

On Reflection

The newsletter
of *The APEX*

Exclusive interview:

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Annie Haslam takes it a step further

INSIDE:

Relayer	p. 2
Jan Akkerman	p. 3
Market Value	p. 4
A. Holdsworth	p. 6

Perhaps the only true vocal virtuoso in the genre, Annie Haslam has long been a favorite of progressive fans. As the voice of Renaissance, Annie typified the classical grace and beauty that was a cornerstone of the 1970s progressive movement. Now, in 1990, she is on her own, touring in support of her first major-label solo album in 13 years. I had the pleasure of speaking with her over the phone last June.

On Reflection: *The origins of Renaissance are interesting. One year there was an album with one group of musicians, and the next year there was Prologue with a completely different lineup. What was going on then and did you ever think, "hey, the original folks are gone, let's just do our own thing?"*

Annie Haslam: No, what happened was...I joined the band in 1971. And before me, Jane Relf was the singer and it was a six-piece band. There was another girl who took Jane's place for six months and the people in the band changed. The band never actually broke up. Keith [Relf] left and someone took his place and Jim [McCarty] left and was replaced, and it went on until they were all different. And then I joined.

When I joined in '71, Jim was still involved; in fact, he wrote the song "On the Frontier" [from 1972's *Ashes are Burning*] and Keith was still involved to a certain extent. But they were responsible for the style of music. We just kind of took it a step further with the classical rock thing.

OR: *What does that term, "classical rock," mean to you? Both Renaissance and ELP are often described as classical rock and yet the two groups couldn't be more different.*

AH: I think it was just trying to write our own kind of classical music. I hate this kind of question because I don't write music and I find it very hard to describe. When I first joined we were using actual pieces of classical music, the same as the original Renaissance. The step further that we took it was by writing our own classical music rather than doing interpretations of existing pieces.

*"Music is the vapour
of art. It is to poetry
what reverie is to
thought, what fluid
is to liquid, what the
ocean of clouds is to
the ocean of waves."*

—Victor Hugo

Relayer

SHADOWFAX REVIVED

In 1975, a group called Shadowfax released one of the most hard-hitting progressive albums made by an American band. The album, *Watercourse Way*, made such an impact on the LA music scene that it was reissued 10 years later.

Shadowfax, however, did not stay true to their form as the years went by. They found their niche in the new age scene and released a number of albums on the Windham Hill label. Although no one would ever call them a bad group, they certainly didn't retain the progressive edge they had in their formative years. Until recently, that is.

On May 20, 1990, I attended a Shadowfax concert at the Coach House in San Juan Capistrano, CA. I had already seen Shadowfax previously, so I thought I knew what to expect. As they came on stage I noticed a new face on violin. Bassist Phil Maggini was quick to announce the band's newest addition, none other than Jerry Goodman (late of the Mahavishnu Orchestra)!

They then cut into two hours of intense music that brought them back to their heyday. Somehow, Goodman's playing encouraged the rest of the boys to play like they were meant to play—with energy. Welcome back, guys!

—Robert Schubert

EMPEROR CRIMSON

Mark McClintock warns us that the Japanese CD version of *A Young Person's Guide to King Crimson* does not contain the same wonderful booklet of photos, clippings, and excerpts from Fripp's personal diary. The 2-CD compilation does, however, contain a booklet that includes the lyrics plus a Crimson family tree.

RELAX, TIPPER, IT'S JUST A JOKE

You probably don't (and shouldn't) care but just for your information, the new album by the Dead Milkmen, *Metaphysical Graffiti*, contains a song called "Anderson, Walkman, Buttholes, and How."

THE NEXT WAVE OF ZAPPA

Ryko has just released another slew of Frank Zappa/Mothers CDs. Included are *Weasels Ripped My Flesh* (Rzzzz!), *Zoot Allures*, *Sheik Yerbouti* (on a single CD!), *Mothers Live at the Fillmore*, and *Tinseltown Rebellion*.

I COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER DEPT.

In the latest issue of *Rolling Stone*, Roger Waters is asked about the recent dramatizations of *The Wall* and *Tommy*. In discussing the shortcomings of *Tommy's* all-star cast, he singled out Phil Collins with the following statement: "I find the ubiquitous nature of Phil Collins' presence in my life irritating..."

CHANGE OF ADDRESS!

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Editor/Publisher:
Jason M. Rubin

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Jan Akkerman gets back in focus

Dutch guitarist Jan Akkerman, formerly the fretmaster of Focus, has just released a new solo album on IRS' NoSpeak label called *The Noise of Art* (IRSD-82041).

