

MONTAGE BY STEVE J. HILL AFTER MAGRITTE



A feast for the ears at sea

PROGRESSIVE MUSIC'S HALLOWED HISTORY SHAPES CRUISE TO THE EDGE 2018

BY NICK TATE • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENIFER FISHER

Time marches on (to odd-metered beats), confirmed by landmark artist anniversaries observed during this year's fifth annual Cruise to the Edge international progressive festival. Surviving members of Yes, Genesis and Jethro Tull all celebrated 50-year milestones with career-spanning, age-defying performances aboard Royal Caribbean's luxuriant Brilliance of the Seas ocean liner, sailing from Tampa, Fla. February 3–8.

Not far behind on the vintage prog timeline were Gong and Focus, marking nearly as many years along with legendary drummer Carl Palmer, whose ELP Legacy band showcased early Emerson, Lake & Palmer tracks harking back to the trio's eponymous 1970 debut. Cruise to the Edge 2018 also saw 40-year marks for Saga, which delivered its farewell (from touring) performance onboard and Marillion, whose main-stage shows were as captivating as anything the band has delivered since forming in the late 1970s.

Other veteran musos enjoyed recognition for decades of fine artistry during the five-day event. Singer/multi-instrumentalist Neal Morse (performing solo) and drummer Mike Portnoy (with new band Sons Of Apollo)—who rose to prominence in the 1990s with Spock's Beard and Dream Theater, respectively—brought crowd-pleasing sets blending familiar and newly issued material ... Chapman Stick specialist/bassist Tony Levin, longtime standout with Peter Gabriel and King Crimson, played two exquisite avant-garde shows leading latest vehicle Stick Men (founded in 2007), featuring ex-Crim violinist David Cross as special guest ... The Adrian Belew Power Trio, which is approaching its 10th birthday, served an edgy mix of fan favorites from the singer/guitarist's own time with Crimson in the 1980s and '90s, plus original solo band material ... Glass Hammer founders Fred Schendel and Steve Babb celebrated 25 years of melodic-symphonic prog reinvention with two shows covering the band's best efforts since 1993 debut *Journey of the Dunadan* ... And Japanese trio Baraka, now in its 21st year, made its cruise debut with two sets of flowing fusion incorporating instrumental covers of well-known pop classics ...

Despite many retrospective nods to the birth, development and maturation of classic

progressive rock, this was no nostalgia cruise. Noteworthy efforts came from much newer acts that didn't exist when first-, second- and third-wave prog forebears were making musical waves.

Haken displayed the compositional depth and instrumental skill earning the young heavy symphonic outfit its reputation as cutting-edge contemporary force. The eclectic London sextet (working on a new record due in October) played two albums in their entirety—*The Mountain* and *Visions*—exhibiting distinctive Gentle Giant-meets-Opeth dynamics ...

... Eric Gillette, erstwhile composer/guitarist with the Neal Morse Band, made his solo group debut of prog-metal inflected material from new release *The Great Unknown* ... New singer Dennis Atlas premiered with Argentine ensemble Bad Dreams, bringing a fresh Phil Collins-like romanticism to the former Genesis cover band ... Singer/guitarist/composer Ted Leonard's spellbinding vocal work fronting Enchant lived up to the heavy prog group's moniker ...

... Intriguing genre-crossing performances included the delightful newly minted flamenco-metal trio Heavy Mellow; fusion-fueled New Jersey outfit Thank You Scientist (whose members sit during band mates' solos); plus British symphonic hard-rock outfit IO Earth, which played new studio album *Solitude* in its entirety.

With another insightfully balanced roster of acts both classic and new, Cruise to the Edge clearly has hit stride as a tone-setting event for prog's festival scene, allowing fans to revel firsthand in the genre's glory days while sampling its promising future.

Haken singer/composer Ross Jennings might have said it best, telling *Progression* that the event has become the definitive live showcase for what might be considered the classical music of our times. "It's a celebration of great musicianship," he said. "We're surrounded by—in pop culture—short, simple music. But as musicians, we strive for something more complex and challenging, as do the fans. And that's why I think it's sustainable."

The cruise was a sumptuous feast for the ears: 27 acts on four primary stages, several dozen concert performances augmented by multiple storyteller/question-answer panels and

meet-and-greet sessions. As in prior editions, the cruise honored contemporary prog's wide-ranging stylistic nature with a smorgasbord of offerings as varied as a Spotify playlist. An additional fifth day at sea allowed the 2018 entry to be more varied than ever with a less-cluttered schedule of events, providing more downtime for cruisers to mingle and pursue diversions at ports of call in Belize and Costa Maya.

Identifying highlights from such a richly diverse event, which is best sampled in small bites "buffet style," is a subjective exercise. But several noteworthy performances merit special notice.

