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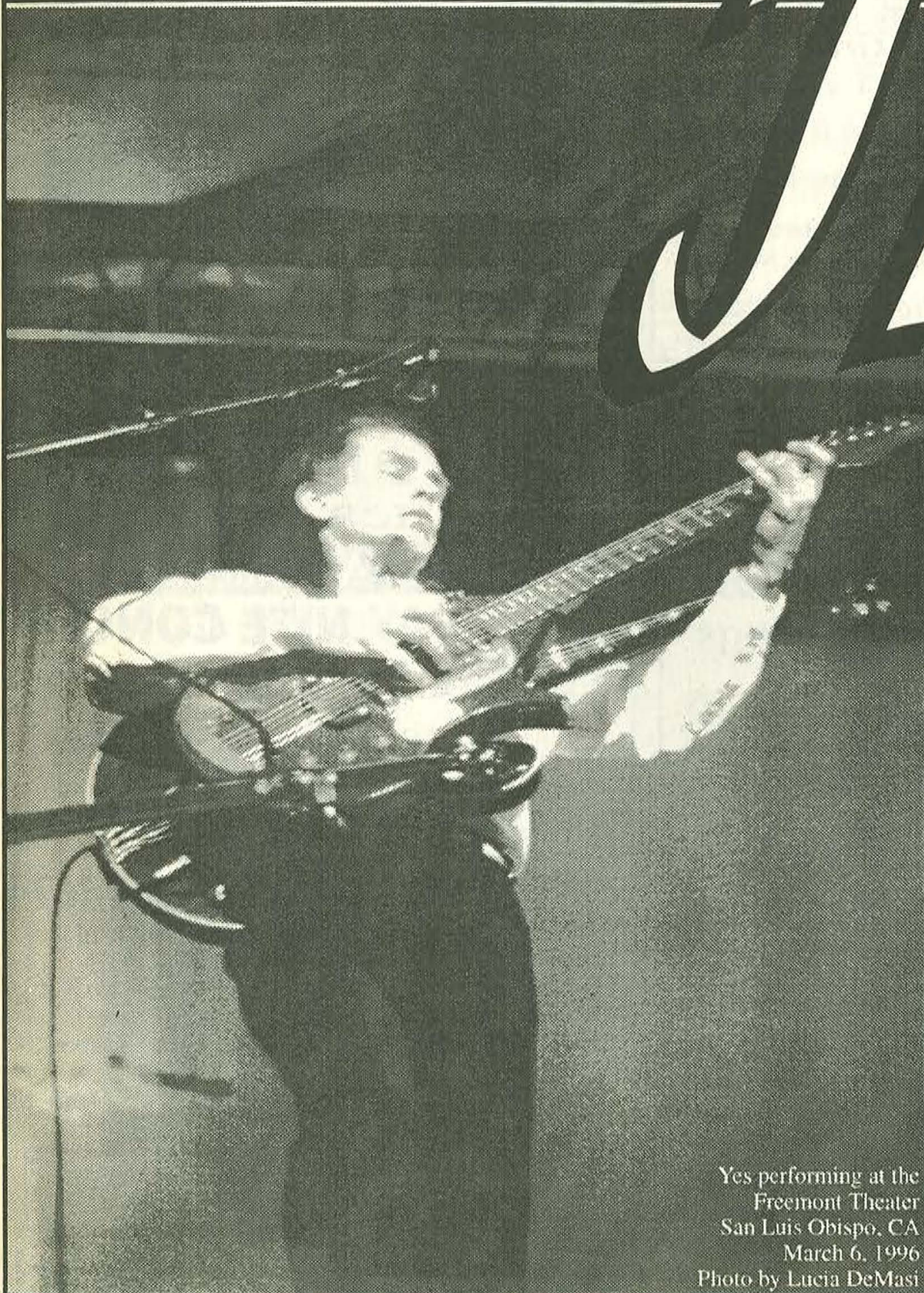
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Steve Howe

Yes



Yes performing at the
Freemont Theater
San Luis Obispo, CA
March 6, 1996
Photo by Lucia DeMasi

Yes.

The mere mention of this word in the context of rock and roll can, depending on the point of view, conjure up cries of pretentiousness, strike fear in the hearts of guitarists and bassists alike (especially when asked to transcribe something like *Close To The Edge*) or bring to mind twenty-seven years of some of the most creatively inventive music the world of popular music has ever heard.

