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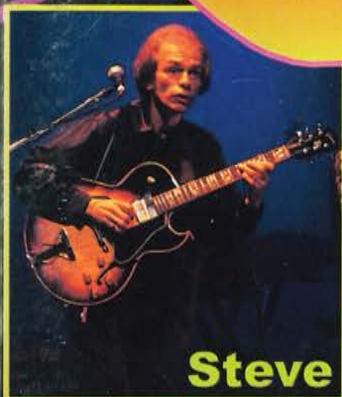
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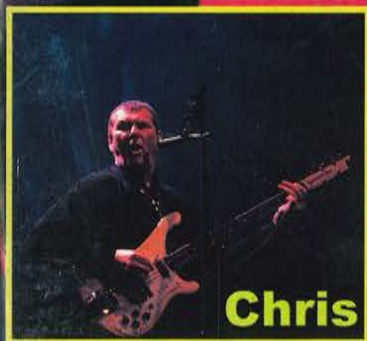
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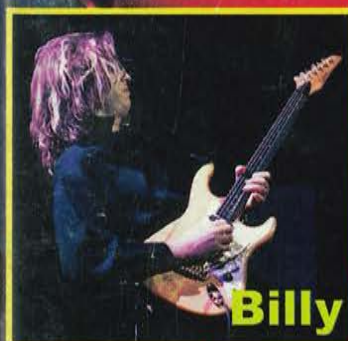
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Chris Squire



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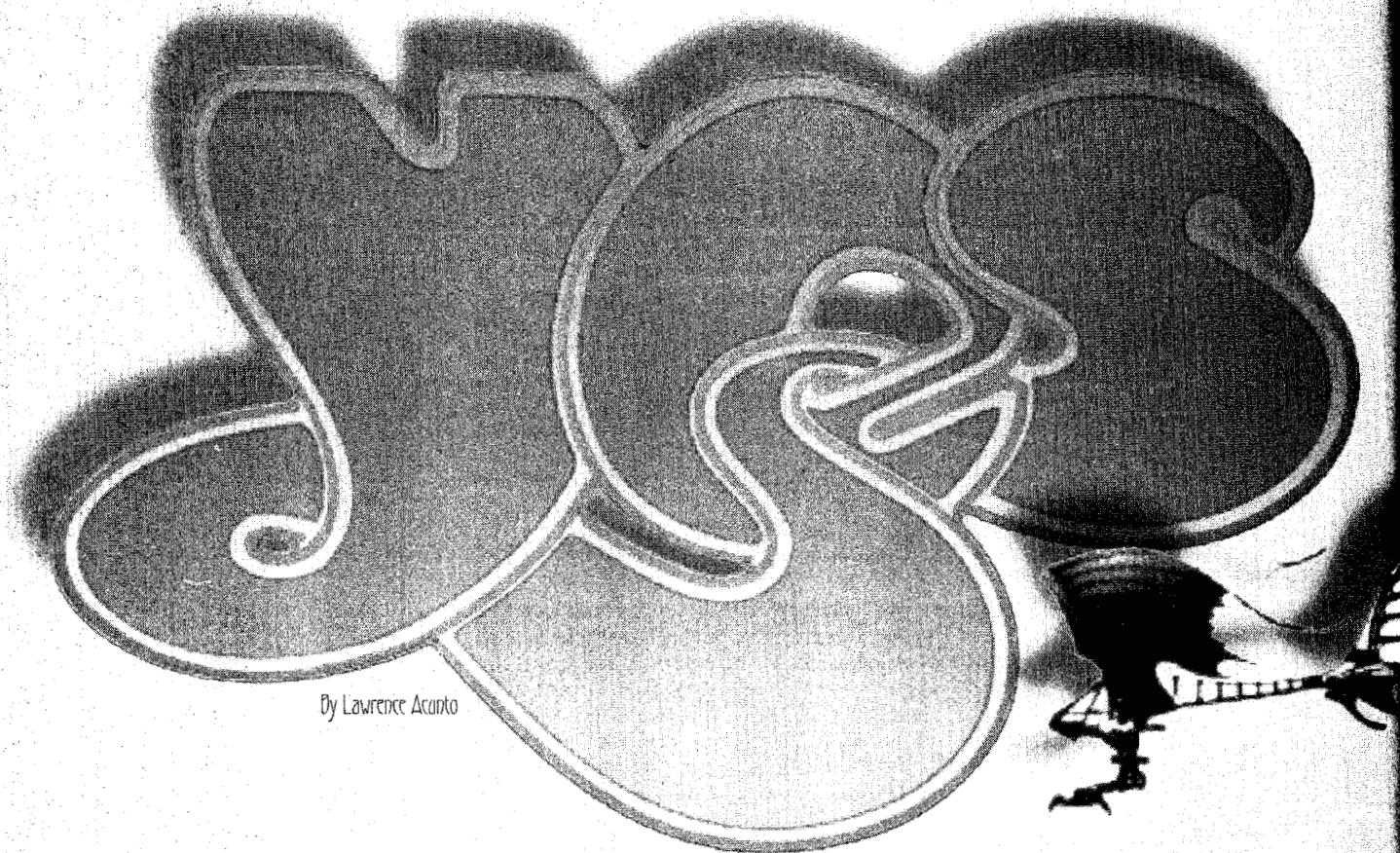
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Perhaps had the original line-up of King Crimson remained intact or if Genesis had not abandoned their early course for the world at the top of the pop charts or if more people had recognized the genius that was Gentle Giant, things would be different. But as it went, it was left to Yes to carry the weight of being the premier purveyors of what was to become termed "progressive" rock.

