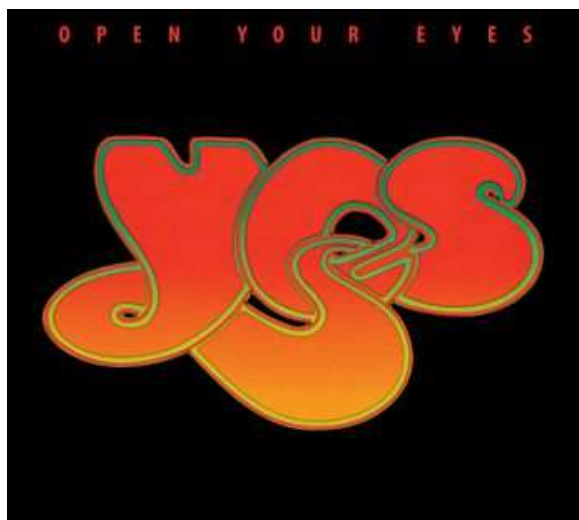


## FAME Review: Yes - Open Your Eyes (LP vinyl)

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## Open Your Eyes

[Yes](#)

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A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
by **Mark S. Tucker**  
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Yes, one of the very few progrock groups to achieve superstar mainstream success, has, of the last couple decades, been subject to much turmoil, now to the extent that founder Jon Anderson finds himself dispossessed of the ensemble. A four-year respiratory illness is to blame, and one can hardly fault the rest of the band too direly in the face of such: patience has its limits, but, ouch!, that's gotta hurt...and probably both ways, judging by fan reaction to the band's latest disc. Ah, but Fate has its whimsies, and Anderson's replacement, David Benoit, also contracted a respiratory affliction and soon exéunited, his shoes presently filled by Glass Hammer's Jon Davison.

Thus, it's not surprising to find the supergroup treading backwards and re-releasing their 17th LP, issued in 1997, this time in true LP (vinyl) format, a very attractive gatefold twofer. Treading hard upon the heels of *Keys to Ascension* and *Keys to Ascension 2*, ***Open Your Eyes*** was the old Yes Mark 2 aggregate minus Rick Wakeman, Billy Sherwood slipping in, formerly a sessioneer but now on keyboards, second guitar, and vocals.

In fact, the seed of ***Open*** was a collaborative between Sherwood and Yes bassist-founder Chris Squire in the Chris Squire Experiment duo project (later 'Conspiracy', Squire's well-known ego thus put in check a trifle, one imagines). Anderson caught some of it, liked what he heard, wanted to do the vocals, and everything eventually became Yes material. There's a key element here, though: despite what the liner credits seem to indicate, guitar legend Steve Howe didn't come into the process until the very end, mainly just to play the axehandler parts. This accounts for the relative dearth of the expected signature depth from Yes' prime period (everything up to ***Tormato***, little beyond), but it also introduces further irony: Anderson and Howe had earlier pissed off the rest of the group by secretly composing the stellar ***Tales from the Topographic Ocean***, Wakeman & Co. shoved aside. Now, with ***Open***, Howe was on the outside. History repeats itself...but not always exactly, payback being the bitch it is.

As a CD, ***Open*** managed to get to only #151 in the States, dropping into oblivion after only a single week (ow!), failing the charts completely on home turf in England. Fan and critical complaint zeroed in on the fact that the group was continuing its median position between the jaw-dropping days of old and later more lackluster chartbuster work most rewardingly attained in **90125**, afterwards foundering in ***Union*** and elsewhere.

Were I not to tell you all the above, I'd fail in my duties as a crit. Thus, the moment of truth arrives: do I or do I not like this LP? Yes, I do...and, no, I don't. I'll explain.

Progrock aficionados are among the most fanatical of all rock and roll genre fans. They're also the most critical—except, ironically, for the critics, who are largely suck-up incompetent dunderheads captained by idiot editors and publishers (I know 'cause I used to write for **all** the main progzines issued in the U.S.)—and, though they may damn aspects of any prog group's catalogue to perdition, they'll secretly collect everything. Why? Because, in most cases, even bad Yes music or bad Gentle Giant music or bad King Crimson music is still at least decent music...it jes' ain't of the vintage and materiality thirsted for. Progheads are VERY demanding, but they're also pretty accepting, and if you check the stash of the average acolyte, you'll find a lot of releases that'll make his or her face redden, defended justifiably if a bit sheepishly. Well, that's where ***Open Your Eyes*** falls, even in its 23:47 track, ***The Solution***, a far cry from the early era.

In fact, the bulk of that song is just plain bizarre, chiefly a clunky experiment in silence and odd ambiance. How it made the final cut is completely beyond me. Right after the intro section, the track cuts out completely for a couple minutes, absolute silence, and I sprinted to mystereo, thinking "Oh Christ! The amp gave out!" 'Twas thankfully not the case, but was this Yes move a Cageian tactic? Enossification? Just dumb desperation? Gawd only knows, and I ain't guessin', but it passeth comprehension, a stranded variation on *Close to the Edge*'s twittering environment with interspiked vocal snatches. Thus we're back to the collector phenomenon.

This is a very nice classy package, sturdier than most of what we children of the 60s and 70s ever saw, save for MFSL reprints and Japanese pressings: double-LP, thick gatefold outer, quality paper liner sans infernal adverts, 180 gram virgin vinyl, stately art direction, pretty much the works. Nor is it artificially doubled up, as too many recent era pressings are, stretching a normal release's 45 minutes onto a second unnecessary slab.. Here, you get just over 74 minutes of music, but is it even a stone's throw from the magnificent work of the esteemed group's glory days? 'Fraid not. Not even close. There's something to be said of the fire of youth, and Yes lost that a long time ago. There's also something to be said of renaissances, but has the group really seen such an event? No, it hasn't. Few groups do. While waiting for that, should it eventuate, this is a collector's item right out of the gate, but an unusual one. In the future, it'll go for outrageous sums, I have no doubt, but for the moment it's something of a pleasant enigma in more ways than one. Make up your mind accordingly. Take heart, though: no one in the group is very satisfied at all with ***Open*** either, no one, and they make no secret of the fact.

### Track List:

- New State of Mind
- Open Your Eyes
- Universal Garden
- No Way We Can Lose
- Fortune Seller
- Man in the Moon
- Wonderlove
- From the Balcony
- Love Shine
- Somehow, Someday
- The Solution

All songs written by Anderson / Howe / Sherwood / Squire / White.

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