Echolyn and American Progressive Rock

John Covach

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing throughout most of the 1970s, British progressive-rock groups developed a style of music that privileged long, complicated pieces, employing a wide variety of musical techniques and features drawn from classical music. While the leading progressive rock groups were British, progressive-rock groups also formed in the United States. This study provides an overview of American progressive-rock bands since 1966, examining how these musicians attempted to blend elements of European art music with rock music. Musical excerpts from Starcastle, Kansas, Happy the Man, However, and U-Totem and others are considered. Recent music from the Philadelphia-band progressive-rock quintet echolyn is placed in the context of 1970s and 80s American progressive rock; analysis of portions of A Suite for the Everyman (1992) and Letters (1995), informed in part by scores and sketches provided the author by the group, detail how echolyn employs art-music compositional techniques in a rock setting in a way that blends “symphonic-prog” and “avant-prog” approaches.

KEYWORDS: Birdsong of the Mesozoic, Christopher Buzby, Cartoon, Echolyn, Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP), Genesis, Gentle Giant, Happy the Man, Henry Cow, However, Jethro Tull, Kansas, Brett Kull, Soft Machine, Starcastle, Progressive Rock, U-Totem, Yes

Introduction

In the early and mid 1970s across the United States, it was almost impossible to tune in an FM rock radio station without hearing the progressive-rock music of groups like Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP), and Jethro Tull. And in the late evening hours, one might also catch album cuts by Genesis, King Crimson, or even Gentle Giant. Indeed, the most commercially successful release of any of these groups during the seventies was Jethro Tull’s Thick as a Brick, which spent twenty weeks on the Billboard Top Forty chart in 1972 and two weeks in the number-one slot. Tull's
follow-up studio LP, *A Passion Play*, charted for fourteen weeks in 1973 and also hit number one, though only for one week. And while Tull did have two singles reach the Top Forty during roughly the same period, it is significant that neither was contained on these two chart-topping LPs.¹ This last fact points to one important characteristic of 1970s progressive rock: the album was the privileged format in this music not the single. Progressive-rock albums were often organized around a central idea or theme, a format loosely referred to as the “concept album.” In the case of Tull’s *Thick as a Brick*, the album plays from beginning to end with only the mandatory interruption that flipping the 33–1/3 rpm LP required. Further, the piece is not a forty-minute-plus medley of songs, or a single song with long solos inserted, but a single work in several sections, complete with motivic and thematic returns that structure the musical aspects of the album in conjunction with its ambitious lyrics. The same could be said for *A Passion Play*, another forty-minute-plus opus, as well as for Yes’ “Close to the Edge” (eighteen minutes) or for the four sides that make up their infamous *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (at almost twenty minutes each). The serious-minded lyrics of *Thick as a Brick* grapple with the roles of church and state in the lives of British youth, resisting the power of these institutions to deprive individuals of their freedom to act according to their own beliefs. *A Passion Play* takes place in the spirit world between death and rebirth, as a soul is led through the events of his previous life in preparation for the next. Yes’s *Tales from Topographic Oceans* is based on aspects of the Shastric Scriptures, while “Close to the Edge” deals with the Indian philosophy that lies at the heart of Hermann Hesse’s novel *Siddhartha*.²

There was a common attitude among the British progressive rockers that drove these groups to record and perform long pieces that worked out big ideas: rock music, they believed, could be serious art (or at least, it could be more like serious art than rock music had been so far); and elevating rock to such a higher status required appropriating music-technical procedures mostly from classical music (though also from jazz) and rejecting the themes of romantic love that had so occupied pop-music lyrics for generations in favor of themes of a more intellectual or spiritual nature — God, State, the Future of Mankind. Admittedly, these groups sometimes handled such perennial philosophical themes in naive and clumsy ways; and to be fair, one should acknowledge that much of this music was written by musicians not yet thirty years old at the time who had spent most of their adolescent and adult lives playing gigs and recording albums — and thus, for the most part, not studying music, literature, or philosophy at university. But it is also important to stress that there are many moments of valuable poetic insight to be found in this music, as well as dramatic and powerful musical works that are as fresh today as when they were recorded twenty-five or more years ago.

What is most important about 1970s British progressive rock for the present study is that this style constituted a careful and conscious attempt to blend popular and art-music styles. Many writers, listeners, and musicians in the rock world of the early 70s were convinced that progressive rock was poised to become the new art music of its time — a music that would not so much succeed the pop of the 1960s as much as take its rightful place beside the modern classical music of Stravinsky and Bartók. Clearly, this is not the way things worked out for progressive rock historically — or at least, this is not the way events have been interpreted thus far in the decades that have followed the development and first flowering of the style. Rather than being understood as a high-art style, progressive rock tends to be viewed as a popular-music style that attempts to incorporate aspects of art-music compositional and performance techniques in a rock-music context, but as a popular-music style all the same.

The usual historical account of progressive rock chronicles its rise in the late 1960s and early 70s, its peak in the mid 70s, and its demise at the end of that decade with the arrival of new wave and punk rock music.³ Indeed, progressive rock faded from view by the dawn of the 1980s; groups either broke up (Gentle Giant, ELP) or took a markedly more commercial turn (Genesis, Yes, Asia). But even though progressive rock moved out of range of the mainstream music-industry radar screen of the 1980s, it did not disappear altogether; while the revamped Yes was soaring to the top of the charts with “Owner of a Lonely Heart” and the Phil-Collins-led Genesis was flying high with “Invisible Touch,” a progressive rock underground had begun to form in Britain and the US. Though some new groups did emerge in the 1980s (and these groups are considered in more detail below), this underground movement consisted mostly of fans of the 1970s groups, as well as record collectors, dealers, and importers who were able to help fans find albums by less well-known groups that were already quickly going out of print. In those early days of what has since developed into the age of the CD re-release, mail-order dealers soon branched out into the record business, licensing and re-releasing albums on CD by minor groups that were often only available originally in limited LP pressings.⁴ By the early 1990s, fans of progressive rock could acquire a wide variety of CDs from mail-order dealers who offered more selection than most customers enjoyed in the mid 1970s when progressive rock was at its peak of commercial success;⁵ of course, CDs by the most successful 70s progressive rock acts were widely available at almost any mall music store, having been re-released on CD by the major labels.

One important consequence of the growing “prog” revival is that it is now possible to get a more accurate sense of the progressive-rock style, its history, and its musicians than ever before. While the important and high-profile progressive-rock groups of the 1970s were British, progressive-rock
follow-up studio LP, A Passion Play, charted for fourteen weeks in 1973 and also hit number one, though only for one week. And while Tull did have two singles reach the Top Forty during roughly the same period, it is significant that neither was contained on these two chart-topping LPs. This last fact points to one important characteristic of 1970s progressive rock: the album was the privileged format in this music, not the single. Progressive-rock albums were often organized around a central idea or theme, a format loosely referred to as the "concept album." In the case of Tull's Thick as a Brick, the album plays from beginning to end with only the mandatory interruption that flipping the 33–1/3 rpm LP required. Further, the piece is not a forty-minute-plus medley of songs, or a single song with long solos inserted, but a single work in several sections, complete with motivic and thematic returns that structure the musical aspects of the album in conjunction with its ambitious lyrics. The same could be said for A Passion Play, another forty-minute-plus opus, as well as for Yes' "Close to the Edge" (eighteen minutes) or for the four sides that make up their infamous Tales from Topographic Oceans (at almost twenty minutes each). The serious-minded lyrics of Thick as a Brick grapple with the roles of church and state in the lives of British youth, resisting the power of these institutions to deprive individuals of their freedom to act according to their own beliefs. A Passion Play takes place in the spirit world between death and rebirth, as a soul is led through the events of his previous life in preparation for the next. Yes's Tales from Topographic Oceans is based on aspects of the Shastric Scriptures, while "Close to the Edge" deals with the Indian philosophy that lies at the heart of Hermann Hesse's novel Siddhartha.2

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bands sprang up elsewhere as well; Italian groups such as PFM and Banco, for instance, are often cited by current prog aficionados as among the best the style has to offer. But the Italian scene is only one of many that could be discussed and explored at great length; Germany, France, and Sweden all produced a number of interesting groups. This study, however, will focus on the progressive-rock scene in the United States. American groups from the 1970s such as Kansas and Styx are well known, and both groups enjoyed tremendous commercial success late in the decade. There were, however, a number of groups playing progressive rock in the US during the 1970s, and one can find American groups playing an important role in the style even in its earliest stages of development. American progressive rock can also be traced forward from the 1970s through the 80s and 90s to the present, and while it would not be quite accurate to speak of an American progressive-rock tradition (since many of the groups operated without any knowledge of one another), one can nevertheless come to an understanding of the history of progressive-rock music-making in the US.

This article will first survey the history of progressive rock generally, and the history of American progressive rock specifically. It will then focus on the music of a number of American progressive rock bands, and especially on the 1990s music of the Philadelphia-based quintet, echolyn. Musical analysis of representative passages from this music will demonstrate the ways in which American progressive-rock musicians have made clear and conscious attempts to blend aspects of popular and art music. In many ways, echolyn's music can be seen to consolidate two distinct stylistic approaches that can be distinguished in the 1970s and 80s progressive rock that precedes it. Before taking up these stylistic and historical issues in American progressive rock, however, it will be useful to review the history of progressive rock in general.

Progressive Rock, An Historical Overview

Progressive rock developed out of psychedelic music, and specifically out of tendencies in the Beatles music after 1966, especially their 1967 release, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. *Sgt. Pepper* is, of course, a pivotal album in the history of rock music, and subsequent groups playing in a variety of styles took their bearings from this LP. In Wilfred Meller's oft-cited characterization (1973, 86), *Sgt. Pepper* made it clear that rock music need not only be dance music, it could also be listening music. The album spawned a host of other similar records, most imitating the psychedelic aspects of the music, such as *The Rolling Stones’ Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967) or the Small Faces’ *Ogdens’ Nut Gone Flake* (1968). What the early progressive rockers took from *Sgt. Pepper* was the idea of the concept album, along with the notion that rock could appropriate features drawn from classical music to both broaden the stylistic palette of rock, as well as extend the length of the rock song beyond the limit of the three-to-four-minute single to encompass an entire album side. Psychedelic music was the music of the late-1960s hippie Counterculture, and this music soon became an attempt — often but not necessarily together with hallucinogenic drugs — to provide a vehicle for heightening the social and spiritual consciousness of the listener. A variety of musical means were available within the psychedelic style to such ends: long instrumental solos, free improvisation, electronic-music and recording techniques, and references to exotic cultures (mostly Indian). For those who would later cultivate the progressive-rock style, an important aspect of psychedelia was that classical music could be used in the service of transporting the mind to what was perceived to be a higher state of awareness.

An early instance of progressive rock — still, however, to be understood in the context of psychedelia — is the Moody Blues’ 1967 LP, *Days of Future Past*, a concept album built around the idea of a day in the life of one person (“Forever Afternoon [Tuesday]”, “Nights in White Satin”). The LP features the band accompanied by a full symphony orchestra, with extended passages scored for orchestra alone. Another early instance of progressive rock is the music of the Nice, a group that featured keyboard virtuoso Keith Emerson; in the 1968-70 period, the group released five albums that blended psychedelic rock and classical music. It was during his tenure with the Nice that Emerson first began doing his infamous arrangements for rock band of classical music warhorses such as Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 and “America” from Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim’s *West Side Story*. The Nice LP *Five Bridges* (1970) places the group together with a symphony orchestra, and offers a liner-note testimonial by Emerson expressing his hopes to build bridges between classical and rock music. Other important “proto-progressive” (Macan 1997) instances are Procol Harum’s “In Held Twas I” (1968) and Pink Floyd’s “Saucerful of Secrets” (1968).

In 1969, King Crimson released *In the Court of the Crimson King*, an album that is often thought of as the breakthrough LP for progressive rock; tracks such as “Twenty-First Century Schizoid Man” and “Epitaph” very soon became prog classics, as the group blended angular and rhythmically complex hard-rocking instrumental passages with softer, Mellotron-drenched lyrical ones. By 1970, Emerson had left the Nice to form Emerson, Lake & Palmer with King Crimson bassist and vocalist Greg Lake and drummer Carl Palmer; a reconstituted King Crimson and the still-intact Moody Blues continued to record and perform, as Yes and Genesis began to establish their reputations on the burgeoning progressive-rock scene.
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The first half of the 1970s saw a tremendous explosion of progressive-rock groups and albums; along with numerous releases by lesser-known groups such as Gentle Giant and Van der Graaf Generator, the major acts (Yes, Genesis, ELP, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, and the Moody Blues) released most of their important albums during these years. One can clearly detect a tendency toward even more ambitious projects among some of these groups during the 1970–75 period. From Yes’ *Fragile* (1971) through *Close to the Edge* (1972) to *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (1973), the music gets further and further away from mainstream rock of the same period stylistically, and, as mentioned above, the tracks get longer. Similarly, ELP reaches its lengthiest and most complex in “Karn Evil 9,” from *Brain Salad Surgery* (1973) as do Jethro Tull with *Thick as a Brick* (1972) and *A Passion Play* (1973) and Genesis with *A Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1974).

