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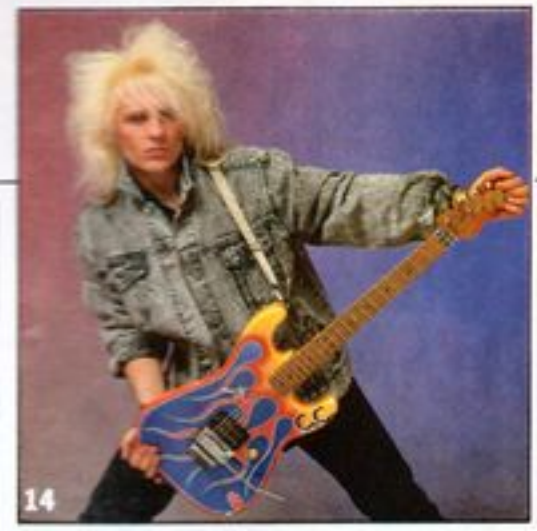

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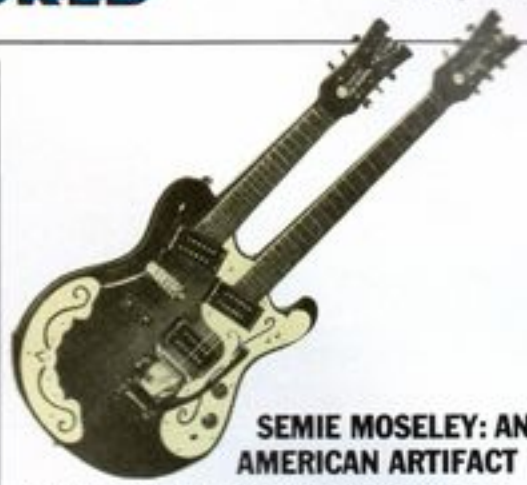

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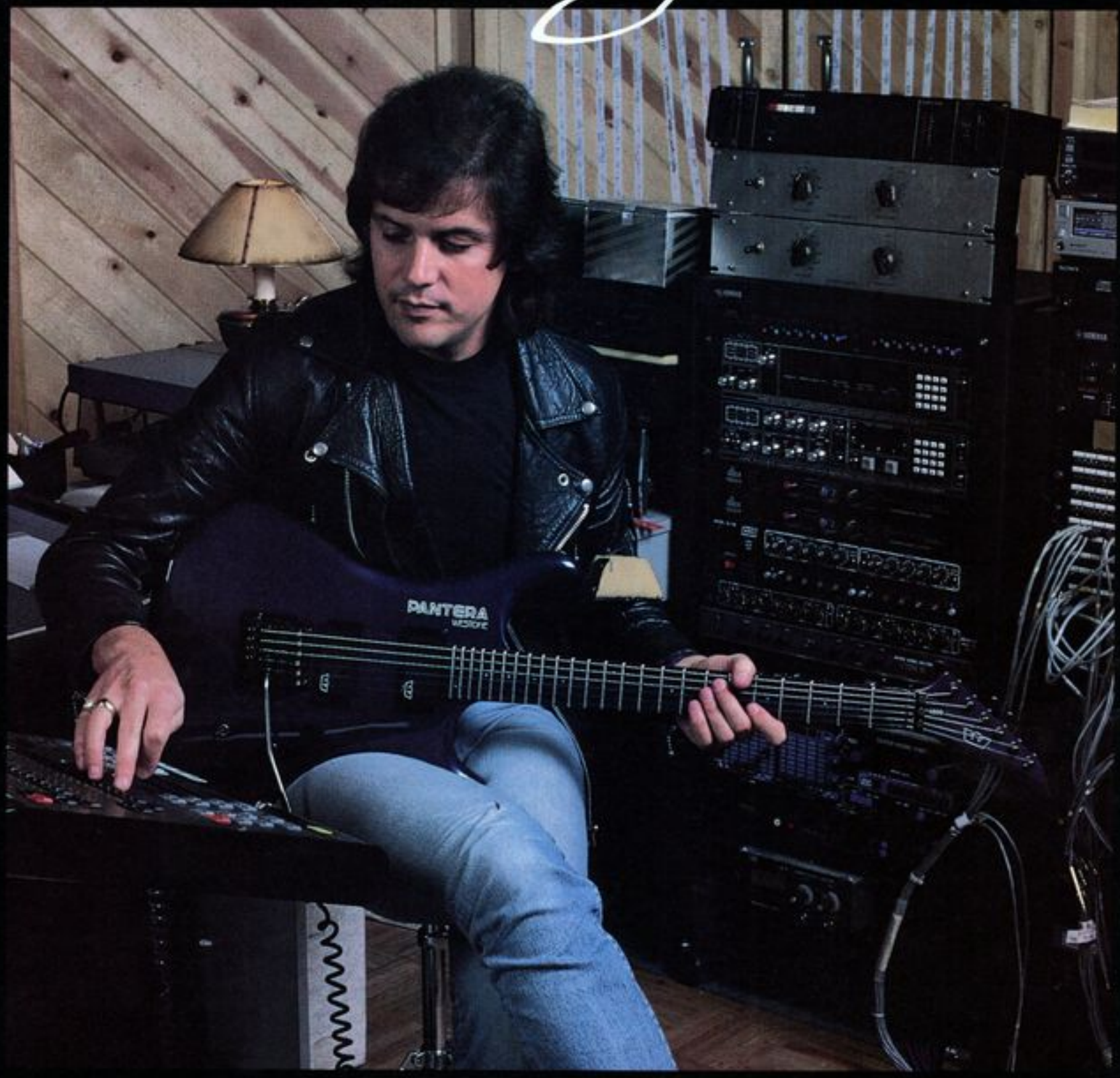

Trevor Rabin of Yes and his Westone Pantera.

Westone 1400 Ferguson Ave. St. Louis, MO 63133

SQUIRE AND RABIN SAY "YES, I do"

By Bud Scoppa with Billy Cioffi
Photos by Neal Preston

Let's begin with a capsule summary—the three stages of Yes:

Yes.

No.

Maybe.

Now, let's elaborate. Yes came together in the late sixties when five conservatory-trained young Englishmen decided that they possessed the wherewithal to manifest their classical schooling in a rock-band setting. It was then the era of virtuosity as high adventure, with Hendrix, Beck and Cream ruling the hearts and minds of aspiring players. In such a climate, anything seemed possible. So it was that vocalist Jon Anderson, bassist Chris Squire, keysman Tony Kaye, drummer Bill Bruford and guitarist Peter Banks cast their lots together in the name of progressive rock.

