

## FIRE IN HARMONY: THE 1980S UK BRITISH PROGRESSIVE ROCK REVIVAL

### Introduction

In the history of progressive rock, the 1980s has been regarded as something of a low point. It was a decade that saw the release of relatively few progressive rock albums, when compared to either the “golden age” of the 1970s or the resurgence of interest in the 1990s and the new millennium. The best known acts of the 1980s were based in the UK, where Marillion, Pallas, Pendragon, IQ, Solstice and Twelfth Night came to prominence due to their headlining performances at London’s Marquee Club, their inclusion at the Reading Festival and, in some cases, their initial signing to major record labels or affiliates. However, the musical landscape of the 1980s fostered many other progressive rock bands within a loosely connected and “underground” translocal scene [BENNETT & PETERSON, 2004] that has largely been side-tracked or ignored by authors writing about the historical development of progressive rock. The term “neo-progressive” has been used retrospectively to categorise this particular era in British music history, and is commonly used by fans at the ProgArchives.com website [see AHLKVIST, 2011], yet it has also been defined in other ways. Bill Martin [1998] uses the term to refer to any progressive music made since the early 1980s, while Mike McLatchey [1996] notes that it can be used to refer to any contemporary music that draws musical influences from 1970s symphonic progressive rock [see also AHLKVIST, 2011]. This chapter takes the position that the term delineates a particular period and geography of music history that can be identified through press coverage and a range of characteristics that separate it from the “classic” era of the 1970s, yet which also presages later developments in progressive rock. It casts new light upon this poorly examined and interstitial era through an examination of the music press of the time, and with reference to the often privately released cassettes and LPs published by the bands involved. Relatively little of this music is currently available to purchase or stream,

while the majority of the bands, despite regular live performances, failed to gain much recognition in the mainstream music press, hence their material traces are often limited to any recordings that they were able to release at the time. The chapter begins with a brief historical overview of existing perspectives and literature, followed by a consideration of various factors which influenced the development of the progressive rock revival in the UK in the early 1980s.

## Overview

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing academic and popular literature discussing the history of progressive rock, including book-length studies by Macan [1997], Stump [2010], Lucky [1998], Martin [1998], Holm-Hudson [2002], Romano [2010], Hegarty & Halliwell [2011] and Lambe [2011]. Together, these books delineate an initial or classic “progressive rock era” [ANDERTON, 2010] in which the genre emerges and then coalesces in the late 1960s and early 1970s before experiencing a period of commercial growth in the mid-1970s, and then subsequently declining in the late 1970s. Its decline is characterised in both commercial and aesthetic terms, with the most visible and successful acts of the 1970s deemed to have run out of creative inspiration, or having adopted a more mainstream, radio-friendly style more suited to the then emergent US radio format of AOR (Adult-Oriented Rock), alongside American acts such as Styx and Kansas, or the artists that Holm-Hudson has called “prog-lite” [2005]. In the UK, we can see that many of the more successful progressive rock musicians of the 1970s remained active, but had moved on from the styles of music that they had helped to develop. Examples include Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Jon & Vangelis, Genesis, Yes, Asia and Jethro Tull, each of which achieved singles and/or album chart successes during the 1980s. In live performance, many of these acts continued to perform tracks from their 1970s back catalogues, yet their focus in both live performance and their then-contemporary album releases was upon shorter and more melodic songs and arrangements, as well as lyrically more accessible material. The broader scale experimentation and musical ambition that had previously been seen was reined in on albums that sought and achieved wider audience acclaim.

With a few notable exceptions, such as the reactivated King Crimson, the general consensus in the existing academic and popular literature is that the 1980s was something of a “dark age” in the history of progressive rock: a lacuna during which progressive rock music was conspicuous largely through its absence. For instance, Bill Martin’s *Listening to the Future* [1998] ignores developments in the 1980s before focusing on bands such as Ozric Tentacles, Porcupine Tree and Spock’s Beard, which each found success in the 1990s. Simon Reynolds [2005] has suggested that some progressive musicians became part of what is now termed post-punk, and goes on to suggest that post punk is actually progressive rock that has been “drastically streamlined and reinvigorated, with better haircuts and a more austere sensibility” [REYNOLDS, 2005]. For Reynolds, progression can be achieved

