

Voyager

The MagellanMusic Newsletter

Summer 2015

“A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, a great adventure took place!”

They were The Golden Years of Progressive Rock. It was a time when songs broke the rules of what songs were supposed to be, as well as albums. They were no longer collections, but entire pieces with themes. Short songs, long songs, simple ones, complicated ones, Rock, Pop, Jazz, Blues, Electronic, Symphony, Renaissance, Children’s, Eastern, Spoken Word, Sound Effects, Narration - the sky was the limit. Anything could be used. Progressive Rock was the ultimate creative platform. The music business had never imagined anything quite like this.

The start of it all was vinyl records. Original 78’s, made from the notoriously brittle Shellac, were 12 inches wide, with only one song on each side of the disc, each about 5 minutes. Essentially a large ‘single’ play record. But when Vinyl came along in the late 1950’s the durability was vastly improved over shellac, and why use of it quickly died. Vinyl carried on with the tradition of ‘singles’ on a 7 inch disc of one song per side, so the real change was the long-player, with the now classic ‘LP’ and ‘album’ catchwords. They could hold a stunning 45 minutes of music. This was a boon for Classical and Opera artists, but not for Pop artists, whose singles had been the mainstay of pop music from the beginning, suddenly had the new and formidable job of finding music to fill up an entire album.

In the early days the only good rock albums were ‘best of’ collections of singles. But thanks to burgeoning writers, such as Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly, certain artists could meet the demands of long-playing records. By 1965, after the explosion of the Beatles and the British Invasion, artists weren’t just pop combos or singers, they were the new term Singer-Songwriter. And the changes kept coming. Albums expanded an artist’s creativity to the point that they were literally ‘progressive’ because of so many genres, such as “Revolver” by the Beatles. Then in 1967, the Beatles “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” confirmed all these amazing changes. It was the first to be called a ‘concept album’ (another unheard of term) because it told a story, even if it was a loose one, but it worked. It started a trend of many more ‘concept’ albums to follow, such as “Days of Future Passed” by the Moody Blues. It finally convinced the music world that rock was indeed an Art, an understanding that it was virtually a genre of its own. Even better was the increasing complexity of the music itself. Songs became ‘pieces’, as Classical music is proudly called. By the early 1970’s bands such as Pink Floyd and Yes were creating works 20 minutes and longer. Other artists like Jethro Tull and Mike Oldfield were devoting entire albums to a single work. Altogether, Progressive Rock, or Art Rock, was a phenomenon. Such albums were a

singular habitat, like a movie for the mind, its own self-contained landscape. Perhaps best of all, Progressive Rock made the listener think. It was engrossing, demanded contemplation, much less the unequalled respect for the talent who created it. Unfortunately, no phenomenon can go on forever. Art Rock faded as the 1980's reverted into superficial commercialism, which the next generation took pleasure in calling the Prog greats 'dinosaurs'. Progressive Rock didn't exactly die, many European and international musicians carried on, but in America the quaint term 'Golden Years of Progressive Rock' was true. And since we know that nothing like it can ever happen again, we must be thankful for the magic of recording and continue experiencing the sublime joy of that era.

With that in mind, here are a few albums that casual listeners may have forgotten:

Ummagumma - Odd that many **Pink Floyd** fans aren't aware of what came before "**Dark Side of the Moon**". Maybe they didn't grasp the idea that without those years of serious Prog Rock "**Dark Side of the Moon**" would have never happened. It's debatable, but "**Ummagumma**" could be the most intense Prog album Pink Floyd ever did. It's so weird and wonderful that at times it goes beyond Prog into the Avant-garde. The 2-disc set features an album of live tunes, the other featuring solo efforts by each band member. And by the time an uninitiated listener reaches the albums' end it can leave them breathless. "*Was this really Pink Floyd?*" So for any fan who doesn't have "**Ummagumma**", shame on you!

Drama - strange that **Yes** will always be considered the foremost of all Prog bands, yet "**Drama**" is the least commended. In a way it's understandable. "**Drama**" came at a time when the rock scene was changing; Prog was fading while Disco, Arena Rock, New Wave, and Punk were coming on, and most incredible was lead singer Jon Anderson and keyboard player Rick Wakeman left **Yes** simultaneously. Most bands would have broken up, but somehow they held together. They brought on no less than the two members of the ridiculous bubble-gum band called the "**Buggles**". **Yes** fans freaked out expecting the worst, but to everyone's shock "**Drama**" was one of the best in their catalog. Its format is much like "**Fragile**"; 4 major songs with a few shorter ones. So good that fans didn't miss Anderson and Wakeman as much as they thought they would. If "**Drama**" isn't in your collection, get it.

Lizard - **King Crimson** is one of those bands whose first album, "**In the Court of the Crimson King**", will always be the one they're best remembered for. It's one of those titles in everyone's collection just like "**Dark Side of the Moon**". But many of us believe "**Lizard**" comes very, very close. It came at a weird time in their career when they were a studio band, no live work, which is why very little of this album was featured in concerts to follow. But it's amazingly adventurous. It has a jazzy approach, lyrics nicely idiosyncratic, had

an upbeat, humorous attitude at times, and side 2 (the title track) clocked in at over 23 minutes. As varied and unusual as **King Crimson** albums are, "**Lizard**" is a stand-out. If you don't have this one, it's a must.