A formidable challenge, to be sure, but Yes has, over the last three decades, worn the title with honor, creating some of the most powerful music since the dawn of rock and roll. Sure, if you like your blues blue or your jazz pure or your pop dripping in lusciously sappy melody, Yes is probably not for you. But for those of us who look for adventure, creativity and innovation, Yes has time and again delivered.

Sure things have not always been rosey. The band has, over the years, suffered many of the same pitfalls that most groups endure leading to personnel changes and temporary breakups. They have even, amazingly enough, topped the pop charts on more than one occasion but that never deterred them from their original plan.

The core players in Yes' success are John

Anderson, Steve Howe and Chris Squire. As a writing team, few, if any, have ever come close. From beautiful melodies such as "Turn Of The Century" to epic productions like *Close To The Edge* and *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, Yes leaves the listener almost dizzy at every turn. The combination of Howe's ability to consistently present the unexpected and Squire's legendary innovative sound and playing and Anderson's ethereal lyrics - even Squire once commented he wasn't sure what Anderson was talking about most of the time - creates an atmosphere other progressive bands can only dream about. And though any combination of two of the three have been able to carry on - *Drama*, for instance, without Anderson or *90125* without Howe - it is when they are together that the magic happens.

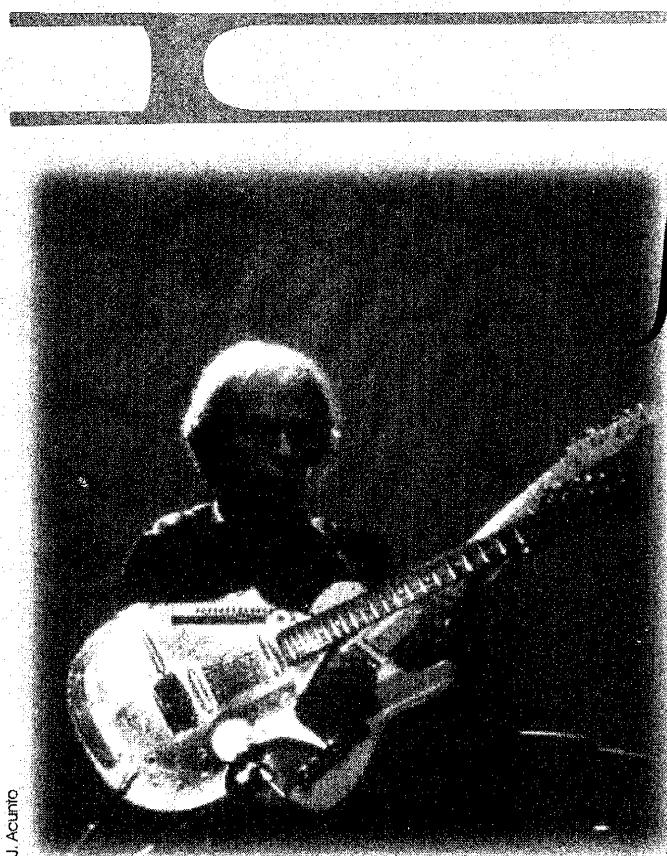
And happen again, it did, with the recent release

