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# SOUNDS



**GENESIS  
BREAK  
OUT**  
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# *Extra Genesis—but don't bother to apply!*

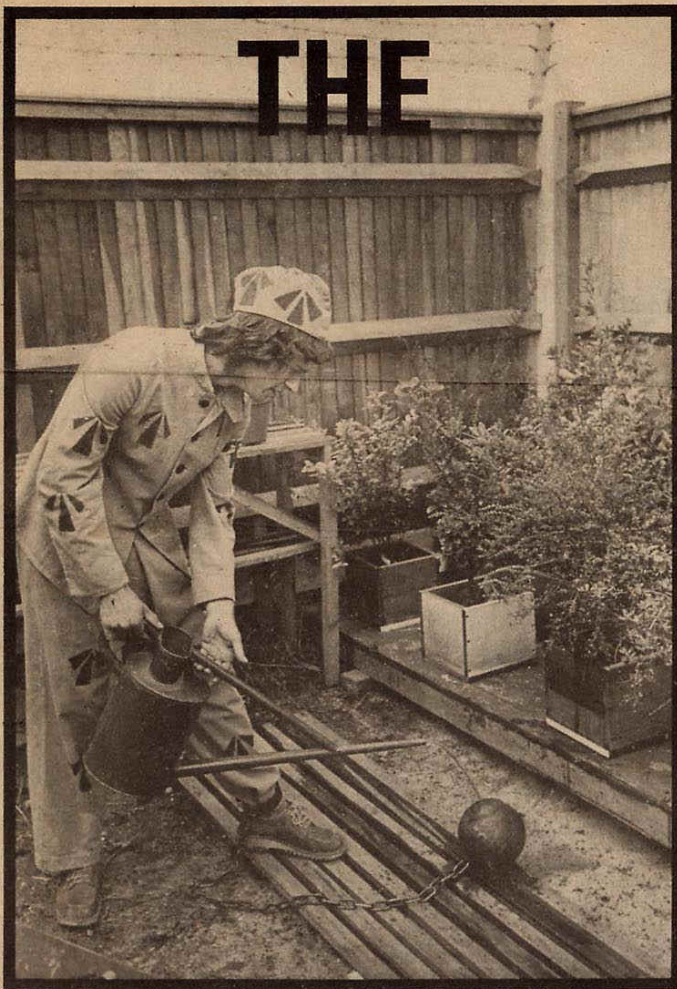
**GENESIS**, whose new album 'ABACAB' was released by Charisma at the weekend, have added another date at Birmingham's International Arena on December 23.

But with over three-quarters of a million applications for the previously announced shows at Birmingham and Wembley there's little point in fans sending off for the new date as the tickets have already been allocated.

The band's new album

will be available in four different sleeves, each featuring different colour variations on the same painting by Bill Smith.

**See exclusive interview, page 18-19.**



TONY, PHIL and MIKE: frankly, we're not too sure why they're dressed up like this, but it seems to have something to do with the cover of their next single, 'Whodunnit'.

## Have Genesis dumped pomp rock for funk? Is this the end of Alan Freeman as we

**"H**AVE YOU heard the album?" asks Mike Rutherford as we settle ourselves round a table in a courtyard at the back of Shepperton Studio Block G in the early evening sunshine.

"Goood," says Mike, metaphorically rubbing his hands together. We can get down to business.

The sense of challenge that surrounds Mike, Phil Collins and Tony Banks as they prepare to issue the thirteenth Genesis album is unmistakable. They know they've done something that's going to surprise a lot of people. They didn't set out with that in mind but they're not sorry now that it's turned out that way. And most important, they're pleased with the result.

Bands of the stature of Genesis have to make their own challenges. They know that this album will go straight to the top of the charts as soon as it comes out. Easy to start losing the sense of challenge and enter the world of big star paranoia. Which is something Genesis have never fallen victim to.

