

ACID DRAGON #42

More Moon Murmurs

always close to the action and so we can follow each musician and interpretation to the best.

The sound is perfect too: you

can choose between stereophony (2 channels) or Dolby surround 5.1.

If I add there are bonuses (interviews and even a clip), you'll easily conclude this is a very professional product... and you'll be right.

The band set is remarkable too with a sober but effective rhythm section, Robert Reed creating crazy sounds with his digital keyboards, a duo of talented guitar players especially the soloist.

Did I forget anybody? Well, yes!... Christina, the beautiful singer with naked feet and gorgeous vocals. This woman has a fully recognizable voice. She shows she is one of the best all along the concert (Annie Haslam from Renaissance comes to my mind). What a delicacy! What an accuracy! ! What a controlled power! No, Christina, I didn't forget you. The last but not the least!

A great singer, a great band, a great DVD. A must. (JL L)

(F2)

me because of the originality of the music, the lyrics and charisma of their singer (Geoff Mann), I think this band would have deserved a better qualification as 'underground' or 'beautiful looser'. A precursor (they started before Marillion), they were unlucky for their productions (mostly private ones or on small labels) were just 'honest' and then they were not given the real possibilities of releasing great works despite their talent. When it finally occurred (with Virgin), it was at the end of their career, when the outfit was disbanding. The result, "XII", is interesting but not really convincing.

I was a bit anxious when reading the line up and the tracks for this concert: mostly Geoff Mann's songs (large excerpts form their masterpiece "Fact & Fiction") sung by Andy Sears. Not so easy singing songs written by the charismatic rocker and clergyman! Well, I can tell you I was not disappointed at all. Andy is a superb showman and his voice is attractive and expressive enough to transcend those jewels.

The sound and the images show the limits of that time (no remastering was done) but are really correct.

This is more than a document from that fabulous combo or for nostalgic fans. It's a must have for all prog heads. (RR)

(Iguana)

----- TWELFTH NIGHT "Live from London"

This 'economical' collection is a splendid initiative. At last some jewels from the glorious heydays of neo prog (the 80's) when everything seemed possible, are available again. IQ, Pallas and Twelfth Night. Always a cult band for

*Acid Dragon has its own
radio show in Lyon on*



Progressive Music Magazine

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Interviews with:

Anekdoten, Asgard, Asturias,
Flower Kings, PFM, Riverside,
RPWL, The Watch

High Tide (story)

Reviews



52 pages.

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ARENA
"Smoke And Mirror"

All along 2005, Arena is on the road again, just after the promotion of their latest and very good album, "Contagion" (2002). The five musicians gig, celebrating their ten years birthday (already!). This DVD features the whole concert played in the Wyspiansky Theater in Poland, on September 2005 and a part of another one (the Reunion concert in Zoetermeer in Holland on October 2005). There are bonuses too, we talk about that later.

The first concert begins with a humorous intro, the 'we are not big headed' typed, and on we go for 1 hour and a half of pure premium!

The concert takes place in a theatre of a rather good capacity, the required public is thus present for the recording of a live work; the sound is perfect, the light are rather dark generally, as in most visual testimonies of the band, dark but not cold.

The musicians seem to be in cracking form but not very expressive as usual, concentrated on their music, Rob Sowden seeming glued on one square metre.

He says it from the start, the band will play old songs; but in fact not as much: 7 tracks out of 19 from the "Visitor", three from "Pepper's Ghost", two from the first two albums and (surprise!) two from "Immortal" which is for me a second choice album. However these two tracks deserve to be here, the unit of the DVD is thus balanced perfectly. I have to underline something impor-

tant: all along the evolution of the band, the respective influences are less and less present. John Mitchell's guitar becomes more prominent in the band sound.

Let's notice the (nice) video show too. Throughout this concert, we once more feel Arena's extraordinary capacity to play a music which is rather close to the studio versions, energetic but so vibrating, with very refined melodies and gorgeous arrangements. Yes, Arena, that's good stuff!

The second concert does not add many thing to the recipe, featuring six tracks already on the first concert but with old members of the combo.

The bonuses are rather traditional: interview (not translated), biography and discography (...). A good complement for the neophytes.

Even if you have other DVD by this band, this document is not superfluous, for quality is here. (O S)

(Verglas Music-Metal Mind Production)

MAGENTA
"The Gathering"

First DVD by Magenta. For those who don't know this symphonic and neo progressive English outfit, it is a meaningful visiting card.

This two hours concert was recorded when the band played in Wales in May 2005.

First of all, I have to highlight the production and the technical means used to release this DVD. The images are very contrasted, full coloured and show an impressive quality (this is almost high definition). The several plans and angles are varied and rather elaborated, the six cameras present are

Dream Dealers since 1988

AD: What about PFM's first violin player?

PFM: He left the band in 1976. We are still friends. This is why he played with us in Siena. He plays ethnic music now. In PFM, we have various influences, you know. From ethnic, to rock, jazz and classical. There are no musical divisions inside our band. Each musician is different from one another.

AD: This may explain why your albums are so different... No solo album projected?

PFM: No, I don't need that. I compose inside PFM. I don't play bass only, you know. I composed music for TV for instance. And if I release a solo album, it has to be really good because I'm from PFM, you know! Or maybe 'music' but not a bass solo album. In the way of Michael Manring, a very good friend from the States and an awesome bass player who can play extraordinary things with his bass as if it was an orchestra. He modified his bass to express himself.

AD: Since you're French, do you have any nostalgia of France?

PFM: Well, yes but I'm not far from France (300 km), you know. I watch French TV. I phone my cousin every day. I feel a French man. I like the French culture. I don't feel frustrated not be known in France but I'd like to play there. When we played in Quebec, it was fantastic! I spoke French to the public.

AD: What about PFM's future?

PFM: We don't want to stop playing. We tour much. Our project ("States of the Imagination") with 3 films (persons, places and civilizations) about Leonardo da Vinci, Archimedes in Sicily, Venice... had success with the Italian authorities: 'this is fantastic! We'd like to support that show! Develop it to more'. We're going to work on this project for the Italian embassies all over the world.



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AD: As a Frenchman, how were you welcome by the Italians?

PFM: Very well! They don't even remember that I'm French!!! ○

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about your popularity in Italy? You're still big!

PFM: We are 'out of the roundabout': the singles, MTV, the radios... We want people come to listen to our music as in a jazz concert. All PFM concerts are sold out. We had three different shows in Milan. We have four different shows. We have six hours of show. We did a show ("State of the Imagination") with a film projected on a screen in front of us and we improvised on with what we saw.

Next week, we'll start a show called "PFM in classics", PFM will play inside the Savona symphonic orchestra and we'll rearrange classical music, improvise inside the orchestra. It's a very good experiment for us. A very good period for PFM now! People come to see PFM doing music not for some songs.

AD: Your fans are not only progressive fans.

PFM: They are PFM's fans. A very wide audience! Many young kids show the records to their father and they say 'go and see them and bring back an autograph!' Those kids say 'I never saw PFM but my father did'.

AD: Where did you play?

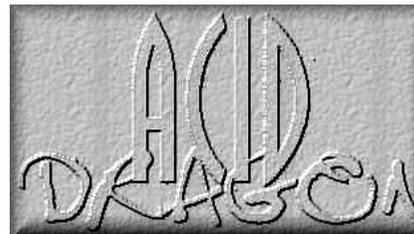
PFM: We played in Japan (3 concerts), South Korea (a big concert there!), Brazil, Mexico, Canada, USA... We're going to play to Mongolia next! But we never played in France since... the seventies in Paris. I'd really like to play in France. I was born in Cannes, you know. I don't understand why we couldn't. I know some people know us in France: my cousin told me so. At a record shop, someone told him, 'Djivas', I know this name! My cousin plays in PFM. Oh, yes I do know them!

AD: How did you join PFM?

PFM: I was playing in a French band in Cannes. I played for American soldiers there. I met the manager of a blues band, an excellent band with a female singer in the way of Aretha Franklin. He said, 'well come to play with us in Europe!' We played in Germany in the military bases, Italy. Then I founded Area and I met PFM during a jam session. I had a date with a girl but she wasn't there. It was too late, she had gone. PFM asked me 'why don't you play with us instead?'

AD: Do you have contacts with other Italian bands?

PFM: Yes, most of them, at least with the musicians. They're friends. I had very good relations with Demetrio Stratos. I left Area because of the drummer, not because of him but because his musical direction was different from mine.



Dream dealers since 1988

Facts & fiction

Lyon, 2005: Ange plays for less than 400 persons. Tiana festival in Barcelona (Spain): our special correspondent counted about 400 persons. For PFM, Riverside & Anekdoten! Prog Sud festival in Marseille (France): he found the same (each day) for prestigious guests such as Soft Machine, Mangala Vallis, Asturias, RPWL... What about the Watch, the Flower Kings or the Pendragon concerts in Lyon or Grenoble? Same old song: not even 300 prog heads.

Take now a trip to the past: 30 years ago. Lyon in 1977: Ange played in front of 10.000 persons!

We asked those bands who tour in Europe, USA, Japan if there's a prog paradise. "Not really", they said.

Then is this a problem of way of thinking? People in the 70's being more curious than now? Yes. I think there were less bands and styles too. I think that television had not formatted our ears (but there was no rock on the TV at that time, at least in France). I think that there were no video games. So youngsters concentrated on music. I think that the musical tastes changed too. Another reason is the lack of support from the main medias. Or how can you explain a Pink Floyd concert gathers thousands of persons and not a Pendragon one? I know that many Floyd's fans don't know that their favourite band plays prog and that about 80% of the public of a concert are not prog heads but fans of the band. In France, there are

ACID DRAGON

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Issue 42

about 400 prog heads.
Any solution then? Find a millionaire who loves prog!

PS: this issue is dedicated to Syd Barrett.

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In this issue

The Flower Kings

Lyon. Despite, the flue, Roine Stolt answered our questions after a fabulous set in front of 200 persons (such a shame!). We could interview Tomas Bodin too. A fabulous night, I tell you.

By Roland Roque

AD: A few questions about this new album. Is it a concept album? What is the subject?

Tomas Bodin: I wouldn't say it's a perfect concept album. We had some ideas to put a frame. People checking in and out of the hotel. At this hotel, there a lot of different people.

AD: What do you mean with 'Paradox'?

TB: In this world, everything is a paradox. You have some people saying one thing and behaving differently.

AD: Any connection with "Hotel California"?

TB: Not at all! Except one thing. We've been at this Hotel. Do you know what is Hotel California, I mean the house on the cover? It's a mental hospital!

AD: I thought it was a satire of the consumer society... Do you express what you want in your solo albums than in the Flower Kings?

TB: I mean both. I don't work the same way.

AD: We love vintage, analogic



Precious,
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Marvellous.

By Roland Roque

(Interview with Patrick Djivas & a little help from Franz Di Cioccio during the Tiana festival in Barcelona)

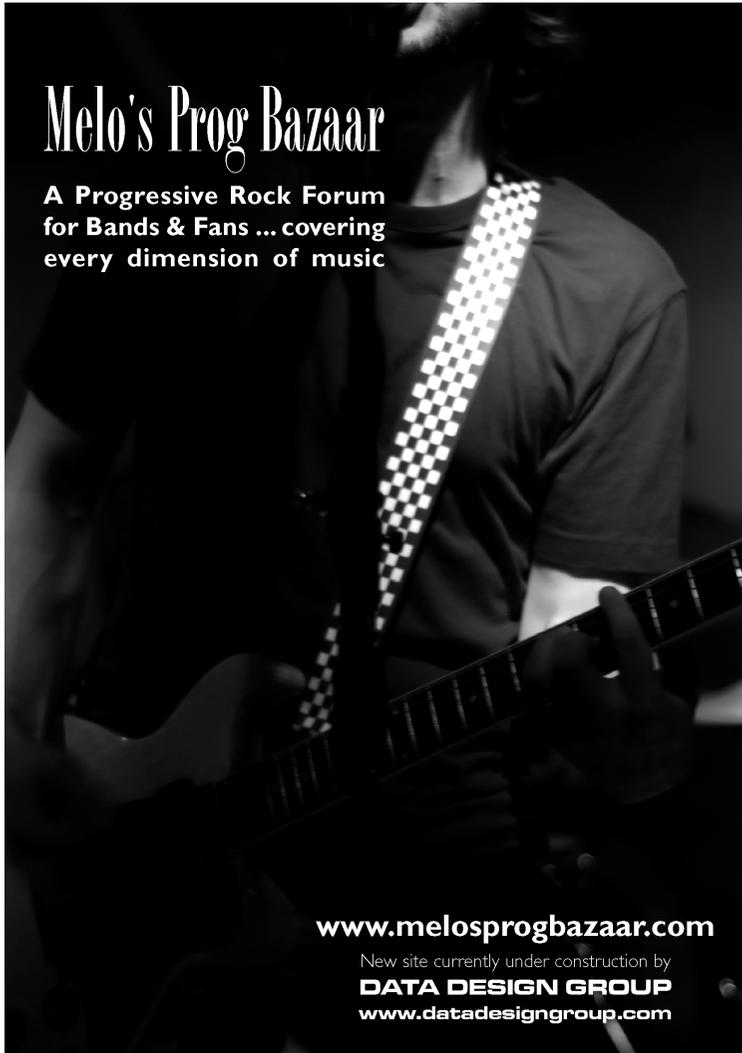
AD : You just recorded a new album called "Dracula" which is very nice, I like it a lot, and this is for me the great return of the band to progressive rock, do you agree ?