By mid-decade, however, the prog movement had begun to stall somewhat: members of Yes, ELP, and the Moody Blues pursued solo projects; King Crimson disband; Peter Gabriel left Genesis; and Jethro Tull turned away from progressive rock toward a style that blended British folk music with rock. By 1978, Yes, ELP, the Moody Blues, and Genesis (now with drummer Phil Collins singing) had all regrouped and released new albums, but progressive rock’s demise in the commercial world had already begun. With a new rhetoric that called for a return to rock simplicity and the directness of expression that was thought to go with it, critics hailed new wave and punk rock as the next big thing, referring to the progressive-rock musicians as “dinosaurs.” Some of the prog dinosaurs were able to adapt well to this drastic change in the music-business climate, however: Peter Gabriel, Genesis (including solo projects by Michael Rutherford and Phil Collins), Yes, and Asia (featuring members of Yes, ELP, and King Crimson) were more successful in the 1980s than they ever were in the heyday of progressive rock. But this first generation of progressive musicians were, for the most part, no longer playing prog.

Despite the commercial success of some of its original practitioners in the 1980s, progressive rock as a *style* was mostly out of the commercial mainstream by the end of the 70s; it was generally thought to be dead as a popular-music style. But while their favorite musicians may have moved on to other, more mainstream styles, some fans of progressive rock remained dedicated to the music of the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the UK saw the rise of neo-progressive rock (“neo-prog”): groups such as Marillion, IQ, Pendragon, the Enid, and Twelfth Night released albums that remained loyal to the progressive-rock style of the 1970s. Marillion was the most successful of the neo-prog bands, with singles and albums charting in the UK, though not in the US. The group’s sound in the 1980s owed much to Peter Gabriel-era Genesis, and this is in large part due to the lyrics and vocal style of Derek Dick (a.k.a. Fish), who seems inspired by Gabriel’s penchant for telling complicated and somewhat enigmatic stories with his lyrics. Toward the end of the decade some of the original players made brief returns to the style as well: Emerson and Lake regrouped with drummer Cozy Powell, releasing one album (1986), then in 1989 four original Yes members regrouped for the *Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe* LP. King Crimson also produced three albums in the 1980s; these LPs continued to engage art music as the band’s earlier material had, but in this case the classical style that most influenced this new Crimson music was minimalism.

By the early 1990s, the prog underground was well established. The increasing popularity of the Internet played a crucial role in the continuing growth of the underground; as fans began exploring online newsgroups devoted to their favorite bands, they also learned that there were newsletters and fanzines, CD mail-order houses, and web pages devoted to progressive rock. In addition to the well-known 1970s progressive rock bands, there were new bands to discover. Prog bands that had recorded albums since the commercial demise of the style in the late 1970s now had small but dedicated followings; gigs were still scarce for such groups, but it was at least possible to market independently produced CDs through the underground. By 1993, a two-day festival devoted to progressive rock seemed a feasible idea to Greg Walker and David Overstreet—a couple of mail-order dealers who also each run independent record labels—and the first ProgFest was held in Los Angeles. Subsequent ProgFestivals in LA have followed, while similar festivals such as ProgDay (North Carolina) and ProgScape (Baltimore) have become annual events. Such prog festivals are international occasions; groups at ProgFest 1994, for instance, included Anekdoten and Anglagard from Sweden, Kalaban, Episode, Giraffe, and echolyn from the US, Sebastian Hardie from Australia, and Halloween and Minimum Vital from France. These festivals have also featured groups from Spain (Galadriel), Italy (Deus ex Machina), Canada (Miriodor), Japan (Ars Nova), Mexico (Cast), Norway (White Willow), Hungary (Solaris), and the UK (IQ, Pendragon, Porcupine Tree).

It is perhaps interesting to note that, until very recently, musicians from the original progressive groups have tended not to be directly involved in the prog underground; the groups who have played at the festivals do not feature members of the 1970s groups. The reason for this would seem to be that the prog underground is currently driven by fans and part-time musicians and vendors, while the 70s prog musicians continue to pursue full-time professional careers in music; even if the promoters of progressive-rock festivals are willing to go into debt to put on an event (and this has happened more than once thus far), professional musicians cannot afford to do so. Concurrent with the modest but continued growth of the underground in the 1990s, however, is the return of some
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It is perhaps interesting to note that, until very recently, musicians from the original progressive groups have tended not to be directly involved in the prog underground; the groups who have played at the festivals do not feature members of the 1970s groups. The reason for this would seem to be that the prog underground is currently driven by fans and part-time musicians and vendors, while the 70s prog musicians continue to pursue full-time professional careers in music; even if the promoters of progressive-rock festivals are willing to go into debt to put on an event (and this has happened more than once thus far), professional musicians cannot afford to do so. Concurrent with the modest but continued growth of the underground in the 1990s, however, is the return of some
of the major 1970s figures to the progressive-rock style. A once-more-reformed Yes has recently released two double CDs (1996, 1997) with live versions of some of the group's classic 70s numbers, as well as new studio tracks that clearly hark back to their 1970s style. Emerson, Lake & Palmer have returned with two studio albums and a live album, while King Crimson is back again with albums that return to the group's progressive roots (1995a, 1995b). The most recent ProgFest (1997) featured former King Crimson bassist/vocalist John Wetton and the Italian group Le Orme, marking the first time that first-generation prog-rockers have played an American prog festival.

**Progressive Rock in the US: “Ameri-prog”**

As mentioned above, progressive rock bands sprang up in many countries outside the United Kingdom in the 1970s; Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, and Holland are just a few of the countries that produced interesting groups. The United States were no exception in this regard. In fact, the American role in the history of progressive rock goes back to the most embryonic stages of the style. If *Sgt. Pepper* can be taken as an important album in opening up the possibility of progressive rock, then it is worth noting that *Sgt. Pepper* was in many ways a reaction to the music of Brian Wilson and The Beach Boys. Paul McCartney has described the effect that The Beach Boys' 1966 LP *Pet Sounds* had on him; he acknowledges that *Sgt. Pepper* was a response to the sophistication and experimentation of that album, as well as to the subsequent Beach Boys single, "Good Vibrations." As Dan Harrison (1997, 43) has pointed out, Wilson thought of "Good Vibrations" as his "pocket symphony." Also in Southern California, Frank Zappa was forging his eclectic style in the late 1960s, blending elements drawn from twentieth-century art music with jazz, rock, and a broad range of popular styles. While Zappa would have rejected any suggestion that his music should be grouped with that of the British progressive rockers, his music nonetheless influenced those musicians; Zappa's music, in fact, set a lofty standard for instrumental prowess and technical proficiency to which many progressive musicians aspired.

As mentioned above, progressive rock also owed much to the psychedelic music that followed in the wake of *Sgt. Pepper* and 1967's Summer of Love, and in this regard a number of American acts can be seen as influential on the style. Seattle-born guitarist Jimi Hendrix made his name in 1967–8 with three important albums with the London-based Jimi Hendrix Experience; the third of these, *Electric Ladyland* (1968) was Hendrix’s most experimental and its ambiance of drug-induced spiritual revelation took up a theme to which many progressive rockers would often return. Hendrix, however, tended not to invoke classical music in his psychedelic musings, and this also holds true in general for most of the San Francisco-based psychedelic groups such as the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane. Like Hendrix’s psychedelia, the music of The Doors (Los Angeles) takes up a concern for spiritual transformation (it is worth noting that the groups took its name from Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (1954)); Jim Morrison’s “Lizard King” musico-poetic persona encompasses not only a Dionysian revelry in acid-induced hedonism, but also a belief that hallucinogenic drugs open doors to higher levels of consciousness. While The Doors’ music only infrequently invokes classical music, the signature introduction to "Light My Fire" is an important exception and is a precursor to similar pseudo-baroque passages that occur only a few years later in the full-blown progressive rock of Yes, ELP, and Genesis.

But some American groups did employ blatant references to classical music more consistently in their psychedelia. Perhaps the best-known of these is Iron Butterfly (Los Angeles): the group’s infamous seventeen-minute track from 1968, “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida,” features a lengthy organ solo by group-leader Doug Ingle that makes a clear reference to church organ music in a very general sense (if also in a somewhat Phantom-of-the-Opera-like manner). Another Los Angeles group, Touch, produced an important self-titled LP in early 1969 that is highly experimental, markedly psychedelic, and loaded with references to classical music. Two tracks, “The Spiritual Death of Howard Greer” and “Seventy-Five,” are extended pieces in several sections, timing in at 9:31 and 10:58 respectively, and both cuts make frequent reference to classical music. In addition, “Friendly Birds” features an instrumental section that is clearly derivative of the piano writing of Ravel and Debussy. While Touch is generally unknown today, in the period immediately after its release the LP made a strong impression on Kerry Livgren, a young musician who would in a few years become a principal songwriter in the American progressive-rock band Kansas. According to Livgren: “Their songwriting, musicianship, and arrangements were quite an inspiration to me. They were way ahead of their time, and one of the best American progressive bands.” In the liner notes to the 1993 CD re-issue of the LP, band-leader Don Gallucci captures nicely the sense in which the album was made:

The Touch album was first and foremost a spiritual quest put to music; a search for the holy grail of its generation by way of sound. It was designed to go where no one had musically gone before in order to break down barriers and walls in the mind; to cause the listener to achieve an altered state of consciousness, not through mediation or drugs, but through music.

Another group that clearly influenced later progressive rockers was from the East Coast; New York’s Vanilla Fudge became well known for their extensive reworkings of pop hits made famous by others — a genre
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that might be called the “psychedelic-symphonic cover version.” Their 1967 version of the Supremes’ “You Keep Me Hangin’ On,” for instance, clocks in at 7:20, extending the original by almost five minutes. The group also produced trademark versions of the Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby” and “Ticket to Ride,” Donovan’s “Season of the Witch,” and others. The second Vanilla Fudge LP combined the idea of cover version with that of the concept album, producing *The Beat Goes On* (1968). The album features the leitmotivic return of the song of the same title, made famous by Sonny and Cher in 1967. One portion of the album features a succession of instrumental passages tracing the history of music since the mid-eighteenth century — an idea that was more ambitious in conception than successful in musical realization. Vanilla Fudge’s mode of extending simple pop songs through arrangements that frequently attempt to evoke the grandeur of classical music became a blueprint for much progressive rock. The first two Yes albums (1969, 1970), which contain Vanilla Fudge-esque cover versions along with original songs, make this connection plain.22

As psychedelia waned at the turn of the decade, the American and British scenes took very different turns with regard to progressive rock: in the UK, the early 1970s were a time during which the principal progressive groups began to mark their mark and establish their audiences; in the US, however, progressive rock did not develop out of psychedelia. The styles of most successful American groups and artists in the first few years of the 1970s can mostly be traced to markedly American styles such as folk (Paul Simon, James Taylor), country (The Eagles), electric blues (The Allman Brothers Band), R & B (Grand Funk Railroad), and jazz (Chicago, Blood Sweat and Tears, Steely Dan). It was not until the British progressive-rock groups began to enjoy their enormous success in the US that American progressive-rock groups began to spring up across the country. Most “Ameriprog” bands in the 1970s formed in the early to mid years of the decade and recorded albums in the period between 1975 and 1980; the principal British acts, by contrast, were already formed by 1970. Thus, while British progressive rock can be seen to develop directly out of British psychedelia, American progressive rock in the 1970s is primarily a reaction to British prog, and — Kerry Livgren’s acknowledged debt to Touch notwithstanding — not a development of American psychedelia.23 American progressive rockers for the most part imitated the principal British progressive-rock groups. But since some of the British groups were influenced in part by American psychedelic bands, the influence of American psychedelia on Ameriprog ends up tracing a circuitous route through the British Isles.

Most progressive groups in the US achieved no more than local or regional success. A few groups had some degree of commercial success nationally, and three of these, Starcastle, Kansas, and Happy the Man, will be discussed below. It will be helpful to pause briefly to survey the various regional groups, however, in order to get a firmer sense of the kind of scenes from which the more successful groups emerged. Figure 1 provides a list of twenty groups who, for the most part, recorded LPs in the second half of the decade. The dates from founding to disbanding of each group are given (where known), along with its geographical home and LP data.24 Almost all of the LPs listed were either never released at the time they were recorded, or were released by the groups themselves (all have been released subsequently by small independent labels). Only Fireballet and Ethos, who had contracts with major labels, were able to get their LPs distributed nationally. To be sure, one reason why much of this music was not picked up by a major label is because it suffers in comparison with the music of the major British progressive-rock acts. But it is only fair to point out that these albums were often recorded on modest budgets without the benefit of a professional producer; it is perhaps more accurate, then, to consider these recordings in many cases as demos for albums that were never recorded. The list provided in figure 1 thus provides a general but useful picture of the kinds of local and regional scenes that existed in the US during the 1970s. In each region, major British progressive groups would play the larger venues (large auditoriums and stadiums) as part of their North American tours, while groups such as the ones listed would likely play local clubs and concerts, sometimes getting lucky enough to open for one of the major groups.

**Groups with major-label releases:**


**Groups with small-label-released, band-released, or unreleased LPs:**

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Groups with major-label releases:


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Maelstrom (c. 1972–74), Fort Walton Beach, Florida: Maelstrom (1973, never released; Black Moon Productions BMFP02, 1997).