You were expecting maybe some progressive wimp-rock? Guess again. This is the eighties, chump, and CHRIS and TREVOR are kicking some serious butt.

The Yes sound was a busy one (more so after ace guitarist Steve Howe replaced Banks between the band's first and second lp's), with odd time signatures, churchy organ textures, stacked and multitracked vocal chorales, trebly rubber-band basslines and virtuosic guitar work all thrown in the Cuisinart and puréed at the "cosmic" setting. These guys didn't do songs, they performed "works," complete with motifs and subtexts. In time, Kaye and Bruford left the group, replaced by similarly gifted and high-minded musicians like keyboardists Rick Wakeman and Patrick Moraz, and drummer Alan White. Yes continued on its merry metaphysical path, gaining and maintaining legions of adoring fans through the seventies before running out of steam as the eighties began.

But then a funny thing happened. Former Yes men Squire and White—tiring of the legs-up-with-a-book-and-a-drink lifestyles and noticing the second-time successes of their contemporaries—decided (on their own, not out of corporate prodding) to put a new group together. Various combinations were tried (including the importation of the pop group the Buggles, with Trevor Horn), the most workable of which involved South African multi-instrumentalist/singer/writer Trevor Rabin and the returning Tony Kaye.

Calling themselves Cinema, the four musicians embarked on an album project (for Atlantic, Yes' old label, which had exercised its right of first refusal). The resulting sessions turned into what might be described as "A Tale of Two Trevors," with Horn calling the production shots and Rabin, a prolific songwriter, providing the material and much of the energy. As the lead singer, guitarist and sometime keyboard player, Rabin was clearly the *auteur* of Cinema. But just before the album was completed, Squire heard from his old mate, Anderson, and it occurred to the bassist that the one-man chorale might be prevailed upon to stack some vocals here and there on the multitrack. Anderson agreed, and in a wink he was the new lead singer in Cin Wait a minute. If Anderson, Squire, White and Kaye were in a band together, why not call it Yes?! And so they did, with Rabin's philosophical approval.

Think of the new Yes as being a very different band from the original, with Rabin's presence being the significant new aspect. Operative analogy: Blues-rock cult band Fleetwood Mac, down to its rhythm section and late-coming keyboardist/singer, adds smart-guy guitarist/writer/singer Lindsey Buckingham (forget Stevie Nicks—please—for our purposes) and starts playing *a whole new ballgame*. With a wholly redefined sound and hit songs, the platinum soon piles up.

Rabin, like Buckingham, is a savvy studio cat and producer (he's made two entirely solo albums), an ace instrumentalist and a good man with a song hook. Also like LB, TR is sharp and capable enough to blend his chops and ideas into the established context without having to dilute or refract them.

But the Buckingham/F Mac analogy falls down in one important aspect: Rabin did not "join" Yes; he helped form Cinema, which happened to *become* Yes. If he'd joined an existing band, it's unlikely he'd be able to operate as autonomously as he does.

So anyways, Rabin, the (sort of) Buckingham of Yes, comes up with "Owner Of A Lonely Heart," a drop-dead smash if ever there was one, as Police-like as it is Yes-like. By doing so, he brings this venerable (but fundamentally *new*) band into the eighties while orchestrating its biggest success ever. Wonderful. But is it Yes? Maybe.

Maybe they should call it Yes Sir, or Yeah Sure. It's not quite Yes, but it's agreeable enough.

Now, after a monumental expenditure of time and money, and the scrapping of Trevor Horn and much of the work he'd done in an Italian studio, the aptly-named *Big Generator* is now ready to roll, complete with a pair of definite smashes and several of the complex, extended pieces the old Yes was famous for.

So goes the unlikely alliance of the old pro and the young Turk, the key characters in this reborn/remade band.

the big generator of yes

squire

By Bud Scoppa

CHRIS gets past "The Tale of Two Trevors" and carries on with his "Great Expectations."

There's some irony in the fact that Chris Squire started out in music as a choir boy—there's nothing remotely choir-boyish about the worldly, bearish bassist now. Squire has been much more than Yes' musical anchor throughout the resilient band's long existence—he's also been its heart and soul. "To me," says manager Tony Dimitriades, "Chris represents the spirit of Yes. The other members tend to go off into outside projects, but Chris is always there, making sure the band's identity is maintained." Perhaps there's still something angelic in Squire's character after all. In any case, his early musical training was purely ecclesiastical.

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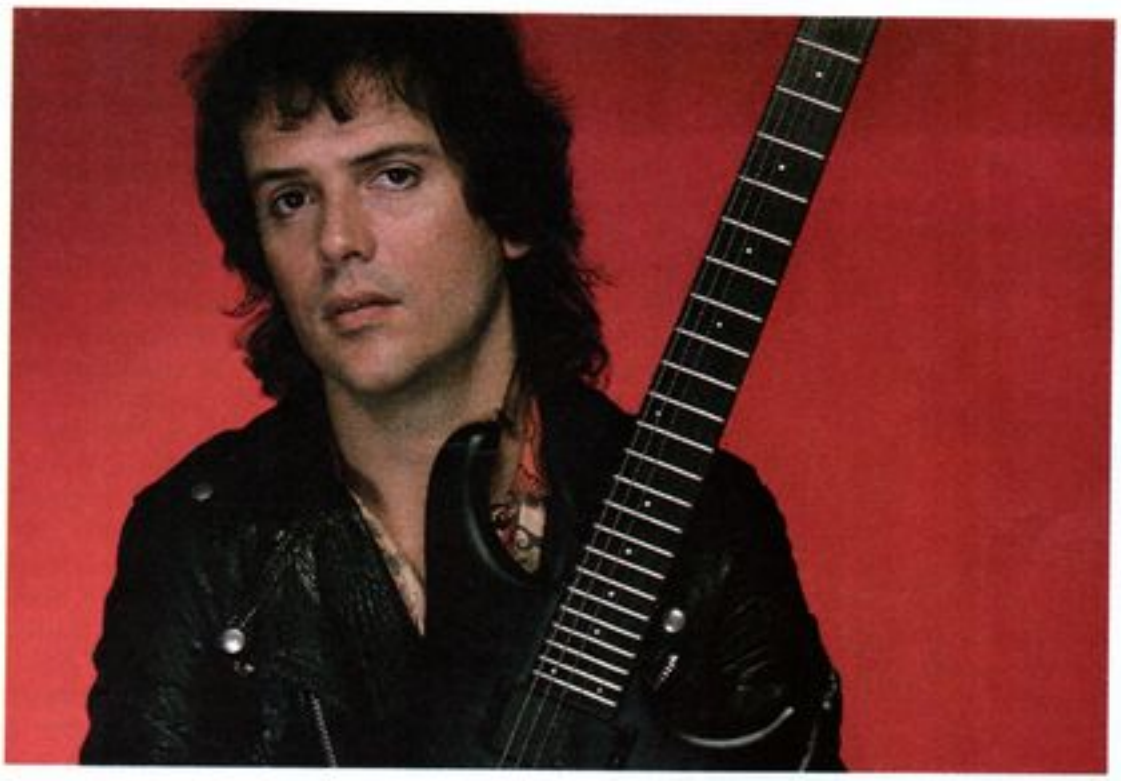
the ascension of the whiz kid

rabin



By Bud Scoppa

TREVOR, the hotshot from South Africa, is the key to the revitalization of the Yes formula.

