

IGOR KOTELNIKOV

**WONDERWORLD
OF
URIAH HEEP
IN
ASIA**

TRANSLATED BY
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NIZHNY TAGIL
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Igor Kotelnikov. Wonderworld of Uriah Heep in Asia.

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The book is about the phenomenal music of the British rock band Uriah Heep. The book is about living in music and about its sense. The book is written in Russian by the member of the Official Uriah Heep Appreciation Society for our dear Heep fans and for all those who are just discovering the Wonderworld of Uriah Heep.

We were determined to avoid any scandalous chronicles and to adhere to the true biographical approach combined with the efforts to analyze the musical phenomenon of the band. The enthusiasm and provincially ardent assiduity make the book the first solid attempt of pushing the perception of Heep music to the 21st century, as it has become classics in the current one.

FOREWORD

You have read the Foreword addressed to Russian readers. Thanks to the conscientious work of Tamara Kazakova, you can read the first book about Uriah Heep in the mother tongue of the band, though not without an imperceptible (or rather perceptible at times) Russian flavour. This flavour is quite natural: it is in Russia that you can find the greatest team of Heep fans in the world, who love their idols with the most pure and faithful love! It is not by chance that there is very little, if any, slang or colloquialisms in the way Russians speak about Heep, because for us Heep is not the matter of consumption but rather the matter of sincere and warm relationship. In the times of the "iron curtain" one could easily pay for it with one's career or even freedom... Probably, this was the reason why this book has been written in Russia - of all countries! - where most of the devoted listeners of the Heep phenomenal music do not know a word in English, yet they perceive the music with their hearts; they listen so seriously that the Heep-civilization has become more than just a cultural phenomenon or a mode of life, but an intellectual worldview. Of course, the book contains mistakes and errors, but, maybe, they are not so important. The most important, in our opinion, is the fact that the book forecast in 1993 the events that have come true in 1995. As if just lending an ear to Igor Kotelnikov, the last Heep album SEA OF LIGHT is as close as ever to the life-giving primary source of the Seventies; Ken Hensley has resumed his creative activities, as well as John Lawton releasing his SUMO GRIP (1994) together with Lucifer's Friend. Lawton also did a few performances with Heep in '95, which prove that his way lies inseparable with Uriah Heep. To the fans' greatest delight, the main prognosis of the book has been coming true: the resurrection of Heep as a musical phenomenon is actual, and, as it turns out, it does not require that all former and present Heep perform together only in the rock band called Uriah Heep. More important is another aspect: "there will be more music, much more music", in the words of Ken Hensley who said them for all Heep in his address to his fans on the occasion of the publication of this book about Uriah Heep in Russia. Now he and all of you, dear Heep fans, can read this book in one of the most widely spread international languages. Thanks, Uriah Heep! With this book we try but a very humble repayment to Heep for all they have presented to us.

Yury Matrosov (August 1995)

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MILESTONES OF URIAH HEEP

Albums	Recorded (Released)	
Very 'eavy very 'umble...	March	1970
Salisbury	Oct./Nov.	1970
Look at Yourself	July	1971
Demons & Wizards	March/April	1972
The Magician's Birthday	Sept./Oct.	1972
Live	Jan.	1973
Sweet Freedom	Jun./July	1973
Wonderworld	Jan./March	1974
Live at Shepperton		1974 (1986)
Return to Fantasy	Spring	1975
High and Mighty	Dec.1975/March	1976
Firefly	Oct./Nov.	1976
Innocent Victim	July/August	1977
Fallen Angel	April/August	1978
Live in Europe		1979 (1986)
Conquest		1979
Abominog	Oct./Dec.	1981
Head First	Jan./March	1983
Equator	Aug.1984/ Feb.	1985
Live in Moscow	December	1987
Raging Silence	Dec.1988/March	1989
Uriah Heep Story		(1990)
Two Decades in Rock		(1990)
Still 'eavy still proud		(1990)
Different World		1991
Rarities from the Bronze Age		(1991)
The Lansdowne Tapes		(1993)
Sea of Light	Jan./Feb.	1995

CHAPTER ONE
1974. URIAH HEEP FALL INTO DISGRACE.

"He pointed to Uriah, pale and glowering in a corner, evidently very much out in his calculations, and taken by surprise. "Look at my torturer," he replied. "Before him I have step by step abandoned name and reputation, peace and quiet house and home."

"I have kept your name and reputation for you, and your peace and quiet, and your house and home too," said Uriah, with a sulky, hurried, defeated air of compromise. "Don't be foolish, Mr. Wickfield. If I have gone a little beyond what you were prepared for, I can go back, I suppose? There's no harm done."

"I looked for single motives in every one," said Mr. Wickfield, "and I was satisfied I had bound him to me by motives of interest. But see what he is - oh, see what he is!"

Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

The year was fatal for Uriah Heep. After the superb albums of LOOK AT YOURSELF, THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY and SWEET FREEDOM the fans were expecting much from Heep who were in their peak; as it turned out some years later, in 1974, Heep gave them a present of "an especially happy day", in Charles Dickens' words, that is, a masterpiece of WONDERWORLD, the gift that very few of them could appreciate at the time.

Since the peak of their popularity had been in Germany, Heep went to Munich to record the next album. The recording of the most ambitious album of the band started immediately after the Christmas holidays, but the holiday inspiration with which the band used to start each new project lasted only till the next attack of the "star disease" which finally overwhelmed glorious leading singer Byron. In fact, at each session of the recording Byron appeared drunk to such a degree that it became impossible to work with him. Hensley would wave his hand very expressively, and the recording would be postponed for the next week.

The recording was prolonged for three months, which weakened the competitive ability of the album considerably. WONDERWORLD, meant simply to create new music on the old basis, was released in summer 1974 and it did not sell out properly in spite of the mighty advertising. The album, under the pompous name of "wonderworld", was seriously attacked by malicious critics whom we can call "gloating critics" nowadays, after all those years. In the end of that year, so unhappy for Heep, the critics struck the final blow to the album, which worked quite negatively on the sales, not so glorious anyway. The fatal alliance between the critics and the fans led the public to the rough-and-ready conclusion that Heep appeared to record good-for-nothing music! And it was about that very direction in music, worked out in WONDERWORLD for the first time, that would be acknowledged as one of the most interesting and perspective for the time by both the fans and the critics a few years later!

On the cover of the album the ecstatic figures of Heep were stamped, as if on the pedestals. The opening will show the picture of the "golden" personnel of the band in full size: Gary Thain (bass-guitar) and his invariable cigarette with which he managed to appear almost everywhere in the photos; Thain is remarkably gloomy, he is exposed and covert. David Byron (vocals) seems soaring in the skies with his habitual languid look and foamy moustache on the smiling lips. A straight-forward fellow, Mick Box (solo-guitar). The pet of the band, Lee Kerslake (percussions). And, of course, wise old Ken Hensley (organ).

WONDERWORLD had a very ambitious start like none of the previous albums. So serious a claim should have been called HIGH AND MIGHTY, by the name of one of the last Heep albums, . The unique sounding, tremendous synthesis, the magic of Byron's voice altogether make the composition of WONDERWORLD. The title song of the album could have but one author - Ken Hensley, the composer with the mysterious sense of harmony and sound, which would make the listener feel the inner fervour and the wish to straighten his shoulders, which would make him sense the boundless freedom and love to his neighbour. Like the rest of Hensley's songs, this music is full of drama.

'Suicidal Man'. All the band are in co-authorship for the first time. It is most unlikely that the only motive for the co-authorship was the discontent of the band with the leading author Ken Hensley. The song was inevitable for such a team. It is extraordinary. It is nervous. It has something in common with the title song of the earlier album LOOK AT YOURSELF: the same anxious and exciting voice, the same broken rhythm. Kerslake's body drumming is absolutely stunning: his drums drive the music lacing the veil of beats and rhythms into it so skillfully that sometimes it is difficult to hear when one ends and another starts.

'The Shadows and the Wind'. The author is Ken Hensley. The piece is very typical of him, contrastive and dignified. The ingratiating, cat-like vocals by Byron (he either was or will be a cat in his other life) are backed by the velvet and tender sound of organ. The powerful, exultant and impulsive refrain. Later, such a drive reached its peak in RETURN TO FANTASY and HIGH AND MIGHTY.

'So Tired'. The fourth piece most fully corresponds to our ideas of the quality of the percussions in the then underestimated album. The virtuosity of Kerslake's drumming reminds us of the ornamental pattern of Emerson, Lake and Palmer. Kerslake is terrific!

'The Easy Road'. You can say much or nothing about the fifth composition. 'The Easy Road' is about those who like easy life and life in general. It is one of the rare things of Heep which they recorded together with the symphony orchestra; it is also one of the most poetic compositions - how enchanting is its unique and lucid recitative! Heep could have made us happy with a purely symphonic album, and it would have been a masterpiece! Definitely! Here, Byron's opera voice sings in full harmony with the polyphony of the orchestra, and Hensley's lyrics is boundless and strikingly sad.

'Something or Nothing'. The authors are Box, Hensley and Thain. It is a heavy variant of rock-and-roll which Heep have never neglected and which has always been a success. Heep's rock-and-roll has very little in common with the classic rock-and-roll and, probably, had Heep been born ten years earlier, they would have been playing the most interesting rock-and-roll in the world. It is a typical detail of the Uriah Heep portrait.

'I Won't Mind'. The authorship of this composition was also shared by the whole band. The song is rather typical for Heep, yet it resembles the earlier albums LOOK AT YOURSELF and SWEET FREEDOM. Abrupt changes of the rhythm. The performance of this composition proves that the band plays wonderful hard rock.

'We Got We'. The organ introduction, absolutely unusual Box's guitar and quite extraordinary chorus with Byron's shadowy vocals. This finding would be developed in the next album RETURN TO FANTASY.

