

# Spotlight

## Fans New And Old Say 'Yes'

*35th Anniversary Finds Band With Fresh, Rejuvenated Outlook*

BY CRAIG ROSEN

There it was—the famed Yes logo designed by Roger Dean decades ago—scrawled across the chest of Sarah Jessica Parker on “Sex and the City.”

That Parker’s character, sex columnist/fashionista Carrie Bradshaw, would sport a Yes T-shirt in 2003 is certainly telling, and she’s not alone. Latin music sensation Shakira also recently donned a Yes T in a Pepsi ad.

The naysayers might suggest that the phenomenon is just part of the trend of vintage rock T-shirts

as a fashion statement. But then again, they’d be missing what’s been brewing for seven years now.

Simply put, Yes is back.

Need proof? Consider this: When Warner Strategic Marketing U.K. released “The Ultimate Yes—35th Anniversary Collection” in the U.K. in July, the two-CD set bowed at No. 10 on the U.K. chart.

Now, Yes has its sights set on America for 2004. The February release by Rhino Records of “The Ultimate Yes—35th Anniversary Collection” will coincide with the planned broadcast of “YesSpeak,” Classic Pictures’ career-spanning documentary of the

band. An arena tour will follow in April.

Although Yes has yet to mount its full-scale assault on the U.S., some of today’s most successful modern rock acts acknowledge the band’s influence.

“So few groups celebrate musical freedom in the way Yes does,” Red Hot Chili Peppers guitarist John Frusciante says. “The depth of their music is still as shocking to me today as it was to me as a little kid.”

“One gets the impression that the format of a record seemed limitless to them at the time of ‘Close to the Edge’ or ‘Tales From Topographic Oceans.’

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PROGRESSIVE ROCK PIONEERS: FROM LEFT, CHRIS SQUIRE, STEVE HOWE, JON ANDERSON, RICK WAKEMAN AND ALAN WHITE

# "We Took Musical Chances": A Yes Q&A

BY CRAIG ROSEN

"It's the most positive word in the English language," Yes drummer Alan White says of his band's moniker.

But Yes is really so much more.

It's a virtual classic-rock institution that has not only survived for 35 years but has managed to thrive for the better part of three decades. While members have come and gone as musical styles changed, Yes has carried on, reaching heights that none of its members could have predicted when the band formed in 1968 in Birmingham, England.

As Yes prepares to return to U.S. arenas on the heels of the release of "The Ultimate Yes—35th Anniversary Collection," *Billboard* caught up with all five members of the group's classic and current lineup before they converged on a Los Angeles studio to record material for a bonus disc to be included with the American version of the retrospective. A new studio album is planned for next summer.

Conducted on separate occasions while band members were on three different continents—singer Jon Anderson at his home studio in San Luis Obispo, Calif.; guitarist Steve Howe relaxing in Devon, England; and keyboardist Rick Wakeman, bassist Chris Squire and drummer Alan White on a tour stop in Perth, Australia—the men of Yes reflected on their highs and lows during the group's 35-year career and glimpsed into the future.

**In your wildest dreams, did you ever think Yes would celebrate its 35th anniversary?**

**Jon Anderson:** Two or three years was the maximum in those days [when we started], or two or three minutes, depending on what the day went like. When we started, we really wanted to be as good as a band called Family. They were doing the clubs. That's all we wanted—to get as big as that, and probably do some university gigs.

You never think you're going to have success. It just comes upon you, and that's when you count your blessings, because a lot of people don't get that success.

**Steve Howe:** The '70s were quite an achievement. When that [decade] finished and I formed Asia with [former King Crimson singer/bassist] John Wetton, I really felt that was then, and now I was going to keep doing different things. But by the time I had [exited] Asia and GTR [with former Genesis guitarist/vocalist] Steve Hackett, I started to realize that the Yes music of the '70s was great.

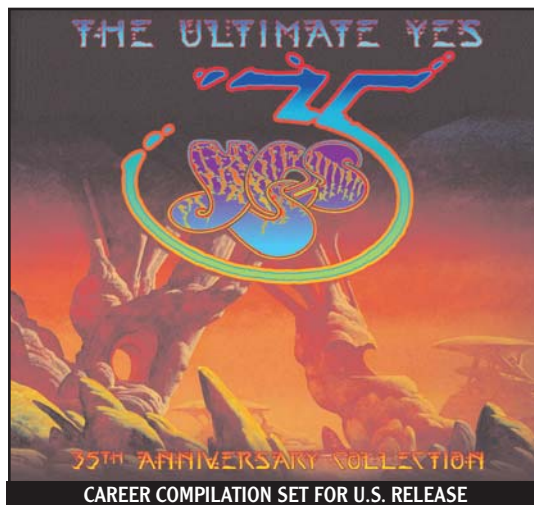
**Chris Squire:** I was 15 when the Beatles came to light around '63. That's kind of what got me interested in the whole profession. At that time, a long career in my eyes was like the Beatles, '63 to '69—six years. I thought, "Wow! Wouldn't it be great to be in a band that had a six-year career?"

I never ever thought at some point [that we could be] together 35 years, because there was no blueprint for that. I don't think anyone had ever done that. Maybe with a big band, but never in rock'n'roll.

**Rick Wakeman:** In my various ins and outs, I've been around for about a third of the life of Yes. In the '80s, many of the classic bands dismantled themselves or took incredi-



YES' REUNITED LINEUP PLANS NEW STUDIO ALBUM



bly long sabbaticals. Yes always continued to work in one form or another, even through the real tough times.

**Alan White:** I wasn't there for the inception, but I joined at a very early time [when] the band was only 3 years old. In joining, I gave the band three months to test our styles out and whether I would enjoy playing with the band and them with me. And here we are about 31 years later.

**How has the 35th anniversary tour gone so far?**

**Anderson:** It's been really good. The band is very self-critical about performance. We love to perform well. We have a legion of fans that love to hear the music that they've listened to all their lives. Our music has been the background to their lives, and they bring their children [to the shows].

**Howe:** Last year, it was kind of new having Rick back. Everyone was getting the feel of it and understanding the lay of the land. But this year, once we did Europe, there was a true feeling of camaraderie. We're flowing, and it's more than just an undercurrent.

There's always been this underlying competition about expertise and rising to the moment, but in Europe we mixed that with a genuine casual and relaxed approach, and we're happy with the lineup. [He laughs.] Hey, what did I just say? Yes being happy with the lineup? [He laughs again.] This is the lineup with the most tried and tested experience from the '70s—not only making records, but also touring. This is a lineup of longevity.