It's the stuff that dreams are made of. Taking a break in the lounge of Sunset Sound's Studio One, where he and Paul Devilliers are fine-tuning Yes' *Big Generator* album, Trevor Rabin tells his visitors how he first got hold of his favorite ax, a classic '62 Strat.

"I bought the guitar in '72," he recalls. "It had been laying around in a warehouse at a music store in Johannesburg. At the time I had a Harmony guitar and it broke. I decided I was going to start playing Fender, so I went into the store and said, 'I want a Fender Stratocaster and I only have 75 bucks!' See, the guy liked me—he always let me sit in the store and play. So

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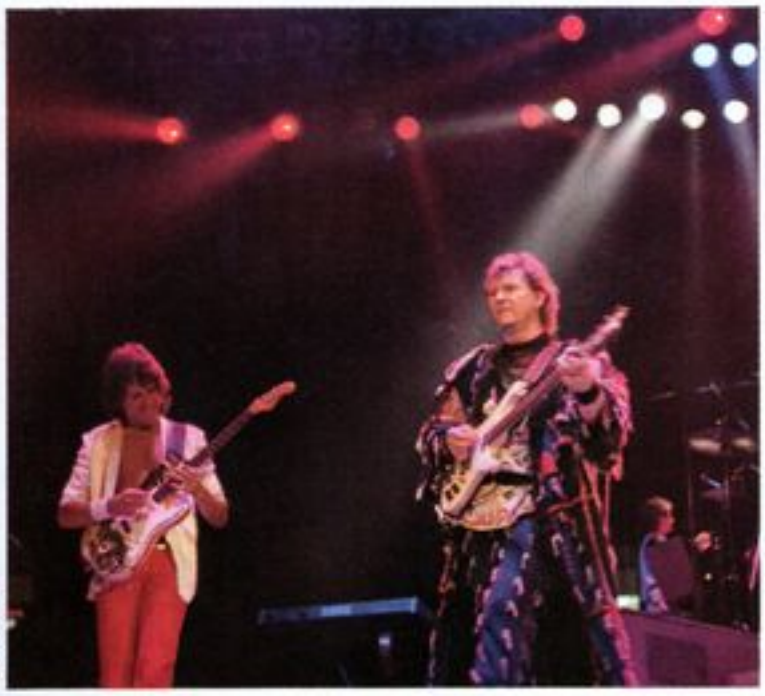
Bob Leafe



Rich Fuschia

On the *90125* tour of '84, Chris could be seen with both his custom-made Westone Electra and his workhorse Rickenbacker bass.

"I spent all my childhood in Church of England choirs," Squire says. "I ended up singing in the Guilford Cathedral and eventually St. Paul's Choir. I was a six-day-a-week, in-the-church guy in the best church choir in England. So I had an early knowledge of the *power* of the music and the singing. Then, when that phase of my life changed and I went to a regular school, I was 16, the Beatles had started and I was a follower of that. I became totally absorbed in the idea of bands, electric guitars and stuff. But as soon as I started formulating bands with friends, obviously my knowledge of church music and harmonies entered into it.

"But prior to that," he continues in his gruff-yet-genteel manner, "although I had all that musical knowledge, I never played any instrument at all. Although I used to sneak into the church or the cathedral when it was closed sometimes and start up the organ—just blow *everything* away for a couple of hours. I couldn't really *play*, but I could jive around a bit—make sounds. I don't know what *God* thought of it, but it was pretty weird stuff." He smiles mock-evilly and takes a sip of his wine.

"Then, when I was around 16, I got a suggestion from a good friend of mine at school who was already a good guitarist, and a pretty hip guy as well. He said to me that since I was kind of tall and had big hands, I should get a bass guitar. So I did. And that is how I started playing.

"I started off by just learning Paul McCartney and Bill Wyman," Squire continues. I just watched what they did and copied it. After a while, because I had musical knowledge, I began to realize *why* it worked like this. Now, one must not underrate the influence of Bill Wyman, especially at the age I was at then. Like the Stones, I was from London, so they were really more my bag than the Beatles. And I used to think what he was doing was just great—things like 'Come On, 'I Wanna Be Your Man and all that stuff. And it was mixed loud, too, so you could really *hear* the bass for the first time. Then, of course, Jack Bruce, too. His style was low-mid and he would usually like quite a lot of Marshall amp distortion—almost verging on fuzzbox.

"Before Cream," he recalls, taking a drag on a cigarette, "I used to go watch him and Ginger Baker in the Graham Bond Organisation. That used to astound me, because it was the first time I'd ever heard a drummer play so loud! And this was before even the mic on the bass drum—it was just acoustic. The Graham Bond Organisation was just a magic band—they were really incredible, and they certainly influenced and shaped my taste."

But it was still another legendary bassist who provided the key ingredient in the signature look and sound of the handsome blond apprentice-rocker.

"It was 1964 or '65 when the Who came to the Marquee and I saw John Entwistle. I'd just been expelled from school along with this friend of mine. We were the first two guys to wear our hair long and wear high-heeled pointed boots." Squire smiles as he recalls his early days as a rock 'n' roll outlaw.

"I went to work for a year at a music store in London as an assistant. It was during that period that I went to see the Who, and John Entwistle was in fact the first guy I ever saw playing a Rickenbacker. Through my position in the store, I actually persuaded my boss to start importing Rickenbackers—and they did. Part of the deal was that I got one at the factory price. I've had that bass ever since. And they went on to make a lot of money!"