PFM : Yes, in a way, a few years ago we decided to come back to progressive music, we decided to get out of the record market, singles, things like that, and to become a band people go to see because it exists not because it has records in the charts. So this is how we are working now and that's the best way for PFM to work; since we took the decision to not follow the record market, everything went very well for us. So we played a lot of progressive music on stage, you'll see to night the show is totally progressive.

AD: I've got the two DVDs you published in Japan and the new one is Siena; it's wonderful!

PFM: Now it's even more progressive on these DVDs because this is the music we like the best and then PFM has a way to create progressive music which is a bit different; for sure we play progressive music but the attitude we have is to improvise a lot and to have fun as musicians; which is not always the case with progressive music, for progressive music is very squared, it's sort of an organisation like classical music, every part is perfect together and every thing like that. This is not the way that PFM that think progressive music, we think that progressive music is very loose and we improvise a lot. "Dracula" was not a PFM record it's an extract of a soundtrack of a rock opera now played in Italy... For example, the 'Overture' is 80% improvised. PFM has developed a very nice way of improvising as a band. One musician plays a solo and the others follow him. We react as a band. One guy starts with something and the other musicians write an arrangement instantly. We know each other so well. This is why the band is still alive.

AD: This is why your all your live recording are always interesting... What



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sounds. Your keyboards are full of 'old sounds'. Do you use samplers and analogic expander?

TB: It's a combination of both.

AD: Do you know French prog? Ange for instance?

TB: Well, no. Is it a band now playing?



AD: Yes, they are famous here, a kind of French Genesis in our country. They're going to play to the Near Fest festival.

TB: I think that French progressive music is very special like the Italian one, very lyrical.

AD: Where did you play?

TB: We played in Roma, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Lithuania and then Paris, Germany.

AD: UK?

TB: No. In Holland it was terrific. This is why we recorded a DVD there.

AD: The States?

TB: Not now, we played in Baja prog and in Denver at a local progressive festival. We'll be back to America in October.

AD: South America?

TB: It's not easy with the economical problems.

AD: What about Italy?

TB: Italy is a good audience for... the metal outfits and Italian bands!

AD: Is there a paradise for progressive rock?

Roine Stolt: It's pretty the same thing in Italy, France... There are some differences but not much. I think that Canada is a very good country.

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AD: Is your band famous in Sweden?

RS: No, no.

AD: Even with the Kaipa background?

RS: I mean we can play gigs, make small tours, concerts with some public, with 400-500 persons, but you know there are almost as much people in Sweden as in Paris. If we want to survive we have to play in different countries.

AD: Many say Eastern Europe is great for prog...Do you agree?

RS: Well, no.

AD: Even in Poland?

RS: Poland is good for us. We played in front of 1.000 persons. Probably Germany, Holland are the best progressive countries. The same in the States. Canada is very good too.

AD: Is it the same thing with Transatlantic?

RS: We had twice as many albums, twice as many public.

AD: Is there a future for Transatlantic?

RS: I don't know...

AD: Is our solo career different from the Flower Kings? Are you freer?

RS: I don't think much about it.

AD: Is it the same with Kaipa?

RS: I don't think of Kaipa any more.

AD: Thanks for making us dreaming every time you play the guitar.

RS: My pleasure! ○



Dream Dealers since 1988

AD : I think that you'll have success because the second album was much better than the first one.

Riverside: The first one was very spontaneous, a kind of a demo. Things are going very fast for us. Two years ago, we played at the Prog Power festival in the Netherlands as replacement and we're now going to play as a headliner band.

AD : Did you play in other Central European countries ?

Riverside: We played in Slovakia, we are going in a big open air festival in the Czech republic.

AD : I am an old fan of old Polish bands such as Exodus, SBB, RSC.

Riverside: I am not a great fan of seventies prog bands. I prefer more modern prog. I like Pink Floyd, one of the best prog bands though. I know SBB recorded a new album last year and played in Baja Prog. I don't know if they are very big but they have a lot of fans. I know Exodus' keyboards player carries on a musical carrier.

AD : They were the first to play rock in your country.

Riverside: They were the first ones to be known outside Poland. There were some others but SBB were the first to be known abroad.

AD : A special message to our readers ?

The most important is to listen to music and feel the music. I hope rock music will come back. I don't like plastic, electronic music.

AD : Do you think that Poland is part of Europe now on a cultural and artistic point of view, is not as isolated as it was ?

Riverside: I think there is some kind of wall, not so big as it was. I think it's our problem. We have to change. We have to think we are not the worst. That we can do it. We feel not comfortable. We fear doing things outside Poland. Things changed: it is not like 15 years ago. We can go outside. We are able to do the same things as the British bands... We are on the right way to do such things. We have to wait one year or two. ○





By Roland Roque

Barcelona—Tiana festival. We could meet the Polish outfit before their set. Riverside's guitar player (Piotr Grudziński) kindly answered our questions about the band but also the situation of prog in his country.

AD : Sorry to ask you this question. When was created Riverside? What's the story of the band?

Riverside: The question I don't like! Any way, the whole story begins with my meeting with the drummer. He drove me back home after a death metal concert. I was in his car and he played Marillion's « Clutching at straws ». Do you like this music? Sure, I have all the CDs and bootlegs. Maybe one day we could play together. After a years, he called me: do you want to play prog with me?

AD : You made two albums.

Riverside: Yes and we released an EP too on own label on May. It was only for our Polish fans but we decided to distribute worldwide.

AD : What is the situation of prog in Poland ? Is it popular?

Riverside: It's still underground. We have good prog bands such as Collage, Satellite, Quidam. There has been almost 10 years of silence in Poland. Now we are the main band in Poland and there are many bands bubbling under. I think prog is more popular now and will be.

AD : Many British bands go and play in Poland and record a DVD there.

Riverside: The DVDs situation is another thing. Metal Mind make DVDs because the conditions are very good. It's cheaper. The fact that British bands record DVDs in Poland doesn't mean prog is a huge thing.

AD : Your fans are prog heads and metal heads.

Riverside: Yes indeed. Never a prog band was connected with metal. That's our case. We had 13 shows in Poland and we had 3.000 people while Pendragon or Arena only have 300 persons.

AD : Did you play in other European countries ?

Riverside: yes we did: in Germany, Spain. We are going to play at the Nearfest festival in the States. We are curious to play there because the audience is different.

RPWL

Marseille—Prog Sud festival. We could meet RPWL before their set. Their singer (Yogi Lang) kindly answered our questions with simplicity, depth and humour.

Acid Dragon: You are from Germany. What part of Germany?

RPWL: The south of Germany, from Munich

By Roland Roque

AD: When was the band created?

RPWL: The band was created in 1997-1999

There is a close relation with Violet District. I was the guitar player and producer. We met in the studio.

We decided to play Pink Floyd songs because this was the music we loved when we were young.

AD: Were you a cover band then?

RPWL: Not really. I don't like this word. Not everyone understood we were playing Pink Floyd. The songs we played were from the sixties. We played long versions, medleys. We mixed up many songs. We were hippies (laughs). Someone heard what we were doing.

AD: Any relation with other German bands such as Eloy? They were very influenced with Pink Floyd, weren't they?

RPWL: Well, the problem is although I was influenced by Pink Floyd, Genesis, Yes, it was part of my youth. But I was never into 'progressive rock'. For me it was rock music only. When we released our first album, it was filed under classic rock/pop. I had to find out what was progressive was. I knew simply good music. It's funny that Eloy is known abroad. I talked last week with a guy from the States that with our music he was remembered of the German bands of the seventies.

AD: The progressive rock school was important in Germany: Anyone's Daughter, Novalis... But this is not part of your heritage?

RPWL: Not really! Pink Floyd is not like any other prog bands. The ideas are very simple. There is an idea behind the music we make. Music is not enough.

AD: What do you want to express then? Emotions?

RPWL: Well, you're on the right way! I wanted to express what I felt when my father died. And all the emotions coming out at that moment. I wanted to express myself. I remember when we began making music when I was fourteen, I

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had the feeling not to tell but to talk about. It was nice to see that the second albums about my problems with women that it was a success. I'd like people listen to the lyrics too, not to the music only.

AD: Expressing yourself is a kind of psychoanalysis?

RPWL: It's a necessity for me. I talk with my words and it's a chance that people understand.

We all talk as a individual. I'm not right or wrong. This is what I feel with my words.

AD: Are successful in Germany or is it the same old prog audience?

RPWL: No. We reach more people buying our albums now, the simple economic thing (laughs). We want to make music for people who listen to music not for people for whom music is playing notes.

AD: What's the meaning of RPWL?

RPWL: Just the initials of our names! We didn't want to have a name (laughs).

AD: Any projects?

RPWL: We just made a DVD. It should be released in autumn. We're making solo projects. We'll be preparing a new album by the end of this year. We are busy! And playing concerts: because we like playing live.

AD: What is the paradise land for prog?

RPWL: We played all over Europe. We were successful in Poland because the first album was played on the radio?

Well, it depends if it was in a festival or in a club. There are more women in Spain than Germany but I don't know why (laughs). That's what we want to do: playing for women (laughs).

AD: Did you played in Japan, South America?

RPWL: No! But we played with Toto in a hippy festival in German. It was very special. I know prog is popular in Brazil and Argentina there but there are economical problems in Argentina and it's too much of a risk. ○



Dream Dealers since 1988

relations with Japanese bands?

A: He worked in a studio run by members of Shingetsu.

AD: What are your influences?

A: Mike Oldfield, Michel Polnareff, Magma, they are famous in Japan, you know.

AD: Is progressive rock popular in Japan? Or is it an underground movement?

A: Not so famous, now. During the seventies, yes it was.

AD: With Novela for instance?

A: They were young guys who were not really progressive. They still exist.

AD: During the eighties, there was a progressive boom in Japan with gorgeous bands such as Pageant, Mugen, Teru's Symphonia, Gerard... What happened to those bands?

A: Most of them stopped or changed their musical style. There are many experimental music now, most them are jazz rock bands.

AD: What progressive bands are popular in Japan?

A: The major British bands of the seventies are popular in Japan. But Japanese don't like neo progressive at all. Marillion came just once and it was not a real success.

AD: The Japanese public prefers symphonic, jazz rock then. What French bands are famous in your country?

A: Ange, Magma, Gong...

AD: What about the future?

A: A concert in Italy and then a studio album by the end of the year.

AD: Asturias are very influenced by classical?

A: Yes, both Misa and Kaori have a classical background.

AD: What classical music composers?

A: Maurice Ravel, the Russian school (Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky).

AD: And you?

A: I prefer Mike Oldfield! I think it's great having a puzzle of influences inside a band.

AD: Anything to say to our readers?

A: We like this country and this culture. We are very happy to be here. This is the second time we are here. Thanks for your support!

AD: You're welcome. ○

ASTURIAS

By Roland Roque

 arseille, Prog Sud festival. My first interview with a Japanese band, I mean not through Internet. It was a fabulous experience. I discovered refined and passionate people: they love France, nature and seventies prog. For instance Hiroshi, their manager, wore tee shirts of PFM and Renaissance... In fact the typical Nippon prog heads as I imagined them!

Thanks to Hiroshi Masuda (Asturias' producer), Yoh Ohyama (guitar and founder of the band) and his two musicians (two lovely girls) Misa Kitatsuji on violin, Kaori Tsutsui on clarinet, kindly answered our questions.

AD: What's the story of the band? When was it created?

A: It's a long story! The band was founded in 1987 not in this form, it was not a real band, Yoh Ohyama played almost all the instruments and recorded and mixed them.