Sigmund Snopek, Milwaukee: Virginia Wolfe (1972; Music is Intelligence WMMS 042, 1994).


Figure 1 Regional American Progressive-Rock Bands in the 1970s

Starcastle, Kansas, and Happy the Man all began as stars on their local scenes, and each rose to some level of national success, primarily through being signed with a major label and garnering the benefits that come from such an association. Starcastle was based in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, and signed with Epic Records, who released the band’s first LP in 1975. According to lead singer Terry Luttrell, each of the four Starcastle LPs sold about 400,000 copies (Collinge 1994, 3), and the group toured as an opening act for bands such as Jethro Tull, Gentle Giant, Todd Rundgren’s Utopia, and Boston, occasionally headlining as well. The first two Starcastle LPs are clearly and deeply indebted to the music of Yes, and to a lesser degree to that of Emerson, Lake & Palmer. The first track from the first album, “Lady of the Lake,” displays many of the stock features found in much Yes music from the early 1970s, The Yes Album especially, and serves as a good example of what some listeners take to be an overly derivative element in Starcastle’s music. The song opens with the keyboards sustaining a sus-4 tonic chord in A, major (A, D, E, G) as the guitar plays a two-measure repeating melodic figure that emphasizes 5 (see example 1a). The bass and drums enter in stop time, and when the entire band kicks in eight measures later, an eight-measure harmonic pattern emerges that is lifted directly from Yes’ "Yours Is No Disgrace" (though the Yes tune is in B, and four measures in length; compare examples 1b and 1c). Further, the opening sus-4 chord is reminiscent of Yes’ "Perpetual Change," as are the bass and drums in stop time as part of the introduction. The lyrics and vocal style are clearly derivative of the style of Yes’ Jon Anderson.

![Example 1a](image1.png) Starcastle, "Lady of the Lake," introduction

![Example 1b](image2.png) Starcastle, "Lady of the Lake"


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\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example1a.png}
\end{center}

Example 1a Starcastle, “Lady of the Lake,” introduction

\begin{center}
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Example 1b Starcastle, “Lady of the Lake”
Despite these obvious similarities, Luttrell has downplayed the Yes influence, stating that "a lot of our influences came from classical composers — Bach, Wagner, Copland, etc… Yes, I'm sure, was influenced by those same composers, and the sound just comes out that way. When you write music with a classical flair and your instruments are the same, then the sounds are bound to be similar" (Collinge 1994, 3). Overly derivative or not, the tracks on Starcastle's first album nonetheless clearly display a concern for imitating the complexity of classical music; the group's arrangements are lengthy and intricate, and aspects of form, harmony, melody, texture, and rhythm all borrow at times from art-music practice. The group's second album continues in the style established by the first. The third and fourth Starcastle LPs, however, move away from progressive rock rather dramatically in an attempt to score greater commercial success with a more straightforward rock sound. According to Luttrell, "We tried to comfortably meld what we did with some degree of commerciality, and never quite hit the mark" (Collinge 1994, 3).

Kansas, however, did hit the mark commercially, and in a big way. The group came together in early 1973 out of two Topeka-area bands: White Clover and Kansas. Billing themselves initially as White Clover, the group at first made the rounds playing seedy bars and rowdy rodeos; by 1973, however, Kansas was signed to entertainment mogul Don Kirschner's record label and in New York to record their first album. Released in March 1974, Kansas featured hints of things to come from the group. Three extended tracks, "Journey from Mariabronn," "Aperçu," and "Death of Mother Nature Suite" clock in at about eight minutes or more apiece; the latter two of these run together on the second side, creating a combined single track of almost twenty minutes' length.

Song for America, released in February 1975, also contained three extended tracks ranging in length from eight minutes to over twelve. One of these, the title track "Song for America," is considered by many Kansas fans to be the quintessential Kansas number. The song begins in C major with a syncopated rhythmic figure set to an octave leap (see example 2a); a simple I-IV-V harmonic pattern supports a broad, lyrical melody that quickly pushes its way to El major, where the second phrase repeats the first transposed up a minor third (ex. 2b). An ascending sequence then circles the music back to C, as this entire theme is repeated. While the general character of the theme suggests classical music, the use of sequence in this excerpt — both in the initial six bars as well as in those that follow — makes the reference clear. The instrumental introduction continues with additional material, including the ascending A-minor theme that will ultimately close out the song. The rest of the track is made up of multiple sections, alternating vocal verses and choruses with instrumental passages. A reprise of the opening C-major theme occurs at about 7:27 and signals the return of vocal material.

Example 2a Kansas, "Song for America," bass introduction

Kansas' third LP, Masque, was driven in part by the band's desire to write a hit single that still retained the group's characteristic sound. Released in October 1975, the album was no more successful than the previous one despite the group's effort to enter the rock-mainstream. In October of 1976, however, the band released Leftoverture. This album met with tremendous commercial success; the LP reached number 5 on the Billboard chart, while the single, "Carry On Wayward Son," rose as high as number 11. Leftoverture marks the group's most extensive attempt to blend classical music with rock. "What's on My Mind," "Cheyenne Anthem," "The Wall," and "Magnum Opus" all make clear and sustained references to art-music practice, though at times the influence of ELP, King Crimson, and Gentle Giant threatens the distinctiveness of the band's style. The band's next album was even more successful; Point of Know Return (1977) hit number 4 on the Billboard Top Forty album chart while "Dust in the Wind" reached number 6 on the singles chart. These two albums taken together mark the highpoint for the commercial success of American progressive rock. The only American band whose success compares with that of Kansas is Styx, though they enjoyed their greatest success after turning away from their progressive-rock tendencies.

If Kansas can be seen to enjoy its greatest commercial success, then Happy the Man is perhaps American progressive rock's most artistically successful band in the 1970s. Indeed, while much American prog of the 70s is often viewed as inferior to that produced by the major British groups, Happy the Man is routinely ranked by fans and critics as among
Despite these obvious similarities, Lutrell has downplayed the Yes influence, stating that "a lot of our influences came from classical composers — Bach, Wagner, Copland, etc... Yes, I'm sure, was influenced by those same composers, and the sound just comes out that way. When you write music with a classical flair and your instruments are the same, then the sounds are bound to be similar" (Collinge 1994, 3). Overly derivative or not, the tracks on Starcastle's first album nonetheless clearly display a concern for imitating the complexity of classical music; the group's arrangements are lengthy and intricate, and aspects of form, harmony, melody, texture, and rhythm all borrow at times from art-music practice. The group's second album continues in the style established by the first. The third and fourth Starcastle LPs, however, move away from progressive rock rather dramatically in an attempt to score greater commercial success with a more straight-forward rock sound. According to Lutrell, "We tried to comfortably meld what we did with some degree of commerciality, and never quite hit the mark" (Collinge 1994, 3).

Kansas, however, did hit the mark commercially, and in a big way. The group came together in early 1973 out of two Topeka-area bands: White Clover and Kansas. Billing themselves initially as White Clover, the group at first made the rounds playing seedy bars and rowdy rodeos; by 1973, however, Kansas was signed to entertainment mogul Don Kirschner's record label and in New York to record their first album. Released in March 1974, Kansas featured hints of things to come from the group. Three extended tracks, "Journey from Mariabronn," "Aperçu," and "Death of Mother Nature Suite" clock in at about eight minutes or more apiece; the latter two of these run together on the second side, creating a combined single track of almost twenty minutes' length.

Song for America, released in February 1975, also contained three extended tracks ranging in length from eight minutes to over twelve. One of these, the title track "Song for America," is considered by many Kansas fans to be the quintessential Kansas number. The song begins in C major with a syncopated rhythmic figure set to an octave leap (see example 2a); a simple I - IV - V harmonic pattern supports a broad, lyrical melody that quickly pushes its way to Eb major, where the second phrase repeats the first transposed up a minor third (ex. 2b). An ascending sequence then circles the music back to C, as this entire theme is repeated. While the general character of the theme suggests classical music, the use of sequence in this excerpt — both in the initial six bars as well as in those that follow — makes the reference clear. The instrumental introduction continues with additional material, including the ascending A-minor theme that will ultimately close out the song. The rest of the track is made up of multiple sections, alternating vocal verses and choruses with instrumental passages. A reprise of the opening C-major theme occurs at about 7:27 and signals the return of vocal material.

Example 2a Kansas, "Song for America," bass introduction

Kansas' third LP, Masque, was driven in part by the band's desire to write a hit single that still retained the group's characteristic sound. Released in October 1975, the album was no more successful than the previous one despite the group's effort to enter the rock-music mainstream. In October of 1976, however, the band released Leftoverture. This album met with tremendous commercial success; the LP reached number 5 on the Billboard chart, while the single, "Carry On Wayward Son," rose as high as number 11. Leftoverture marks the group's most extensive attempt to blend classical music with rock. "What's on My Mind," "Cheyenne Anthem," "The Wall," and "Magnum Opus" all make clear and sustained references to art-music practice, though at times the influence of ELP, King Crimson, and Gentle Giant threatens the distinctiveness of the band's style. The band's next album was even more successful; Point of Know Return (1977) hit number 4 on the Billboard Top Forty album chart while "Dust in the Wind" reached number 6 on the singles chart. These two albums taken together mark the highpoint for the commercial success of American progressive rock. The only American band whose success compares with that of Kansas is Styx, though they enjoyed their greatest success after turning away from their progressive-rock tendencies.

If Kansas can be seen to enjoy its greatest commercial success, then Happy the Man is perhaps American progressive rock's most artistically successful band in the 1970s. Indeed, while much American prog of the 70s is often viewed as inferior to that produced by the major British groups, Happy the Man is routinely ranked by fans and critics as among

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Example 2B route.
the best groups the movement produced. Happy the Man recorded two albums for Arista, *Happy the Man* (1977) and *Craffy Hands* (1978), and it is with these records that the group made its reputation. Forming in 1973, the band moved from Harrisonburg, Virginia to the Washington, D.C. area in 1975. During the mid 1970s, Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia were home to a handful of progressive-rock groups. In addition to Happy the Man, Grits and the Muffins played clubs and concerts on both sides of the Potomac during the second half of the decade, and however were writing and recording there (though they performed infrequently). Thus, Happy the Man can be seen to emerge from a fairly active regional progressive-rock scene, and this is unusual for American groups in the 1970s, who were mostly reacting to the national excitement created by the British groups.

The D.C./Alexandria groups were influenced to some degree by jazz fusion, and Happy the Man was no exception; the music features extended instrumental improvisation (often based on modal scales and harmonic patterns), the frequent use of harmonic extensions in chord voicings, and a place of prominence in the sound mix for the Fender Rhodes electric piano, the jazz-fusion keyboard of choice. The group’s style also owes much to British progressive rock, however, and recordings of the group’s 1974–75 years (released as *Beginnings* in 1990) shed considerable light on the influence of the major UK groups, Genesis especially. It is particularly interesting in this regard that the group auditioned as Peter Gabriel’s back-up band in 1976; Happy the Man decided to pursue their contract with Arista instead of back Gabriel, and as guitarist Stanley Whitaker has suggested, the combination sounded a little too much like Genesis anyway.28

An example of how Happy the Man blended progressive-rock’s frequent evocation of classical music with jazz fusion tendencies can be seen in “Morning Sun,” a track from *Craffy Hands*. Composed by the group’s keyboardist, Kit Watkins, the piece is made up of two sections as shown in examples 3a, b, and c. The piece is in B♭, and the first section features a chromatic descent from A to G, combined with a chromatic neighbor movement of F to E♯. This short three-measure idea cycles back on itself through repetition, as both E♯ and G resolve into F as A is reintroduced above. The other section (ex. 3b) is focused mostly on the subdominant, as a simple inner-voice melody introduces the chromatic pitch class A♯ in the second and fourth measures, but more importantly introduces a C♮ in the seventh and eighth measures of the section. While the A♯ can be thought of as signaling a local tonization of IV, the C♮ creates two measures in which four of the six tones of one whole-tone scale are present. The whole-tone cast of these two measures is perhaps suggested by the passing chord in the second measure of the first section, which consists of three pitch classes from the other whole-tone scale. Example 3c gives the
two measures that replace the two whole-tone measures when this second section is repeated (this repeat begins in the seventh measure of example 3b). Here an A supported by a bass F brings the section from the subdominant to the dominant, preparing the way for a return to the tonic and the first section, which follows immediately.

Example 3a Happy the Man, “Morning Sun,” first section

Example 3b Happy the Man, “Morning Sun,” second section

Example 3c Happy the Man, “Morning Sun,” alternate mm. 7-8 of second section

These two sections are presented in a straight-forward manner the first time around; but after both sections have been presented, parts are layered on top of this harmonic framework, with Watkins taking a few of his characteristic MiniMoog solos and guitarist Whitaker soloing on the steel-string acoustic. Fellow keyboardist Frank Wyatt arpeggiates the chords on the Fender Rhodes throughout both sections, and synthetic strings sustain these same chords to provide an atmospheric timbral backdrop. Taken alone, the piece is perhaps reminiscent of a late-nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century character piece for piano. The soloing over the harmonic changes and Fender Rhodes accompaniment add a jazz-fusion touch, while the strings and Ron Riddle’s drumming — the tom toms are used to suggest tympani — evoke the symphony orchestra.