Yes began life as a progressive unit led by singer Jon Anderson and bassist Chris Squire, releasing two albums as the sixties came to a close. But it was in 1970, when Steve Howe replaced guitarist Peter Banks and the group recorded the legendary *Yes Album*, that the band reached heights never before obtained within the context of rock and roll and from there, they never looked back.

Album after album throughout the seventies, the core members of Yes - Howe, Squire and Anderson - continued to explore and experiment, often to the

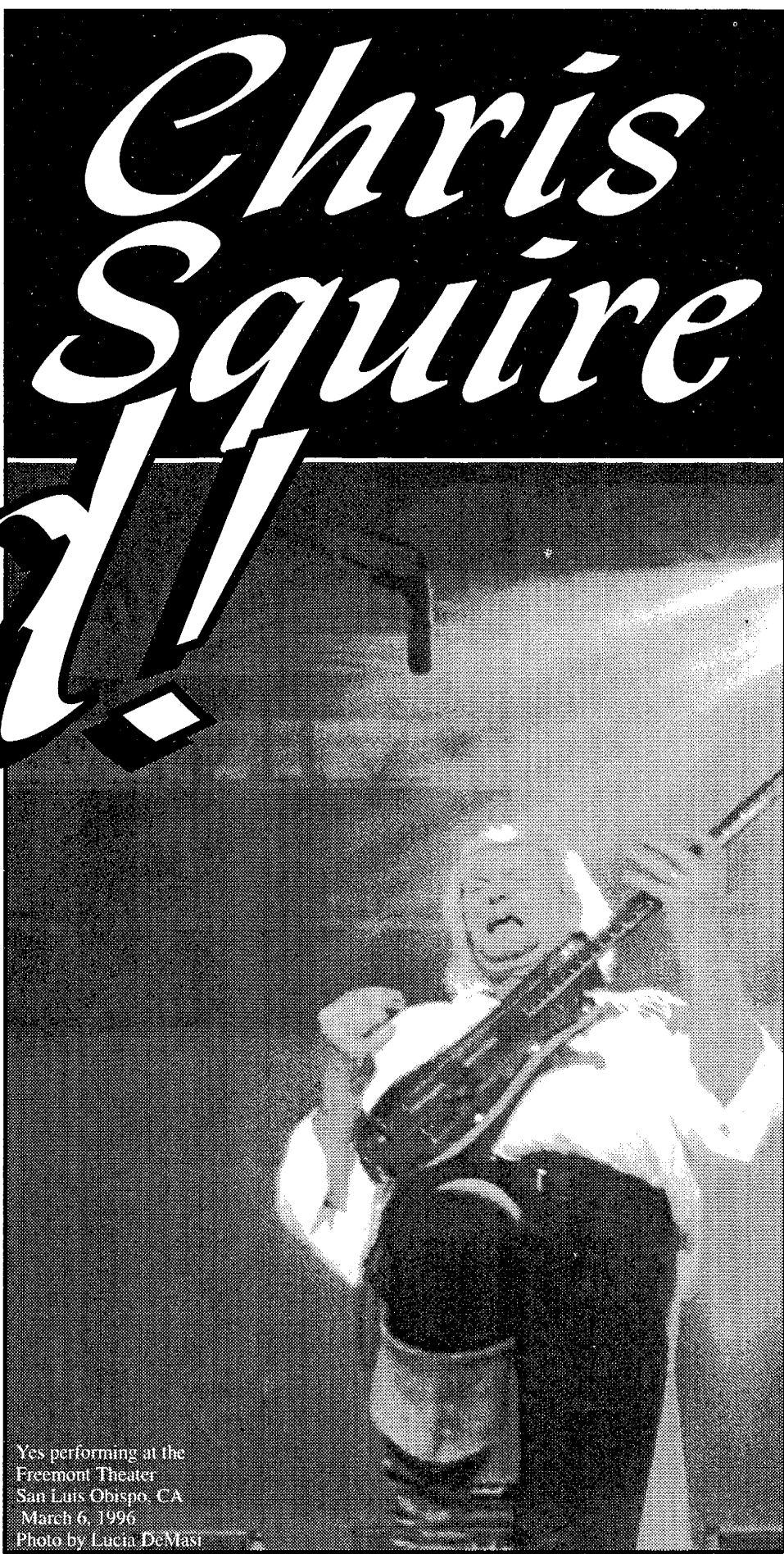
Yes,
Yeeeah!