Once Squire had that Rickenbacker bass guitar in his hammy hands, things began

to come into focus. Together with some musically-schooled friends, he formed Yes in '68 and set about applying his formal training in a contemporary pop context. Signed by Atlantic Records along with Led Zeppelin in '69, Yes began its big-time existence with a blend of British artsiness and Americanized vocal harmonies. It was a musicianly but somewhat stiff approach that had more than a little in common with a group called Genesis. Together, the two bands virtually invented and then embroidered on a style that has come to be known as seventies progressive rock. It's significant that both groups are still at it—in somewhat modified form—and more successful than ever.

"What has happened in the case of Yes and Genesis," Squire philosophizes, "is that we are all guys who in one form or another have had varying kinds of English classical music education and have formed their bands around those theories. And over the years—coming to America and touring here—we *learned* to rock 'n' roll. Originally, though, it was more a pure sort of English style. And through the learning process, we just came up with different things along the way. Of course, Phil and the guys in Genesis have gone very pop, but it still has integrity. Actually, Phil has become one of the most excellent drummers there is. That's why he can get away with going ultra-right-wing in his pop taste."

If Collins' Genesis has always been an arty pop band at heart, Squire's Yes has long had the tendency to go in quite the opposite direction. By the mid-seventies, Yes' jazz-ish pretensions had transformed the band into a hifalutin fusion outfit given to side-long musical pieces and lots of gratuitous soloing.

"I blame jazz-rock for that," Squire says. "I used to like Return To Forever's early stuff a lot, but it almost became a bit too sort of *religious* with some guitarists and keyboard players. So that they suddenly all had to play like Chick Corea—it was a bit of a minor *disease*.

"In Steve Howe's case, you'd have to say he had that sensibility as well, so he was pulled in that direction. And obviously, Rick Wakeman had a reputation for that. 'A little too many notes, as they say. During that period, everyone just got a little jazz-rocked out. I felt pretty comfortable with it because I could see what was best about that stuff and used some of the techniques.

"The classic example of all that was, of course, *Tales Of Topographic Oceans*. Squire's speaking of the infamous four-sided epic of excess. "It wasn't a particularly happy album," he admits. "It was a very busy period then; we were going all the time. It was a major project and there really wasn't enough time to do something that difficult and still capture people's interest as a commercial thing. So it fell a little short."

But Yes survived this noodle-factory frenzy and made it out of the seventies—due in great measure to Squire's tenacity. But the nearly simultaneous loss of Anderson and Wakeman was difficult to overcome.

"All through the seventies, we were a band that had various personnel changes. Then Jon and Rick weren't in the band anymore, and Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes were. It was my idea to bring them in—by that time I was pretty much in charge of the direction of the band. We'd lost a singer and a keyboard player—and here was a singer and keyboard player who'd just had a Number One single in every country in the world except America. This made me think these were the guys who could help!" A guilty laugh erupts from Squire's insides. "In a way it was a very interesting experience, and *Drama* actually has some pretty good things on it. But it was another very rushed album."

So much for the Yuggles. "Of course, the ongoing good thing about that was, at least Trevor Horn then came back to produce *90125* with a good understanding of the band, having been in it. So it was a useful time. But after the 1980 tour, Steve Howe and myself—probably more me—were just a little tired. We'd just spent the seventies doing 12 or 13 albums and we'd done 17 tours here. I just wanted to lay back and have a year or two off."

So Squire recharged his batteries and then re-formed Yes, right? Wrong. Instead, he and his best mate Alan White tried to get something going with .Jimmy Page. They called the new band XYZ.

"It was supposed to be Robert [Plant], too, but Robert never showed. I know that at the time there were feelings between Jimmy and Robert. The summer before, Robert lost his son and John Bonham died—which had been quite a blow to Jimmy. It sent him into a much 'stricter' mood with himself. So it was a good time to get together with Jim, and that was the first thing Alan and I did after we'd had a few months off. Interestingly enough, one of the songs I wrote—I wrote all the songs for the band—showed up on the last Firm album; 'written by Jimmy Page and Paul Rodgers, it said very interesting! It didn't do anything so there was no point in making a fuss about it.

"But anyway," Squire continues, "it was going well for a while—but as soon as it started to go well, I think Jimmy started getting some of his old confidence back together with a few of his certain 'pleasures. Then it started to fall apart.

"So then I called Trevor Rabin. In fact, I was suspicious of Trevor when I was first made aware of him," Squire reveals. "It was about '79, and the manager I had at the time, Brian Lane, gave me this tape and said, 'Here, you know what you should do ?' He was like this scheming-manager type guy who would secretly go to every guy in the band and just sound

everyone out until he got some sort of reaction. So I was a little suspicious of Trevor for that reason.

"I heard this tape that Brian had given me and the guy played and sang everything on it and it sounded just like the last Foreigner album prior to that time, whatever it was. So I thought, what *is* this guy? What does he actually *do*? But he did it all very well—he could sing like Lou Gramm, and he could play like any guitarist I'd ever heard, more or less. *And* produce his records *and* play drums! So I thought, well, the guy is obviously a bit of a *clever* dick—but what is he really *saying*?

"But when I actually met him, we got on really well," the burly bassist recounts. "In fact, the first time he came over to London to talk about forming this new band, we had this *awful* jam. We didn't really play very well at all, but we actually *liked* each other, so we didn't really care. That's when we agreed to go ahead with it."

"It" turned out to be the umpteenth version of Yes—but not until founding members Tony Kaye and (eventually) Anderson had come back into the fold. Kaye had a tough choice to make: to rejoin his old comrades or become the keyboardist in Spinal Tap (a band that was satirizing much of what Yes had lived through). But he made the leap of faith once more. And Anderson, whom Squire describes as being "fairly Napoleonic during the seventies" had mellowed nicely during his Vangelis period.

With Squire providing the continuity and Rabin tossing in just about everything else, the new—and, frankly, improved—Yes stormed back onto the American charts with *90125* and "Owner Of A Lonely Heart," to the surprise and delight of the execs at Atlantic Records. Squire recalls a high-level a&r meeting that had taken place during the sessions:

"Ahmet Ertegun *[Atlantic's chairman]* came down to the studio and said, 'We have to have a hit single this time. You have to work on it; it is *your* responsibility, Chris, to make sure it happens. And fortunately, we did it."

Everything should've been hunky dory for Yes after that startling comeback—but, hey, this is eighties rock 'n' roll, folks, not forties movies. Making the follow-up album turned out to be about as effortless as two straight years of root canal work.

"I realized—but certain other people didn't—that going to Italy to save money was the start of doing it wrong. Inevitably, when you try to do anything to save money, it ends up that *because* it's cheaper it's not the best place to be—and therefore you end up redoing it somewhere else. So we had to redo stuff in London, and other people weren't happy with Trevor Horn doing it there, either, so we ended up doing it in L.A.! The most sensible thing in the world would've been if we'd never left here in the first place; then the album would've been finished a year ago."

