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## [ELP Reunites for 40th Anniversary DVD](http://www.theclevelandsound.com/?p=9073)

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Even in their heyday, Emerson Lake & Palmer were accused of being pretentious. Nevertheless, the progressive rock super group—comprised of key members of The Nice (Keith Emerson), King Crimson (Greg Lake), and Atomic Rooster (Carl Palmer)—turned the post-Woodstock world on its ear in 1970 with its unique mesh of symphonic music and British rock 'n roll sensibility. Never before in popular music had strains of Bach and Beethoven been so seamlessly woven into measures metered out by electric bass guitar and drums. And never before had a rock band made such an impact without a lead guitarist in the lineup; classically-trained Emerson provided melody and mirth with his arsenal of keyboards, which included the then-new Moog synthesizer.

The trio sold millions of records over the next ten years, packing concert halls and setting the standard for other arty arena-rockers like Pink Floyd, Yes, and Genesis. Individually, the three men raised the bar of virtuosity. As a unit, they showed just how locked-in musicians could be—even when performing intricate pieces like those fond on Tarkus and Brain Salad Surgery.

But they'd fizzled by the 80s, with the half-hearted Love Beach album receiving less than favorable reviews from a press who'd been seduced by New Wave and punk. Emerson devoted some time to movie soundtracks



(including Sylvester Stallone's Nighthawks), while Lake fraternized with guitarist Gary Moore. Palmer leapt at the chance to join another super-band with other celebrated English rockers—John Wetton (King Crimson, UK), Steve Howe (Yes) and Geoff Downes (Buggles)—in Asia, which charted the hits "Heat of the Moment" and "Only Time Will Tell." He even played with Lake in Asia for select 1983 shows, when his ELP peer stepped in for Wetton.

Emerson and Lake recruited Cozy Powell for off-shoot record *Emerson Lake & Powell* in 1986, but Palmer rejoined around 1991 for another bona fide ELP disc (*Black Moon*), raising expectations for future projects. The threesome toured regularly over that decade, their run culminating with an August 1998 gig in San Diego.

ELP reunited for a hotly-anticipated one-off concert in London on July 25, 2010, headlining the High Voltage Festival in Victoria Park. The new DVD from MVD Visual, *Emerson Lake & Palmer: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary—The Show That Never Ends*, documents that incendiary, career-encapsulating show for those of us who weren't among the 30,000 in attendance. It's a terrific-sounding (Dolby Digital Stereo / 5.1), smart-looking (16x9 Hi Def), cleverly-edited film capturing the now sexagenarian musicians as they ply their considerable skills once again on a massive stage—and with a vigor and athleticism defying their years.

The show commences—fittingly enough—with "Karn Evil 9: 1<sup>st</sup> Impression," the memorable FM radio opus wherein Lake welcomes back the listeners, inviting them to "Come inside, come inside" with a thrum of his bass. Palmer—dressed comfortably in black jeans and a tee—wastes no time jumping behind his custom kit and throttling away. Throughout the extravaganza we're treated to his percussion prowess on snare, high-hat, toms, and trigger pad—all whilst utilizing an array of sticks and mallets with a "traditional" grip. Meanwhile, Emerson—clad in black—tends his array of keyboards and organs, his hands splaying across chords and his fingers typing out medleys with mind-boggling dexterity and precision. A Korg OASYS appears to be Emerson's go-to instrument—but it sits atop a reliable, heavily-played Hammond C-3 (housed in a Goff Professional casing). Emerson's Moog sits adjacent to the other boards—at Keith's left—its towering "ribbon controller" spilling out colorful wires responsible for only God (and Keith)-knows-what.

The band revisits several of its epics and more "conventional" songs—including "The Barbarian," "Take a Pebble," "Knife Edge," and MTV hit "Touch and Go." ELP's romp through the (Russian composer) Modest Mussorgsky-influenced "Pictures at an Exhibition" is easily the show's high-water mark, what with the players navigating complex time signatures and zigzagging passages—making it all seem so easy. From his

resplendent magic carpet, Lake leads the crowd in a sing-along of “Lucky Man,” swapping out his bass for an acoustic guitar.

“Farewell to Arms” ends the main set on a poignant note—but ELP returns to encore with its hyperkinetic take on Aaron Copeland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man,” during which each player is given a solo spotlight. Emerson practically murders an electric piano, ramming a pair of knives in between the keys and toppling the instrument onto its side. Palmer renews his old “doffing of the shirt” drum routine while battering away on his double kicks, playing hand-over-hand across his cymbals before crashing a gong with dramatic flair. The grand finale fireworks are telegraphed, what with the cameras shooting from the POVs of two canons located on each side of the stage before their pyrotechnics are triggered—but the visual impact is no less dazzling, what with a shower of sparks arching brilliantly into the English sky.

The DVD also contains a half-long documentary about the historic event—which those close to the band thought would never happen. ELP’s two current managers are interviewed by DJ Nicky Horne, along with a former tour manager, noted rock journalist, a fan archivist—and the guys themselves.

“I can’t believe they’ll do it,” thought manager Stuart Young before winning the band’s consent. “They don’t want to work together.”