Chris Squire

exasperation of the critics. The fans, however, soaked up everything Yes threw at them. The decade of the seventies saw Yes produce no fewer than eight studio albums, one triple live record, a full-length feature film and solo efforts by all of the members.

Things were not always rosy, however. Keyboard players changed almost as often as album covers, drummer Bill Bruford left after *Fragile* and was replaced by Allen White but the three main members continued to guide Yes as they pushed the musical envelope with such landmark recordings as *Tales From Topographic Oceans* and *Relayer*. That was, of course, until the end of the decade when things began to fall apart. A rehearsal session was set up for the band and only White, Howe and Squire showed up. After waiting as long as they felt necessary, the three remaining members drafted the Buggles - Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes - to replace Anderson and Wakeman. The result was *Drama*, an album many will argue is easily one of the best to ever wear the Yes logo. But the writing was on the wall and after one tour, Yes disbanded.

It wasn't quite over yet, though. Steve Howe went on to form the super group, Asia, Rick Wakeman went solo,



Yes performing at the
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Trever Horn went on to producing (rather successfully at that), Geoff Downes went with Howe and John Anderson pursued a solo career. Squire attempted a number of projects leading up to the formation of a group called Cinema with guitarist Trevor Rabin, drummer Alan White and original Yes keyboardist, Tony Kaye. While recording their first album, Jon Anderson came in to record some vocals and ultimately joined the band which changed its name to Yes. Yes was back and the first album yielded a hit single and all was right in progland. Well, for a little while, anyway.

The new Yes released a disappointing total of three CDs over the next fourteen years and by the third recording, Chris Squire, whose creative and driving bass work was the glue that held Yes together, was non-existent and it was clearly evident that Yes was not Yes without the Howe/Squire combination. An attempt in 1992 to combine the old Yes with the new Yes with a project called Union was well

received by the dedicated Yesheads but failed to live up to its grand promise. Anderson, Wakeman and Howe got together with original drummer Bill Bruford to record Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman and Howe, possibly one of the best post-old Yes recordings.

The end? Not quite. 1995 began with talk of a reunion of the original members of the band. By the end of the year, Anderson, White, Squire and Howe were in California rehearsing and waiting for the arrival of Wakeman. Wakeman was a no-show for personal reasons. So, 1996 began the way '95 ended, this time with all present and accounted for. Things clicked. By March the band played three shows at a small theater in California which was recorded for a live/studio album, since named *Keys to Ascension*. The band has plans to begin a new studio record and, hopefully, tour once the disc is completed.

The end result of all this rambling is to let you know that, yes, Yes is back. And for us progites, this is good news. Yes, indeed.

Steve Howe



TCG: Yes.

SH: That's not a question.

TCG: OK, I'll start with a question. What are the plans for Yes?

SH: The plans are still being decided. What is definite is that sometime around June an album is due called *Keys To Ascension*. This will have something in the region of an hour and forty five minutes live Yes music drawn from the catalog but not necessarily the catalog we've been playing to death over the years. There are some nice surprise tracks, none of

Chris Squire



TCG: Welcome back. I have been a fan since the beginning. I would like to start with the show last week. It's the first time this lineup has been together for about fifteen years.

CS: Well, apart from the Union tour. The shows went well apart from some little things. But overall, it was really good.

TCG: Those that I have spoken to who were there said the shows were great.

CS: That's good to know.

TCG: From the pictures we got, the theater looks like a great place.

CS: Yeah. It was built in the thirties and it

Steve Howe

which I'm going to mention - though Larry knows some of them and might hint that he thinks he knows what they are - and two studio tracks which last thirty minutes in all.

TCG: Is this a double CD?

