyd.)
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 (one of the finest bands from Canada ever! Tight ensemble playing reminds one of the heyday of British progressive fusion music. But this is not jazz! *Tot ou Tard* is their best effort with an equal mix of instrumentals and fine vocal tunes. Some comparisons with Happy the Man and National Health are inevitable but these guys are themselves! Get in on Canada's best kept secret!)
 HAPPY THE MAN—*Better late....3rd* (CD VERSION/USA) \$13.00
 (this is a recent reissue of the last LP by the late, great HTM! This CD-only version features two songs not found on the LP—"Who's in Charge Here?" and "Such a Warm Breeze," plus a new cover that is a vast improvement over the original. This is a limited edition!)

If you like the kinds of things that you see here, then send for my newest list! It's **FREE** and full of progressive music at reasonable prices! LPs/CDs and cassettes. I also trade video—your list gets mine.

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Echoes

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Only two votes for "Best progressive album of the '80s?" At least one of them *had* to be for King Crimson's *Discipline* and I'll tell you why.

The '80s incarnation of King Crimson was virtually the embodiment of that which has come to be called "progressive" (or should be). You doubt? Check the resumes for starters—this was a bona fide supergroup, ladies and germs. Every member of that band could be called a true master of his chosen instrument. Individually, they were as good as it gets; collectively, they were a collusion of influence, ego, and experience that resulted in some amazing music right out of the gate.

Granted, this certainly wasn't the band that recorded "I Talk to the Wind." Neither was the band that played "Starless and Bible Black." And Professor Fripp had no qualms about knocking *that* one on the head when he felt it had outlived its usefulness in the world. It was 1981, not 1969, and not 1974. The world had moved on and there were other musical ideas to explore.

Thus, two musicians from Europe and two more from North America looked further afield. No side-long epics, nothing orchestral, no keyboards, and what of it? Guitars from the east and from other worlds, rhythms from the veldt and the street and the factory floor. Major changes, to be sure, but even more important was what *didn't* change—the musicianship, the intensity, the "almighty noise" that always distinguished King Crimson.

On *Discipline*, the "almighty noise" assimilated the three-minute pop song and found sounds, and treated us to the hypnotic ritual of "Discipline," the dreamlike soundscapes of "The Sheltering Sky," and the industrial-strength menace of "Indiscipline" (featuring guitars that

will take your head off and hand it to you). The album captured a revitalized powerhouse seeking challenge in new directions. It was about evolution. *Progression*.

The album cover is cool, too.

Meanwhile at the other extreme, the first big bomb of the '80s stands out as vividly as the first big blast of that decade. *Discipline* arrived almost unannounced and blew me away; Asia arrived on a wave of hype ("the first supergroup of the '80s"—*right!*) and dashed my hopes unmercifully. Seemed like a great idea in theory, didn't it? When I heard the lineup I was psyched. I was *primed*. Then the album came out and I was *aghast!* And I don't aghast easily.

Sadly, it wouldn't be the last time progressive stalwarts who should have known better would shamelessly hustle hockey-rink music in pursuit of big bucks. Remember GTR? (Remember *Musician* magazine's review of that one—"SHT?" A classic!) Or, God help us, 3? And as for Phil Collins, well don't get me started.

Still and all, the first cut is the deepest. Asia's debut established the mind-boggling, stomach-turning precedent. The travesties that followed were all just bricks in the wall or nails in the coffin.

Who's to blame? Tough call. My gut reaction is that Wetton did it. He sank UK after Bruford and Holdsworth split, killing them with crooning. He tainted Asia the same way. But who can say? Palmer has Asia and 3 on his conscience (and I always took Lake for the weak link in the ELP chain; now I'm not so sure). Howe has Asia *and* GTR to live down.

Anyway, it's only rock 'n' roll, right?

Mark Matteson
Ashland, MA

Survey results

The results are in and the overwhelming conclusion is that not many people want to answer survey questions.

So to save my pride, why don't we just curtail this futile activity and if anyone wants to ask the general readership anything, they can do so by sending it in.

For the three kind souls who appeased me by sharing their opinions, here are the results:

Rick Melchionno

1. Instrumentation
2. Length of songs
3. Familiar name
4. Cover art

Stephen Roberts

1. Instrumentation
2. Familiar name
3. Length of songs
4. Cover art

Michelle Buccella

1. Cover art
2. Familiar name
3. Instrumentation
4. Length of songs

Jason M. Rubin

1. Instrumentation
2. Familiar name
3. Cover art
4. Length of songs

Renaissance: *Tales of 1001 Nights*, cont.

truly first-rate and the quality of the booklet (30 pages!) is ironic in light of some of the other shortcomings (mainly that with two separate discs, each has to have the same expensive-to-produce booklet). The only difference in the booklets are the first two pages, which list that disc's songs and copyright information.

The rest of the booklet is a beautifully designed and informative (though sometimes arrogantly written) history of the group, with pre- and post-Renaissance information on the musicians (Annie Haslam—vocals; John Tout—piano, keyboards; Jon Camp—bass, bass pedals, vocals; Michael Dunford—acoustic guitars; Terrence Sullivan—drums, percussion).

We should note that all the songs from *Prologue* and *Ashes* are presented in their live versions; this is good considering that *In the Beginning*, naturally, has the original studio versions and duplication when choices are scarce is a pain. Also, the live version of "Ashes are Burning" is far more interesting than the studio.

Both discs clock in at around 75 minutes. There's plenty of room for the longer

songs, like "Can You Understand" (10:24), "Running Hard" (9:37), "Mother Russia" (9:18), "Trip to the Fair" (10:48), "Can You Hear Me?" (13:39), "Touching Once" (9:25), "A Song for all Seasons" (10:56), and the aforementioned "Ashes" (23:47).