of *Keys To Ascension II*, a half live, half studio double CD that brings Anderson, Howe and Squire together again with long-time drummer Alan White and perennial keyboardist Rick Wakeman in what is widely held to be his final performance with the group. The live CD recorded two years ago in California is not much more than a re-hash of older material, songs that for the most part have appeared live on previous releases and is, for all but the most ardent, hard-core fans, little more than a side dish (though, the performances, in typical Yes fashion, are stellar). It is the studio CD of the set where Yes puts to rest any rumors of their demise. The lyrical interplay between Howe and Squire, the perfect harmonies, the intricate arrangements are all there as expected and, though this is what many consider the "classic" Yes line-up, the music is fresh and up-to-date, picking up where the studio CD from *Keys*

To Ascension I left off. This is classic Yes. Only more so.

This year Yes also shows off their acrobatic abilities as the band performs a complete 360-degree flip with the release of yet another CD called *Open Your Eyes*. The core of Anderson, White, Howe and Squire are present but add guitarist/songwriter/producer Billy Sherwood. This, along with keyboardist Igor Khoroshev, is the touring line-up currently crossing the U.S. *Open Your Eyes* will definitely fall to criticism from those who consider any departure from the Yes "norm" a sacrilegious act, but there are those that prefer it to *Keys II*.

What the future will hold for the band is anybody's guess. Since the late seventies, Yes has been one of the most unpredictable acts in rock. But if you are a fan, this is the best of times. Two new CDs, a tour and a bright prospect for good things to come.

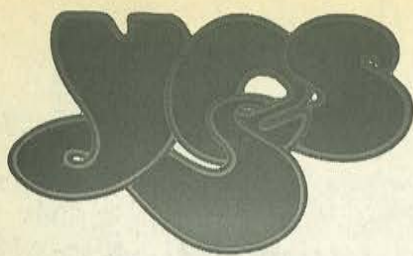


J. Acunio

Steve Howe

Since his debut with Yes on 1970's *The Yes Album*, Steve Howe has been one of the most innovative, creative and respected guitarists in the business. No other player has so successfully incorporated rock, jazz, classical and country style playing so cohesively in a single musical setting. It is not unusual for Steve to play an acoustic guitar, a classical guitar, his prized ES-175 and a pedal-steel live in the same song - usually at the same time! (Well, almost.) Howe is a student of guitars, easily one of the early collectors (he was pictured with over a dozen instruments surrounding him in the booklet that accompanied the *Fragile* album in the early seventies) who chooses each guitar for every situation very carefully. Sound is the number one criteria for his instruments so it is not unusual for him to modify particular instruments to get that sound, regardless if it is a 1952 Telecaster or a recent Strat.

Howe's return to the Yes lineup after a fifteen year absence (though the band got together briefly in the early nineties for the *Union* album and tour as well as an almost-Yes with Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman and Howe) is a most welcome event to all Yes followers. Though the Trevor Rabin-ed Yes realized the group's biggest success with the single "Owner of a Lonely Heart," the band was not the same. So much of the musical nuances that only a player of Howe's caliber could produce were missing from the



TCG: Are you ready for the tour?

SH: I think so. We flew in from L.A. last night and I kind of took it easy today. We've worked solid for the last month in California so I'm treating this period very laid back even though we are still rehearsing. I'm trying to reserve as much energy as I can.

TCG: I was surprised to hear what you are opening with ("Rhythm of Love" from the album *Big Generator*).

SH: Well, you get to a point when you realize things can't always be the way you want them in a band. Then you go through all of the twists and curves of what you can do about that and the levels you can get satisfaction. Then you realize other people's ideas have to be tried out as well. Yes is the sort of evolutionary object. Each time I find myself involved, it is totally different. Union was different from the seventies and this is totally different again. In San Luis Obispo I didn't get a chance in those three shows to establish my identity in the live show. With this tour, I hope to do that.

