

Hard times are owning a Bentley with dents in it and not having the cash to put

# SAYING YES TO A

The first time I ever saw Chris Squire was from a distance of about 400 yards. I, along with 30,000 other greatcoated mid-70s rock addicts, was sitting in the pouring rain in the middle of the mudfield that passed for the 1975 Reading Rock Festival. Squire was up on stage playing bass for Yes—the star attraction.

In those days Yes were the Gods of the "progressive rock" movement. In other words they could actually play their instruments and their music was self-consciously serious.

Yes records had titles like "Tales From Topographic Oceans". Their songs were often 20 minutes long. They never made anything as basic as a hit single, but their LPs and concert tickets sold by the million around the world. They played London concerts at Queens Park Rangers' Loftus Road stadium. In America they played to audiences of up to 130,000 at a time. Even their record covers—air-brushed fantasies of faraway planets painted by artist Roger Dean—were turned into posters and stuck on countless bedroom walls.

Such success brought the good life in its wake. For Chris Squire, the son of a North London cabbie, it meant a drophead Bentley, registration number CS1, and a mansion in the millionaire's village of Virginia Water. The house came complete with the largest thatched roof in southern England and a domestic staff comprising a secretary for Squire's wife Nikki, a nanny for their three daughters—Carmen, Chandrika and Camille—a housekeeper, her husband and two gardeners.

But times pass and pop fashions change. When punk rock arrived in 1977, Yes were denounced as "dinosaurs": long-haired, pretentious and old-fashioned. In 1979 keyboard-player Rick Wakeman and singer Jon Anderson left the group and were replaced by Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes, two studio technicians who had called themselves Buggles and had a worldwide hit with "Video Killed The Radio Star".

In America the new line-up still attracted big crowds, but it was trading on past glories.

Unable to find a sound or a line-up that could flourish in the new musical climate the group broke up in 1980 and its members went their separate ways. Trevor Horn returned to the

recording studios as a record-producer, rapidly establishing a dazzling reputation as a hit-maker with groups such as Dollar, ABC and the controversial Frankie Goes to Hollywood.

But for Squire, who had founded Yes in 1968, the road back to success was to prove much rougher. He and ex-Yes drummer Alan White spent the next two years in search of members for a new group. They settled eventually for an unknown South African guitar player named Trevor Rabin. They planned to call the group Cinema.

Squire asked Trevor Horn to produce their first LP, but, as Horn recalls, things were not so simple as they had been in the halcyon days of Yes. "At first nobody was prepared to put up the money for the record. It was terrible for Chris to see things not working. People treated him like dirt. Nobody answered his phone calls. It was funny to watch him driving his Bentley around full of dents because he couldn't afford to mend them.

"When you've had 10 years of success you forget how easily it can go. But Chris had guts and he stood up to it. It must have been very hard."

For nine months the new group worked in the recording studio and the cost of their record rose towards its final total of \$650,000. It was towards the end of this period, in the early autumn of 1983, that I saw Squire again—this time at much closer quarters.

He had bumped into a friend of mine—another music writer—who, knowing that I had never met Squire and would be thrilled to do so for old times' sake, suggested they come and have a drink and a bite to eat at my house. I had expected to see the very tall, thin, dark-haired figure I remembered from my teens. But the man who walked through my front door had altered out of all recognition. He was tall all right, but fat and shambling, with dyed blond hair and a baggy T-shirt. My friend later told me she had bought the petrol for the Bentley and the bottle of wine which they had brought.

Squire seemed withdrawn, but very nice. He sat and made occasional conversation and ate terrible spaghetti bolognese around my kitchen table in Fulham, and I don't know of many rock stars who'd be content with that.

He seemed to me to be a sad figure, his days of glory past.

But this is a 20th-century fairytale and it has a happy ending. Squire asked Jon Anderson to sing some vocals on the Cinema album. The projected birth of the new group became the re-emergence of the old; "It sounded so much like Yes with Jon's voice on it that we couldn't really call it anything else," said drummer Alan White.

So Yes returned and, thanks to Horn's golden touch, they had never sounded better. Their record—entitled 90125 after its catalogue number—was released in November last year and has gone on to sell over 3,000,000 copies around the world—more than any one of their previous dozen albums. And to cap it all the record contained a single, "Owner of a Lonely Heart" that went to Number One in the American charts.

Which is why, when I met Squire again recently, it was in his luxurious suite on the 39th floor of a New York hotel where even the cheapest rooms cost £100 a night, breakfast not included. His wife, children and parents had all been flown over from England to be with him when Yes performed the last concert of a sell-out American tour before 23,000 fans at the legendary Madison Square Garden.