'Dreams'. This is a super masterpiece, the visit card of the band which could be placed anywhere, included into any "golden" record. Here one can feel the influence of SWEET FREEDOM, up to some of the words. It is the last epoch-making thing of the band. 'Dreams' can be considered the peak of the first period of Heep's creative activity. It includes the best achievements of the band of that period. It is the most exciting and the most interesting thing in the album, and one can easily trace the associations with DEMONS, 'The Magician's Birthday' and 'July Morning'; yet, at the same time, 'Dreams' differs from all of them. The unearthly final could not be played by the usual people, in the medieval times Heep would have been burnt at the stake for such music. The end of the song comes unexpected as if the musicians failed to find human resources to control the Revelation that dawned upon them. The 'Dreams would have gone in line with such polyphonic compositions as 'Child in the Time' (Deep Purple), 'Way To Heaven' (Led Zeppelin), 'House of the Rising Sun' (Animals).

By the way, a weak attempt to repeat the sound of the song was made by Heep in 1977 when for the last time they felt sure coming over from style to style.

The American CD of WONDERWORLD brought an unexpected bonus, now a rarity, 'What Can I Do' (Box, Byron, Kerslake). As soon as you hear it you can understand why the producer Gerry Bron rejected the song in 1974. You could have placed it in the album, but not after 'Dreams'.

The army of Heep fans could only feel sorry that Ken Hensley and Gerry Bron were not perspicacious enough to foresee the coming success of the WONDERWORLD. In 1975 the album with the eloquent title RETURN TO FANTASY, played in a different key, lost a great part of the energy and freshness of the musical style of WONDERWORLD. It is unfortunate that the nervous and impulsive drive of the album was not further developed.

The troubles were not over yet: while touring in the U.S., Gary Thain got an electric shock. There had been problems with Gary before, he was very heavy on drugs. Gary Thain, aged 27, was a genius of bass guitar, and Hensley thought high of him, relying on him as on the basis of Heep rhythm. It is unlikely that we will have a chance to come back to the most mysterious and enigmatic of Heep, so let us use the sleeve notes to LIVE (1973):

"Gary's fatless frame looks as though he has just survived the ravages of a particularly virulent disease. His sallow complexion, drawn face are topped with a great mound of hair like a Grenadier Guard who has just washed his bearskin and cannot do a thing with it.

His spindly legs totter on well heeled boots, pacing the area between Lee's drums and Ken's keyboards. He looks rather like an Eiffel Tower, but he is a tower of power.

I do not think the importance of Gary's contribution to Heep was fully realized by many people outside the band when he first joined. It was clear that there was a new chemistry in the rhythm section. Lee was working with greater certainty and the band's pulse was steadier, less liable to a sudden flutter at the heart.

The change should have surprised no-one, of course, for Gary is one of the best rock bassists currently playing in a British band. He has reached that accolade through a thorough and diverse training. In his native New Zealand Gary started out by backing visiting stars until he came to Britain via The Big Oz. Before Heep his most notable gig was a three year stint with Keef Hartley's band. Check out the latter's live album recorded at the Marquee and you will hear the Thain bass driving the brass section through a series of punchy arrangements.

Heep are more an Entertainment than Gary's past bands and it has taken him a while to rid himself of the introverted and stationary stage persona he had grown into.

Gary is probably the most serious of the Uriahs. In conversation he will fix you with his eyes and talk slowly, considering each phrase and leaving long, long gaps to let each point hit home or wait for the right word to come to him. Similarly, he has been waiting for the right moment to emerge fully from his shell. On the group's recent tour fans finally saw and heard Gary at his peak. The time was ripe".

Starting with Gary, Heep were always lucky with bassists. Not without reason, producers, managers and composers of the group were always very considerate about bass-guitar and accentuated its sounding.

The electrocution did something to Gary, it was a final blow. Thain became so unbearable that even his friend, super patient Hensley, could not go on working with him. Thain, always under drugs, and permanently drunk Byron were bringing discord into the group which were in low spirits after the failure of WONDERWORLD. Heep were very unhappy to part with Thain whose life would come to an end from overdosing of drugs a few months later - 8 December 1975 - in his own bath. One of the versions was it was suicide.

The results of the year: the ill-used time while recording of the album, poor sales and malicious critics, Thain's fatal electrocution, cancellation of the tour. The first period of Uriah Heep was over.

Let us paraphrase the epigraph chosen by Heep for WONDERWORLD: Life outside can be difficult. Life within can be the way you want it to be. But life without you is no life at all.

CHAPTER TWO

1975. RETURN.

There was nothing for it, but to turn back and begin all over again. It was very hard, but I turned back, though with a heavy heart, and began laboriously and methodically to plod over the same tedious ground at a snail's pace; stopping to examine minutely every speck in the way on all sides, and making the most desperate efforts to know these elusive characters by sight wherever I met them. I was always punctual at the office; at the Doctor's too; and I really did work, as the common expression is, like a cart-horse.

Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

RETURN TO FANTASY, released in 1975, represents a slightly modified Uriah Heep. The public paid their pennies, providing the biggest selling for the album, yet it was only No. 7 in the chart. Extensive touring followed, that time the dates announced for Scandinavia where the band broke the all-time attendance record for an indoor concert. The next was a year-long world tour in Europe, USA and Canada. Producer Gerry Bron predicted that by the end of the year Heep will have played for one million people and traveled thirty thousand air miles.

But in Louisville (Kentucky, USA) Mick Box fell off stage breaking the radial bone in his right arm. Luckily, the brave Box noticed a bottle of Remy Martin close by and eased the pain. He needed to carry on in plaster for the rest of the tour (against doctor's orders) having two casts every day and three injections a night to allow for the swelling.

Yet the incident with Box did not prevent Heep from finding themselves on a Cleveland festival bill with Aerosmith and The Faces after three-week races through the USA. Byron and Hensley were taken in their own limousines to the gig, though the distance between the hotel and the arena did not exceed a few hundred yards...

Festivals, breaks and fashionable limousines were, probably, the brightest events of the year, because, after the real innovation of WONDERWORLD, RETURN TO FANTASY seemed a return to the well-used tracks of show-business.

Yet, Hensley would not have been the Hensley, nor Byron the Byron, nor Box the Box, nor Kerslake the Kerslake, if all of them had not contributed to the standard patterns of RETURN TO FANTASY such a diversity that the fans accepted the album as a revelation and a new word in the technique of playing and melody.

RETURN TO FANTASY held on to the tradition of co-authorship, thus scattering the myth about Hensley as the only source of the music. Meanwhile, Ken wrote two notable songs, getting the feel of the basic Heep ideas and developing what had been laid by the Heep veterans, Box and Byron who had directed the style and dynamics of the band. Later, both Hensley and Byron tried to move away from the standards of Heep style in their solos, but neither of them succeeded in doing this. Solo projects could bring satisfaction to their ego, but the magic sound of Uriah Heep was there only when they were together. I would cite Andrew Makarevich (though he spoke about another group), whose words seem a good illustration to my idea:

"I have always been awfully curious about what kind of mite each of Beatles was contributing into their songs. I can recollect how we were arguing about it to the point of exhaustion. It became evident only when the group had been disintegrated. Each of the four started their own music, and it was clear that all of them differed greatly from each other in their music. Yet, there was something Beatles-ish in all of them. It was as if a magic crystal was broken and each of them was given a piece. And the magic was gone".

RETURN TO FANTASY became a trial of strength for John Wetton, the new bass who had come instead of Thain. Wetton joined the work straight, and his participation brought an immediate result. Within the year of his work with the band, he somehow managed to cement the group, to bring Byron to discipline, to give a new impulse to Hensley. His great experience in the technique and composition brought freshness and diversity into the melodies of the band. In contradistinction to the other Uriah Heep's newcomers, before joining the band Wetton had got on his service record such groups as King Crimson, Family, Roxy Music. He came to Heep directly from Bryan Ferry. Though there was something in common between the styles of King Crimson and Uriah Heep, and in addition, Wetton had got an experience of work with the outstanding "schizoid" and experimenter Robert Fripp, which had introduced him into guitar parts and experiments with synthesizer, I have been always puzzled about why Heep chose Wetton among such a number of candidates.

Thanks to John, Hensley began to work with synthesizer, though not so long ago, while recording LOOK AT YOURSELF, he had yet to invite Manfred Mann for sophisticated synthesis parts of the "July Morning". It was also Wetton's desert that his presence in the group withheld Byron's degradation for a year, since Wetton had no less outstanding vocals than he had bass and synthesis parts. Perfidious Hensley, if he was, suspended the sword of Damocles over obstinate Byron, thus keeping him in tension all the year through: he could be replaced by Wetton at any moment. The only reason why it did not happen then was that John's voice in 1975 had not reached Byron's range, whose vocals in Uriah Heep was a powerful musical tool driving all the instantaneous and multiple changes in the register, all the exclusively sophisticated polyphony of Heep. But even then Wetton was able to fill in the niche in the vocals, and he would have been but more capable under such Master as Hensley! It is a pity that Wetton did not stay long enough with Heep to lead their vocals. The only album where we can hear Wetton's Heep was HIGH AND MIGHTY, released in the next year when it became evident that Byron's presence in the group was about to end.

Having the real chance to stay in the group and to become the leader before long, John parted with Uriah Heep in 1976 to organize a band of his own. Probably, Wetton could not do anything about it: the presence of Ken Hensley in Heep made

anybody else's leadership impossible. The commercial success of records is the proof, for records with Ken's songs always sold well and became hits.

To record RETURN TO FANTASY Heep invited session musicians from outside, in spite of the presence of Wetton who was a multi-instrumentalist, just to work with strange arrangements. Among those invited there appeared Mel Collins, an old friend of John's by King Crimson. Collins was responsible for the brass section in Primadonna.

RETURN TO FANTASY was recorded at the old respectable Lansdowne as well as at brand new Morgan Studio in the beginning of 1975, as the sleeve notes say. Probably, after WONDERWORLD Heep became a little superstitious and, for the first time, they did not specify the recording dates, thus depriving their critics of the most venomous sting. The cover design of the record fully coincided with the contents, which was also quite unusual.