The essential Yes factor ... As de facto Cruise to the Edge host band, Yes played two 100-minute shows illustrating its 50-year heritage via one track each from its first 10 albums, beginning with "Survival," off the 1968 debut through "Machine Messiah" from 1980's *Drama*. The greatest-hits show tracked Yes's evolution from a '60s pop-psych act through its 1970s heyday as seminal progressive rock powerhouse. Guitarist Steve Howe was engagingly animated assuming front-man duties, joined by Geoff Downes (keyboards), Jon Davison (vocals), Billy Sherwood (bass), and stand-in drummer Jay Schellen (drums). Original Yes keyboardist Tony Kaye and longtime drummer Alan White (sidelined by back surgery) stepped in for concert-ending renditions of "Roundabout" and "Starship Trooper" that packed an emotional wallop. Kaye, who last played with Yes in 1996, told *Progression* that joining the band for its 50th anniversary was gratifying. "It is history," he said, "and I'm glad I'm a part of history in that respect."

Tull tales from Martin Barre ... Former Jethro Tull guitarist Martin Barre sampled tracks from his 2015 solo album *Back to Steel* before doing a deep dive into the Tull catalog, demonstrating newfound confidence as leader of his own band after 40 years toiling in the shadow of Tull honcho Ian Anderson. Aably assisting Barre's familiarly classic fretwork was singer/guitarist Dan Crisp, replicating Anderson's vocals and flute lines. Barre told *Progression* he has left his affiliation with Anderson behind since Tull's dissolution six years ago but continues to embrace the band's



music, reworking it to his own ends. "I never want to be a Tull cover band, in any way," he said. "But I owe something to Tull as an entity and am very respectful of the music and the fans." Barre is working on two new albums to coincide with Jethro Tull's 50th anniversary this year—a solo entry of new material and a collection of Tull tracks reworked with guest musicians. "I'm celebrating 50 years of Jethro Tull all year!" he quipped.

Marillion's social conscience ... For fans of melodramatic British prog, Marillion's two 95-minute shows were satisfying indeed. Vocalist Steve Hogarth and guitarist Steve Rothery led the band's unofficial 40th anniversary observance emphasizing selections from dark, richly textured new album *F.E.A.R.* (*Fuck Everyone and Run*) along with a few old favorites ("Kayleigh," "Sugar Mice"). Hogarth, whose smoothly evocative vocals are as distinctive as any in contemporary music, provided context for the newer material with biting commentary on the conservative wave fomenting geopolitical tensions in England, the U.S. and elsewhere. In reference to President Donald Trump's election, he asked the Americans present, "What were you thinking?" He introduced new track "Living in Fear" noting, "This is a peace song. For God's sake, why are we still writing them?" Marillion's first performance was capped with a breathtaking encore of "Three Minute Boy," during which Hogarth invited the crowd to "sing softly" with him. The audience complied in a moment of tribal connection between group and fans, many still humming the song leaving the theater.

Channeling the Genesis spirit ... Guitarist Steve Hackett's crowd-pleasing first- and last-night theater shows bookended the festival, furthering his reputation as honorary "Dr. Feelgood." Reprising his high points with Genesis as well as solo material, Hackett demonstrated why the end of his tenure with Phil Collins and mates in 1977 didn't mitigate his creativity or influence. Longtime Hackett band vocalist Nad Sylvan assumed a more commanding presence this time out, perhaps honed by two recent solo albums of his own—*Courting the Widow* and *The Bride Said No*. His captivating turns on "Icarus Ascending," "The Fountain of Salmacis" and "Supper's Ready" brought cathartic intensity to the songs. Moon Safari bassist Johan Westerlund, who led a spirited crowd singalong with Sylvan at the back of the theater during the second show's encore, told *Progression*, "Nad's so good, we forget we're supposed to be missing Peter Gabriel!" Indeed, when will Sylvan get his own solo spot? What say ye, Mr. Hackett?

Lifesigns' rising star ... English neo-progressive act Lifesigns certainly gained deserved exposure with two sunny sets of upbeat yet challenging material drawing liberally from polished new release *Cardington*.

From the pool stage, powerhouse singer John Young thanked fans for their vital crowdfunding support of the album. He also rightfully hyped Lifesigns' facility for melody, introducing catchy new tune "Impossible" by saying, "If pop radio played progressive music, this next song would be a single." If only.

Harmony masters Moon Safari ... Had the Beach Boys collaborated with Yes back in the 1970s, their joint venture might have resembled Moon Safari. The Swedish sextet performed nearly a dozen hook-laden songs in each of its two appearances, distinguished by honey-sweet vocal harmonies weaving through complex arrangements. If you doubt a crowd could sing along in 9/8 time, you haven't seen these guys perform live. Both Moon Safari shows were capped by a capella renditions of "Constant Bloom" that were pure musical magic.

