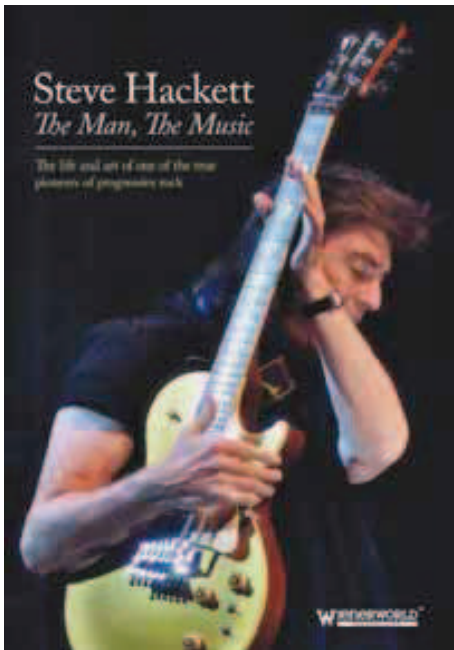


DVD REVIEW

By Pete Roche

STEVE HACKETT:
THE MAN, THE MUSIC

It's been a splendid couple years for Genesis fans.

Although the progressive rock legends went their separate ways following a successful 2007-08 reunion tour featuring Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford, and Tony Banks, there's been a slew of updated and remastered material seeping from the archives—and a wealth of new material by individual members.

Former singer Peter Gabriel is busy recording his first studio album in years, and drummer Phil Collins will release upgrades of his classic solo albums this fall. Mike Rutherford just finished touring with his *other* band, The Mechanics, and keyboardist Tony Banks recently issued the career-spanning box set *A Chord Too Far*.

Atlantic / Rhino dropped *R-Kive*—a three-disc Genesis compendium—last year, and the BBC documentary / DVD smash *Genesis: A Sum of The Parts* chronicled the group's musical history, from envelope-pushing quintet fresh out of boarding school to

acclaimed pop rock trio.

By most accounts (including his own), guitarist Steve Hackett got short shrift in that otherwise-lauded biopic, with his contributions to six masterful '70s releases reduced to mere minutes of discussion in deference to extended bits on Gabriel and Collins, and *their* solo triumphs.

Now Hackett is finally receiving his due, courtesy his very own video retrospective. Filmed by Big Beak Productions honcho Matt Groom (whose Edifying label reissued the guitarist's classical albums *Bay of Kings* and *Momentum*) over the last five or six years, *Steve Hackett: The Man, The Music* takes fans on decades-long journey through Hackett's remarkable musical career with—and without—Genesis.

Eschewing traditional narrators and voiceovers in favor of extensive, exclusive, and intimate chats with Hackett himself, the two-hour study plants viewers in parlors and green rooms (and a retired country star's tour bus) opposite the guitar icon for fascinating tales, amusing anecdotes, and insightful reflections on his early days, Genesis fame, and ongoing solo trajectory.

With an occasional timid head-scratch (or tug on the ear), Hackett recalls his boyhood in the concrete rubble of postwar England, and of taking up guitar as an artistically-inclined teenager turned on by The Beatles, John Mayall...and Schubert. He recounts cutting his teeth in nascent bands Sarabande and Quiet World, his session work as an in-demand hired gun, and his nerve-racking, three-tiered audition with Genesis (following their response to his infamous *Melody Maker* advert).

Hackett doesn't simply talk about epic Genesis albums like *Foxtrot*, *Selling England By the Pound*, and *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*: He breaks out his guitars for Groom's cameras and blazes through incendiary passages from "Firth of Fifth" and nylon string classics bits like

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Bach's "Bourree in E Minor," divulges his stylistic secrets (tapping and tremolo bar use), and inventories his toy box (volume pedals, sustain, etc.) for the home audience.

Witty producer-arranger Roger King joins Hackett in the control room(s) to reflect on Steve's solo albums, his songwriting process, and their recording tricks—all of which evolved along with available technology (reel-to-reel tapes to digital files).

"I was up for parole, but no one else would have me," King jokes over the partnership. We get the lowdown on Hackett's 1975 solo debut *Voyage of the Acolyte* (with input from Hackett, Collins, and Banks), behind-the-scenes summaries of follow-ups *Please Don't Touch* and *Spectral Mornings*, and the how-to hokum of post-millennium efforts *Out of The Tunnel's Mouth*, *Beyond the Shrouded Horizon*, and brand new *Wolfight*. Steve reveals his reasons for reworking his old music for the *Genesis Revisited* projects, and shares his delight with the overwhelming positive response to those albums and live shows.

Select chapters are given to Hackett's love of classical music, and to his exploration of the genre on discs like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Tribute*. At one point he busts out an acoustic guitar on a davenport and proceeds to demonstrate the sweep-picking and "raking" techniques employed by flamenco guitarists, unfurling the fingers of his right hand to fan over the strings while his left hand repositions itself up and down the neck.

Hackett takes us inside the short-lived (but commercially successful) *GTR* collaboration (with Yes guitarist Steve Howe), and bemoans how corporate interests soured that group's creative impulses. We also visit with Yes bassist Chris Squire, who teamed with Hackett on the holiday-themed *Swiss Choir* and the overlooked (but excellent) "Squackett" one-off *Life Within a Day*. It's a bittersweet cameo, however: Squire passed away in June from leukemia (Hackett dedicates the DVD to his friend's memory).

Still, it's wonderful watching the affable, still-healthy bassist yuck it up with Steve at the kitchen table (it was Squire's wife who dreamed up "Squackett" as a name for dinner reservations). Both he and Hackett confirm that their time recording together felt quite natural and spontaneous, and one can't help but wonder what another album or two from the duo might've yielded.

Other interviewees include bandmates Gary O'Toole (drums), Rob Townsend (sax), and Amanda Lehmann (guitar). Wisecracking, Guinness-sipping bassist Nick Beggs is a gas, and flautist / brother John Hackett proves a key witness to some wild late night sessions in frigid temps. Porcupine Tree front man Steven Wilson also chimes in, as does Hackett's mum—and wife (and business manager), Jo. "She's fantastic," beams Steve.

The movie also gives Hackett a chance to self-actualize and reassess his growth as a *person* as well as a musician. He remembers hiding behind geeky glasses and thick moustache because of stage fright, and how Gabriel's costumed theatrics helped take the focus off the players. He reflects on the delicate balance between an entertainer's life on the road and life and home, and how his domestic situation always seemed to run low despite the Genesis highs. Steve laments that his first marriage crumbled, but concedes neither he nor his German bride were committed to each other or the lifestyle.

"It's extraordinary how people do things out of tradition," Hackett says. "It was a case of 'Oh, I'm 22 now; I ought to get married and settle down.'"

The film lacks archival Genesis footage, relying instead on still photos of Hackett with his ex-colleagues (along with flyers and album sleeves) for 70s-related visuals. Fans looking for rare clips of Gabriel, Collins, et al will come away disappointed, but those committed to the Hackett perspective won't mind (it's all been done before anyway). Some of the interviews drone on a little long, but the carefree shooting style bolsters the personal appeal, whereas capping or over-editing the clips might've made them seem perfunctory. Here, Groom makes us feel welcome.

The DVD arrives at a busy time for Hackett, who will hit the United States again next month for the *Acolyte to Wolfight* tour. The guitarist also just put out a fifteen-disc collection of his Charisma recordings entitled *Premonitions*.

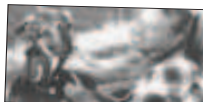
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