The album is standard, holds up the unified style. RETURN TO FANTASY is one hundred per cent hit. It contains the best of Ken's synthesis and David's vocals. One can only assess it as superb. It may have been influenced by the frequent tours to the USA, which made the album sound quite commercial in the American way.

First of all, it concerns 'Shady Lady' and 'Devil's Daughter'. These two songs were broadcast for the USSR by the Voice of America right after the release of the album. It was then, eighteen years ago, that I heard these songs for the first time, without seeing of the record itself, and it justifies the sound commercial strategy of the album.

'Beautiful Dream' and 'Your Turn To Remember' are nearly crazy in their melody and performance. They are marked by the progress of the old ideas together with the novelty which was later used by many bands, even Queen.

All the above said can refer to the last two things of the album, 'Who Did You Go' and 'A Year or a Day'. Their beginning is unusual for Heep, as it softly passes into tender guitar parts. The apotheosis of the album is, as usual, the last song 'A Year or a Day'. At first, it seems usual, but then it explodes like a bomb. Many times passing over from register to register, from timbre to timbre, Byron managed to surpass himself filling a simple song with the most sophisticated contents. You may give it the title of Miss Return-to-Fantasy.

The album would not be a Heep if it had not a standard rock-and-roll 'Primadonna', the tradition that died away after Wetton's departure. 'Primadonna' was a better success than all its twins in the other albums, for it is a dead copy of the "pre-historic" rock-and-roll.

RETURN TO FANTASY became another album into the success of which much had been contributed by the engineer Peter Gallen. The change of engineer may change the image of a group completely. We can remember Pink Floyd or Deep Purple after the departure of their engineers. The next year Gallen was replaced by his assistant Ashley Howe, and it was only then that all the fans could see what had united all the Heep records before 1976. Ashley provided quite a different sound, with syncopes according to hypertrophied frequencies of Byron's voice. No doubt, it was new (it was one of the reasons why Howe became the producer of Uriah Heep in 1982), but with all that, their music lost the soft even sound of Gallen, who managed to imply his mood into it and let it into the hearts of listeners.

1975 became notable for Heep by their independent creative achievements, Hensley and Byron in particular. Ken Hensley's solo PROUD WORDS ON DUSTY SHELF, dated by 1973, in fact, had been thought of yet in 1971, while the first crisis of the band who were in desperate search of their "proprietary" sound and "golden personnel". The recurrence of the "eternal search" in 1974 gave another push to Ken, but the next solo EAGER TO PLEASE (1975) was considered rather weak by most fans and did not come up to Ken's claims for leadership.

Byron's solo album was released at the same time, while he was in his last days with the band. The record has not survived the course of time and sounds even more archaic than Ken's now. But then David's album was a much greater success than his leader's solo albums, though Byron did not overcomplicate the matter and followed the well-trodden track of Uriah Heep. The relative success of his solo put more heart into David and turned him to the solo career. He would quit the band in 1976 and vanish. But Heep, though missing him greatly, would survive...

CHAPTER THREE
1976. A DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP.

"My dear Copperfield, a man who labours under the pressure of peculiar embarrassments, is, with the generality of people, at a disadvantage. That disadvantage is not diminished, when that pressure necessitates the drawing of stipendiary emoluments, before those emoluments are strictly due and payable. All I can say is, that my friend Heep has responded to appeals to which I need not more particularly refer, in a manner calculated to redound equally to the honour of his head, and of his heart."
Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

"...We then did HIGH AND MIGHTY", remembers Box. "And we were still a bit shell-shocked at Gary's death. HIGH AND MIGHTY has some really nice songs on it, particularly 'Weep in Silence' and 'Misty Eyes'. The album was getting a bit lightweight. It was less of the 'eavy and more of the 'umble."

We do not know whether HIGH AND MIGHTY is more "lightweight" than its more melodic predecessors, but there is no saying about modesty. Suffice is to have a look at the cover of the album and to read what is printed in black and white (or, to be more exact, printed in white and blue): URIAH HEEP / HIGH AND MIGHTY. And the pompous music gives the ultimate proof of the correspondence between the album and the title.

Usually, Heep were demanding about the design of their records, and this time their demands were embodied into a unique monster, a pistol-plane soaring in the blue sky. This freak, the result of creative torments of an anonymous artist, was not very Uriah Heep. It can be partly explained through the sleeve of SALISBURY (1970) with the tank on it; but the tank is likeable and may have hinted on the events in South Africa, while the disgusting "Pistoplane" may have been a key to the mysterious title of the album. We must take it that Pistol is mighty, and Plane is high. It may be the reverse as well.

The CD version, to our great disappointment, is "thinner" not only because of the lack of artist's name, but it also lacks the coloured supplementary sheet with the pictures of the members of the band, which adorned the LP version. It is high time we fell into sweet nostalgic reminiscences about good old vinyl long-plays crackling on the pauses, and about wonderful photos on the inside of gigantic records, sometimes with signatures of the owners of the record. How pleasant it was to take such a record in your own hands, caressing the glossy surface of the sleeve with the visages of your idols on it. Getting slightly crazy, our fans just could not help cutting out the posters off the sleeves, which pictures were usually placed on the most honorable spots of our shabby rooms. Man, it was love! And it was love for the right thing: Uriah Heep covers were usually superbly designed.

But let us come back to the HIGH AND MIGHTY Heep album. The most contentious point came with the matter of production. Box said that, with Bron committed to other projects, including his new toy, Executive Express air-taxi service, the band decided to produce the album themselves.

HIGH AND MIGHTY was the first record of the band which was produced exclusively by Heep themselves. The album was released on the good old Bron(ze) with engineers Ashley Howe and Peter Gallen but the studio had been changed for the first time; that time it was Roundhouse Studios. They came back to the good tradition of marking dates of recording: between December 1975 and March 1976. As we can see, the album was recorded in the by then standard period.

In HIGH AND MIGHTY, Wetton and Hensley showed themselves as universal musicians. Judging by the number of instruments that Ken Hensley played, he can be included into the list of the super multi-instrumentalists: he played eleven of them, plus the vocals! Neither did John Wetton lag behind, playing bass, guitar, Mellotron, electric piano, vocals. "Who is talking about vocals?" an ardent fan could ask. Wetton's vocals in HIGH AND MIGHTY may seem a real enigma but until one pays attention to the opening song of the album: who is there singing together with Ken? There he is!

Almost all the songs of the album, but for three, written together with Wetton, were written by Ken, and it became a tradition for the next two years. The group used to rebuke Gerry Bron for the preference of Ken's songs, yet now, when they became their own producers, they had to do the same! There was nobody to be to blame, and Ken's obvious leadership was proved by Heep themselves.

Box said that Hensley still felt that the album was deliberately neglected by Bronze. Hensley's doubts were well-grounded, as Bron still maintained that "it was Heep's worst album".

Gerry turned out to be a bad prophet, and HIGH AND MIGHTY did not become "Heep's worst album". After all, it is a nice record, but not very Uriah Heep. For that time the record became one of the most effective "follies" of the band, if not for WONDERWORLD. (The same happened to Deep Purple, when after magical FIREBALL and MACHINE HEAD they released rather strange WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE, superb but not a novelty; it was due to Deep Purple that the epithet "mutated" was labeled onto Heep by some critics.)

HIGH AND MIGHTY was quite comprehensive for critics to understand and convenient for promotion in the press. Yet Byron was the one whose problems were causing most concern. Mick Box remembers a major incident in Philadelphia: "We were playing this 20,000 seater and David, having been drinking heavily, rushes out onto the stage, steps onto one of the legs of the mike-stand and of course, it smacks him in the mouth. The whole crowd roared, oblivious to what had happened but David, thinking they are having a go at him, turns round and says, 'You can go and fuck off if you don't like it'. I am standing there at the side of the stage thinking 'Oh, no, he's just told 20,000 of our fans to fuck off!' We could not catch a cold there after that." Hensley was so disgusted with the way Byron was going that he flew back to England and it was only Bron who managed to persuade him not to leave there and then.

"That was where the problem started with David," remembers Ken. "He'd always got drunk after the show but it had never got to the point where it would jeopardize the show itself. The performance had always been first and foremost with David. It was when the show started to come second that the problem began."

The distance between David and the rest had grown to unworkable proportions. "David was pissing away his career and ours with it," continues Hensley, "and it is a tragedy to say it but David was one of those classic people who could not face up to the fact that things were wrong and he looked for solace in a bottle." Hensley also remembers that David was the link of the group during the show but his phenomenal voice and manner made him think he was always infallible and he got a false idea of his own importance. By Hensley, it may have been the cause of the break between Byron and the group. He became less responsible and particular to himself, which led him to degradation. Once he was arrested, and it caused the further estrangement and the necessity of the urgent substitution. Thus, his work with the group ended in summer 1976.

What did David think about it? By Hensley, who met Byron in September 1976 after his departure from the group, David was accusing the rest of them and said that they were not right and that he thought them responsible for the break. They did not meet each other ever since.

Bron remembers David's decline: "He created impossible situations. By comparison with Ken, who was certainly no angel, he was a total pain in the arse. He was making himself more and more unpopular." Ultimately, there was to be no 'Easy Road' for David Byron. His first project, ROUGH DIAMOND, failed to ignite, while a subsequent solo career that spawned the BABY FACED KILLER and ON THE ROCKS albums, also failed to bring Byron back to the big time. Sadly, it all came to an end in February 1985, when aged 38, he died of a heart attack.

1976 was clearly watershed time in Heep's career. Before the shockwaves had died down from Byron's departure, bassist John Wetton announced he was quitting, electing to pursue solo career as well as teaming up with Bryan Ferry. Wetton has since gone on to enjoy major success with the formation of Asia and UK. As it turned out, Wetton needed the group less than they did. His departure was a heavy blow to the group. Alas, the separation was inevitable. "When he joined us," remembers Ken Hensley, thinking over the stormy events of 1976, "we thought that we could replace a great bass player Thain with another great bass player, but we ignored the personality factor, which is crucial. It was like grafting on a new piece of skin but it just did not work - the body rejected it."