without “ostentatious virtuosity”, and in this he is in agreement with Chris Cutler’s view that 1970s progressive rock was never really progressive at all, but merely the application of “clever arrangements” and Classical music clichés to a rock setting [CUTLER, 1991: 118–121]. Indeed, a wide range of bands, styles and labels were active during the 1980s and are now considered by some progressive rock fans to be part of the progressive rock meta-genre [ANDERTON, 2010]; yet the bands classified under labels such as Rock-in-Opposition, progressive electronic and Zeuhl, for instance, are rarely discussed as “neo-progressive” despite numerous albums being released in the 1980s. Instead, the term “neo-progressive” has become synonymous with musicians and bands that were both influenced by and sought to perpetuate or develop in some form, the symphonic progressive styles and approaches introduced by groups such as Genesis, Yes and Pink Floyd in the 1970s.

A “neo-progressive canon” or style can now be identified, though this canon (and the bands that have followed in its wake) has often been criticised by fans as making music that was inferior to that made during the “classic” era of the 1970s [for instance, see AHLKVIST, 2011]. The basis of this criticism seems to be that the bands of the 1980s were not “progressing” the genre or style of progressive rock as a whole: that their music was lacking in complexity or originality, or that it was too mainstream or pop-oriented in its approach due the incorporation of contemporaneous stylistic elements drawn from New Wave, AOR and Heavy Metal. The musician, arranger and composer Robert John Godfrey (who had worked with Barclay James Harvest in the late 1960s/early 1970s, and ran his own band The Enid, whose music was neo-classically inspired) sums up some of the objections to the 1980s “neo-progressive” bands in a 2003 interview where he argued that the bands offered “no surprises – no adventures in harmony or rhythm – it is just cut-and-paste from a box of well-worn progressions, presets and riffs” (cited by Gaskins [2003]). Nevertheless, in some ways the new bands were partially following the lead of the older progressive bands that had survived and adapted into the 1980s, since those bands also simplified some of their song arrangements and drew inspiration from New Wave pop and AOR.

This chapter will not offer a musical defence of the albums and singles produced by bands during the 1980s, or a detailed musicological analysis of the music they contain. Instead, it will examine how these bands, initially without record company support, were able to develop their craft in the early 1980s, and how they were perceived in the press of the time. This history of musical activity and ambition is important to recognise as it laid the foundations for what would become known as a “neo-progressive” style of music in the 1990s and beyond and because, like subaltern histories of progressive rock in non-Anglo-American countries, it offers a fuller picture of the development of the meta-genre as a whole. The majority of the bands involved in the 1980s revival did not achieve commercial success or critical acclaim, yet this should not detract from their efforts to build something new in a relatively hostile or disinterested press environment, and at a time when the promotional and technological developments of digitisation and the Internet

were as yet largely unavailable. Instead, it may be argued that, as will be discussed in the next sections, the progressive bands of the early 1980s not only drew inspiration from the music of the 1970s progressive bands, but from the business practices and attitudes of late 1970s punk and post-punk, and the concert circuit provided by the New Wave of Heavy Metal in the early 1980s.

### **Influences from punk/post-punk**

There are two key developments from the era of punk and post-punk which may be said to have potential influence upon the progressive rock revival of the early 1980s. Firstly, the musicians involved in the early 1980s revival were rarely trained musicians and many had grown up and started to perform during the height of the punk era in the mid-to-late 1970s. Arguably, these amateur musicians and their bands extended the familiar punk battle cry of “learn three chords and form a band” into “learn a few more and go progressive.” They learned by listening to the records that had been produced in the 1970s, and attempted to write and play ambitious music that sounded like “symphonic” progressive rock, but updated it for contemporary audiences on the pub and club circuit. For instance, a 1977 press release by the band Pallas stated: “Their new adventurous approach to music led to a genetic mutation of old and new wave music in the form of a cynical futuristic 1984 setting. Their menacing Thought Police appearance on stage smacks of new wave, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Rock Music minus the obligatory safety pins. Their music, driving energetic, at times overpowering, is structured with the skill and cleverness of the old wave and has been described as “Symphonic Punk”” [PallasOfficial.com, 2015].