**Squire:** I think the band is probably playing better than ever now.

**Wakeman:** And we've learned how to live with each other, too, which is really nice. We've learned when and how to give each other space. We know we're great together as a unit of five and that there are areas where we can work together in pairs or as [a group of] three. We've got it down really well, which is why the band is so healthy onstage.

**What do you think about "The Ultimate Yes" package?**

**Anderson:** It's a good package for somebody that doesn't know Yes that much and is interested in finding out a brief history of the universe of Yes, because there are 20 albums or so. You could spend days listening to them. This is a good, concise project.

**Howe:** Obviously, there are cornerstones of popularity for the band, and we tended to look mostly in that field. We looked at the music that was kind of always surfacing or resurfacing back into our lives in one way or another. That included a sprinkling of music that is far less familiar to me—[music in] the '80s—but that's when some people got into Yes, and I can respect that.

The whole thing had to show what [original keyboardist] Peter Banks and [original guitarist] Tony Kaye were doing in the early days. There's a long story, and it's not been the same lineup. Through all those lineups there has been a lot of different textural approaches and different styles of music. So hopefully it encompasses that.

**Wakeman:** [The meeting about this project] was one of the shortest band meetings we've ever had. It was incredibly short, because we all went, "This looks pretty good." Of course, you could tinker with it for ages, but we think Warner did a good job. Most of the sales so far have been to younger generations. This is a great short cut to [understanding] the history of Yes in one fell swoop.

**What brought this classic Yes lineup back together?**

**Anderson:** We've basically been together for the last seven

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# Fans Respond To Global Concert Run

BY RAY WADDELL

While progressive rock kings Yes have toured fairly regularly through their 35 years together, as the band's manager and agents have found recently, the lineup is the thing.

Fans have said "yes" in a big way to the current—and most popular—lineup of Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Alan White, Steve Howe and Rick Wakeman.

This lineup recently completed an international tour and will begin a U.S. concert swing in late April.

This is the same roster responsible for most of Yes' classic albums. Many fans feel it is also the most dynamic configuration onstage, one that will propel the band into the future.

It is an assemblage that has taken Yes manager Allen Kovac, CEO of 10th Street Entertainment, seven years to bring to fruition. And fans have responded with their wallets.

"When I first started managing Yes there was Chris Squire, Jon Anderson and Alan White," Kovac recalls. "Then Steve Howe joined the band two years later, and now Rick Wakeman has joined. As we got closer to what was the less-diluted Yes brand, ticket sales started going up steadily, year after year."

The result is a musical force to be reckoned with. "When you put these kind of musicians onstage behind a voice like Jon's, you have a very difficult act to follow. Audiences understand this," Kovac says. "When you have these musicians onstage playing songs 11 to 20 minutes long, the dynamic of the performance is incredibly strong."

## SYNERGISTIC PROMOTION

While this lineup of musicians produces incredible synergy onstage, promotional synergy propelled the band to its best touring success in years in 2003. This year, Yes has played to 95% to 100% capacity in Europe, and it notched a string of sellouts in the Pacific Rim before wrapping Sept. 15 in Hawaii, according to Kovac.

A worldwide 35th-anniversary campaign that began in Europe in July and continues throughout the globe well into 2004 has done the trick.

Record-company TV advertising of a "Best Of" collection that combines the band's Atco and Atlantic catalog, along with promoters advertising specific dates and promotion of a TV documentary, has proved extremely successful, Kovac says.

The effort has worked for the tour and the album; Yes played to large arena crowds in Europe, and the record debuted in the top 10 in the U.K., where it was test-released before a planned worldwide January 2004 sendoff.

"Tickets went up at the same time the label was advertising the greatest-hits compilation, and shows were promoted as 35th-anniversary concerts," Kovac says. "I've done this several times before with a lot of artists, and when you can showcase their body of work with the kind of advertising you can combine between the promoter, TV show and the record company, you can get the message out in a more robust way than the traditional on-sale."

This takes a united effort, Kovac stresses. "The trick is to do the heavy lifting with a six- to nine-month setup to make sure everything is in synch worldwide," he says. "It only works when you can put it together and everyone is willing to go market-to-market around the world with a brand. Yes had not played Australia in 20 years, and now they're back there selling out shows using this exact same concept."

## THE ROUTE

Yes began its 2003 tour in late May, playing some 45 dates through July in mid-sized arenas and theaters.

"They don't have the 18,000-seaters over there like here in the U.S.," Kovac notes. "Most arenas are in the 7,500- to 10,000-seat range."

In Europe, Yes played "everywhere—Budapest, Prague, the U.K., Germany, Scandinavia, Spain," Kovac says. "Yes is a worldwide currency. Part of our strategy was to take this Yes talent, lineup and logo and connect it all over the world, beginning last year in the U.S."

The tour has been "exceptional," Kovac says. "They're doing



WITH ITS REUNITED LINEUP, YES HAS PLAYED TO NEAR-SELLOUT CROWDS IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

business everywhere. In some places we had to scale up or add another show. We did two Hammersmiths in London, and in Birmingham [England] we scaled from 5,000 seats to 7,000 seats. Their numbers are way up this year."

Keith Naisbitt, Los Angeles-based agent at International Creative Management, oversees routing and booking for Yes' international dates.

"They've done fabulously," he says. "They continue to grow, amazingly, worldwide. We've gone back to markets they haven't played in a very long time, or ever."

Naisbitt agrees that the lineup is the magic bullet. "The band seems to be going from strength to strength," he says. "This is such a strong lineup for Yes and Yes fans. Musically, if you look at the top 10 guitarists in the world, Steve has to be one of them. The same with Chris on bass and Rick on keyboards. This is a dream band for people."

Naisbitt also points out that Yes fans now span generations. "We see a lot of kids 20 to 22 years old with Yes T-shirts on, particularly at the European festivals," he says.

This past summer, Yes played such European festivals as Glastonbury, Montreaux and the Sweden Rock Fest. For promoters in international markets, Kovac used "the usual cast of characters, the best promoters in each market."

A similar strategy will be utilized in North America next year, with such promoters as Clear Channel Entertainment, House of Blues Concerts and Concerts West on board.

"We're going to use the right promoter in each market," Kovac says. "At Madison Square Garden in New York we'll go with Jim Glancy at Clear Channel, for example. In Los Angeles, House of Blues."

Artists Group International (AGI) books Yes in North Amer-

ica, and a route is currently being assembled. "I think the North American tour next year will be great," says Dennis Arfa, president of AGI. "The buyers throughout North America seem to be very excited."

Kovac is hoping for a similar synergy in the States next year. "We'll start the marketing in the States in January for the tickets and the television show," he says. "The tour will run from late April through June in North America."