And lastly (for the positive attributes), their penultimate album, *Camera Camera*, and their swan song, *Time Line*—both forgettable—have been ignored, leaving the integrity of the band intact on this compilation.

My initial fear—that this

would greatly delay or even preclude CD versions of the original albums—frustrates me further with the paucity of tracks taken from *A Song for all Seasons* and the exclusion of "Song of Scheherazade," the side-long suite recorded with members of the London Symphony Orchestra. Included on Vol. I is but one short (4:04) segment that is snipped from the middle of the piece, out of context, that ends without satisfying the need to hear the expectant parts that should follow.

The live version, nearly 30 minutes long, is likewise endangered should there be no subsequent CD release of the live album. If any Renaissance composition could make

logical (and largely chronological).

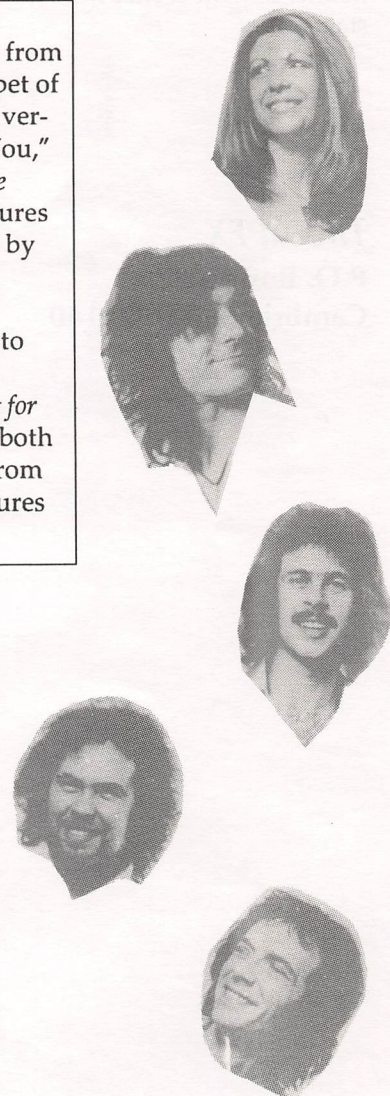
There are no "lost" tracks, remixes, or previously unreleased live or studio tracks. The packaging—including the booklet and the color scheme (orange and green, reflected on the booklet cover and the label side of each disc)—is beautiful and elegant, quite an appropriate way in which to present the special music of Renaissance.

All in all, this is an important addition to a progressive CD collection, especially if this is all that Sire intends to release. We should, however, try to make it clear to Sire that there are consumers (you know, people with money and a desire to buy) who want more. Lots more. @

	The tracks are as follows:
Vol. I	"Prologue" (originally from <i>Prologue</i> ; this version is from <i>Live at Carnegie Hall</i>), "Can You Understand," "Carpet of the Sun" (both from <i>Ashes are Burning</i> ; again, these versions are from <i>Live</i>), "Running Hard," "I Think of You," "Black Flame," "Mother Russia" (all from <i>Turn of the Cards</i>), "Ocean Gypsy," "Trip to the Fair," "The Vultures Fly High," "The Young Prince and Princess, as told by Scheherazade" (all from <i>Scheherazade</i>).
Vol. II	"Can You Hear Me?," "Touching Once (is So Hard to Keep)," "Midas Man" (all from <i>Novella</i>), "Northern Lights," "A Song for all Seasons" (both from <i>A Song for all Seasons</i>), "Jekyll and Hyde," "The Winter Tree" (both from <i>Azure d'Or</i>), "Ashes are Burning" (originally from <i>Ashes are Burning</i> ; this version is from <i>Live</i> and features an amazing bass solo.)

a CD live up to its potential, it is "Song of Scheherazade."

To summarize, the two volumes of *Tales of 1001 Nights*, while inexpensive, are nevertheless two separate products. This is unnecessary, shows the lack of faith on the part of Sire, and is inconvenient to the consumer. The sound quality makes it worth having on CD, which cannot be said for many progressive CDs made in the USA. The song selection, with at least one very notable exception, is impressive and



Hammill, continued

line between assuredness and uncertainty marking all human endeavors. From the intricately entwined chords of "The Future Now" (PH7) to the spellbinding *a capella* of the finale "Chicago" (from Robert Fripp's *Exposure*), the artfulness certainly never failed. His music provided the pensive highs and bristling rumbles of a man who has sustained a dedicated following for over two decades.

Though Peter Hammill has never achieved the fame of contemporaries like Peter Gabriel and David Bowie (both of whose sound he influenced), this show proved that whenever he performs, there is neither a silent corner nor an empty stage. ☺

The APEX

P.O. Box 661

Cambridge, MA 02140

New HTM CD due in fall

by Greg Katona

I have some further news on Happy the Man to report.

I just received a letter from Kit Watkins. He informs me that a CD release of HTM's early pre-Arista tunes will be called *Beginnings* and is due in September, 1990.

Among other things, it will include "Leave that Kitten Alone, Armone," a tune that may be familiar to some HTM fans.

"Death's Crown," the 50-minute multi-media piece (of which "Open Book" from *Crafty Hands* is a segment) was unfortunately never recorded.

At least we have the release of the *Beginnings* CD to look forward to. It will no doubt be filled with the same exquisite music we have come to expect from Happy the Man. ☺

Want to write to Kit Watkins? Here's the address (thanks to Greg for sharing it; guess who'll soon be receiving every issue of On Reflection?)

Kit Watkins
P.O. Box 520
Linden, VA 22642

Be sure to let Kit know that HTM made music that mattered, and that progressive rock lives on!

We know progressive music when we hear it!