Pallas included cover versions of older progressive and heavy rock songs in their early live sets, while their own music in the early 1980s clearly drew inspiration from the likes of Genesis and Yes, as documented on their first cassette album *Arrive Alive* in 1981 and in the “Atlantis Suite” of songs that were released (in partial form) on the band’s first major label release *The Sentinel* (1984). Similarly, early demo recordings of the band Silmarillion dating from 1980 had a sound reminiscent of mid-1970s Camel, with the band even covering Camel’s “Lady Fantasy” on their second demo, which was recorded at studios owned by The Enid. In 1981, Silmarillion morphed into the better known Marillion when lead singer Fish and keyboard player Mark Kelly joined the group. Marillion’s sound and style demonstrated clear influences from Genesis in terms of a musical soundscape that now included Mark Kelly’s Tony Banks-esque mini-moog melodies, and Fish’s distinctive vocals. Fish has been likened to Peter Gabriel in his tone and delivery, enhanced no doubt by his penchant for face paint in early stage performances. However, Fish’s lyrics owed more to the poetic style and approach of Peter Hammill of Van der Graaf Generator than to the often mythological concerns of early Genesis, and as Marillion developed, his lyrics often had a political or personal slant that tackled topics such as the paramilitary “troubles” of Northern Ireland or

the pressures of contemporary urban life. Another band with strong influences from Genesis, but also from Steve Hillage's solo albums of the late 1970s, was Twelfth Night – a band which featured musicians with a background in late 1970s punk in addition to the politically-minded vocalist Geoff Mann. His vocal performances and lyrics were often emotional in content, passionately delivered, and concerned with matters related to individualism, the Cold War, and broader social/socialist commentary relevant to the Thatcherite political developments of the early 1980s.

Pallas, Marillion and Twelfth Night each drew upon musical models from the past, but developed simpler versions of these in line with their musical abilities, and each of them also adopted different elements of contemporary popular music styles into their sound, whether drawn from new wave pop, heavy metal, AOR or punk. Lyrically they all shifted attention towards contemporary social and political issues, though often using poetic allegory to communicate their ideas rather than the blunter approach of punk. The flights of fantasy that were seen in some 1970s symphonic progressive rock bands are less in evidence in the 1980s, with the so-called neo-progressive bands focusing even more on what Keister & Smith [2008] have described as the “nasty side” of progressive rock: the “scathing criticism” of social conformity (p.433) but with, as in Marillion and Twelfth Night, an added focus on the personal deprivations of then contemporary urban life and politics.

The second influence that we might identify from developments in mid-late 1970s punk and post-punk is the ideology of independence and self-sufficiency; of a preference for Do-It-Yourself practices such as the private production of demo recordings and albums on cassette tape and vinyl. These recordings were made without record company support and sold at concerts and through mail-order advertising in music magazines. They were often sub-par in audio quality due to relatively primitive 4-track home-recording equipment, or to limited resources being available to gain sufficient time in a professional recording studio. Home duplication (“dubbing”) of cassette tapes also led to further deterioration in audio quality, and the recordings typically fail to capture the essence of what were, principally, live acts. Indeed, live performance was the key strategy for most of the new progressive bands of the early 1980s, as it allowed them to improve upon their stagecraft, gain important feedback from the public, and to help build a grassroots following. The privately-released demos and albums became important merchandising items for their fans, while revenues received from their sale would be used to support the purchase of new equipment and to help the bands sustain touring schedules. Such strategies represented a needs-must situation due to record company indifference, although many bands were, like the punks before them, seeking major label recording deals that could potentially provide longer-lasting financial security and marketing support.

A number of private press vinyl albums were produced in the early 1980s, including Twelfth Night's *Live at the Target* and Gemini's *Counter Balance* in 1981, and Quasar's *Fire in the Sky* and Protos's *One Day a New Horizon* in 1982.

