

YES

The Yes Album is, as you may have noticed from its review in last month's *BI* (and its position in the LP charts), an excellent example of what rock bands in this country are still capable of—if they manage to get themselves out of the self-imposed rut which rock is in at the moment. Yes are one of the very few bands who have not only the vitality and the experience, but also the natural creativeness necessary to get the Bandwagon rolling again.

Over the last few years bands have been increasingly aware of what it takes to make a hit record and have thus been over-consciously striving to achieve new and different sounds. The result has been—as no doubt everyone already appreciates—a goose-stepping of new sounds: heavy—lull; harmony—lull; acoustic—lull, and now a combination of the latter two. While all this has been going on, a few bands, such as Mark-Almond, Continuum, Emerson, Lake and Palmer, T. Rex, etc., have been creating new bags for themselves. Yes are in the same category, far re-

moved from the main bulk of bands who are content following along the, so called, creative road to stardom.

I don't wish to incriminate myself by declaring my favourite TV programme, but ... on 'Maggie' way back in 1968, Pete Brady said that Yes were going to be a very big name during 1969. They did make a reputation in that year, but not as big as Pete's prediction. Their album *Yes* did sell fairly well for a couple of months, but not sufficiently to make vast amounts of bread for the group's five members. Still, the band which had come together through a 'musicians wanted' advertisement had got off the ground and it was only a matter of time before their music left the pop roundabout to follow an individual route: a route which was becoming apparent with the release of *Time and a Word*, and which reached a junction with *The Yes Album*. It's difficult to pass comment on the next album, or even where it's going, because it isn't due to be recorded until May, when the band return from a one-

month tour of the States (with the Faces); although a few of the tracks which are already prepared could be recorded in Atlantic's Miami studios—if the tour's timetable permits.

Yes began when Jon Anderson (vocals) and Chris Squire (bass) got together over a pint in a London club. Drummer Bill Bruford joined through the above-mentioned ad, and Tony Kaye (organ) came in as a result of both the advertisement and a pint with the other three. Peter Banks was last to say 'Yes', only a matter of days before the group's first gig at the Marquee. It is just over a year now since Peter left and Steve Howe took charge of the guitar depot. Steve's first claim to fame was with the Keith West group Tomorrow (which had disbanded because of Keith's interest in the business side of pop).

Tony Kaye is one of those people who seem to have been bred for a musical career: his grandfather was a Broadway arranger and saxophonist, and from the

age of four Tony was given piano lessons. At school he took up the clarinet because at that time you had to be competent on more than one instrument to get into the Royal College of Music. While still at school, Kaye was playing with one amateur and two very successful professional bands—one of which, the Danny Rogers Orchestra, was a 15-piece. Following Kaye's failure to gain admission to the Royal College, he went to Art College where he studied graphics; but, again, due to his constant moonlighting as a musician he failed his final examinations.

That was the deciding point for Kaye. He made up his mind to be a pop musician and shelved the idea to be a concert pianist until he could be sure of success. There followed periods with Johnny Hallyday's backing band, the Federals, Winston's Fumbs and Bitter Sweet. When I was with Winston's Fumbs we went on tour to Turkey and Rumania. At that time there was no rock at all in the country, so we got an incredible reception, football

JOHN ANDERSON

TONY KAYE



A definition of excellence

stadiums, the works. We recorded the first pop record ever to be made there, and it was absolutely terrible because nobody else had ever done it before. The engineer hadn't got the faintest idea what we wanted, all the instruments they have in Rumania use strings, so, when it came to recording my Continental (Vox), they hadn't the faintest idea how to do it.' Chris Squire began playing bass while still at school. From there he joined Boosey and Hawkes as an instrument salesman—which enabled him to buy a new guitar for £30. There followed a longish spell with Syn, a band which enjoyed top-ten success in France. Yes was the next step. Military band was Bill's first 'professional' encounter with drums. Following that he went to Leeds University, but the pull of pop was too much so he joined Yes.

Last is the guy with the voice which always sounds as though he is always singing at the top of his voice... from a distance. John Anderson. Four years

with a group in his native Accrington was John's apprenticeship before he joined a band bound for the German market. Six sauerkraut-weary months later he was back in England—discussing the formation of Yes.

Yours Is No Disgrace, perhaps the best-known track off *The Yes Album*, begins and ends with Tony playing Moog—an instrument which he likes very much when played by its chief advocate Keith Emerson, 'Keith is doing lots of very nice things with the Moog, and I would like to get into it a lot more, but I simply don't have the time. Eddie [Offord, sound engineer at Advision Studios] always has a Moog set up in the studio, so when I get a chance to have a play with it between takes I do. Electronic music isn't really our scene anyway—except those little bits on intros. Anyway the Hammond organ is still quite a new instrument for me; in fact, I think it is quite a new instrument altogether—it's only since Emerson started throwing it around the stage that it really came

into being as an instrument.'

Tony's Hammond B 3 is very much the same now as it was when he bought it, the only addition being a treble booster. Two Leslie 122s issue the sound—one into the PA and the other, from the opposite side of the stage, straight at the audience. The PA is, as John puts it, 'nameless'. Yes bought it from Iron Butterfly at the end of their recent joint tour of this country. Eight months ago Yes were recognisable by their vast banks of WEM speakers; now, although there are still huge amounts of gear the individual stacks have gone. In their place are small solo cabinets and one almighty PA set.

The four roadies (John, Lou, Phil the sound engineer, and Mike the business administrator) have a task which is still uncommon with groups: they set up a complete monitoring rig on stage, i.e. four speakers situated around the stage, usually on top of the PA, pointing at the band and not at the audience. 'It makes playing much easier and much more pleasing, because we can

hear exactly what the audience hears—it is surprising what it's like playing without one now that we are used to it—you can't even hear what's going on beside you sometimes,' Tony explained. 'for all you can hear the guy beside you could be playing a different tune, but with our monitors we can hear everything.'

It's not that Yes aren't successful enough as a band, but should they ever find enough time, all five could become session men in their own rights—Tony already has a number of session credits to his name—all five read music AND translate, it to their respective instruments with a truly professional talent. I shall refrain from saying Yes are the group of 1971 only because for my money they were one of the groups of 1969 and 1970... 'Maggie' always did have an eye for talent.

S.H.

CHRIS SQUIRE

BILL BRUFORD

STEVE HOWE