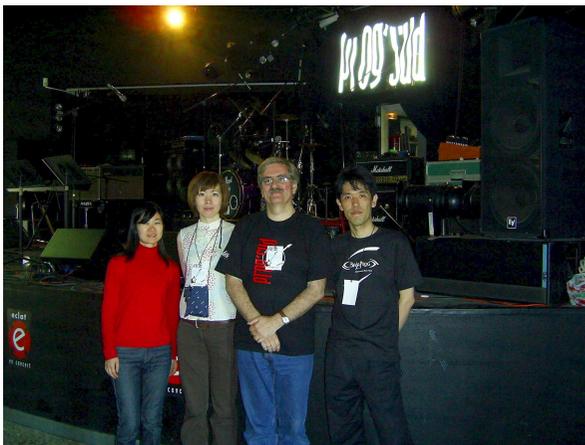
AD : A bit like Mike Oldfield.

A: Yes (laughs). He released three albums this way. After a long silence, he stopped this electric side for playing acoustic music. In 2003, he started an acoustic band. It's a different band. In Baja prog in 2005, they played and got a big success.

AD: Asturias is a famous part in Spain? Why this name?

A: Because he's a fan of Isaac Albeniz, the classical Spanish composer.

AD: Do you have other



RR with Asturias



By Roland Roque

The Italian band, after a tremendous show in Grenoble (South East of France, in the famous Alps mountains), kindly answered our questions.

A.D.: Hi, thanks to Dominique Barboyon, Ex-Vagus' mentor (he played with his band as guest), we could discover the Watch. I know this is not the first time you play in France. You did in Sarlat, I think, didn't you?

Simone Rossetti: Hi! We've already been in France a couple of times: Sarlat and Lormont. I remember it's always been a great experience, and one more time it's been, here in Grenoble. Great audience and great support by the technicians. But lately, as the band has grown very much, our gigs sound more professional than in the past and this has a feedback also under the audience response point of view.

A.D. : What were your impression ? Same reaction of the public? As many people (tonight, there were 150 persons. You played in other countries. Where? How was the public there?

Ettore Salati: We played in many countries all over Europe and in America, we have played the most in Germany, Belgium, Holland, Scandinavia. The reaction of the public has always been pleasant; sometimes we play in front of a big audience, sometimes not, but we can say that our supporters behave

as if they were thousands, each time! That's very rewarding.



A.D. : Could you tell me when was the band created ?

SR: We met when we were at school, and we started playing some covers together, then we

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worked on original tunes, till in 1998 we released "Twilight", soon very well received both by critics and audience. We started with the tour, but the band split at the end of it. Me and Simone Stucchi collected some old and new friends to produce a second album, named Ghost, which saw the light in 2001. And with the same band mates we went on touring and producing the third album, Vacuum, in 2005. Now we are still playing gigs.



A.D.: What is the difference between the Night Watch and the Watch? There's a kind of continuity between both bands. Why did you change your name then?

SR: As we were saying, The Night Watch is how we started... I'm the only one "survivor" of that group. The name was changed after the line-up split, and the project itself changed. Now The Watch is completely another band, a professional project.

A.D.: The band comes from Milan... Any connections with other bands from that town ?



ES: now we can say that we are lucky enough to be an international band, our supporters come mainly from USA and Europe. We don't have many connections with other bands, here. I think that this is a pity. I'd like to know more about Italian prog scene that we know to be appreciated abroad. To have more friends would mean meeting people that could share with you all the difficulties of this way of living and we could support each other in some way. Anyway in our Portal, that is growing each day much, due to Luca Spano's huge work, we are managing to have a "friends" session, where other prog bands can

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| | |
|--|---|
| <p>DEREK SHERINIAN Blood of the Snake</p> | <p>FROST Milliontown</p> |
| | |
| <p>+++ Derek Sherinian's (ex-Dream Theater) current stroke of genius feat. special guests Yngwie Malmsteen, John Petrucci (Dream Theater), Slash (Guns N' Roses) and Zakk Wylde ++ Contains a cover version of the all-time classic „In the Summertime“ sung by Billy Idol +++</p> | <p>+++ Milliontown is the sensational progressive rock debut album of the band +++ Frost was founded by Jem Godfrey who also worked as producer and songwriter for Ronan Keating and Atomic Kitten +++ Also featuring John Mitchell (Kino, Arena) as well as John Jowitt and Andy Edwards of IQ +++</p> |
| <p>PAATOS Silence of another kind</p> | <p>NEAL MORSE Cover to Cover</p> |
| | |
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gart, in our area but now our activity stopped and we can't play. As soon we can find a new rehearsal room, that'd be great!

AD: The band is from the north of Italy?

A: Yes that's true, close to Austria.

AD: That's why you are influenced by the northern legends?

A: Yes, it could be. In the north of Italy, in the mountains of my region, there are several valleys with people speaking a kind of a Scandinavian dialect very similar to the ancient languages from Germany and Scandinavia.

AD: How many people speak this language?

A: In the big towns, people speak Italian but in the valleys, people speak this language.

AD: Which was your most successful record?

A: It was "Imago Mundi". It sold a lot: Peter Wustman (from our label, Music is Intelligence now defunct) said around 8.000 copies, but I don't really know. Any way, you can't find our records any more. I would like to publish the new CD because this will be the occasion for the reissue of the old albums... If we find a label!

AD: How would sound this new opus?

A: Our new album will be typical of Asgard music but with some more influences from ancient music. Our new guitarist comes from an Italian progressive metal band. The new album will sound a little bit like "Imago Mundi" then. ○



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exchange ideas and talk about music. I hope it will be ready soon. We have some friends among European bands like Pallas, Arena, Ex-Vagus and others, meeting each other to play in some festivals here and there.

A.D.: I was in Milan last year and I met many "prog actors" there: Paperlate magazine, BTF, Kaliphonia (AKA Ma.Ra.Cash records)...This town seems to be a progressive rock Centre!

SR: I must say that we are lucky to be from Milan, it's the most international town we have in Italy, and belonging to this town in some way has helped us a bit.

But it's a pity to say that Milan is an exception in the Italian prog scene. More, we think that also Milan is not enough.

A.D.: Your main influence is for sure Genesis, "The" Genesis featuring Peter Gabriel especially on the latest opus (there are even some flute parts!). Can you explain why?

ES: we surely like very much their albums, but there's not a precise reason. We like them and we like some other bands, like Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Pink Floyd, and so on. Some influences by them can be heard in our releases, surely, but there's a whole and very large range of sounds and colours that can't be reduced to influences by a couple of artists. We like to play different kind of tunes, but each of them in our own way. Probably Simone's voice helps the Genesis comparison very much.

A.D. : How came this passion for this great prog band ? You are too young for having



known this period...

SR: music should not be a matter of period. I noticed that often people like a certain kind of music only because it belongs to a period that's to be remembered with nostalgia. I mean that when you look back to your youth, almost everything seems good, and also music that belongs to that period seems to be good even though it may not be. During the 70's there was much good music but also bad music. Instead, we had to search for music and we discovered and listened to some bands we like, so we can say that we really like them, because we had some "job" to do as listeners. It came out that we like some 70's bands like Genesis, Pink Floyd, but also many other, belonging to the 60's (Beatles!!) and to the 80's like Depeche Mode and Talk Talk for instance. It's great to be compared to such a great band as Genesis, that I personally like immensely, and this helped us very much to be better known, but I think that you can recognize The Watch typical style while you're listening to our stuff.

A.D.: Do you agree that progressive rock finally is more a genre than an attitude and that playing progressive today with strong seventies colours is not a "regressive" attitude?

ES: Thanks for this good question. We agree, keeping in mind that you have to compose and to play first of all good tunes. If you play jazz, that's ok if it's good jazz; if you play reggae that's ok if it's good reggae. We like prog rock, however, and British style of the 70's, and we want to play good songs belonging to these genres...

I mean this happens in every musical genre.

A.D.: I'm a great fan of the Italian progressive school (I even wrote a book about it with my friend, Jacques Toni!). Could you tell me why we can't find any Italian influences in your music? Not even Italian lyrics!

ES: we were saying that in our mind progressive rock is a matter of style. So, we are into the British prog rock genre and not into the Italian one, that is very different. We know releases by Italian classic proggers, but that's not our cup of tea. We think that English is a language that fits for that prog rock style much more than Italian. We just try to do what we feel, although I personally like bands like Banco or Le Orme very much. Everywhere we go people that don't know us very much is surprised to discover we are from Italy. This is good for our way of thinking: we hate frontiers and don't care too much about people too much proud of their nationality. Music is one of the few things that men have to proud of: so it belongs to human race, doesn't matter where you are from.

A.D.: Your keyboard wizard uses a mellotron (Woaw !). Where did he find that precious instrument?

SR: I bought it in Italy, from an arranger and producer who works for pop productions. That mellotron has been played the last times by Brian May

ASGARD

By Roland Roque

Alberto Ambrosi (keyboards, flute, vocals) is a long time fan of the Tiana festival (Barcelona). Asgard played there and he comes back every year. We could chat with him about the band but also rare languages in northern Italy.

AD: So what's about Asgard?

A: The band is thirteen years old. At the moment, the band can't play...But we are working for a new CD.

AD: What will be the title?

A: I don't know, may be "End of the times".

AD: With the same members?

A: We are four now: a bass player who sings, a guitar player, a drummer, myself on keyboards.

AD: The band stayed silent for a long moment. What happened?

A: Until October 2005, we were working on the new album and we had our sessions in a old cinema because it was very nice and it sounds very well like in an old venue. But the people who owned it, sold it, so we had to go out... Since October we didn't find anything unfortunately.

AD: And which record label are you going to release this album?

A: We don't know, we will see the offers. May be we will self produce the record.

AD: Did the band make many concerts and where?

A: We played in Salzburg, in Austria, in Germany near Stutt-



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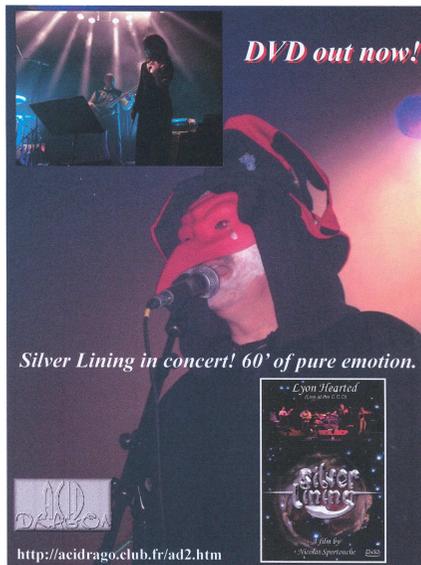
High Tide-ed) I was elated to discover our musical endeavours worked well, our music not entirely commercially viable but we took the risk and spent the record company's money anyway. As a Darwinist-Atheist I see us as being overwhelmed by single issues thus losing the big picture which should also concern us. Some of my lyrics are also comedy.

AD: The Denny Gerard 'Sinister Morning' is an obscurity that is well worth checking out. It has a unique 'vibe' (Listen and you'll hear!) and some of the songs like 'True Believer' reveal a genuine talent. What can you tell me about your involvement with this album?

Tony: Decca studios, 1968. We all hung out together. (I presume this is Denver Gerrard who produced 'Sea Shanties' we are talking about- ed.) Denny signed with Decca and booked us for the session. Denny's lyrics portray a moral attitude blended with beautiful music. High Tide loved doing the band bit for the album.

AD: The songs '6 Million Years' on 'Inexactness' is for me a classic song on 'human suffering' and was co-written by the legendary Bevis Frond.

Tony: Over 6 million years we 'homonids' have been aware of danger, opportunity, pain and joy. But now having a not insignificant brain we are aware of our 'predicament' in a crystal clear sense. Are we a plague or do our children have a future of intelligent progress and gain personal strength? I hope it's the latter. So between nature's tender mercies and our own stupidity, I fear we will continue to suffer to some extent.



AD: Looking back on the music you've been involved with what are you most proud of. Also do you listen to much music now and what inspires you to keep writing?

Tony: Phil, I just can't stop playing my bloody guitar. It's an addiction. I recommend it to everyone. Rock on! ○

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(Queen guitarist) and was hardly used by Zucchero Fornaciari. It sounds great! A dedicated section will be uploaded soon on our Portal, with photos and technical descriptions, plus some curious infos and mp3s of our current tape set.

A.D.: You just released an "Official Bootleg" recorded in various European countries. Can you tell?

ES: we had some audio material coming from some gigs of the Vacuum tour, from Sesto, Pratteln and some other venues, and being it good, we decided to work on it and release a first live album. We had not at the moment the possibility to release an official live album, so we preferred to release it as an "Official Bootleg"... that is the reason of the name! It features songs from Ghost, Vacuum, Twilight and a previously unreleased song, "Doctor Mystere". The precious work on mixing and mastering has been done by Simone Stucchi, as usual.

A.D.: Your set is very visual, theatrical (as was Peter's)... Are you planning to release a DVD?