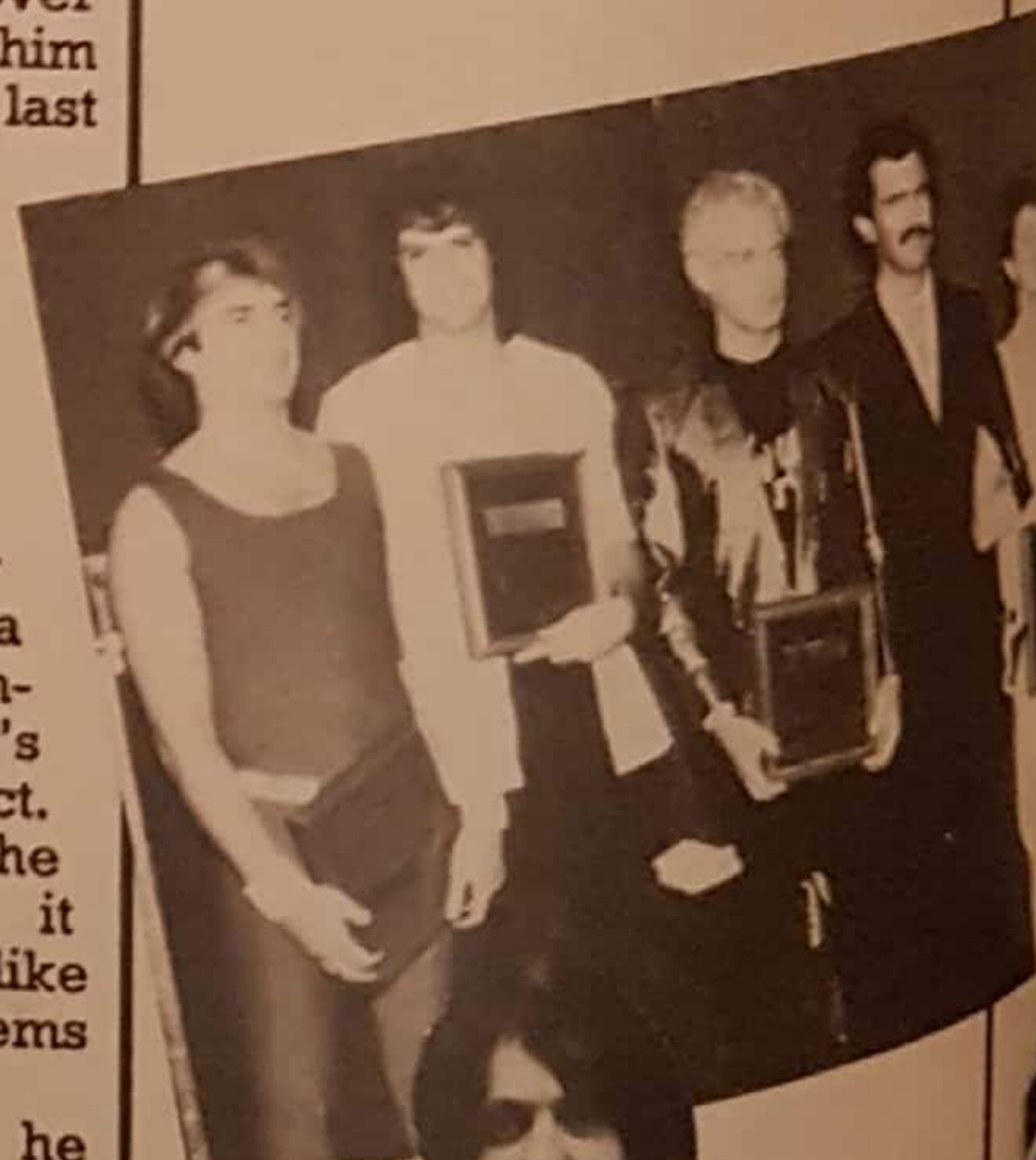
Now that he is back to the top, Squire can afford to look back on his three years in the wilderness with wry amusement; "You sense a slightly different level of importance," he says. "There's a little adjustment in respect. When you're waiting for the quarterly royalty cheque it doesn't come through quite like it used to. The little systems start to slip a bit."

