

On Reflection

The newsletter
of *The APEX*

Frank Zappa "Czechs" out

Vol. II, Issue 2
March 1990

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"The composer who stumbles in taking a step forward is worth more attention than the composer who shows us how easily he can step backwards."
—Ernest Reyer

Frank Zappa, ever on the lookout for a new challenge, is now the Czechoslovakian Cultural Representative to the United States. Zappa discussed his Czech connection on *CBS This Morning*,

In a voice betraying anger, he said, "Frank Zappa the rocker has been barred from American broadcasting. So Frank Zappa the person is doing something else."

About a year ago, a Czechoslovakian rocker—named Michael something (sorry, I didn't have a pencil handy when I saw the show)—visited Zappa at his house to play and discuss the possibility of Michael performing some of Zappa's orchestral works in Czechoslovakia. Michael was involved in the recent revolution and is now a member of Parliament.

Michael invited Zappa down to discuss larger issues, which led to his new responsibilities. According to Zappa, he will be consulting on such issues as tourism, the Czech economy, and cultural exchanges. He stressed that this has nothing to do with rock 'n' roll, although he is trying to organize a massive concert in New York that will combine Czech and Western musicians.

Reprising his obvious frustration with his American image ("Here's weird Frank Zappa playing his weird music"), Zappa said that someone had been responsible for smuggling his records into Czechoslovakia and that there are many interested listeners there "who like the words, like the music and are interested in what I'm doing."

He also mentioned that his plane was met by thousands of fans, something that doesn't happen in the U.S. The interviewer didn't ask how his time would be managed between this new role

continued p. 8

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Keep your

Look for a spring tour from Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe. So far, I know they will be in Boston on March 20 and Washington DC on March 22.

Former King Crimson drummer Ian Wallace (1972's *Islands and Earthbound*) is on Warren Zevon's present tour.

GuitarSpeak II, IRS' second collection of instrumental works by classic guitarists, features new performances by Jan Akkerman, Robin Trower, Tony Iommi and others.

eyes open

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Relayer

A NICE REFLECTION

As you have no doubt noticed by now, *On Reflection* has a new look. Much of this has to do with the fact that I am now doing it on a Macintosh. The new typefaces, I hope, will lend an air of excitement and action. I don't yet know why, but I'm bullish on progressive music in the '90s and I want *On Reflection*, naturally, to reflect that.

A wonderful coincidence exists concerning the banner, or nameplate (that's the title on the top of page one). As most of you know by now, "On Reflection" is a Gentle Giant composition that appears on their 1975 classic, *Free Hand*. A special software program was required to do the reflecting shadow under the title. That software program is called Aldus FreeHand.

TO UNSIGNED ARTISTS

Thanks to APEX member Mark Doomkey for alerting me to this ad placed in the January 1990 issue of *Guitar World*:

NEW LABEL SEEKING ARTISTS influenced by ELP, Floyd, Crimson, Rush, etc. Send tapes, press to: **MAGNA CARTA**, Suite 1820, 208 East 51st Street, NY, NY 10022.

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Cambridge, MA 02140**

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Jason M. Rubin**

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STUDY WITH ROBERT FRIPP

Guitar Craft Services, the business end of Robert Fripp and the League of Crafty Guitarists, has announced that Robert Fripp will present a Guitar Craft seminar at Claymont Court in West Virginia from Thursday, March 8 to Sunday, March 11, 1990.

Players of all levels of experience are welcome. For application information, send a SASE to Guitar Craft Services (address below) or call (304) 725-9793.

GCS also has a nice little catalog/program that they distributed on their recent tour. Among the stuff they have to sell are *Discipline* and LCG t-shirts, pins and decals, as well as recordings, pamphlets chock full of Frippphilosophy, strings and picks.

The merchandise on the whole is of excellent quality (I highly recommend the 5" *Discipline* logo decals) and the money goes to support Guitar Craft classes, recordings and tours.