Airbridge's *Paradise Moves* was also released in 1982, but by a very small and short-lived independent label called Carve Up Records. The first band to sign to a major label was Marillion, who had mobilised their fanbase in order to give packed out performances at the Marquee Club in London, hence attracting the attention of Tommy Vance's *Friday Rock Show* on BBC Radio 1, for whom the band recorded a live session, and then of record companies based in London. The band subsequently signed to EMI and released the EP "Market Square Heroes" in 1982. A full album titled *Script for a Jester's Tear* followed in 1983. Marillion was given strong marketing support by EMI, while their publicist Keith Goodwin encouraged them to continue building their fan following through tours in the UK, Europe and North America, where they supported bands such as Queen and Rush. The chart success of singles such as "Kayleigh" and "Lavender" in 1985 propelled Marillion further into the mainstream, which spurred their manager John Arnison to push his other progressive rock acts through the *Fire in Harmony* compilation album, which featured tracks by Pendragon, Liaison, Trilogy, Haze, Citizen Cain, Solstice, Quasar and LaHost. However, none of these bands found success or continued record company support at that time, though Pendragon went on to a long career by forming their own independent label, Toff Records, in 1987, and some others have re-formed or re-activated for recordings or live shows at various times over the past thirty years. Other bands of the 1980s such as Marillion and IQ (briefly signed to Mercury Records) have continued to release albums on a regular basis, but there were many more bands operating around the country in the 1980s. These latter bands, including those appearing on the *Fire in Harmony* compilation operated largely under the radar of the mainstream music media, with the only evidence of them appearing in concert listings. Progressive rock fanzines of the sort discussed by Atton [2001] were few and far between in an era before Internet communication, hence bands had to build local scenes for themselves and then forge translocal links with other bands in order to transition to regional and national tours. In this respect they were in a similar position to all new bands starting out in the music business, and were following a long-established strategy for gaining fans.

### **The importance of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal**

The new progressive rock bands emerging in the early 1980s gained support from the commercial and subcultural success of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) – a term denoting a set of bands that came to prominence in 1979–80 through the live concert circuit [STUMP, 2010; LAMBE, 2011; HEGARTY & HALLIWELL, 2011]. Paul Stump [2010] argues that the NWOBHM got young male musicians back into guitar based hard rock music, and pinpoints Rush as an important "standard bearer" alongside British acts such as Iron Maiden, Saxon, Diamond Head and Tygers of Pan Tang. At this point Rush had, according to the ProgArchives (2015) website, "moved headlong into progressive rock" and this

helped to contribute to some genre confusion and crossover in the early 1980s. For instance, progressive groups such as Twelfth Night, Marillion and Solstice would find their early releases on the Heavy Metal chart of magazines such as *Melody Maker*, while Pallas had a track included on the 1982 compilation album *Heavy Metal Heroes Vol. II*, and some bands, such as Trilogy, Dagaband and Gothique, are today still claimed by fans of both heavy metal and progressive rock. Furthermore, Tommy Vance's *Friday Rock Show* would played a mix of heavy rock and heavy metal alongside classic and new progressive rock styles, while the heavy metal magazine *Kerrang!* gave cover features to both Pallas and Marillion. It would appear that there was considerable cross-over between the heavy metal and progressive rock markets, and the concert circuit that developed for the NWOBHM allowed new progressive rock bands a chance to perform to receptive audiences. However, it also made it harder for new progressive rock bands to forge a separate identity. For instance, an *NME* review of Marillion's performance at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens in 1983 first noted that the band attracted a heavy metal audience before stating that "Marillion tried to create the impression of a mythical Anglo-Saxon world where men were heroes and defended their ladies with swords of stone" [O'BRIEN, 1983], despite the fact that the lyrical concerns of Marillion's songs were neither medieval nor fantastical in nature.

The network of regional venues hosting both the NWOBHM and new progressive rock bands could be characterised, in Bennett & Peterson's [2004] terms, as a loosely-knit version of a translocal scene in which touring bands, promoters and recordings formed an interconnected, mutually-supportive yet geographically diverse market. It was a "scene" that fostered a great many bands during the 1980s, with Gurin and Ruaud [1991] identifying around 200 bands active during the decade, although their survey includes late-1980s bands such as No-Man (which featured Steven Wilson, later of Porcupine Tree) whose music was far from the symphonic style that is usually associated with the term "neo-progressive", and leaned more closely towards AOR and pop. Nevertheless, we might argue that a loosely connected translocal scene did emerge in the 1980s, with bands arranging "gig-swaps" (for instance, Pallas with Marillion, and IQ with Mach One) or touring the country together (such as the Brave New World tour of 1983, that featured Pallas, Solstice and Trilogy). There is little evidence of a central point of origin for this scene: instead, we can identify the parallel evolution of bands in different parts of the United Kingdom during the late 1970s and early 1980s, each of which was extending the ideas of progressive rock in their own ways or drawing influence from the successful bands of the 1970s. For instance, Scotland's leading progressive bands were based in Aberdeen (Pallas) and Glasgow (Abel Ganz), while England saw bands based in Sheffield (Haze), Stroud (Pendragon), Norwich (Airbridge), Southampton (IQ) and London (Tamarisk, Quasar). There was also a concentration in the Home Counties around London (Marillion, Mach One, Twelfth Night, Solstice, As Above...So Below). In this respect, the translocal scene of progressive rock in the early 1980s is more akin to a distributed and localised set