Few bands are as erroneously typecast by the rock media as Genesis. Branded together as part of the Yes/ELP/Moody Blues syndrome, they are regularly condemned out of hand by people who haven't listened to anything since 'The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway'. And because they fail to demonstrate their enthusiasm in the acceptable rock and roll tradition ('Dunstable Queensway Hall, you're the centre of the rock and roll world!') they are branded as boring old farts of no 'relevance' to the 'true vision' of rock and roll (whatever that's supposed to be this week).

Of course, Genesis are big business. Very big business. Inside Block G at Shepperton they've been rehearsing a show that's cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to set up and is about to travel round the world with running costs of upwards of £25,000 a week.

That's not very good for their street credibility... or is it? Within two weeks of the announcement of their British gigs at Christmas there were three quarters of a million applications for less than 6,000 tickets. It is reasonable to assume that some of these applicants will, when not playing Genesis albums in their bedrooms, occasionally be seen on the streets.

But outside in the leafy courtyard, surrounded by odd statues and other bits of memorabilia from Shepperton's cinematic past, Messrs Banks, Collins and Rutherford can put all of this into perspective. They work from the oldest rock and roll truth of all — that you're only as good as your last album and your last show.

**Y**OU'LL SPOT the difference on 'ABACAB' even before you hand your money across the counter for it. The cover is an abstract painting by Bill Smith, a stark contrast to any of their previous sleeves.

Inside, the music is identifiably Genesis for the

most part but the sound has undergone a radical transformation. The pomp and grandeur that has been a hallmark of their style has been replaced by a rough-hewn, almost demo-like quality. The drums clatter around in huge empty spaces at the back, the guitars whine and the keyboards, which normally wash over you with all the restraint of a tidal wave, emerge gently with more subtle textures.

Was this break deliberate?

"Not really," says Phil. "We set out with the idea of writing a lot of songs together and that's what we did."

"We didn't set out to write any differently than we have on any previous album," adds Tony. "We reckon each album differs from the last. This one had the added help that we used a different engineer, our own studio and we produced it ourselves. From the writing point of view we did it in the same way we wrote the group songs on the last album. The songs tended to evolve more as we rehearsed them."

"Duke" set the scene in many ways," agrees Mike. "It was the end of one era and the beginning of another I think. There were old songs and new songs and there are more new songs on this album. There are more changes. Our writing has changed a lot, even since 'Duke'. It's been two years since we wrote that."

"I find the lyrics have changed a lot too," says Tony. "We're doing 'Firth Of Fifth' again on this tour (pause while the imagination savours the full-throated roar that track will evoke on stage) and musically it stands up very well but lyrically I feel it's a bit dated. It's a sort of period piece."

"Ah, late Regency?" muses Mike, and Phil and Tony chuckle.

"On this album the lyrics are much less upfront," continues Tony. "We're not even putting them on the album. They are meant as more of an abstract thing, more a part of the sound. We've tried to take some of the emphasis away from them. Not everywhere, but I think some of them have been overemphasised in the past."

**B**ESIDES having a keen, objective sense about their own past, Genesis are also not without a sense of humour, despite what you might have been led to believe. I've already got the impression that they are closer together as individuals than I've noticed before, almost certainly as a result of the way the recorded the new album.

That impression is confirmed when we start talking about the title track and single 'ABACAB' which has already been the subject of correspondence in the *Sounds* letters page. Read on and you may or may not discover more about the title.

Phil: "It's very much a group song. There are bits from everyone on that."

Tony: "We got it by jamming along to a drum machine. The letters were originally the three parts of the song but when we finally put them together it spelt something completely different and unpronounceable."

Phil: "C is Friday."

Mike: "It's no use saying why it's called

'ABACAB' and then saying that actually it's not. Let's just say it's called 'ABACAB'."

Tony: "But it doesn't work!"

Phil (from the depths of his chair): "C is Friday."