British music author Chris Welch expressed likewise: “I thought it was all water under the bridge; the problems seemed intractable.”

But Lake himself saw beauty in ELP’s reformation in London—where it all started for them as youngsters. “I could see the power of the nostalgia.”

Emerson explains his misgivings prior to the show, noting how concert halls used to be “an extension of the band’s instruments,” whereas festival shows leave you “at the mercy of the elements.” Conversely, Carl was eager to channel some aggression and enthusiasm into his drums. “I like that kind of tension,” the percussionist admits. “And it was nice to give something back to the fans.”

Footage of the band rehearsing at Shepperton Studios imparts the pressure ELP must have felt to live up to their legacy. Technician (and Zappa cover band stunt musician) Andre Chomondeley is spotted going over some piece of equipment with Lake as Emerson noodles away on his keys, wearing bifocals. Lake observes that the “musical bar” was always very high in the band, and there was no getting around the fact that they were sixty-plus year olds playing complicated music written by twenty-plus year olds. Could these former musical heavyweight champs triumph once again?

Welch concedes he needn’t have worried.

“It was a *great* day,” agrees longtime friend and technician Andrew Lane. “I loved seeing the age difference in the crowd...it was very similar to thirty-five (or whatever) years ago. You could *feel* the electricity.”

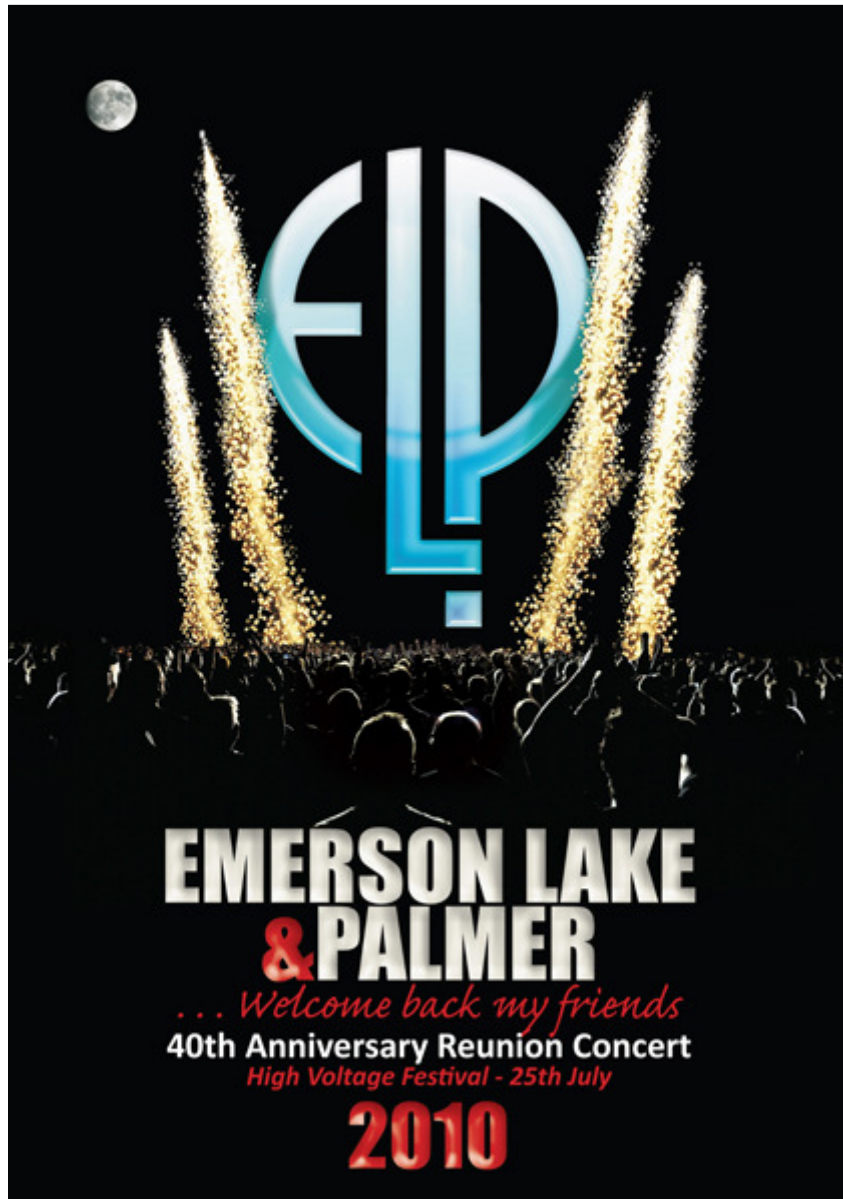
Manager Martin Darvill observes that the men were “locked in”—as was their audience—and that a warmth permeated the atmosphere around them.

These feelings of interconnectedness and fulfillment weren’t lost on Lake, who used them to ride out any glitches in the gear. “The monitors were *dreadful*,” he says. “But that paled in significance when you felt the warmth.”

Palmer reveals that thirty minutes were trimmed from their set after the preceding band went overtime. The concert fell on a Sunday night, imposing a 10:30pm curfew on the musicians.

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