of what Jason Toynbee [2000] has termed proto-markets, where audiences and artists converge but have yet to build a market that can be commodified by the music industries. The most significant proto-market was the Marquee Club in London, which had a long history of launching important rock bands in the late 1960s and 1970s, and was seen as the one of the most important venues for new bands seeking success. The venue was crucial to the new progressive bands because it was located near to record company offices, hence offered a perfect opportunity for bands to showcase their music to talent scouts, managers and promoters. The club regularly booked both NWOBHM and progressive rock bands during the early years of the 1980s, and was also responsible for booking acts for the annual Reading Rock Festival, with Twelfth Night playing the event in 1981, Marillion in 1982, and both bands in 1983 – a year that also saw Solstice, Pendragon, and Pallas on the bill.

### ***The Friday Rock Show and the mainstream music press***

A successful performance at the Marquee Club could also attract the attention of radio producers, with Tommy Vance's *The Friday Rock Show* on BBC Radio 1 being an especially important media outlet for new progressive music. The programme played a variety of hard rock, heavy metal and both classic and new progressive music, and while this may have added to genre confusion with the NWOBHM, it also helped new progressive bands to reach audiences that may not otherwise have heard of them, since it was the only radio programme with a national broadcast reach to play this mix of music. In addition, the programme broadcast highlights of live sets from the Reading Rock Festival and offered opportunities for new bands to record live sessions whilst still unsigned or in the early stages of their careers. The first of the new progressive bands to benefit from a recording session was the band Hibiscus in 1980, with the group As Above... So Below following in 1981, and then Marillion in early 1982. Such appearances could not guarantee success, but pointed to a support mechanism that was otherwise unavailable in mainstream media. Hibiscus does not appear to have produced any commercially available recordings, while As Above... So Below (featuring Phil Hodge, formerly of Steve Hillage's live band, on keyboards) only managed to release a single demo tape in 1981. Other progressive rock bands to have received live sessions were Pallas, Pendragon, Magnum, Solstice, and Trilogy, which all recorded sets in either 1983 or 1984.

Media support from mainstream music magazines was generally lacking in the early part of the 1980s, with little coverage of progressive bands found during 1980 and 1981, except within concert listings and news, or occasional appearances on the *Melody Maker* Heavy Metal chart. Concert reviews began to appear in *Melody Maker*, the *NME*, *Sounds* and *Kerrang!* during early 1982, at a time when audiences for bands such as Marillion were beginning to pick up around the country. However, early reviews were often rather critical in nature. For instance, Sally



Gethin's *Melody Maker* review of Marillion at the Marquee in August 1982 starts "Well, it's back to the old days my friends. Back to the days of reptile spells, pagan gods, funeral pyres and into the twilight lands of Marillion" before giving grudging respect to the band's ability to keep heavy metal fans entertained. Brian Harrigan's review of Marillion's performance at the Reading Festival in 1982 was more damning still: "Get yourself a big coffee grinder, chuck in a Mellotron and copies of various Yes songbooks, strain out most of the talent and you've got a fair idea of what they sounded like." The Readers' Letters pages of these magazines allowed fans to voice their frustration with such reviews. One example is Steve O'Farrell's letter from February 1983, which argued that: "None of these writers like the style so it gets little or bad coverage. A bit of a blow to the egos too, considering that this is a grass roots development, not a press hype, generated by a genuine desire by both musicians and fans alike for the music." Similarly, in March 1983, Alan Ness wrote to the *NME* to complain about the negative review given by Richard Cook of the Marillion album *Script for a Jester's Tear*, which had been reviewed alongside albums by Def Leppard, Styx and Thin Lizzy. In the review, Cook described Marillion's music as consisting of "formless, straggling loops of Genesis and Greenslade", and argued that the only "virtue it can claim is its power, its imaginary punch" [COOK, 1983]. Ness responded, "Believe me, something imaginary does not make me go and see a band nine times; exciting, subtle, intelligent and passionate rock music, however, does." He then went on to argue that "trendy journalists who make up most of the staff [at *NME*] will never be able to enjoy music for its own sake until they forget about the dictates of fashion" [NESS, 1983].