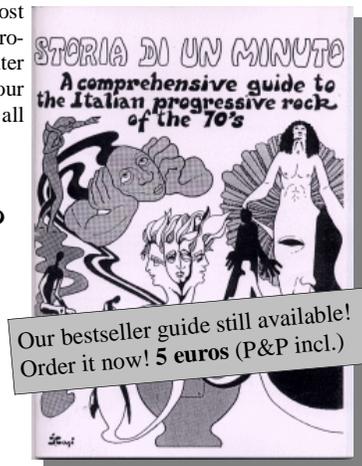
SR: it's our aim to leave a "visual witnesses"! The reason is what you were saying, being our live set very theatrical. We have some live video material and we'll have more. When we'll think it will be enough, we'll start this new work. It will be a hard and long work, and we aren't able to plan a release date, but we hope to make it and hopefully not too late.

A.D.: Any other project such as ... a new album?!

SR: one of the reasons by which we won't be able to work on a DVD in the next months is the production of a new album...! We are proud of the new tunes and all the new material is almost arranged, so we can start with the production. Roberto will be the first to enter StudioLab, where we usually make our albums, on the 26th of June, and then all the band members will follow.

A.D.: Grazie.

SR& ES: Prego! Ciao, see you soon! ○



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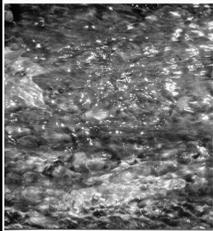
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than bury his fellow musicians. I totally agreed with Ade here and it's nice to see songs like the moody infectious 'I Don't Want To Talk', 'But There Again' and 'Right Now Forever' in the repertoire of Tony Hill's current band Fiction where he is ably supported by Dean Holt on bass and Syd Farrell on drums (who have just produced their own CD with Gary Mason on guitars that is now available for download from the Fiction website). Incidentally the 15 minute track to which Ade refers has been compared to some of the music by a conglomerate of musicians including Hill on 'Acid Jam 2', "a psych-guitar jamfest of epic proportions" featuring members of The Bevis Frond who also provided much of the backing on 'Inexactness' where the twin guitars of Nick Saloman and Tony Hill are a joy to the ears and Matt Kelly does a great job in the unenviable task of filling Simon House's shoes on violin. Andy Ward, ex Camel, was a member of The Bevis Frond at the time and forms a rhythm section with Ade Shaw with original High Tide members Peter Pavli on three tracks. The last song is in fact a Hill/ Ward/ Saloman/ Shaw composition entitled 'Six Million Years', a classic song about human suffering that was perfect for the times. The title song is one of Hill's best I think and would have been ideal on one of those Johnny Cash American Recordings. ('Inexactness' was released on Saloman and Shaw's Woronzow label in 2001).

I mentioned Tony Hill's Fiction earlier and their 'DNA, The Brain, The Universe' is an essential listen with some very strong material including another stirring Hill observation on the 'human condition' 'You Wouldn't Want To', old favourites like 'Open Season' and a live (and loud!) version of 'I Don't Want To Talk' from the 'Inexactness' album. I have also been privileged to see Fiction on film and while there is certainly a 'roughness at the edges' in the vocal department the 'power and passion' of the music shines through to a small but appreciative audience.

In summary I couldn't possibly disagree with ex Gong man Tim Blake's description of High Tide as 'mind blowing' and commend Tony Hill for managing to keep the musical and lyrical vision alive over the years in difficult circumstances. Indeed there's a brand new Fiction album in the making with Dean Holt and Geoff Pivert forming a new rhythm section.

To conclude this article there is a brief interview with Tony Hill. Tony tends to be a bit reclusive when it comes to giving interviews and I am indebted to Dean Holt for getting Tony to commit pen to paper (literally) Although Tony didn't have a lot to say what he does say is profound and I hope that what you've read encourages you to check out some of the music he's been involved with. (It's interesting to note that the 'progressive ears.com' site has been debating the merits of High Tide with mixed opinions but mostly favourable. Their first two albums have stood the test of time remarkably well it seems!

AD: I'd like to ask you about your lyrics, sometimes poetic with a recurring theme which seems to be a deep concern for 'the human condition'.

Tony: I'm often misanthropic and content to reside somewhere between hope and despair. I'm also fascinated by language. Normally, if one's emotions are disproportionate to a situation you could possibly have mental issues. Not so with rock lyrics where you may indulge. Lacking confidence at the time (of

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nail sketches of all High Tide's albums "There is hardly a quiet moment on *Sea Shanties*, the heaviest tracks being 'Futilist's Lament' and the instrumental 'Death Warmed Up.. Stylistically it is a mix of hard rock, psychedelic, blues, folk, and jazz-rock." they report.

High Tide also played as backing band on Danny Gerrard's (sic) album *Sinister Morning* (1970). (I believe they're deferring to Denver Gerrard who produced 'Sea Shanties' and who released one album on the budget Decca label, Deram Nova also home to Egg) A third album, *Precious Cargo*, a previously unreleased set of rehearsals from 1970, featuring the classic High Tide line-up was more a psychedelic album with some 'staggering electric jamming' but without any hard rock influences but the band split up, and it was not published until 1989, when Hill and House reformed High Tide as a 2-man band with the use of drum computers and produced the folk inflected *Interesting Times*, in the wake of which 'Precious Cargo' was finally released. Two other albums with previously unreleased material, *The Flood* and *A Fierce Nature*, followed in 1990. Simon House left, and Pete Pavli joined again. Together with some guest musicians including Dave Tomlin (violin), Drachen Theaker (drums) and Sushi Krishnamurti (vocals), they recorded *Ancient Gates*, a space psych album which had some Indian influences. Another album of previously unreleased material, *A Reason of Success*, was released in 1992.

In my view 'Interesting Times' is an album full of great ideas imperfectly realised not helped by a rather dense production albeit one that perfectly captures the High Tide ambience set out in the early days! A rather hesitant 'retiring' vocal performance by Hill and the use of some rather dubious drum programming (limited by the technology of the time) are inhibiting factors from a listener's point of view. Having said that there are at least 20 minutes of music I would return to including the poetic lyrics of 'Movie Madness', the superb 'The Reason Why' and the anthemic 7 minutes of 'Rock Me On Your Wave'. Two Simon House compositions (instrumentals) bookending the album are also worth checking out. Tony is accompanied by House on violin, mandolin, keys and also shares the bass duties. 'Interesting Times' was released on Akorma a division of comet Records that appears to be dedicated to 'classic and unreleased rock titles'. Helpfully all the lyrics are reproduced on the impressive heavy card sleeve with some really interesting artwork as you can see below

A final High Tide CD well worth mentioning is 'Open Season' an anthology selected by Tony Hill, Pete Pavli and Simon House including unreleased material from 1971 until 1990 plus two especially written new songs by Tony Hill and Pete Pavli with the collaboration of Adrian Shaw.

Tony Hill's solo albums are also well worth checking out especially 'Inexactness' praised by The Sunday Times newspaper as 'one of those rare comeback albums that doesn't actually disappoint' saying that it merges a 'Celtic folksiness with psychedelic electrical jam'.

Adrian Shaw's opinion of 'Inexactness' is that, "Aside from the massive 15-minute jam, 'Of Foundries, Ships & Steeples' which should immediately quell any doubts as to whether the 'old man's still got it' most tracks are simple, melodic rock and roll tunes punctuated by tasteful solos which embellish rather

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ANEKDOTEN

Barcelona, May 2006. 8th Tiana festival. Very hot weather. Not so easy interviewing a band coming from Northern Europe! Well, Anekdoten's welcome was not cold. Not at all!

AD: When the band was created?
Anekdoten: In 1991.

By Roland Roque

AD: The band comes from Sweden but where exactly?
Anekdoten: The band comes from a town situated two hundred kilometres north of Stockholm. But now we are living in Stockholm.

AD: You have a large discography. But how many studio albums did you release?
Anekdoten: We made 4 studio albums: "Vemod", "Nucleus", "From Within", and "Gravity" three years ago...

AD: What are your projects?
Anekdoten: We are preparing a record in Sweden; we'll release it in autumn.

AD: On which label?
Anekdoten: We'll sign for our own label.

RR with Anekdoten

AD: Do you agree with this statement: you're King Crimson's heir (this is a compliment!)?
Anekdoten: Maybe in the past but not now... It's an influence among others.



AD: Do you qualify your band as a progressive rock band, or not at all? Do you accept this label? Or do you refuse it?

Anekdoten: It's OK if you want to call it that way, it's OK.

AD: Do you have any contacts with other prog bands in your country or are on your own?

Anekdoten: We toured with Ritual, Sinkadus, Landberk...

AD: I mean is there a kind of a family of Scandinavian prog bands?

Anekdoten: No. It used to be. Not now. There are so few concerts, you know, we usually meet abroad.

AD: Do you think prog is popular in your country?

Anekdoten: Yes, people buy a lot of records but... they don't go to the concerts!

AD: It's the same everywhere. Where did you play?

Anekdoten: Everywhere! Norway, Finland, North America, South America, Mexico (Baja festival), France, Japan, Italy, Germany, last was Portugal one month ago...

AD: Is there a prog paradise?

Anekdoten: Maybe Canada, the French speaking part of Canada.

AD: Where do you sell most? Where are you the most popular?

Anekdoten: Maybe in Japan.

AD: Do you earn a living with your music?

Anekdoten: We all have separate jobs.

AD: Because I am a singer and I write lyrics, I'm very concerned by the texts... What are your texts about? They seem to be very dark, melancholy... Am I right or not? Do you agree?

Anekdoten: I'm not conscious writing dark texts. It's very different how people react. I don't think they're very dark...

AD: Maybe it comes from the atmospheres... Do you have other experiences with other bands? Do all the members of the band work only for Anekdoten?

Anekdoten: Nicklas Berg and Peter Nordins played in the Morte Macabre project...

AD: Thanks a lot. ○

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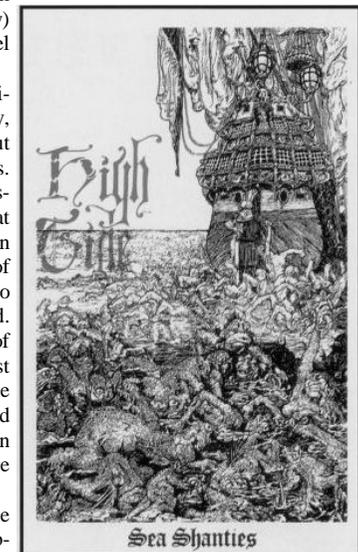
'Sea Shanties' as one of 'the best proto-prog albums ever made'. No-one seems to mind the muddy sound quality as it adds to the intensity.

Keith Henderson writing on the web site of that wonderful space rock music and radio station run by Jerry Kranitz, www.aural-innovations.com, has this to say about High Tide: "Loud, dark, dangerous, indulgent, and just barely under control, High Tide's first two albums, Sea Shanties (1969) and High Tide (1970), are among the finest, fieriest slabs of high-octane psychedelic rock you're ever likely to hear'. 'High Tide' is less heavy than its predecessor with more use of keyboards and more jazz and folk influences.

A lot more has been said about 'Sea Shanties' than about its eponymous 1970 successor. This is a pity because 'High Tide' demonstrates a more mature style combining folk elements with the sensibility of a King Crimson. The band expand into the space provided by deciding to record just three lengthy pieces and some really interesting variations are concocted with more variation in the instrumentation adding organ to Simon House's violin. Tracks like 'The Joke' and the 14 minute opus 'Saneonymous' have stood the test of time really well'. There is also an amazing 1970 'BBC Sessions 1969-1970' (Thanks very much to Dean Holt for the copy!) to track down which, once you get past the debatable sound quality, shows what an incredible band High Tide were, a real 'one off'. All of the 'Sea Shanties' album is covered with the exception of 'Death Warmed Up', its place taken by a gem of a composition, 'Dilemma'. While you can't find much about High Tide in reference books on the subject there are some interesting stories in Carol Clerk's book 'The Saga of Hawkwind' (recently published by Omnibus Press) including the one where 'Group X' (later to become Hawkwind!) gatecrashed High Tide's gig (in the nicest possible way) and caught the attention of John Peel with their blend of musical anarchy.

Black marks to all the leading chroniclers of progressive rock then- Lucky, Stump, Macan, Martin- for missing out High Tide altogether in their histories. Martin C Strong includes both The Misunderstood and High Tide in his Great Psychedelic Discography while Colin Larkin in his Virgin Encyclopedia of 60s Music' makes passing reference to High Tide under The Misunderstood. This is a disappointing return for one of progressive/ psychedelic rock's most unique bands right up there with the likes of Van Der Graaf Generator and other heavyweights of prog rock in forging out and realising a distinctive cerebral musical vision.