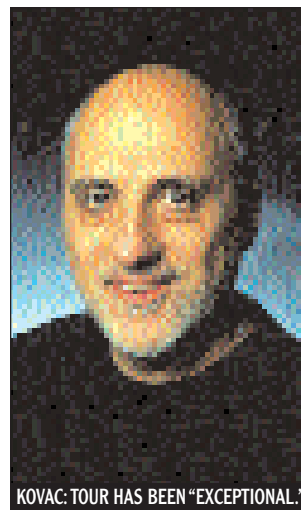
Yes will play arenas in the band's strongest North American markets. "This band has an opportunity, and they're taking it," Kovac says. "They're bringing this world-class talent back to arenas, which is something that should have been done a long time ago."

Naisbitt says Yes will follow up the North American tour with more European festivals in 2004, followed by a return to Southeast Asia. "We'd also like to get the guys back down to South America. It's been a while."

Count on Yes to keep the shows fresh. "Part of building this brand has been they've not toured the same way since I've managed them," Kovac notes. "They've done everything from touring with an orchestra to taking their

top songs and extending them into longer arrangements. Now, with the 35th-anniversary tour, they're doing a much longer show than anyone has seen from them before, chronicling the band's entire career. They understand how to give their audience something different each time they go out."

Naisbitt adds, "They're a great bunch of guys. They have a fantastic vibe, they know what they want. They're very adventurous, they love going to new and exciting places. They're very conscious about the sound, how the show looks and the performance. Yes is one of the most professional bands I've ever worked with."



KOVAC: TOUR HAS BEEN "EXCEPTIONAL."

## Q&A

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years. Rick came in for a year [in 1995] but then had a difficult time deciding if he wanted to tour or work in England. He does stand-up comedy, a cooking show and he tours, just himself and his son. At the time, he decided to spend more time in England and be more family-oriented. But then last year, he started asking how we were doing.

We're such a brotherhood, we were very eager to let him come back into the band. He has such great talent, and he has a great musical balance with Steve. When we play, it's like a well-oiled Bentley. It drives well and goes pretty fast sometimes.

**It's interesting that you say it's like a family, because the band's history has been rather soap opera-like, with all the personnel changes. What were the low points?**

**Anderson:** We've all had our moments. It's always been a question of, "Are you into where we're going? If you're not,

*"Many times, Yes has been pure 'Spinal Tap'."*

you should leave." We didn't all come from the same town, so we didn't feel like we were bound together with an umbilical cord. When one or two of the musicians weren't interested in rehearsing hard enough, there was no question. You're either in or you're not.

**Squire:** You tend to forget the low points. We've had times of disagreement when I guess the overall feeling of what was going on wasn't clear to everyone at the time. Fortunately, we've escaped having any real tragedies. We've gotten away fairly lightly in terms of low points.

**Wakeman:** The low points to me were certainly around the "Topographic Oceans" era. I couldn't get into the direction the music was going, and Yes is always a give-and-take. Having to make the decision to leave, that was a low point. If you can't get into the music, you have to ethically say, "Hold on, I can't help the band here, it's time to move on."

But there were some great moments on that tour, which ended up [inspiring] "This Is Spinal Tap." We had this huge Roger Dean stage set with all these wonderful pods. Alan played in this giant pod, which [was supposed to] open up when the show started. He actually did one complete show when it wouldn't open. We couldn't get him out. There were people with crowbars and everything. Many, many times, Yes has been pure "Spinal Tap."

**What do you consider the highlights of the band's career?**

**Anderson:** There are about three or four. The time when we initially became famous in England, and we played with Cream at their final concert at Albert Hall. That was like a dream. We set up our equipment onstage and played our set, and then these three guys came on and blew everyone away. They were unbelievable.

Also when we did "Close to the Edge." The scope of doing a piece of music like that and having an audience that would listen to it was a great feeling.

Another highlight was when we had a resurgence in the early '80s with "90125"; that was a very big leap into being famous for 10 minutes. We had a No. 1. We were treated like rock stars. A week into that tour, I went with this young filmmaker, Steve Soderbergh [who filmed that tour], to see "Spinal Tap." I went in and saw my whole world in front of me. It blew my mind. I never laughed as much in my life. I could never take myself seriously again.

Another great time was the Union tour in the beginning of the '90s. That was great for one reason and one reason alone: We performed some of the Yes music as a nine-piece ensemble. There were one or two gigs that we played when everything clicked. I don't think it's ever been quite as surreal or spiritual.

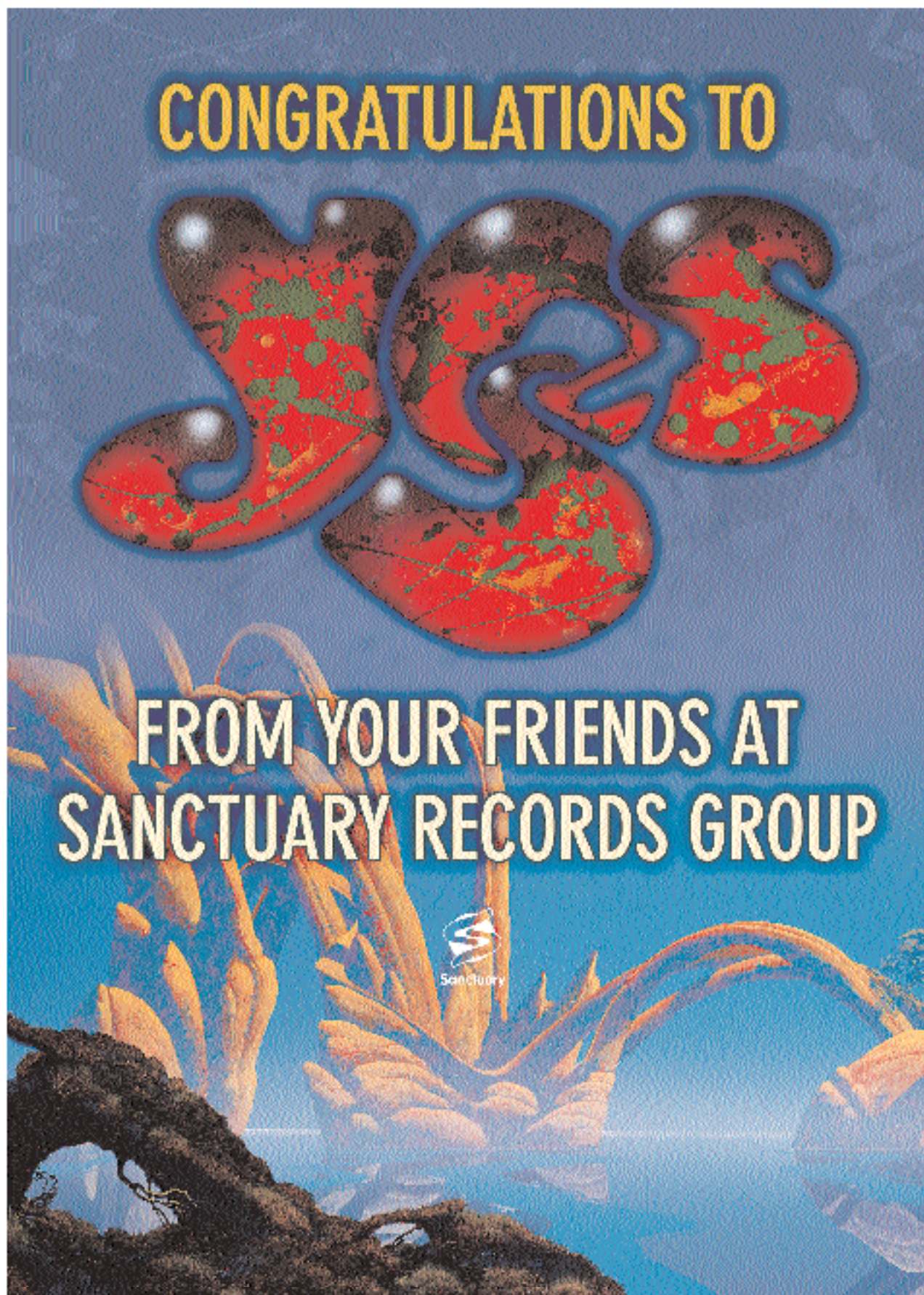
Now we come to these days where there's such enjoyment being onstage. In some ways we still have a lot to prove. We still want to hit the big time.