Yet, there had been times when Hensley was far from regarding Wetton "a foreign body". There is an evidence: Ken and John had formed a promising co-authorship. Together, they wrote songs, quite unusual for Heep, of a strange style and code. The central thing of the record, 'Weep in Silence', was written by Hensley and, as you can easily guess, by Wetton. This may prove that both Heep and Wetton lost their best chance!

In HIGH AND MIGHTY Heep enjoy their power over the sound to such an extent that they can do absolutely everything about it, including an incredible number of effects, part of which, unfortunately, were not any further developed. All aspects of their skill show themselves in full glory. Yet, starting with HIGH AND MIGHTY, Heep have not given their fans any opportunity to hit upon the development of the grounds. This became the beginning of their end, the fame of Heep who had produced such a number of albums for such a short period of time, was waning.

The magic of their rebellious and mysterious music had died out before the formal departure of Ken Hensley. We can find the only consolation in the thought that Heep were not the only group trapped in this way. Earlier, Deep Purple were trapped like this: when the band outstripped their own music "the witch-hunter", Ritchie Blackmore, deserted the boring "hit machine". Ken Hensley was on the edge of the break with his "machine" many times in 1976. But the parting was constantly delayed. Ken Hensley did not have nerve to leave like John Wetton who turned out to be the most sensitive to the coming commercialization.

CHAPTER FOUR
1981 - 1985. THE NEW WOUND, AND THE OLD.

"I'm umbly thankful to you, sir, " said Mrs. Heep, in acknowledgement of my inquiries concerning herhealth, "but I'm only pretty well. I haven't much to boast of. If I could see my Uriah well settled in life, I could not expect much more, I think. How do you think my Ury looking, sir?" I thought him looking as villainous as ever, an I replied that I saw no change in him.
"Oh, don't you think he's changed? " said Mrs. Heep.
"There I must umbly beg leave to differ from you."
Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

The transition of the group to the absolutely new conception which meant the end of the Heep to the fans of the "Made in Ken Hensley" kind, with their traditional interpretation, was crowned with Ken's departure in 1980, after 10 years of their teaming.

The new blood was infused into the music of the group, which varied and refreshed the once so refined Heep melodies. Being inherited from their predecessors, the creative potential of the group provided good grounds for their forthcoming quest of new forms. With such resources behind them, nobody would imagine them yielding their positions in rock. Yet they gave up, but not instantaneously. The descent from the glorious heights had been dragging out for years, until the new rise or, to be more exact, the return to the old sources, started in 1987 - and we shall discuss it later.

Just after Ken's departure, his place was overtaken by Gregg Dechert, "the unfortunate", a famous Canadian keyboard player. He seemed an adequate replacement for Hensley then. Dechert had worked in Pulsar with John Sloman, now a new vocalist of Heep. Dechert's appointment was accompanied with a 23-date tour round obscure towns of UK. It is in the period that the next single album THINK IT OVER appeared, destined to find its way as the re-recorded version onto 1982's ABOMINOG. Thus, the unique combination of Dechert, Sloman, Bolder and Slade (we shall come back to him later) singing the song was recorded in this single. The alliance was short-lived: Sloman announced his resignation during the tour. "Whilst I have enjoyed the past 18 months with Heep I felt that my musical ambitions lie in a different direction", said Sloman.

"At that point in time, myself and Trev paid a visit to David Byron", recalls Mick Box, "to ask him if he'd like to join the band again. We couldn't believe it when he said he didn't want to know".

Why does David reject his finest hour? The main enemy is not there; there is Box and no Hensley; the group has a unique chance to return into 1969 when it all just started: a Heep-3 identical to the Heep-1! Yet Byron stood up. Probably, he took it at last that no Super-Heep was possible without Hensley.

Meanwhile, Heep-2 was falling apart. Trevor Bolder accepted a lucrative offer to join Wishbone Ash who were fond of changing their minor personnel for the sake of new ideas. The bassist said that he did not mean to leave Heep in the hard times, but he thought it might be time to try something different from Heep. To justify himself, Bolder found even more weighty arguments: "I've had enough of Gerry Bron and the management."

Dechert was the next to give up. After all the trials and tribulations, it seemed that the whole cohort of the Heep, "Heap of Heep' had bit the dust", as the "Melody Maker" commented upon the rush of more than twenty musicians who had come and gone.

"I locked myself in for two days and drank myself senseless", recalls Box, "but somehow managed to pull myself together. Neil Warnock, my agent, was suggesting I go out and do the guitar hero thing, because the time was right. But I was getting a lot of mail from fans all over the world, saying how we had been a part of their lives. So I was encouraged by that." To start, he rang Lee Kerslake who had already recorded his debut BLIZZARD OF OZ with Ozzy Osbourne by that time. Box was not sure that he would succeed in enticing Lee and bass Bob Daisley from Ozzy, because Osbourne was on his up, and the star of the Heep was in its lowest, like it never used to be before. Quite unexpectedly, Kerslake and Daisley agreed, and Box found out that there was a basis for the new Heep, since the previous problems had been eradicated! (Here, Box vindictively hints at Ken, no doubt. - I. K.) They started rehearsing and looking for a keyboard - and we found John Sinclair who used to be on the Heep side years ago when he was the member of the Heavy Metal Kids, and they, in their turn, watched him while his work with the Lion in Los Angeles.

Ex-Argent's John Verity was considered for the vocal singer. The legendary Greg Lake, whose vocals could wonderfully match the music of the Heep, provided, Hensley were staying with the group, preferred to cooperate with the rising star of Gary Moore. As a result, the vocal position was given to Peter Goalby of Trapeze, who had been auditioned for the Heep after the departure of Lawton in 1979. John Sloman was preferred then; ever since, Goalby felt it a mystery: why he had been rejected two years ago? The new vocal appointment looked especially dubious in the light of ironical comments of Ken Hensley who declared that it was only he who greeted Goalby coming in 1979, while all the rest were strongly against him; and now, two years later, the same people admitted Goalby with enthusiasm. Probably, it was another proof of the fact that the Heeps were still under the strong influence of the hateful and wise Ken.

Certainly, the permanent renewal of the personnel worked on Heep music. "We obviously couldn't continue in our previous direction, i.e. CONQUEST, and we couldn't do any more RETURN TO FANTASYs. That era has gone", reckons Box. "We had some dynamite songs and the important thing was that we continued to look ahead. I realized that it was coming together when we were interspersing our new songs from ABOMINOG with our old ones and they all sounded as if they belonged." I think that ABOMONOG is one of the most important albums of the Uriah Heep. It is significant because it had pulled the Heep out of the 70-s and resolutely pushed them into the 80-s.

This album was preceded by EP *Abominog Junior*, which included the composition 'On the Rebound' and two singles, "Tin Soldier" of *Small Faces* and "Son of a Bitch". God, we are quite unlikely to hear the songs: they are not included into any of the Heep collections, but for the legendary *Rarities from the Bronze Age* (1991).

Abominog became favourable among critics at once, probably, unlike all the other Heep albums. It gained a special praise from the new rock magazine *Kerrang*, where *Abominog* was proclaimed the most mature and outstanding record of Heep's career, which can hardly be true and reveals the commercial background of the statement.

Anyhow, the record did not produce any awful impression on the fans, though Ken's admirers could find only scarce familiar tunes in it. As a debut record of a new group, the album would have been wonderful, if it were not competing the shadow of the previous fame and glory of Heep, which comparison was unfavourable for the *Abominog*. In addition, the album sounded "too American". By Box's biting remark, "Our producer had a very American head on his shoulders".

Peter Goalby said about the "Americanism" of this album: "If *ABOMINOG* had not been the way it was the band wouldn't have taken off again. *Abominog* opened all the doors."

Most likely, Goalby is right. The beginning of the 80-s was passing under the banner of the tuneful hard rock, and everything was estimated under the principle of "as Americans like it". *Abominog* tuned with the new fashion, but who would rejoice in it? Ten years ago the Heep did not run after the fashion - they were trend-setters themselves.

Abominog brought a success to Heep in America as well as in Europe, in spite of the fact that one of the songs, "The Way That It Is", was forcing hard to MTV.

The album was recorded in October and December 1981, produced by the *Bronze* and re-produced in CD by the *Castle Communications*. The producer, Ashley Howe, was also the engineer. By *Abominog* it is clear that the renewed Heep became quite a different group which was united with the old one only through the name and the faces of Mick and Lee. Peter Goalby is the leading vocals on the record. His voice is powerful enough, original and unique, singing in tune with the old as well as with the new music of Heep. Yet, sometimes his vocal manner reminded of all the singers at a time with its phrasing and vocal nuances - which irritated quite a number of fans at first. Besides, Goalby was too clumsy and affected in the shows. Alas, he did not have the charm of Byron or Sloman, and even Lawton, towering up like a cliff on the stage, looked much more charming. Pete seemed a pale shadow of his predecessors like a reservist by a sudden chance turned into a front player. Shy and harsh at a time, he did not feel at ease among Heep. He was no star.

Bob Daisley, a good bass, was famous to many groups as a session musician. Up to now, it is not clear why he appeared in Heep; most probably, he was enticed by Lee Kerslake who felt somehow that Daisley was not happy with Ozzy's "solo" career. Daisley preferred Heep - an old horse who cannot plough deep but who will not spoil the furrow.

Lee Kerslake, the percussions. Lee just came back home when his main "offender" Hensley had left it, though it was Ken who had led Kerslake into Heep. They were friends, and up to now nobody knows what black cat separated these two brilliant showmen.