To their credit the Wikipedia on-line encyclopaedia gives the reader thumb-



boxed set 'Nuggets 2: Original Artyfacts from the British Empire and Beyond'. (If you want to hear more of The Misunderstood then please visit their .com website where there are a generous number of free downloads including 'I Can Take You To The Sun' and 'Who Do You Love?' made famous later by Juicy Lucy into whom the group evolved. Apart from Tony Hill that is!)

After The Misunderstood came Torquoise who thanks to Dean Holt, bass player with Tony Hill's current band Fiction I can confidently state existed from 14 September 1968 to 16 March 1969. The band had two mime artists including David Bowie. To put the record straight, Tony Hill was the guitarist/ vocalist for Torquoise, ('Feathers' came later, a fact often confused). The repertoire of the band included 'Space Oddity' later to launch Bowie's career of course!

Ade Shaw's (bass player with Hawkwind and the equally legendary Bevis Frond) opinion of Tony Hill's guitar playing is that, "He's not blues, not jazz although his technique is easily good enough for that discipline and he's certainly not out and out Rock. He plays scales in his solos I've never heard before and his song writing combines beautiful obtuse lyrics with highly structured psychedelic arrangements."

Leaving the shipyard to unleash his Fender Start on unsuspecting audiences in French American air bases, Hill formed a blues band in London called The Answers and started to write original material. Nothing quite prepared the world for High Tide and their debut 1969 album 'Sea Shanties' though!

"It's complicated and very, very strange," says Shaw "and there's this twin-lead onslaught of Simon House's violin and Tony Hill's guitar. It is really the heaviest and most spine-chilling stuff I've ever heard in my life." (Pete Pavli uses a cello tuning for his bass and Roger Hadden's drumming is phenomenal- it needed to be!).

I think it was Julian Cope who wrote this of 'Sea Shanties' "Hill pushes his entire guitar into a grinder of wah-wah, fuzz and supreme tearing at its throat distortion in a revolving fever dream kept barely grounded by Pete Pavli's bass and Roger Hadden's explosive Keith Moon-like drum presence, which is everywhere at once effortlessly. In fact, excepting the slight opening finesse of 'Missing Out' (which hurtles headlong into a massive power trio jam by the end, anyway), the entire album is track after track of unrelenting, screeching guitar and muscular backing like Sabbath and The Groundhogs joined by Dave Swarbrick during the highlights of a messy methedrine binge. There's an abundance of ever-screaming guitar work from Hill, and his vocabulary of distortion and interplay is only surpassed by its volume."

Most commentators agree that 'Sea Shanties' was so far ahead of its time that they don't believe it was made in 1969 and many compare Tony Hill's voice with Jim Morrison although this is something I don't hear myself. One enthusiast (calling herself just Jeanine) writing in 2005 reckons 'Death Warmed Up' was the first prog metal piece ever. (She's not alone in expressing this view) She also says 'Walking Down Their Outlook' provides an interesting example of violin and guitar playing two different voices which is rare in rock music'. Andrea Salvador believes a lot of metal bands took their cue from this band and refers to the incredible 'wall of sound' with, paradoxically considering the complexity of the music, 'catchy songs of immense quality'. Dieter Fischer describes

Alive & Kicking

Let's talk about two European festivals : **Tiana** (Barcelona, Spain) and **Prog Sud** (Marseille, France). They took place recently in May and June.

By Roland Roque



Tiana featured Riverside, Anekdoten and PFM. The festival gathered about 400 persons (for 1 day).

Riverside were great. A perfect blend of neo with prog metal hints. They come from Poland. They released 2 records.

Anekdoten were interesting but a bit cold: the keyboards, the guitars were not developed enough. Only the bass player stood in front.

PFM : ouch! One of the best concerts I have ever seen. They played their classics including 'The World became the World'. Who told prog is a cerebral music? The fans were moving, singing, almost dancing. Great show.

Prog Sud (Marseille) featured 12 bands (yes!) during 4 days with about 400 persons each day.

I'll mention the 'prog' bands only to be short.

John Slade band is not a British outfit but a band from... Marseille playing an interesting music close to Zappa's. They privately produced 2 records.

Tai Phan is the heir to Tai Phong, the prestigious symphonic band of the 70's made in France. From the original line up, there's left the drummer only. He hired several musicians including a woman on the vocals. Their show was not perfect but it carried a lot of emotion and passion. It was a real pleasure hearing great classics of this combo live.

Il Castello di Atlante is an old Italian band. Their music is powerful, energetic but this doesn't mean they play hard rock! Not at all. Their music is dominated by the violin. I missed some quiet moments but enjoyed their set.

Mangala Vallis, from Italy too, was one of the best festival feature. Their classic prog with Mr Lanzetti (ex-Acqua Fragile & ex-PFM) on vocals was brilliant.



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Especially with 'Call me Alias', a superb song from their second opus in the way of King Crimson's 'Epitaph' and a reprise of PFM's 'The World became the World'.

I shall not say a word about Soft Machine, this is not my cup of tea. Or at least, just one : 'respect'.

Eclat were perfect as usual. Even better than before. The problem with this band is that you know the musicians (some are friends), and you have seen them so many times that you are blasé. And they surprise you each time!

Although Asturias, now a trio (from Japan), played classical music, I enjoyed their set a lot. Crystal clear music with no stain.

RPWL, the now famous band from Germany, closed the festival with their Pink Floyd influenced music (you can tell them that, they do agree!). Brilliantly. A superb concert including an awesome light show and... two Pink Floyd reprises ('Cymbaline' and 'Welcome to the Machine')!!

Both festivals were a celebration of good music, good vibes, friendship. Gracias a Manu and merci à Alain & Eliane.

PS : I'm too tired (it's so hot here!) to tell you something about the following concerts we had this spring in Lyon (France) and the surroundings: Pendragon, The Flower Kings and The Watch (with Ex-Vagus as guest). Or just that : excellent despite the lack of public (300 persons). The same old song...

That's all folks!

Progressively yours,
R. R.



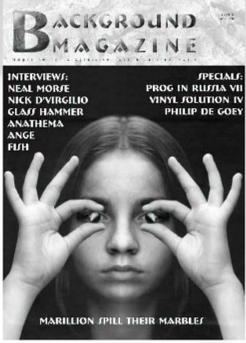
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Background Magazine is an international magazine that started in 1987 and has dedicated itself to progressive music and the likes. The magazine appears quarterly and our main goal is to bring in-depth information about known and lesser-known bands to an audience. In previous issues we have had interviews with Marillion, Happy The Man, Camel, Porcupine Tree and England. As our name indicates there is plenty of room for more obscure subjects like an in-depth look at the Russian music scene, album specials or an ongoing feature about progressive albums that have not seen the light of day on CD.

Apart from these subjects the magazine is complemented with a large amount of live reports and cd reviews that our writers have carefully digested and like our motto suggests review in a critical but honest way.

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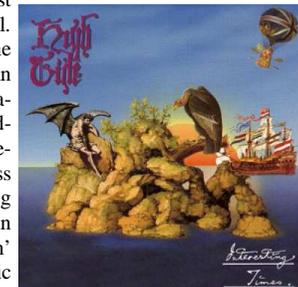
HIGH TIDE

INTERESTING TIMES - THE HISTORY OF HIGH TIDE, ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE PROGRESSIVE ROCK BANDS EVER

By *Phil Jackson*

Before Tony Hill wrote most of the material for High Tide's stunning 1969 debut album 'Sea Shanties' he was a member of The Misunderstood. John Peel in 2003, in an interview with Steve Lafreniere, describes The Misunderstood's performance in Hollywood in 1966 as the greatest he'd seen in his life. "They weren't getting anywhere in California, so I said to them, "Why don't you go to London? They did and stayed with my mother." Unfortunately vocalist Rick Brown was drafted into the US army fighting in Vietnam and the American band split up only to be reincarnated on the same record label (Fontana) with a different line-up that included Nic Potter and Guy Evans who would go on to form a rhythm section for Van Der Graaf Generator. Recently interest in The Misunderstood has been reawakened with the release of 'The Lost Acetates 1965-1966'. This is an impressive collection that gives us an overdue glimpse into the potent mix of r'n'b, garage pop and rock recalling Them, The Rolling Stones, The Animals, The Yardbirds and at times The Bluesbreakers before a move from Riverside to England and a gestation into one of the most innovative psychedelic bands on the planet. Indeed Record Collector magazine recently named their record 'I Can Take You To The Sun' #6 in the top 100 greatest psychedelic records of all time- 'I Can Take You To The Sun' was unveiled in December, 1966 -- the same month as Hendrix's 'Hey Joe' and a good two before 'Strawberry Fields Forever' Without apologies, the Misunderstood single stands alongside both these classics as one of the most powerful and best psychedelic singles ever released", said Record Collector in 1999.

Included on 'The Lost Acetates' are alternate versions of four great songs from the band's psychedelic era featuring guitarist Greg Treadway's replacement Tony Hill. Among these are the classic 'Children of the Sun' which according to S.L. Duff is an 'awesome fuzz-fuelled psychedelic proclamation, fairly faithful in its devotion to the Yardbirds' 'Shapes of Things'. The CD is also remarkable for the appearance of Glenn Ross Campbell whose rocked out steel guitar playing blew John Peel away when he saw them in concert.! By the way 'Children of the Sun' opens disc two of the widely available classic



eral with none of the trademark organ sound of early Soft Machine but he is there contributing two compositions and two co-writes. Karl Jenkins plays a major part in the writing and his 'Floating World' hints at major things to come. The first 25 minutes pass very quickly as one track segues into another and Allan Holdsworth's amazing guitar work lifts the band to creative peaks rarely heard before or since. Roy Babbington's intriguing bass creation 'Ealing Comedy' (misleading title!) is a welcome interlude in a maelstrom of music with Holdsworth's guitar playing simply breathtaking. He even manages to play a well received violin solo on Ratledge's 'The Man Who Waved at Trains' underpinned by a laid back bass riff and some delicious cymbal work from John Marshall. Another Ratledge composition 'Peff' follows that allows space for Jenkins to have a blow and for Marshall to start warming up for his 10 minute drum creation 'JSM' and I use the word 'creation' advisedly for this is one of the most interesting drum/ percussion solos I've ever heard- not one you'll want to skip too often! The track I would skip is 'North Point' where Ratledge's staccato synth lines are very strange! Drum rolls introduce 'Hazard Profile' Part One (There are 5 parts on the 'Bundles' album) which builds to an amazing climax as Holdsworth's fluency on guitar begins to border on the impossible. Frustratingly just as he scales the heights there was a break in the radio transmission and the music had to be faded out. The funky 'Riff III' (A relation presumably of 'Riff I' and 'Riff II' on the 'Six' album) is one of only two whole band compositions and once again, in Roy Babbington's words in the helpful sleeve notes where band members reminisce, Holdsworth

'blows the pants off everybody'! Ironically Holdsworth was the first guitarist in The Soft Machine since Daavid Allen left in 1967 and he does tend to dominate proceedings when 'he's in'. Not that that's a bad thing but I would have liked to have heard some keyboard solos as well- the electric piano provides backing only. There are three encores starting with Jenkins' lovely 'Song of Aeolus' which would end up on the next LP 'Softs' begins with piano and then Holdsworth is at his most poignant with- is that an oboe solo I'm hearing?

Critics were divided about the 'Bundles' era but I'll go with one train of thought as expressed in Paul Stump's history of progressive rock that what we hear here was 'a vivid and colouristic revolution in the entire feel and timbral materiality of the band's sound'.

Anyway, what is captured here didn't last long for within in a year both Holdsworth and Ratledge had departed with another guitar maestro John Etheridge coming in on Holdsworth's recommendation.

So for many reasons 'Floating World Live' is an essential addition for any serious music lover who wants to hear Allan Holdsworth in his own words beginning to develop his own sound with an extraordinary group of musicians who straddle jazz, fusion, funk, ambient and progressive rock with ease and great aplomb.

Highly recommended. (Ph J)

www.moonjunerecords.com

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FAR FROM THE BEATEN TRACKS

ABACAB "Les Trois Couleurs"

Abacab, previously called Contresens, is not similar as its name may suggest to Genesis during the Phil Collins era but to Ange.