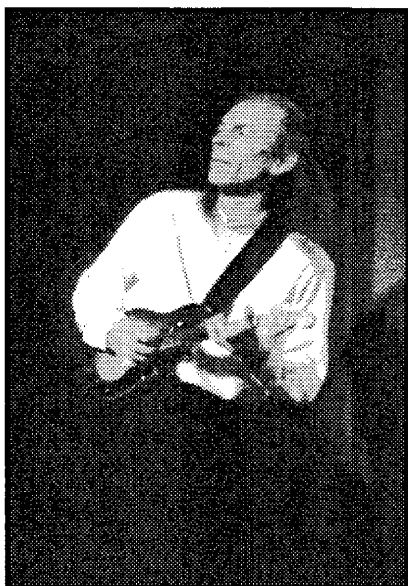
SH: It is a double CD with our friend Roger Dean doing the sleeve. It will come out on Castle which is an English label and I think it will come out here on CMC. These are the definite Yes plans and I don't know what kind of video we've got yet but we do have a video of the shows.

TCG: I understand the shows ran close to three hours.

SH: I never knew because I don't think we ever once went out on time and I don't have a clue as to when we came off but people told me we played for about two and a half hours.

TCG: Have you heard any of it yet?

SH: I heard bits of it each night after the shows and I felt pretty relaxed about it. Funny enough, ever since we've played with all five of us together, which is only this year (Rick Wakeman was not present during the first sessions of rehearsals at the end of 1995), it



Lucia DeMasi

really sounded good. We recorded everyday and we all just took it completely for granted that that's how we play. That's how it sounds, everybody plays the right notes, it's in tune, good-bye. We don't even have to think about the old material, it's so potentially there.

TCG: When you went to California at the end of January, was that with the intention of recording a live album?

SH: Yeah.

TCG: So you knew, then, that it was coming.

SH: But no date had been set at that point. It wasn't agreed where it was going to be. Alex Scott and myself were believing that it would be better to do it in Santa Barbara and we tried to get the others to believe this also but nobody would agree to that. So, it was done in San Luis Obispo, which, of course, the fans found very hard to find. Nevertheless, we did it there because we were there.

TCG: Is it fun being back with Squire again?

SH: Oh, yeah. When I could look over and stop for a moment and listen to Chris, that's when I can conceive of what this band really is. Once Rick was back and taking care of his parts, I could notice the nuances of the band. Now I can see what kind of automatic pilot Yes can be in. Not that musicians can take that for granted, but we can play in that way and we can play very well and it's because we can fine-tune some sort of thinking between and make it work. The assumption that we can do no wrong is definitely not the case. We

Chris Squire

has a kind of Art Deco theme to it. It was a nice place to play.

TCG: Are you guys going to get back out on the road?

CS: The plans right now are to get the live album mixed and edit the video - we shot all three shows - then do our next studio album then go out. We may not do the U.S. first. We may do Asia and Europe first. I'm not quite sure what the time frame of all of this is but we would like to be back here before the end of the year. We've started working on a lot of the tunes for the next studio album so we already know where we are going with that. We would like to have that finished by the end of May. That would be nice.

TCG: One of the things that was missing, to a point on *Big Generator*, and definitely missing on the last album, *Talk*, was Squire.

CS: Oh, absolutely. What can I tell you.

TCG: Are you going to come back on the next one?

CS: Unfortunately, we had a guitarist (Trevor Rabin) who didn't know what he was doing and thought he had become Yes. He has an ego as big as a house. He used to tell everyone that I had lost all of my talent and then erase my parts and redo them on a keyboard, if you want to know the truth.

TCG: Well, I would rather hear that than you say that was the way you wanted it to be.

CS: Exactly. It became a problem and that's why he is no longer around.

TCG: I don't know Trevor, but on the *YesYears* video, he comes across rather egotistical. I do like his playing, though.