Akkerman plays a Gibson Les Paul Custom and Chet Atkins 6 and 12-string guitars on the album, as well as synthesizers and sequencer programming. But this is no electronic bubble bath. In fact, this is probably the best overall guitar album to be released in the last five years or more.

Backing him up are drummers Clive Mayuyn and Brendan Day, and bassists Livingston Brown and Derek Holt. (All but Day are featured on IRS' *Night of the Guitar*, the live album culled from a tour of NoSpeak artists. Akkerman was part of the tour but is not included in the album. He did, however, contribute a track to *GuitarSpeak II*.) The emphasis is on the guitar but not at the expense of composition, melody, and interesting rhythm backing.

The album opens with "Trojan Horse," an upbeat prog rocker with synthesized horn section. "You Can't Keep a Bad Man Up" is a slow blues that burns with feeling.

"Bonnaville" is a straightforward rocker. "Shame on You" is a soulful ballad. You would think that there were vocals on this track but in fact it is the guitar that sings so eloquently. "Having Fun" is just that: a fun funk number that bops and pops. "Prima Donna" is another nice ballad; sentimental, to be sure, but not syrupy. "Prelude/Friends Always" opens with some great acoustic playing and continues with acoustic and electric sharing melody and rhythm. "Akkerman's Sombrero" is a Latin-tinged number with deft touches of flamenco. The album concludes with "My Pleasure" and "Quiet Storm," a pair of prog-rockin' tunes.

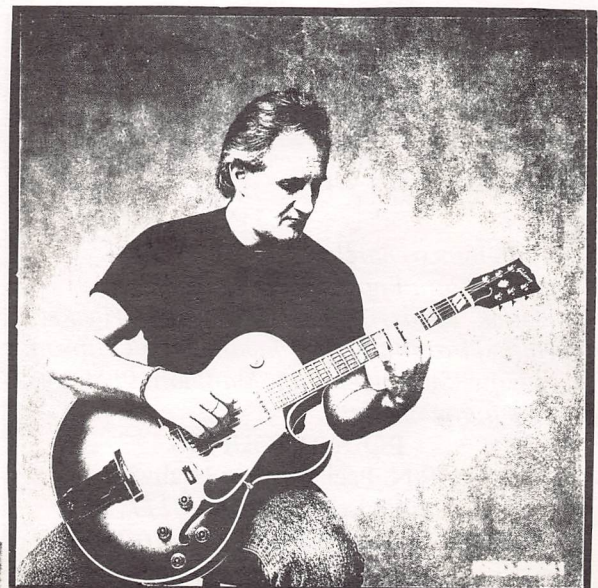
The taste, agility, and feeling Akkerman puts into his playing and his solos make this album so important. It has been a long time since an artist exhibited so much variety and intelligence over a 10-track, 50-minute album. The guitar playing is brilliant without being overpowering. *The Noise of Art* is an intensely musical album with virtuoso performances that both musicians and non-musicians can appreciate.

Akkerman is a classically

trained guitarist who first recorded with Brainbox in 1970. That album had a couple of originals but most of the songs were covers like Tim Hardin's "Reason to Believe," Simon and Garfunkel's "Scarborough Fair," and Gershwin's "Summertime." He left soon after in search of more complex music and became a co-leader, with flutist/keyboardist Thijs van Leer, of Focus from 1971-75. His playing and composing skills were a key component to the artistry of Focus' work.

Concurrently, Akkerman started his solo career in 1972. His early albums featured classic performances of progressive fusion, while 1974's *Tabernakel* is a showcase of classical and original compositions for the lute. In the '80s, Akkerman released a disappointing Focus reunion disc with van Leer and dabbled in New Age, as so many of progressive rock's best musicians have.

Gladly, Akkerman is back with a vengeance. At 43, he seems about to embark on a newly revitalized career as a major instrumental force in the progressive music of the '90s. Get this album! e



Market Value

WANTED:

The following albums (all have Roger Dean covers):

- Babe Ruth - *1st Base*
 - Budgie - *Squawk*
 - Budgie - *Never Turn Your Back on a Friend*
 - Magna Carta - *Lord of the Ages*
 - Paladin - *Charge*
 - Snafu - *Snafu*
 - Nitro Function - *Nitro Function*
- ...and any others except Yes, Uriah Heep, Mc. Spring, Green-slade, Badger, Steve Howe, Asia, and ABWH.

Also looking for audio tapes:

- Yes - Prov. Civic Center, 6/9/76
- Jon Anderson - European tour, December 1980 (he did many shows; looking for any show except Sheffield and London.)

