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Genesis Flower Pot Men

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Dusty in Memphis

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Crazy Rock'n'Roll

History Of The Singles Charts

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David Gilmour



EVER CHANGING COLOURS GENESIS LIVE 1969-75

Gabriel's angels were little short of a marvel live. Paul Russell selects 12 of their best performances, with an introduction by Daryl Easlea

When riddles are spoken of being wrapped in enigmas, none more puzzling springs to mind than the success of early Genesis. A group of reserved public school boys — the core of Tony Banks and Michael Rutherford — with a vocalist, Peter Gabriel, so shy that his love for soul and blues became subsumed by the neo-classical direction that the band embarked on.

We are not talking about a conventional pop act here. We are dealing with a group selling quasi-religious imagery, bizarre time structures, meandering instrumental passages, and a singer who went on stage wearing a replica fox's head. Given this recipe, what can their success be attributed to? The answer is simple — Genesis were an irresistible package: the acceptable face of progressive rock. Of course, they had the great-coated exclusivity of all the early 70s proggers, but they also relied heavily on melody, comedy and downright strangeness. Much of this was down to the personality and larger-than-life idiosyncrasies of their leader.

To overcome his shyness, Peter Gabriel performed. In an era rich in pop weirdoes, his on-stage manner often out-zigged Ziggy, and he demonstrated greater showmanship than Alice Cooper. It came complete with an acute pop ear, coming across at times like some sort of satanic Leo Sayer. Gabriel would submerge himself in character, appearing in a variety of increasingly bizarre outfits. With these detailed costume changes taking place throughout every song, blending with a group of seated virtuoso performers and the metronomic drumming of the band's fourth and greatest drummer, Phil Collins, Genesis became an extremely hot ticket indeed. Given all these factors, the atmosphere at their concerts became akin to a high church ceremony.

By October 1972, Genesis began to cross over from the underground to the mainstream. *Foxtrot* climbed to No. 12 in the album charts. Their live reputation propelled the August '73 release, *Genesis Live*, into the Top 10 (helped by being part of Charisma's budget 'CLASS' campaign). From then on, they became chart regulars. By the end of 1973, *Selling England By The Pound* was in the Top 3 in an album chart chock-full of Slade, David Cassidy, Status Quo and Peters & Lee. The charts were about to get a lot more interesting. Genesis were now big-time players.

Although the group's albums are myriad testament to the intricacies of the Genesis myth, it was in concert where you really could experience their parallel universe. Where Jon Anderson was too angelic, David Gilmour's too pure, Greg Lake's too *faux*, Gabriel's voice was progressive rock's truest marriage of the old English folk tradition with an enormous detour through southern American soul. He would also deliver long spoken-word introductions — part-diatribes, part-sketches — all in his best Home Counties BBC enunciation. At

London's Rainbow Theatre in 1973, after a ramble about worms, Gabriel concluded: "Rainfall in worm world means two things — mating and bathing". The band start whistling Blake's 'Jerusalem' — and then Gabriel intones 'Jerusalem boogie to us, but to the birds it meant . . . supper was ready'.

'Supper's Ready', a meandering discourse on the triumph of good over evil, was the benchmark of Gabriel-era Genesis, encapsulating the essential riddle and enigma of the group. It was a seven-part, 23-minute opus, with subdivisions called 'Ikhnoton And Itsacon And Their Band Of Merry Men', 'Apocalypse In 9/8 (Co-Starring The Delicious Talents Of Gabbie Ratchet)' and the closing 'As Sure Is Eggs Is Eggs (Aching Men's Feet)'. On paper it sounds like a terrifying patchouli-stained sheepskin throwback. However, on listening, Gabriel's emoting, and the band — especially the work of guitarist Steve Hackett and keyboardist Tony Banks — hold the whole piece together perfectly. It's no surprise that Monty Python were one of their Charisma label mates. It was almost as



David Macdonald

if Genesis were the musical equivalent to Python, with this enormous sense of the absurd (just listen to *Selling England By The Pound*'s 'The Battle Of Epping Forest'). However, there was no questioning how serious the group's intentions actually were.