TCG: It would also seem that a song like "Owner of a Lonely Heart" would almost be necessary as it was such a big hit for the entity known as Yes, regardless of the lineup, just as every show would also have to include "Roundabout."

SH: Yes has been without me so it's actually quite fun to do "Owner" and work out how to play it. I'm sort of mellowing out. There are only so many battles to fight. If you are going to be in a band, you just have to try out some things and see how they work.

TCG: But even beyond all of that, once the music starts, nobody listening knows the difference. The only disappointment I experience at your live shows is they are not six or seven hours long. There is so much music we, the audience, don't get to hear. With two guitars, there is a lot that can be done.

SH: Yes, there is a lot of potential with different line-ups. It doesn't always have to be five. It's different for all of us now. It's always different for me coming back to Yes after Asia and the other things I've done with Steve Hackett and John, it changes your attitude. You see Yes as a different thing as well.

TCG: Does having the additional guitar give you

"eighties" Yes. One only need listen to "That, That Is" from *Keys I* or "Mind Drive" from *Keys II* to hear that the magic is back.

In addition to his return to the band, two new albums and the current tour, Howe has a number of other projects coming forth in the very near future including a new solo recording entitled *Quantum Guitars* and the long-anticipated *Masterpiece Guitars*, recorded with Martin Taylor using over sixty guitars from The Chinery Collection. Steve and Martin will perform together January 28, 1998 at the Smithsonian as part of the Blue Guitars exhibit at the museum.

more freedom.

SH: Yes. The first time I experienced that was with ABWH. I was able to step back and look at things a bit differently. You have to be careful though, not to do more than is really needed. With the Yes arrangement like it is, there are times when there are two guitars and that helps out the whole thing.

TCG: Sherwood does seem to have respect for what has been done and knows enough not to step on toes, so to speak. Igor (Khoroshev) has that wonderful sound that only a Russian-born and trained pianist can have.

SH: That is exactly what John and I picked up on. It was his sound. That and the fact he can play all of the music.

TCG: But again here, he is an example of someone so completely different than any of the keyboard players that have come before him in this band and yet, when you guys start playing, it is Yes. It is also great hearing you and Squire back together again.

SH: Yeah, you've always liked that, haven't you.

TCG: Got that right. What are you using guitar-wise on this tour?

SH: I'm using a heck of a lot, really. We got a lot of guitars and we haven't got all of them out yet. Conversely, I'm hoping that some of them will go. We had fourteen when we left rehearsal. It's just a collection of the usual things. I've got the ES-175, and the stereo, the Les Paul, three Fenders - a Strat, a Tele and the Steel - five acoustics - two Martins, the Sharpach, and a couple of others - the Sitar guitar and a banjo. I also have the Chet Atkins and the six-string Steinberger with me.

TCG: I see two new Fender Twins up there. How do you like them?

SH: I like them a lot. We did do a little bit of tweaking on them.

TCG: Have you set what you are going to do for

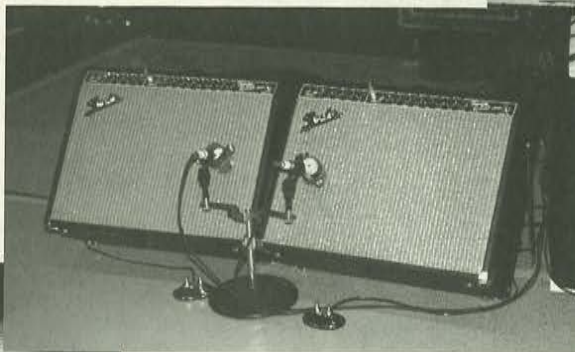
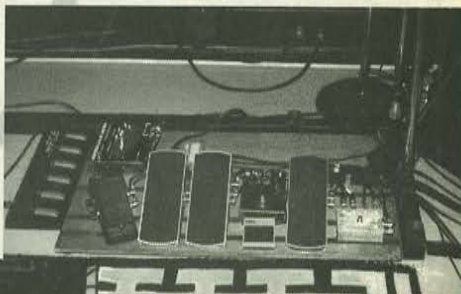
a kind of tribute to Chet. I might not do that every night but here and there I might do it. It's just that the damn guitars are so awful. How Chet played them, I don't know. You've just got to know them, I don't know them that well. I'm not at home on them.