John Sinclair, the keyboards. It is worth dwelling upon the manner of his playing organ, as for ten years we had got used to the style of Ken who was able to find unique sounds and fascinating harmony for the melody and backing of each song. Sinclair was the keyboards of the new rock generation. We cannot compare him with either Lord or Emerson or Steve Walsh (*Kansas*) or Dennis De Young (*Styx*). He did not do any mighty passages but just played, frequently repeating the same musical phrases at a short period of time. It was his participation that let Box's guitar to the front, which never happened before, as we were enchanted with the pompous keyboard variations by Hensley that sometimes were indiscernible with Mick's splendid guitar. Only when the organ stopped its continuing solo, Box could realize himself, at last, as a talented leading guitar. If to take into consideration that he mostly played his own compositions, we could hear quite different Box and quite different music which was closer to him and his new Heep than to insidious Ken who inexplicably made Mick play in Ken's manner. Fostered by the decade, the spirit of the *Wonderworld* of Heep disappeared within a year, the divine sounds vanished into nowhere... Even the Byron-like vocals of Bernie Shaw who came to the band in 1987 could not save Heep music because the performance of the old things is agonizingly lacking Ken's backing vocals.

To do justice, we should say that the new group was notable for their professionalism, tunefulness, hard and regulated sound, especially in comparison with the other hard-art-and-pop-rock bands of the early 80-s. Heep also turned out to be musically and commercially more powerful than Ken Hensley's *Blackfoot* of 1983-1984. With this group, Hensley did not succeed in making what he had done with Heep within the previous decade - he just failed to create "a group to his content". This time Ken's sense of harmony and novelty had failed him. He began to repeat himself forcing the hard group with its loud vocals into the performance of tuneful hard rock rich with sweet polyphony and soft echoes. And Ken's Heep turned into Mick Box's Heep. It was just because in 1970 it used to be Mick's band and he was surrounded by the green youngsters like he used to be before. Uriah Heep, like Chekhov's Sweetheart, lost themselves changing hands after hands...

It is time to remember that under Ken the band had performed someone else's things only four times: first, it was "Come Away Melinda", next there were two songs by Jack Williams, Ken's friend, from his *Innocent Victim* (1977). Last, it was the case of classical rock-and-rolls performed by the group only at their shows. That is all for the whole decade!

The first Heep concert without Ken almost by half consisted of second-hand songs, by Box's, chosen "for the sake of intensification". Some of them were good enough, especially Ballard's song (Ballard is Ballard, even in Africa!). Of special interest is the last song of the *Abominog* written by Bolder and Sloman who had left the group by the time of the record to be issued. If only Ken could return! But the reunion of Ken and Uriah Heep appeared less and less likely with every passing year. Too much had been said, too much done and too long a period spent in separate...

The next album *Head First*, recorded with the new staff, was regarded as a close relative of *Abominog*, and it had the same key, both creative and commercial. *Head First* was recorded from January till March 1983, just a year and a half after *Abominog* record, at the *Oxford Studios* and the old Heep's *Round House*. Indeed, producer and engineer Ashley Howe was becoming the sixth member of the group.

There are only three "second-hand" things out of ten in the album, which shows the obvious progress in comparison with Abominog. The songs had been taken from outside "to augment" the compositions of the group (It is a disputable statement: how could Heep "augment" themselves by interpreting someone else's music?). The major compositions written by Goalby in co-authorship with Box and Sinclair were credited to the whole group. This was the way Box used to avoid the previous problems of the authorship when only one of them made all the money. "That was part of the deal when I came in", declared Goalby, thus throwing another stone at Hensley's. (As usual, Ken's desire to get the honestly earned money was considered his main sin.)

We do not know how the world public met the album, but, in our opinion, Head First is one of the best Heep albums of the 80-s . At least, half of the album can compete with the best Heep compositions of the previous decade. The record contains some unique finds. Yet Heep is definitely exorcised: Head First, in spite of al the new staff, imperceptibly reminds of the music "a la Ken Hensley". It especially true as to the organ parts by John Sinclair who, quite of a sudden, got interested in monumental, panoramic style, in quest of new fascinating sounds... As a result, the album is marked with the same sounds full of feeling and sadness like the earlier works of the group.

Yet Head First differed from its predecessor: its music sounded contrastive to that of Abominog with the powerful vocals of Pete Goalby throwing upon you a fall of noise and wild pressure, and the independent sounds of all the instruments with their simultaneous solo in every song. The Head First music was different and it corresponded to the concept of the album.

Having their start with "Love Is Blind", Heep are marching through "Roll-overture", "Red Lights / Rolling the Rock", jerky and excited things, instantly coming over to the beating heart rhythm of "Straight Through the Heart". This musical thing seems utterly familiar - and no wonder, the technique was used for the first time by Pink Floyd, yet in their albums Meddle and Dark Side of the Moon. By Lord, we would not have reproached Heep for it, had it not turned out that it was not only the technique that the two bands had in common. Right in those days when Head First was being recorded, Pink were parting with the public in their last joint album and, without extra words, made a courtesy bow to Roger Waters, Pink's Ken Hensley, whose talent and energy exceeded the joint talent and energy of the group, thus turning Waters into Pink Floyd like it had turned Ken Hensley into Uriah Heep. How wrong the critics turned out to be saying Deep Purple could be the only analogue to Heep! The vicissitudes of their creative fate put Heep very close to Pink. See, how Gilmore and Box resembled each other when they claimed that it was only their music that one should consider genuine, without boring sermons of Waters or Hensley. Yet, at the same time they were forced to record and perform new and new versions of "Gypsy", 'July Morning', "Arnold Lane", "Time", "Wish You Were Here", etc. - by the demand of the fans. All those old songs that had been composed by their retired - and so boring - patrons who left their ungrateful but ever so diligent apprentices.

But let us come back to Heep. If the band had been going on in the manner of Head First, there would not have appeared EquatoR. Equator was reached by Heep without Daisley who had gone to Ozzy, seeking his fortune; yet that time the prodigal son, Trevor Bolder, reunited with them because after the two years spent with Wishbone Ash he "still felt like an outsider". He felt much more comfortable with Heep, and the group, in their turn, had hopes for the perfection of their melodic backgrounds due to his return. But alas, once again it did not happen, and Equator only enhanced the disappointment: the Heep music had not developed, and Bolder's return had demonstrated his creative infertility in this album.

The leap-frog of the studios where the album was being recorded is striking. It started with the Battery Studio from 27 August till 4 September, went on at the Jacobs Studio from 12 September till 26 October - and it was not the last one: the third one was the Genetic Studio 12, 13, 19, 26 January 1985. And the album was mixtured back at the Battery Studio. Something happened with the Heep who had not got used to changing horses while crossing. The group had never jumped from studio to studio like this, preferring the inspiration that dawned upon them in one particular place. Equator was being recorded during half a year. The fact is not unusual in itself, especially with the memory of Pink who normally recorded their albums within a year. But Pink issued the extraordinary albums, which cannot be said about Equator. The music of the album is absolutely impersonal, with the only exclusion of the pompous Rockarama which is the evidence of their retreat from the positions of hard rock. There are also a couple of rather melodic things, authorless, though, as all the songs were composed as if by the whole group, without any concrete name.

The critics received the album with their wry faces and settled conviction that it might not have been issued as well. Who knows, what equator was the group striving for when they gave such an ambitious name to it! Alas, the album had not become a revelation, and the style that Heep had found in 1982 and had worked on in 1983, was played out two years later. The record turned to be accursed.

"CBS just did a terrible job getting it into the shops," said Mick as to this unlucky project. "We were going out and playing, doing really good business, but you couldn't buy the bloody record!" Heep hoped only for the inspiration of Bolder's which had once revealed itself in Conquest...

Meanwhile, Gerry Bron quit the management of the studio and the recording company Bronze Records. The studio was crippled by massive debts which caused the bankruptcy in June 1983 severing the relationship that had been lasted for thirteen years. Suffering the loss of the Bronze support, the band badly needed new managers and producers like it had never done before. There was also a great need of studio, which, naturally, did not contribute to the joy of life, neither made it for the success of the EquatoR album.

The new manager was soon found - it was Harry Melony who contracted an agreement with the Portrait of CBS. There appeared the new producer, Tony Platt, who seemed not bad an alternative to Ashley Howe at first.

The bankruptcy of the Bronze cost big money to Heep as it happened in the heat of the strenuous tour round the countries quite obscure for the rock music. Heep swore that they had undertaken that tour to India, Malaysia, Indonesia for the sake of new markets; they just silenced the fact that the group had been rated rather low. Putting some serious miles on the clock of the far-off music markets, they were rapidly losing their position in the fashionable America. Two months

were spent to support the Rush, Judas Priest, Def Leppard. The Leppard vocalist recalls that tour very vividly: "Uriah Heep were the best band that we've ever toured with... we learnt a lot from them... without them saying 'Listen, son', with that smarmy, father-like attitude. And Mick Box has got to be one of the funniest, most genuine men I've ever met". Mick Box, remembering that tiresome tour, said: "We started to go much further afield because the offers were coming in from quite unexpected places. And if you're gonna do Australia and New Zealand it makes sense to do those other places as well on route".

To listen to those words of Mick, full of honey, one cannot help thinking that the good boy Mick Box has made the wrong choice of profession - he'd better be a salesman! Every new venture on that tour brought to life another amazing tale. Said Mick: "It was in India where some drug-crazed Indian jumped up on stage and bit into Pete's back, and he wouldn't let go! A load of police jumped on stage and they are beating this guy to death. Pete still has the scar to this day. I also remember one show in Bombay (following a major festival performance in San Diego with Def Leppard) being literally in the middle of a field, and our lightshow consisted of something like four lightbulbs each side! A reporter asked me about our effects and I said, "Yeah, on and off!"

The ensuing period saw Heep adopt the role of global warriors, even venturing into the Eastern Bloc in early '84 (Budapest show). And yet. "We were spending so much time on the road though," reflects those crazy times the injured Goalby, "that I felt there was no time to do anything. I felt there wasn't enough time spent preparing on the new record". Thus, the failure of *Equator* was founded long before the recording of the new album. No wonder, the heavy duty schedule started troubling the band. The overwork influenced the frontman first of all. Goalby's voice was suffering. "I bumped into Gary Moore while in Hamburg and he said I sounded terrible as if I'd lost my voice", said Pete Goalby. "I said we had just played sixteen dates back to back. He told me I should sack my manager!" (Heep are neither first nor last to accuse their managers and producers or CBS - anybody but themselves! - when they are a failure. - I.K.) Goalby's voice finally went while in the middle of an Australian tour with the apparent lack of support from CBS. The endless touring with so little time to write made Goalby say au revoir: "I loved and believed in Uriah Heep but it kicked the shit of me in the end..."