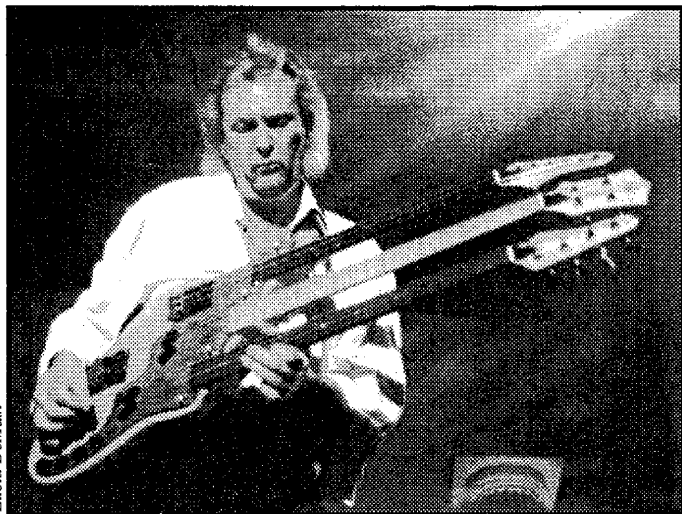
CS: I like his playing and I quite like him as a person. He just had an insecurity when it came to working with other people and needed to steal anything that was going and then get it wrong on top of that. At first it was a kind of disease that was slow and creeping and I thought he would grow out of it but it just became worse. The essential part that he missed about Yes is that it wasn't one person having a master plan. It's the fact that we just get together, play the way we play and it comes together. It's not something that can be programmed on a computer. We don't even know what it's going to be. That's the system that Yes has always worked under and it has always worked for us.

TCG: There is that inter-play between you and Howe that has been missing and that's what I'm hoping to hear on the next record.

CS: You certainly will. There are a couple of studio tracks on the live album that are pretty good actually. There is quite a lot of that on the new stuff.

TCG: What about another solo album from you?

CS: I've been working on one that is about finished. It is going to be



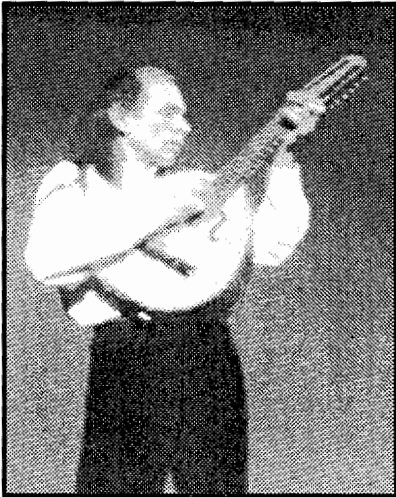
Lucia DeMasi

Steve Howe

can come unstuck. We didn't go out feeling that we were under-rehearsed but the fact that a couple of times over the three nights we did come unstuck, one can only assume that we were under-rehearsed. It's an awful thing to have to admit but we have to admit it. Yes usually wouldn't make mistakes of that nature.

TCG: When you feel that you are in trouble on stage, is it things that you feel are wrong? By that I mean, Yes music can become so incredibly complicated, are these mistakes that may seem larger to you but go un-noticed by the listener?

SH: I think most of it does go by but sometimes it is noticeable. The mistakes during the three nights were probably less from being under-rehearsed and more from the lack of familiarity of being on stage together. There is a sort of a settling down process. Monday and Wednesday things went great and we had a good feeling. Just Tuesday, things were slightly different. The sound was different, we were different.



Lucia DeMasi

TCG: What guitars are you traveling with?

SH: When I went to California, I took seventeen but for the shows I ended up with twelve. Which was fine because twelve is enough to deal with.

TCG: When you do the older Yes songs, are you staying faithful to the guitars you used then or are you using instruments you are more comfortable with now?

SH: For the most part, it's all authentic guitars. I didn't use a pedal board, just some pedals on the floor. It was a very simple system, not unlike a 1970's pedal board. I used two Twins as well.

TCG: What were some of the guitars you had with you?

SH: I started the shows with the ES-345 Stereo and used it mostly as my main guitar. I used the Fender steel, the sitar guitar, four acoustics - the Martin 00-18, the Portuguese guitar, the Spanish guitar and the 12-string Martin - the Telecaster, the Steinberger 12-string and the ES-175.

TCG: What about your next solo album?

SH: The next release is called Home Brew and it comes out on May 7th. I realized that I was kind of proud of the tapes I've made myself. They are what could be labeled demos but there is a lot of work in them. They are not just thrown down in a fashion that one might expect. They're quite meticulous, quite in time, quite in tune and they have arrangements in them that have not been heard before. The tunes are treated quite differently. Some of it is a jigsaw of how the material evolved. I think people will be quite surprised with how it comes out. I'm going back to the roots of my music.

TCG: Did you always do your demos this way?

SH: Usually, yes. Some of them are quite elaborate. It ends with a piece that made up "The Reveling Science of God" called "For This Moment." That's the song I played for John that started Tales. The CD

comes with a twenty-page booklet that explains everything. And folks, this is Volume 1!