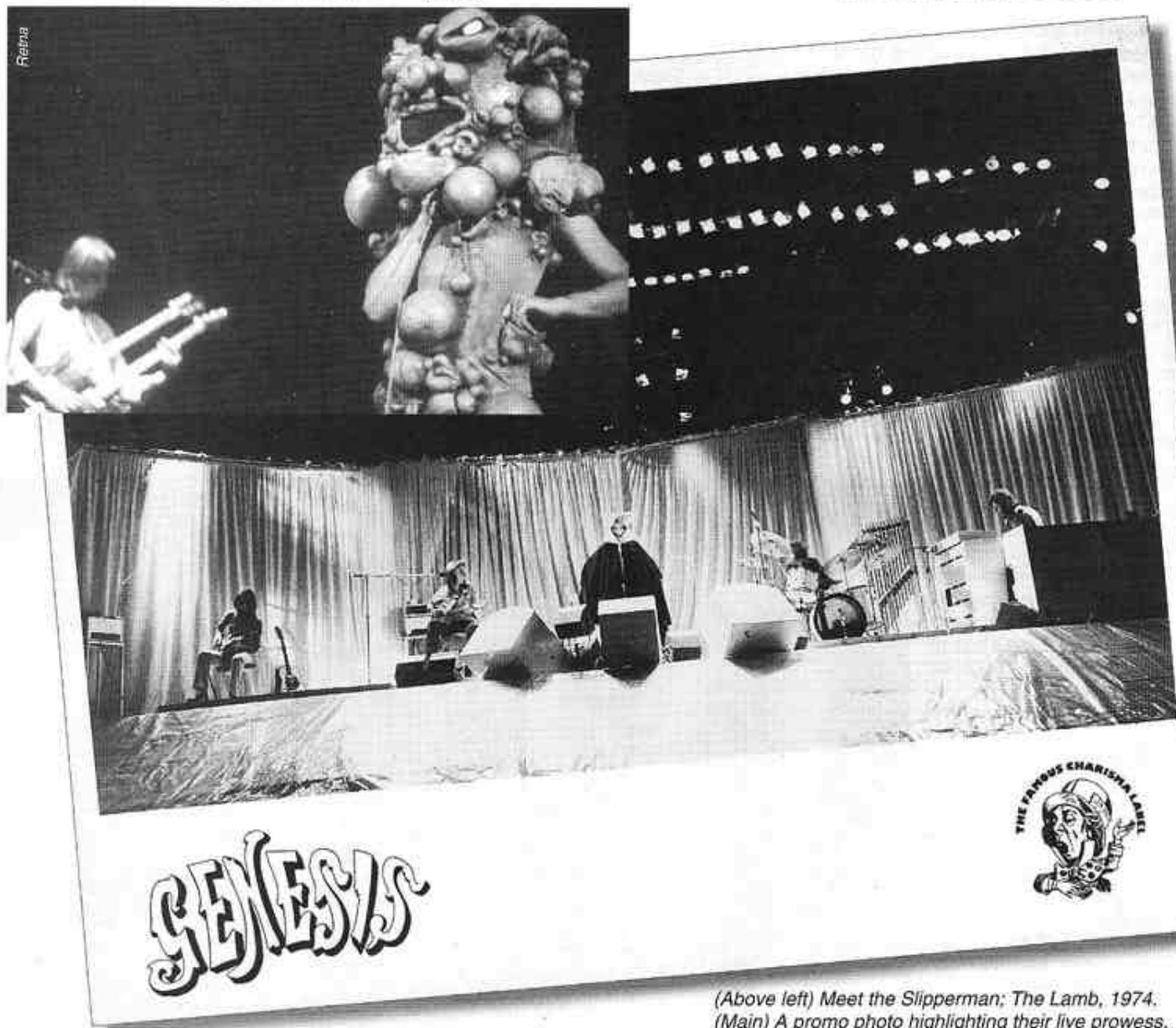
By late 1974, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, by far and away the most fascinating thing that the group ever recorded, located them in a fantasy land of sewers under New York City and in the street punk character, Rael — like Peter Hamill's Rikki Nadir — Gabriel saw punk on the horizon and embraced it. To cite Gabriel as the sole creative force in the group would be to do the others, especially Tony Banks, an enormous disservice. However, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, Gabriel's vision, led to a feeling of unease as few members of the group understood what the singer was on about, and due to family commitments, the band had to create a large section of the music in isolation from their leader. The multi-media stage presentation of *The Lamb* was intrinsic to the experience. But it was also complex and structured, and the group endured simi-

lar problems that had dogged the Who's *Quadrophenia* the previous year — getting all the material to run in sync. Problems enough, perhaps, but running with a simultaneous film show, and several costume changes — including Gabriel's notoriously cumbersome Slipperman mask — the show verged on a logistical nightmare. For a band that enjoyed stretching out musically on stage, the technical constraints led to more ill feeling between group and leader. However, when it was on form, the show was unassailable.

Peter Gabriel left Genesis in May 1975 and, after a period of reflection, a new era for both band and singer began. His closing statement was prescient — "Although I have seen and learnt a great deal in the last seven years, I found I began looking through 'rock star' eyes. I had begun to think in business terms — very useful for an often bitten, once shy musician, but treating records and audiences as money was taking me away from them. When performing there were less shivers up and down the spine". He got out at exactly the right time, before his shtick descended into parody.