**Howe:** "Close to the Edge" was the invention of the 20-  
(Continued on page 57)



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# Yes Is Still On A Roll In U.K.

BY PAUL SEXTON

LONDON—Any rock career spanning 35 years is certain to experience peaks and troughs. But 2003 will go down as a memorably upbeat time in the epic saga of Yes.

As the year comes to a close, the band is riding a new wave of interest from some of its traditional market strongholds around the world, with the promise of more to come in 2004.



"IN A WORD: YES" ARRIVED FROM RHINO AND WMI IN JULY 2002

Helping the effort is a highly successful new compilation, a set of catalog reissues and a tour documentary for international TV and a sell-through DVD.

While the band plans a new studio album for next year and is currently unsigned for that project, the venerable rock powerhouse has nevertheless returned to international sales charts in recent weeks with its highest commercial profile in more than a decade. That is thanks to "The Ultimate Yes—35th Anniversary Collection" from Warner Strategic Marketing (WSM) U.K. The elegantly packaged, 21-track double-CD arrived July 28 in the U.K., boosted by a TV ad campaign.

At the time of the collection's release, Yes' track record on the U.K. album charts was enviable but hardly current. But "The Ultimate Yes" sold almost 19,000 copies in its first week of release to debut on the U.K. chart at No. 10. It is the band's first top 10 album since "Union," on Arista, in 1991.

In the first seven weeks of its release, "The Ultimate Yes" shipped some 80,000 units in the U.K., progressing swiftly to WSM's target figure of 100,000, according to Jacob Harregaard, international marketing director for Warner Strategic Marketing International.

"The core fan group that we are targeting sits well with this campaign," he says. "It's a package that contains all their best-known songs, so it's a great chance to get it all on one album."

A closer analysis of Yes' track record in this country, where the band formed in 1968, underlines the strength of that fan base. But it took the act time to find its following.

The debut album, "Yes," released here in November 1969, did not chart in the U.K. It was something of a formative effort, containing covers of the Beatles' "Every Little Thing" and the Byrds' "I See You."

By the time of its sophomore album, "Time and a Word," in summer 1970, Yes' profile had increased considerably, and guitarist Steve Howe had joined the ranks. The result was a No. 46 ranking for the set on the U.K. album chart.

But it was with "The Yes Album" eight months later in spring 1971 that the group became commercial and creative frontrunners, hitting No. 7 in a 29-week chart span that remains its best performance.

In a remarkably consistent run, eight more British top 10 albums would follow during the next nine years, emphasizing that Yes was perfectly able to withstand the supposed onslaught of the punk revolution that hoped to

kill off such groups.

Indeed, even as the Sex Pistols rode the singles chart in summer 1977 with "Pretty Vacant," Yes ascended to No. 1 with "Going for the One."

The U.K. impact of the "90125" album, which gave the band such spectacular U.S. success in 1983—achieving triple-platinum certification and more than one year on The Billboard 200—was somewhat muted. That was largely because its flagship single and U.S. chart-topper "Owner of a Lonely Heart" did not repeat its achievements at home. The single peaked at a mere No. 28. (Yes' only British top 10 hit single remains "Wondrous Stories," a No. 7 success in 1977.)

Despite its relatively low profile in Britain, "90125" stands at the top of the list of Yes' international best-selling albums, according to Harregaard. "Close to the Edge" is No. 2 on that index, followed by "The Yes Album," "Yes" and "Fragile."

The band's tenure on the Eagle label in the late '90s and early part of this decade generated steady sales. "We were delighted having them," Eagle artist liaison and repertoire manager Mike Howell says. He adds that such titles as "The Ladder" (1999) and "Magnification" (2001) continue to do good business. Eagle has sub-licensing deals for the albums with JVC in Japan and Warner Music in Australia and through its blanket distribution deals elsewhere.

"What we've seen is a very steady, loyal fan base everywhere for them," Howell says. "There's no [territory] where that's particularly better than anywhere else. It's an absolutely solid, loyal fan base," he adds.

WMI has found the same with its five-disc boxed set "In A Word: Yes," released in conjunction with Rhino in July 2002, featuring six previously unreleased tracks. Howell believes that the latter-day reappraisal of the group reflects greater acceptance of the progressive rock genre.

"It's lost some of the stigma," he says. "Pink Floyd is another great example of a band spoken of in revered terms now;

10 years ago they were being castigated as dinosaurs."

Yes continued its "Full Circle" tour during September in Japan, Australia, Singapore and Hawaii, and Harregaard says that the international release of "The Ultimate Yes" is being coordinated with live appearances, which will continue as the band returns to the road in 2004.

"We're now focusing on those markets where Yes has just been touring," he says. "In Australia, where the album is also being backed by TV advertising, it was released on Sept. 5 and in Japan Sept. 10.