While critical reception remained rather mixed throughout the 1980s, the mainstream music press did acknowledge the grassroots revival with a double-page feature in *Melody Maker* in November 1982 titled "The return of progressive rock". The feature focused specifically on Marillion and Pallas and included interviews with members of both bands in which they each said that they were unashamed of their influences yet "aggressively jealous of their individuality" [SUTHERLAND and HARRIGAN, 1982]. As Fish (lead singer of Marillion) stated in the interview: "It takes time for any influence to be filtered out. Just give us that time." It is interesting to note that this article does not use the term "neo-progressive" to describe the music or the bands. Indeed, despite the use of the term by journalist Phil Bell in a *Sounds* review of Marillion in May 1982, the reviews and features published about the new progressive rock bands refer to them variously as "pomp rock", "hard rockers", "heavy metal", and "new-wave progressive rock." This gives some credence to Jerry Lucky's [2008] contention that the 1980s bands now identified as neo-progressive should be regarded as a continuation of the 1970s symphonic progressive sub-genre. However, this article argues that while the bands may represent a continuation in musical terms, the development of a translocal grassroots scene and do-it-yourself business practices actually marks a discontinuity with the progressive rock of the 1970s, as does the fostering of a younger audience demographic.

### **A youthful audience**

A key characteristic of the early 1980s progressive rock was the relative youth of both its performers and its audiences which belies, in some ways, claims that the scene was playing to disaffected fans of the 1970s bands, “recreating past glories”, or “attempting to keep a style alive in a state of pristine, unchanging “perfection”” [MACAN, 1997: 197]. Indeed, Stephen Lambe has argued that progressive rock fans of the early 1980s were typically not old enough to have seen the original progressive bands emerge in the late 1960s/early 1970s [2011: 113]. Support for this is given by Marillion’s manager John Arnison who, when reminiscing about the band’s early performances at the Marquee, stated that: “These weren’t old Genesis fans, this was a new band with a new audience” [cited by COLLINS, 2003: 31]. Similarly, Graeme Murray of Pallas noted in a *Kerrang!* interview in December 1982 that “most of our fans are 17/18 years old who never saw Yes or ELP in their heyday... so, when they come to see us, it’s a fresh experience, something that’s completely new to them” [cited in DOME, 1982]. The press of the time also noted this younger audience. Bob Flynn’s review of a Marillion gig at Dundee University in November 1982 referred to the fans as “young computer hippies”, while Lynden Barber’s feature about Marillion in April 1983 stated that “the bulk of the audience are school age.” In a 2013 interview, Steven Wilson of Porcupine Tree notes that “When I was a 14-year-old kid, I discovered Marillion. They were local lads. I could go see them play in local venues and loved it. A few of us 14-year-olds started this band which sounded a bit like the bands we liked from our big brothers” record collections. It was a step in the learning process” [cited in PRASAD, 2013]. That band, called Karma, released its first demo cassette in 1983, which was a peak year for the progressive rock revival, as several bands were signed, or were reportedly close to signing, recording deals with record labels such as EMI Records. It would appear that, contra Macan [1997], the audiences who gravitated to the new progressive rock of the early 1980s were not simply indulging in nostalgic recreations of the past, but forging a proto-market or translocal scene which had importance to their lives, and was experienced as something new and exciting.