For a catalog or seminar application, write to Guitar Craft Services, Rt. 1, Box 278-M, Charles Town, WV 25414, USA.

ONE IN A MARILLION CROWD

Marillion kicked some ass in Boston on February 7. The 650-capacity Paradise Rock Club was wall-to-wall with highly satisfied Marillion fans. This was my very first experience with Marillion and I was most impressed. The performances were tight, well executed and exciting to watch and hear.

New singer Steve Hogarth no doubt shelved fans' fears that Marillion couldn't be as good without Fish. Again, I'm new to Marillion, but Hogarth was very respectful of the material and genuinely loved singing the songs (which he did very well). He was obviously getting off on the music and never tried to divert attention to himself during the

instrumental passages. Towards the end, he thanked the audience for making him feel so welcomed and then rewarded them with a medley of old classics. I found him to be a very classy and hard-working guy.

The band itself was in a solid groove all night long, and earned every ovation and encore. Here is the complete set list:

King of Sunset Town
Slainte Mathe
Script for a Jester's Tear
The Uninvited Guest
Easter
Warm Wet Circles
At That Time of the Night
Berliner
Season's End
Kayleigh
Lavender
Wide Boys
Hooks in You

Encore: Incommunicado
After Me
Market Square Heroes

(including a verse and chorus of Alice Cooper's "School's Out")

FYI: Before Marillion went on, the club played a number of progressive tunes, among them "Roundabout," "21st Century Schizoid Man," "2112," "The Song Remains the Same," and "Are You Experienced."

STILL SMOKIN'

To benefit the Armenian Earthquake Fund, an all-star cast of musicians has recorded a version of Deep Purple's classic "Smoke on the Water."

Among the artists involved are Ritchie Blackmore, David Gilmour, Alex Lifeson, Brian May and Tony Iommi on guitar; Keith Emerson and Geoff Downes on keyboards; Chris Squire on bass; and Ian Gillan and Paul Rodgers on vocals. Neil Peart was supposed to drum but his schedule prevented it.

Downes also produced the session. No release date was given. ☺

Anderson, Levin join in Indian tribute/benefit

Jon Anderson and Tony Levin are among the artists who have contributed their talents to *Requiem for the Americas: Songs from the Lost World*, a benefit album for the Save the Children Foundation (1989: Enigma Records, 7 73354-2).

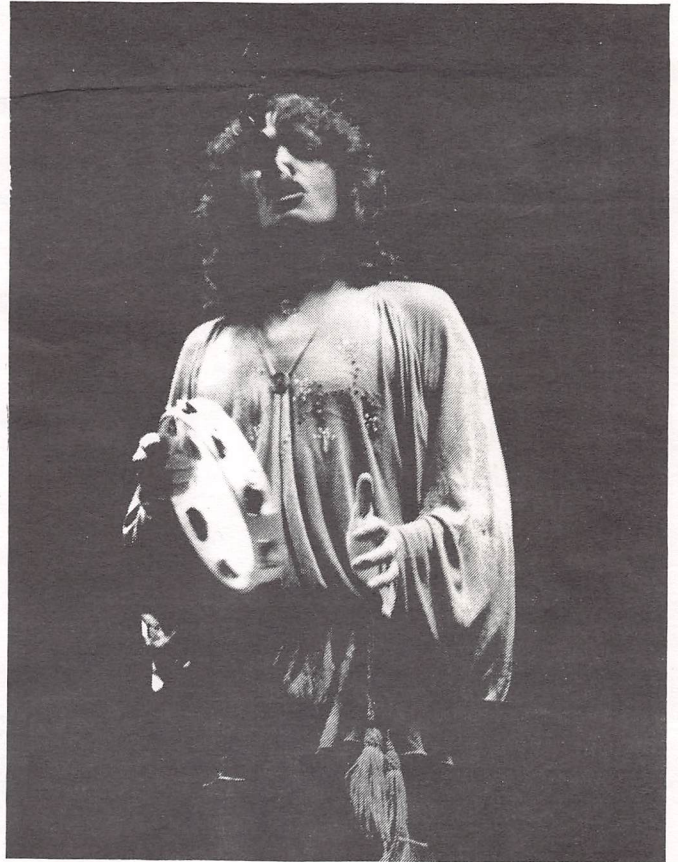
The album, composed and produced by Jonathan Elias, celebrates and is influenced by Native American culture. Some of the songs focus on a shaman named Ihala and on the Indians' close relationship with the earth. One song, "Far Far Cry," includes an Indian prayer.

