of a new genre,” citing the unique character of “the convoluted melodic lines, or ’heads,’ played immediately before and after the improvised solos on familiar chord progressions.” With these “heads,” “the beboppers made it impossible to hear their music as a version, a ‘jazzing,’ of some other repertory (pp. 424–25). This is but one of the many insights that flow from DeVeaux’s music analyses, in which technical explanation never strays far from social meaning.

DeVeaux uses Gillespie’s experiences with his “bebop” big band to explore the difficulties caused by the increasing gulf between art and commerce in progressive jazz (especially for African American musicians). Always the most practical and ambitious of the jazz modernists, Gillespie had to become more of an entertainer to promote his band, a development that created discomfort for critics who subscribed to modernist ideals of commerce-free art. A brief epilogue speculates on why the success of Gillespie’s big band could not draw along others in its wake as did Benny Goodman’s success in 1935. Despite the “insider appeal” of the new music, the music press wanted to champion the “progressive jazz” of Herman and Stan Kenton, with its more obvious connections to European concert music. But, DeVeaux cautions, this alone cannot be blamed for the failure of Gillespie’s group, as many swing bands folded after the war, and big bands that did not play dance music (such as Gillespie’s) faced even more obstacles.

_The Birth of Bebop_ does not so much contradict clichés of jazz historical writing as it reveals them to be clichés by fleshing them out with a richness of context and by presenting a multiply determined history. While this book avoids many of the historiographical pitfalls that trap those who chronicle the “jazz tradition,” the passing references to the emergence of other genres in the early 1940s, such as rhythm and blues, point the way to studies that would further destabilize a seamless “jazz tradition.” DeVeaux’s social history of institutions opens up the field considerably, as does his skillful connecting of musicians’ biographies to this history; yet by focusing on some lesser-known figures such as Howard McGhee, he counteracts the tendency to write yet another “great man” history of jazz. This book succeeds as well as any so far in its conjoining of close music analysis, social history, and the resultant “meaning” that emerges. The contextual depth, range of sources, and breadth and thoroughness of the repertory are dazzling and should inspire scholars working in a wide range of music fields.

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The past few years have seen an increased interest in rock music on the part of musicologists and music theorists. Every department, it seems, is either offering a course in rock music or planning to do so. A constant problem in planning such a course is not only finding suitable material for students to read and study, but also finding material that helps the instructor prepare for lectures. Until recently, musicologists have avoided rock music, and writing on the subject has tended to come
either from rock critics and journalists or from academics in such fields as cultural studies, communications, or sociology. But recently musicologists and music theorists have begun to weigh in on rock, and serious-minded books focusing on issues of musical style and history are appearing at an increasingly frequent pace.

In the writing on rock that has appeared to date, there have been areas of the rock repertory that have gotten less attention than others. Progressive rock is one style that has been largely ignored by journalists and academics alike; most historical accounts of rock, for instance, mention progressive rock merely as a kind of footnote to the 1970s, despite the overwhelming commercial success of groups such as Yes, Jethro Tull, and Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP) during that decade. It is into this context that the three books considered here must be placed. Each offers a history of progressive rock; one is written by a musicologist (Edward Macan), one by a philosopher (Bill Martin), and the third by a music journalist (Paul Stump). The interpretive concerns pursued by each author are often quite different—and only sometimes owing to differences in professional orientation—but after a long period of neglect, progressive rock has become the focus of some very careful and well-considered study. Indeed, when it rains, it pours.

The story of progressive rock that is usually told unfolds as follows: Progressive rock arises in Britain out of late-1960s psychedelia, and especially out of the late music of the Beatles. It is a style that openly attempts to blend rock with classical music; this combination can be found in instrumentation, song length, and compositional techniques, or in tendencies to virtuosic solo and ensemble playing. The Moody Blues’ Days of Future Past (1967), for instance, employs a full orchestra; Procol Harum’s “A Whiter Shade of Pale” (1967) features a melody and harmonic progression inspired by J. S. Bach; and the Nice (featuring Keith Emerson) became infamous for their flamboyant, rocked-up arrangements of Bach and Leonard Bernstein. By the early to mid-1970s, British progressive rock bands such as King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, ELP, Jethro Tull, Gentle Giant, and Van der Graaf Generator were releasing the albums that most critics agree constitute the high point of the style. As the decade wore on, however, punk and then new-wave groups displaced the progressive bands amid calls for a return to the simplicity of earlier rock eras. By 1980, progressive rock was as dead as the “twist” in commercial terms, and the main groups either broke up or retooled their sound to accommodate changed musical tastes.