Ameriprog in the 1980s

As the 1970s drew to a close and new wave, punk, and disco became important stylistic forces in popular music, progressive rock receded from the commercial market. In fact, as Happy the Man were finishing the final mixdown of their second LP, the band learned they had been dropped by Arista. Whatever the group’s musical merits might have been, potential appeal to a broad audience was not one of them — at least in the opinion of the record company. Other American groups found it nearly impossible to draw interest from major labels during this period; even the British groups of established reputation were thought to be past their prime as major recording acts. As a result of progressive rock’s commercial demise, Ameriprog groups in the 1980s tended to have very different expectations from those of the decade before. Although mentioned above, Marillion had some success in the UK during the 80s, but the British neo-prog movement never made it across the Atlantic. Most American groups could never have expected to achieve the kind of commercial success that, say, Kansas enjoyed in the 1970s. As a result of this, many groups were formed on a part-time basis, with musicians pursuing other careers by day — careers that would not only provide a workable living for these musicians, but that could also help finance their recording projects. In short, groups became more independent of the music industry; and if the industry was not much interested in their music, that meant bands did not need to be as much concerned about their music’s commercial appeal as they might otherwise have been.

This combination of factors led to more experimental and avant-garde tendencies in 1980s than had been the case for 1970s Ameriprog. While the major British progressive groups had blended classical music with rock, the classical styles from which they tended to draw were those of
two measures that replace the two whole-tone measures when this second section is repeated (this repeat begins in the seventh measure of example 3b). Here an A supported by a bass F brings the section from the subdominant to the dominant, preparing the way for a return to the tonic and the first section, which follows immediately.

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This combination of factors led to more experimental and avant-garde tendencies in 1980s than had been the case for 1970s Ameriprog. While the major British progressive groups had blended classical music with rock, the classical styles from which they tended to draw were those of
the standard tonal-music repertory from Bach to Brahms (perhaps also including Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Copland). Since the days of psychedelia, however, there had always been groups that experimented with applying more avant-garde musical approaches to rock, drawn both from cutting-edge art music and jazz. Principal among these groups were Britain’s Soft Machine, Egg, and later Henry Cow. On the continent, Univers Zero and Magma explored reputations for playing uncompromisingly difficult music, while in the US, the Muffins were among the most adventurous experimental rock bands of the late 1970s, winning the support of Henry Cow guitarist Fred Frith (who even had them back him on one of his solo albums). These “avant-prog” groups tended at times to employ modal harmony (derived from 1960s jazz), chromaticism, and even atonality. Passages or entire pieces were in some instances carefully scored and notated, though the practice of working up tunes and arrangements by ear through extensive rehearsals — the prevalent method employed by the major 1970s prog groups — was still a common practice. Avant-prog groups also explored free improvisation, sometimes in the context of a larger, more structured piece, and sometimes as an independent performance act. Figure 2 gives a list of fifteen American progressive-rock bands active in the 1980s; of these, however, 5uu’s, Cartoon (and later PFS), Motor Totemists Guild (and later U-Totem), Thinking Plague, Dr. Nerve, and Birdsongs of the Mesozoic continue in the modernist direction explored earlier by avant-garde rockers like Soft Machine and Henry Cow.

San Francisco/Bay area:

Cartoon (1978–84), moved to San Francisco from Phoenix: Cartoon (band released, 1981); *Music from Left Field* (band released, 1983). Most of the preceding re-released on *Sortie* (Cuneiform Records 55005, 1994).


Los Angeles


5uu’s (1984–94): *Bel Marduk & Tiamat* (U:R Records, 1984); *Bar Code* (Rotary Totem Records, 1985); *Elements* (ReR Megacorp, 1986); “Carousel of Progress,” on ReR Quarterly 3/3 (1987); All the preceding re-released on *Points of View* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 85, 1996); *Hunger’s Teeth* (ReR Megacorp ReR 5uu1, 1994).

Motor Totemists Guild (1981–91): *Infra Dig* (Rotary Totem Records, 1984); *Contact with Veils* (Rotary Totem Records, 1986); most of the preceding re-released on Archive One (Rotary Totem Records nml/MTG1, 1996); *Kiang* (Rotary Totem Records, 1985); *Shapunoo Zoo* (Rotary Totem Records, 1987); *A Luigi Futi* (Rotary Totem Records, 1989); most of the preceding three re-released on Archive Two (Rotary Totem Records nml/MTG2, 1996).

U Totem (1988– ), formed from members of 5uu’s and Motor Totemists Guild: *U Totem* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 24, 1990); *Strange Attractors* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 66, 1994).

Washington, D.C.

However (1977–): *Sudden Dusk* (Random Radar RRR 011, 1981; Kinesis KDCD 1011, 1993); *Calling* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 2, 1984; Kinesis KDCD 1013, 1995).

Boston


New York

Doctor Nerve (1984–): *Out to Bomb Fresh Kings* (Punos Music, 1984); *Armed Observations* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 8, 1987); the preceding re-released as one CD on Cuneiform Records RUNE 38X, 1991; *Beta 14 ok* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 26, 1991); *Skin* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 70, 1995); *Every Screaming Ear* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 88, 1997).

Denver

Thinking Plague (1980–): *...Thinking Plague* (band released, 1984); *Moonsongs* (Dead Man’s Curve, 1987); *In This Life* (ReR Megacorp tpCD1, 1989).

Chapel Hill, North Carolina


Figure 2 American Progressive Rock in the 1980s
the standard tonal-music repertory from Bach to Brahms (perhaps also including Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Copland). Since the days of psychedelia, however, there had always been groups that experimented with applying more avant-garde musical approaches to rock, drawn both from cutting-edge art music and jazz. Principal among these groups were Britain’s Soft Machine, Egg, and later Henry Cow. On the continent, Univers Zero and Magma made reputations for playing uncompromisingly difficult music, while in the US, the Muffins were among the most adventurous experimental rock bands of the late 1970s, winning the support of Henry Cow guitarist Fred Frith (who even had them back him on one of his solo albums). These “avant-prog” groups tended at times to employ modal harmony (derived from 1960s jazz), chromaticism, and even atonality. Passages or entire pieces were in some instances carefully scored and notated, though the practice of working up tunes and arrangements by ear through extensive rehearsals — the prevalent method employed by the major 1970s prog groups — was still a common practice. Avant-prog groups also explored free improvisation, sometimes in the context of a larger, more structured piece, and sometimes as an independent performance act. Figure 2 gives a list of fifteen American progressive-rock bands active in the 1980s; of these, however, Suu’s, Cartoon (and later PFS), Motor Totemists Guild (and later U-Totem), Thinking Plague, Dr. Nerve, and Birdsongs of the Mesozoic continue in the modernist direction explored earlier by avant-garde rockers like Soft Machine and Henry Cow.

San Francisco/Bay area:

Cartoon (1978–84), moved to San Francisco from Phoenix: Cartoon (band released, 1981); *Music from Left Field* (band released, 1983). Most of the preceding re-released on *Sortie* (Cuneiform Records 55005, 1994).


Los Angeles

Djam Karet (1984– ); *The Ritual Continues* (band released, 1987); *Reflections from the Firepool* (band released, 1989); *Suspension and Displacement* (band released, 1991); *burning the hard city* (band released, 1991); *Collaborator* (band released, 1994).

5uu’s (1984– ); *Bel Marduk & Tiamat* (U:r Records, 1984); *Bar Code* (Rotary Totem Records, 1985); *Elements* (ReR Megacorp, 1986); “Carousel of Progress,” on *ReR Quarterly* 3/3 (1987); All the preceding re-released on *Points of View* (Cuneiform Records RUNE 85, 1996); *Hunger’s Teeth* (ReR Megacorp ReR 5uu1, 1994).

Motor Totemists Guild (1981– ); *Infra Dig* (Rotary Totem Records, 1984); *Contact with Veils* (Rotary Totem Records, 1986); most of the preceding re-released on *Archive One* (Rotary Totem Records nml/MTG1, 1996); *Klang* (Rotary Totem Records, 1985); *Shapumo Zoo* (Rotary Totem Records, 1987); *A Luigi Futi* (Rotary Totem Records, 1989); most of the preceding three re-released on *Archive Two* (Rotary Totem Records nml/MTG2, 1996).

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Denver

Thinking Plague (1980– ); *...Thinking Plague* (band released, 1984); *Moonsongs* (Dead Man’s Curve, 1987); *In This Life* (ReR Megacorp tpCD1, 1989).

Chapel Hill, North Carolina


Figure 2 American Progressive Rock in the 1980s
It is significant to note that most of the 1980s American avant-prog groups included at least one member who was formally trained in composition, sometimes more. By contrast, only Gentle Giant's Kerry Minnear received such formal training among the major 1970s prog groups. This may account for why much 1980s American avant-prog seems more directly engaged with issues in post-World War II music composition than does most 1970s prog, American or British.\(^2\) A brief examination of music by two American groups, However and Cartoon, illustrates the ways that formal training affected 1980s prog. Both groups have their origins in 70s progressive rock and released LPs in the early 1980s. However emerged from ashes of the progressive scene in Washington, D.C. that had produced Happy the Man and the Muffins; the group formed in 1977, releasing LPs in 1981 and 1984. Cartoon formed in Phoenix in 1978, moving to San Francisco in 1980; they released albums in 1981 and 1983.

Peter Mark Prince, the principal composer for However, entered the New England Conservatory in 1975; he went on to receive an undergraduate degree in 1979 from George Mason University, later completing a master's degree in composition at the Peabody Conservatory in 1990.\(^3\) His "Beese" (composed in 1977 but recorded by However in 1980 and released on Sudden Dusk in 1981) is a good example of a carefully composed avant-prog piece. A setting of the poem "Beese" written by Prince's friend Mark Stuart Holmes, the piece is entirely notated in full score. The verse section (0:52-1:29, mm. 1-57) consists of a solo vocalist accompanied by a dense contrapuntal accompaniment scored for two saxophones, electric guitar, marimba, piano, clarinet, electric bass, and drums.\(^4\) After a brief instrumental transition, a second verse section (mm. 73-121) arrives at 1:47 and extends to 2:31, building to a climax at 2:11. Here the instrumental forces remain from the previous section while an RMI keyboard computer ("horn" setting) is added; vocal forces are augmented to five voices in four parts (two voices double one part in octaves while the other three are each assigned a single part). As in the previous verse section, the texture in this section is markedly contrapuntal. These two verse sections return later in the piece in an interesting way: after an extended instrumental section (2:31-4:12; mm. 122-170), the first section is partially recapitulated without vocal at 4:12-4:23 (mm. 171-188) and leads directly and without the previous transitional material to a partial recapitulation of the second verse section with vocals (4:23-4:32; mm. 189-199), forming a telescoped return of the previous material that leads first to the climax of the piece (4:40-4:45; mm. 209-212), and then to the coda (4:57-7:05; mm. 226-47).

The careful scoring of parts and the control of contrapuntal voices and form as they occur in "Beese" are compositional characteristics most often
It is significant to note that most of the 1980s American avant-prog groups included at least one member who was formally trained in composition. Sometimes, more often than not, only the major avant-prog groups received formal training in composition. This may account for why, in the mid-1980s, American avant-prog scenes were more directly engaged with issues in post-World War II music than ever. A brief examination of the ways that formal training affected rock and progressive rock in both the late 1960s and early 1980s. In the late 1960s, however, a huge energy had been felt, and the progress of rock and progressive rock in the early 1980s. However, groups that formed in the 1960s and have yet to appear in the early 1990s. The group formed in the 1970s, however, and the group formed in Phoenix in 1970, moving to San Francisco in 1970, they released albums in 1981 and 1983.