Rick Messina
P.O. Box 610
Wallingford, CT 06492

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• Glass Moon - *Growing in the Dark*
(Prog. pop circa 1982)
Notch in cover; vinyl VG+ - \$2.00

• Tangerine Dream - *Rubycon*
Same grading as above - \$2.00

• Michael Shrieve/Steve Roach - *The Leaving Time*
(w/David Torn and Jonas Hellborg)
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• King Crimson - *Three of a Perfect Pair*
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Interview with Annie Haslam, *continued*

OR: *The song "Ashes are Burning" is, perhaps, the quintessential Renaissance song. Over the years, it has constantly evolved, especially your incredible vocalizing during the final movement. What does that song mean to you and what drives its evolving nature?*

AH: Well, for some reason, the audience just go crazy. The good thing about it is that it gives everybody in the band a chance to show what they can do. It's special because Betty [Thatcher, the lyricist for many of Renaissance's songs] wrote it but then all Betty's songs are special to me anyway. And it gave me a break because while everybody else was doing their thing, I got to go to the side of the stage and rest [laughs her wonderful laugh].

But we're doing it again where we haven't done it for a few years because the last time I came over it was a semi-acoustic lineup and we didn't have a drummer. You know, it wouldn't have worked very well. But now it's a six-piece band, with drums as well, so we've put it back in. And because there are new people playing it, we've taken it a step further, so it sounds different again. It's got lots and lots of energy.

OR: *In the late '70s, all the progressive groups were altering their style to stay contemporary and none really survived after that. With albums like Camera Camera and Timeline, how were you hoping to attract new fans without alienating the old ones?*

AH: I didn't want to do what we did, I mean it was too radical. It was Jon Camp basically, Jon and Mickey [Dunford]. I mean, Mickey was in between but he was the writer, I couldn't really...it was a democratic vote. There were three of us in the band, plus session musicians we took on the road, and they just decided that they wanted to try and take the music into the '80s the way they wanted to, and I didn't like it.

I just thought we were sounding like anybody else. I think we should have tried very hard to keep with what we'd been doing because it was unique and just try to take that a step further, but we didn't. It didn't surprise me that those records didn't do very well. A lot of fans didn't like it.

OR: *Did Jon leave because of those differences?*

AH: No, he left 10 days before an American tour. I was already over here. We were doing a small acoustic thing because we were having troubles getting a record deal and we kept coming back and back. We decided to do an acoustic thing for a change while we were waiting for a deal. And then I got a phone call 10 days before the start of the tour that said Jon had left the band. He'd gotten an opportunity with another band and that was it. He thought he'd have more of a chance with that band and he didn't think that we'd get a deal.

That was a big shock because Mickey was in England, he had to fly over a couple of days later and I had to get another band together because we'd already committed to the tour. And that's when Raphael Rudd and Mark Lampariello joined us. And they're working with me now, in fact. That was a weird time.

OR: *And he's never been heard from since?*

AH: Well, I don't keep in touch with him, no. When we got back to England after the tour he wanted to rejoin because the band hadn't done anything. We said no, thank you. It's changed now and we're not going to change it back. It's a shame but he shouldn't have done it, really.

OR: *In contrast to your work in Renaissance, your three solo albums [Annie in Wonderland (1977), Still Life (1984),*

and Annie Haslam (1989)] show you as more of a song stylist, where the focus is on your interpretation of the song rather than on complex instrumental passages or vocal gymnastics. How do you classify your solo music?

AH: Well, I have to do this, don't I? I mean, that's the only way I got the record deal. I went to the studio in England and did some short songs that were different from what I'd done before, more commercial sounding. And it was the song "Let it Be Me," in fact, that got me the deal with Epic.

I think nowadays that that's what I have to do. But on stage, the new songs are going down incredibly well because they're very melodic. And I don't think they're too far removed from Renaissance. Especially "Wildest Dreams," which is going down really, really well. But we're also doing four Renaissance pieces in the set.

OR: *You have three songwriter credits on the new album: "She's the Light," "Celestine," and "One Love." I assume you wrote the lyrics; is this a new talent or, with Betty Thatcher, had you never had the opportunity to write before?*

AH: No, I never had the opportunity. I was never encouraged by the band at all. In fact, I was discouraged more than anything to do any writing. I didn't really know that I could do it until when Larry Fast [of Synergy, the composer of two of the songs she wrote] became involved as producer, and it was the opportunity to try to do something, and it just came to me.