1985 was marked by the issue of the Heep videobooks, which contributed to the philophonic collections of Heep fans. Most of those Heep video versions consisted of the shows of 1974 and middle '80-s. In spite of the loud declarations of the new band about how the Heep-80-s loved their own music, their fans dotted their i-s in favour of the old Heep. This is another evidence to the truth that the band are afloat mainly due to the old - Hensley's - material which makes about seventy per cent of the nowadays Heep repertoire.

One of the videobooks issued by The Castle was recorded in London Camden Palace. The honour of a concert in the prestigious Palace is awarded to the bands with very big names that gained popularity about ten years ago. A concert in the Palace is both the confirmation of the previous deserts and the epitaph to the old band that have gone off stage. It is something like the Nobel prize for the English musicians.

Half of London Heep concert consists of the songs of the "Hensley era", and also heats like "Rockarama", "Too Scared to Run", "That the Way That It Is". To speak frankly, to watch Pete Goalby in live for an hour does not bring any aesthetic delight. Jumps and grimaces! What a striking contrast Bernie Shaw, the new vocalist, makes with Pete (with all his enthusiasm and diligence)! Bernie, who has a kind smile and looks so natural - but we will come back to him later. The band-1985 were anticipating a new torturing collapse. Goalby's departure was soon followed by that of John Sinclair, who, along with Pete, had enjoyed a big say in the Heep's writing of the first half of the '80-s. After Daisley, Sinclair elected to join Ozzy Osbourne, which was commented by Mick Box (as affable as ever, though secretly sorry): "It's hard getting the right people and it's very draining too".

The atmosphere of permanent changes of the personnel became habitual and, probably, necessary for Heep. You cannot have Byron back, as well as Thain. Lawton was thrown off the band years ago, and Goalby, with his voice broken, is overboard. Ken Hensley and Wetton are unlikely to come back - is there anybody left at all?.. Having let quite a number of musicians through, after two decades of existence, Uriah Heep have nobody to turn to. A mass of disappointment and offense separate the former musicians of the band from the world of Heep, and some of them have gone from the Wonderland into the other world, probably, of greater wonder.

A new period of hard time begins for the band, which is to last for about two years during which Heep did not give concerts while gathering the new band.

CHAPTER FIVE 1965-1970. A RETROSPECT

A display of indifference to all the actions and passions of mankind was not supposed to be such a distinguished quality at that time, I think, as I have observed it to be considered since.
Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

We will not tell you stories about Heep, beginning with their babyhood, neither are we going to persuade you that Heep started playing guitar when nearly half a year old or that they started singing when they could hardly speak at all. No doubt, there is a great sense and meaning in the artistic baggage with which a musician comes to Big Rock, as well as in the real biography of his. However, one cannot rely on any information about the green years of the stars, and the members of the band have to varnish their boyhood to please the tastes of their fans, thus turning themselves into a live myth. Perhaps, it is quite natural a desire, to slightly correct one's own biography, but we think it would be better to tell a real story about the period of making the band till that very December day of 1969 when they took the name of Uriah Heep and released their debut album which differed greatly from their subsequent activity.

In the 60-s new rock-and-roll bands in UK were springing up as if from nowhere and out of nothing, they were just suddenly rising in full size. By God's will, Heep of that time were not a super band which would appear just to delight their conservative fans, like some music machine.

Those critics were right who said that Heep were based on the art of their predecessors, but that "discovery" was not worth those venomous arrows that were put in later. Yes, there was a good chance not only to learn from somebody in 1969, but also to develop the ideas, vaguely marked by somebody in the tempestuous times of "flower-children". It was not by chance that right in 1969 the French Academy of Music (!) recognized as the best work of the year the double album UMMAGUMMA by Pink Floyd. As there would not have been any rock without the experience of the previous generations of musicians, so there would not have been any Uriah Heep without the experience of the 60-s.

By some sources, the seed of Heep was sown back in 1967 when Jimmie Hendrix was about to show the world exactly what the electric guitar was and what it was made for. The other say that it took place in 1965. One can say that the beginning of Heep's history should be considered the moment of Box/Byron musical relationship. And to be more exact, it was Mick Box who gave a start to Uriah Heep.

Mick Box was born in London, 8 June 1947. "He is a short, squat guy, almost as wide as he is tall, with the face reminding that of an Indian. His solos are simple but theatrically climactic and effective. Uncomplicated and warm, that is his approach to the guitar and to people. When you first meet him there is no pretense, no wall of silence. He is always the first with the friendly handshake, and on your second meeting it will be a bear hug. It is a natural friendliness and it spills over into his matey stage character." (From the sleeve notes to LIVE, 1973).

As a young boy, at the age of twenty, Mick liked his football but he loved music more. Tearing himself between the two, he came to the guitar rather late, but once done, his choice has been in progress since. Having bought his own guitar, he formed a semi-professional local Walthamstow band, the Stalkers. In 1965, when their singer resigned, drummer Roger Penlington suggested that his cousin David Garrick come down to the auditions. David had been a "writer", and some of his songs were performed by the local groups. He came and sang a few old rock songs together with Stalkers. "David was a bit reluctant when he had finished singing", remembers Mick about that memorial day, "so I said to him to have a go. We knocked out a few songs, and that was it, he was in!" Their relationship flourished from that moment, as they had much in common about their musical aspirations.

David Byron was born in Apping, 29 January, 1947. As to Byron, there is no doubt: it was his voice that led the Heep music to so vertiginous a height. He never played any musical instrument but it did not matter because his main musical "tool" was his voice. David's voice is broad in range and emotion, which became the key department of the presentation of Uriah Heep on stage. Byron is the focus of the presentation, the peacock-ish dresser who struts his staff for the girls. After a bottle or two of whiskey, he shakes the mike-stand hard, coming on heavy to let the lads know he is no effete poseur but a rock-singer who would not stand like a statue and gives way to another vertiginous solo before slipping back into the shadows.

Observing and analyzing other singers who were so skillful to attract and manipulate the audience, David had taken great pains to transpose their mannerisms and tricks into something very much his own. The refined technique David had reached had been a conscious deliberate process. But you should not think that Byron was a coldly calculating man. He was genuinely awed by his power over a hall - a power not unlike a dictator's. Like Mick, David was quick to make friends, but his pre-stage nerves often betrayed his usual warmth. (From LIVE, 1973)

But let us be consistent.

Eventually, David and Mick decided to give up their day jobs and go professional, setting up a new band by the name of Spice. David changed his surname from the original Garrick to Byron. So, you can see that he is of no relation with the famous poet as many fans would have loved him to be. Drummer Alex Napier was recruited via a music paper advertisement, with the stipulated rule that there were to be no girlfriend/marital ties. Alex was very witty to claim that his wife was his own sister. Later he explained that he had done it only to get a chance to join the band. Bassist Paul Newton had come from the band named Gods. So the band of four was complete.

In early 1969 Spice was yet the same body, without Hensley, and their music was not as hot as their name suggested. The band deliberately avoided playing the songs of the time, concentrating on more obscure material.

"We were always striving to do something original," remembers Box, "and though at first that made it difficult getting gigs, eventually we built a little cult." The results were following, and Spice gradually climbed their way up but it was not enough, and by 1969 it was time to take a giant step upwards. The man to provide that step was Gerry Bron, a

management/production magnate, who upon being contacted went down to see the band in search of new contracts and "stars" and was sufficiently impressed to sign the four piece to his Hit Records Productions Ltd. (who had a deal with Philips Records). "I thought they were a band I could develop and I took them on that basis," said Bron. According to Heep themselves, Bron appeared on their way much earlier than in 1969, which contradicts their biographers. Gerry Bron was a very famous producer and showman who had already worked with Pink Floyd.

As to Spice, it soon became evident that Bron should take over their management too, the repertoire included. It was that step by Bron that made him well-known, rich and, at the same time, caused a lot of reproaches about his dictatorship, which caused serious problems in the band.

The relationship with Bron was also followed by the change of name. Inspired by the hope to become a unique rock-band, Box, Byron and Newton renamed Spice to Uriah Heep, which name Charles Dickens could not argue because the hundredth anniversary of his death had been celebrated on the eve of 1970. The name was suggested by Bron and based on David Copperfield film. To Russian fans it might be more comprehensible to imagine the name of the satirical character of "Juda Golavlev" to appreciate the real effect of the new name of the band.

In 1985 video "The History of Uriah Heep" Ken would make a mistake: "Gerry suggested that the Gods (!) should be renamed to Uriah Heep." A few years later Heep, which also includes Hensley, would swear that it was Spice that had been renamed to Uriah Heep. It is my opinion, that it was Spice that had been renamed, and Hensley who used to play with the Gods and then with Toe Fat before he came to Uriah Heep had just forgotten which was which.

At first, the new name was importunately attacked by journalists in every interview but eventually, after the series of television shows, the name became the symbol of their music.

Gerry Bron did more than the change of name, turning the four into the five: it was he who put forward the idea of the introduction of keyboards to the band. "We had actually recorded half the first album when we decided that keyboards would be good for our sound," recalls Box. "I was a big Vanilla Fudge fan, with their Hammond organ and searing guitar on top, and we had David's high vibrato vocals anyway so that was how we decided to shape it." While the search for a permanent member, session player Colin Wood was used for keyboards, who was a school teacher by profession and a bosom friend of Gerry Bron. His name was even included into the annotation to the first album. But it was Ken Hensley who became a permanent organist. Ken had played keyboards with Paul Newton in The Gods, at the same time currently playing guitar in Toe Fat.