"Then the strategy for the rest of Europe is to emulate the U.K. success [in conjunction with] arena dates in 2004. We're actively working with European promoters to cross-promote the album with tour dates."

Although only the U.K. dates next summer had been confirmed at press time, other markets WMI is targeting for such activity next year, Harregaard says, are Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Italy. Yes' four U.K. arena dates June 16-20 will be in London, Birmingham and Manchester, England, and Glasgow, Scotland.

Harregaard also enthuses about the promotional potential of a newly produced documentary called "YesSpeak," made by Classic Pictures Entertainment and described by the WMI executive as "a fantastic piece of work and a great tool. We're working with promoters to get it on TV internationally."

The three-hour, double-DVD package, filmed during the European dates on the "Full Circle" tour, will also be released commercially in Europe in November and in North America in 2004.

Further bolstering the WMI effort will be no fewer than 11 catalog reissues, with bonus tracks, ranging chronologically from "Yes" to "90125" and all remastered, expanded and repackaged.

Harregaard adds, "With their style of music, they have really been able to build almost a myth around the band."

## Yes: Tracking The Hits

For 35 years, Yes has been a consistent presence on the *Billboard* charts. The inventive act has racked up 15 top 40 albums on The Billboard 200—with seven of those reaching the top 10. The group's highest-charting set is "Close to the Edge," which hit No. 3 in 1972. While Yes isn't known for its hit pop singles, that album spawned The Billboard Hot 100 entry "And You and I (Part I)," which reached No. 42.

The group would not return to the Hot

100 until 1983, when it earned its one and only top 10 pop single—"Owner of a Lonely Heart." The No. 1 Hot 100 hit was lifted from the "90125" album, which went to No. 5 on The Billboard 200—and places it third overall on Yes' tally of its highest-charting albums.

Ever adventurous, earlier this year the group released "Yes Remixes," a compilation of retooled versions of older songs. The Rhino album peaked at No. 23 on the Top Electronic Albums chart.

Titles on this chart are ordered by peak position on The Billboard 200. If more than one title peaked at the same position, ties were broken by the number of weeks spent at the peak. If ties still remained, they were broken by the number of weeks on the chart, and then in the top 10 and/or top 40, depending on where the title peaked.

### The Billboard 200 Albums

Rank	Title	Peak Position	Debut Date	Label
1.	"Close to the Edge"	No. 3	Oct. 7, 1972	Atlantic
2.	"Fragile"	No. 4	Jan. 22, 1972	Atlantic
3.	"90125"	No. 5	Dec. 3, 1983	Atlantic
4.	"Relayer"	No. 5	Dec. 28, 1974	Atlantic
5.	"Tales From Topographic Oceans"	No. 6	Feb. 2, 1974	Atlantic
6.	"Going for the One"	No. 8	July 30, 1977	Atlantic
7.	"Tormato"	No. 10	Oct. 14, 1978	Atlantic
8.	"YesSongs"	No. 12	May 26, 1973	Atlantic
9.	"Big Generator"	No. 15	Oct. 17, 1987	Atco
10.	"Union"	No. 15	May 18, 1991	Arista

Compiled by Keith Caulfield



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*Thanks to all our  
family, friends and fans for  
allowing the past 35 years to be possible.  
It's been a wonderful journey together.*

*Alan, Chris, Jon, Rick and Steve*

## Fans Say 'Yes'

Continued from page 45

They were putting feelings on records that no one had come close to. No one has since either," he continues. "Those records are huge. I think 'Close to the Edge' is one of the top five greatest-sounding records of all time."

Yes singer Jon Anderson, who turned 60 this month, summed up his renewed enthusiasm for the band.

"It feels like I'm just starting," he says. "There are so many things I want to do. And the band feels the same way; we're just hitting our stride again."

Or as David McLees, senior VP of A&R for Warner Strategic Marketing (WSM) and Rhino Entertainment, puts it, "They're sort of getting a second look. A lot of people who grew up with them aren't afraid to say 'They're cool' now. It's like the geeks have taken over the industry."

Indeed, Yes' "I've Seen All Good People: Your Move" was heard in and featured on the soundtrack of Cameron Crowe's Academy Award-winning 2000 film "Almost Famous." The band—which the teenaged Crowe once interviewed backstage at the San

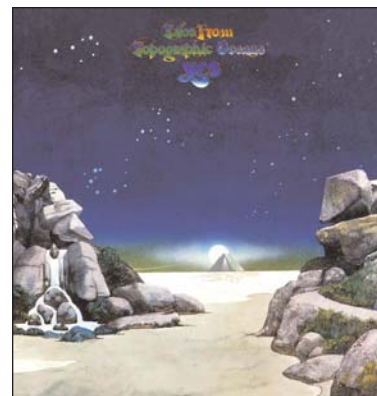
Diego Sports Arena—served as an inspiration for several scenes in the film. Crowe, in turn, penned the introduction to the "In a Word: Yes" boxed-set booklet.

In the current hit movie "School of Rock," when Jack Black's rock'n'roll teacher assigns homework to his class of rockers-in-training, he gives the keyboardist a "Fragile" CD and advises him to study the keyboard solo in "Roundabout."

Yes is a band with one of the most storied careers in rock. Members have come and gone; musical boundaries have been stretched, reshaped and refashioned. The band has gone from upstarts to arena-rock superstars to public enemy No. 1 of the then-emerging punk movement.

After being written off, it resurfaced with a surprise hit in the '80s. After more personal changes and splits—and a period when two different Yes bands existed simultaneously—nearly all its original members reunited in the early '90s.

While that colossal collaboration was short-lived, it paved the way for the rein-



roduction of the band's classic lineup a few years later, which was cemented by the return of keyboard wizard Rick Wakeman.

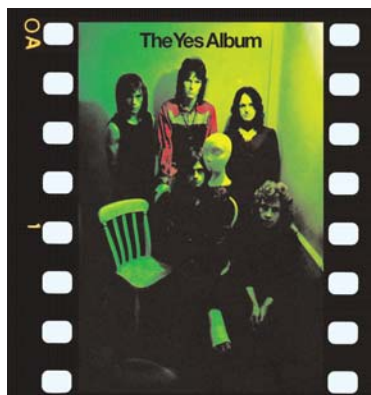
### YES REBRANDED

Manager Allen Kovac of 10th Street Entertainment, who has engineered similar revivals for groups ranging from the Bee Gees to Blondie, was drawn to Yes seven years ago.

"I had two separate meetings, one with Jon Anderson and another with [bassist] Chris Squire and [drummer] Alan White," he recalls. "Basically, what interested me was that it was a band that had in the late '60s helped bring the British rock scene along; Zeppelin followed them. They were part of [the] premier talent of new bands after the Stones, the Beatles and the Who that helped create the network of concert promoters and really got FM radio happening in the '60s and '70s."