Gong and Knifeworld double duty ... Impressionistic psych-prog acts Gong and Knifeworld—both featuring charismatic guitarist/vocalist/lead merrymaker Kavus Torabi—served important notice that "progressive" still applies in the term's literal sense. Vestiges of classic Gong honoring late guru Daevid Allen remain intact under Torabi's stewardship while Knifeworld's unpredictability pushes stylistic boundaries in surprising, oft-unsettling (in a good way) fashion.

The Dave Kerzner Band for all reasons ... In addition to his group's own shows featuring material from new album *Static*, singer/keyboardist Dave Kerzner was a key cog in tribute performances drawing together musicians from across the prog spectrum, including Steve Hackett, Geoff Downes, sisters Lorelei and Durga McBroom, Jon Wesley, Gabriel Agura, Harry Waters (Roger's son), and Randy McStine. Between performances Kerzner told *Progression* he is working on a new studio album, a live recording of *Static*, a new Rush tribute work, and a new recording of the Genesis classic *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. Stay tuned.

Focus on life of the party ... Focus front man Thijs van Leer (vocals/flute/keyboards) seemed to be everywhere. His performances were typically exuberant, the yodeling Dutchman leading fans in rollicking call-and-response singalongs. He seemed to try out every piano on the ship playing Focus tunes and classic covers. In one of those memorable you-had-to-be-there moments, he commandeered the Schooner Bar lounge piano (anchored most nights by Brook Hansen), regaling late-night onlookers with impromptu takes of "Hocus Pocus," "Waves" and Jimmy Webb pop classic "MacArthur Park." Van Leer wasn't the only star gracing the Schooner Bar piano: Geoff Downes (Yes, Asia, Buggles) gave an unplugged rendition of "Video Killed the Radio Star," the first song that MTV aired in 1981.

Neal Morse, Casey McPherson solo showcases ... In a first for Cruise to the Edge,

two artists appearing with bands during prior cruises signed on for singer/songwriter solo gigs in the ship's Colony Club bar. Neal Morse unveiled his new solo acoustic album *Life & Times*, sporting a country-prog feel. Casey McPherson presented a storytellers-style show, coaxing the crowd into singing a three-part harmony over which he layered verses from Leonard Cohen classic "Hallelujah." McPherson later told *Progression* he loved the venue's intimacy. "When you strip it all down to the songs," he said, "it feels less of a show and more like the opening of a diary."

Saga's open-ended "retirement" ... In one of the more unusual anniversary celebrations, Canadian group Saga wrapped up four decades of music making by staging two 90-minute farewell performances. As always, singer/front man Michael Sadler was a captivating presence, leading the melodic-symphonic band through hit favorites including "On the Loose," "Wind Him Up," and "Take a Chance." Asked why Saga is going go out at the top of its game, Sadler told *Progression* with a wink, "We've closed the door, but we haven't locked it. So I'll just leave it at that."

Late Night Live ... The nightly feel-good gatherings of amateur musicians onboard known as Late Night Live helped define the cruise's festival atmosphere. Coordinated by stage manager Rob Rutz, the sessions involved some 60 musically adept festgoers playing 73 (!) rehearsed prog tunes on which professional talent sat in. Among those seen taking part were van Leer, Levin, Sylvan, Jonas Reingold, Paul Bielatowitz, Simon Fitzpatrick, Davison, Fernando Perdomo, Kerzner and Babb. Noted Levin, "These [musician-fans] are serious about what they're doing; this is not easy stuff to play!" Selections included the likes of "Supper's Ready," "Karn Evil 9," "And You and I" and "My God" among other legendary tracks.

Expecting the unexpected ... Some of the finer moments defining Cruise to the Edge 2018 were unplanned collaborations and special one-off events, including a touching video tribute to late singer/bassist John Wetton (King Crimson, Asia, U.K.) followed by anecdotes from a panel of his peers. Elsewhere ... Neal Morse joined Carl Palmer's ELP Legacy for a heartfelt rendition of "Lucky Man," with guitarist Paul Bielatowitz and Chapman Stick player Simon Fitzpatrick replicating Keith Emerson's signature Moog break ...

... Lorelei McBroom (along with sister Durga McBroom a mainstay of Pink Floyd's backing band) joined Dave Kerzner and friends for a sassy, soulful version of "Have a Cigar" from *Wish You Were Here*. "I'm going to give you some Pink Floyd like you've never heard it before!" she promised the late-night pool stage crowd, before doing just that. ➡

Smooth Sailing Ahead?

CRUISE TO THE EDGE FINDS ITS PROVERBIAL SEA LEGS, FISCALLY AND ARTISTICALLY BY JOHN COLLINGE

Five years into his role of impresario overseeing Cruise to the Edge, Larry Morand has proven a quick study. It wasn't long ago that his experience with the annual Moody Blues cruise on behalf of On The Blue tours hinted at a very specialized audience ripe for the picking. Now, the annual shipboard progressive music festival finally appears set for the long haul.