Another pale copy then? Not at all! This maxi CD (3 tracks) features progressive metal ('Ne me dérangez pas') with distorted guitars, symphonic prog metal too ('Les 3 couleurs') with excellent guitar solos, and the awesome 'La source', blending cosmic music with magnificent guitar and keyboards parts. Every track is perfectly played by musicians who are not beginners. The lyrics are nice and would suit the 'angelic' universe: our selfish society, TV alienation... The vocals, in French bien sûr, are very theatrical and remind of



Mona Lisa's Dominique Le Guennec. For sure, there is a small draw back (we are French!). I missed some sharpness and originality, this sounds 'déjà vu'! But nothing crippling. No revolution certainly in our genre but another French band to be followed. This sample is very promising; an album is welcome then. (JL DLC)

(private)

APOSTOLIS ANTHIMOS "Back to the North"

Apostolis Anthimos is a Greek musi-

cian who has been living in Poland since birth and who is above all known as a permanent member of one of the oldest and most famous bands ever to have come out of that country, SBB. Anthimos also has three solo albums to his credit: "Days We Can't Forget" (1994), "Theatro" (2000) and "Back to the North", which was brought out just recently, via the Metal Mind label. On "Back to the North", Apostolis not only appears in his habitual role of guitarist, but also plays grand piano and synthesizer. Apart from Anthimos, the cohort includes his SBB band mate drummer Paul Wertico and bassist Marcin Pospieszalski, whose name I haven't encountered until now. The recording is not over-produced with studio values and features only well-considered, truly essential overdubs (always two guitars in the

picture for instance), due to which the trio sounds normally either like a quartet or a quintet. Apostolis is equally masterful and inventive when playing the guitar and piano, so I regret slightly that the latter instrument is only featured on two of the seven tracks present. Well, this is merely remarked on, as the matter doesn't affect the overall value of the material at all. The synthesizer is present on about half of the pieces, but unlike the piano it is used exclusively as a supporting instrument. A classic Jazz-Fusion aesthetic is obvious throughout each of the compositions, four of which however present the primary style in combination with a

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pronouncedly heavy Blues Rock. These are 'Bar Wah Wah', 'New Century', 'Pinocchio's Dream' and 'Back to the North', though on the title track the heavy component openly manifests itself only in the finale. The opening number is somewhat less complicated than its brothers in style, as well as the other pieces. The music is anchored by the guitar and bass setting syncopated rhythms in tandem with the drums, played with quite a few repetitions, yet maintaining a very compelling sound throughout. All in all, this is a driving jazz-rock, full of fervent energy and dynamism. There is something in common between it and the Hymn to the Seventh Galaxy from the eponymous album by Return To Forever. The other three are quirky, yet totally intelligent compositions made up of complex structures, with constantly shifting themes and many original chord progressions. All players are at the top of their form throughout, although of course, Apostolis much more often shines in a primary solo role, his guitar taking center stage unless his studio double:-) switches over to piano, which is eloquently documented on 'Pinocchio's Dream' and the title track - the most multicolored compositions in the set. A cross between "Birds of Fire" by the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Allan Holdsworth's "Metal Fatigue" can serve as a rough point of comparison. 'Bonnie's Eyes' and 'Waltz for Barbara' are more laid back and reflective, referring to atmospheric Space Fusion, though still with a strong improvisational component and rare returns to a once-carved furrow. Each of the musicians finds some place to show their solo performance skill on the 15-minute 'Color Impressions', but the epic's greater part is occupied by the trio's joint improvisational jams,

most of which are fast, intense and (which is especially striking) highly eclectic all at the same time. Overall, the piece has a strong free jazz feeling, which makes me think it was created extemporaneously and was performed live in the studio. The remembrance of "9 Eleven" by Taylor's Free Universe, Soft Machine's "V" and Holdsworth's (jazziest in my view) "Atavachron" may help give you some idea of these 'Color Impressions' - in case you ever venture to imagine this music without listening to its bearer:-). "Back to the North" is a strong and very listenable Jazz Rock album, full of intricate maneuvers and dynamic contrasts. The sound is normally thick and rich and is very rarely restrained or muffled. Those who like Allan Holdsworth, early David Torn or even late Brand X (think "Xcommunication") will find plenty here to be pleased about. Recommended. (V M)

(Metal Mind)

CRYSTAL PALACE **"Through the Years 1995-2005"**

As you will gather from the title this is a compilation CD self produced and distributed documenting the history of a Berlin band over 3 demo releases. I refer you to the 'Melodic Hard Rock Today' website where the CD was an album of the month for information about the band and a revealing interview with singer/ lyricist Jens U. Strutz who describes the music as 'Melodic Art Rock'. This is a good place to start to understand the band's music because on 'Puppet in Your Hand' their earliest song it sounds a little close to Marillion and you might be thinking- here we go again another clone band!- but listen

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of music described 'Waves' is well worth checking out. (Ph J)

(Musea)

----- **SAGA** **"Trust"**

Saga has always been a band at the same time unlucky and intellectually irreproachable. After a thundering beginning with 4 legendary albums and sold out concerts all over Europe, North America and Canada (*of course! - Ed*), the band always wanted to propose the music they wanted on their CDs and especially always wanted to test something new, and not to repeat themselves. Unfortunately the public followed those wanderings with difficulty, and I should say that sometimes Saga approached the calamitous side of things. Yet the band survived, carrying on gigging while trying to keep the flame by proposing live songs from their best period. Maybe defending their new productions a bit more each tour would have made things different. But Saga's audience became thin.

1999, the band wants to recover yesterday's style, the futuristic insect of the first covers is back, the famous chapters (whose meaning still remains a mystery) are back too. The music is good, very good sometimes through this album and the three following ones. But if the great Saga is back, something is missing to mesmerize us again as they did at the beginning of the eighties, when Styx was 'humiliated' by Saga, their guest, in Paris.

Well, with "Trust" it's done, Saga released an album in their great tradition. The keyboards are in the front of

the guitars, those being for sure present but slightly mixed behind when compared to the previous albums.

But the additional ingredients reappearing are the small touch of progressive we love so much and the musical developments in the way of the prestigious 'Don't Be Late', 'Ice Nice', 'Pitchman' and many others.

Songs like 'Back to the Shadows' could very have been included in "Silent Knight", 'Ice in the Rain' on "Images At Twilight", no less.

The cover art is sublime, all the musicians are excellent, a version of this album features a 15' making of the album in an additional DVD, in black and white, not translated, with limited interest then, but also an unpublished instrumental track where you see Ian Chrichton (*Saga's guitar player - Ed*) showing a breathtaking technique and skill. Don't look at it if you have been playing the guitar for years and if you think you're good!

Note: the previous album featured some similar passages already revealing the band was going to release something brilliant. Let's hope that they'll play this album on stage a bit more than usual. (O S)

(Inside Out)

SOFT MACHINE **"Floating World Live"**

Congratulations to Leonardo and all at Moon June Records for the truly stunning release of a live performance on Radio Bremen in January, 1975 by the line-up that released 'Bundles' a few months later. The only original member of Soft Machine on this recording is Mike Ratledge and on first listening his contributions seem rather periph-

RASCAL REPORTERS
"Ridin' On A Bummer" (20th anniversary edition)

The 3 minute opener is Zappaesque and really whetted my appetite for more but I really didn't expect the nice song that was 'The Hills' and no-one could prepare you for the epic 16 minute flight of imagination aptly entitled 'RIO'. Steve Gore (half of the Rascal Reporters) takes up the story in his helpful sleeve notes where he describes the long distance collaboration between Tim Hodgkinson, Dave Newhouse and Fred Frith and the differences in opinion between himself and Frith, now resolved I believe.

The idea of producing a double album of Rock in Opposition combined with pop bands like The Association is an intriguing one but was dropped (although remnants remain among the 8 bonus tracks on this CD) and the 20th anniversary edition is in fact a remixed, re-edited and re-mastered version of the original single LP with Frith's 'airplane decrescendo' (the subject of much debate apparently) restored to 'RIO', an intense creation also distinguished by a stark cello and a wonderfully evocative keyboard sound that recalls Dave Stewart's work with Egg. The second half of the piece is the purest kind of 'Mother of Invention' to me. There is also an interpretation of a Hodgkinson piece in song from 1976 and some music hall piano on this beguiling piece of well- you guessed it- RIO! To add to the perplexity, a jaunty little 'folk' piece follows and like some thematic counterpoint, a composition by Hodgkinson (who provides the alto sax solo) and the other half of Rascal Reporters (Steve Kretzmar) described

by Gore as 'impossibly dense' re-introduces a sense of musical disorientation. Originally released in 1984 I would have sworn that Kretzmar's 'Without Passion or Peace' and 'Bones Chorale' were early Zappa compositions. The 8 bonus tracks from 1976-1985 are interesting but you would need stamina to take all this in at once and recommend you start with Gore's 'Bread and Buddha' with some wonderful electric piano sounding like a vibraphone.

I am no expert on RIO but I would say this CD is worth checking out for the Gore/ Frith track of the same name alone (and also for the 'gratuitous amounts of improvisation' referred to on the sleeve! (Ph J)



Contact: hebbardesque@yahoo.com

CHRISTIAN RICHEL
"Waves"

An interesting CD full of ambient vibes and grooves mostly produced through synthesiser but augmented with some guitar on the hypnotic 24 minute long 'Marching II' and 'Hard Waves', a dramatic symphonic statement with timpani effects. The classical inspiration is also evident on the third track 'Obscure Waves' which has more than a hint of Gustav Holst about it.

It is difficult to sustain the listener's attention over an hour of such music but Christian succeeds in doing this because of the dynamic, restlessly shifting approach he takes, a musical search you might say. Even on the repetitive 'Marching II' the music is never boring. This is Christian's fifth album and if you are a fan of the type

on, there are many subtleties and nuances to explore in this 12 track collection. Influenced by the likes of Porcupine Tree, Faith No More, Steve Hackett and of course Marillion, the emotion and power in their most experimental and progressive song 'Psychedelic Sleep' is remarkable. You may also have guessed that the line-up is the 'standard' one of Keys/ guitar/ bass/ drums and each musician contributes to a very full and well rounded sound. Repeated listening is required to appreciate the relative contributions of each band member. It is surprising that Crystal Palace has no management or record deal but as an EMI man said 'You're years too late!' Still, 'Isle of Passion' is every bit as good as those AOR ballads unleashed with such frequency on MTV. The 8 minutes of 'Under The Red Sky (Ambience)', an anti-war song with particular reference to the situation in Bosnia at the time complete with news clips, have been extensively reworked since the early demo manifestation. It is very much a reflective song as the title suggests. The band sometimes plays 'unplugged' and 'It's Hunting You' (about how famous people really feel inside) is the one acoustic number featured with Frank Köhler's piano and Ralf Jaschob's acoustic guitar providing most of the backing. Their most recent song 'Cry-Feat. Roxy' is one of their heaviest and most powerful and, like all their material, a lot of thought has been put into the lyrics and the story they tell. (Ph J)

www.crystalpalace.de

ENNEADE
"Remembrance"

After several years of stage in the Lyon region, Ennéade, finally recorded their first CD. The result exceeds all expectations. The band features three guitar players, a singer, a bass player, a drummer and can be filed under progressive metal, with strong King Crimson and Dream Theater influences (*no less - Ed!*). Once again, some will say! Yes maybe, but that combo goes beyond the borders of the genre and reaches the limits of the most energetic metal. All the musicians made their debut in metal bands and you can feel it. This genre being limited for these accomplished musicians, progressive rock allowed them to open wider fields of experiment and escape the classic format of the compositions (intro, stanza, tune, bridge, solo, etc.) of non progressive music.