"It was an exciting rebranding project for me," Kovac con-

(Continued on page 56)



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## Fans Say 'Yes'

Continued from page 55

tinues. "I thought, 'If we could get the band back together, their body of work and musicianship would allow for them to get back into arenas around the world,' which is precisely where we've gotten seven years later."

But the revitalization of Yes did not happen overnight.

"Open Your Eyes," the first full studio album since the return of guitarist Steve Howe, was not well-received when it was released in 1997 on Kovac's now-defunct Beyond Records label. "House of Yes: Live From House of Blues," released in 2000, and "Magnification," issued in 2001, were also greeted with lukewarm receptions.

But the tide began to turn when WSM began to mine the band's rich catalog. As Kovac puts it, the reissue campaign served as a setup for the larger goal of moving Yes back into the arena circuit.

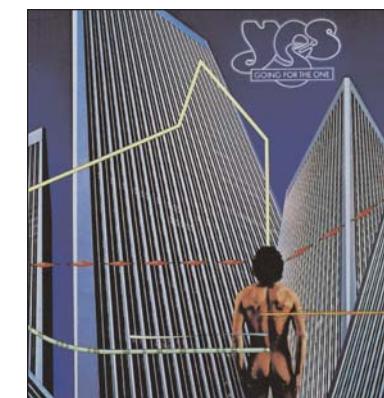
Part of the success of the reissues and Yes' resurgence can be attributed to the Internet. Kovac notes that the band has a rabid and Web-savvy fan base that has created a virtual network of fans who spread the word. McLees says that the Rhino reissues have sold "very well" even though "retail is hurting all the way around right now."



McLees, a longtime Yes fan, was anxious to give its catalog the attention he believed it deserved.

"I always dreamed about getting my hands on this catalog," he says. "It's the 13- or 14-year-old boy in me that never went away."

The reissue campaign began in earnest in the summer of 2002 with the release of "In a Word: Yes (1969-)," a five-CD boxed set spanning the band's career. "Yes Years," a four-CD set, may have seemed adequate when it was released in 1991, but more than a decade later, McLees felt the band needed a new box.



"It didn't cover the band's last 10 years, and it was a 12-by-12 box," he says. "We were having great success with the 6-by-12 format and thought the market could sustain a five-CD boxed set. Also, they were still an active touring entity, which led us to believe there were opportunities to sell catalog."

While Rhino planned to reissue the band's entire Atlantic/Atco catalog, which has moved under the Elektra umbrella, McLees and the band's handlers believed it would be best to start with the new box.

"That makes the biggest press statement. They had a summer tour planned, and we wanted it to go out with that announcement and that we were doing everything in a big way, instead of going piecemeal."

According to Nielsen SoundScan data, "In a Word: Yes" has sold 14,000 copies since its release.

The boxed set and an American theater tour by the classic Yes lineup, featuring the return—once again—of Wakeman, were followed by the release of remastered and expanded versions of the band's 1969 self-titled debut, 1970's "Time and a Word," 1971's "The Yes Album" and 1972's "Fragile" in January. (The label also released the latter title on DVD-Audio in late 2002.)

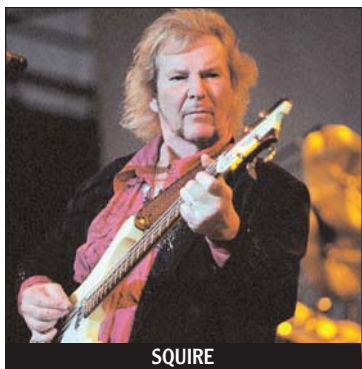
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*and you and I reach over the sun for the river...  
Thanks for the journey*

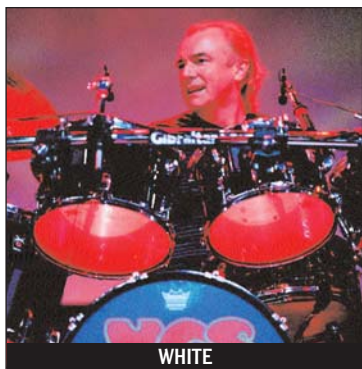


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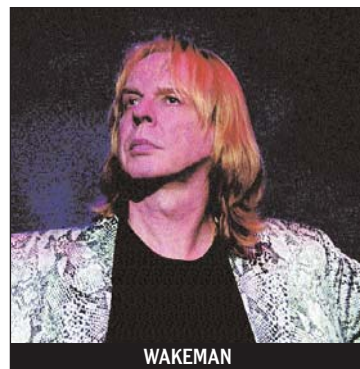
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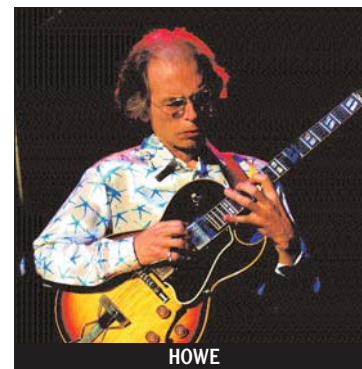
WHITE



ANDERSON



WAKEMAN



HOWE

# Q&A

Continued from page 49

minute Yes [song], and it stands [the test of time] because of that. We were challenging the idea that we could play 18-plus minutes at a time. Jon and I were so excited to have this sort of symphonic approach to our music. We did "Roundabout," which was quite a long song, and then we sat around with these smirks on our faces as the songs started to expand. I started playing Jon some ideas, and we realized we were going to invent something really big.

The next time we hit it was when Rick returned and we did "Going for the One," which for me is a really exuberant, fresh, crystalline sort of record. We were still in this wonderful pre-digital time when there was marvelous warmth. Listening to that guitar at the beginning of "Turn of the Century," I was feeling every moment of it.

**Wakeman:** The highlights to me were certainly the "Fragile"/"Close to the Edge" years—'71, '72 and early '73—because I thought the balance in the music business was perfect.

Bands were left alone to create music. Nobody told us what to play, how to play, how to record. We were the musicians, the scientists in the lab.

Around us there was the management; their job was to take the finished [product] to the record company, and the record company's job was to present it to the media. Radio stations at that time had DJs who had a certain amount of freedom to play what they liked, they would play tracks of any length and played them to the general public who voiced their verdict. Sadly, very quickly after that, it changed.

The most important time apart from that for the band was in the mid-'80s. I'm truly convinced that if "90125" had not happened, there [would have been a] question mark as to whether Yes could have continued. I think the arrival of Trevor Horn on production was a crucial element in presenting the band in a different light.