Peter Mark Prince, the principal composer for the New England Conservatory in 1975, he went on to receive an undergraduate degree in 1977 from the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. His Beese (compositional degree in composition) was recorded in 1977 but recorded by Hall in 1970. The Beese was noted for its work on writing in full score. The Beese has been performed by the New England Conservatory in full score. A setting of the poem "Beese" written in full score. Prince and Mark Prince used two instruments for each section of the Beese. The Beese consists of a solo vocal, electric guitar, and drums. After the two instruments, the Beese was recorded at 1:47 and extends to 2:31, building to a climax at 189-199. Here the Beese is where the two voices are assigned to one voice per part. As in the previous verse section, the texture in this section is marked by contrasting vocal and instrumental parts, with the two voices each assigned to a different part. In the previous verse section, the texture in this section is marked by contrasting vocal and instrumental parts, with the two voices each assigned to a different part.
associated with art-music practice, though these features alone are not enough to distinguish “Bees” from earlier prog bands like Yes and Jethro Tull. Unlike the way in which most 1970s prog bands tended to approach the organization of their material, however, music is controlled in an often-detailed way by a single composer. It is important to note that Prince allows the players room to modify, embellish, or even develop their parts (especially the guitar and drum parts), and thus each player’s involvement in the finished piece is greater than might be if he or she were merely expected to execute a fully notated part.\footnote{The important effect of the “single-composer” compositional approach on progressive rock is that the role of the group is changed: for the most part, group members attempt to faithfully realize the composer’s intent, not to develop a complex arrangement. In this music a clear distinction can be made between the role of the composer and that of the performer, even when, like Prince (who plays a number of instruments on the recording), these roles are assumed by the same person. In this sense then, however, music—like much Ameriprog in the 1980s—tends more to extend the practice of groups like Gentle Giant and Henry Cow than that of Yes, Genesis, and ELP.}

Issues of form and free improvisation are very much the focus of four Cartoon tracks from their second LP, Music from Left Field. During the early 1980s, the band’s keyboardist Scott Brazziel was a composition student at the San Francisco Conservatory, studying with American minimalist John Adams, among others. It is perhaps not surprising then that the group came up with the idea for organizing the second side of the album according to the traditional four-movement schema of much symphonic and chamber music; the first track, “Bedlam,” is modeled on sonata form; the second, “Light in August,” is inspired by the traditional adagio movement; the third, “Scherzo,” is jocular and light; and the fourth, “Bottom of the Ninth,” roughly follows ABACAD rondo form. Of these four movements, however, only “Light in August” is actually scored; the other three are “improvised to a preconceived form.”\footnote{The blending of group improvisation with a refined and relatively circumscribed formal model like sonata form is potentially fraught with problems; but the group is able to avoid many of these by adopting the traditional forms they use very loosely. “Bedlam,” for instance, sounds in performance more like an ABA form than a sonata form: the A section (“exposition”) falls into two subsections, the first rhythmically driving while the second is far freer. Perhaps these subsections can be taken as first and second themes, but they ultimately do not act in accordance with traditional expectations within the form; the second A section does indeed bring both themes back as in sonata form, but this return does not resolve any tonal, motivic, rhythmic, or structural issues previously set up in the exposition or development. The forms are perhaps better understood as a convenient way of organizing improvised material. The traditional sonata-form layout in this case creates sections that lead from one to another and these sections contain certain loosely predefined kinds of music. Like any kind of improvised music, there are as many potential versions of these pieces as there are performances of it. Still, the fact that the group engages traditional formal types in a post-tonal context already shows an awareness of an issue in twentieth-century composition that goes back at least as far as Schoenberg’s turn to atonality and his Second String Quartet.}

As the 1980s progressed, both However and Cartoon disbanded.\footnote{But by the middle of the decade, new groups had formed and were recording—groups that would continue to be active into the 90s and up to the present time. One such group is Birdsongs of the Mesozoic. Birdsongs began in 1980 when Roger Miller, guitarist in the Boston-area avant-garde punk band Mission of Burma, and composer/producer Erik Lindgren began working together to record two of Miller’s piano pieces in Lindgren’s studio. With the addition of guitarist Martin Swope and keyboardist Rick Scott, Birdsongs were playing gigs by 1982. During the 1980s, most of the music was composed by Miller or Lindgren, both traditionally trained musicians who scored their works for the group. In the period after Miller’s departure from the group in 1987, much of the composing has fallen to Lindgren. Like However and Cartoon, Birdsongs of the Mesozoic work to realize the intentions of the composer of any given piece, though a certain amount of freedom is allowed in the arrangements and soloing. While in the 1980s Miller and Lindgren wrote most of the group’s music, there is nonetheless a sense in which Birdsongs operated something like a composers’ collective—musicians working together to perform one another’s pieces.}

Another interesting instance of a composers’ collective is an interrelated group of Ameriprog bands: the Los Angeles-based Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu’s, and the Denver-based Thinking Plague. James Grigsby is the principal composer for Motor Totemist Guild, while Dave Kerman composes the music for 5uu’s and Mike Johnson writes music for Thinking Plague. In the mid-1980s, members of Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu’s circulated in a community of musicians called the California Outside Music Association (COMA), an organization devoted to promoting eclectic and avant-garde music. In the late 1980s, members of Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu’s formed yet another group, U-Totem, as a result of their mutual musical interests. In the early 1990s, bassist Bob Drake of the Denver-based Thinking Plague relocated to Los Angeles and became a successful recording engineer. He soon met up with Kerman and joined 5uu’s, while Kerman joined Thinking Plague (which continued to rehearse in Denver,
associated with art-music practice, though these features alone are not enough to distinguish "Bees" from earlier prog bands like Yes and Jethro Tull. Unlike the way in which most 1970s prog bands tended to approach the organization of their material, however, music is controlled in an often-detailed way by a single composer. It is important to note that Prince allows the players room to modify, embellish, or even develop their parts (especially the guitar and drum parts), and that each player's involvement in the finished piece is greater than it might be if he or she were merely expected to execute a fully notated part. The important effect of the "single-composer" compositional approach on progressive rock is that the role of the group is changed: for the most part, group members attempt to faithfully realize the composer's intent, not to develop a complex arrangement. In this music a clear distinction can be made between the role of the composer and that of the performer, even when, like Prince (who plays a number of instruments on the recording), these roles are assumed by the same person. In this sense then, however, music — like much Ameriprog in the 1980s — tends more to extend the practice of groups like Gentle Giant and Henry Cow than that of Yes, Genesis, and ELP.

Issues of form and free improvisation are very much the focus of four Cartoon tracks from their second LP, *Music from Left Field*. During the early 1980s, the band's keyboardist Scott Brazziel was a composition student at the San Francisco Conservatory, studying with American minimalist John Adams, among others. It is perhaps not surprising then that the group came up with the idea for organizing the second side of the album according to the traditional four-movement schema of much symphonic and chamber music; the first track, "Bedlam" is modeled on sonata form; the second, "Light in August," is inspired by the traditional adagio movement; the third, "Scherzo," is jocular and light; and the fourth, "Bottom of the Ninth," roughly follows ABACAD rondo form. Of these four movements, however, only "Light in August" is actually scored; the other three are "improvised to a preconceived form." The blending of group improvisation with a refined and relatively circumscribed formal model like sonata form is potentially fraught with problems; but the group is able to avoid many of these by adopting the traditional forms they use very loosely. "Bedlam," for instance, sounds in performance more like an ABA form than a sonata form: the A section ("exposition") falls into two subsections, the first rhythmically driving while the second is far freer. Perhaps these subsections can be taken as first and second themes, but they ultimately do not act in accordance with traditional expectations within the form; the second A section does indeed bring both themes back in sonata form, but this return does not resolve any tonal, motivic, rhythmic, or structural issues previously set up in the exposition or development. The forms are perhaps better understood as a convenient way of organizing improvised material. The traditional sonata-form layout in this case creates sections that lead from one to another and these sections contain certain loosely predefined kinds of music. Like any kind of improvised music, there are as many potential versions of these pieces as there are performances of it. Still, the fact that the group engages traditional formal types in a post-tonal context already shows an awareness of an issue in twentieth-century composition that goes back at least as far as Schoenberg's turn to atonality and his Second String Quartet.

As the 1980s progressed, both However and Cartoon disbanded. But by the middle of the decade, new groups had formed and were recording — groups that would continue to be active into the 90s and beyond the present time. One such group is Birdsongs of the Mesozoic. Birdsongs began in 1980 when Roger Miller, guitarist in the Boston-area avant-garde punk band Mission of Burma, and composer/producer Erik Lindgren began working together to record two of Miller's piano pieces in Lindgren's studio. With the addition of guitarist Martin Swope and keyboardist Rick Scott, Birdsongs were playing gigs by 1982. During the 1980s, most of the music was composed by Miller or Lindgren, both traditionally trained musicians who scored their works for the group. In the period after Miller's departure from the group in 1987, much of the composing has fallen to Lindgren. Like However and Cartoon, Birdsongs of the Mesozoic work to realize the intentions of the composer of any given piece, though a certain amount of freedom is allowed in the arrangements and soloing. While in the 1980s Miller and Lindgren wrote most of the group's music, there is nonetheless a sense in which Birdsongs operated something like a composers' collective — musicians working together to perform one another's pieces.

Another interesting instance of a composers' collective is an interrelated group of Ameriprog bands: the Los Angeles-based Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu's, and the Denver-based Thinking Plague. James Grigsby is the principal composer for Motor Totemist Guild, while Dave Kerman composes the music for 5uu's and Mike Johnson writes music for Thinking Plague. In the mid 1980s, members of Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu's circulated in a community of musicians called the California Outside Music Association (COMA), an organization devoted to promoting eclectic and avant-garde music. In the late 1980s, members of Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu's formed yet another group, U-Totem, as a result of their mutual musical interests. In the early 1990s, bassist Bob Drake of the Denver-based Thinking Plague relocated to Los Angeles and became a successful recording engineer. He soon met up with Kerman and joined 5uu's, while Kerman joined Thinking Plague (which continued to rehearse in Denver,
making for frequent long car trips between California and Colorado for the two musicians). As a result of participating in one another’s projects, these musicians have in effect formed a kind of composers’ cooperative in which who has written a particular piece can often determine the name of the group playing it (though there are several other musicians involved in the groups’ recordings as well). The music of all four groups continues in the avant-prog style pioneered by Soft Machine and Henry Cow, and according to Dave Kerman, without much knowledge (until the late 1980s) of the music of American precursors such as However and Cartoon.

A 1989 James Grigsby composition gives a representative picture of the ways in which these musicians tend to approach the blending of art music and rock. “One Nail Draws Another” appears on the U-Toten CD of 1990. Grigsby has scored the work for flute, bassoon, electric bass, piano, and three voices; at various points in the recorded version electronic keyboard, electric guitar, cello, and sitar are also heard, in most cases doubling one of the scored parts. The piece is typical for 1980s avant-prog in that its stylistic range includes both the pop/rock-song features as well as ones drawn from post-World-War-II contemporary chamber music. The piece is an extended setting (at almost fifteen minutes) of lyrics written by Grigsby; the music alternates between sung verses and purely instrumental interludes. The vocal verses are at times lyrical in a pop style; the setting of the words “one nail draws another,” for instance, is reminiscent of a passage in a popular Blondie song in which that song’s title, “One Way or Another,” is set to a markedly similar melody. But such pop-influenced vocal passages are immediately preceded and followed by passages employing free atonality, tone clusters, flutter tonguing in the flute, scraping of the strings on the electric bass, and complicated contrapuntal writing. A special feature of “One Nail Draws Another” is a section that occurs twice in the piece and is essentially a three-voice motet in three languages (English, German, and Japanese; see ex. 5). This section employs the medieval “Thomme arme” tune, and motives drawn from this melody can be found throughout the piece, both before and after the famous tune appears in the motet section proper.

**Echolyn and 1990s Ameri-prog**

I have characterized American progressive rock in the 1980s as turning away from the influence of the major British progressive groups of the 1970s — an influence so strong that it often threatened the individual character of 70s Ameriprog bands. The later American avant-prog groups embraced a more “composerly” fusion of rock and avant-garde art-music
Echolyn and 1990s American Prog-Rock

A 1990s prog band, Echolyn, incorporates several progressive rock elements into its music, including elements of classical composition and avant-garde rock. Echolyn's music often features complex structures, intricate arrangements, and a wide range of instruments, which are characteristic of progressive rock. The band's music is often compared to the works of bands like Genesis and Yes, both of which are considered to be innovative and influential in the progressive rock genre.

Figure 5

The music of Echolyn is characterized by its use of classical and avant-garde elements, which are often combined with rock and pop influences. This combination creates a unique sound that is both experimental and accessible. The band's music is often described as being both progressive and accessible, making it appealing to a wide range of audiences.

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practice. In the early 1990s, however, there arose new interest in 70s-style prog among American groups, fueled in part by the growing prog underground. Among the dozens of currently active bands that could be cited, groups such as Baltimore’s Illuvatar or Detroit’s Discipline continue in the 1980s neo-prog style of Marillion and Pendragon, a style that was very much influenced by Gabriel-era Genesis of the early to mid 70s. Los Angeles-based Cairo combines aspects of 80s progressive metal with keyboard-dominated passages reminiscent of 70s ELP. Also based in Los Angeles, Spock’s Beard blends 70s British prog with a strong Beatles influence and a high degree of recording-studio savvy to produce a highly successful and distinctive retooling of the classic British progressive-rock style. Figure 3 provides a sampling of twenty-one progressive groups active in the 1990s (note that many of the 1980s avant-prog groups listed in figure 2 have remained active in the 90s as well). There are thus two general but distinct types of Ameriprog groups in the 1990s: those that continue in the avant-prog style developed in the 1980s (with roots in 1970s British avant-prog); and those that return in some significant way to the style developed by Yes, Genesis, and ELP in the 70s (often called “symphonic prog”). What unites these two camps under the banner of progressive rock is that each attempts to blend classical music with rock: for the avant-progrers, the classical music of choice is twentieth-century music since Schoenberg; for the symphonic-prog bands, classical music is the standard chamber and symphonic repertoire of European instrumental music from Bach to Brahms.

Boud Deun (Warrenton, Virginia): Fiction and Several Days (band released, 1995); Astronomy Made Easy (Cuneiform Records RUNE 91, 1997).

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Discipline (Detroit): Push and Profit (band released, 1993); Unfolded Like Staircase (band released, 1997).