As we speak, Squire is holed up in his rented mansion in Coldwater Canyon while Rabin and Paul Devilliers (who produced the big one for Mr. Mister) fine-tune the *Big Generator* mixes down the hill at Sunset Sound. The house is barely furnished; it's as if Squire had spent so much time in hotels that he couldn't quite figure out what to do with a space of his own. In truth, the big guy seems a bit lost in his sterile, cavernous quarters. "I'm leaving it even a bit more to Paul and Trevor, if he goes down there *[Come on, Squire—just try to keep Rabin away from the studio]* so that I can be a little more *not* in the studio. So I come in and review the mixes instead of being totally involved. For so many years I've been *so* totally involved that now—if somebody else can do the work and it *works* "

Squire's voice trails off as he stares blankly at another MTV clip on the muted television. "That's more my attitude now.

"What I've learned from 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart, " he concludes, seemingly over the spell of ennui, "is the wonderful thing of people going, 'Is that Yes?! Really?' I like that. It's especially good for all the fans who stuck with Yes for the *right* reasons—people who'd been written off by others who'd say, 'Oh, he's into that old Yes shit. When 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart' came out, those same people could finally say, 'Have you heard my band's new single?' And what's good about this new album is that it's different *again*."

With that, the warhorse returns to the solitude of his dark, empty sanctuary, where he'll wait for a call from the guys in the studio ●

Chris Squire: Battle-axes of a Warhorse

When Chris Squire first burst on the American music scene with his Yes charter cohorts, Squire was something new in terms of bass guitar. Not since Jack Bruce gave the rock bottom a whole new meaning had a bass player caused such a stir. His diesel-driven lines, propelled by the clickety-clack edge of his round-wound Rotosound Strings and Rickenbacker bass made him stand apart from the traditional Fender bass sound & players. The sound was different, the approach was different and it all served as the foundation to the band. It can safely be said that there would be no Yes without the bass in the big hands of Chris Squire.

Chris Squire and his playing have been synonymous with Rickenbacker instruments since Yes began its dramatic ascent into the popular music cosmos. Recently, however, and specifically for the recording of the new Yes project, Squire has purchased several instruments from master luthier Mike Tobias. Most notable of these instruments is a five-string designed especially for Chris. Since Chris and Mike are busy guys we had to talk to them separately.

Chris: "When I got the Rick bass, it was 1964 or 1965 and at that time John [Entwistle] had one, the Kinks' bass player had one and I had the third one. I had that bass for years. I had only had a cheap guitar before that to learn on, so really I pretty much started after nine months of learning to play on that Rickenbacker. It went through so many phases being in certain bands—the flower-power thing. I had wallpaper stuck on it with big colored flowers and stuff like that and then when that year finished it was like, 'take it off.' There was this little Chinese guy in Soho that used to do guitar repair and he would go, 'Oh, terrible! I better shave it off.

"So by the time anyone ever heard my Rickenbacker bass on the Yes record it had actually been shaved down to about two-thirds of the weight of the regular factory model; she sounded completely different.

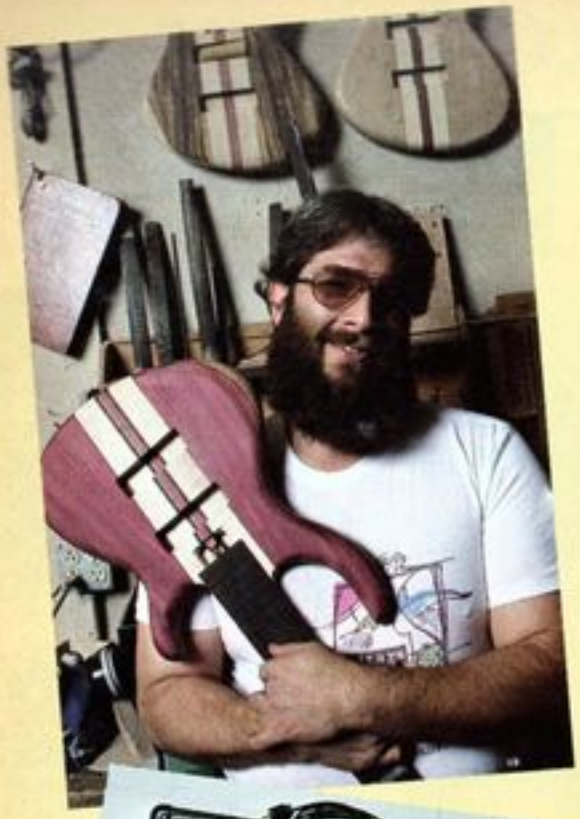
"I know that so many people went out buying Rickenbackers thinking it was going to sound like me, and it didn't because by then, like I said, my guitar was a different weight of wood and, of course, I was one of the very first people to start using Rotosound strings—which Rickenbacker hated me for. The company here in Santa Ana would get really annoyed with me. I would go to see them thinking that they would go, 'Chris, great, have these free basses, you are doing well for us, and all they did was say, 'Come and look at our repair room, look at all these guitars that have been sent back to have re-fretting because the [Rotosound] strings wore out the neck. I haven't actually used it on this album because this album has been a whole project for me where I have been using this five-string bass [*made by Mike Tobias*] for the whole album.

"I was very interested in having a five-string because I was aware of the fact that synthesizer basses were going much lower than bass guitars, so there needed to be some way of combating. The fifth string is supposed to be a low B; I in fact use it quite a lot as a low A, although it is a little floppy like that, but in some ways it is more useful for rock 'n' roll.

"I have done some songs where the tune is A and then I didn't know the song and changed it to B, and then I did another song recently where I turned the whole thing down so it is real low; it's like A-D-G-C-F. I have had Rotosound make three gauges of strings so far [*designed for Chris by James How —GW Ed.*] between 130 and 140 and I think the ones I settled on were like about 135. It's hard—what it tends to do, strange enough, is just because there is another string on the bottom (there is no real logic for this) it then makes the E string appear to sound like an A string does. Usually when the E's on the bottom that always sounds a little duller than the rest, especially with the Rotosound in most of my guitars. With the five-string having an extra low string, the E, sounds much brighter in itself. I don't quite understand why that it is. It may be because it is further in the pickup rather than being on the edge of it.

