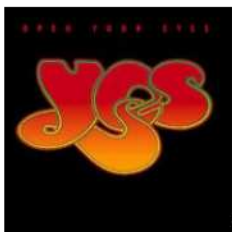




In the past, introducing a new voice into the ever-changing Yes dynamic often started the band on a series of quickly realized new directions. 1997's *Open Your Eyes*, it once seemed, was the exception.

Contrary to Yes' earlier additions of Steve Howe (on 1970's *The Yes Album*), Patrick Moraz (1974's *Relayer*), Geoff Downes and Trevor Horn (1980's *Drama*) and Trevor Rabin (1983's *90125*), the group didn't seem to pick up early momentum with the addition of band cofounder Chris Squire's protégé Billy Sherwood. In fact, *Open Your Eyes* only reached No. 151 in America, and didn't chart at all in the UK.



Fast forward 15 years, and [a new first-ever vinyl reissue](#) due July 10, 2012 through Germany's Sireena Records provides new insights into what may be Yes' most overlooked project.

What we find, in this warmer, more spacious aural environment, is a record that connects Rabin's heavily produced hitmaking era with the quirk-filled, Britpop-flavored recordings from Yes' initial incarnation like 1969's self-titled debut (casually referenced, it seems, on the *Open Your Eyes* cover design) and 1970's *Time and a Word*. There still are, to be sure, a few moments when the record betrays its troubled genesis, yet to my ears *Open Your Eyes* stands on its own within this intriguingly connective context. For instance, "New State of Mind," though a touch overlong, manages to combine a layered, Beatle-esque vocal treatment and some nifty sitar textures with a shuddering Zeppelin-ish rhythmic signature. If you felt that went too far afield, there are creature comforts to be found in the subsequent title track — with its familiar episodic song structure, driving Steve Howe riff and old-school intertwining of voices from Jon Anderson, Squire and Sherwood. Howe and Sherwood then smartly tangle back and forth on acoustics through the opening of "Universal Garden," to great effect.

**[SOMETHING ELSE! INTERVIEW: [After recently reuniting with Billy Sherwood on a pair of 2012 projects, Yes cofounder Chris Squire discusses the prospects of a new album as Conspiracy.](#)]**

So far, so good, right? Unfortunately, from there *Open Your Eyes* suffers through a more uneven journey — something that, in many ways, is to be expected.

As with 1983's *90125*, this album grew out of a side project involving Yes members, as Squire, drummer Alan White and Sherwood (a band songwriter, touring musician and then producer dating back to 1991's *Union*) worked on material intended for what would later become a self-titled album called *Conspiracy*. In both instances, Anderson became enchanted with some of the early sessions work and the songs eventually evolved into a new Yes album. The difference is, Rabin had been working on the backbone of songs that would make up *90125* — notably the eventual [chart-topping single "Owner of a Lonely Heart"](#) — for years. Sherwood and Squire had only just begun their collaborations when Yes' newly acquired label began clamoring for a new studio album to build a tour around.






*Open Your Eyes* would ultimately become a cobbled-together rush job: "Somehow, Someday" is built off portions of the song "Boundaries" from Anderson's 1982 solo project *Animation* and the bass line from "City of Love" on *90125*. "No Way We Can Lose" sounds like a reworking of Rabin's "Saving My Heart," from *Union*. "Man in the Moon" is a Conspiracy tune, with Anderson and Howe's parts tacked on. In fact, an uncomfortable amount of Howe's work feels second hand. He and Anderson were only intimately involved from conception on a single song, "From the Balcony."

**[SOMETHING ELSE! INTERVIEW: [Billy Sherwood on his working relationship with legendary Yes bassist Chris Squire: "I got a chance to join my favorite band."](#)]**

Even so, “Balcony” is a deeply effective duo recording. Many once-ignored charms surrounding *Open Your Eyes*, in fact, are belatedly revealed with this new reissue. Get past the somewhat out-of-place reggae affectations of “Now Way We Can Lose,” and you’re left with a series of boldly inspiring vocal passages. The intriguing “Wonderlove” is simultaneously cosmic-cool and chest-splashing propulsive, with Howe taking a stunning Robert Fripp-inspired turn. “The Solution,” a wildly underrated rocker, boasts the kind of coiled sense of rhythmic anticipation from White — not to mention a serrated outburst from Howe — largely unheard since *Drama*.

Then there’s the lengthy ambient track, punctuated by sweeping vocal interludes from the album’s key moments, that concludes *Open Your Eyes* — something which always felt like a nod to *Close to the Edge*, and another honorable attempt to bring things full circle after a lengthy period of change within the band.

Of course, *Open Your Eyes* isn’t Yes’ most complete album, and no vinyl release can bolster it to that level. Still, the passage of time, and the richer textures of this new format, make it clear just how much there still is to discover about it.

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Author: [Nick DeRiso](#) Nick DeRiso has explored jazz, blues, roots and rock music for Gannett News Service and USA Today, Blues Revue Magazine, AllAboutJazz.com, Rock.com, Popdose, Living Blues magazine, the Louisiana Folklife Program and NoDepression.com, among others. As a longtime newspaper editor, he was named columnist of the year five years in a row between 2003-07 by the Associated Press Managing Editors of Louisiana/Mississippi, the Louisiana Sports Writers Association and the Louisiana Press Association. DeRiso, who oversaw a daily publication that was named Top 10 in the nation by the Associated Press in 2006, also worked for a decade in radio, and has owned his own live music venue.

## 1 Comment

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[TheDailyVinyl July 4, 2012 9:34 am](#)

Part of the problem with its initial release is that it came on the heels of “Keys To Ascension 2”. I find when listening to “Open Your Eyes” I enjoy it if I think of it as a Conspiracy release, but not as a YES record.

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