The album features 4 tracks from 10' to 18' alternating all possible colours, from quiet, melodic atmospheres, to feverish, even mad ones, the whole decorated with awesome rhythm changes. This opus is a true success, the compositions are very elaborated. It's hard to believe that it is a first album but this is the result of a close collaboration between the musicians, both for the compositions and for the execution, for several years (*AD had discovered their talent long time ago and our faithful readers could discover the band in one of our compilation - Ed.*)

What about their performances? They were the laboratory of their music during years and the energy displayed on



stage is astonishing. The tracks find a new vigour there and my sensations reach a paroxysm that I feel only during Magma's concerts. One of the guitarists is a Christian Vander big fan, this can explain why. A thundering bass, powerful drums, intense and chiselled riffs by 3 guitars (*no less!* – Ed) are the ingredients of the 4 long instrumental suites in which genius goes with madness and divine. Ennéade, that's certainly a well chosen name. (JL DLC)

(Musea)

DOCTOR DUNBAR'S MEDICINE BAND

"Doctor Dunbar's Medicine Band"

seems to be an influence while the closer 'Rock Your World' has a touch of soul and a lovely little organ break that Brian Auger or Booker T Jones would be proud of. From the opening bars of the highly infectious 'Good Bye Song' you're pulled in. I guarantee if you play this song anyone with an ear with music will be convinced they're listening to a famous class act. Well, they may not be famous yet but watch out for Doctor Dunbar's Medicine Show. Let's just hope they get the promotion they deserve. Meanwhile you can do your bit by checking out this deliriously brilliant album. It may not be prog rock but it is rock 'n' roll and I like it! (Ph J)

(Record Heaven)

Any album with a song as good as 'Brand New Day', an exquisitely catchy and musical homage to Ray Davies and the like deserves to be taken very, very seriously. Power pop/garage rock, all the best elements of late sixties music including a euphoric 'I Wanna Party' (sounding like a lost and wild Beatles or Stones song) are present in full measure on this stunning album. You begin to think the band cannot keep the quality up but they do over 42 minutes of music that demands and deserves a LARGE audience. I am a bit short on information about this band but I believe they come from Norway? If so their command of English wit and acerbic social commentary is commendable and the use of Hammond organ brings back happy memories of Spencer Davis. But did anyone back then really produce an album as consistent as this? Not many! Uriah Heep at their best springs to mind. Also The Who with a drummer trying his best to emulate Keith Moon

FLOWER KINGS
"Paradox Hotel"

With an almost metronomic regularity, the Flower Kings send us their very awaited annual production. The fans of these great professionals will once more be satisfied because this year the opus is double, a format which fits well to our flowered kings. Yet we are going to see that this hotel, if it lies on solid foundations, can shelter some paradoxes. 'Check In' and its countdown coming from the NASA, makes us hope an immediate propulsion to the progressive stratospheres. Wrong! The vertical takeoff is delayed because we are invited to play again the ping pong party begun just ten years ago on the "Retropolis" album. You think that this short prelude is a rather good premise for the rest of the journey when suddenly arrives the longest track of the album, 'Monsters & Men', which dur-

The band continue in similar vein through seven tracks only faltering occasionally on the jazzy 'OSC Bolero' but soon finding their way again. Indeed the odd lapse in timing adds spontaneity to the improvisation, something all too often missing in over produced, sanitised recordings. The guitarist proves that all you need to do at times is hold on to a note or add a bit of echo on 'Falling Stardrops', a slow burner patiently pushed on by a rhythm section that is perfect for the realisation of their musical vision. Evocative, at times visceral, space music doesn't come much better than this. (Ph J)

www.oresoundspacecollective.com
(Record Heaven)

PS: I have recently discovered sessions of this band on Jerry Kranitz's space rock radio site www.aural-innovations.com and they're well worth checking out! The band tells me they are about to release some new music- watch this space!

RARE BLEND

"Stops Along The Way"

Rare Blend is a very generous band. On 11 February they played a concert in Ohio and the price of admission included a copy of this CD, a recording that lives up to the billing of 'where rock, jazz, fusion and world music collide'.

The opener 'Illegal Aliens' is a real powerhouse of a track with Vic Samalot's fluid guitar runs, Jeffrey Scott's agile bass playing and some solid drumming and cymbals work from Vince Broncaccio. Bobbi Holt's organ also helps things along nicely.

Styles that follow include some funky soul resplendent with wah-wah guitar and some wonderful synth lines and organ runs on 'Wuhan Incident' backed by some cool congas, drums and bass runs. (Parts of this would make a nice soundtrack to the new Starsky and Hutch movie guys!) 'Mystic jam' is more laid back with a haunting melody while 'Cole Train' does a pretty good job in interpreting its subject matter. Just when you think the train is stopping you get a high octave refrain segueing with some jazz piano into 'Feast of The Warrior Kings'. Really I could go on all day extolling the virtues of this music. Three of the tracks are live studio improvisations while two tracks have vocals- the closer 'Heading home', basically vocal accompanied by acoustic guitar is particularly effective and a fine way to wind down the album. This is highly inventive (mostly) instrumental progressive rock infused with more traditional styles in the classic style of Dixie Dregs. The making of this CD was a blast says Bobbi Holt- well all I can say is that I really envy the lucky people who attended the gig that evening in Lakewood, Ohio! (Ph J)

Contact: www.rareblend.net
(Tough Stream Music TSM 290731)



Even if nobody, in my opinion, has not reached the boss as far as vocals and lyrics are concerned. Yet I have to recognize that now, on composition, some bands exceeded them. This comes from the "less progressive" side taken by Ange version 2. Nemo is unmistakably a part of this category. The 5 tracks, among which 2 are more than 15 minutes long, are a true feast: impeccable rhythm section alternating power and subtlety, delicate and incisive guitars, inspired keyboards. It's difficult to describe the 5 tracks of this album simply, they are so rich and diversified. We find quiet passages and hypnotic crescendos, breaks, some jazz-rock digressions (just what is needed), finally all that we like in progressive rock. As Maldoror (see issue #41), Nemo is a band to be supported at all costs and their new opus is an album to be listened to urgently (*avant qu'il ne soit trop tard - 'before it's too late' - as sang Mona Lisa - Ed*). (JL DLC)

(Quadrifonic)

OHO

"The Oriency Anthology 1985-2002"

I first heard OHO thanks to Background's free CD 'Ecce OHO' (Issue #28, 1998) The magazine also featured a history/ discography of the band by guitarist Jay Graboski. The band described were a progressive and at times experimental Baltimore rock band. This CD features OHO Mach 3 I think. I found the band's website www.ohomusic.com rather confusing in its amount of detail and apparent lack of reference to this new release.

What is on this CD is a 73 minute compilation of OHO music with female

vocalists playing an intelligent blend of psychedelic, power pop with some Celtic undertones and jazzy funk here and there. I was reminded of Jefferson Airplane, Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac, Kate Bush maybe even Aimee Mann but this is clearly not the progressive manifestation of OHO. That is not to say this is not recommended to Acid Dragon readers for I found it to be a thoroughly enjoyable listening experience from start to finish and certainly more coherent than previous OHO music I have heard. I am even prepared to forgive the lack of sleeve as only the CD itself made its way to me! Don't miss this one! ((Ph J)

(private)

ORESUND SPACE COLLECTIVE
"Oresund Space Collective"

The hypnotic Tangerine Dream inflected opener is interesting as a skilful exposition of synthesised space music. However, it's on the more substantial (both in terms of length and content) 'Consumed by the Goblin' that this music transcends the norm, a divine rhythm section defining the OSC sound and providing a groove for the keyboards and guitar to flirt in and out. A spaced out Doors evocation becomes a kind of space funk replete with fluttering, warbling synths and Manzarek type organs stabs and meanderings, a clean sounding electric guitar itself laying down a groove for some memorable 'parping' synths, then electric piano- no instrument takes centre stage for long. All in all the music is beautifully understated, creating a unique atmosphere in a perfectly undemonstrative way. The piece is long but never boring.

ing 21' shows, if necessary, all the technical skill of our Swedish friends. Roine Stolt, as usual, is excellent while Tomas Bodin is imperial behind his keyboards, playing the organ in the 'Awaken' tradition.

Undoubtedly, this first (real) track perpetuates the Flower Kings as an heir to Yes. 'Jealousy' calms down the pressure after this excellent introduction. Then come two nice songs including a very beautiful instrumental one, 'Pioneers Of Aviation', a lyrical track which, this time, makes us take off, our spirit floating in a state of weightlessness.

At this moment, I think I hold the new masterpiece of my favourite band. Yet my enthusiasm falls down brutally when listening to the four following compositions. For sure, they aren't really bad, they are just plain. 'Lucy Had A Dream' refers to the Beatles' 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds'. Well done, lads! Fortunately, the meaningful 'End One A High Note' closes this first chapter with the quality seal of the beginning!

I have to say now the second CD reproduces this clumsy patchwork identically. We find a succession of high moments mixed with slightly shallow compositions for a band of that level.

Among the climaxes, let's quote: 'Minor Giant Steps', 'The Unorthodox Dancinglesson' with its experimental side in the King Crimson's and even Frank Zappa's vein, 'Life Will Kill You', an excellent track à la Deep Purple (the David Coverdale period) signed by Fröberg (yes!) which is my favourite and 'Blue Planet', the finale, with echoes of 'Monsters & Men'. With the same draw back: a succession of weak songs drawing the general level of this second disc to the 'dark side of the moon'.

The case of 'Touch My Heaven', the only track signed by Tomas Bodin (except the sound effects I mentioned before), makes me wonder. Why this so talented keyboards player doesn't let his brio explode here? On the contrary, this composition is paradoxically (I said it!) the place for a long and splendid... guitar solo. Even if Tomas' work is absolutely correct throughout the album, we would really like he gives to the band a part of his talent as a composer (see his solo works).

'Paradox Hotel', the eponym track is perfectly anecdotic because it's basic rock'n'roll, almost out of purpose, as if the Flower Kings had wanted to create a hit for the radios. It works on the stage yet, as we could see during their latest concert in Lyon.

What should I say more about this disc? That the production seems to be a bit less luminous than in the previous ones? That I missed yesterday's unforgettable instrumental dialogues? That the rhythm section is less put in front? The answers to these interrogations undoubtedly appear in the questions, but we should forget these minor objections because we know those Swedish men can rebound as high and quickly as their famous small white ball.

I made a delicious dream in which this album was entitled "Paradise Hotel". When I woke up, "Unfold The Future" and "Stardust We Are" were fortunately always on my bedside table... (JL L)

(InsideOut)

ELOY FRITSCH
"Landscapes"

If you're a fan of symphonic synth

music with lashings of swishing, swooshing, swirling, warbling and trumpeting synths and a large Rick Wakeman influence then 'Landscapes' is for you! It's not all about lead synths though as Eloy makes good use of 'slap bass' and rhythm effects to provide a solid background to tracks like 'Teleportation'. On 'Andromeda' there is a hint of Tangerine Dream while Jarré and Tomita spring to mind on tracks like 'Science Fiction'. 'Cartoon' adopts a more humorous approach - remember Tomita's 'Golliwog's Cakewalk'? It's all very well done but won't appeal to everyone of course. Another remarkable thing about 'Landscapes' is the fetching cover by Roy Fritsch - a talented family then! (Ph J)

www.elayfritsch.cjb.net

PS: Musea just released a superb compilation featuring four bonus tracks. If you like Vangelis, this record is for you! (Ed)

THE GALILEO BROTHERS **"The Dancing Lawn"**

The Galileo Brothers are apparently a conglomerate of musicians from all around the world with over 100 featured on this 43 minute concept piece in 13 parts. Bells, monastic voices and haunting piano introduce the album with a 'New Age' approach suggested. 'The Dancing Lawn' is much more than that though. Each piece segues into the next effortlessly and it's nice to hear Leon Cotton's bass playing so high up the mix. By part 3 The Galileo Brothers have hit a really good groove with marimbas, timbale and a brass section driving the music on. Time

passes quickly and there a whole lot of instruments I've never even heard of before a marching band (The Hendersons) enter the fray on part 6. The accordion at the start of part 7 suggests a sailor's hornpipe and 4 pianos lead the way with some astonishing picking by Dr Bhba on steel body 7-string banjo. There's also a brass section of 9 players (The Goodnight-Loving Horns) This is the longest piece at over 6 minutes and is the showcase on the Carbon 7 website. '8' begins with Sheila B Nelson's violin with bass clarinets and cellos with voices (from Sofia) and whistle sounding synthesised giving an Irish air meets Oldfield's 'Ommadawn' vibe. There is a different bass played on every track it seems and it's a double bass (Daphne Petrescu) on '9' with instruments like 'tar' and 'rik', 'ney' and 'mey' and 'kavals', the xylophone and clarinets easily picked out (I do know what they sound like!) The theme continues on '10' with other unfamiliar percussion instruments. This ingeniously does a metamorphosis into a Latin American dance rhythm on '11'. A well known name appears on '12' - Mo Foster on fretless bass with Hammond organ quietly in the background and percussion provided by the very familiar shaker and cowbell (Couldn't hear the backing vocals listed on this one!) The orchestral feel to '13' provides the album with a very beautiful ending.