"When we started this, it was because of the Moody Blues cruise suggesting a rebirth [of the genre] like, 'Wow, progressive rock ... I kind of forgot about that!'"

"But I really hadn't," he clarifies. "I had looked at bands like Threshold and Spock's Beard that I became acquainted with through Concrete Marketing [advertising agency] some 20 or whatever it was, 25 years ago. I just viewed that as good rock 'n' roll. I always thought of it that way, just that they didn't care about keeping to a three-minute song time limit or felt constrained to a format."



Having educated himself on the esoteric non-mainstream art form with its relatively small but fiercely dedicated following, Morand now speaks the lingo of a

diehard prog fan, parsing subgenres like a seasoned veteran—noting, for example, "I think we're going to spread out a bit, I want to get more fusion involved with the next lineup." Hence, Brand X, Soft Machine and Marbin coming aboard next year.

He also cites cues from prog festival forebears like Chad Hutchinson and Rob LaDuca, whose Pennsylvania-based North East Art Rock Festival (Nearfest) set the standard through a highly successful 13-year run. "I now understand Nearfest more and more from having gone through some of the same hurdles," Morand says. "Our stories parallel in a lot of ways."

After testing the concept through four outings that were hit or miss financially, Morand reports that the event's fifth try (Feb. 3–8) was firmly in the black—just 10 of 900 cabins short of selling out, drawing 1,900 music-loving patrons.

Morand and crew now look forward to their sixth Cruise to the Edge slated Feb. 4–9, 2019. For the third-straight year the festival will sail from Tampa, Fla. on Royal Caribbean cruise line's Brilliance of the Seas, this time with port stops in Key West, Fla. and Cozumel, Mexico.

The talent lineup remains in process, but acts confirmed at press time include (along with the aforementioned fusion bands): Yes, Fish, Steve Hackett, Mike Portnoy, Riverside, Jordan

Rudess (Dream Theater), John Lodge (Moody Blues), PFM, Frost, Gazpacho, Pendragon, Magic Pie, Baraka, Electric Asturias, IO Earth, David Cross Band, In Continuum, Alan Jewitt and One Nation, Enchant, Airbag and District 97.

Progression: *Now looking toward your sixth edition of Cruise to the Edge, do you feel you've settled into a comfortable working philosophy?*

Morand: "It took awhile and we're thoroughly happy we've been able to hold on. I think I know where this is going to be and it's a passion. I do think we're getting to where we're bridging the younger audience with the older audience and vice versa. How big it gets, I don't know that it's the next 'big thing' in music. But we've gotten to where even though people might say, 'I don't know who this [group] is, I've never heard of them,' they leave the ship saying 'I've got a new favorite band,' or they've got new appreciation for some other music."

Progression: *So after tinkering with the formula a few years, do you think things are solid going forward?*

Morand: "Yes, I do. You've seen us go through different ships of different sizes, but this [Brilliance of the Seas] is very much like our first ship size-wise. I think it's the proper size and it accommodates everything that we do."

Progression: *What about the financial aspect?*

Morand: "That comes down to what we decide to use for our entertainment budget. One thing this event doesn't have is the type of revenue the cruise line is looking for, which is gambling and drinking. So that's the only thing that hurts us. But we're in the black on this one [2018] and happy about that. The one prior, we trickled into [realizing a profit]."

Progression: *You have had quite a few repeats in the lineups from year to year. Repeating headliners like Yes, Steve Hackett and Marillion seems understandable. But you also have a lot of second- and third-tier bands repeating and I'm curious about the reasoning behind that.*

Morand: "Something very important to us is having bands that interact well with the crowds; musicians that are willing to do extra shows, will pair off and do special performances with other people, etc. Like, I don't think one Neal Morse performance has been the same on any of these. Even for this one when he approached me about it, he was just going to play piano and sing, a singer/songwriter performance. And by the day of the show he had multiple guests appearing.

"So with all of these, what I'm trying to go for is unique performing experiences. Like when Thijs van Leer from Focus decides to

CRUISE TO THE EDGE 2018 BY THE NUMBERS

- 5 Days of cruising aboard Royal Caribbean's Brilliance of the Seas.
- 2 Ports of call: Belize, Costa Maya, Mexico.
- 27 Acts onboard.
- 1,900 Estimated passenger count (a near-sellout).
- 45 Scheduled performances (including duplicate shows by main acts).
- 30 Question/answer sessions, artist talks, meet-and-greet events.
- 2 Last-minute artist cancellations—*Anathema* (reportedly due to illness in the band) and *Sound Of Contact* (two members, Simon Collins and Kelly Nordstrom, quit the outfit just weeks before the cruise set sail).
- 1 Silly cape night theme.

jump on a piano in the Schooner Bar and hold court for an hour. Some of that is why we have repeats, because they really get into the spirit of what this is all about."

