

# Music/Progressive rock picks up a new following thanks to radio and Internet exposure

Continued from Page 1

Those in the prog-rock scene acknowledge the World Wide Web has been key to the form's ongoing resurgence.

The ability of acts to bypass the conventional music industry and get the word out and sell records on their own has made the Internet "the Mecca for progressive rock bands," says Gagliardi.

"If it wasn't for the Internet, my show, and the scene, would not have taken off."

The Internet, says Bill Berends, co-founder of Mastermind, "kind of leveled the playing field.

## Know your progressive rock stars

Not familiar with contemporary progressive rock bands? Here are a few suggestions to get you started, courtesy of disc jockey Tom Gagliardi of WBZC-FM (88.9).

■ **Deus ex Machina** ([www.derepublica.com](http://www.derepublica.com)) — "A very over-the-top band. Their new album, *Cinque*, is the talk of the prog-rock world."

■ **Scott McGill** ([www.scottmcgill.com](http://www.scottmcgill.com)) — A

As a matter of fact, a lot of independent bands have hipper Web sites than major-label bands."

Peter Morticelli, who runs the Rochester, N.Y.-based progressive music label, Magna Carta, suggests the Web's main value in promoting prog rock lies in being a source for unfiltered news and information.

"Because of the Internet, there's a whole new sub-strata of press that has evolved. There are a whole lot of Web pages devoted to progressive rock," says Morticelli, whose roster of acts includes such contemporary favorites as Shadow Gallery, Magellan, Tem-

pest and Cairo.

Not that the Internet has led to explosive sales of prog CDs.

Berends estimates his group has sold about 100,000 copies, in total, of its six albums. And according to Ken Golden, who owns the Voorhees-based Laser's Edge label, sales of 10,000 copies of one of his artists' albums would constitute a success.

By comparison, Michael Jackson sold 2 million copies of his last CD, *Invincible*, and was considered a "failure" by mainstream music industry standards.

"There is a very small, but fiercely dedicated, fan base" for prog, says John Collinge, editor and publisher of *Progression*. The decade-old quarterly, based in Lowell, Mass., boasts 8,000 subscribers in 49 countries.

What is drawing the current generation of fans and musicians are pretty much the same things that lured them three decades ago — a desire for more serious instrumental and lyrical work, and a disinterest in commercial radio fare.

"I became interested in (prog) because of the musical intricacies, and differences from mainstream music," says Philip C. Terry of Millville. "Progressive rock music just seems (to have) more in depth and (expressiveness)."

Morticelli suggests the form's

emphasis on instrumental prowess is a powerful draw. "(Modern audiences) always listen to the guy who is angriest, or the guy who has the best mask," he says.

"But if you want the best musicianship, you find your way here."

For Berends, Mastermind's singer-composer-guitarist, prog is the only place to be. He and his drummer-brother Rich started the band in the mid-1980s to counter what they considered shallow, uninteresting sounds topping the charts at the time.

Prog, he continues, "has the power of rock, and the intellectu-



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Ken Golden is owner of a Voorhees-based prog-rock label called Laser's Edge.

ally successful of the classic-era prog outfits, Genesis, didn't achieve superstardom until it left behind progressive music for more pop-oriented modes.

But the music itself never totally disappeared. Those who listened to the original artists continued to immerse themselves in such albums as *Brain Salad Surgery* by Emerson, Lake & Palmer, and *Yes' Close To the Edge*.

In addition, the Canadian trio Rush continues to be a top attraction, and popular acts of the 1980s and early '90s, like Metallica and Queenyche, gave their brand of prog a violent, high-decibel edge that captured the ears of the younger, hard-rock crowd.

Now, a new generation of artists has brought the progressive blueprint into the 21st century. But, says Gagliardi, the current crop of progsters "aren't just rehashing the same old ideas. A lot of new bands have their own sounds. Some have a harder edge."

And others, adds *Progression's* Collinge, are incorporating modern formats, like electronica and world music, into the prog equation.

Interestingly, observers of the scene note that England, which spawned the original progressive movement, isn't much of a player these days. Instead, Italy, Scandinavia and Japan are hotbeds of both musicians and fans.

For instance, while Mastermind is not that well-known in this country, Berends boasts of selling out 1,000-seat venues during a tour of Japan several years ago.

Despite prog's current niche status, Ken Golden suggests a true commercial revival is on the horizon.

"Every (1970s) genre has had a resurgence," he reasons. "Metal has come back. Disco has come back. And progressive rock will come back."

John Collinge isn't sure if today's progressive bands will ever again achieve the fame and fortune of their ancestors. But he is confident the music is here to stay.

"We might be seeing a whole new progressive movement independent of anything that happened before," he says.

"I think it's probably going to be here forever, as long as there are people looking to get more out of the listening experience than just something playing in the background."

## On the Web

- [www.ghostland.com/gagliarchives](http://www.ghostland.com/gagliarchives) — Gagliarchives' radio show Web site
- [www.lasercd.com](http://www.lasercd.com) — Laser's Edge record label Web site
- [www.magnacarta.net](http://www.magnacarta.net) — Magna Carta record label Web site
- [www.k2nesoft.com/mastermind](http://www.k2nesoft.com/mastermind) — Mastermind Web site
- [www.users.wineasy.se/flowerkings](http://www.users.wineasy.se/flowerkings) — Flower Kings Web site
- [www.scottmcgill.com](http://www.scottmcgill.com) — Scott McGill Web site
- [www.whitewillow.net](http://www.whitewillow.net) — White Willow Web site
- [www.progressionmagazine.com](http://www.progressionmagazine.com) — 'Progression' magazine Web site
- [www.ghostland.com](http://www.ghostland.com) — Progressive rock Web site
- [www.progrock.net](http://www.progrock.net) — Progressive rock Web site