'The Dancing Lawn' was recorded in Panama City (including inside a chapel) and in London between 1998 and 2002. Considering the disparate musicians, locations and timeframe it all sounds very connected. Although a vast array of instruments are used there is nothing crowded about the music and it sounds alive, fresh, evocative and at times exuberant. Highly recom-

The overall style defies accurate definition, and only its components are determinable, though even these are modified, at times almost beyond recognition. (So please note this before I list them:-). Neo Prog, Space Rock and Gothic are most widespread. They touch each of the songs, save the aforementioned two and 'Pill', while 'Pati', 'Into My Hands', 'Insomnia' and 'Circus' are points of their concentration, each being notable for excellent piano work. Moonlight play in a very personal, fully unique style. Only atmospherically is there common ground between these and Marillion's "Afraid of Sunlight", Landberk's "Indian Summer" and "Signify" by Porcupine Tree. Just a casual remark: Accordion could have imparted a healthy dose of folksy flavor to Circus if its contribution to the song had been more significant. On 'Spy', which also features accordion plus a very inventive violin, the band moves towards a more intricate and a heavier, progressive Doom Metal-related sound, with the considerable renunciation of Art-Rock keyboard patterns in favor of those reminiscent of Classical music, though the primary components of the album's overall style are still here as well. The next song, 'Irreversible', can be described in a similar way. I only have to underscore its incredible heaviness, evidenced primarily in the crushing guitar riffing, and the presence of some angular RIO-like movements instead of those of Classical music (although violin is active, too). In a way, it's like abstract algebra - in the best meaning of the concept, though the associations with Leif Edling's Abstract Algebra are also pertinent - in a way, still. Pill is made up mainly of Metal constructions; it's rapid, intense and heavy almost throughout, Maja's singing being

also powerful in this case. The remaining two pieces, 'My Own Words' and 'DownWords', are not only free of any sorts of aggression, but are also much lighter in mood than any of the other songs. Both are based on soft-and-slow piano-laden, fully transparent (perhaps just airy) arrangements, with Maja's vocals morphing gently over recurring backgrounds. By the way, the title track is the one that slightly disappointed me, perhaps due to its strange constitution. The song as such doesn't exceed 4 minutes; then follow effects, and the rest of the track's space is filled with nothing else but emptiness. So the CD's real duration isn't the hour mentioned above, but is less by 5 minutes - not a big deal, of course. Bearing in mind its real musical content (or just music as such, if you will), Moonlight's "DownWords" is essential listen from start to finish. Anyone on a good footing with good music regardless of its stylistic or structural peculiarities should love it. (V M)

(Metal Mind)

NEMO **"Si Partie 1"**

Nemo's fourth album is another good surprise in the garden of French progressive rock. Despite the absence of support by the medias, French bands still manage to produce high quality albums and thus delight fans of French-styled progressive rock. Ingredients are simple: musicians able to explore all the paths of the genre (metal, cosmic, prog, neoprogram, jazz-rock) and mainly theatrical and meaningful vocals with poetic and/or engaged but always intelligent lyrics. You guessed the reference is Ange.

madness (those who saw Hassan Hajdi on stage will confirm) which would make their music really take off.

Yet this opus is the best they made since the beginning of their career. The end of the tunnel then? I hope so because their willingness and their passion are indisputable. (JL DLC)

(Muséa)

MOONLIGHT
"DownWords"

Moonlight should probably be regarded as veterans of Poland's *contemporary* progressive scene, as they celebrate their 15th anniversary this year. Singer Maja Konarska remains as the only one of the musicians who founded the outfit back in 1991, though most of the other members of Moonlight's current lineup have been with her already for almost ten years. The collective is famous for their frequent live performances, as well as their consistently high activity in the studio. Their official discography includes two concert releases (CD and DVD) and eight full-length studio albums, namely "Moonlight" (1993/2003), "Kalpa Taru" (1996), "Meren Re" (1997), "Inermis" (1999), "Yashi" (2001), "Candra" (2002), "Audio 136" (2004) and "DownWords" (2006), which signifies my acquaintance with Moonlight. At least on this album, Moonlight don't shine with technical filigree, but this would be just needless for the music they present here. What is typical of "DownWords" is that everything here is focused upon composition and on the strengthening of harmonic bridges between tracks. In other words, this is a highly cohesive album, regardless of a certain diversity of its

stylistic picture. On closer examination, it turns out that although five of the nine songs stand out for some distinctive features that are peculiar only to them, the entire material possesses some inner unity, which in many ways smoothes over the contradictions between all the pieces, thus lending them a common kinship on many levels. Some contain many dramatic transitions, some less, some little (the two referring to 'Words' in the their titles, to be described last of all), but none is ordinary. Those from the first two categories all have a solid rhythmic groove provided by the dynamic rhythm-section (which is a cardinal propulsive force here), often in conjunction with low-pitched hypnotic passages of synthesizer. The sound is saturated, distinct and volumetric, and is normally dense and layered, constantly revealing some new sonic and textural collages. The mood ranges from light sorrow to melancholy, but mystery and aggression are not far from here, and even though the latter much more often suggests itself in latent form, it manifests tangibly in most cases. This music quite well reflects the essence of our existence on the planet of Earth. Maja deserves special praise for her singing. While the 'vocal entities' seem to be less subjected to mood changes, they just exist a bit outside our customary emotional spectrum. Anyhow, they're always beautiful and bring a keen sense of fragility to the stuff. The number of rapid solos is small, the basic tempos usually range from slow to moderately slow, but the music is always moving, gripping, contrasting, mesmerizing even at its softest moments. This is music that is progressive despite the absence of intricate arrangements, having a philosophical feeling without being sophisticated.

mended. (Ph J)

(www.carbon7.com)

HIJOS DEL AGOBIO Y DEL DOLOR
"Pioneros y origenes del rock andaluz"

Many fans of Andalusia rock remember the gorgeous double compilation released two years ago for the Spanish legend Triana. Gorgeous by the DVD included which featured many rare videos, concerts, interviews about that fabulous band. This year, the same label publishes an awesome double compilation about the bands of that style. I wrote 'Andalusia' and not 'flamenco prog' on purpose because you'll find other styles of rock influenced by flamenco. Any way, all prog heads will enjoy many combos selected such as Triana, Medina Azahara, Mezquita, Azahar, Alameda, Iman, Cai... Yes, they are all here (or almost!) including very obscure ones such as Tabletom, Gong... And as usual, there is a DVD, a document (in Spanish) about the origins of Andalusia rock in the 70's and especially about the seminal outfit, Smash. Highly recommended! (RR)

(Droatlantic)

HYPNOISE
"Analog Ergo...Siam"

An ancient villa in the province of Padova... wrapped in the fog: this is how a temporary seal of nature looks like over this portion of earth, an island in comparison to the rest of the world... A dazzling light coming from a win-

dow of the ancient villa tries to irradiate itself in the fog but neutralizes itself while those wide windows look like secular eyes of this prestigious residence dwelling on the surrounding forest...

Structured sounds arrive to our ears floating from small holes in the old windows in a mystic atmosphere to show us signs of life

It's a large room, in the 'belly' of a secular villa in the country close to Padova the 'hometown' of those signals we distinguish to be 'Music'... what music!

Shall we go in? Impossible to go in all together so I'll use my ears for all of you... Let's go in!

Right away I understand that 'The Way Out' to be involved in the 'musical world' created by this exceptional trio of Italian musicians is that you must put on your shelf dedicated to great records under letter 'H' for Hypnoise!

'The Way Out' is the opening song of "Opium", their first album, officially released in the first months of the new millennium, four years after the band got together in 1996.

At that time in fact, the 'Hypnoise symptoms' had been perceived by three students of a local school of a Middle Ages town, Cittadella, where they had a debut with some primitive versions of songs recently included in the 7" Opium.

The 'belly' of the villa is in the country close to Padova, 'home base' of the activities of the band, and had incubated tiny musical buds, today flowers of international valence, conceived and cured under a 'natural light' of a happy *meeting* between talent and cultural formation persevering an artistic objective!

The power of the trio is assured by the energies of P. Mike III, guitars, vocals,

creative force and fulcrum of the band, Frez eclectic drummer and percussionist, Sanze... high performance bassist. The musicians have played together since the days spent at the prestigious "Thelonius Monk jazz school" of Vicenza.

The international debut of Hypnoise had the precious care of the famous American producer and musician Ronan Chris Murphy, known for working with King Crimson, members of Yes, Ministry etc., who had flown from Seattle to Padova and was very interested to develop the Hypnoise Project. "Opium", is a winning realization with a strong international profile composed of nine heterogeneous episodes, (total time over 40 minutes), with a pair of cool instrumental ones.

The opening begins with a strong and structured rock song, 'The Way Out', in which you can appreciate great rhythm section and guitar style; the right opening song of a wide "musical mosaic" composed by this Italian power trio: an intoxicating lead guitar always in the right place to leave space for a solid rhythm section.

P. Mike III's expressive voice sounds quite rough and warm... and Trey Gunn's Warr guitar is a long walk in the garden of "King Crimson".... an exciting and amazing end.

All following tracks show that Opium isn't a foreseen work easy to catalogue under any commercial label, but a mix of precious musical caresses and feelings dedicated to listeners looking for interesting and exciting timeless music. The music of Opium is a fascinating one, with precious arrangements; every single track shows P. Mike III's great guitar work, sometimes virtuosus in great solos, other times 'suspended' in psychedelic parts creating, with Frez and Sanze, moments of curious ambi-

ent music!

Hypnoise carefully avoid commercial digital recording techniques devoting their skills to the use of analog equipment to get warm sound improving creativity and *spontaneity*.

Having been convinced of the quality and positivity of their analog experience, and with all the good reviews that were obtained after the official release of their first album Opium, Hypnoise delight us with a new album titled St. Valentine's Porno Bar under Los Angeles based Veneto West Records. (www.venetowest.com)

Compared to Opium, where every track was a different picture of P. Mike III's life, in St. Valentine's Porno Bar we're in a real "Rock Opera", ("A novella in sounds by Hypnoise" on the exclusive front cover made in a square of Venice), over 70 minutes to explain a history of a personal reinvention between many different musical, colored moments.

A remarkable step ahead comparing their new album to the first instinctive and valuable Opium... careful listenings of St. Valentine's Porno Bar convince me Hypnoise fly high with this new album, confirming their international vocation and their great creative effort.

A 'Trio' with great ambitions!

P. Mike III's musical invention wide skills have been confirmed with this "small/mega production" created in a few minutes of 1999 St. Valentine's Day.

Try to imagine what a great combination of positive elements and feelings must have occurred to turn on such an incredible creative force.

So patiently, Mike begun to write the 'storyboard' based on this 'inspiration', primitive lyrics and musical riffs to describe spaces and lights within Cae-

sar step by step after personal reinvention and inner revolution ultimately finds peace and happiness in the purity of nature. (great end, 'The Ocean', inspiration had, (confession of the writer), during one warm and placid Cuban night before the immensity of the Atlantic Ocean on the famous Playa de Santa Lucia)... more than ever analog, Hypnoise realize this CD using exclusively old analog devices, kind of ancient recording in the WI-FI, mp3, iPods modern age but, as I said before, all this aged equipment works like a "balsam" for their interesting creativity!

Places, things and persons, contributed to the making of this CD..... town of Venice with the recording of noises from Rialto's fish Market and its humid and foggy streets, the reverb of a small medieval church and an ancient villa, medium waves of glorious tube radios... all on a 1935 Magnadyne S53, breathtaking gospel choirs with the amazing voice of American Cheryl Porter...everything orchestrated with great artistic production by Ronan Chris Murphy, the right producer for Mike & co..... even an old demijohn had lend its 'belly' contributing to the creation of particular sounds for the Sanze's bass... "old demijohn makes... good sound"

On all, skills and abilities of the Italian trio, and its leader, are inspired from the great musical pages like the ones written by Pink Floyd, appreciated somewhere in the album.

Must say P. Mike III joined a 45 hours non-stop jam in Padova playing with musicians like Pat Mastelotto and Tony Levin (King Crimson World) and the great guitarist Willie Oteri.

Moreover, some weeks ago some radio stations broadcasted the Band playing acoustic showcases with interviews.

St. Valentine's Porno Bar has been presented February the 14, at "Blacks club" in London, we look forward to listen to them live soon...! Padova, latitude 45°24' 57"96 N - longitude 11° 52' 58"08... rock listeners may have to turn their head on that part of the Planet! www.hypnoise.net exhausting and constantly updated official site... Not supporting the band would be an insult to St. Antony from Padova! (CC) (private)

MAGNESIS
"L'immortel Opéra"

Since their first opus, "Les voyages de Mikado" in 1992, Magnésis, a band from Burgundy (East of France), built a fantastic and medieval universe in the Ange tradition, our national reference in the progressive genre. I saw them on stage, some years ago, as guest to Ange and during the Dijon music feast, and I can tell you their performances are interesting: the singer has presence on stage and he dramatizes his songs with various masks and suits while the musicians do their work well. Yet their albums never got success in the progressive spheres (let's not speak of the other ones!). Why? The singer-lyricist is good but in my opinion too affected in his interpretations and has a bit exaggerated intonations. The musicians are excellent too and do their jobs. So why don't they reach Nemo's level (reviewed in this issue too - Ed) for instance? For me because: their style is too close to the 70's (a little bit old-fashioned now) and thus shows a lack of originality (in the etymologic meaning), the singer is far from having Christian Décamps' charisma and voice, and mainly we miss a touch of