In fact, I've written some things for a Japanese band named Rebecca. I'm doing four lead vocals on their next album. They sent me four songs without any lyrics and I said, "would you like some lyrics?" and they said "yes, please" [laughs]. So I've just written two more. I want to do more of that. The only reason I'm not writing constantly, like

Allan Holdsworth: *behind a veil of Velvet Darkness*

With some musicians, the range of experimentation and technique that is employed and expanded on throughout their career makes you forget your initial impressions after the first hearing. How nice it is, therefore, to be able to revisit an artist's debut and compare the promise and potential with the resultant repertoire.

It took Allan Holdsworth many years (and Eddie Van Halen) to make a name for himself, even within the realm of progressive music. For a time, he was an unknown guitar wizard whose singular style augmented the complex works of bands such as Ian Carr's Nucleus, Tempest (led by ex-Colosseum drummer Jon Hiseman), Soft Machine, and Tony Williams' Lifetime. As none of these bands ever broke into the mainstream, neither did Holdsworth. So when his first solo album, *Velvet Darkness*, was released on CTI Records in 1976, not many people noticed.

Now, CBS Records is doing the world a great favor by reissuing on CD remixed and remastered works by artists such as Miles Davis (*Nefertiti*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro* and a never-before-released live set), Return to Forever (*Romantic Warrior*), John McLaughlin (*Electric Guitarist*), Al Di Meola (*Splendido Hotel*), and including, thankfully, Holdsworth's *Velvet Darkness*.

If it's been a while since you've heard the album, or if you've never given it a spin, you should definitely check out this CD reissue for it is truly a garden of delights. Holdsworth not only plays electric and acoustic guitar on the album but on one track he plays violin as well (he also plays violin on Tempest's first album). Also appearing on the album is the multi-talented Narada Michael Walden on drums, jazz/funk/fusion journeyman bassist Alphonso Johnson, and pianist Alan

Pasqua, who appeared with Holdsworth on Lifetime's *Million Dollar Legs* earlier that year.

Even though the album clocks in at just around 30 minutes, there is great solo and ensemble playing within. The opener, "Good Clean Filth," is a powerful number that is propelled along with a Crimson-ish eclecticism and great drumming. A funky reggae break adds to the dynamic discordance. Not a tune you can hum. "Floppy Hat" follows, a breezy acoustic piece that provides a nice rest before "Wish" comes along and blows your head off again. What's nice about this tune, compared with the Holdsworth work that was to come in the next decade, is that the guitar is pure. No synths, no space-age computerized axes, just pure, clean, exciting electric guitar. The support on this song is particularly strong as the bass and piano each step out for solos and the drumming is steady and precise throughout. On this tune, one is reminded of Jeff Beck from the *Blow by Blow* and *Wired* days.

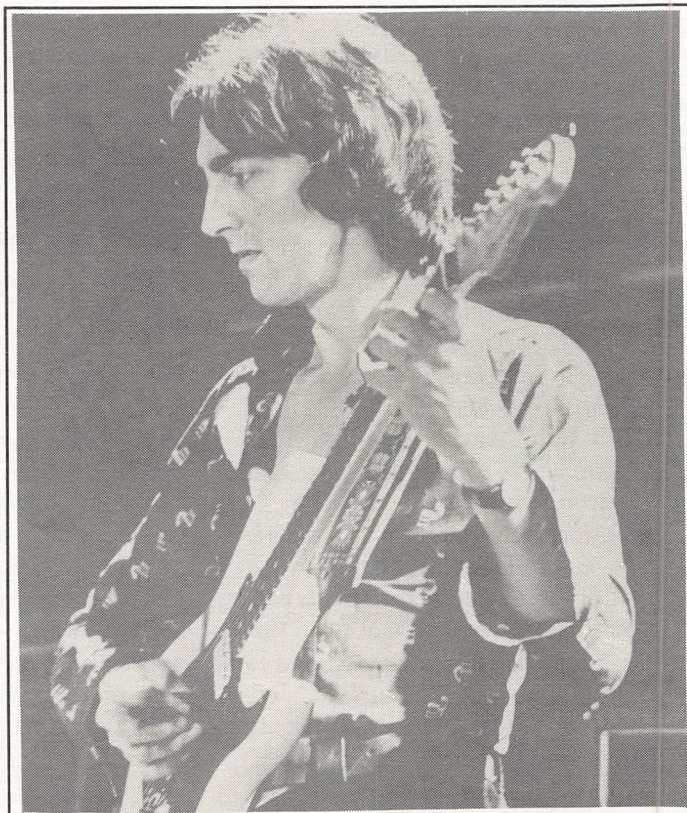
"Kinder" is another acoustic piece, more elegant than Floppy Hat. It strikes me as a precursor to the long, sweet lines he played in the intro to "Nevermore" from the first U.K. album two years later. The title track definitely brings to mind Beck, although the style presented here is clearly Holdsworth's own. Still, he was young (27)

and fairly early in his career and he must have learned a lot in the next few years after this album by playing with Gong, Jean-Luc Ponty, U.K., and Bruford, which helped him shape the style that is his today. "Velvet Darkness" features a nice melody and exceptional support and soloing from Johnson.

