

Yes: The Third Revolution

by John Szwed
and
Lorenz Fritzsche

Introduction

Rock music, in case you haven't noticed, is here to stay. Future musical historians will not find rock as a mere last but not a least musical movement with a totally unique character. The development of rock, certain groups and individuals in the music industry will be pointed to as making outstanding contributions in terms of adding variety and depth to a field that could potentially have suffered from terminal stagnation at any point in its history. The effort of the bands on rock music is well documented. Observers of the rock field also point to the original blues, swing and jazz group as introducing a unique quality of American jazz-based music. Now, what may be termed a third revolution in rock is on the ascent, and leading the way is the exceptionally talented group of Yes. Potentially, Yes could in later years come to be recognized as one of the two or three most important acts of the seventies. They have already become the central figures of a musical sub-culture that draws followers from all areas of music and taste. The following pages grow out of that sub-culture, and may be seen as a labor of love on the part of several A.C. students in John Szwed's class. Following pages grow out of that sub-culture, and may be seen as a labor of love on the part of several A.C. students in John Szwed's class. Following pages grow out of that sub-culture, and may be seen as a labor of love on the part of several A.C. students in John Szwed's class. Following pages grow out of that sub-culture, and may be seen as a labor of love on the part of several A.C. students in John Szwed's class.



The Yes in concert at the Arena. Left to right: Steve Howe, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Rick Wakeman

Howe and Rick Wakeman can be noted.

Two songs on *Time And A Word* are written by outside contributors. "No Opportunity Necessary, No Experience Needed" by Richie Stevens and "Everyday" by Stephen King lend variety to *Time And A Word*.

The Yes Albums

A definite difference between earlier efforts and *Yes*' third album *The Yes Album* is apparent. The reason is the arrival of guitarist Steve Howe. His immense talents are displayed throughout the album on such cuts as "Stealin' Troggs" and "The Clap." The latter is reminiscent of reggae piano coupled with strings and a delightful tune.

The instruments on *The Yes Album* continue the improvement started on *Time And A Word*. Overall, the album represents the versatility of Yes, their ability to sustain both related solo interpretations and solid instrumental themes without losing the listener.

Fragile

Fragile, the group's fourth album, enjoyed enormous popular success. A large part of this success can be attributed to Rick Wakeman's appearance with the group. Educated at the Royal College of Music, Wakeman brought classical background, immense natural talents, and a drive toward perfection to the group. His keyboard work on piano, organ, moog, mellotron, and harpsichord is accompanied by an artful lute, in or out of rock music. While Wakeman's solo work, "Close To The Edge" and "Heart of the Sunrise" that give a clear picture of his contributions toward the band and subsequent albums.

Besides Wakeman's solo, Fragile features solo work by several of the group's members: vocalist Jon Anderson ("We Have Heaven"), drummer Bill Bruford ("Five per cent Nothing"), bass player Chris Squire ("The Fish"), and guitarist Steve Howe (a superior improvisative piece "Blood For a Day"). The album is also distinguished by Yes' biggest Fragile success in up to date ordinary rock, "Roundabout."

Close To The Edge

In late 1973 with the group's membership solidified, Yes produced their breakthrough album, *Close To The Edge*. While Fragile merely set up some ordinary rock, *Close To The Edge* was aimed in an entirely different direction. While "Siberian Skies" later evolved into a powerful concert opener and "And You And I" became a popular radio number, it is side

one, "Close To The Edge," that music chroniclers of the future will point to as the seminal work of Yes.

The lyrics of "Close To The Edge" are possibly the best that Yes has done. The vivid imagery that breathes Yes' song words is certainly there, but these also seem to be an abundance of individual lines and passages in "Close To The Edge" that make sense, but point to an overall philosophy in Yes' music. Any effort at unearthing the complex metaphors and well-layered meanings of Yes' lyrics would inevitably be tedious, slow and time-consuming, but let me make the general statement that many of Yes' songs, in particular "Close To The Edge" and "And You And I," are Christian Gnosticism. "Close To The Edge" also shows elements of human and social commentary, and taken as a whole hangs together in a way that Yes' lyrics do little to do.

But as mentioned previously, Yes is mainly an instrumental group. This is their strength, and "Close To The Edge" is the show case par excellence of this talent. It has an intensity unobtainable by even their live performances. In particular, Rick Wakeman's keyboard work on "I Got The Feelin'" and "The Fish" highlights the use of the overall musical effect is superb. The device of interweaving several instrumental themes is as though to make music as an electric guitar would be in a symphony orchestra, but Yes use this musical device effectively on "Close To The Edge." Also, the transition from one theme to another on "Close To The Edge" are truly excellent, which is a pleasant surprise indeed when one considers that even the most masterpieces of classical music sometimes suffer from jarring, unnatural transitions. "Close To The Edge" is a masterpiece and fully deserves its unsurpassed musical virtuosity.

The two songs on side two of *Close To The Edge* provide an excellent example of the "I Got The Feelin'" and "I" is performed as a soft, light, very gentle song, with instruments muted and its vocal dominated. The "I Got The Feelin'" is performed as a soft, light, very gentle song, with instruments muted and its vocal dominated. The "I Got The Feelin'" is performed as a soft, light, very gentle song, with instruments muted and its vocal dominated.

Yesongs

The three recent self entitled Yesongs represented for Yes a final and new boldness that they had indeed reaped out their own unique place in music. Yesongs

was recorded live on the group's 1973 world tour, and it is one of the best live albums ever produced.

Yes recordings are always well packaged and Yesongs is no exception. Roger Dean is responsible for the beautiful look and picture that adorn the outer covers of Yesongs and Martin Dean and David Lake took the excellent color photos in the booklet accompanying the album.