He admits, however, that he could not imagine any other way

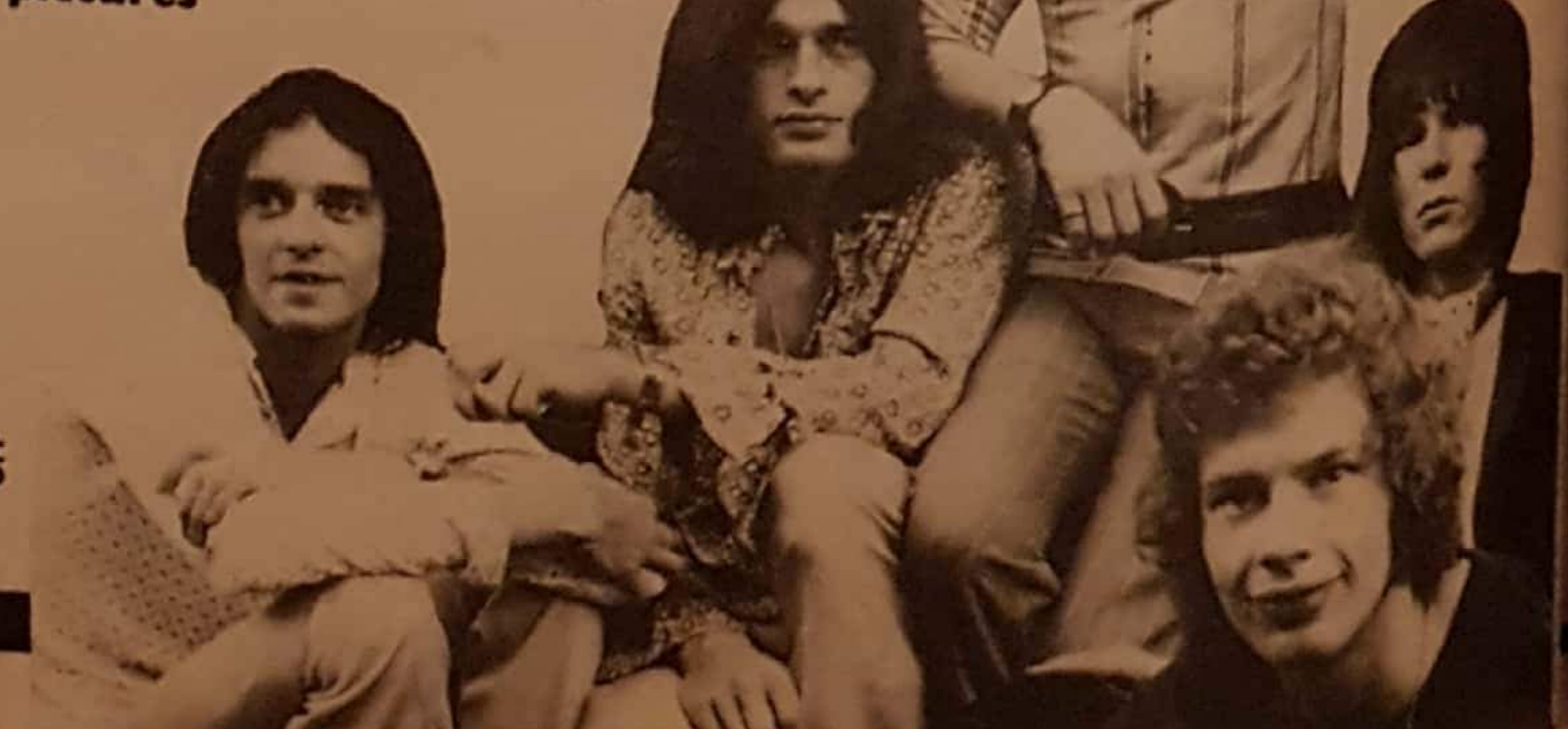
of life; "I don't know what else I could do." His addiction to applause dates back to his early teens; "I was 14 and singing in a choir in Kingsbury, North London. They used to do an annual revue in the church hall and a few of us decided to do a mime to the Beatles. We couldn't actually play or anything. I was on bass because I was tall and had big hands. We went down so well just miming that we got an encore. I thought, 'There's definitely something in this'."

So there still is, judging by the rapturous applause with which the New York crowd greeted every note of a Yes show that had lost none of the group's matchless capacity for musical self-indulgence. And there must be something, too, in the cossetting and flattery lavished on any group by the minions who hang around them.