"Karzie Key" is a tropical-flavored tune on which Holdsworth wields his trusty violin. I have heard that he was originally a violinist who switched to guitar and it is easy to believe after hearing this track. The style is the same, it is the fresh timbre that colors the atmosphere of the song. "Last May" is a short acoustic number that is very pretty and sentimental. "Gattox" closes the album with classic Beckian flair and a hot piano solo.

Again, to clarify my comparisons to Beck, it is the ensemble arrangements and performances that calls to mind the music that Beck

continued p. 8



Interview with Annie Haslam, *continued*

writers do, is that at the moment I'm more or less managing myself until I can sort things out. I've got a lot on my plate right now.

OR: *It's interesting to hear your version on Rose Royce's "Wishing on a Star." It's the only song on the new album where you really stretch your vocal range. Is this indicative of the direction you're heading?*

AH: Well, I don't normally like to do covers. But in terms of using my vocal range more, yes definitely. I was a bit worried about doing it because their version was so good. I was scared that it would be compared but it's so different the way I do it. It came off very well and I was quite surprised. It was my least favorite to do on the album originally but now I love it, and in concert it sounds amazing. We end the set with it and the high note blows everybody away.

OR: *Tell us what the show will be like. Who's in the band?*

AH: The band consists of Raphael Rudd on piano and synthesizer; Mark Lampariello on guitar, bass, and backing vocals; Caris Arkin on guitar, bass, and backing vocals; Rave Tesar on synthesizer; and Joe Goldberger on drums. It's quite a powerful band.

Aside from the four Renaissance pieces, we're only doing material from the new album because I want to promote it. Nobody knows that it's out because Epic did such a good job of hiding it.

OR: *How's the reception been so far?*

AH: Excellent. We did the Stone Pony on the 1st of June and somebody rang in to Allison Steele on KROC and said that it was a great show and that if anybody missed it to come to the Bottom Line on the 26th. That was really good because I remember in early days of Renais-

sance, people would ring in to the local radio station if it was a good show. We're going down very well.

OR: *So how long will you be out on the road?*

AH: As long as it takes me to get another deal and sort everything out, really. You know, there's no point me going back to England.

Then I'm 3000 miles away [from the record companies in New York]. But I am going back for 10 days in July to do this recording with the Japanese band.

I want the album to be reissued, that's the main thing. I don't want to lose this record, because most people don't even know that it's out.

OR: *And what does the future hold? Will Still Life be released in the US?*

AH: I'm working on that now. I've got people looking into it because a lot of people have been asking for it. So hopefully yes. As for anything else, my main priority is to stay on the road and get a record deal and make people aware of the album. Unfortunately, I'm too busy to write new songs. But like I said, I've got a lot on my plate now and I'm just hoping everything works out. ☺



VIVA LA DIVA - Annie Haslam

CORRECTION

The location for Annie's show in Boston that was printed in last month's issue is incorrect. The concert (which is free) will be held at the Copley Square Park, at 5:00 p.m., Thursday, August 9, 1990.

Holdsworth, cont.

himself was playing at that time. It is not a ripoff, nor is Holdsworth's own singular style subjugated. But with the taste and dexterity of the two guitarists, and the common bond of Narada (he played on *Wired*), it should not be too surprising that similarities exist.

Nor should it do anything but further pique your interest in this early phase of Holdsworth's career. After *Velvet Darkness* came a string of further explorations into the sound possibilities of the electric guitar. Whether on his own or as a sideman, his sheer ability and desire to progress have made him one of the most unique and important guitarists in contemporary music. And let it be recognized that *Velvet Darkness* was an early and crucial rung on his artistic ladder. ☺

Allan Holdsworth 1970s discography

- 1972 Nucleus - *Belladonna*
- 1973 Tempest - *Tempest*
- 1975 Soft Machine - *Bundles*
- 1976 Lifetime - *Million Dollar Legs*
Velvet Darkness
Lifetime - *Believe It*
- 1977 Gong - *Gazeuse*
Jean-Luc Ponty - *Enigmatic Ocean*
- 1978 Bill Bruford - *Feels Good To Me*
U.K. - *U.K.*
Gong - *Expresso II*
John Stevens - *Touching On*
- 1979 Bruford - *One of a Kind*
Gong - *Downwind*

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