People ask me if there are any Yes albums that I would have liked to have played on, and I always say "90125." I feel I could have contributed to that album.

**White:** Getting an award for doing the most sold-out shows at Madison Square Garden and playing at JFK Stadium in Philadelphia with so many people, it was like a beehive.

Another highlight is this current tour, coming back to Australia to play to these people who haven't seen us in 31 years.

**It seems as though Yes is cool again. Sarah Jessica Parker and Shakira have been spotted wearing Yes T-shirts, and modern rock bands are citing the band as an influence. What do you make of that?**

**Squire:** Maybe eventually we'll become the Rolling Stones. [He laughs.] I guess we must have known someone in the wardrobe department [for "Sex and the City"]. Maybe [Parker is] a fan. I was actually watching that episode because my wife loves that show. I was astonished when I saw that. Maybe we've been around long enough that people are going, "Wow, they must be cool, because they're still here."

**Wakeman:** There are logical reasons for some of it. There are so many new young bands out at the moment; I won't say they are prog-rock bands, but [they are] certainly taking elements of prog rock and using them in their music. Bands such as Muse, Air, [Super] Furry Animals and, even though they don't call themselves a prog-rock band, Radiohead took the best elements of prog rock and used them. And certainly  
*(Continued on page 59)*

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## Fans Say 'Yes'

Continued from page 56

The initial flight of reissues was followed in August by the rerelease of 1972's "Close to the Edge," 1974's "Tales From Topographic Oceans" and "Relayer" and 1977's "Going for the One."

Like the previous series of reissues, these, too, were loaded with rare bonus tracks.

"One of the pleasures of working with the band is that they have a lot of bonus material, and they were very trusting to allow us to use studio run-throughs and rehearsals," McLees says. "Because of the incredible musicianship in the band, a lot of their rehearsals are arguably as good as the records."

The Yes reissue campaign will continue with remastered and expanded versions of 1978's "Tormato," 1980's "Drama," 1983's "90125" and 1987's "Big Generator" in January 2004. Rhino is also working on a new four-CD boxed set of live recordings due in summer 2004. McLees and the band have been sifting through about 80 to 90 CDs of material while putting the project together.

### THE ART OF YES

With the reissues of "Fragile" and "Close to the Edge," Rhino released Digipaks with slip cases in an homage to the elaborate cover art of the original vinyl LP releases. That is appreciated by Roger Dean, who designed the band's most famous logos, painted several of its album covers and conceived some of Yes' more elaborate set designs.

"Working with the band has been great for me professionally," says Dean, whose work is also enjoying a bit of a renaissance. "I like the band. I like the music, and I'm amazed how well they play now. They get better and better. With 35 years of practice, they should get better, right?"

Dean, who had his artwork displayed at the Grand Gallery

in New York this summer, also staged an exhibition in Sydney to coincide with the band's first visit to Australia in 30 years. In addition, he designed a 35th-anniversary logo for the band that will grace the album, posters, tickets and other merchandise.

The renewed interest in Yes is not limited to nostalgia. The band's music has been remixed by the Verge, the pseudonym of Howe's son Virgil, on "Yes Remixes," which Rhino released in July.

The band also recently recorded some new music, including some acoustic interpretations of Yes classics, for a bonus disc to be included with the U.S. release of "The Ultimate Yes."

### 'YESSPEAK'

There will be a DVD release of "YesSpeak," which will run three hours. Director Robert Garofalo says the project differs from the run-of-the-mill rockumentary.

"It's the band telling their story in their own words," he says. "There's no narrator."

Instead of dwelling on the past, the documentary offers a brief glimpse into the band's history before following the group's 2003 European tour, warts and all. Garofalo, who has helmed titles on Procol Harum, Wakeman as a solo artist and Emerson, Lake & Palmer, says Yes offered some unique challenges.

"The other projects were mainly live concerts," he says. "This one is taking it one step further. The actual program is the behind-the-scenes of the live concert. You do get quite a lot of the music, but you also get insight into the band."

"I went to great pains to make sure this film is an equal contribution from five different members, as opposed to an outlook on Yes. It gives insight into each one's feelings, how they get along, differences in the past and how they jell together as one unit. It's how the band works, because they are five completely different personalities," he continues.

While Yes' music is often serious, Garofalo notes that the band, particularly Wakeman, has a good sense of humor. In

fact, the act claims credit as the inspiration for some scenes in the classic mockumentary "This Is Spinal Tap."

That humor is presented in "YesSpeak," Garofalo says. Wakeman is captured enjoying a cup of tea during one of Chris Squire's bass solos. There is also footage about "Mr. Gibson," Howe's most precious guitar.

"He won't let it out of his sight," Garofalo explains. "I came upon it by chance. I was in the production office, and the tour manager was in the production office booking a ticket for Steve Howe and 'Mr. Gibson,' Steve's guitar. This guitar has flown the Concorde in its own seat."

Aside from the DVD release, Garofalo says special theatrical screenings of the film are being planned in the U.K. and the U.S.