Progression: *But aren't you concerned about the cruise getting a tad "same-y"?*

Morand: "I think next year you'll see more names that haven't appeared previously. Others are quality acts that we've watched develop. Someone like IO Earth, for instance, originally was kind of a fledgling band for us that's now playing festivals in Europe."

Progression: *Since the start of Cruise to the Edge, Yes has been the event's unofficial 'host' band. Do you have concerns about Yes's longevity or ability to hang on?*

Morand: "I'd be lying if I said no. I know they love doing this, but like anything ... We just went through it with the Moodies. It's



beautiful sailing with them and they're going into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, announced right before the cruise. Then we arrive ashore to news of the death of one of their original members. It kind of drags it all down and puts mortality into perspective. Obviously, we've lost [vintage genre stars] that have appeared with us—Chris Squire [Yes], Edgar [Froese] from Tangerine Dream, Royce Albrighton from Nektar, John Wetton ... Yeah."

Progression: *So from your perspective, how essential to the cruise is having these keynote acts like Yes, Hackett and Marillion?*

Morand: "It's very strategically important. They are unbelievable bands but also a driving force ticket-wise. Again, there hasn't been a day Steve [Hackett] hasn't done something extra, whether it's getting up to play with Dave Kerzner's band, doing a signing, etc. Steve sees it and wants to take advantage of everything. These performers are strategically important. I

also think they've grown comfortable with this environment and see some exploring they can do with other things. I'm not saying sell their wine, but maybe other things musically.

"Marillion won't be on next year because they'll be touring and doing their special weekend events. Funny enough, during the last Moodies cruise Fish had reached out and we started this conversation for a couple weeks. He said he wants to do it next year and I think he knows that [Marillion, his former band] kind of does it every other year. He's got some different ideas how he would approach this anyway, what he wants to do—some storytelling, etc."

Progression: *Who else have you identified as "signature" acts you'd like to bring in?*

Morand: "Big Big Train is one and we're talking to them. Toto is another one we're speaking with. I want to bring Airbag back next year. Frost, I thought was brilliant. We're trying to get Al DiMeola. He's very reachable,

but with some of these [musicians] it's a matter of getting into their heads what the cruise is all about. Like I said, I want to stretch into fusion, into the Frank Zappa world as well."

Progression: *One anomaly of this year's cruise was shipping off a day before the Super Bowl. Were there any issues for you around that?*

Morand: "Truth be told, I wondered if that was going to affect anyone on Cruise to the Edge, if there would be many real football fans. The answer is, weirdly, Yes wanted to move their show so they could watch the game. They loved the idea of going to the pub, having a few drinks and watching it. Also, Tony Levin [fronting his band Stick Men] reached out about rescheduling his group's first performance so he could watch the game, which we did, because I could tell it was important to him.

"Next year, we depart the day after the Super Bowl, so there will be no conflicts." —

Fifty years of Yes, and counting

STEVE HOWE MULLS SEMINAL GROUP'S PAST EXPLOITS, FUTURE ENDEAVORS BY NICK TATE

At the height of the late-1960s counterculture revolution, Chris Squire walked into a London pub where Jon Anderson was working and the two struck up a conversation about music, just as the term "progressive rock" was emerging to describe the genre they would help pioneer.

From that 1968 meeting Yes was born and, as the story goes, the rest is music history.

Fifty years on, Yes still performs, helmed by longtime guitarist Steve Howe but without Squire (who died in 2015) or Anderson, who left in 2008 and now tours with the "rival" group known as Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman.

In an extended question-answer session during this year's Cruise to the Edge festival, Howe, a veteran of three stints with Yes since 1970, acknowledged the many contributions by former band members and the current lineup comprising Billy Sherwood (bass/vocals), Jon Davison (lead vocals), Geoff Downes (keyboards) and Alan White (drums) through five decades.

He also told *Progression* that Yes's enduring appeal isn't mere nostalgia. But he said the band's golden anniversary is an appropriate occasion to reflect on its development since that key 1968 meeting between bassist/singer Squire and original lead vocalist Anderson.

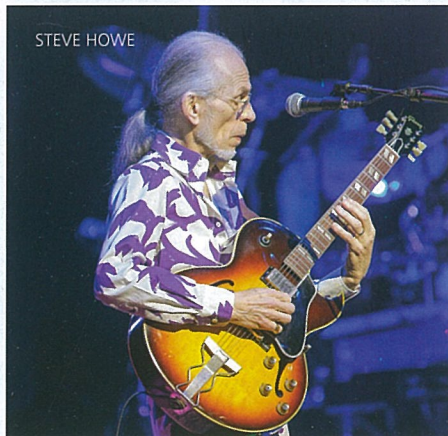
"You can't just [say] it's nostalgia. No, of course not," he said. "But we're all prone to have nostalgia and enjoy it. It's nice to look back. I think that is a great element of music, that it takes you back to when you first heard it."