TCG: You don't endorse anybody really, do you?

SH: I think I'm going to do a promo for Gibson Strings because I really think their strings are very good. I don't like to get involved with a company unless they really get me involved. Let me say what I think and what could be changed to be much better. But I don't think most of them would like that.

TCG: What about two new Yes albums at the same time?

SH: *Keys To Ascension II* represents what could be the final opportunity to taste the original seventies music, that line-up. It is very exciting in the sense that it is part of the Yes story. *Keys I* started something that had to evolve. The music is very dark, dense, thick, with all of the seventies shades in it. It's got a lot of flavor. I'm very, very pleased with it. With *Open Your Eyes*, we've got this whole sort of other side of Yes which is a reshaping and a reorganization of Yes. With *Keys II*, we got that far with that band. With the new band, it is reflecting the seventies and the eighties and trying to find the balance of those two things. This is a very tight and tidy version of Yes. It has some familiar elements, it has some new elements and it has some diversity.



Photos, from left: Steve's guitars, amps and pedal board. (L. Acunto)

your solo spot on the tour?

SH: There are just too many things I want to play. I can't imagine not doing like five or six tunes but it is just not going to be like that. It's very hard to imagine that I'm not going to do "Mood For A Day" or "Clap." I know that people are expecting to at least hear those. I'm thinking of playing "Clap" on the Gretsch Chet Atkins as

We've got a lot of history and the only way people are going to know about that is to find something pleasing about Yes now. It's a reentry for Yes as if we've been to the moon and back.

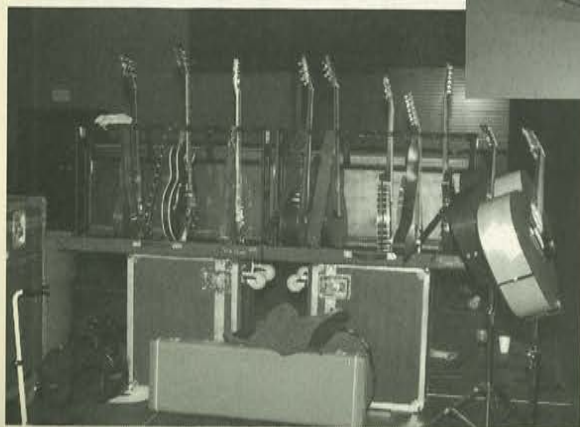
TCG: Just don't burn up on reentry.

SH: That's right, we don't want to burn up as we enter this stupendous, sort of strength of musical catchiness to replace the fire that was the Yes of the seventies. The group does play well together and it is hard for a band like us to be representative of so much on one record. Certainly on *Open Your Eyes*, it is Yes taking a severe bend.

TCG: That, in and of itself, is not unusual for Yes. Certainly *Relayer* was quite a change from *Tales* which was again very different from *Going For The One*. I was listening to that just yesterday, it was a great album.

SH: That album took a year of our lives to make. And a million dollars. If you want to do everything in style, it cost money and we did that album in style.

TCG: I would think a very high style for a million dollars.



SH: We never were completely sure that we spent that much, we were just told that. I think there is a difference between being told you spent a million dollars and actually spending it. I know that the books to the accounts got lost for a very long time which, of course, does arouse suspicion as a young musician. As you become an older musician, your suspicions become even greater. But there was a time when maybe that album didn't cost that much and somebody else made a lot of money on it. Put it is a nice retirement pension, not for us, of course.

TCG: But you know *Union* cost that much.