Enchant (San Francisco): A Blueprint of the World (Magna Carta MA-9006-2, 1995); Wounded (Magna Carta MA-9020-2, 1997).

French TV (Louisville, Kentucky): French TV III: Virtue in Futility (band released, 1994).


Illuvatar (Baltimore): Illuvatar (Kinesis KDCD 1008, 1993); Children (Kinesis KDCD 1016, 1995); Sideshow (Kinesis KDCD 1023, 1997).

Kalaban (Springville, Utah): Don’t Panic (Syn-Phonic SYNCD 5, 1989); Resistance Is Useless (Syn-Phonic SYNCD 11, 1993).

Leger de Main (Erie, Pennsylvania): The Concept of Our Reality (band released, 1995); Second First Impression (band released, 1997).

Magellan (Vacaville, California): Hour of Restoration (Magna Carta MA-9272, 1991); Impending Ascension (Magna Carta MA-1080-2, 1994); Test of Wells (Magna Carta MA-9008-2, 1997).


Realm (Kansas City, Missouri): The Path (Syn-Phonic SYNCD 9, 1992).


Ring of Myth (Monrovia, California): Unbound (Kinesis KDCD 1018, 1996).

Roots of Consciousness (Atlanta): Roots of Consciousness (Syn-Phonic SYNCD 12, 1993).

Spock’s Beard (Los Angeles): The Light (Syn-Phonic SYNCD 14, 1995); Beware of Darkness (Radiant Records RA-001, 1996).

Squonk Opera (Pittsburgh): Ha Ha Tali (band released, 1996).

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A Triggering Myth (Richmond, VA): A Triggering Myth (Laser’s Edge LE 1003, 1990); Twice Bitten (Laser’s Edge LE 1019, 1993); Between Cages (Laser’s Edge LE 1022, 1995).


Figure 3 American Progressive Rock in the 1990s

Unfortunately, one thing almost all of the current American progressive-rock groups also have in common is that none of them has a recording contract with a major record company. CDs are sold mainly through the prog underground via mail-order dealers and specialty shops; these recordings are generally not in local music shops and in many cases are not even available by special order. In this sense, the Philadelphia-based echolyn is an important exception; in 1995 the group released their As the World CD on the Sony label. Echolyn’s music on that album and the ones that led up to it synthesizes a wide variety of stylistic characteristics drawn from progressive rock since 1970 to create a distinctive group style. The music brings together the song-oriented approach of 1970s British prog and the composely bent of much 80s avant-prog. This mixture of musico-poetic sensibilities is the result of the teamwork of the group’s keyboardist Christopher Buzby and guitarist/vocalist Brett Kull: Buzby
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is a traditionally trained musician who sang with the Philadelphia Boys Choir and later studied composition as an undergraduate at Moravian College; Kull is largely self-taught, one of a generation of guitarists who took their lessons from Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, and Gentle Giant records. This contrast in musical backgrounds produces a music in which carefully composed (and sometimes fully scored) passages alternate with intricately arranged rock songs, and in which the tonal context can range from atonality to traditional tonality.

Echolyn formed in September 1989 with Buzby, Kull, and drummer Paul Ramsey; singer Ray Weston joined a month later. The group released its first album, *echolyn*, independently in 1991. During the recording of this first album bassist Tom Hyatt joined the group, completing a quintet that would remain intact for the next four years. Two more self-released CDs followed with *Suffocating the Bloom* (1992) and the EP... *And Every Blossom* (1993). There is a pronounced stylistic shift from *echolyn* to *Suffocating the Bloom*; while the first CD seems to be dominated by Kull's songwriting and a harmonic pallette that is more thoroughly triadic than subsequent material, the second CD features what would soon become the band's characteristic blend of Buzby's penchant for atonality, extended tertian sonorities, and sudden shifts of tonal focus with Kull's strong melodic sense and tendency toward tonal stability.

A representative instance of the salient features of echolyn's music can be seen in the first few pieces from the group's A Suite for the Everyman from *Suffocating the Bloom*; the twenty-eight-minute suite is comprised of eleven interrelated tracks that run together without a break (see figure 4). "Only Twelve" serves as the instrumental introduction to the suite. Composed by Buzby, this brief piece blends twelve-tone composition with extended jazz harmony. According to the composer,

"The piece" starts with one twelve-tone row (violin) accompanied by a different twelve-tone row in the cello (played rhythmically expanded from the first), and then joined by a third twelve-tone row (viola) that rhythmically follows the first... Finally all three rows are joined by chords that harmonically place the tones in an analyzable chord progression, leading us back to the traditional tonal system most of us are accustomed to.

![Figure 4: echolyn, A Suite for the Everyman, list of songs and timings](image)

The measures Buzby is describing appear in example 6; the first three bars present a twelve-tone melody ("T3P1"); see figure 5), phrased according to a 3+4+5 scheme. This melody is repeated in the next three measures as the cello begins a second melody ("T3P2") that will take six measures to unfold the twelve pitch classes. The first melody begins a third time at m. 7, this time matched rhythmically by a third row statement ("T3P3") in the guitar.
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![Figure 4 echolyn. A Suite for the Everyman, list of songs and timings](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Suite for the Everyman</th>
<th>28:13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Only Twelve”</td>
<td>1:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “A Cautious Repose”</td>
<td>2:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Bearing Down”</td>
<td>3:49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Cash Flow Shuffle”</td>
<td>0:39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Mr. Oxy Moron”</td>
<td>3:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Twelve’s Enough”</td>
<td>2:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “I Am the Tide”</td>
<td>1:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “Cannoning in B Major”</td>
<td>1:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “Picture Perfect”</td>
<td>0:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “Those Who Want to Buy”</td>
<td>6:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. “Suffocating the Bloom”</td>
<td>4:03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 6 echolyn, “Only Twelve”

The measures Buzby is describing appear in example 6; the first three bars present a twelve-tone melody (“TₚP₁”; see figure 5), phrased according to a 3 + 4 + 5 scheme. This melody is repeated in the next three measures as the cello begins a second melody (“T₂P₂”) that will take six measures to unfold the twelve pitch classes. The first melody begins a third time at m. 7, this time matched rhythmically by a third row statement (“TₚP₃”) in the guitar.
The three rows Buzby employs are not traditional twelve-tone transformations of one another. There are important structural features that link the dodecaphonic melodies together however. T₃P₂ can be derived from T₃P₁ as shown in Figure 6. Thinking of the two rows in terms of their hexachord structure, one must first invert T₃P₁ at index-number 9 to produce I₃P₁. If the first hexachord of I₃P₁ is then rotated forward one place within the hexachord and retrograded, the first hexachord of T₃P₂ results. In the second hexachords, Buzby keeps the ordered segmental trichords from I₃P₁ to T₃P₂; after retrograding the <95t> trichord to appear as <t59>, the hexachord is rotated to begin on pc 9. The third row, T₃P₃, can be derived from T₃P₂. Figure 7 illustrates how T₃P₂ is first rotated to realign the bracketed tetrachords. The pcs in each tetrachord are then reordered to form T₃P₃. Thus, instances of P₂ can be derived from those of P₁, and forms of P₃ can be derived from forms of P₂.

As interesting as such organic connections may be, it must be admitted that Buzby does not seem to develop these relationships in any extended manner later in the suite; the row transformations in this case simply provide melodic and contrapuntal variety and do not establish a twelve-tone structural context. The melodic row material does return as the sixth track in the suite as "Twelve's Enough" (see figure 4 above), where it is engagingly recast instrumentally, but the dodecaphonic relationships remain mostly undeveloped. It is clear, however, that Buzby means to incorporate twelve-tone technique into a rock context, and it is his use of techniques often associated with avant-garde art music that makes this stylistic blending significant in the context of the present study. And as will be shown below, other relationships that appear in this introduction are indeed developed subsequently in the suite, even if the specifically twelve-tone implications of this music are not pursued much further.

Figure 5  The three rows in "Only Twelve"

Figure 6  Derivation of T₃P₂ from T₃P₁

Figure 7  Derivation of T₃P₃ from T₃P₂

Echolyn 45
The three rows Buzby employs are not traditional twelve-tone transformations of one another. There are important structural features that link the dodecaphonic melodies together however. T7P2 can be derived from T3P1 as shown in Figure 6. Thinking of the two rows in terms of their hexachord structure, one must first invert T3P1 at index-number 9 to produce I3P1. If the first hexachord of I3P1 is then rotated forward one place within the hexachord and retrograded, the first hexachord of T3P2 results. In the second hexachords, Buzby keeps the ordered segmental trichords from I3P1 to T3P2; after retrograding the <9 5 1> trichord to appear as <5 1 9>, the hexachord is rotated to begin on pc 9. The third row, T3P3, can be derived from T3P2. Figure 7 illustrates how T3P2 is first rotated to realign the bracketed tetrachords. The pcs in each tetrachord are then reordered to form T3P3. Thus, instances of P2 can be derived from those of P1, and forms of P3 can be derived from forms of P2.

[Table and diagram text]

Figure 5 The three rows in “Only Twelve”

As interesting as such organic connections may be, it must be admitted that Buzby does not seem to develop these relationships in any extended manner later in the suite; the row transformations in this case simply provide melodic and contrapuntal variety and do not establish a twelve-tone structural context. The melodic row material does return as the sixth track in the suite as “Twelve’s Enough” (see figure 4 above), where it is engagingly recast instrumentally, but the dodecaphonic relationships remain mostly undeveloped. It is clear, however, that Buzby means to incorporate twelve-tone technique into a rock context, and it is his use of techniques often associated with avant-garde art music that makes this stylistic blending significant in the context of the present study. And as will be shown below, other relationships that appear in this introduction are indeed developed subsequently in the suite, even if the specifically twelve-tone implications of this music are not pursued much further.

The music that follows (mm. 10–16) sets the third of the three twelve-tone melodies in a highly chromatic tonal context. The passage wanders from one extended harmony to another, with priority given to chromatic-third relationships between chords (see brackets below the harmonic analysis in example 6 above); E major add-6 (m. 10) and A minor 13 (m. 11) chords, for instance, cannot coexist diatonically within any single key. The root movement by major third that occurs between these two chords is repeated between the subsequent chord pair with roots on G and B, and as a diminished fourth in the chords that follow with roots on F and C#. B and E., “Only Twelve” ultimately comes to rest in E minor, as the first song in the suite. “A Cautious Repose,” begins. In Buzby’s harmonization of T3P3 in “Only Twelve,” the melody tones do not always fit in comfortably with the extended tertian harmonies that immediately support them; this tendency toward an “outside” tonal setting, together with the chromaticism of the dodecaphonic melody, lends a dissonant-yet-tonal character to the music that conjures up the stylistic world of third-stream jazz as much as it does art music.

As mentioned above, “A Cautious Repose” is in E minor, and after a short vamp on the tonic chord the first two verses are presented, sung in three-part vocal harmony to the standard rock-band accompaniment of guitar, bass, keyboards, and drums. As shown in the reduction in example 7, the harmonic scheme for these verses is based on descending diatonic thirds that cycle through I - vi - IV - ii in E. Here Buzby and co-writer Brett Kull would seem to be offering a tonally stable and markedly diatonic response to the wandering chromatic thirds of “Only Twelve.” The topic of third-related sonorities is further taken up in the instrumental
interlude that links the verses to the bridge (see ex. 8). After the final E, chord of the second verse, the interlude begins with an F#-major sonority that ultimately moves to a D major-seventh chord; thus both El major to F# major as well as F# major to D major seventh work out the chromatic-third idea introduced earlier and offer a contrast to the diatonic thirds employed in the harmonic structure of the verse sections. The bridge also takes up the musical issue of third-related sonorities (see ex. 9); here the overall harmonic movement from a B minor-seventh chord to an El major-seventh sonority not only develops the chromatic-third topic that was addressed in the interlude, but it also returns to the identical chromatic-third relationship that introduced the song at the conclusion of “Only Twelve.”

Example 7 echolyn, “A Cautious Repose,” reduction of harmonic progression in verse

Example 8 echolyn, “A Cautious Repose,” interlude linking verse to bridge

Example 9 echolyn, “A Cautious Repose,” bridge

“A Cautious Repose” thus takes up the harmonic issue of the diatonic-versus the chromatic-third relationship. The binary opposition of these two types of relationship is nearly reconciled at the conclusion of the song (ex. 10). As the final verse concludes, a deceptive move to the borrowed VI chord, Cmaj, major occurs. After the VI is led through a borrowed iv chord, a V-I cadence brings the verse and the song to an end. In this standard harmonic gesture of delayed cadential expectation, the B to El, chromatic-third relationship is recast within the context of a stable El-major tonality; the enharmonically equivalent Cmaj-major chord stands in for the B-major sonority, and the earlier opposition of the two chords is transformed into a chromatic inflection of the diatonic I-vi harmonic movement that permeates the verse sections of the song. Thus the song develops a limited set of relationships and ultimately comes to a kind of closure at the end—a poetic strategy that is certainly borrowed from nineteenth-century instrumental art music.