Genesis went on to be one of the world's biggest bands, slowly morphing into a grandiose stadium pop act before their final cessation of activities in the late 90s — although you feel with a group and legend this big, it can never truly be over. Genesis were able to convey an archetypal Englishness in their prog and are sorely missed. There's a real mourning for their live experience to this day. It's little wonder that Genesis tribute bands now draw enormous crowds.

With the aid of Tony Banks, Mike Rutherford, Phil Collins, Steve Hackett, Anthony Phillips and engineer Richard MacPhail — who debated set lists and running orders, and tried to remember exactly when Rutherford played his cello — we've selected a dozen of Genesis' best live shows. Let us take you back to the heady years of the early 70s when the group could be found doleing out delight with their amazing musicianship, mini-operas and the antics of an incredible frontman. Grab a bean bag, wind up your musical box, slip on those headphones, and remember, watch those skies...



(Above left) Meet the Slipperman; *The Lamb*, 1974.
(Main) A promo photo highlighting their live prowess.

12 OF THE BEST

by Paul Russell

Genesis live conjures up images of vast arenas, spectacular light shows, two drum kits, and a singer doing a funny dance with his tambourine. If you're a little older, you might well recall another man, Peter Gabriel, in a dress, wearing a fox head, or doing a funny dance while pretending to be a lawnmower. If you go back even further, you will remember a strangely compelling, intense-looking acoustic outfit with hardly an idea of how to even set up their equipment. This was the far-off era in which they had a habit of passing guitars to each other between songs, while the dozen or so people in the audience waited patiently for the next number.

Unfortunately for Genesis fans, hardly any live recordings from those early chaotic days have surfaced, as the band took a couple of years to build up a serious fan base. It just shows how low-key Genesis were at this point, as their contemporaries Jethro Tull, Yes, and King Crimson are all well represented on the live recordings front, right from the very beginning. There are Tull and Crimson

shows from as early as 1969. But no one recorded Genesis upstairs at Ronnie Scott's.

The line-up of Peter Gabriel (vocals), Mike Rutherford (bass), Tony Banks (keyboards), Anthony Phillips (guitar) and John Mayhew (drums), played their first professional gig at London's Brunel University on 1st November 1969. They set up in two rows, Ant Phillips had a tuning nightmare, and they needed to impress the booking agents in the audience. They obviously succeeded, because the gigs kept coming. Small halls, colleges, universities and working men's clubs all paid host to the fledgling band as they honed their stage act to become one of the most individual live bands around. And, of course, this soon led to much bigger things.



1. Brunel University, Acton, London. 1st November 1969

After months of writing and rehearsing, this was Genesis' first official gig. The set list is in no particular order, although Tony Banks is sure that they ended with 'Pacidy'. And some songs might well be missing in action.

In The Wilderness / Masochistic Man / Stumble / Black Sheep / Build Me A Mountain / In Limbo / Digby / Little Leaf / Babies / Key To Love / Looking For Someone / Twilight Alehouse / Sitting On Top Of The World / Pacidy

Anthony Phillips: "The first disaster was me, because we started with 'In The Wilderness'. I had re-strung just before the gig and I had a loose machine head. We hit the first break and the string had slipped, everyone was looking and there were all these agents there. I was so nervous; first number, showcase gig."

Tony Banks: "I remember playing at full volume from the word go. I had an organ through a Selmer Goliath amp which had a great big speaker and a home-made Leslie. We had all these subtle little volume changes worked out at rehearsal. I just put my foot down and played flat out, couldn't hear a thing. But they seemed to like us."

Mike Rutherford: "There was an argument with Peter about where to put the PA, we sat in two rows as we hadn't really thought about how to set up."



Genesis 1970: (l to r) Anthony Phillips, Peter Gabriel, Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, John Mayhew.

2. Eel Pie Island Hotel, London. 10th April 1970

The gear had to be carried over a little bridge to this fabled island in the middle of the River Thames. A precious microphone was lost in the water, and although billed as supporting Jan Dukes De Grey, they were playing up against Free, who were riding high in the charts with 'All Right Now' and commanded most of the attention.

Their two sets now contained some more familiar pieces. With the acoustic songs in

the first set, leading up to 'The Knife' in the second, they might well have turned a few heads away from Kossoff and co.

Grandma / Let Us Now Make Love / Little Leaf / Dusk / Stagnation / White Mountain / Twilight Alehouse / Visions Of Angels / Key To Love / I've Been Travelling All Night Long / Going Out To Get You / Shepherd / Looking For Someone / Jamaican Long Boat / Pacidy / The Knife

Banks: "I played guitar for the first few numbers and wore gloves, it was so cold."