TCG: There is more to come?

SH: Yeah. I have an enormous tape library, and not just me on my own, not the least of which is with Yes.

TCG: That's two major projects down, now let's move to the third one and that's what you're doing here now. (*Steve and Martin Taylor are recording a CD using over sixty guitars selected from the Scott Chinery Collection. The group of instruments represent the finest guitars ever made.*)

SH: I'm producing Martin Taylor and playing a bit myself. My role is to do what a producer does, which nobody has ever been able to define. This is the second time that Martin and I have been in these roles.

TCG: You brought Martin in on this, right?

SH: It was a gradual coming together of the logical point of Martin doing it. Scott (Chinery) and I had other ideas of how we could do it but each of them featured Martin. Eventually, Scott said to me, "How about just featuring Martin." I was offered the job first to play it all but my problem with it was the repertoire. I'm much more used to playing my own repertoire and I couldn't really put a whole album of my repertoire towards this project because I knew it would exhaust other things I'm doing. But to put a few tunes in would be great and Martin and I are most probably going to write quite a lot together and created stylized music for the collection as opposed to totally rely on what tune we can play to make the guitars sing. Maybe a third of the music will be new. The point of the project is not only well selected music played by good musicians but also that the music is able to explore and explain the sound of the guitars. We want it to have musical life about it. We don't just want to record the guitars for their own sake. Scott wants to hear his guitars really being performed on.

Chris Squire

different from *A Fish Out Of Water* and include a lot of the stuff I did with Billy Sherwood. He is putting it all together. It's just a couple of tracks shy of being a complete album.

TCG: At the shows last week, is that the original Rickenbacker?

CS: It is the original one.

TCG: And you are playing the triple-neck.

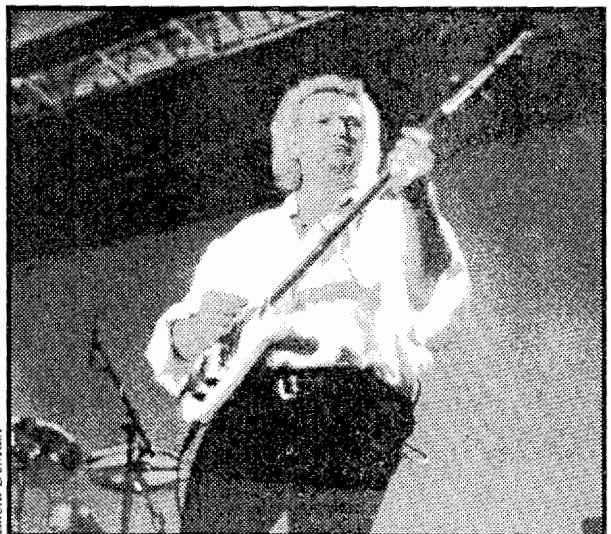
CS: Which isn't the original one.

TCG: Is the original one in the Hard Rock in New York?

CS: Yes. the original is actually a bit of a dog of a guitar. The one I'm using now was made in Japan. Some guy there made two identical copies and he gave me one.

TCG: I thought you went and pull it out of New York.

CS: I did on the Union tour. But this guy came to me with both the copies and said that if I signed one I could have the other.



Lucia DeMasi

TCG: Good deal.

CS: And it is much better than the original one. The only song I've ever used it on is "Awaken." It is the only one I need it on.

TCG: The first time I saw you use it I had mixed emotions. At first I thought it was really cool but then I thought, "Hey, where is the Rickenbacker." What else are you using now?

CS: I have an eight string bass which I used the other night and a Tobias 4-string that is tuned to B, E, A, D. It is real long and has extra frets at the bottom instead of the top. And a Carvin acoustic/electric bass. I also have a very nice 5-string bass that they made for me.

TCG: Do you still have that White 8-string Rickenbacker?

CS: You know what? I do but it is sort of in the custody of my ex-wife which could mean anything.

TCG: In 1964, what was it that made you want a Rickenbacker bass?

CS: Mine was one of the first three that came over to England.

TCG: Was it a custom-order color?

CS: No. It was a red sunburst when I bought it. What happened was that I covered it with a lot of stuff during that whole psychodelic era and I took it to a guy who cleaned it all off, took off the finish and just put a clear lacquer on it.