Looking ahead, Howe also discussed Yes's plans for another summer tour, a new studio album and release of a re-recorded version of

2011's *Fly from Here* (featuring new Trevor Horn vocals and several bonus tracks), due imminently.

Excerpts from Howe's wide-ranging chat follow:

On the continuing popularity of 1970s-era Yes music: "I find with great performances of music that I love, I come back to them, just revel in them and don't ask myself why. For Yes fans, it's like that—they come back to *Relayer*



[1974] or *The Yes Album* [1971]. And maybe it hits them [the same way as] when they first picked up on that record. But that also applies to music written 200 years ago. Loads of music means that much to me."

On founding keyboardist Tony Kaye guesting with Yes during Cruise to the Edge: "We thought it was a great idea for him to do that this year, joining us for tunes he knew very well because he was there from the inception.

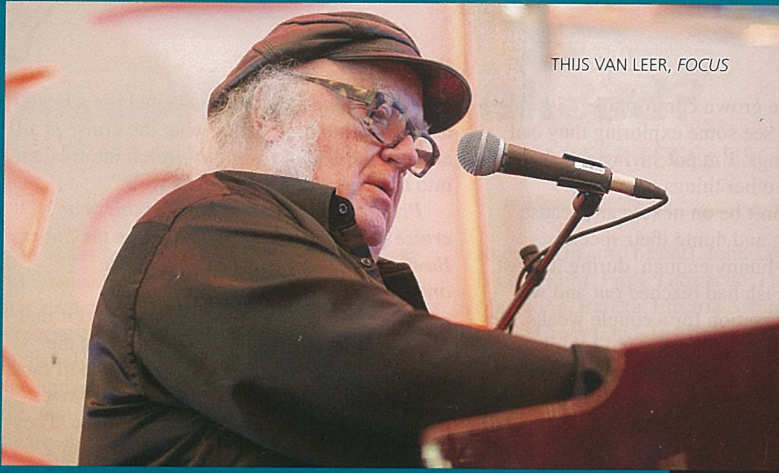
So we have an original member with us, and that's always a plus."

On his favorite, definitive Yes album: "The one [thing] that always comes to my mind is the changes we made from being a band that played four-minute, five-minute songs to one doing 10-minute songs. But *Close to the Edge* [1972] heralded the beginning of the 20-minute pieces, which is somewhat a specialty of ours. So I'd pick *Close to the Edge* as being the most ecliptic album."

On performing older songs like "Roundabout" and "I've Seen All Good People": "It's good to leave one or two of those out every now and again, so you can come back to them later with gusto. In the '70s we had a pattern and we'd never not play them. But that maybe was too predictable and the songs become kind of thrashed or beaten up. What the band has tried to do since 2008 is kind of revolve them so when we're back on them, they're a joy to play."

On playing albums live, in their entirety: "The album [tour] series gave us a chance to really explore what we are, which is an album band. We're not really a singles band. And we're proud of that because we don't need that kind of commercial chit-chat to make our music great. The old motto in the '70s was 'de-commercialize,' don't have some little chorus that goes 'nah-nah-nah-nah' and keep playing it over and over again. Because, that's pop and we wanted to do something else."

On live albums vs. studio recordings: "Live albums are a great part of Yes's music. Sometimes people heard the new album live before they'd hear the studio version. We



