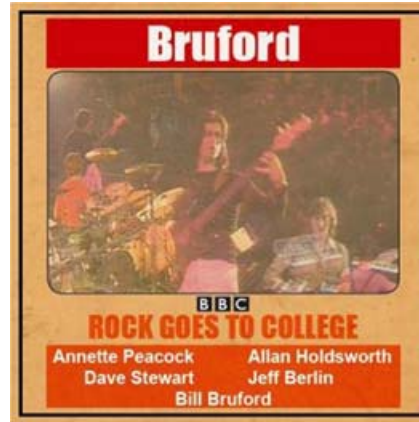




## MUSIC STREET JOURNAL

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### Bruford – Rock Goes To College



By Gary Hill

### Overall Review

Bruford's original lineup only played two shows, both television appearances. The second of those is the recording released here. Bill Bruford is joined here, as on the two studio albums that original presented the material they perform, by keyboardist Dave Stewart, guitar god Allan Holdsworth and bassist Jeff Berlin. Vocalist Annette Peacock adds her unique artistry to two tracks. Holdsworth and Bruford would later play together in the prog supergroup UK and this group sounds rather similar (but with more of a jazz bent) to what the sound of that outfit would be. You will also probably hear a good bit of King Crimson in this mix and even some Frank Zappa. The recording quality on this, while good for the time period, is definitely not up to the high standards modern listeners have grown accustomed to. Still, this CD is awesome, featuring some of the greatest musicians on the planet doing some incredible music. That makes it a must have.

### Track by Track Review

**Sample And Hold:** They jump right into the midst of this angular jam. It's simply incredible. After a time it drops to a different, more melodic progression. This runs through and ends. Then piano in a frantic, rather angular pattern rises up. This becomes a rather Crimson-like jam that gives way to a more rock based journey that's again quite in the mode of KC. Like the rest of the music thus far, it doesn't last long, though. Instead they run through for a while and then drop it way back to a stripped down, chaotic lounge jazz sort of sound. This then gives way to another quick excursion. They continue to move through a number of short visitations. It turns a bit bluesy at one point, then wanders off to the cosmos the next. This is an exceptionally dynamic piece with segment after segment occurring in seeming random patterns. The thing is, the listener never really feels lost,

which is something that frequently occurs in musical compositions like that. It definitely presents a challenge to a reviewer like myself, though, because sometimes pieces of music stay around less time than it takes someone to read a description of it. Suffice it to say, this one will surprise, enthrall and captivate.

**Beelzebub:** A rubbery sort of riff drives this in crazed directions, seeming to careen this way and that until eventually moving out into more melodic territory. This is far more constant than the last track, but still has plenty of changes and drama packed inside to please the most discriminating jazz, fusion or prog rock fan.

**The Sahara Of Snow (Part One):** Gongs and ambient elements start this off. It becomes quite strange as it builds up with echoey sound effect type tones. Gradually this works its way further and further into space before a new direction rises up ready to take it into unexplored territory. After a period of piano driven wanderings on this base, they power it into the next section of the composition, firing forward in rapid ascension. Elements of noisy, almost chaotic melody scream over the top as this gains more and more energy. Sound effects segue this into the next part.

**The Sahara Of Snow (Part Two):** Rising up from the effects left over from the last cut, this powers up with a rising motif. Elements skirt across the top here and there as they begin the new instrumental journey, this one more melodic. You will certainly hear echoes of King Crimson on this one, but also hints of things to come like UK. This is one of the more accessible pieces on the disc. It turns to noisy chaos for a short outro.

**Forever Until Sunday:** In stark contrast to the music that came before, this comes up in a pretty and very melodic fashion, running through in a rather balladic style – albeit a jazz ballad. They work through a few changes and variants and this becomes another very catchy track with a funky edge. It's definitely one of the highlights for me.

**Back To the Beginning:** Pounding in with a King Crimson like approach. This drops back to a stripped down motif for the first vocals of the album. These vocals are in an almost punk rock sort of approach. I guess I could compare it a bit to the Waitresses, if that rings a bell with anyone. In any event, the nearly spoken vocal segments are punctuated by what feels like almost freeform jamming. This is a cool tune that crosses the lines between jazz, punk, beat poetry excursion and progressive rock. While it might be a bit to get used to – this is strange – it's worth the effort, even if just for the uniqueness of the exercise. This shifts out into a great groove later over which Holdsworth lays down the patterns of coolness in massive quantities, at times ably assisted by Stewart. This turns a bit dissonant at times, but just plain rocks. It makes its way back to the song proper before ending.

**Adios a La Pasada (Goodbye To the Past):** The opening portions here seem to embrace the RIO movement in progressive rock. The group start with noisy chaos and then modulate through several changes. It modulates into more melodic territory and then they journey on their way to newer plateaus here and there on the landscape. This is a frantic and powerful piece that seems to keep growing. It drops to a false ending and Peacock begins a poetry reading amidst very ambient music. The sounds build in the background and then the group explode back out into fast paced fusion to carry forward. This sort of alternating pattern, in varying levels of intensity, carries the song through.

**5G:** Frantic bass patterns start this off. The group launch into a jam that's a bit noisy and chaotic, but also funky and quite cool. The King Crimson-like textures return, but with more of a jazz approach built into them. This is frantically fast and really tasty. They work out into a more melodic sort of movement later down the road. They turn this out towards noisy space music for a time. It returns to the direction from where it came later. This is quite an intriguing and potent piece of music that works quite well.



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