That song and a couple of others are sung beautifully by Anderson, with Levin playing stick on a number of cuts. The album also features ex-Zappa guitarist Warren Cucurullo, Toni Childs, Stewart Copeland, Jim Morrison (we knew he was in Paris the whole time), Grace Jones, actors Martin and Charlie Sheen, and others.

Boston Globe rock critic Steve Morse said, "Musically, *Requiem* often sounds like a melting pot of richly textured progressive rock, ethereal folk and ambient high-tech New Age music, framed by various Indian chants and exotic percussion by the Xipe Totec Drummers."

He also noted that the music owed "...a few all-too obvious debts to Peter Gabriel's spiritual synthesizer soundscapes from his *So* album."

The proceeds from the album sales will be routed to 60 Indian tribes in North America. ☺



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The evolution of Man (and the Neutrons)

THE DAWN OF MAN

Man should have been called Everyman, because they incorporate a bit of several progressive styles in their music. There's spacy stuff, hard rocking stuff, long jams, a touch of silliness, and a general sense of intellectual musicianship.

Coming out of Wales, the band recorded a string of obscure and, I'd wager, impossible to find albums: *Revelation* (1969), *Two Ounces of Plastic With a Hole* (1969), *Man* (1970), *Do You Like It Here, Are You Comfortable?* (1971), and *Live at the Padget Rooms, Penarth* (1972). All except the live album are on obscure and no doubt extinct labels, and only *Man* and *Do You Like It Here* were released in the U.S.

The live album, though, began their association with United Artists, and this is where Man made their mark. By the third album, a cohesive and fairly stable lineup had been established: Michael Jones (gtr, voc), Clive John (gtr, key, voc), Deke Leonard (gtr, voc), Martin Ace (bass, gtr, voc), and Terry Williams (drums).

In 1972, Man put out *Be Good to Yourself at Least Once a Day*, the album that got me into the group. Leonard had left before this album but he scribbled a family tree of the group on the inner sleeve and returned to the group in time for the next album. Martin Ace had also left and he, too, would show up later. This album featured two notable replacements—Will Youatt on bass and vocals, and Phil Ryan on keyboards and vocals.

Be Good to Yourself is quite an extraordinary album. The gatefold cover opens to reveal a pop-up cartoon map of Wales. But what pops up in the grooves of the vinyl is really something to hear. There are four songs: "C'mon" (11:03), "Keep on Crinting" (8:14), "Bananas" (9:22), and "Life on the Road" (7:09). I am partial to "C'mon", where Ryan

interjects a tasteful *Three Friends*-era Kerry Minnear organ solo, but each song shows off Man's strengths—vocal harmony, ability to stay tight during long jams, driving layers of guitar, and all-around excitement.

In 1973, Man put out *Back into the Future* and then a two-10" set called *Christmas at the Patti*. For you search service freaks, the catalog number on the latter item is United Artists UDX205/6 (UK).

ENTER THE NEUTRONS

At this juncture, Youatt and Ryan left to form their own band, the Neutrons. Stupid name, but they made two excellent albums that are more "composed" than Man's music. Yes, that means the songs are shorter but it really indicates a more focused, arranged and song-structured compositional style.