Trespass - when **Genesis** first came on the scene in 1969 buyers were rather puzzled. The album "**From Genesis To Revelation**" made one think it was a religious album, and why it essentially died and the band split up. However, guitarist **Anthony Phillips** brought them back together in 1970 to try once more, and amazingly they found a whole new attitude. "**Trespass**" appeared in October of 1970 and it sounded like a completely different band. It was pastoral, flowing, rich with melody, lyrically and musically descriptive, a perfect example of Art Rock. And it captured 'The Sound' that **Genesis** would be known for throughout their career. Unfortunately it got very little PR from the record company, but it showed promise and there was no going back. "**Trespass**" is a must-have.

Songs from the Wood - As happens with many bands, **Tull** will be remembered most for certain albums such as "**Thick as a Brick**" and "**Aqualung**". Seems like most of their albums afterward were slammed by critics, at times bordering on outright anger, but the appearance of "**Songs from the Wood**" in 1977 was a nice surprise. It's not exactly a lesser known album, but definitely a throwback to the good ol' days. There was a renaissance feel to it, lots of acoustic instruments, but lots of energy with all-out heavy Prog Rock at times, all capped with memorable melodies from the timeless vocal delivery by Ian Anderson. "**Songs from the Wood**" is a classic.

Pictures At An Exhibition - was **Emerson, Lake & Palmer's** least appreciated album for various reasons. It was a live album of new material, which was almost entirely classical pieces by composer Mussorgsky, had been shelved because the record company didn't like it, was released only because of their breakthrough album "**Tarkus**", and was even then sold at a cut rate price as if already headed for the cut-out bin. A sad story since "**Pictures At An Exhibition**" reveals more of ELP than any other album. They may have been jostled with lots of ego, but they clearly exemplified the depth and perception of musicians who came long before they did. This album is a keeper.

The Six Wives of Henry VIII - Unfortunately for Keith Emerson, ELP's keyboard god, **Rick Wakeman** emerged as the King of Keys when **Yes** broke through with "**Fragile**" in 1971. His distinctly classical style made him the standout of all keyboard players. It was inevitable that sooner or later **Wakeman** would do solo work. **The Six Wives of Henry VIII** was a natural direction since his work had a renaissance feel, but still progressive rock through and through. Unfortunately, albums to follow got much more attention. Some thought "**Six Wives**" might be a fluke with **Yes** riding the big wave of Prog Rock at the time, but wrongo. It was one-of-a-kind. **Wakeman** would go on to record an entire

catalog of solo albums, and still is, but nothing is like “**Six Wives of Henry VIII**”. If you don’t have it, add it. Your library deserves it.

A Song For All Seasons - Renaissance was a British band who never got the acclaim in America that they deserved. There was a Folk influence that gave them a softer approach, very little electric guitar for instance, a touch that was nicely reflective of their band name. **Renaissance**’ top years were between 1972 and 1976, but it was in 1978 when the surprising “**A Song For All Seasons**” emerged in the midst of the Disco rage. It was full of classic melodies and arrangements, was more adventurous than others, electric guitar joined the fray, even featured an unexpected best-selling single, “**Northern Lights**”. If any listener wants to know more about **Renaissance**, there isn’t a better start than “**A Song For All Seasons**”.

Fireballet - “*Since I’ve never heard of this band could you repeat that please?*” **Fireballet** was maybe the most stunning new Prog band to come along in the mid 1970’s. Not only did they cover a classical piece by **Mussorgsky**, but their sound and approach was in the class of bands we’ve just mentioned. Some might complain they were just a cross between **Yes** and **Genesis**, but there was no mistaking **Fireballet** from anybody. Their mastery of instruments and complicated time signatures is impeccable. By the time you reach the end of both **Fireballet** albums you’re likely to be slack-jawed and ready to listen again. Unfortunately, they got extremely little support from their record company and quickly faded into the unknown. But thanks to patience and coaxing by die-hard fans they were finally able to release both albums on CD - “**Night On Bald Mountain**” and “**Two Too**”. They are treasures. Get them as soon as you can.

Q: What do you say to the banjo player in the three piece suit?

A: “Will the defendant please rise.”

No more 30 second sound clips

Good news for those intrigued with **MagellanMusic - CD Baby** has surprised everyone by featuring songs at full length now. That may not seem astounding, but it is. Since online selling has become a mainstay, the former effort of 30 second clips was a nice add for shoppers, but hearing an entire song (or songs) is like trying on an entire outfit. It gives buyers a much better look at artists they’re interested in. For those of you who would like to take a closer look at **MagellanMusic**, go to www.cdbaby.com/all/magellanmusic and dig in!

Q: What do you call someone who hangs around a bunch of musicians?

