



Prog legends **Yes** came roaring back in the '80s with a US number one single, 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart', and the smash album '90125'. But its birth was long and laboured, and follow-up 'Big Generator' was no less painful. **Malcolm Dome** talks to guitarist **Trevor Rabin** and vocalist **Jon Anderson** about this key period...



The Yes line-up that recorded and toured the '90125' and 'Big Generator' albums. L-R: Alan White (drums), Trevor Rabin (guitar), Jon Anderson (vocals), Tony Kaye (keyboards), Chris Squire (bass)

THE NUMBER GENERATORS

PROGRESSIVE ROCK WAS A curiously '70s affair, a style of music that initially seemed destined for obscurity, lauded only by geeky musicians obsessed by technique, and socially awkward people more comfortable in the presence of a turntable than with actual human interaction. Yet somehow prog became one of the most loved and influential musical styles of the decade, sweeping all before it to become a cultural phenomenon that made stars of its perpetrators and large amounts of money for the labels that released this curious music.

Yes became one of prog's star attractions. The English group formed in 1968 and, over the course of an insanely productive decade that yielded nine studio albums, helped to define exactly what prog meant. Long songs, complicated arrangements, extraordinary musicianship, and a musical curiosity that appeared to know no bounds were all part of the mix.

On the surface that doesn't sound like a recipe for global success. But at a time when hi-fi technology developed at dizzying speed, prog's headphone-friendly

intricacies turned out to be tailor-made for the times.

As the '70s gave way to the '80s, however, prog was short of breath. Punk and new wave had changed the musical landscape, as well as musical thinking. Many people were no longer impressed by technical excellence. In fact, prog wizards suffered a backlash as fans decided they wanted music that didn't seem quite so pleased with itself. Plus technology was starting to advance at such a rapid rate that lesser musicians could create really interesting soundscapes without traditional playing skills.

Understanding how to create sounds was becoming more important than being able to play an instrument at a super-high level.

To the credit of at least some of the members of Yes, there was a growing realisation within the group that things were going to have to change if the band was going to survive and prosper into the new decade. The music was in need of an update, maybe even a turbo charge. The question was how exactly Yes were going to achieve it...

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