TCG: That's why I could never find one that color as a kid.

CS: That's right. Rickenbacker had never made one like that until they came out with the Chris Squire Model.

TCG: I guess I can stop looking. What was the influence for going for that sound. No one was using Rickenbackers that early.

CS: As I said, I got one of the first three that came over. John Entwistle got one, the bass player from the Kinks got one and I got the other. To be fair, I was a big Who fan as a kid and I saw Entwistle playing his. He used it in the early days of the Who but then moved on to other things. That's why I was impressed to buy one.

TCG: What amps are you using now?

CS: I use a combination of Marshall and Ampeg SVTs. The Marshall is the one that I have had since 1968. It says it is a bass amp but it has more top end than many of the guitar amps.

TCG: It seems that Chris Squire is the guy who has kept Yes alive all of these years.

CS: It seems that way. One has to do what one feels he must. It has been a double-edged sword sometimes. I've had to take care of the bills as well. There aren't many bands that have made it this far.

TCG: It certainly is nice to hear Yes is back.

CS: It's a good lineup. The best is yet to come.

THE PROJECT: Recording the world's Most Beautiful Guitars

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"How many people have ever heard an Orville Gibson or an original C.F. Martin? Or how about a Stromberg and a D'Angelico played together? So many of the great instruments have never been recorded or even heard. That's the main reason why we are doing this project," says collector Scott Chinery.

And that's why over sixty of Scott's finest guitars were sent recently to a studio in Pennsylvania where Steve Howe and Martin Taylor spent two weeks playing, living with and recording the most beautiful sounding instruments produced in this century.

Howe and Taylor first made a trip to the Chinery estate, spending two days choosing guitars for the project. No limit was put on the criteria for selection and while it sounds like an easy enough thing to do, imagine swimming through over seven hundred instruments and choosing your favorite five or six dozen. Prior to and during this period, Steve and Martin decided on material and, in some cases, wrote some of the songs themselves. On March 11, they locked themselves into the studio, ably assisted by Dave Wilkerson engineering and Mike Carey maintaining the instruments.

Fourteen days later, Chinery's vision of an historic recording, showcasing the very finest of 20th Century American instrument building, was a reality. The Martin Taylor-penned "LaQuista" features Martin and Steve playing a D'Aquisto Solo, the D'Aquisto Advance, a D'Aquisto Centura, a Centura DeLuxe, a miniature Bozo flattop, a miniature Bozo archtop, a Larson Mandocello and a Larson mando bass guitar. "No Pedestrians" includes an ovalhole D'Angelico Excel, a 7-string Super 400, a Stromberg Deluxe and Master 400, the "Muzzy" Super 400, a 16" D'Angelico and a 1964 Fender Precision bass. A song entitled "Two Teardrops" features the 1957 D'Angelico New Yorker Teardrop and the D'Aquisto Teardrop. The list goes on. A White Penguin, a Custom '50s 6120 made for Chet Atkins, an Advanced Jumbo, a Gibson Banjo Bass, three Gibson Century of Progress guitars, Wilkanoski's, Loar-era Gibsons and more.

"These are some of the finest instruments ever made and this recording gives many people a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only hear these great instruments, but to hear them in the context of each other. How often does anyone get to hear a Stromberg Master 400 and a D'Angelico trading licks," says Chinery. "But this recording gives the listener even more. Martin Taylor is truly in a class by himself when it comes to guitar playing. He has no limit. He can do anything and everything. He is the greatest guitar player I have ever seen. Steve was the perfect person for producing. He has a passion for vintage guitars, an eclectic repertoire and broad musical taste. There is nobody else I can think with those kind of qualifications for this job.

In two weeks Martin and Steve recorded eighteen songs for the CD but it is not quite finished. In May, just prior to the Classic American Guitar Show, they will return to the studio for one more song. By that time, all 23 of the blue archtop guitars will be completed and Martin will record the 23 instruments on one song with each guitar taking eight bars. This last song will be on the CD and included on a separate CD single to be part of the forthcoming Balafon Books release on the Chinery Collection.

There is something for everyone on this CD. It will appeal to fans of Martin Taylor and Steve Howe, vintage guitar enthusiasts, jazz lovers and fans of guitar music alike. It is expected to be released some time in June of this year.