

# Prog-Rock Anniversary

The 40th Anniversary edition of the concert film *Yessongs* revisits the band's 1972 performance at London's Rainbow Theater

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

**B**ASED IN THE U.K., Screenbound emerged from various U.K. distribution, production and DVD companies founded in 2003 by Alan Byron.

In 2015, the companies were all brought under the Screenbound brand, and the international sales and distribution arm — Screenbound International Pictures — was launched to represent a classic film library of over 500 titles.

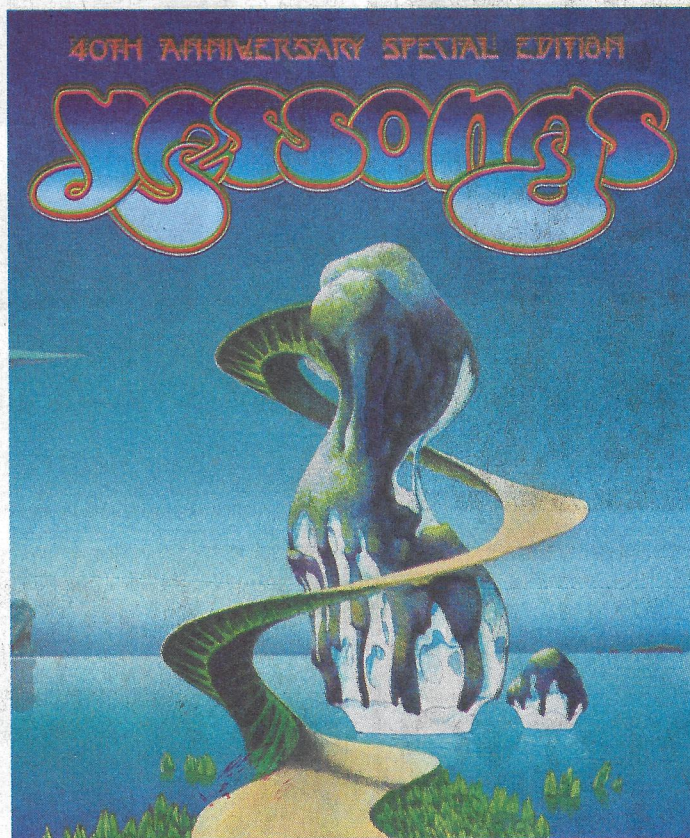
"We're delighted to be working with a specialist distributor such as MVD," said Byron. "While they succeed with many genres of film and music, at their core is music video and that's exciting."

"We are honored to be working with Alan and Screenbound, and so pleased to be launching with some absolute classics in the music video genre," said Ed Seaman, COO of MVD Entertainment Group.

MVD will represent the following titles for US distribution. Melanie For One Night Only. A 2007 appearance at the Meltdown Festival at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. *Yessongs* a film from 1972 capturing the band at London's Rainbow Theatre. And for the first time ever a Blu-ray of the cult music rockumentary *Glastonbury Fayre: 1971 The True Spirit of Glastonbury*. Shot by acclaimed director, Nic Roeg. A lineup that included Melanie, Terry Reid, Family, Fairport Convention, Linda Lewis, and Arthur Brown.

A 40th anniversary DVD and Blu-ray edition of the concert movie *Yessongs* is now available.

Yes has always been regarded as



a unique rock group and progressive rock legends. Never afraid to innovate or draw their inspiration from music that traversed the spectrum from symphonic to rock, Yes has been at the forefront of progressive rock and became a major force in popular music selling over 30 million albums and reaching platinum status multiple times worldwide.

During the late 1960s Yes were renowned for their live performances culminating in their seminal album and film of the same name, *Yessongs*. Filmed in 1972 at London's Rainbow theatre, and directed by Peter Neal, this feature film was released theatrically in the U.K.

the following year with a quadrophonic sound track. The film features their new line-up of the time Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman and Alan White.

"Someone, can't recall exactly who but they had to be a kindred prog spirit, gave me *Yessongs* for my 17th birthday," remembered Lonn Friend, author of *Life on Planet Rock*.

"I probably spun the trinity of perfect platters a thousand times in preparation for my first personal live experience with the aural avatars which took place a few months later in the spring of '74 at Inglewood's Fabulous Forum. It was the *Tales*

of *Topographic Oceans* tour. The band performed all four sides of the visionary double opus and then encored with the entire side one from *Close to the Edge*. A tsunami of lasers, mellotrons and transcendent riffs. The rendition of 'Edge' from *Yessongs* remains forever incomparable in instrumental precision and overall cathedral arena hugeness.