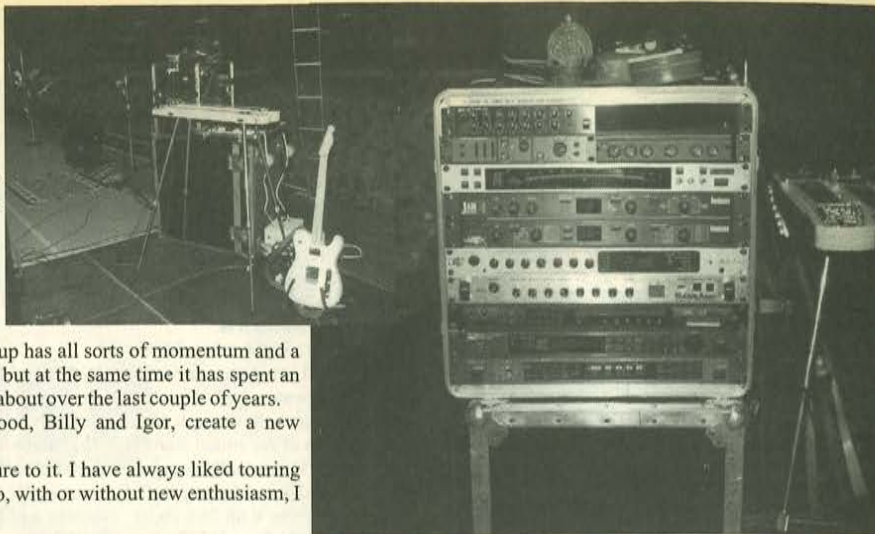
SH: That's for sure. There is a responsibility, one I felt very much at the end of *Drama* when Geoff and I were left holding the group, of keeping the group going, one that I turned down



at the time. In a way, this group has all sorts of momentum and a lot of energy to keep it going but at the same time it has spent an awful lot of time meandering about over the last couple of years.

TCG: Does having new blood, Billy and Igor, create a new enthusiasm for the band?

SH: It does add another texture to it. I have always liked touring and I like touring with Yes. So, with or without new enthusiasm, I would be here.



Left: Howe with his "Stereo." (J. Acunto) Above: The Tele and lap steel (L) and the effects rack. (L. Acunto)

Chris Squire



It will be thirty years next year since Chris Squire met John Anderson and the two formed what would become the most successful progressive band of all time. Of the many elements that went into the formula creating the Yes sound, none is more important and up-front than the bass of Squire. Though not the first to take the little-known Rickenbacker 4001 and attach a set of Rotosound strings (he readily admits to seeing John Entwistle of The Who with the first Rick in England), it is he who made the sound his and with it, anchored one of the most unique bands in rock. Over the long history of Yes, Squire is the only member to be present on every album and tour. As the list of former Yes members grew almost annually, there was, and is, only one bassist. And those of us who spent their early youth playing incessantly repetitive blues progressions behind the guitar player of the week, his sound and playing was nothing short of a revelation, a release and a vindication that the bass could be more than just something to keep the beat. For sure, no longer could the organ player handle the bass duties on the black keys of his Farfisa, the bass guitar had arrived as an integral part of the group and

Chris Squire is solely responsible. If there is a downside to Squire, certainly it would be his lack of productivity, both solo and with later variations of Yes. While the seventies version of the group put out no fewer nine records including some huge projects like *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, the Squire-led eighties Yes barely got out three. And, while members such as Howe and Anderson have several solo albums to their credit, *A Fish Out Of Water* remains Squire's lone release. But beyond that, Squire most certainly is credited with being the "keeper of the flame," the one member of the band who, time and time again, has resurrected the group under some very difficult circumstances.

TCG: It's great to see you and Steve Howe back together again. It has been awhile.

CS: Since the Union Tour back in 1990 with the eight-piece Yes.

TCG: Then the San Luis Obispo shows.

CS: Yes, that's right.

TCG: I noticed out on your guitar rack two Rickenbacker basses. I guess one is the original and one is the Squire Model. How does the Signature Model compare?

CS: It's different. They copied the original exactly. Every spec, the thickness of the wood and the thickness of the varnish. But it doesn't sound the same.

TCG: Is it age?

CS: It is probably that the original is actually inferior. They probably can't get the same electronics today that they had years ago and the new parts are just better than the old ones. So the character of the sound is a bit different.

TCG: Is the reissue a backup?

CS: Yeah, it's a backup.

TCG: The original guitar has been through the war, so to speak, hasn't it?