The rest of the Neutrons were Martin Wallace (voc, gtr), Ray "Taff" Williams (gtr), Caromay Dixon (voc), and Dave Charles (drums). On their first album, *Black Hole Star* (1974), Gentle Giant drummer John Weathers performed on four of the eight tracks.

[As illustrated in the family tree from *Be Good to Yourself*, Weathers' connection to these guys goes back to 1965, when he and Martin Ace were in the Brothers Grimm. Then in 1969, Weathers, Ryan and Taff Williams were in Eyes of Blue, which recorded one album. In 1970, Weathers and Ryan recorded an album with another gent as Ancient Grease, and then joined Piblokto, which included Youatt. Finally, in 1971, Weathers, Ryan and Williams recorded as the Big Sleep.]

Standout tracks from *Black Hole Star* include "Living in the World Today," which sounds the most Man-ly; "Feel," a very nice acoustic piece with an electric guitar solo and excellent backing vocals by

Dixon; "Dance of the Psychedelic Lounge Lizards," which is dedicated to Graham Bond; and "Snow Covered Eyes," which, like "Living in the World," is a trio tune by Youatt, Ryan and Weathers.

The Neutrons followed up the next year with *Tales from the Blue Cocoons*. The album has a slightly different feel from the first, due mainly I think to the songwriting. On the first album, virtually every song was written by Youatt and Ryan as a team. On *Tales*, Youatt has three solo writing credits, Ryan has two, Wallace and Williams each contribute one, and Ryan and Wallace teamed up for one. Notable songs include "Live Your Lie," a duet with Williams on acoustic guitars and Dixon on vocals; "L'Hippie Nationale," with Youatt on vocals, bass, rhythm, acoustic and lead guitars, and piano; and "Welsh R. Blunt, or The Dextrine Dormouse," an instrumental tune with Ryan on a number of keyboards.

MAN'S AUTUMN YEARS

Meanwhile, Man carried on with *Rhinos*, *Winos and Lunatics* and *Slow Motion*, both of which were released in 1974, featured somewhat shorter songs, and were the last Man LPs to be released in the U.S.

In 1975, Man issued a killer live album called *Maximum Darkness*. With the lineup back down to Jones, Leonard, Ace, and Terry Williams, they invited the late, great John Cippolina from San Francisco to accompany them. If you're looking for an album of blistering, quality electric guitar work, this is it. The drumming, also, is manic and inspired. The 50-minute album contains five songs so strong in power and energy that it is easy to see why the stylus needs a substance as hard and perfect as a diamond to get this sound out.

Echoes

THE DEBATE RAGES ON

I would like to address Frank Jarvis in response to the points he made in the last issue. If all Frank is looking for is Hammond organs, mellotrons and mini-moogs, then that is fine; there is certainly plenty of that sound to go around.

But there is also a wealth of new music and sounds being created that go largely unnoticed because they don't quite fit the mold. When we as "progressive music listeners" want everything to fit into that "symphonic/Hammond/mellotron" sound then are we not doing exactly what we accuse the record companies of doing, namely narrowing everything down to a formula?

The progressive music that stands out in my mind from the last ten years as being the most memorable has to be the neo-classical groups like Univers Zero, Present, Cartoon/PFS, Nazca and Art Zoyd. Of course there were and always will be artists whose main focus is to breathe life into the past. The best examples from the 1980s might be IQ, Sagrado Coracao da Terra, Deys, Iconoclasta, and Mastermind.

A good example is found in 20th century classical music. On the one hand you have had the great innovators—Stravinsky, Stockhausen, Berg, Berio, Bartok, Schoenberg—all making the accepted norm topple and fall. On the other hand, you have had the neo-classicists like Copland, Gershwin or Britten whose main thrust was to remind people of the past and the rich heritage that formed the basis for all music. In short, just because you love Mozart and Beethoven, you shouldn't keep the Stravinskys and Stockhausens of the world from pointing you towards the future.