A: A drummer.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

The Good - the best news in years are the recent lawsuits won by the classic 1960's band the **Turtles** against **Sirius XM**, the satellite radio provider. **Sirius** used an odd gap between Federal and State laws to play music produced before 1972 without paying royalties. Or so they thought. The **Turtles** victories were in California and New York, which then spurred certain record labels to file suit in yet other States where that same 1972 law gap exists. This is especially good since other slime-ball stream sites caught on to the weird law glitch and are trying to do the same to enlarge their bank accounts. That includes **Pandora**, who has staunchly defended it, which is why the **Turtles** have filed suit against them as well. As of this writing there is no news as to the status of that suit. When **Voyager** learns we will share.

More great news is the introduction of a bill (in the House of Representatives) that will overhaul the Copyright/Royalty system. It is called the **Fair Pay for Fair Play Act** (H.R. 1733). This has been in need for a long, long time. The advent of digital technology changed the music business in so many ways and so fast that Congress couldn't keep up. With streaming websites paying incredibly low royalties and broadcast radio only paying the composer, the **Fair Pay for Fair Play Act** will even it all out by establishing basic royalty standards for any public use of music. It will also eliminate the collective effort to end royalties to music produced before 1972. Congress is sure to be pummeled by lobbyists against it, but lobbyists for it will be heard too. You too can contact your Senators at www.senate.gov and your House rep at www.house.gov. Tell them to support **H.R. 1733**, the **Fair Pay for Fair Play Act**, and it will only take a few minutes. Do it!

Another is the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the **Allocation for Music Producers Act or the AMP Act** (H.R. 1457). It is a bill that would formalize into law a policy of honoring a "letter of direction" from an artist to re-direct royalties to producers and engineers who are part of their creative process. The bill would also address royalties for producers who worked on sound recordings made before the digital performance right became law in 1995. The AMP Act is also supported by The Recording Academy. This definitely reflects the direction music should be going.

More good news is a flamboyant and popular stream site called **Grooveshark** has been shut down. They made the mistake of not even paying for licenses to play music, thus lawsuits from Universal, Sony, Warner, and EMI. **Grooveshark** shut down as of April 30.

Another bit of good news recently is the discovery that **Pandora's** growth is slowing. **Pandora** has the top name in music streaming, prominent enough to reflect the collective of streaming sites, so was this really good news? Yes and no. Pandora resorted to stock market manipulation to create income, which

hid the fact that company growth is inarguably slowing, but only an indication that the same could happen to all streaming websites. Let's hope it does!

Q: Did you hear about the guitarist who was in tune?

A: Neither did I

The Bad - As unbelievable as this may sound, **NPR** recently joined the Establishment forces to lower the royalty money paid to songwriters/musicians for airplay. There was a time when tiresome radio was solved by tuning into **National Public Radio**. They have always seemed independent of the typical network hogwash despite government funding, actually reported stories as they happened, no slant politically or culturally, but something has gone wrong. **NPR** hasn't explained why, but they have joined the **National Association of Broadcasters** to lobby congress for reducing royalty rates. Nothing else needs to be said considering how bad that is for such a respectable radio network.

Q: How do you get two piccolo players to play in perfect unison?

A: Shoot one.

The Ugly - The downside of the music business is streaming, and it still grows. Why is that happening? It's because of listeners. If people didn't listen, stream sites wouldn't happen. If retailers, restaurants, or car repair shops cut their prices to match stream site royalties they would go broke and close down. That is what's happening to the music business. It's a very sick industry and not getting better. If stream listening doesn't stop, the music business will.

Q: What happens if you sing country music backwards?

A: You get your job and your wife back.

This is a challenge

How many times have you been asked to name your Top 10 Favorite Albums or Artists? The **Voyager** staff has spoken of it several times and we find it interesting that it's a much more thought provoking question than it seems. As soon as one decides, or writes it down, suddenly they must stop and think again. "Do I really think Steppenwolf is better than Jefferson Airplane?" Or "Is 'Dark Side of the Moon' really better than 'In the Court of the Crimson King'?" Hmm. We put down our pens and we try to think real hard about what favorites are **REAL** favorites. So give it a try sometime - if stranded on an island and you could only have 10 albums, which ones would they be?

Q: How can you tell someone is a true music lover?

A: When they even put their ear up to the bathroom keyhole.

Buck the system

Considering how dead the music scene is and no decent magazines other than Rolling Stone that keep an eye on what's happening, there are ways of finding new and unusual artists. Online radio stations, not stream sites, follow the guidelines of broadcast radio, even ask for donations to stay alive, and there are three exceptionally good at playing rare tracks:

www.auralmoon.com - specialize in progressive rock and they are superb. They're so organized that they actually span the world. They also provide links on each song so listeners can buy the CD.

www.psychedelicized.com - focus mostly on 60's music but feature so many unusual tracks it's hard to keep up with. They too feature links on each song to get the CD, some so rare that they're only available on collections.

www.psychedelicjukebox.com - specialize in rare 60's music as well but feature more well-known songs, plus segments dedicated to contemporary retro bands. Very nice!

Please visit www.MagellanMusic.com or www.cdbaby.com/all/magellanmusic sometime soon.

“Life without music is like a body without spirit.” - unknown