CS: Yeah. It's been refinished several times and refretted at least three or four times. The headstock nearly broke off at one time. Mike Tobias fixed it up for me.

TCG: Was that before they built the Signature Model or did you have something to go back to?

CS: No, it was before the reissue.

TCG: When you look at them, they look identical, they did a beautiful job.

CS: Except for the signature on the pickguard, they are identical.

TCG: You also have a six-string Carvin out there. I hear you have been doing a lot with them lately.

CS: I met them somehow. I had always been aware that they built guitars and amps but never really crossed paths with them.

TCG: Well, you just can't walk into a music store and pick one up.

CS: That's right, exactly. Two or three years ago a friend of mine who had a deal with them



J. Acunio

introduced me to Dave Flores. They were more than helpful. They have given me all kinds of equipment from guitars to mixing boards and speakers and I've been very impressed with all of the equipment. On the new Yes album we used a lot of the Carvin guitars. I guess their a bit like, and I don't know if this is a fair comparison, but Carvin is a bit like Casio in that the perception is they were not that high-end but have really moved up. I had never played a six-string before I got this one.

TCG: Did it take awhile to get used to that?

CS: It did. But I'm used to it now. In fact I still go to play a G on the D string and I hit something else, I'm not quite sure what it is.

TCG: What are you using for power?

CS: I'm still using my original 100-watt Marshalls that I've always used. If we are playing bigger places I'll run those through various banks of power but the basis of the sound starts with the Marshalls. On this tour I'm actually using a combination of the Marshall and some Ampeg stuff. I've got an SVT II Pro which I use with two 8x10" cabinets and the Marshall through a 4x12" so, you are hearing a combination of the two of those.

TCG: You never used Fender basses much.

CS: Yeah.

TCG: There was the old Telecaster bass you used to use.

CS: I don't have that anymore but I do have my original Jazz bass. I did, in fact, play it on the *Talk* album on a song called "Walls." I love my Fender Jazz actually. I also used it on the third side of *Tales*.

TCG: That's a Jazz bass?

CS: Yes.

TCG: Actually, it's hard to tell what anything is on that side of the album. You guys are doing a fairly broad retrospective of Yes music on this tour.

CS: We have a lot to draw from. We still may change the set around.

TCG: Two days before the tour starts?

CS: Sure, we've been known to do that.

TCG: Wouldn't next year be a Thirtieth Anniversary of sorts for Yes?

CS: In theory, yes. I first met John in 1968. So it would be thirty years of Yes!

TCG: Well, you have to start planing for the big celebrations.

CS: There are all kinds of things coming up. We are probably going to be quite visible over the next two or three years.

TCG: Starting now, really. You have two albums coming out this year.

CS: Actually, almost in the same week.

TCG: I hears that *Keys II* was coming out first, but that has been reversed now?

CS: I'm not really sure. *Keys II* had some problems, I'm not exactly sure. Once it was finished and delivered I really didn't pay too close attention plus we were very busy doing the new album, *Open Your Eyes*. But they should come out around the same time.

TCG: *Keys I* was great. The live stuff was pure Yes but the studio stuff was really good to hear.

CS: Thanks. I think you find more of it on the new albums.

TCG: I know you guys are really busy today so I'll let you go. Thanks.

CS: Thank you.



The Squire arsenal as used for the current tour. (L. Acunio)



The *Keys II* lineup: Steve Howe, John Anderson, Rick Wakeman, Alan White and Chris Squire . . .

Billy Sherwood

Yes fans got their first glimpse of Billy Sherwood on the *Talk* tour playing second guitar to then lead-guitarist Trevor Rabin. That tour began a collaboration of sorts between Sherwood and Squire that led to Sherwood's involvement in *Keys To Ascension*, mixing the studio CD. He then became further entangled in that which is Yes on *Keys II*, again mixing the CDs but this time also acting as co-producer. Lending his writing talents to the band for their latest recording led to a full-fledged membership, one that is, given the band's past history, tenuous at best, but one he seems to be thoroughly enjoying as the group crosses the United States on their first tour in years.

