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Affirmative Action Figure: Chris Squire Just Says Yes

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Chris Squire rarely takes no for an answer. After all, he's a Yes man, seemingly forever.

That's [Yes](#) with a capital "Y." A founding member of a group so progressive that the label "prog rock" wasn't even invented when the group formed in 1968, Squire continues to persevere long after others have come and gone.

The steady-handed bassist in an ever-changing British lineup of synth-laden, guitar-driven *classical* rock isn't averse to having an old-fashioned reunion, though. Squire leaves the door open to working with fellow co-founder Jon Anderson, the band's first singer, who departed because of respiratory problems that led to a cancellation of their 40th anniversary "comeback" tour in 2008.

"Of course, he would want to have to do it," Squire said during a recent phone conversation while dealing with triple-digit heat in Phoenix, his American home when he isn't living in London. "But it would be probably a little bit different. Because I'm not sure if he'd be up for doing the hard slog, a long rock 'n' roll tour, at this moment. But I'm sure there's a good possibility we could do something together in the future."

Being the cordial chap that he is, Squire doesn't rule out any possibilities.

"Well, the funny thing is that more by default than desire, I've sort of been there the whole time," he said. "And various other members like Jon and (keyboard whiz) Rick Wakeman, for instance, have been in, they've been out, they've been back in, they've come back again. So, it's really par for the course with Yes. That's sort of a pattern. I wouldn't object to working with *any* former member of Yes, really."

Yet, Squire is a forward thinker who wants the group to continue in that direction as they approach Year No. 45. He's getting ready to embark on a tour of America with [Procol Harum](#) that begins [July 13 in Atlantic City, N.J.](#), with longtime members Steve Howe (guitar), Geoff Downes (keyboards) and Alan White (drums). The latest twist is the addition of lead singer Jon Davison, who replaces Benoit David, the voice on last year's long-awaited album, [Fly From Here](#), the group's first in 10 years.

After recently touring New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Indonesia and Hawaii, Squire likes what he's heard of Davison, still a member of [Glass Hammer](#) who came recommended by longtime tour manager Paul Silveria and Squire's Foo Fighting friend, Taylor Hawkins.

"(He) has been saying to me for years, 'Hey, if you every need a singer, I know a guy,'" Squire said of Hawkins, a drummer who has been Davison's BFF since childhood. "I used to say, 'OK, Taylor, we're doing OK now, but I'll definitely put that in the back of memory somewhere.' ... So Taylor was really happy that we finally got together."

While watching the band evolve over the years has presented certain challenges, Squire said the "new blood" brings a positive energy and finds the creation of new music through technological advancements beneficial -- even to an old pro.



"Well, you see, I've had a great education out of this," said Squire, who has had his share of side projects, most recently [Squackett](#) with guitarist Steve Hackett, whose [A Life Within A Day](#) was released June 5. "Because of all the various people who've come in and out and brought along ideas, I've been on a learning curve throughout all these years. Of course, everyone that's been involved has influenced me as well. And I'm grateful for that."



Members of Yes in 2012, from left: Chris Squire, Alan White, Geoff Downes, Steve Howe, Jon Davison (Photo by Rob Shanahan).

The ability to adapt to the times is partly responsible for the group's longevity, said Squire, who started out believing they would be lucky to match the modest lifespan of the Beatles, who were falling apart just as

Yes was coming together.

"I thought, 'Wow, if we could have a career that was five or six years long, that would be fantastic,'" he said. "And, of course, never even thinking it would still be something I'd be doing in 45 years."

Even he seems astonished by their continued popularity that's resulted in more than 50 million albums sold, with a catalog that includes 20 studio full lengths.

"I think a lot of it is by accident," Squire said, laughing. "Some of it is, I guess, by skill. And I think what the story of Yes has been is we've wandered in and out of different styles over the years."

Noting that their genre was originally called art rock, Squire saw Yes being influenced by pop and jazz while experimenting with projects like the double album [Tales from Topographic Oceans](#), which was "pretty left field and at the time (1973) didn't seem like the best career move."

"Over time, though, the fact that we did take chances and do things in an odd fashion have helped towards the longevity of the band," he said, bemused that "Owner of a Lonely Heart" became a

"No. 1 single on the black charts" while topping Billboard's Hot 100 in the 1980s.