Tony: "B is the Stones and A is the main bit. But it still doesn't work!"

Phil (patiently waiting for room to speak): "A is Booker T And The MG's, B is the Rolling Stones and C is 'Friday On My Mind' (the old Easybeats hit). OK?"

Tony: "And at the end we just jammed until the tape ran out."

Mike: "There's a lot of space in that song. People tend to think of Genesis as a wall of sound but that's a thing of the past for us I think. And actually, that's what we've always sounded like when we've been rehearsing for an album."

Phil: "The thing is, 'they' (he measures the word deliberately) used to go into the studio and clean us up. And we decided that we didn't want that and so we did it ourselves. We used Hugh Padgham as engineer who I'd met when I did Peter Gabriel's album and he did my solo album too."

Mike: "He was good. He was very brave."

Tony: "He had some very good ideas about the drum sound and got that very well (that sound will be familiar to those who know Gabriel's third album). He didn't know so much about the keyboard sound but that suited me. Dave Hentschel (who produced all the Genesis album from 'Lamb' up until 'ABACAB') used to be a keyboard player and gave me a very rich, full sound. I wanted to try getting the kind of sound I was used to hearing in the studio before it went into the recording machinery, which I was able to do."

Mike: "We never spent that much time getting the sound together. It either happened or it didn't."

Phil: "There was a big difference between working in our studio and going away to do it — which is what we used to do — and feeling that you had to keep up a schedule. We spent 14 weeks doing the album. If something wasn't happening we'd just stop and do something else. Before, we'd have felt obliged to keep on trying to get it right. There are a couple of songs on the album that would have died under the old method. But we were able to stop and come back to them later."

Tony: "It did take us as long time but we had teething problems with our own studio and we also wrote far more than we used. We could have done a double album but we decided against it. But we will be releasing a new single or an EP around Christmas so more will be coming out."

Phil: "But 'Me And Sarah Jane' is something we kept from the second day of recording. So we got moving pretty quickly. Hugh Padgham was really proud of that. It certainly didn't feel like a leisurely pace. We worked hard — 12 to 14 hours a day."

'Me And Sarah Jane' is Tony Banks' solo contribution to the album — each of them have contributed one individual track, the other seven are group efforts. There was a time when Genesis could be stilted and self-conscious when talking

about their songs, understandably feeling that there was little point in going beyond what they'd recorded — either you got it or you didn't. But Tony's description of the song is a clear example of their relaxed frame of mind.

"In some ways that song has quite a lot of the old traditional Genesis in it. But I hope it also sounds different as well. We started by playing one drum rhythm all the way through and then embellishing it with other drum parts. It contains some of the most emotional moments on the album, sort of shivers down the spine stuff which is something we've been noted for in the past, if you liked us. If you didn't I suppose it's a bucket of cold water down the spine."

More laughter round the table. They're cheerfully aware of their idiosyncracies, both individual and collective. Thus, Phil was able to exorcise a bee in his particular bonnet by putting a brass section onto one track — the Earth Wind And Fire horn section no less.

"We'd tried to simulate that brass sound on a couple of tracks on 'Duke'," says Phil. "So after I got to know Earth Wind And Fire when I used them on my solo album I was looking for a space on this album. They did a couple of tracks, 'No Reply At All' and another which isn't on the album. There could have been more but they didn't have the time."

"I was a bit worried that I was maybe pushing and putting my neck on the line if it didn't work. And Tony had some reservations at the beginning but we're all happy with it now."

The unreleased track is likely to be the new single and according to Mike it will be 'a BIG hit'. It's also something of a friendly wager between Mike and Phil on one side and Tony on the other but the odds are a closely guarded secret.

**B**UT WHATEVER changes Genesis may have wrought on their latest album, their live show will not be entirely devoid of the odd classic, to judge from the rehearsal that I eavesdropped on. And they are not radically revising their back catalogue either.