Yes' music is much more accessible in live performance. The live versions of previously released material on Yesongs have the best listening to any of Yes' studio recordings, one marvels at the complexity of the music. The fact that this quality carries over in live performance is remarkable. In one instance at the recent live concert at the Browne County Veterans Memorial Arena remarked "I really didn't think that Yes could do any of their music on stage." Well, they can. Oh how they can.

The opening number of Yesongs is a pre-recorded excerpt of "Siberian Skies." This is a strictly beautiful piece of music, written by one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century, and showing it is upon the album as a masterstroke. There follows "Siberian Skies," which has been previously discussed and which stands as perhaps the most dynamic number on the album. Closing out side one of Yesongs is well done version of "Heart of the Sunrise."

During their 1972 tour drummer Bill Bruford left the group and was replaced by Alan White. Before his departure however, Bruford's drum solo on "Perpetual Change" on side two of record one of Yesongs was recorded. The side finishes with "And You And I" and is somewhat of a let down from side one.

The second record of the set opens with a superb effort by Steve Howe on a solo guitar piece "Blood For a Day," then Peter Dinklage on a beautiful piano solo. The last two sides of record two are by Rick Wakeman, a musician and a unique overliner of Handel's Messiah Overlure are included with short selections from "Wakeman's own concert. The last two sides of record two are by Rick Wakeman, a musician and a unique overliner of Handel's Messiah Overlure are included with short selections from "Wakeman's own concert. The last two sides of record two are by Rick Wakeman, a musician and a unique overliner of Handel's Messiah Overlure are included with short selections from "Wakeman's own concert.

Yes' first period. Amid the rock output of 1970, Yesongs is a masterpiece that is truly a musical album, and one of the most remarkable records of recent years.

The Future of Yes

Listening to *Time From Topographic Dreams*, one is tempted to say that Yes is moving toward the logical conclusion of its musical development. Norsk group today contains the brilliance and sensitivity of Yes. *Time From Topographic Dreams* is a fine showcase for the unmatched instrumental virtuosity. Yet at the same time it contains enough flaws to be regarded not as a conclusion but merely a beginning.

When then is Yes heading? Critics commenting on their album *Time From Topographic Dreams* the listing of classical and rock music is not

surprising. While *Time From Topographic Dreams* is a blending of folk music of all countries and regional with the Yes sound is also evident. In other individual pieces, one can observe traditional hard rock, soft rock, jazz, and a myriad of other stylizations together in Yes' music. One may be able to find adequate vehicle for displaying the power and brilliance of Yes would be still longer, more informed piece. One also had Yes' music. One may be able to find adequate vehicle for displaying the power and brilliance of Yes would be still longer, more informed piece. One also had Yes' music. One may be able to find adequate vehicle for displaying the power and brilliance of Yes would be still longer, more informed piece.

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Postscript: Yes In Concert

The music of Yes, characteristically instrumental brilliance and engineering perfection, would be equally applicable to the concert stage. Thus at attending a Yes concert, such as their recent appearance at the Browne County Arena, is a pleasant surprise. The intensity and intimacy of Yes' live performance is a truly unique experience.

Time And A Word
In their second album Yes displayed hints of the direction their music would later take. Throughout the album the use of instrumental virtuosity in the music, inattention the listener strays from driving rock sounds to a style more consistent with the greatest guitar of Yes. The writing of Jon Anderson shows definite improvement on this album. Still, the lack of Steve

'Topographic Oceans' Reviewed

by F. Walton Hager, III
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"Tales From Topographic Oceans" was featured as the highlight of the Yes concert at the arena a few weeks ago. This album is definitely a massive recording accomplishment for the Boston Station in London, where it was recorded. The music, however, tends to not live up to past YES standards and abilities.

The lyrics are a work of art. They portray a beautiful story which has been molded into an impressive package, requiring the listener. However, in most cases in order to follow these lyrics, one must read along in the album, lest he miss most of the message.

Particularly disconcerting is the lack of variety within the musical structure of the album. Although the group prides itself on the classical foundation of its music, the wide, wide range of musical moods and characteristics are for a great part of the album, all the same. There are periods of release from the massive expanse of sound, and these bring warm attention from the listener.

The work is basically divided into four parts, four different sides to this album—"The Tower

of the Dawn", "The Remembering High the Memory", "The Ancient Giants Under the Sun", and "Ritual". All four are based on the Shintonic Scriptures. The forward to the album gives an insight into the conception of the album, and the story is extremely interesting in itself, and should be read before listening, as it does aid in understanding the message in the lyrics.

Hick Wakeman is the chief innovator on his album, Bill ARP, Steve Howe, C.J. Hammond, and the rest of the instruments which he has mastered give the album the true musical foundation. The rest of the instruments and members of the band all give outstanding performances, and as far as quality is concerned, this band is unsurpassed for talent's sake.

This is an important album for Yes. It has placed them in the position of great power over the competition where quality is concerned. If they begin to integrate their styles more frequently, and give us all of what they are capable of doing, then Yes can continue to rise as an important member of the musical world. As for this album, it is essentially good, and if you are an avid Yes fan, then you should be happy. If you're not, then you're better off listening here.



Yes performs Tales From Topographic Oceans, aided by superior special effects.



Above: Part of the 1980-plus crowd at the Arena.

Below: Yes instrumentalists enthralled enthusiastic concertgoers.



Yes History

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play, a microphone stand collapsed, nearly damaging Steve Howe's equipment. Once such problems were out of the way however, the music of Yes took over and enraptured a standing room-only crowd. Although never depicted in the performance of the entire Tales From Topographic Oceans album at first, a historic drum segment near the end of the performance brought a standing ovation. The group responded to the crowd with two encores, a fitting end to a remarkable event.