Squire, happily restored to the rock'n'roll circus, strode around on stage. I remembered a remark he'd made earlier; "The dinosaur is dead. Long live the dinosaur. That's our story." ■

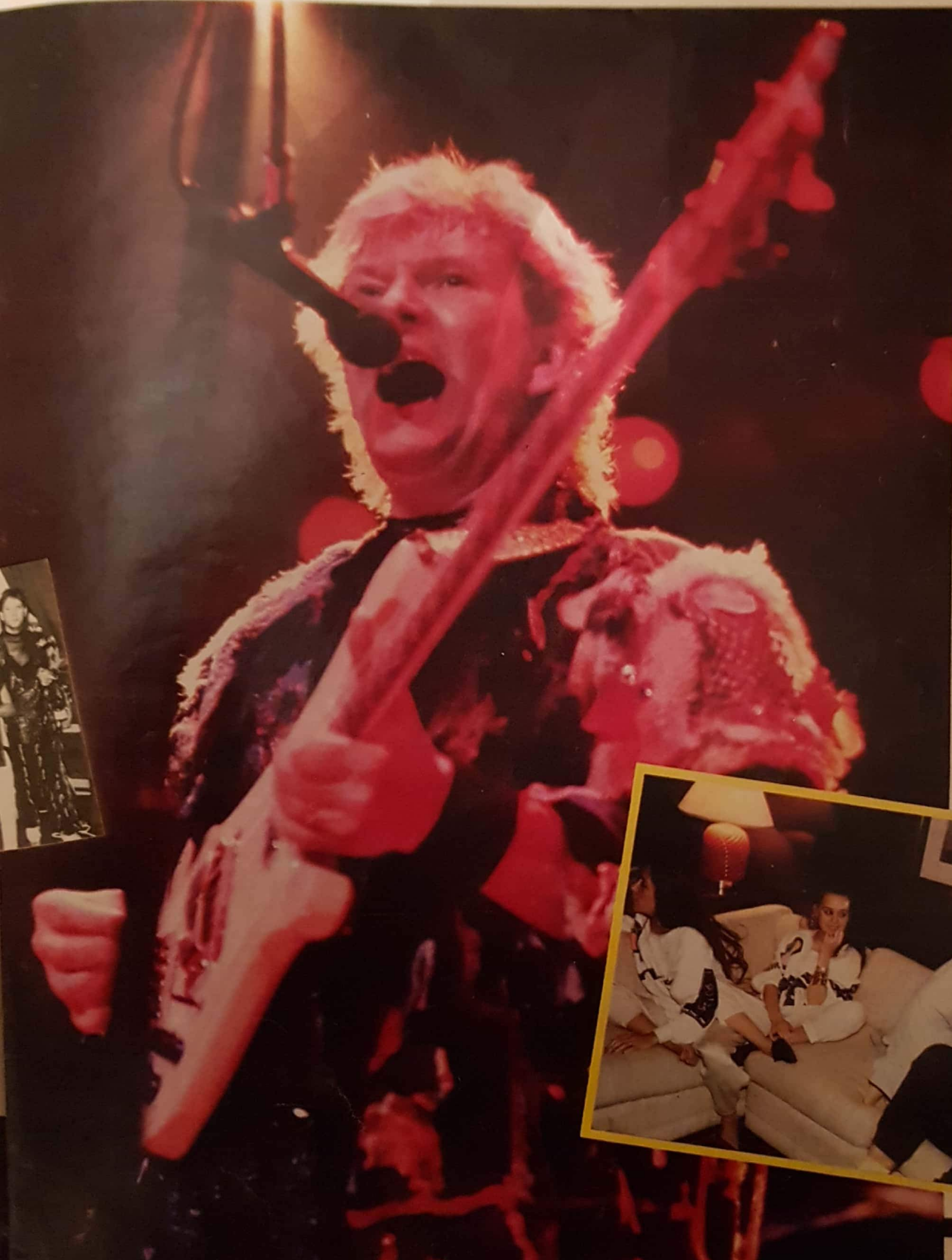


Yes in 1969 (below), then at the top of progressive rockers and reborn today—picking up awards in America. Squire is at extreme right in both pictures



ght, David Thomas reports on the revival of bass player Chris Squire's good fortune.

# SECOND CHANCE



Squire, left, now shorter of hair and more portly than he was, belts it out to a capacity Madison Square Garden crowd in New York (left). In his luxury hotel suite (below) there was a taste of the old days. His wife, children Carmen, Chandrika and six-year-old Camille and his parents had all been flown out for the concert, the climax of the successful comeback tour.

Squire looked fit and contented as Camille romped all over him. "I want to beat you up," said the little girl.

"You can't beat me up while I'm being interviewed," replied her father. "I can beat up daddy whenever I like," she said, setting to work with a will.

Squire admits that he couldn't imagine any other lifestyle. His addiction to applause dates back to his early teens when with fellow choirboys he mimed a Beatles record in a local church hall revue and won an encore.

America thus reconquered, Yes return home to play their first concerts here in four years, with two nights at the Wembley Arena and one in Birmingham in July. With Squire in the revived line-up are original keyboard-player Tony Kaye, "new boy" guitarist Trevor Rabin, original vocalist Jon Anderson, and drummer Alan White



PHOTOS BY JILL FREEDMAN