### **Concluding thoughts on a “stillborn” revival**

Paul Stump [2010: 263] has noted how the UK progressive revival of the 1980s was largely a “stillborn” one, with only Marillion managing to cultivate a mainstream audience at the time. Talk of a progressive rock revival fades from the media after 1983, though bands such as Pallas, Pendragon and IQ still gained coverage of their releases and tours in the following two or three years. These other bands failed, however, to achieve the crossover success of Marillion, which led to all of them parting company with their record labels before the end of the decade. It is interesting to note that no independent record labels emerged in the early-mid 1980s to cater to the numerous bands that were active at that time, though some independent labels did occasionally release progressive rock albums alongside their

other releases. For example, both Gemini's *Counter Balance* and Protos' *One Day a New Horizon* were released by Airship records, based in Bognor Regis on the south coast of England: a label which also released heavy metal, reggae and jazz albums. In the 1980s, progressive rock was largely underground and the lack of record company and media support was what made the revival seem stillborn.

Circumstances changed in the 1990s, when new independent record companies specialising in modern symphonic progressive rock (increasingly referred to as "neo-progressive") began to appear. Examples include SI Music, Giant Electric Pea, and Inside Out Music. SI Music was established in The Netherlands in 1990 as an offshoot of SI Magazine, and would go on to release albums by Geoff Mann (former lead singer of Twelfth Night), Citizen Cain (who had been active in London throughout the 1980s), Landmarq (whose line-up included keyboard player Steve Leigh, who had played in early 1980s bands such as Tamarisk and Quasar), and various projects related to Clive Nolan (who joined Pendragon in the early 1990s) and Karl Groom (of Threshold). The label released many more British, Dutch and European acts prior to closing down in the mid-1990s. Giant Electric Pea (GEP) was established in 1992 to facilitate the release of the IQ album *Ever* – the band's first release since it had parted with Mercury Records. GEP has since gone on to release music from a number of other artists, including Threshold, John Wetton, and Spock's Beard. One of its founders, Thomas Waber, also went on to launch Inside Out Music, which has supported many British, European and American progressive rock and progressive metal acts since it began in 1993. Other labels active in the 1990s were Syn-Phonic (based in the US), Mellow (based in Italy), Musea (based in France) and Belle Antique (based in Japan). These labels (and others) not only supported contemporary progressive rock bands; they also re-released music by lesser known progressive rock bands of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as previously unreleased studio and live recordings. In the process these labels have shown how progressive rock continued to be made in different countries through the late 1970s and 1980s, further demonstrating that while the "golden age" of the early-mid 1970s may have been over, progressive rock did not completely wither away.

The 1990s also saw the establishment of the Classic Rock Society (in 1991) with the aim of fostering "the growth and development of "grass roots" progressive and general "classic" rock" (CRS 2013). Since the early 1990s, a range of fanzines, internet sites, discussion lists and magazines devoted to progressive rock have emerged [see ATTON, 2001], and the internet now allows bands to take control over distribution and marketing themselves, and to cater to fanbases that are now often international in scope. In this sense they are carrying on the entrepreneurial work originally undertaken by bands in the early 1980s that used the technology then available to them to privately produce cassettes and vinyl albums, while numerous independent labels now offer the support that was lacking at the time of the first revival.

There is much more to be said about the progressive rock revival of the early 1980s than there is space to cover in this chapter, and there are many more

questions that this period in history poses. For instance, there are questions regarding the music itself and how it may be defined in relation to the meta-genre of progressive rock (and what this might mean for our understanding of the “progressive” in rock), and there are other recordings available from a range of countries (including many from Japan) that might constitute further subaltern histories or narratives of progressive rock in the 1980s. Yet, this article has shown that the British progressive rock revival of the 1980s demonstrated considerable differences from the “classic” era of progressive rock in the 1970s in terms of its economic and social structure, and that it can be defined and discussed as a relatively coherent proto-market or translocal scene. It further argued that the musicians involved in making progressive rock music in 1980s Britain had learned from the Do-It-Yourself practices of the punk/post-punk scene of the late 1970s, and benefitted from the NWOBHM, which provided both a touring circuit for live performance and a relatively receptive audience. Tommy Vance’s radio show was also recognised as important at this time, since mainstream music magazines and record companies offered only minimal support, and it was the only national media outlet through which new bands could be heard. Those bands that were able to cultivate a grassroots following (such as Marillion, Pendragon and IQ) have, with the advent of internet communication, managed to forge long-lasting recording and performing careers well into the twenty-first century, and have maintained control of their own copyrights and destinies in the process.

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