Hensley remembers those times as associated with the name of Paul Newton. He had not played long with him in Heep as well as in The Gods. It was Paul on whose initiative they both came to work with Heep, and it was Paul who introduced him to Gerry Bron. Ken accepted the invitation, parting with his group - temporarily, as he was thinking then. After a thorough discussion of their plans they decided that it was worth trying to play together, and the rehearsals started.

Ken Hensley was born 24 August, 1945. His musical career started with Kit and the Saracens in a small town of Stevenage, the next step being Jimmy Brown Sound band and, finally, The Gods and Toe Fat with Cliff Bennett. Ken was moving from band to band, playing guitar and waiting for his finest hour. And there turned up Heep. By the way, Cliff Bennett thinks he is worth praising "to have given" Ken to Uriah Heep.

"I saw a lot of potential in the group to do something very different," Ken has managed to carry his first impression of the band through more than ten years of joint work. Writing, arranging and producing altogether, Ken became a gift for Heep, as much of the writing in Uriah Heep was his. As a musician he is highly self-critical. As a writer for Heep he is impressing and impressionable. Starting on guitar and moving to organ later, Ken developed his own style, so terrific that one might think that his favourite part of the instrument was the swell pedal to create the biggest volume of the sound. Seated at the organ, he was dominating in the Heep's programme. He became the Phantom of the Opera when his head bowed over the keyboards as great clouds of dry-ice conjured steam enveloped him while he was playing anything from chopsticks to Bach. (LIVE, 1973)

Even in his earliest days when he played in the group with his cousins he had definite views on music and business which later made him appear difficult to work with Heep. Yet the co-operative atmosphere of Heep proved that Ken, being a truly productive member of the group, could both listen to and take advice.

So, the first group of Uriah Heep was combined of two groups, The Gods and Spice, each having contributed three of them but one who did not play long in the band. Contrary to the widely spread opinion, Toe Fat did not contribute to Uriah Heep for Toe Fat was just an offspring of The Gods, and the main initiator of Heep, Paul Newton, had left The Gods for Spice by that time.

"Heep-1" did not exist long. It was then that the first troubles with the staff began, and they have been always there since then. Wood was the first to quit. It was three quarters into the recording of the album in February 1970 that drummer Alex Napier was replaced by Nigel (Ollie) Olsson who had been working with Elton John to whom Ollie would come back three months later. By the way, the relationship between Heep and Elton is still more durable: David Byron had been friends with Elton since the days they both worked for Avenue Records in late 60-s, when they were recording low budget Top Thirty covers.

Later Ken Hensley, remembering the personnel of those days, said that the relationships in the group were complicated: while the three of them, he, Mick and Byron, made friends quickly and formed the main body of the group, Paul Newton turned out to be very unsociable, and the most uncertain relations appeared to be between the group and Alex Napier, the first drummer. Hensley was reluctant to judge about Napier's problems, he just mentions that they were there. Napier became the first to be replaced. The next drummer did not last long and soon quit to prefer an independent position. Yet, very gifted, Ollie would work later with Elton John and David Byron (in his solo career).

After Paul Newton's departure there were only three of them left in the band. It was time to seek the lacking members. Hensley reckons that period the time of research, as they were in great need of members whose musical abilities and aspirations would be close to those of the group.

Such was the situation when Heep were recording their first album ...VERY 'EAVY ...VERY 'UMBLE packaged differently for the US and simply titled Uriah Heep by Vertigo. Released by Mercury (an affiliate of Philips Records) on June 19, 1970, it featured a morbidly gothic cover (the startling face festooned with cobwebs).

The debut album included eight tracks that reflected a greater diversity that was given credit for at the time. Part of the pieces, with the famous "Gypsy" among them, were typical Heep of the future, featuring heavy, earthy guitar riffs, prominent keyboards and strong vocals, while the rest of the album had King-Crimson-like feel. It happens when a group is seeking to create their own, unique sound. But critics did not take this into consideration; their opinions ranged from "interesting", "skillful but not particularly original" to "a veritable pain to listen to". A Rolling Stone critic promised that "if this band make it I'll commit suicide. They sound like a third rate Jethro Tull". Mick Box's reply to that was that nobody in Heep had ever played flute standing on one leg.

Yet there was something in that album that was approved even by the most severe critics. First of all, it turned out to be a song by the name of "Gypsy", thus becoming their trademark for years. Yes, "Gypsy" scored the goal, but it does not mean that it was the best song of the record. Critics were not right to praise "Gypsy" too high while smashing all the others. No doubt, "Gypsy" became a point in Mick/David career, yet the best piece in the debut album is "Lucy Blues", a very unusual song for then Byron's style and even for later Hensley's style. It was that song that introduced an outstanding band.

Nor less remarkable is the last composition of the album, "Wake Up", which became a bridge to the further development of the band; you can sense the conception of Heep in it, the unique passages from style to style, Byron's impeccable vocals; there is the dramatic and monumental organ party.

Critics missed the album which heralded the Heep metamorphosis. Most likely, they were not patient enough to listen to the end of the record for the other side of the vinyl disc appeared to be on-dragged and monotonous, sometimes not interesting at all. Fans were no more attentive than critics, and the other side was not very popular among them, while everybody preferred "Gypsy" or the third song, the quiet, slow and melodic "Come Away, Melinda" from The Weavers repertoire. This is a remarkable piece, indeed. Probably, the thing was the beginning of the later developed ballad-like dialogues between Hensley and Byron in DEMONS AND WIZARDS and THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY. No doubt, Ken and David introduced a novelty, for no band, including Beatles, had ever used the change of the vocals within a song. Anyhow, neither Deep Purple, nor Pink Floyd used polyvocality, whatever critics would say, nor did Gilmore and Waters sing in turns within one and the same song. This device was developed later by Heep, however, they used it for the first time in "Come Away, Melinda". The voices of Byron and Hensley were very much alike in their timbre, only Byron's voice was more vulnerable to change the registers, and Hensley's was more pathetic.

Though as a whole the album did not happen to be integral or conceptually mature, yet it indicated the times of experiment and the growing creative relationship between Mick, David and Ken. "It was very quick," recalls Box, "because we were all into the same things. It was like it was meant to be."

Later, answering the question whether the name of the album VERY 'EAVY, VERY 'UMBLE was connected with their worldview in that time, Ken said that it was certainly so, that "all we knew in those days was that we wanted to play loud rock and roll music." The group could be called a very hard rock band. This period, together with the film shot at the same time, was very active.

Accepting the name of Uriah Heep, the band would never come back to their start as the musical leadership was overtaken by "foundling" Ken, and the founders of the band did not dispute his genius. Without Hensley, it was very unlikely that the group would have reached the heights of the show business, at least, they would not have become a standard of the everlasting Heep style in the music of the 70-s. We may say that Paul Newton himself had brought the Trojan horse to Spice. It happened to many bands. If it had not happened with Spice, the band under the name of Uriah Heep would have enriched the list of second-rate hard-rock bands, like Atomic Rooster (potential, though very unsteady in their staff), Bad Company (somewhat "raw material"), Cactus (not bad a group, though always lacking something essential), Colosseum, Free, Toto - even the names are vague to remember now.

It is not by chance that, besides serial hard rock, the debut album of Heep would also present blues and even jazz. The melodies of compositions, the prominent keyboards - all these features indicate that Uriah Heep should be placed between Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, on the one side, and King Crimson and Genesis, on the other side. What I am going to say now may sound absurd, yet I am very serious to declare that VERY 'EAVY, VERY 'UMBLE is the first and the last (underlined by me - I.K.) concert of Uriah Heep. To begin with, Uriah Heep was formed of the four (Box, Byron, Newton and Napier) as a guitar rock band oriented at the very heavy blues like that of Led Zeppelin. The name of Uriah Heep, as something awfully mysterious, fitted the group and fully corresponded to their intentions realized in the first album. And "seducer" Ken, though taking part in the debut album, did not have a chance to influence the music then for he was just a session keyboard player and had to play somebody else's music honestly. (To realize Ken's ambitions they would have had to delay the album, which was very far from the intentions of the management.) But later, as a permanent member of the group, Ken canceled the typical hard rock future of the band.

To the hard rock band of Uriah Heep Ken's advent turned out to be fatal. This circumstance was justly marked by critics on the issue of the second album in 1971. If the debut record was accepted more or less positively, in spite of the polarity of the reviews, and the band attracted attention, the second album, released a few months later, insulted and shocked the public; critics heard quite different a group, Ken Hensley's band. Box/Byron band had vanished! The two albums differed greatly in their style, and the unusual and sharp music of the second album would have rather adopted the names of Spice or The Gods so that not to shock the rock fans of the 70-s with the sudden regeneration of Uriah Heep.

The answer to the abrupt change of the style is simple: Byron's mannerisms in both albums show that he developed in the same direction with Ken, their ideas were very much alike. Mick who had written almost all the music for the first album also showed the signs of succession as to the second one which was almost fully Ken's... There is no sensation in this case; Ken had not arrived to Heep on the white horse, he had just been very sensitive to the unique potential of the group

making their own music. There is also a guess that neither Box nor Byron were very fond of composing, and it looks as if Mick and David had exposed their composer abilities in the first album and then gave up their dubious privilege to Ken, once underestimated and now seeking leadership.

Let us restore our own feelings while listening to this music many years ago and then we will be able to understand the reaction of Heep when at their rehearsals Ken would start playing his compositions. So sensitive musical souls as Box and Byron instantly entered this music and felt how good it really was and how wonderful it would sound. By the way, Heep were not the first to use the swelling baggage of ideas of one musician. A similar story happened to David Coverdale when he was invited to Deep Purple in 1973; David's material was enough for two records, Burn and Stormbringer.