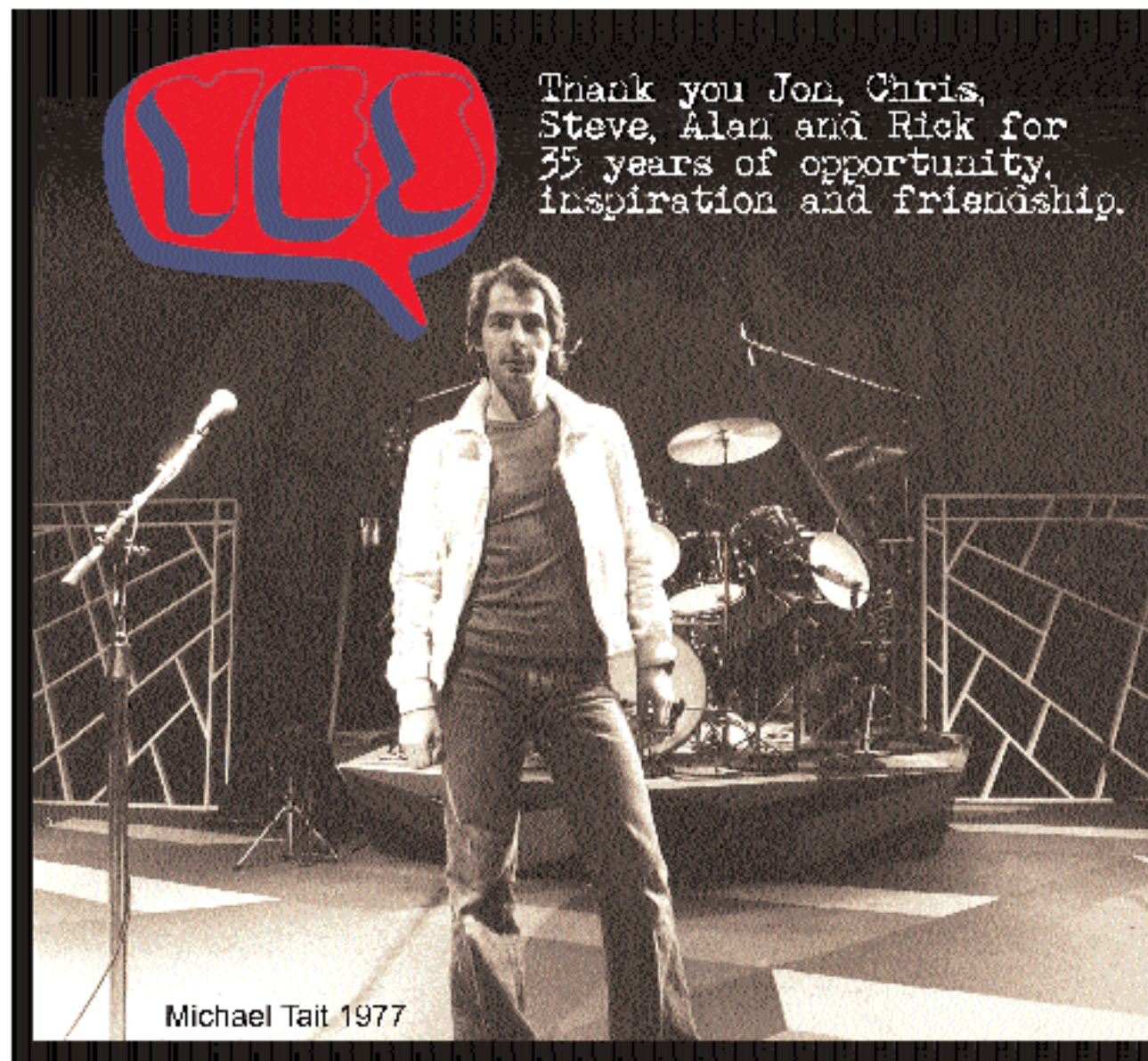
The broadcast of the documentary and subsequent advertising will help generate a buzz for "The Ultimate Yes" package when it is released in the U.S., Kovac believes.

"The idea is to show Yes' body of work through the documentary on television and promote it through print, radio, television, ticket sales and the greatest-hits record," he explains. "We're working with Warner International and Warner Strategic in the U.S. to accomplish that on a global basis and do an arena tour worldwide." Broadcast dates and an outlet are still being set.

That the classic Yes lineup is back together adds to the excitement of its live show, Kovac adds.

"I was talking to an A&R guy from Sony who was at [the U.K.'s] Glastonbury [Festival]," Kovac says. "He was out in the middle of the field while some alternative band was playing on one stage, and then all of a sudden there was this magnet moving a mass of humans across to another stage."

"When he went over the hill and saw it was Yes, he couldn't believe how the musicianship and the sound just moved that many people, that they were having that much fun as a band and that there was that kind of talent onstage," he says. "It blew him away."



Thank you Jon, Chris, Steve, Alan and Rick for 35 years of opportunity, inspiration and friendship.

In 1968, I was working at the "Speakeasy" in London. A friend asked me to drive a band, that he had just signed, to a gig in the north of England. Upon hearing them play that night, I found what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. The next fifteen years on the road with YES was an incredible experience. The fact that YES music is awe-inspiring goes without saying, but it was their drive to produce "mind blowing" stage shows that allowed me to do what I do! Thank you YES for taking me with you, I owe you everything.

-Michael Tait

Michael Tait 1977

## Q&A

Continued from page 57

bands like Incubus.

They've created a lot of awareness by saying in articles that they were influenced by bands like Yes and people like myself, Steve and Chris. That tells a whole new generation, who maybe haven't raided their parents' record collections, "Hey, check this out."

### To what do you attribute the band's longevity?

**Squire:** I think it's the fact that we took chances that weren't always popular. For example, "Tales From Topographic Oceans" didn't exactly ignite everyone's interest. There are a lot of diehards that love that album, but it was a very risky project to do.

At the time, I wasn't totally convinced it was the right thing to do after we had success with "Roundabout," "Fragile" and "Close to the Edge." I thought maybe we should have gone back [in the same] direction with that album, but we didn't. The fact of the matter is that we took a hit from that. But maybe in the long term, maybe because that happened, we didn't get too big and therefore managed to keep some semblance of the peaks and valleys of the whole roller coaster ride we've been on. We've managed to stay on the tracks.

**Wakeman:** The band doesn't follow trends. Yes has always been Yes music-driven, as [opposed to] fashion-driven or what outside people think it should be. Yes is an amazingly funny band in relation to the fact that the periods of time that I've not been in it are probably the periods of time that I've felt closest to the band in a lot of respects.

Yes is a band, but the truth is, you can't leave. It's like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton with me. Before anyone asks, I'm Richard Burton.

### How long do you see Yes continuing?

**Squire:** I don't know. When we were in Germany the other month, I saw a poster for the Beach Boys' 40th anniversary, and I thought, "Well, I guess it's possible." [He laughs.] At the moment, we're looking forward to making some new music together next year. We're going to do a brand-new studio album, so we'll see where that takes us.

**White:** I'm looking at the way we're playing onstage right now; everyone is very happy with what's going on. We have a sense of camaraderie here. Physically speaking, especially from my point of view as a drummer, I'm ready to keep going. I just can't wait until the next gig.

**Wakeman:** The area that concerns me is health. At the moment, everybody is healthy; we've all got our own hips. But Jon had a bad accident last year. He fell off a ladder and broke his back, and it took six months for him to recover. That was an eye-opener to everyone: Music may be immortal, but people aren't.

We're all in our mid- to late 50s. We can only keep going along at the pace we're going along while we have our health. We all look after ourselves in the best possible way, probably more so than we've ever done.

The continuation of Yes won't ever [come] down to the music—it will [come] down to what the future holds for us health-wise. We have to pace ourselves and how we do things. We'll always look ahead.

I don't think there's any question in anybody's mind that the band has come home to the lineup that the majority of fans really like and we really like. I must admit it wasn't until I went out on that American tour last year that I was genuinely moved to tears at times. I never realized what this particular lineup meant to this many people.

We have been the curators of Yes music for the last 35 years, and will be—whatever is to come. As curators we have sort of a responsibility, and that will carry us through to the end, whatever that end might be.

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