IT'S EASIER TO WRITE ABOUT MASKS...

In 1973, Gabriel gave an interview to an excitable DJ to promote the LA Roxy gigs on the *Selling England By The Pound* tour.

You use a bass drum on stage but the audience don't often hear you play it.

Well, I used to be a drummer but it's not miked up any more, it's the fact that I like to do something and if you get excited by the music I don't want to sit around being frustrated. I've got something I can hit, something to do.

One of the most powerful groups I have seen on stage was Slade. They could get the audience to do anything they wanted.

I think there is definitely some power that you have in that situation, and I have a sort of fantasy thing that is important, a sort of escapist release really. I get excited by that sort of thing.

Will you have your full stage set at the Roxy shows?

The stage is not big enough, but we will have something, we want our first Westside show to have all the back projections we now use, various images that are meant to relate to the lyrics.

Your stage presentations attract a lot of publicity.

Because it's easier to write about the masks than it is the chord progressions and people generally don't want to read about that, because they don't understand or it's just not very readable.

A lot of the articles are only concerned with what you were wearing, the fox's head or the flower mask.

It serves its purpose from that point of view, the flower mask is a character called Narcissus who turns into a flower. All the masks are connected to the songs except for the fox mask which was a different character from the *Foxtrot* cover. **At the Reading Festival this summer you had a kind of pyramid.**

That was for 'Watcher Of The Skies'. It was meant to give the impression that I had no legs — a strange solid with a human head on top. It was extremely uncomfortable for my neck and shoulders.

Have there been any effects that you felt just didn't work?

There was a serpent mask that I had made recently, but I did not use that at all. And things like dry ice you can see on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday every day of the week.

Will you make any financial gain while you are here?

The group itself will lose at least £15,000 on this tour, which will come off our record royalties. We have the cost of our crew of six or seven who work very hard, and one truck for the shows in the west; we are even using the Roxy's lights. While we are here we would play for nothing if we could, we just couldn't get the dates.

You are playing the Roxy for three days.

They wanted us to do a week, but three doubles (two shows a day). I am not sure I can do anyway. My voice normally goes after one, but apparently the club can't make money unless they do two shows a night.

The Musical Fox: Peter Gabriel wearing his wife's dress — oh, and a fox's head, 1972.

Richard MacPhail: "There was this nutty old tramp who lived on the island by the bridge who tried to charge you a toll as you went across, and we were carrying all this gear; we had no money for trolley wheels. The whole thing was ludicrous."

Phillips: "I had to stand up and move my chair, every time someone wanted to go past and have a pee. I virtually had to stop playing."

GENESIS' FIRST ROCK GIG
DE LA FERME
TWILIGHT

APRIL	
FRIDAYS	SATURDAYS
3 LITTLE FREE ROCK plus EASY LEAF JAN DUKES DE GREY plus GENESIS	4 MOTT THE HOOPLE plus WHITE LIGHTNING
10 TASTE WHITE LIGHTNING (back by demand)	11 EAST OF EDEN plus CRACIOUS
17 CLIMAX CHICAGO BLUES BAND	18 STRAY
24 FREE DRAUGHT BITTER & COLONEL BAREFOOT KILLER PUNCH VERY CHEAP HOT SNACKS SOFT DRINKS FAGS ETC. INCREDIBLE LIGHT SHOW BY AURAL PLASMA FREAKY SOUNDS - INCENSE DOORS OPEN 7.30 p.m. CLOSE 11.30 p.m.	25 SHADES

3. La Ferme, Woluwe, Belgium. 7th March 1971

Genesis' first overseas gig, and so far the earliest known live recording, a vital document captured on tape by a Belgian fan. The set starts with 'Happy The Man', which Gabriel introduces as being about "a man who eats his toenails, I think". Phil Collins adds a certain swing to this gentle number and also to its follow-up, 'Stagnation', which is about people "with bad breath".

After several minutes' delay and a few attempts at an introduction, 'The Light' finally gets underway. This lengthy, disjointed piece was penned mostly by Collins and had been around in the live set for some time; some of it would later appear on *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* as 'Lilywhite Lilith'. The rest sounds strangely improvised, and almost loses its way once or twice before Collins pulls things together once again.

'Twilight Alehouse', with its swirling organ, comes on all Van Der Graaf Generator at its climax — early Genesis theatre at its best. Gabriel introduces 'The Musical Box' in both French and English, much to the crowd's amusement. The closing 'Touch Me' section raises the hackles as Tony Banks wins the duel with recently-joined guitarist Steve Hackett for the best solo. A frantic 'Knife' and an organ-dominated 'Going Out To Get You' bring the set to its conclusion.