If progressive rock music is going to thrive, not merely survive, in the coming decade (and I really think that is possible), we as listeners

and supporters have to be open to new ideas and new sounds. Support those musicians who are trying to do something different and new even if you may not feel like they have quite achieved it as yet. Remember, it took Yes three albums to make a statement and Emerson made several sketchy albums with the Nice before that first landmark ELP record. So try some new things, take some chances and if you find someone new you think is OK but not great, stick with them and see what happens. It may be rewarding!

The '70s are gone but that doesn't mean that we have to settle for anything less than the excitement that we felt then. Nostalgia is great but there are new sounds that will move our emotions in the same way without making us yawn!

Stephen Roberts
ZNR Records
Louisville, KY

WORLD TRADE SINGER IN YES

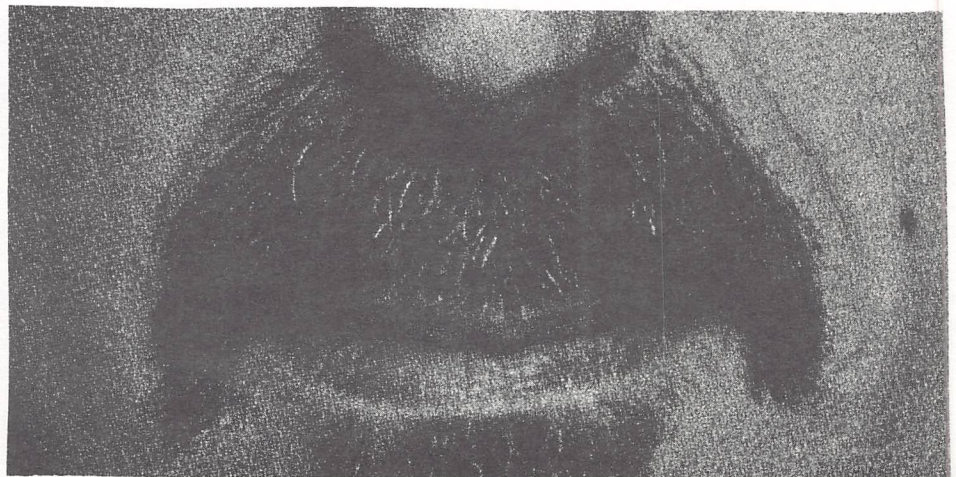
I saw your piece in the February issue on World Trade and I have some more information on them that you may find interesting.

First, World Trade's nucleus consists of William Sherwood and Guy Allison. Their first band was called Lodgic and they released one album on A&M Records called *Nomadic Sands* (of course, it is out of print now) produced by David Paich of Toto. After Lodgic broke up, Allison and Sherwood ran into Mark Williams who was doing work on the latest Toto album. It was then that World Trade was formed.

Today, however, the future of World Trade is in question because *Sherwood is the new vocalist for Yes.* My brother owns the Power Plant Rehearsal Studios in Burbank where Yes is now rehearsing. World Trade also rehearses there but while they have not booked time in quite a while, Yes—with Sherwood—has been there every day for the last couple of weeks.

Even though Lodgic's album is hard to find—I'm one of only two people I know who own it—it is required listening for anyone who is a fan of World Trade.

Robert Shubert
West Covina, CA



VERDICT: IT BITES!

A friend alerted me to a review of It Bites' *Eat Me in St. Louis* from the February 1990 issue of *Stereo Review*. Rarely have I read such a glowing review of any album, much less a 1989 disc of (supposedly) progressive rock, "that maligned stepchild of the Seventies," so says the review.

You can imagine my excitement at hearing about a new band favorably compared to Yes and early Genesis. Described as containing "well-thought-out guitar solos, bracing keyboard chases," "impeccably coordinated meter changes," "a fine melodic touch" and "a powerful emotional undercurrent," I fantasized that these guys might be the outfit who could deliver progressive rock into the 1990s. Boy, was I wrong.