The next song of the suite, “Bearing Down,” begins with a melodic figure played by the organ that reinterprets the pcs of the verse sections of “A Cautious Repose,” but here in a G-minor context that features frequent use of the $i^3$ and suggests the Phrygian mode. Of course, G minor is connected to El major through a diatonic-third relationship, and in the context of our analysis so far and combined with a clear instance of motivic reworking in the organ part, it is significant that this third piece in the echolyn suite continues to work out ideas set up earlier in the work. In fact, as the verse of “Bearing Down” begins an accompanimental line in the guitar enters that is clearly derived from the figure that led into “A Cautious Repose.” It is also worth noting that the bridge section of “Bearing Down” is centered tonally on B Mixolydian, and the last chord of the bridge, B minor seventh, leads directly to the G-minor chord that begins the next verse, further developing the chromatic-third topic. In this instance it is clear that the organic reworking of earlier ideas continues in subsequent pieces within the suite, and again this compositional practice is descended from classical music.

Further investigation of the echolyn suite would reveal similar kinds of motivic and harmonic relationships and organic processes; but the
of relationship is nearly reconciled at the conclusion of the song (ex. 10). As the final verse concludes, a deceptive move to the borrowed vi VI chord, C6 major occurs. After the VI is led through a borrowed iv chord, a V - I cadence brings the verse and the song to an end. In this standard harmonic gesture of delayed cadential expectation, the B to E6 major-seventh relationship is recast within the context of a stable El major tonality; the enharmonically equivalent C6-major chord stands in for the B-major sonority, and the earlier opposition of the two chords is transformed into a chromatic inflection of the diatonic I - vi harmonic movement that permeates the verse sections of the song. Thus the song develops a limited set of relationships and ultimately comes to a kind of closure at the end—a poetic strategy that is certainly borrowed from nineteenth-century instrumental art music.

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present discussion will suffice to indicate how the group incorporates aspects of classical-music composition into a rock context. Like the 1970s British groups, the suite is organized around songs that are embellished and stitched together with musical interludes. The lyrics of the songs contained in the suite deal with the relationship of rock musicians to the music business, and angry titles like “Cash Flow Shuffle” and “Mr. Oxy Moron” reveal a sense of frustration on the group’s part with the record-company representatives with whom they have had (mostly unsuccessful) dealings. The suite is centered on the topic of remaining true to one’s musical ideals and not selling out in hopes of achieving fame and glory. But like the American avant-prog groups of the 1980s, echolyn also employs a degree of compositional control that is certainly due in large part to Buzby’s formal training in composition. In some ways, echolyn picks up where groups like Yes and Emerson, Lake & Palmer left off in the late 1970s: they not only employ compositional techniques drawn from nineteenth-century symphonic and chamber music, but they also engage atonality, serialism, and extended tonality. It is this blend of avant-prog and symphonic-prog tendencies that is the distinguishing feature of echolyn music.42

While A Suite for the Everyman offers a clear instance of a lengthy work that is unified by both structural and poetic means, the poetic topic of this suite is not as much in keeping with the practice of the 1970s British groups as the musical structure is. In fact, most Ameriprog does not address the same kinds of philosophical questions as the classic British prog does (Kansas is an important exception in this regard). As mentioned at the beginning of this study, Yes, Genesis, and Jethro Tull addressed grand philosophical and spiritual issues in large-scale works such as Tales from Topographic Oceans, A Lamb Lies Down on Broadway, and A Passion Play. An example of echolyn taking on such a topic is the group’s Letters from As the World. Letters consists of five pieces played without pause to create a suite that is over twenty minutes in length (see figure 8). Reminiscent of similar themes taken up by the 1970s British bands, the five songs of Letters deal with the progress of one’s life, covering stages from childhood to old age and death. Brett Kull remarks that “these five songs represent our choices in life and how we are accountable for them”; Chris Buzby casts the work’s theme in the form of a question: “as each of us approach the final moment of judgment, how will we face and defend a lifetime’s worth of actions and words?” (echolyn 1995, 24). The third piece, “My Dear Wormwood,” is directly inspired by C. S. Lewis’s The Screwtape Letters: a devil-in-training is given advice on winning the soul of his mortal charge. The final song, “One for the Show,” reflects on the meaning of life as viewed by one already departed and viewing his/her life in the afterworld.

Letters begins musically much as A Suite for the Everyman does; example 11 shows the first several bars of “Prose” as Buzby originally composed them for string quartet (these bars appear reworked somewhat in the finished piece, mostly to affect a repeat of the first four bars). Here again one may note Buzby’s concern for projecting a contrapuntal texture. Instead of employing twelve-tone melodic lines in an atonal context, however, in this excerpt the music is loosely in E major; the initial two bars employ an exchange between the tonic and leading-tone-seventh sonorities, clearly establishing the home key. The third and fourth measures in example 11 are based on a IV6-VIV6-V harmonic movement, though dissonance is treated very freely, suggesting the open kind of pandiatonicism characteristic of the music of jazz musicians such as Lyle Mays and Pat Metheny. The last two measures feature a movement from III to IV, and then to a chord that might be taken as the applied dominant to the diatonic mediant sonority.43 Though such a sonority might seem to signal a change of key, the music that immediately follows it in the piece returns directly to E major, though these passages quickly turn chromatic. A rapid succession of tonal centers, employing extended tertian harmonies in much the same manner as was found in the dense harmonic passages in “Only Twelve” (see ex. 6 above), further reinforce the stylistic influence of contemporary jazz practice on “Prose.” The piece ultimately comes to a close by returning to E major, however, and “A Short Essay” begins.

Unlike the pieces in A Suite for the Everyman, the songs in Letters tend not to be firmly linked motivically. Musical material does return across the suite, however, and perhaps the most pronounced instance of this in the beginning of “Prose” returns as accompaniment to the chorus of “A Short Essay” (at 0:25 of the latter, and again later in the piece). Perhaps the strongest structural feature binding the five pieces together is the suite’s general key scheme. As mentioned, the first two pieces are in E major. The third piece, “My Dear Wormwood” is mostly in D, while the fourth, “Entry” is in B major, with a contrasting section in F. The fifth and final song, “One for the Show,” returns to E major; the suite as a whole can be heard in E major. Letters is thus structured as a well-coordinated medley, in which songs are loosely related musically but fit around a
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Conclusion

In any case, skill and planning can be very different sounding groups.

Echolyn’s music can be seen to blend aspects of 1970’s symphonic rock and 'progressive rock' of the mid-1980’s and early '90’s, with aspects of 1990’s rock fusion. The Echolyn group's work reflects a blend of symphonic rock, jazz-fusion, and prog rock elements, resulting in a sound that is unique and distinct. The group's approach to music is characterized by its blend of different styles, creating a sound that is both innovative and accessible.

Example II, “Feast,” Buzby’s original version for string quartet
central theme. There are other tracks on *As the World*, however, that feature Buzby’s composerly bent, and perhaps the best instance of this are the tracks called “The Wiblet” and “Audio Verité.” “The Wiblet” is a 47-second instrumental introduction to “Audio Verité” and had its origins in a concert work Buzby had written in college; according to Buzby, “…we took a small section from the third movement and expanded on it. It is loaded with twelve tone, bi-tonality, atonality, and lots of humor…” (echolyn 1995, 38–9).

From March 1995 to the end of the year, many fans inside the prog underground hoped echolyn’s *As the World* would be a break-through album for the group and for the movement as a whole. Echolyn had, after all, achieved something that no avowedly progressive-rock group had been able to do since the mid-1980s: they had a recording contract with a major label. But in a manner similar to events surrounding Happy the Man almost two decades earlier, the band was dumped by Sony in late summer, 1995, and this move precipitated the dissolution of the group; bassist Tom Hyatt quit the band in September, followed by Buzby in October. Though one album would follow in 1996 (made up of unreleased and live tracks and appearing on Greg Walker’s Syn-Phonic label), echolyn was no more. The three remaining members of echolyn, Kull, Weston, and Ramsey released an album in 1997 under the name Still. Buzby has gone on to form a new group called Finneus Gauge that also released an album in 1997. Still’s music takes elements from the echolyn style and blends them with a strong component of alternative rock; Finneus Gauge is even more influenced by jazz-fusion than echolyn was. If the echolyn sound was a blend of Kull’s melodic sense and penchant for diatonic harmony with Buzby’s composerly bent and tendency to invoke contemporary jazz harmonic practice (as I suggested above), then in moving away from one another personally and musically Kull and Buzby have wholeheartedly embraced their respective stylistic proclivities. In any case, Still and Finneus Gauge are very different sounding groups.

**Conclusion**

echolyn’s music can be seen to blend aspects of 1970s symphonic progressive rock (use of structural characteristics from tonal art music, addressing grand issues and ideas) with aspects of 1980s avant prog (atonality, lengthy composed and scored passages). The group’s music could thus be understood as a kind of culmination of over two decades of American progressive rock, and there is certainly value in viewing echolyn in this context. It would be misleading, however, to leave the reader with the impression that echolyn’s stylistic blend is representative of
most 1990s progressive rock, American or otherwise. As indicated above, other currently active American groups such as 5uu’s, Discipline, and Spock’s Beard have each worked out their own stylistic synthesis of earlier prog styles. An understanding of the historical development of American progressive rock provides a rich background against which the band and its music may be viewed; a study of the music of 5uu’s would likely suitate that group’s music differently, but it would still draw on the same historical context, at least in part.

While there are important differences between current groups, there are also a number of significant contrasts that can be drawn in regard to the 1970s and 80s American groups. One aspect of 1990s Ameriprog groups that sets them apart from earlier bands is that they are at least to some degree aware of one another (and they are even increasingly aware of earlier Ameriprog bands). The 90s groups advertise their current CDs in the same fanzines, occasionally appear on the same bill at concerts, festivals, and clubs (even appearing sometimes on one another’s albums), and they share a common fan base. It is thus possible to refer to a “90s scene” in progressive rock, even if this scene thrives more in cyberspace (owing to the Internet) than it does in physical space. In the 1970s the only prog groups most musicians knew were the major British acts, and perhaps a few of the minor ones as well; in the 80s prog groups of any kind disappeared from public view (with the exception of the neo-prog bands in the UK). Today, any group with a web page and a post-office box can make its presence known to the prog underground and sell its CDs by mail order. In the 1970s it was very difficult to record an album without the financial support of a record company, and getting the record in stores without the distribution systems provided by even an independent label was next to impossible. This situation kept most of the albums listed in figure 1 above, for instance, from ever reaching most progressive-rock fans; these albums were either never released, or if they were, they were only ever distributed regionally. Tremendous advances in digital recording technology in recent years have made it possible for bands to record their music in home studios in far higher fidelity and at far lower costs than ever before. Combined with the growth of the Internet, these technological advances have played a significant role in creating a 90s prog underground in which dozens of new CDs are released each month and are available to anyone with Internet access or a fanzine subscription.

As was mentioned above, one clear benefit of the growth of the prog underground — in addition to creating a greater audience for musicians playing prog — is that it facilitates the emergence of a clearer picture of the history of progressive rock than was attainable before. Until recently, most popular-music historians have only been able to consider the most commercially successful progressive-rock groups, and these have been the high-profile British acts such as Yes, ELP, and Jethro Tull. The underground has made it economically feasible for small businesses to re-release albums by lesser-known bands, some of which were previously extremely difficult to locate, and scholars can now figure these albums into historical accounts of the style and its development. Materials for the current study, for instance, were gathered in the period between 1993 and 1997; this would have been a far more difficult task if it had been attempted even a few years earlier.

This study of progressive rock in the United States can only be understood as a preliminary one; there is far more music than the scope of this article will allow me to consider, and at least some of it is worthy of detailed consideration (as in any style of music, there is less good music than there is mediocre music). But this overview Nevertheless leads to a clear historical outline of Ameriprog. I have argued that American psychedelia significantly influenced the British musicians who would become the first wave of progressive rockers. While British progressive rock developed directly out of psychedelia, American progressive rock did not; 1970s Ameriprog arose in the emulation of British prog, and thus can be viewed as a kind of stylistic echo. When progressive rock failed commercially in the late 1970s, American groups arose that exhibited a closer involvement with avant-garde art music; these avant-prog groups often acted as composers’ collectives, with musicians working together to realize the intentions of a work’s composer. In the early 1990s, a number of groups emerged that were once again influenced by 1970s British prog, and this interest is in part attributable to the growth of a progressive-rock underground, while many of the 80s avant-prog bands remained active and new ones formed as well. Among the many Ameriprog bands of the 1990s, echolyn can be seen to bring together aspects of 1970s and 80s American progressive rock; in this sense they may be seen as a culmination of Ameriprog.