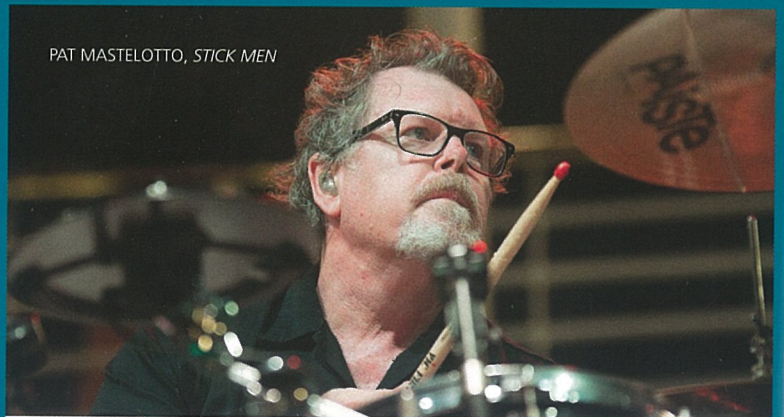
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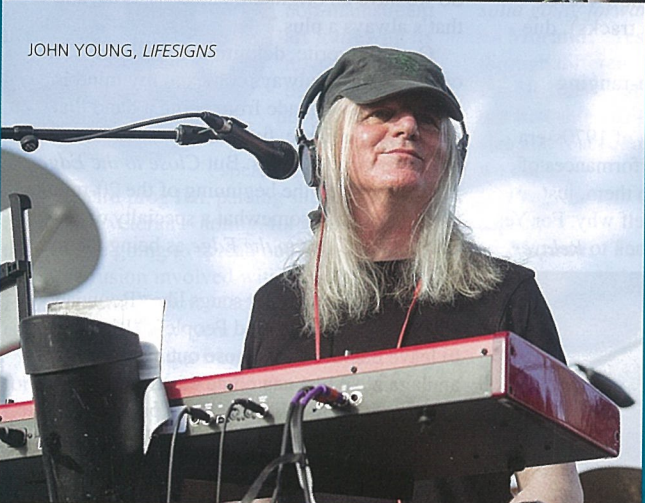
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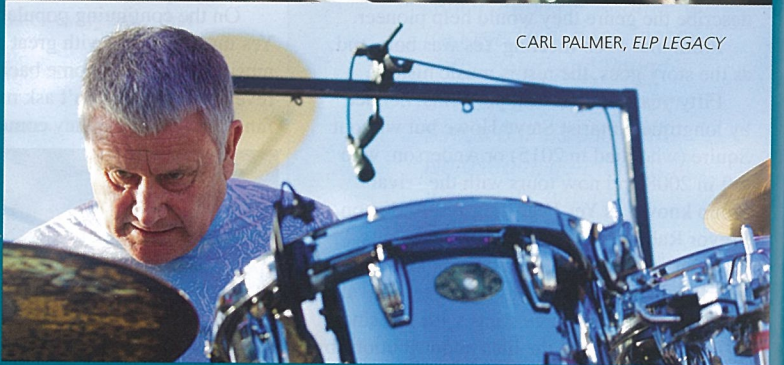
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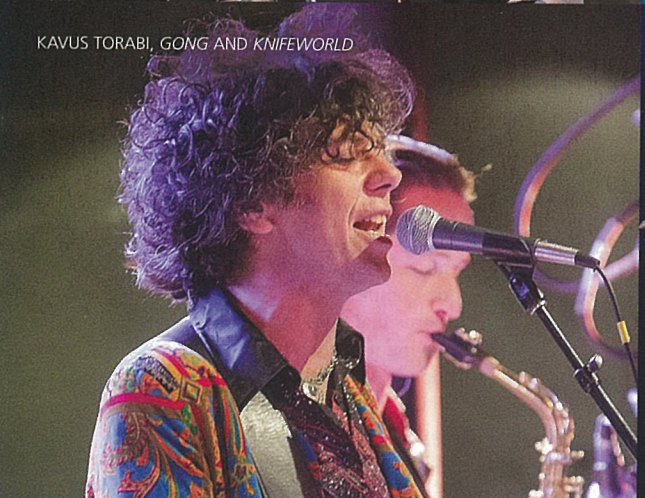
PAT MASTELOTTO, STICK MEN



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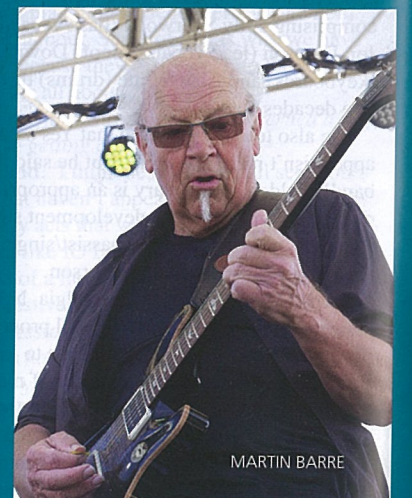
CARL PALMER, ELP LEGACY



KAVUS TORABI, GONG AND KNIFEWORLD



ROSANNA LEFEVRE, IO EARTH



MARTIN BARRE



were playing stuff like *Relayer* and *Tales from Topographic Oceans* [1973] live and nobody had heard it before, they didn't know what we were playing. So there are great things about studio albums and great things about live albums. They're very different animals."

On a new Yes studio album with the current lineup: "I never like saying to people, 'Hey, we're going to make a new album,' and then they wait two years wondering where it is. So I'd rather be more understated and keep things like they're supposed to be—you know, inside the band. We've got some plans but they're not ready yet and they're certainly not going to be announced. We're going to go through the year and work on some songs and see where that brings us.

"I think that's a better way than signing a deal, where they're going to give you a date and say, 'Write the album next week, please.' That doesn't work because you want to get it right, or have time to rethink it. You want to take it to the limit of perfectionism getting the right performances."

On recording vs. touring: "There is a lot more you have to decide with an album than with a tour. You have to decide where it's going to

be done, where it's going to be rehearsed, how you're going to write together. It's a complex thing. There is a lot to it and one shouldn't just start mouthing off about it saying, 'Hey, we've got a great new album, guys, but we haven't actually got any songs yet. Sorry!'"