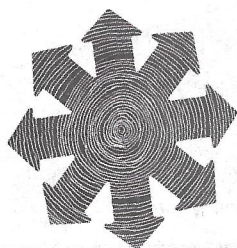
"The time tripping DVD takes one back to those divine days of cross dimensional soundscapes, instrumental majesty, dry ice on stage and by encore, not a dry eye in the house. In 1972, Yes were a band of gifted young lads on the crest of a musical wave that would eventually cover our fragile, freaked out earth. And you and I can relive it all, here and now.

"Over the past half century, despite two dozen member changes and the loss of founding father, Chris Squire, the music of Yes endures and enchants," Friend stressed. "I've never said no to Yes. I've watched the Steve Howe/Alan White version rock at sea the past three Cruise to the Edge adventures, baring witness to the amazing Billy Sherwood, who proudly and passionately totes the four string torch channeling the big fish with dexterity and boundless spirit.

"I've also enjoyed the Jon Anderson, Tevor Rabin, Rick Wakeman incarnation twice since their glorious reformation. The ivory wizard still dons the sequined cape, as he did back in the symphonic '70s, his gothic boots, however, replaced by a pair of slightly hidden Chuck Taylors. Neither decades nor wardrobe nor personnel can mute what keeps this British institution of

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rock n' roll in the pantheon of modern music. The songs. Yes, the songs."

Writer, popular culture historian Jan Alan Henderson caught a screening of *Yessongs* at the now defunct Tiffany Theater on the Sunset Strip in the early '70s. Henderson, is the author of *Crypt 39* (a novel); *Speeding Bullet*; *The Legendary Lydecker Brothers*; and *Rocky Jones, Space Ranger*. He interviewed original Yes drummer Bill Bruford for *FilmFax* Magazine (it was withheld so as not to interfere with the release of Bruford's autobiography).

Already well familiar with Yes and a longtime Canyon dweller, Henderson offers personal insights to *Yessongs*.

"I first became aware of Yes on a rainy evening in 1971. Some friends were visiting and brought an album, green in color, with five of the strangest looking dudes I'd ever seen. I had already fallen under the influence of King Crimson, the Moody Blues, Tull, Soft Machine, and a number of other bands, so there should have been no surprises. But there were! If Crimson was musical Karate, then Yes was Judo. Yes were musical masters, as were Crimson, only from different dojos.

The Yes Album, *Fragile*, and *Close to the Edge* are the sonic dynasty of Yes. While other products by the same band have moments, those three represent the zenith of the band.

"*Yessongs* is a live documentary of the classic lineup performing its most popular pieces of music. To contemporary audiences this film may fall flat, but to those of us who lived through this age of wonder, this is like coming home. An important moment in the history of progressive music."

"I bought *Fragile* as 'Roundabout' was blowing up on the radio," recalled writer and author Kenneth Kubernik. "It commanded everyone's attention (at least in my high school): Anderson's coloratura pitch, Wakeman's rabid organ solo, Howe's turbo-charged Tal Farlow-esque runs, the vicious rhythmic punch of Squire and Bruford. The album went deeper;

madrigal musings meets the Mahavishnu Orchestra. This was manna for hairy young guys with university ambitions and, yes, the rare hip chick who swooned to those bountiful harmonies.

"It also introduced us to Roger Dean's fantastical imagery — a pastiche of Kew Gardens landscapes set to a Dr. Who timeline. It was all very English with a surprising right hook.

"*Yessongs* captures the band in concert at the cusp of their creative and commercial ascendance. Wakeman, resplendent in his dime store kitsch sparkling cape, his long blond hair waving like florescent sea grass, looks like Pattie Boyd's homely older sister, who practiced piano instead of chasing after incipient rock gods.

**"To those of us who lived through this age of wonder, this [film, *Yessongs*] is like coming home."**

"Anderson's words, a collage of Wordsworthian flummery crossed with the spiritual uplift of Rupert Bear, still holds the allure of self-discovery, the hint of depths greater than the preoccupations of pimply teens. Though the production values reek of *Spinal Tap*, the music is still evocative and often provocative, vital enough to withstand the absence of Bill Bruford, which is praise indeed."

Harvey Kubernik is the author of 14 books, including heralded titles on Leonard Cohen and Neil Young. His 2017 volume, the acclaimed 1967 *A Complete Rock History of the Summer of Love* was published by Sterling/Barnes and Noble. His *Inside Cave Hollywood: The Harvey Kubernik Music InnerViews and InterViews Collection, Vol. 1* was published in December 2017, by Cave Hollywood. Kubernik's *The Doors Summer's Gone* was published by Other Cottage Industries in March 2018. On November 6, 2018, Sterling/Barnes and Noble published Harvey's book, *The Story of The Band From Pig Pink to The Last Waltz*, written with brother Kenneth Kubernik.