It is unclear what the future holds for American progressive rock, or even for progressive rock in general. In many ways the current underground continues to take its bearings from the major 1970s acts, several of which are still active to some extent. But as the members of these original groups begin to approach sixty years of age (as will occur over the next few years), one wonders what will become of prog: will the younger musicians continue the tradition? Or will the style transform into something else? Interestingly, the 1990s have also seen the growth of art music that engages rock music (and often popular music and culture more broadly). Fortyish American composers such as Steve Mackey, Michael Daugherty, Michael Torke, and David Lang, who grew up listening to and sometimes even playing rock music, are now incorporating some aspect of this music into their concert pieces. Performing ensembles such
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as the Kronos Quartet and the Bang on a Can All Stars have made use of some aspect of rock music or culture in their performances. It would seem that 90s prog musicians and art-music composers may be approaching a certain musical middle ground from opposite ends. Already there are points of intersection: Bang on a Can have recorded a work by composer Nick Didkovsky called “Amalia’s Secret”; Didkovsky is also guitarist and composer for the avant-prog group, Dr. Nerve (see figure 2 above).44

There are, of course, fundamental distinctions to made between contem-}
porary progressive rock and crossover, and it is important that one not approach Mackey’s “Physical Property” as if it were rock music, or approach echolyn’s Letters as if it were art music; each would suffer under such an aesthetic interpretation.45 But still, within the larger question of the relationship between popular and art music in American culture, it is tempting to wonder whether there really could be a music that would not need to be qualified as either pop or classical and yet be meaningful in some aesthetic sense. If such stylistic distinctions were ever erased for future listeners (or at least found by them to be irrelevant), perhaps progressive rock would also lose its stylistic distinctiveness in the bargain. It may well be that in order for prog or crossover music to be interesting, each must blur that line in the listener’s understanding that may be thought to separate popular and art music in American culture — to challenge the stylistic division in a way that causes one to hold more than one repertory in the ear as music-stylistic points of reference. It seems then that progressive rock may be at its best when it celebrates the tension between rock and classical music without ever really resolving it.

References
as the Kronos Quartet and the Bang on a Can All Stars have made use of some aspect of rock music or culture in their performances. It would seem that 90s prog musicians and art-music composers may be approaching a certain musical middle ground from opposite ends. Already there are points of intersection: Bang on a Can have recorded a work by composer Nick Didkovsky called “Amalia’s Secret”; Didkovsky is also guitarist and composer for the avant-prog group, Dr. Nerve (see figure 2 above).  

There are, of course, fundamental distinctions to be made between contemporary progressive rock and crossover, and it is important that one not approach Mackey’s “Physical Property” as if it were rock music, or approach echolyn’s Letters as if it were art music; each would suffer under such an aesthetic interpretation. But still, within the larger question of the relationship between popular and art music in American culture, it is tempting to wonder whether there really could be a music that would not need to be qualified as either pop or classical and yet be meaningful in some aesthetic sense. If such stylistic distinctions were ever erased for future listeners (or at least found by them to be irrelevant), perhaps progressive rock would also lose its stylistic distinctiveness in the bargain. It may well be that in order for prog or crossover music to be interesting, each must blur that line in the listener’s understanding that may be thought to separate popular and art music in American culture — to challenge the stylistic division in a way that causes one to hold more than one repertory in the ear as music-stylistic points of reference. It seems then that progressive rock may be at its best when it celebrates the tension between rock and classical music without ever really resolving it.

References


Recordings

The following lists recordings cited in the text that do not already appear in figures 1–3.


King Crimson. 1969. In the Court of the Crimson King. E. G. Records EGKC 1.
King Crimson. 1996. ThrakaTTak. Discipline Global Mobile DGM 9604.
Procol Harum. 1968. In Held Twas I. On Shine On Brightly. A&M 4151.
Percy Sledge. 1966. When a Man Loves a Woman. Atlantic 2326.
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Echolyn. 1993...And Every Blossom. Band released.

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Procol Harum. 1968. In Held Twas I. On Shine On Brightly. A&M 4151.
Percy Sledge. 1966. When a Man Loves a Woman. Atlantic 2326.
Yes. 1969. Yes. Atlantic SD 8243.
Zappa, Frank. 1968. We're Only In It for the Money. Verve 5045.

Notes
1. The two singles that made the Billboard Top Forty for Tull in the 1970s were “Living in the Past” (1971; charted in 1972) and “Bungle in the Jungle” (1973; charted in 1974). Each single spent ten weeks on the chart, peaking at eleven and twelve respectively.
2. See Covach 1997 for a fuller discussion of the influence of Hesse’s novel on “Close to the Edge.”
4. I would like to thank Ken Golden of Laser’s Edge and Greg Walker from Syn-Phonic for sharing with me their perspectives on the growth of the progressive-rock underground in the 1980s.
5. The Internet and World Wide Web have accelerated the growth of the progressive-rock underground. Adam Levin’s progressive-rock webpage (http://www.ari.net/prog/) for instance, lists hundreds of artist pages, CD dealers (some online), and news and information sources.
6. I offer these countries only as an example; Greg Walker’s 1997 Syn-Phonic mail-order catalog offers over 3000 CDs by groups from 37 countries.
7. Frank Zappa’s We’re Only In It for the Money (1968) offers a far more cynical reaction to Sgt. Pepper.
8. While Sgt. Pepper is widely cited as the first important concept album, John Lennon denied that the songs were any more related to one another than they had been on previous albums. The second side of Abbey Road (1969), however, was clearly a conscious effort—though mostly by Paul McCartney and producer George Martin—to create a medley of related tracks. For an extended consideration of the second side of Abbey Road, see Everett 1995.
10. In the documentary video, The Moody Blues: Legend of a Band (Polygram Music Video 082 779-3, 1990), Gweneve Edge, Justin Hayward, and Ray Thomas explain that the group were originally asked to record an album for Deram that would be used as a high-fidelity demonstration record in the marketing of the company’s “Deramic Super Sound” stereo systems. The original idea—as presented by Deram—was for the group to work up a rock version of Antonín Dvořák’s New World Symphony that could be played with a symphony orchestra. In the period immediately prior to this project proposal, the Moody Blues had been performing a 45-minute set of new music linked together by the central theme of a day in the life of one person. While Deram thought the group were going into the studio to record the Dvořák, they recorded the music that became Days of Future Past instead.
11. According to Paul Stump (1997, 57), Bernstein was so offended that Emerson had burnt an American flag during a performance of “America” that the composer took steps to have the American release of the record stopped.
13. In their live shows during 1969, King Crimson also had their own classical arrangement: a rocked-up version of “Mars” from Gustav Holst’s The Planets. See King Crimson, Epitaph (1997).
14. Similar festivals have also been held in Europe, though it is probably safe to say that the current center of activity for the prog underground is the US.
15. An examination of the 1970s “Euro-prog” scene, and the way this scene changed and developed in the 1980s and 90s, is another worthwhile study in itself. Since it lies beyond the scope of the present article, the topic will not be pursued further here.
16. In the August 1980 issue of Musician, McCartney is quoted as follows: “I think the big influence on Sgt. Pepper was Pet Sounds by the Beach Boys. That album just flipped me out. Still one of my favorite albums—the musical invention on that is just amazing” (Dowland 1989, 160).
17. Wilson (1991, 82–86) has acknowledged the tremendous influence producer/songwriter Phil Spector, and Spector’s “teenage symphonies,” had on his work with the Beach Boys. “Good Vibrations” was no exception in this regard: Wilson has described the song’s production as “grand” and “Spectorlike” (145).
18. It is interesting that musicians from various Zappa bands have been involved in the progressive rock scene; keyboardist and violinist Eddie Jobson, for instance, played with Curved Air, UK, and briefly with Yes. Guitarists Steve Vai and Mike Keneally are well-known within the current prog underground, with Keneally even offering his own tongue-in-cheek tribute to Yes (and Yes guitarist Steve Howe) with a 1993 track called “Faithful Axe.”
19. It is worth noting that the Grateful Dead’s long track, “That’s It for the Other One” (1968) comes close at points to the avant-garde experimental art music of the 1960s. The Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit” (1967) seems based on Maurice Ravel’s Bolero.
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20. Classical-music references can also be found in British-invasion pop of the mid 1960s;
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21. Livgren is quoted in the extensive liner notes to Touch 1969. These notes also claim
that Touch influenced Yes, though no quotation or reference citation is provided to
confirm this. In Chapter 5 of his Seeds of Change (1991, 58), entitled “Musical Influ-
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Electric Prunes. The latter group’s Mass in F Minor (1967) is another American proto-pro-
gressive album that can be included with the music discussed here.

22. Yes singer and songwriter Jon Anderson (1977) has acknowledged his debt to Vanilla
Fudge.

23. Even Livgren (1991) cites Gentle Giant, King Crimson, Procol Harum, and the Moody
Blues as important influences.

24. The list of groups in figure 1, as well as those on figures 2 and 3 that follow, are based
on my own personal collection of recordings; the list is therefore not comprehensive
and is constrained by the limits of personal resources. An in-depth ethnographic study
of regional progressive-rock scenes is needed and would no doubt turn up dozens
more groups and demo tapes.

25. I saw Starcastle in the late 1970s at Detroit’s Masonic Auditorium and at one point in their
show they used a lighting effect created by shining a spotlight on a rotating disk made up of
many small mirrors. Though I cannot remember the song they were playing at the
time, I can attest, as can anyone who saw Yes in the period between 1972 and 1977, that
this was exactly the lighting effect they used in their performance of “Close to the Edge.”

26. Note as well the symmetry that results from the initial move from 1 to 3 in m. 4 and
its inverse at the end of the excerpt, enclosing the sequential middle bars.

27. The first two albums by Todd Rundgren’s Utopia (1974, 1975), along with the first two
albums by Ambrosia (1975, 1976), certainly have marked progressive-rock tendencies
as well.


29. Gentle Giant is an exception in this regard, and again owing to Minnears training.
King Crimson might also be cited, as they made a reputation for free improvisation
in concert, especially during the 1972–74 period.

30. Other composers in However were Bobby Read and Bill Kopatish.

31. The influence of Gentle Giant’s Kerry Minnears is apparent in Prince’s contrapuntal
writing in this section, as well as throughout the piece. Thanks to Peter Prince for making
his unpublished manuscript score of “Beese” available to me.

32. Peter Prince informs me that when he brought pieces into the group they were
between 50% and 90% finished. Usually form, melodies, and harmonic structure
would be in place, but he would often work with members to develop their parts. It is
important to note as well that while “Beese” was one of the pieces that was mostly
worked out in score form when the group began working on it, the finished score was
completed only after the recording was completed.

33. This is the phrase used on the LP sleeve. In private correspondence (18 March 1996), Braz-
zieal confirmed the exact formal types used in the movements. He also mentioned that
the group used to perform their own version of a movement from Webern’s Op. 5: “we
played it as written but kind of rocked it out, people used to love it.”

34. Brazieal and two other members of Cartoon went on to form a new group, PFS, and
remained active through the rest of the decade.

35. The two pieces were “Sound Valentine” and “Pulse Piece,” and they were recorded in the
months of May and June, 1980. An informative summary of the group’s development
through the 1980s is provided in the liner notes to The Fossil Record, 1980–87.

36. Guitarists Martin Swope and Michael Bierylo (who replaced Swope in 1990), Rick
Scott, and saxophonist Ken Field (who joined the group in 1988) have also written
music for Birdsongs.

37. On a 1985 tour of Sri’s, for instance, composer and drummer Dave Kerman enlisted
keyboardist Scott Brazieal (Cartoon), bassist/vocalist Bob Drake (Sri’s and Thinking
Plague), and guitarist Mike Johnson (Thinking Plague).

38. Thanks to James Grigby for making his unpublished manuscript score available to me,
and also to Dave Kerman for informing me on the sources and functioning of these
inter-related bands.

booklet produced by the group that features commentary on the album by each of the
band members. The group also produced a similar booklet for As the World (echolyn
1995).

40. Thanks to Chris Buzzby for making scoring passages of this and numerous other echo-
ly pieces available to me. Row forms in this analysis are labeled by distinguishing
between the three distinct row classes that appear in the piece—P1, P2, and P3—and
by pitch-class and order-number operators that precede these identifications. Thus,
“TfP1” simply indicates the instance of P1 that begins on D#/Eb without inversion,
rotation, or retrograde; TpP1 indicates the inverted form of P1 that begins on F#/Gb.
Throughout the discussion, C = 0, C# / Db = 1, D = 2, etc.

41. Due to the structure of row classes P2 and P3, the hexachords of TpP3—[0 1 3 4 6 8] and
[0 1 2 4 6 9]—are present in TpP2, and through rotation and inversion (at index-number
6) one can generate the unordered hexachords of TpP3 directly from TpP2.

42. This blend is, of course, prefigured in the music of Gentle Giant: keyboardist Kerry
Minnears tended to write the “composed” passages, while brothers Derek and Ray
Shulman tended to write more song-like ones. Echolyn’s music is often compared to
that of Gentle Giant by prog-rock writers and critics and there is a strong sense in
which this music extends and develops Gentle Giant music. But as far as American
versions of Gentle Giant go (in terms of surface similarities of group sound in an over-
all sense), Yezdi Urfa (see fig. 1) is a much closer match.

43. The sonority found in the last measure of example 11 is common one in jazz harmony.
In most cases it will be taken as an Eb augmented-9 chord, and as a dominant-type son-
ority its likely resolution would be a major- or minor-type chord with an A, or D root
(the latter resolution arising from the common jazz practice of flat-five substitution).

44. Didkovsky’s “Amalia’s Secret” can be found on Bang on a Can 1996, along with David
Lang’s “Lying, Cheating, Stealing.”

45. A performance of Mackey’s “Physical Property” with the composer on electric guitar
can be found on Kronos Quartet 1993.
it builds up from a quiet beginning and to a crashing climax at the end, keeping a bole-
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