On the re-recording of *Fly from Here*: "*Fly from Here* was a big production and a good gig working with Trevor Horn, who has done a whole new version of it. But we don't talk much about [2014 album] *Heaven and Earth* because that was very problematic. We didn't work so well with the producer and didn't find it easy. That's why I think we're better off making nice plans to write and record some new things and develop them as we go along."

On what inspires him: "There are a lot of people who influence us, it does go deep. Like for me, I'd heard a lot of guitarists but when I heard Chet Atkins, I was like, 'This is the guy!' But there are other forms of inspiration outside music. You know, family, all of the arts, when you look at Picasso, or Dali, or Dean. When you look across art, that brings light and it's being interpreted. That's what music is doing—it's interpreting light in another form and it's like a quantum leap to somewhere else.

"When you realize how interesting and complicated nature is, you're starting to tap into a major source of potential inspiration. So that's inspiring, to think about connecting with nature. That happens whether you meditate or go through religious encounters, or whether you just wake up one day and go, 'Hey that's really bloody beautiful!'"

On favorite classical composers: "That's such a big question. I wouldn't even want to pick out whether I prefer Bach to Vivaldi to Mozart to John Dowland. It just goes on and on. Classical music is a big resource for us all. In the early days with Jon Anderson, we used to talk a lot about Sibelius, Stravinsky, and Debussy. You have hit on a big subject, but it's too big."

On origins of the band's name: "If you saw [1968 animated film] *Yellow Submarine*, you would have seen that word 'yes' very often. Yes, as a name, is blindingly obvious. It's a great name. But nobody ever thought of it before [original guitarist] Peter Banks thought of it. The guys came out of groups called Mabel Greer's Toyshop, The Syn and The Warriors. So 'yes' was a definitively positive, wonderful word. That's all it is, there are no hidden meanings. I think it was great to call the band Yes." ➤

Navigating a rocky start

ALL-STAR ACT SONS OF APOLLO DELIVERS IN LIVE DEBUT AMIDST TECHNICAL SNAFUS AND PERSONAL TRAGEDY *BY NICK TATE*

Mike Portnoy's fledgling supergroup Sons Of Apollo wowed the prog-metal faithful in two powerful shows on this year's Cruise to the Edge—the first live performances of material from introductory album *Psychotic Symphony*.

But technical glitches and misfortune beyond the group's control nearly waylaid the ex-Dream Theater drummer's gathering of musical brothers, both before and during their opening-night live debut in the resplendent Pacifica Theater. As the band took the stage in darkness, a recorded fanfare heralded what promised to be a thundering intro. But an anticlimactic wall of silence ensued, just as guitarist Ron "Bumblefoot" Thal moved to strike his opening chords.

Thal's guitar amp had cut out entirely, triggering an epic false start that felt like a sinking dirigible. His mates looking on, perplexed, Thal stepped to the microphone before a hushed audience saying, "You guys, I just fucked up really bad."

His endearing mea culpa drew appreciative laughter, clearly winning the crowd over. They quickly rebooted and everything clicked, the ballsy quintet launching into fierce tunes defining Portnoy's latest group vision.

For the next 90 minutes, deft interplay between bassist Billy Sheehan and Portnoy produced a rollicking rhythmic foundation



JEFF SCOTT SOTO

for Thal's intricate fretwork and Derek Sherinian's interlacing synth lines. New songs a la "Signs of the Times," "Lines in the Sand" and "In the Labyrinth" worked exceptionally well, vocalist Jeff Scott Soto exhorting onlookers to "stand up" and ride the energy.

It wasn't until midway through the performance that Soto offered a heartrending revelation putting all else in perspective: Just hours before show time, he learned that his younger brother, Joey, had died unexpectedly. "I got word as the boat was pulling off from shore that my brother had passed," Soto later told *Progression*. "And then it was a matter of, do we go on with the show or not?" Soto said Portnoy and the others left the decision in his

hands. In the end, he decided to press on.

"It was our debut performance. We've been working and anticipating to this point and the show had to go on," he said. "But the guys had my back. They were willing to, if we had to, cancel, postpone, or do whatever based on how I felt. I told them I could do it and I got through it." Soto said he didn't want to "let the guys down or let the people down." But he added, "To be honest with you, part of it was I wouldn't let my brother down. I think he would have wanted the same."

Portnoy affirmed the band was willing to support whatever Soto decided. "It was a little nerve-wracking,"

he acknowledged about all the challenges surmounted during the opening-night concert. "But I think, all things considered, it was really good."

A second show on the ship's pool stage went much smoother. In addition to showcasing tracks from *Psychotic Symphony*, the band ran through covers of "The Pink Panther" and Queen's "Save Me." Soto even got the crowd to sing along after paying an extraordinary tribute to late Queen vocalist Freddy Mercury by reprising—in note-perfect form—the stacked-vocal harmony break from "The Prophet's Song," off classic Queen album *A Night at the Opera*. ➤