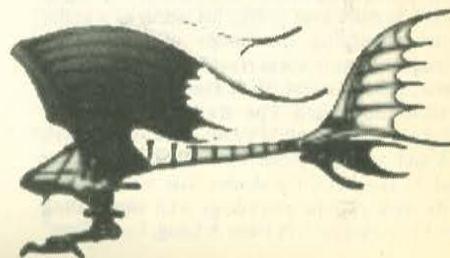


Left: Sherwood's two Carvin half-stacks and his rack of Carvin guitars. Right: Billy during the staging rehearsals just prior to the opening of the tour.



And the Open Your Eyes lineup with Billy Sherwood (L) and Igor Khoroshev (R)

Thanks to The Left Bank Organization and Baker / Northrope, and special thanks to Steve Howe (see you in May!) for their help in preparing this article. Photo of Yes (Keys version) by The Gottliebs. Photo of Yes (Eyes version) by Carl Studna. Yes logo and incidental art work by Roger Dean.



TCG: How does one get into a band like Yes?

BS: I first became really involved when I worked on *Keys II*. After *Keys II* we had a lot of these ideas running around about songs ideas for a new album and I had some ideas to throw into the mix. Everybody in the band was saying why didn't I just join at that point. It was pretty unusual for Yes because they never had two guitar players. There are certain moments on this tour where I try to find my way in without treading on the music because I'm a big fan as well as being in the band. There are places in the older music where I just bow out but there are other things I get to do, and enjoy doing, like "Owner of a Lonely Heart."

TCG: There must be a certain reverence to the Yes music and, in particular, to Howe as a guitarist.

BS: On that same level when I did the *Talk* tour, I went back and researched the albums and came to rehearsal playing the parts that were never played live. I'd seen these guys a million times. So, I'm familiar enough to know which parts weren't played. I did that on the *Talk* tour and I'm doing that here. There is a lot of two-guitar stuff that had not been done before live. It's not monumental, but I don't think that is what it is about. It's about making the whole, not about stepping out.

TCG: It sounds great out front, even in this empty hall. And you guys certainly are not shy. It is really loud out there.

BS: I know. I was even told to turn up!

TCG: I don't know why. Squire is really loud.

BS: He's the one who told me to turn up, actually!

TCG: There must be a certain level of excitement first, playing the music you were involved with from the beginning and second, getting to play songs like "America" and "And You And I," classic, monumental pieces.

BS: It is interesting. I kind of had that shocking realization on the *Talk* tour. Those feelings were really strong back then with the lights and the smoke and the crowd. I just thought wow, I'm a part of this even though I was only a sideman then. I still felt the music. Now, as a real member of the band, you feel so much more a part of it.

TCG: And working with Steve?

BS: Steve's great. He came to town and played a bunch of things on the new record. A lot of the foundation tracks were cut with me and Chris and Alan. It is a really interesting record. It is almost a hybrid of the two sides of Yes. There are really two sides to this band and the line has always been very definitive. As a Yes fan, I think that it is all good. These two worlds are both represented on the new album.

TCG: I noticed on the set list that there are a couple of Rabin-era songs being played on this tour.

BS: I get to play the solo in "Owner." I never thought in a million years I would get to play something like that live. I hope I do it justice.

TCG: I also noticed you use all Carvin guitars.

BS: Yeah, all Carvin. Dave Flores sent me down a 12-string when we were doing the record which was really nice. He also sent me down this acoustic-electric they had. It was mostly Chris' stuff because he was the one that had the deal with them. He brought them over to me and said what do you think? I started playing and the feel was just great. One thing lead to another. I met Dave and he's given me some really nice guitars to work with. It's not vintage stuff but I'm not really all that concerned with that. If it feels good and sounds good, I'm happy.

TCG: Steve is a perfect example of someone who plays a lot of vintage gear but the sound still takes precedent, even if it means cutting a humbucker into an old Telecaster. Even looking at Chris' guitars, he's got his Rickenbacker but he also has the six-string Carvin.

BS: He used that Carvin on a couple of tunes on the new record. They make nice sounding instruments. I'm also using their amplifiers on stage and I used some of their microphones on the record. Obviously, the stuff has to be good to use it. One particular guitar Dave sent me down, I think it is called a TL-60, just plays so easily. This music isn't that easy to play so anything that makes a little easier for me...