Mike: "When Chris first got the bass, he didn't want to play a low B. He wanted a low A because the pattern made more sense to be A-E-A-D-G but the Marshall top and the Bassman top and his 4×12 speaker wouldn't take it. You could hear every beat of a low B as it trashed the speakers. So we had him try some new equipment. Part of the reason for his clarity is somewhat in the construction of the bass and pickups. The neck-through tends to have better sustain and clarity. The pickups are Bartolinis, which are designed to have more clarity and sustain on the low end and that makes it tough on an amplifier—particularly a tube which is not used to seeing anything that low.

"The spacing in the neck is slightly narrower than what we normally build. It is essentially a Rickenbacker spacing for *five* strings.



Squire's Old Guard and New: the battleaxe Rickenbacker and the custom-made five-string Tobias bass stand at attention; Chris' Marshall Super Bass Amp, SWR-400 and Energy cabinet; Mike Tobias showing off his handiwork.

Glen La Ferman

"The bass itself, though it's painted red, is a classic model and has a laminated hardtop. The bass is made of purple heartwood and alder with a maple and purple heartwood neck. Purple heart is a South American hardwood that comes out of the ground actually colored purple."

Chris: I still use my Marshall that I've used for years—it really works. I have also been using the SWR, which is made here—it is a very high-quality amplifier with a tube front end and solid-state power side—it is a very good amplifier. Mike Tobias recommends it because it goes with his guitars; it particularly caters to the large strings and stuff. I've had this Marshall Super Bass Amp for years and the incredible thing about it was it always had more high-end than any of the lead amps. Guitarists who plugged into it couldn't believe it but I can because the way those Marshall Amps used to be made in the late sixties was a very funky operation.

Mike: "It's funny, Chris doesn't appear to be very technical but when you hear him in the studio he's a wizard. In terms of his ability to set sounds and produce things and be a trend-setter. His musical taste is impeccable. I think his ability to be a general and marshall the technical people around him is wonderful.

"He finally settled on an SWR-400 to power two 15-inch Energy cabinets. Then he goes directly into the board, because it's set up in stereo just like his Rickenbacker.

Chris: "I usually play with a pick but I do some things with my fingers sometimes. I used to go and watch people play and especially John [Entwistle] used to play with a pick and I used to really like his sound then. Through time I actually developed a style anyway where I actually play with the pick and also with my thumb at the same time.

Mike: "The Bartolini pickups are a proprietary design exclusively for our guitars. It's a very flexible pickup. It allows a lot of focus in the low end without clipping the high end. It has a remarkably clear tone and is very transparent. It's recorded very well.

"Chris' bass is wired passive and there is one volume and tone for each pickup. It's set up with only one jack because he always runs it in stereo.

"Most of the tone, I think, comes from his fingers anyway. It doesn't matter if Chris is playing through an SWR and Energy cabinet or a Marshall. It's still the feel of Chris Squire playing bass."

— Billy Cioffi

Rabin

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he said, 'We have a brand-new one. I told him I couldn't afford a new one, and he said, 'It's brand-new but it's real, *real* old. It's been lying in the back forever—we just found it the other day.' He said the neck was probably screwed up. So he pulled out this guitar, dusted it off, and here was this gleaming red Strat! Needless to say, I bought it on the spot. I've had it ever since. But," he admits, "I hated it for the first three months!"

Things tend to fall Rabin's way— not that he doesn't take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. When the old coach said that luck is the by-product of preparation, he wasn't speaking of Trevor Rabin, but he might've been. Rabin's a member of the new school of guitar heroes—he's much too thoughtful to box himself into a stylistic corner, and his virtuosity serves his songs rather than the other way around.

"I've been accused of not having a specific sound, and it's true, I don't. I know it's important as far as 'making it' is concerned to have a style—so that when a record comes on the radio people will say, 'It's *him*!' But sometimes when you have that specific thing it narrows you in, and every time you want to move out of that a little bit, you can't. I like changing sounds. That's why I love John McLaughlin so much: He's a superb guitar player, but he goes from things like *Birds Of Fire* to *Apocalypse* and then into *Shakti*, and he is very honest about everything he does. That's all I want to do, is try to be honest. So I use different guitars and different sounds all the time. For example, I can make my Fender sound almost exactly like my Les Paul with the right chords. You learn to manipulate your pedals, manipulate your sounds.

"Obviously, there is an inherent style in the way I play," he continues. "I was always into having technique, but not in the way of hammer-ons and such; I've always been into a different kind of technique. To play the guitar a thousand miles an hour is the easiest thing in the world; you practice a while and you can do it—though I respect that and think it is important to have a blistering technique. But I try, as much as possible, for the *feeling*.

"I feel I have good technique, but a lot of guys do. I just wish that more guys with great techniques would take that athletic ability and channel it through more musical thought. Because, to me, a guitar part that's just sitting there, pulsating and supporting the vocal, is as important as the solo."

Rabin is an able, enthusiastic conversationalist; verbally as well as musically, he's an elaborator, an embellisher. Once he's made his point, he cites examples to drive it home.

"When I was doing my third [Chrysalis] solo album," he presses on, "Ray Davies from the Kinks was involved in an executive-producer capacity. And he kept telling me that the sound I was using at the time was a great sound, that it should be 'my sound. I said, 'No, no, that's just for this song—you move on. "

Another example:

"The Roland Pedal Library has some sounds of me, 'Trevor Raven, it says," he laughs. "And when I saw that, I thought, what a great compliment. But then I opened it up and it had the setting for 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart. Ridiculous. Now, the solo for that song was done on a Fender Strat, very, very loud, and an E-max harmonizer. There's board reverb at the end of it, and it's panned all over the place, but the fundamental is just a very choppy Fender Strat through a harmonizer. I got all these compliments about the guitar sound, and I thought, what is the big thing about this? And people say, 'That's your style. God *forbid* that's my style. Imagine being stuck with that as your 'style'—it's a pretty peculiar sound. I hate to think of anything as my sound; it's just one thing. Tomorrow, hopefully, there will another sound that's better—or even worse—but at least I'll try it."

And now, for the *coup de grace*:

"Once again, not only guitar-wise, but writing-wise, arrangement-wise, engineering-wise, production-wise, I hate staying in the same place. I like going ahead. If it doesn't work, then I'll just play bar mitzvahs." Rabin seems to have his ego well under control. Talk about your complete packages. Isn't there *anything* wrong with this guy?

"I'm pretty boring," he admits, with typical modesty. "I write and work out. I have weights at home, I swim for a half-hour each day, then I bicycle for about an hour; so I do about two hours of workout a day. Years ago, I went through this silly sort of thing, thinking that holding the weights was going to affect my hands. That was a stupid concern."