This is the account in general terms that all three books relate in great detail, holding this broad historical outline mostly in common. But a number of more specific historical questions also arise that each author must confront during the course of his study: When does the style begin? What are the important bands, albums, and songs? When does the style recede? Has there been any important music in the style since its heyday in the 1970s? As might be expected, interpretations begin to diverge as these questions are addressed. But differences also arise because each author has a distinctive set of issues that undergird his historical account, and each ultimately addresses an issue that goes beyond establishing chronologies: How is the history of progressive rock meaningful today?

Edward Macan’s Rocking the Classics is the most musicologically oriented study of the three. Macan announces early in the book, however, that his study will attempt to move beyond the concerns of traditional musicology and encompass those of the “new musicology”: “the ultimate goal of musicology, in my view, should be to document the relationship between music and society” (p. x). Macan sees progressive rock as developing out of a historically and geographically specific social context: the British hippie subculture of the mid to late 1960s. Progressive rock thus arose from this subculture in late-‘60s and early-‘70s London (and southeastern England generally), and its principal features can be traced back to the values and cultural practices of this scene. As bands subsequently became successful in the United States, however, they no longer played the London clubs in which they started out, opting instead for large arena and stadium performances. This change of venue transformed the audience for progressive rock from a regional subculture into an international taste culture in which members...
tended to be brought together more for their stylistic proclivities in music than by their beliefs, lifestyle, and geographic proximity. Macan argues that studying the music alone would miss all this, while taking these kinds of sociological concerns into consideration helps a great deal in explaining, for instance, how the style became so wildly popular only to disappear for all practical purposes only a few years later.

Macan begins his study with an introduction that discusses his general approach and methods as well as the ground to be covered. Chapter 1 covers the prehistory of progressive rock, while chapters 2–4 deal with the musical characteristics, lyrics, and visuals of the style in the 1969–76 period. Chapter 5 offers music analysis of four representative pieces, while chapter 6 surveys related music styles during the 1970s. Chapters 7 and 8 offer a "sociology of progressive rock" and a response to the critical reception of the style, respectively. Chapter 9 surveys developments in progressive rock since its heyday, while a concluding postlude reflects on where the style might be headed. Macan's appendix provides a valuable listing of dozens of progressive-rock bands, detailing personnel and recordings.

Considering his stance on positivism in musicology, it is ironic that Macan is at his best in this book when he is dealing with fairly traditional kinds of music-historical issues. His first chapter exploring the roots of progressive rock in 1960s psychedelia is masterful; he is able to generalize across hundreds of songs by dozens of bands while keeping the social context in view in a way that enhances the reader's understanding of the music, the musicians, and the audience. Likewise chapter 2, in which he offers a reliable characterization of the principal musical features of progressive rock, again drawn from hundreds of songs. In this chapter his use of masculine and feminine to differentiate electric/electronic from acoustic timbres, however, seems somewhat pasted on and unconvincing. In this case, no "new musicology" at all would have been better than a dab of gender coding.

Paul Stump's book is in many ways complementary to Macan's. Stump writes from an avowedly British point of view and thus offers a history of how progressive rock unfolded in the United Kingdom; this contrasts nicely with Macan's interpretation, which in many ways reflects the American experience of British progressive rock. Stump is not a musicologist but a journalist; his writing is elegant, smart, sometimes irreverent, and always engaging. He does at times fall into the kinds of breezy, superficial dismissals of pieces that are all too typical of newspaper and magazine album reviews; his judgments are nonetheless mostly fair and considered.

The introduction and first six chapters chronicle the period up to the advent of punk and new wave in the late 1970s. The remaining four chapters grapple with the remnants of progressive rock in the two decades that follow. Stump is particularly good when writing about the role played by beat poetry and avant-garde jazz in the formation of London's 1960s underground scene—a scene that ultimately turned to psychedelia later in the decade. His account of how progressive rock looked in the United Kingdom in the mid-1970s when the most prominent bands were spending much of their time touring the United States is fascinating. Almost with a sense of regret, for instance, he writes: "The consecration of Progressive rock ideology was complete in November 1973. The counterculture ideology was gone; in its place was nebulous bourgeois acquisitiveness and Romantic rhetoric which, while not an artistic retreat, represented the primacy of the final, determinant and fatal phase of progressive development" (p. 156). The problem for Stump is large and ambitious concept albums like Yes's Tales from Topographic Oceans ("flatulent," "overblown"), Jethro Tull's A Passion Play, and ELP's Brain Salad Surgery, all released in 1973. For most American fans of progressive rock, these are the very albums that mark the high point of the style; for Stump, decay has already set in.