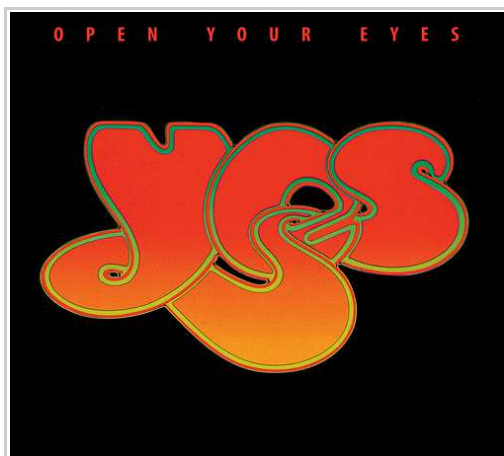
Today, Squire marvels at the younger crowds Yes attracts to their concerts, saying, "Well, some of them have got to be the kids of parents who originally bought like the vinyl albums and they probably got them out and listened to them and grew to like them. And, of course, some of those kids, if their parents were real Yes-heads, probably we're brainwashed."

After a laugh, then pausing for effect, he added, "While they were still infants."

While Yes is making a comeback, vinyl is, too. Squire seemed pleasantly surprised by the news by [MVD Entertainment Group](#) that Yes' 1997 *Open Your Eyes* (released originally by Beyond Records) is coming out for the first time on 180 gram heavyweight vinyl on July 10.

"How do you know that and I don't?" he asked. "I'll investigate that."

Open Your Eyes initially started as his outside duo collaboration with Billy Sherwood, who was formally welcomed into the group as Wakeman's replacement when recording sessions



concluded. This double album (with a running time of 75 minutes, 49 seconds) closes with "The Solution," a cut that's extended to 23:47 by a hidden track filled with ambient nature sounds. Charges of excess and self-indulgence notwithstanding, this is actually wax for relax sake, following through with a peaceful, dreamlike theme.

The love-it-or-hate-it record (soon to be available at sites including [seeofsound.com](#) and [amazon.com](#)) has been heralded for its "catchy pop" by Rolling Stone and criticized as a musical Titanic and "inane mainstream pop conventions" at [progarchives.com](#), where almost 400 posts from 2004-11 speak to its staying power.

Squire's just pleased that Yes' career reboot continues and "it's good to see young kids who know the words to music that was written in the '70s."

It's ancient history that he owns the rights to the Yes name, along with Anderson and White, who replaced Bill Bruford as drummer in the early 1970s. But only Squire has appeared on every Yes studio album. And it's likely only this rock-solid anchor of the band who can name every musician to play on a Yes track after recently taking on what he called the "daunting task" of compiling that list by listening to the group's entire catalog.

In doing so, he came to a fairly reasonable conclusion. "I found a lot of stuff from all different eras of Yes that was really good," Squire said. "So, I must admit, it's quite a body of work."

That knowledge might also be useful when -- or if -- he's asked to provide names and addresses for some overdue invitations. While he isn't holding his breath, Squire imagines the possibility of seeing anyone who was ever a Yes man sharing the stage again -- at the [Rock and Roll Hall of Fame](#).

Asked about Yes' exclusion thus far, he laughed, citing the huge number of former members (their website says "no fewer than 18") as a possible detriment.

"Well, I mean ... that is just one of those things. It may be a problem logistically."

And though one of prog rock's progenitors doesn't consider that term to be a hindrance, Squire still wonders. "It's never been really the genre of choice in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," he said. "I believe there are other people, too, who aren't in it who should be. Like Chicago, I don't think are in it. And I don't think the Moody Blues are. And that's kind of ridiculous to me. So anything that's kind of leaning towards being a bit more on the musical side, maybe they don't

think it qualifies."

An ongoing poll at rateitall.com currently ranks Yes fourth behind Rush, Chicago and Deep Purple as the most deserving among bands still waiting on the outside.

"I don't know," Squire said. "But they did put Genesis in last year, so ... I've given up sweating about it."

Even in Phoenix, where Squire had just completed a workout as part of his tour readiness. At age 64, he believes they remain relevant and practically guarantees there won't be another 10-year wait between Yes records. While no formal arrangements have been made, he said, "I suspect that we'll probably end up doing something next year."

As long as the music continues, Squire obviously plans to stay pumped up. Memories of a Madison Square Garden concert in 1984 keep the passion going and the blood flowing.

Touring in support of the successful [90125](#), the group was overwhelmed when the New York audience applauded for 15-20 minutes after the set's third song. It was like a religious experience for Squire, the one-time choirboy, who remembered the electric atmosphere and "how great it was that Yes were back on top. It was just one of those moments in time."

Yes, indeed.

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