Eat Me in St. Louis is about as progressive as Dan Quayle and even less exciting. To me, It Bites sounds like a cross between Howard Jones and Def Leppard. The only trace of progressivism on this album is its cover, a feeble effort at best by Roger Dean. But where is it written that if an album cover is designed by Roger Dean, the music contained within is therefore progressive? I guess these guys sat around thinking "O.K., let's get a Dean cover, Steve Hillage producing, heavy drum beats in not-too-odd rhythms, layers of keyboards, lots of guitars and tons of multi-tracked voices. They'll never know the difference between us and Yes."

Wrong, fellas. You forgot that Yes has something you don't: TALENT. And even though Yes may be an influence, it certainly sounds like they spent more time listening to GTR than *Close to the Edge*.

I guess I should have known better, though. Any reviewer who describes music as being "as thrilling and as much fun as a bobsled ride down an icy mountain" or shining "like chromium" and dazzling "with the fire of a cut diamond" can't have a strong grip on reality.

But what offends me is not his giving a good review to a bad album. That and the reverse happen all the time. My main beef is his ludicrous assertion that this music is somehow progressive. But perhaps this reviewer is not so much an ignorant music critic as a reflection of the state of rock music today. It certainly scares me to think that in the grand scheme of things, It Bites is on the progressive edge of the rock world. What a depressing thought.

So what have we learned today? First of all, never believe any mainstream music critic, especially when it comes to progressive music. Secondly, just because the surface elements of an album seem to be in the progressive tradition (i.e., a Dean cover, Hillage producing, etc.), don't assume that the music will be true to that tradition (note: Tony Banks' *Bankstatement* was also produced by Hillage and is, I believe, a real polyester bore).

Thirdly, if you're looking for new (or heretofore unknown) progressive music, don't look to the major labels. Your best bet is to explore the worlds of independent and imported music. That is, music that is not subject to the fast-food mentality of American music professionals.

Joshua Pincus
Somerville, MA

*"Any time you spend
in rock bands not
progressing is wasted."
—Bill Bruford*

SURVEY

Those two months without surveys must have affected your response mechanisms; I only received two replies to last month's question.

So let's try it again, with a new twist:

What was the best progressive album of the 1980s?

And, what was the most disappointing '80s effort by '70s artists and what could have made it better?

.....

It's ABWH tour time again!

Last summer, several APEX members supported the cause by passing out flyers for *On Reflection* at ABWH shows. Many of you are reading this now thanks to those people's efforts.

If you're interested in doing the same this time around, please let me know. Thanks in advance.

Zappa, continued

and his own music—this was a typical TV reporter who had no idea of Zappa's work, other than that it was "weird."

Zappa's anger at the commercial conventions of the American music broadcasting, now after so many years of thumbing his prominent proboscis at the industry, is telling. Is it getting worse even as it appears to be getting better? Maybe a call to Zappa's "Barking Pumpkin Hotline" at 1-818-PUMPKIN, demonstrating our support for his music and his new position would show him he's not alone in his frustration. (This is a very good info/merchandise hotline; you get a real live person who knows what's going on.)

I'll give the last words to Frank. As he said in the interview, "Frank Zappa is legitimate." ☺

Man, continued

Man bowed out after two more albums. *The Welsh Connection* (1976) and *All's Well That Ends Well* (1977) came out on MCA but never reached these shores. After Man, some members did session work (Terry Williams spent time with Dave Edmunds and Rockpile), and Leonard put out a solo album, his third, in 1981 called *Before Your Very Eyes*.

In 1983, out of the blue, a new Man live album called *Friday 13th* was released in the UK. The quartet featured Leonard, Jones, Ace and John Weathers on drums. The CD was recently released as an import on Line Records (see last issue). The sound quality is a little rough—you can tell it was recorded in a smoky little club—but the music rocks. The liner notes suggested that more was to come, but nothing has yet reached this writer's ears. ☺

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