Despite Stump's broad and sometimes detailed familiarity with the progressive-rock repertory, his study is not scholarly in the way Macan's is; Stump's is clearly directed to a general audience. Stump provides an always-interesting survey of the music and the times, but mostly fails to take up specific historical or interpretive issues along the way. Perhaps his approach is best described as responsible music journalism. He does, however, frame his study with a
discussion of why he wrote the book and what he hopes it will accomplish. In his introduction he complains that progressive rock has been unfairly neglected in rock writing; his book attempts to initiate a reappraisal of the style that positions it more accurately in the history of rock music. He returns to this topic in his postlude, nicely extending his discussion to consider progressive rock in light of the cultural dialectic of modernism and postmodernism. He views the style as essentially modernist in its intent, “dignifying continual progress, rationality, discipline; it deals in universals, in truth, justice, and beauty” (p. 351). But because progressive rock mixes received styles so freely and without any sense of incongruity, it is “nonetheless a symptom of postmodernity” (ibid.). This is a striking idea that invites further exploration.

Bill Martin’s book contrasts with the others in many ways, and perhaps most immediately in its informal, even chatty tone. But despite the occasional self-indulgent passage and a general tendency to ramble, Martin offers a compelling argument for the importance of progressive rock in the present. Picking up on Macan’s remarks, Martin argues that progressive rock of the 1968–78 period was for the most part utopian. As an extension of the “sixties” (the term is used here to encompass the values of the counterculture), progressive rock looked to a brighter future, suggesting a better world that could be (thus, “listening to the future”). But that imagined world has not come about in the twenty years since the 1970s, and part of the value of ’70s progressive rock in the late 1990s, according to Martin, is using it as a source of “reconnecting” to these original utopian visions. Such reconnection might ultimately prompt various kinds of social, cultural, and political change. Thought of in this way, then, the “ideology of progressive rock” becomes more than a nostalgia trip into the past, and remains, as it always has been, directed at the future. Martin is brilliant on this point.

The heart of the book is the lengthy (over eighty pages) guided discography that serves as chapter 4. Proceeding year by year from 1968 to 1978, Martin leads the reader through what he judges the most important progressive-rock albums, keeping in view all the while other developments in rock music outside progressive rock. Martin has a good grasp of the music he discusses, and this extended chapter will be valuable to anyone learning the repertory. Unfortunately, the chapters leading to chapter 4 are frequently less useful; while there are many insightful moments, there are at least as many frustrating ones. Martin’s inclusion of music outside his core repertory in order to pursue certain interpretive issues often tends to lead to rather naïve interpretations. When, for instance, he tries to place progressive rock in the broader contexts of rock history (chap. 2) or the history of twentieth-century avant-garde music (chap. 3), his arguments are poorly grounded historically and consequently unconvincing.

The three books share a common weak point in trying to account for progressive rock after its disappearance from the commercial scene in the late 1970s. Macan and Stump each discuss the 1980s British neoprogressive scene at some length (Martin does not mention these groups at all) and all three consider King Crimson’s 1980s music (“post progressive,” according to Macan). But after that, all three authors have a difficult time finding strong ties to present groups. There is, however, a small but active progressive-rock underground made up of newsletters, fanzines, Internet newsgroups, Web pages, mail-order dealers, and all-day music festivals. Most important, there are dozens of new bands in North America, Europe, and Asia constantly releasing their own compact discs via this network. All three authors seem only dimly aware of this scene, which is clearly the link to the present each would like to make. To be fair, such a small underground scene is easy to miss. But new releases and rereleases of older, often obscure recordings document the fact that, to some extent, there has been constant activity in the progressive-rock style since the late 1970s.

Taken together, this trio of books on progressive rock will initiate a reappraisal of its role in the history of popular music. Each is a worthwhile study, deserving of a place on the desk any serious student of popular music.

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