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MCN Columnists

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Emerson Lake & Palmer: 40th Anniversary Reunion Concert: Blu-ray

In the late 1960s-70s, as some members of established rock bands tired of their original mates and ego trips upstaged those taken on LSD, the era of the supergroup was born. As much a business decision as a creative alliance, most of the ensembles drowned under the weight of their press clippings, while a few made music that represented an evolutionary step forward from whence the individual artists had come. **Emerson, Lake & Palmer** was comprised of former members – Keith, Greg and Carl, respectively — of the Nice, King Crimson and Atomic Rooster. Together, they practically invented a musical genre – progressive rock – that would dominate FM radio stations and summer concert tours for a decade, at least. ELP became famous for taking classical pieces, such as “Pictures at an Exhibition” and Aaron Copland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man” and “Rodeo,” and running the music through a massive Moog synthesizer. They further pumped up the volume and tempo to suit the tastes of fans similarly turned off by relics of Flower Power. Almost universally, critics denounced prog-rock as pretentious and “masturbatory,” and openly ridiculed the tastes of its growing legion of admirers. Critics don’t pay for the concerts and albums they review, however, and it’s the ticket-buying masses who ultimately dictate to labels and radio stations what will be promoted. Eventually, ELP would add full orchestras and other extravagances to its shows, causing profits to drop to near-zero and doubts about the band’s future to rise. Like so many other supergroups, ELP has re-formed several times in the ensuing decades. Last year, they reunited to celebrate their 40th Anniversary and headlined London’s first High Voltage Rock Festival. The Blu-ray record of that performance re-creates the excitement, music and special effects that greeted fans that day.

– Gary Dretzka