"We're not trying to change the old songs," confirms Tony. "It's nice in some ways to recreate the era. Because you're playing in a way you don't play now but did play then. It also means the songs stand up for themselves, the old and the new. But we've always done that you know. Except when we went out and played 'The Lamb' all the way through. That wasn't such a satisfying experience."

"It killed us," agrees Mike. "And I'm not sure you could bring some of the old songs up to date without destroying them."

"Oh, I don't know," rejoins Phil. "You can sing them better. I find some songs flow better for me now because I've got much more feel for them than I used to. I also find it difficult to set the clock back ten years when I'm drumming, particularly with Chester Thompson around!"

"Some songs do sound dated and we just can't do them," adds Tony. "We tried doing 'Dancing With The Moonlit Knight' (from 'Selling England By The Pound') on the last tour and we just couldn't bring ourselves to play the end

# ESCAPE



pix by VIRGINIA TURBETT

## GENESIS from page 19

with the band and something strong emerges. Suddenly you have that moment of magic and that's what's worth being in a group for as far as I'm concerned."

"It's not any frustration within the band that makes us do solo albums," explains Phil. "In fact the group has actually got stronger because we've done solo albums. It means we don't have to impose stuff on each other. You don't have to feel confined by a group you know, you can do other things too."

Tony: "All of us like to do other things, that's the point. And that doesn't just mean albums. It can be all sorts of projects. It would be frustrating if one of us wanted to concentrate on the band and the other two didn't but we're all agreed on how we work so that's fine."

Mike: "If you think about it, having been a professional musician for ten or twelve years or whatever, one album a year isn't enough for all the things you're writing. But what was exciting with this album was that there were lots of 'firsts' for us."

"For instance, Hugh Padgham was ill for a week and we were battling on, pushing buttons and dropping bits and pieces in. There were, dripping in sweat, pushing the 'record' button and hoping you weren't rubbing something out. We've all got these eight-track machines at home which we play around with and treat like dog-shit and it was nice to get something of that into the album. It was fun. We knocked down several taboos."

Tony: "We did several mixes of the songs — took them all the way through and then picked the one we wanted."

Phil: "That was good because it made us realise that there isn't necessarily a definitive version of a song, only how you choose to do it at that time."

**B**UT AMID the band's bubbling conversation there remains a niggling frustration that their efforts haven't been recognised by the press. Phil feels it most keenly. "It is frustrating when you're not something they think you are. You make a conscious effort to change and come up with something different and the reviewer doesn't ever bother to listen to it."

Mike and Tony are more philosophical about it. "Last time round with 'Duke' we were shot down on principle. In some cases the music didn't even come into it. There was a real set-up job in *Melody Maker*. The first column didn't even mention the music. It was all about ideals and what we stood for."

"But that's what he assumed we stood for," says Phil. "But he clearly didn't bother to listen to find out."

"I read that review about six months after it came out," adds Tony. "I couldn't face it at the time. In fact I thought some of the points he made were valid. But it was the whole standpoint that made it difficult to accept."

"I think if some of those people saw us live they'd change their opinion," says Mike. "Because they think we're an arty farty band with our heads in the sky but on stage they'd find us much more earthy. But having said all that I do it too. I've dismissed bands from way back and never thought that they've changed when they have."

"Like the Grateful Dead," chortles Phil, obviously touching a sensitive nerve.

Mike looks crestfallen. "I haven't got one to throw back at you," he replies. Then he perks up again. "Still, at least no one will be able to write this record off as 'just another Genesis album'. If they do I'll go and thump them."

Oi oi!

## know it? HUGH FIELDER investigates

convincingly. But other bits of it worked very well. Phil: "So we've started doing medley's now. Like bits of 'Cinema Show' and 'In The Cage'. We just join together the bits we like which are relevant now. I mean, we *could* just do a Greatest Hits show. It would be the easiest thing in the world."

