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## An Evening of Yes Music Plus Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe



As one of the more popular progressive rock bands of the 70s and a chart mainstay of the early 80s, Yes has learned to overcome and outdistance just about every obstacle in its storied path. By the end of the 80s, Jon Anderson, the group's lead singer and spiritual light, was at a crossroads with his career. Despite the fortunes he enjoyed from the recent forays of Yes into the pop machine, Anderson yearned for the days of old when the tunes were long, the themes otherworldly, solos pretentious, and, most importantly, the guitar and keyboard posts were occupied by Steve Howe and Rick Wakeman, instead of Trevor Rabin and Tony Kaye. The problem, at that point in time, was bassist that Chris Squire, the only man who's been on every Yes album ever released, retained the rights to the Yes name and was apparently uninterested in reforming the classic lineup. Undaunted, Anderson rounded up Bill Bruford, Rick Wakeman and Steve Howe to make a record under their sir names. It worked for ELP and CSN, so why not Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman and Howe – a mouthful no matter how you slice it. The obligatory tour begat some astonishing moments with well-known stuff interspersed with new stuff, captured by film crews at various points. Some 18 years later, ABWH's **An Evening Yes Music Plus** comes to DVD.

The first portion of the show is made up of solo segments from Anderson, Howe and Wakeman. Anderson wanders through the venue aisles and onto stage, serenading the crowd with "A Time And A Word," before switching over to "Owner Of A Lonely Heart," a Yes song that only he could have done within this configuration. It's a nice nod that the modern Yes era before Howe steps up with his acoustic and breezes through "The Clap/Mood For The Day," a piece he could probably play in his sleep. Howe's short set provides the proper prelude for Wakeman, whose flying fingers dart over a random sampling of his vast solo catalog. Once the keyboardist starts rubbing out the opening notes of "Long Distance Runaround," that's the queue for everyone to hit the stage and join in the reverie. The chemistry is instantaneous between the four consummate pros (and three supplementary players, including bassist Jeff Berlin). Bruford, fresh from an inspiring stint with King Crimson, assumes the lead as he operates like a hyperkinetic robot with calculated precision and skill, surrounded by electronic drums and percussive toys. This introduces an entirely new range to the voice of the band, playing right into the first new song of the night, "Birthright." The forbearance of the new ABWH material eases the transition to the comfort zone of such Yes staples as "And You And I," "I've Seen All Good People," and an exceptionally biting crack at "Close To The Edge."

Returning to the ABWH provides an excellent view into the renewed sense of urgency. The music is lighter, less contentious and dramatic, embracing new possibilities while retaining a sense of dignity. Even as "Themes," "Brother Of Mine," and "The Meeting" wash over and induce the audience, it's the Yes music they want to hear. "Heart Of The Sunrise" grabs their attention soon enough. "Order Of The Universe," the last new one, dissolves into the finale of the ever faithful "Roundabout." After the credits role, the group finishes up with "Starship Trooper." ABWH would set up the return of Howe and Wakeman back to Yes, first during the Union album and tour that brought eight past and present members together for the first time, and then finally as the classic line up of today with Anderson, Squire and Alan White on drums (Bruford returned to Crimson, and then went solo). The light's still on outside the Yes Clubhouse, so who knows what's on the horizon.

~ Shawn Perry

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