Rabin seems to genuinely enjoy the organization of his life and work, with the attendant drawing of conclusions and making of decisions. He's the rock star as yuppie. But isn't it refreshing to see such a straight-shooter in this often sleazily-played role? You bet it is.

In his ongoing quest to keep things moving, Rabin set out to make *Big Generator* dramatically different, sonically and song-wise, from *90125*.

"Before we started," he says, "we thought a lot about *Abbey Road* as a model. In the sense that, if we come up with an idea, why pressure ourselves into making it a song? Just have it there. If you can't come up with a chorus, don't throw it out because it's not a complete song.

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Trevor's Tales from the Electronic Ocean

Paul Devilliers, Audio Clean-Up Man: When Trevor Horn bid *adios* to Yes, Paul came up to bat.

Glen La Ferman

Do guitars talk to each other? Trevor's 1962 Stratocaster, Westone Pantera and unfinished Tobias guitar confer.

A Shopping Spree Gone Mad: Trevor's set-up consists of two Marshall JCM-800 Lead Series heads, two Marshall 4×12 cabinets, a Mesa/Boogie head (used as a fuzz), a Marshall mini stack and the increasingly popular Bradshaw System.

As we walked into the main studio of Sunset Sound Recorders in Hollywood, I spied Trevor's amp rig standing in the center of the studio facing away from the control booth. I asked Paul Devilliers, the band's producer/engineer, if that was Trevor's "studio" set-up. He replied that it was also his stage set-up as well. Hmmm that's the first thing I thought was unusual. After all, isn't Yes a "state-of-the-art" band? I expected the studio to be awash with every known or unknown prototype guitar-hype product. Rabin's guitar work on *90125* was a consummate example of studio wizardy and guitar techno-calisethetics.

There was the rub! Could this, well hodge-podge of old and new actually be the rack of Rabin? The answer: a resounding. err *Yes*! We'll let Trevor in his own words take you close to the edge of his own topography, but we will preface it with this observation: The Bradshaw Switching System (and some other aspects of Rabin's signal chain) is undoubtedly the ultimate in technology. Rabin's philosophy of effects is, simply put, "if it sounds good use it and be open." His general motivation is "sound for sound's sake" and not tech for tech's own end.

"I love the sound of transistor amps. This may sound like a contradiction because I still use the Marshalls as my main amps (JCM-800 Lead Series, two heads). I use the Mesa/Boogie as my fuzz box, which is phenomenal. But my main overdrive—I have two—the one I use more than anything is the 12-watt Marshall transitor amp—it's great. It is a different sound; it's not quite as warm.

"If you are going to plug into your Marshall or your Vox or whatever you've been using and you say, 'That's my sound!' Then you take that and plug it into a transistor amp—of course it's going to sound different. It's the same with digital recording; it's not the same as the two JCM-800 Lead Series, but I'm thinking of changing to the Marshall Jubilee Series. They really sound great.

How does Trevor pull this all together?

"This is the Bradshaw System [*pointing to the pedalboard that controls the effects rack*], programmable with 10 banks with four presets on each bank. It's got MIDI facility, which is great because I can change echos and reverb, MIDI-wise. One thing I'm exploring is having a digital patch bay so things could change where they come in the chain."

Trevor's Bradshaw floor board has two volume pedals:

"The volume pedals, one is an overall volume with a pre- and post-switch. Then the other is for the echos and for whatever else are in the Korg mixers.

"I'll just go through the way things are patched. We've got an SPX-90, which I use for reverb and as a harmonizer, but I might be changing to this new Korg unit if it becomes available before we hit the road. I had a chance to try it out and it seems like it might be a better-sounding unit.

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Rabin Tales

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"The delays consist of Korg SDD-2000 sampling digital delays. There are two of them in stereo. The Korg keyboard mixers—KMX 62—I have two of those so there is a total of 12 channels available. The great thing about the mixers is you have pan pots on them and you have auxiliary re-send if you ever want anything on top of the effect.

"These Rocktron Hush Units are terrific. I use two of them as noise-reduction units. It's two stereo units, so one over each channel on the big Marshalls and one on the 12-watt lead. That's my one overdrive and on my second overdrive, a Mesa/Boogie Mark III, is where the other fourth Hush Unit goes.

"I have a Yamaha GC2020 Stereo Limiter, which I don't use in stereo. I use it in series and I set them one after the other. I use an MXR Stereo Graphic eq which I also don't use in stereo and it's a 2/3-octave 15-band eq. The reason it's an MXR is because I've gotten to know it really well and it's noisy and all, but it's one of those things. If you like it, you like it.

"Another one of my fetishes is the Roland SRE-555 Stereo Chorus Echo. Once again, it's just something I like.

"As far as the Bradshaw System goes, I used to use a Pete Cornish foot-pedal rig which has a great sound. There are buffer amps between each stage, so it's very quiet, but the Bradshaw is more convenient. With the Cornish, I'd be jumping all over the stage. You can't preset things. I'll give you an example: with "Owner Of The Lonely Heart," as I'd be getting near the solo I'd have to be stepping on things a little bit at a time as the solo was coming up. Here, with a flip of the switch it changes to what you want because of the presets. It's also got MIDI so you can store the MIDI with the programs and it will change. The SPX is MIDI and the Korgs are MIDI and those are the things I want to change the settings on a lot I'm going to have another rack made before I go out on the road which will be all MIDI stuff. A couple of AKAI 900 samplers and some Korg Modules."

Rabin is an interesting blend of traditionalist and "New Age" guitarist. For years, his instrument was almost exclusively his 1962 Stratocaster [*See feature for the lowdown on this*]. This past year, however, Westone have been hard at work designing custom-made six- and matching 12-string Pantera models, both of which he has utilized in the recording studio and plans to use on this summer's tour as well. When it comes to guitar synths, Rabin is kind of ambivalent but maintains an open mind.

"I haven't used MIDI guitar yet because it is too slow to my mind. So on a lot of stuff, if I wanted an acoustic guitar and an electric guitar I doubled it, rather than MIDI it. I find the SynthAxe a bit cold for me. That's not to say it's not great. It's a fantastic controller! I understand how the electronics work and it is a fantastic thing that they have done. Playing-wise, though, I feel it is a little cold. I have heard it used, however, to great effect."

Sound is everything to Rabin but it means nothing to him without the underlying emotion that translates into creative expression. The components of his rig range from the pricey but it'll do nicely Bradshaw System to a drawer in his rack where his inexpensive MXR Dynacomp and Stereo Chorus pedals are stashed and feed into his system like cheap but effective switchblades. It isn't really the "meat," Rabin feels—it's the motion.