Tony: "But once you start pandering to an audience it becomes transparent that you're doing that."

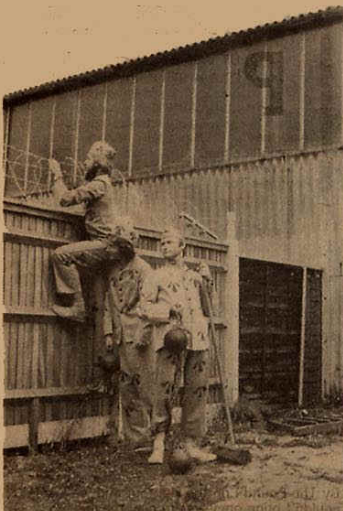
Mike: "I think it's a compliment to us live. Most bands who've been going as long as we have go back further than we do on stage. We do scarcely anything before 'Trick Of The Tail' now."

Clearly Genesis don't feel the weight of their own pedigree the way some people think they do. "I suppose that's true but I don't look at it that way," says Tony. "I just want to be judged on what we're doing now. That includes the material we play live as well as the latest album but that's valid."

"This is the contemporary rock music era. We're not talking about music that's supposed to be liked twenty years from now. It's supposed to be liked here and now. And that's the kind of music we're writing. We don't claim to be more esoteric than that."

"Oh, I thought we were," says Phil in a very small voice. He splutters and then bursts out laughing. "Sorry, I didn't expect to hear you say that."

"Ok," says Tony, "apart from Phil."  
"Our esoteric singer," adds Mike.  
"No no," replies Phil. "I agree with Tony."



**I**T LEADS us into a discussion of exactly what kind of group Genesis are and why they've been so badly miscast by the media. Tony's answer is straight and direct.

"Our production standard is high, the musicianship is quite good, there's a musical quality about us, the complexity of some of the songs — I think that tends to throw out that kind of image."

Phil: "I think in the past it has been demanding to listen to some of our stuff. And maybe that gives it the impression of being something different way."

Mike: "But that's true with this album, only in a different way."

Tony: "Yes. Different tracks will grow on you this time. Some you'll like at once and others will take longer. That's how it's been for me. But I don't think there's anything wrong with songs that grow on you."

Mike: "This time it's not so much the complexity as the change itself which is usual and hopefully original."

Not that Genesis fans haven't been softened up for the change over the course of the last three studio albums, each of which has contained noticeable differences from the one before.

"Obviously we feel they do," agrees Tony. "But on this one just about everybody ought to see the difference."

"In some ways the personnel changes helped us by giving us new challenges," says Mike, "but in other ways they were a hindrance because we became preoccupied with that challenge. You know, like 'the first album without Peter' and 'the first album without Steve'. Maybe if we hadn't had those problems we might have made the changes we've just made earlier. I don't know, I've only just thought about it. But I remember that when we did 'And Then There Were Three' I could think of nothing but the guitar parts."

"I'm not so sure," says Tony. "I think a lot of it is down to the fact that this is the first album where the contributions are almost exactly 33 1/3 per cent each."

"Which is a good reason for doing things as a group," adds Phil. "I find it gives us a real purpose as a group. We've got our own albums to do our own things on. This group is existing for what this group does best. What we want to do now is to write songs together, to throw ideas around. We used to do a lot of that in the old days. I think we got out of the habit of doing it for a while."

"I think that was because after Peter left we felt we had to prove ourselves as writers," chimes in Mike. "We felt underrated. Although there were group songs on 'And Then There Were Three' I remember it was very much a case of 'we've played my song, now let's play your song.' That's why I think we've reached the end of an era and gone back to writing songs as a group. And so the solo albums are vital to the band's career in that sense."

"Go back to 'The Musical Box' or 'Supper's Ready'; they were group songs," says Tony, warming to the theme. "For me there's nothing more exciting than being in the rehearsal room"

## GENESIS BREAK OUT