"It's affordable to anyone now. You can get an SPX-90 or there are new Korg digital reverbs that are great. The Roland has one where you can use multiples in presets. The Korg has great multiple presets and they are both under a thousand dollars. You don't have to spend twelve thousand dollars to get a great sound. So it is great that young musicians have access to anything that's available. At this point it's down to taste and talent. It's also good to see that playing is coming back in."

— Billy Cioffi

Rick Gould/ICP

Forget those struggling days. Trevor Rabin and Tony Kaye rehearse in *style*.

Rabin

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and don't put a bad chorus around it; just leave the chorus out. So it evolved into an album with long songs, ranging from four to nine-and-a-half minutes."

Gee, that makes it sound like a traditional Yes album, of all things.

"The thing that makes Yes sound like Yes more than anything is Jon's voice," Rabin clarifies. "You could put any band there, to a degree, and it would sound like Yes." With the band's guitarist functioning as the principal member of the Yes production team, will *Big Generator* be perceived as a guitar album?

"This one is more so than the last one," Rabin answers. "If it sounds like a guitarist's record, that's great, but I like to make it sound like it's an *arranged* record—not to make it sound contrived or un-live. I like the guitar to be used as an instrument; it should happen here with one guitar sound and then another guitar sound should come in. It's a great instrument to be orchestrated. [*Rabin will get a chance to explore this avenue further on his own solo album, his next project, to be released by Elektra—GW Ed.*]

"The song is the most important thing," he emphasizes, still wearing his producer's hat. "Don't be selfish, allow the song to live. I've scrapped solos because they were too overbearing and I needed something a little less so. What I try to do is keep the solos on the ground or basic track—when the whole band is playing—as much as possible.

"What I would like to achieve is, when people listen to a Yes record, after the solos and stuff, which is the initial thing, that they'll listen to it over and over and keep discovering new things. That's what I liked about Hendrix—there were always things to listen to."

Rabin's leadership role in the studio was formalized when Trevor Horn was sacked in the midst of the sessions for the new album. What caused the split?

"There were certain personal problems, but mostly it was a musical thing. The band had a very clear understanding of what we wanted to do on this album, and we thought the producer had the same understanding—that obviously wasn't the case. He was pulling it in one direction, us in the other, and nothing ever got sorted out. We had a *lot* of trouble, and eventually—speaking for myself, but I think everyone felt this way—enough was enough. Stop! We weren't getting anywhere. The work I was most happy with was when I went in on a Sunday with nobody there and I was able to focus on what I was doing. So eventually, I just said, 'Stop. Let's go back to L.A. I'm on home territory here. I have a 24-track studio at home [*above Lake Hollywood*] and I can check things out there. In fact, I've done lots of overdubs at home since Paul has been involved in it. Being an engineer and a musician and knowing the live thing and the band—as well as knowing how to deal with people—has been invaluable."

Yeah—makes sense. But where did Horn go wrong?

"One of the reasons this happened," Rabin responds (emphatically, as usual), "was the success of our last album. There was a lot of apprehension going into it, so it's not so surprising that it didn't work out. Trevor Horn is a guy who sits back and has ideas, and if you come up with something, he likes to say, 'Oh, I like that.' That's the kind of producer he is; he's not an engineer at all. And as far as sampling, he's not a programmer, either. Steve Lipson, the engineer, did all the sampling and all the programming for him. And on *90125*, Gary Langan was the engineer. This time 'round there was an engineer I thought was good who I recommended. We were in a studio in Italy—a castle—on a package deal, and I think he [Horn] was a little bit taken out of his territory. That, and working with a guy he didn't know. So in fairness to him, I can understand that.

"But when we got back to London, things didn't right themselves— the problems just kept going on and on. We went to SARM Studios, which is Trevor Horn's studio, to do a long and very complex song called 'I'm Running.' The band was in the studio playing, and even though I'm an engineer, I wasn't thinking about the technical aspect of it. When we went back to listen, I was thinking that any sounds that weren't happening we'd fix later. It turned out that the drum sound was unusable! Alan, to his credit, did the drums again, note for note. There was a *lot* of salvaging.

"It's like buying an old house," Rabin

analogizes: "When you finish refurbishing it, it winds up costing more than if you bought a new one."

His vintage Strat notwithstanding, Rabin tends to prefer the new to the old. He and Devilliers went halfsies on a Sony digital 24-track tape machine in order to put this album right. With digital, Rabin explains, "You can play a tape a million times and it never changes. With analog, you see, the oxide sheds, the tape stretches, you find yourself adding top-end eq all the time. With digital nothing changes— the top end, the cymbal sound, the transient response. A lot of people say they miss the analog] bass end; I think what it is is that on analog tape you can get that compression—the softness and tubbiness of the bottom end. If you want that on digital you have to contrive it; that's the only difference. I'm absolutely into digital."

Rabin doesn't mind working his way into new things—he revels in the rigors of the learning experience, and he likes to keep turning the pages.

"I never get comfortable with anything," he says—and it sounds almost like a boast. "I've been playing Fender for years and I'm always updating it. Lately I've been using this Westone Pantera." Rabin picks up the sleek black guitar. But wait—he's had the logo sanded off. "That's the only thing I don't like about it. If they'd done it in gray instead of white, it would've been less distracting. But it's not as if you must only play Fender or Gibson; there are some great guitars out there. Jackson is building me one at the moment. I'm very hyper as far as guitars are concerned—I have to try this or this!"

Still, he admits, "The cliche, I'm afraid, is true: The old Fenders, they've never copied them. Maybe it's the feeling, I don't know. The neck broke on mine and I couldn't find one that felt good—good for me, anyway. It didn't feel right, so I actually had it fixed—it took eight months." Rabin gets a little starry-eyed. "My Fender to me is like a woman," he confesses.

What's this, nostalgia from a staunch modernist? Renovating the old house rather than buying a new one? Perhaps Rabin's previously hidden conservative/sentimental side extends to the perpetuation of Yes as an idea. Don't bet on it.

"One of the funny things Chris says to me sometimes when something happens is, 'Well, is it "Yes"?' What is 'Yes'? Yes is this band; if something happens, *that* is 'Yes.' But if 'Yes' is something that is from the past, then, no, it is *not* 'Yes.'

"Chris is pretty trusting; he just lets me get on with it," Rabin says of his colleague. "He knows that when I come up with something, there is always thought behind it. I never just *do* something—throw this on, throw that on—I *always* have an idea."

We get it, Trev—the idea, that is.•