In the coming years Ken's compositions were used even more actively, especially in the connection with the tremendous success of the SALISBURY hits, "Bird of Prey", "The Park" and "Lady In Black". The group accepted Ken's concepts. Only two years later, after five albums, they began to realize that Ken had used the band as the stage for self-expression and had put into existence a lot of his OWN ideas with the help of the group. Indeed, Hensley released too many records for such a short period of time. Such a tremendous efficiency was based on the material that had evidently been prepared long before Ken's coming to the band; since the peak of the popularity of the band happened in Ken's times, it produces the impression that the other Heep did not contribute much into the fantastic success of the group.

It was in Uriah Heep that Ken Hensley got the unique opportunity to implement his ego, thanks to the most advantageous human staff, the stunning Byron, the skillful Box. All the Heep were full of creative energy, young passion and a great desire to become famous, to do something great. Such musicians were too great a favour not to do a work of genius. P.S. We can only feel sorry that it is very unlikely to hear Byron's unique vocals of 1967 or Mick Box's guitar in Stalkers. Things are not better with the early Ken Hensley; though the vinyl record of the best things of The Gods was released in 1976, it is a rarity now.

CHAPTER SIX
1970-1973. GOOD AND BAD ANGELS.

*...I was stronger than ever in those tremendous practical resolutions that I
felt the crisis required.*

*It continued to walk extremely fast, and to have a general idea that I was
getting on, I made it a rule to take as much out of myself as I possibly
could, in my way of doing everything to which I applied my energies, I
made a perfect victim of myself.*

Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

The first genuine Heep album SALISBURY gave rise to many questions about how such supernatural music could be born. I will not give any final characteristics to Uriah Heep songs, it would be beyond my abilities. Nor will I be able to understand the phenomenon of Uriah Heep group genius, which raises them to still greater a height...

The music chemistry of VERY 'EAVY...VERY 'UMBLE is reflected more with SALISBURY. Once again produced by Gerry Bron, SALISBURY was being recorded by engineer Peter Gallen during two months, his assistant being Ashley Howe who would play an important role in the Uriah Heep career later. The album was recorded with new drummer Keith Baker.

The idea of the album was formed in Germany; in a way, it was their first "German record" though it was recorded in England. SALISBURY is significant for its songwriting development and unprecedented diversity.

The first song of the album is "Bird of Prey" which was later used by Heep to open their concerts so that to 'wind up' the audience. The song is climactic, showing all the potential of the band, with lots of high notes from Byron. The high-rise chorus is especially striking, as if raising itself to higher and higher notes; this chorus is unique on the background of the dim riff of hard-rock guitars. There is a very interesting nuance about the authorship of the song: the Bronze version indicates three authors, Box, Byron and Newton, whereas the later produced versions add the name of Hensley as the fourth author. The song really sounds different in different versions of the album. Who can say what it really means?

The enigmatic story of the song accounts for another interesting fact. I did not have the initial variant of SALISBURY, and it became a news for me that the official twentieth anniversary band roll of Uriah Heep given to me by David Owen, the manager of London Uriah Heep office, did not include the 'Bird of Prey'. Instead of the 'Bird', the catalogue includes 'High Priestess' which usually opens the second side of the album, while the discography says that the second side opens with a 'Simon the Bullet Freak'. Since I have only managed to find 'Simon' in the collection of rarities "Rarities of the Bronze Age" (1991), I can suppose that it was recorded only in the launch of the album, did not come up to expectations, and was replaced by 'Bird of Prey' in the following versions due to the fact that 'Bird', first, probably, released as a single, was a tremendous success. We can only try to guess why 'Simon' was excluded, though there was enough place on the vinyl disc to save both 'Simon' and 'Bird of Prey'. (The solution is simple to the point of absurdity. The compiler of the 1990 booklet included the American version of SALISBURY into the British list of records. Alas, things happen. - I.K., 1995.)

The song 'Lady in Black', an appropriately Euro-sounding ditty, subsequently became a gigantic hit in Germany upon its re-release in 1977, earning the band the Golden Lion award (the European equivalent of a Grammy) for its thirteen week stay at No.1. The image occurred to Heep while walking in Munich park where they met a 'German girl'. They tried to convey the atmosphere of innocence and romanticism of that meeting in their legendary ballad. The 'Lady in Black' single brought another novelty, it was performed from the beginning to the end by one and the same man named Hensley. As we see, it was one of the first efforts of Ken's to move Byron up or just to put him in his right place.

The title track of SALISBURY is also worth our attention as the most expressive thing the band ever did, for Heep would not achieve anything like this in the future. A 16 minute epic represents a musical potpourri with its keyboards, brass, woodwind and orchestral parts, all creating a wealth of colour and substance. The psychedelic sounds penetrate into the Baroque theme based on English horns and flutes, and all this is enhanced by the fantastic vocals of Byron's with the powerful organ background and bass and guitar solo.

The combination of rock and jazz in Heep strikingly new and very efficient. Heep were the first to perform together with symphony orchestra and did magic with fantastical jazz and symphony arrangements with John Fiddy, not so famous but very interesting a musician. Suite penetrated into their musical Cosmos, not fully explored yet, and opened new style with boundless possibilities which could have helped to evade a colossal damage to their creative work.

SALISBURY is the most monumental musical composition of Heep. Yet critics did not make any allowances either for the album or for the title song and thoroughly mixed them with mud like they had done with their debut album. Only this time they tried to accuse them of plagiarism of "Concerto for symphony orchestra and rock-band Deep Purple", released a year before. Once again, they appeared to be very poor prophets. After so many years the Deep Purple concert seems a poor copy of SALISBURY which has survived and sells well on CDs now.

The registration of copyrights for SALISBURY songs, as well as those of the other albums, was done by Sidney Bron Music. We mention this because the problem of copyright is, evidently, very troublesome for Ken Hensley. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to understand why he founded Ken Hensley Music to protect his copyrights ten years later. No doubt, Ken Hensley has something to protect, as at least half SALISBURY songs were written by him. Three of them (the best of all!) were written by him alone, he co-wrote two, and there was the only one which he did not take part in (according to the annotation). Indeed, if he had not been so modest and were more smiling, Ken would have become a rock-idol, nor less popular than Elton John, Rod Stewart or Paul McCartney. But Ken was more than modest not to mention his name in the vocals to the single 'Lady in Black' or to the albums HIGH AND MIGHTY and FIREFLY. We

can only guess about his vocals. (Anyhow, in the notorious LIVE IN EUROPE (1979), 'July morning', was really saved by Ken - and not Lawton - holding the sound.)

The British press remained deaf to the band's musical qualities, being preoccupied with the scandals and gossips. SALISBURY's diversity is explained as a result of a search to find a proper musical identity but, as Hensley later confessed, "all we knew in those days was that we wanted to play loud rock and roll music".

Following the release of SALISBURY, it was Keith Baker's turn to leave the band. "I never quite knew what happened to him," said Box a few years later. The group was completed with new drummer Ian Clarke, recruited from fellow Vertigo band Cressida (with only two albums released and later re-issued by Repertoire Records on CD. I would recommend them. - I.K.). It was then that the first Heep's visit to the States took place, to a country that immediately warmed to them in a big way. They were to play 20,000 seat arenas in support of top US pop band Three Dog Night and Steppenwolf. "Playing with Three Dog Night was all wrong musically," recalled Box, "but it was invaluable experience for us."

With that experience behind them the group went to work on album number three. Bron's deal with Philips/Vertigo was now over, which left him free to set up his own label meant for Heep. The first releases on the new label, Bronze, were re-issues of Heep's first two albums. The recording of LOOK AT YOURSELF took place during the summer months of 1971, marking a hat-trick of visits to Lansdowne, which was fast becoming a second home for them.

The album was recorded in the shortest possible time - during July 1971. That time Keith Baker had been already replaced by Ian Clarke, but the drummer's name was not mentioned in the sleeve notes to this album, nor is it now. Maybe, it was not just, because it was Ian Clarke who was doing the percussions, which was later proved by Heep themselves. So all the rumours about the usage of session drummers were not true.

We know now that Ian Clarke was tied up by crushing terms with other companies to such an extent that had his name been mentioned on Bronze and Island records released in Europe, he would not have received a penny but would have been tortured by plaintiffs. At the same time, records released by Mercury in America contained his name for, luckily, the English laws have no power in the States.

The album was recorded at the same studio as the previous one. They also held up the tradition of inviting musicians from the outside. For example, the title song required the invitation of percussionists from Osibisa Teddy Osei, Mac Tontoh and Loughy Amao. They also invited Manfred Mann to play the Moog synthesizer in the legendary 'July Morning', who had paid off his band and was thinking over the idea of creating new group Manfred Mann's Earth Band which would bring him a world success later (at the same Bronze).

If SALISBURY differed from VERY 'EAVY VERY 'UMBLE in the way CD-player differs from Addison's phonograph, then LOOK AT YOURSELF differed in the same way from SALISBURY. It was LOOK AT YOURSELF that consolidated the status of a diverse band for Heep. Based mostly on bass registers and on frenzied rhythm of Ian Clarke which has made the album unimaginably popular up to nowadays, LOOK AT YOURSELF became the most hard-rock album of all Heep concerts.

The hardest compositions, like 'Love Machine', were written with Ken's assistance, and he did it in the style that was absolutely not his. The songs followed one another in such an order that the second side of the record was notable for its hard and gloomy mysticism. It is this album that provides a mystic association of the mood and spirit between Heep and Black Sabbath, thus revealing Heep's interest in 'beyond-the- grave' themes. Nothing like this would happen in the future, if not to take for mysticism regular exchange of musicians between Heep and the group of Ozzy Osbourne's, ex-Black Sabbath's vocalist .

LOOK AT YOURSELF could become a starting point which would define the band's musical direction. The disparate ideas that had been a prominent feature of SALISBURY suddenly produced a more unified sound which cannot be denied in 'Look at Yourself' and 'July Morning', British hard-rock classics alongside with such things as 'Stairway to Heaven' (Led Zeppelin) and 'Child in Time' (Deep Purple). Some time later Ken Hensley said: "I think that 'July Morning' is one of the best examples of the way the band was developing at that point in time. It introduced a lot of dynamics, a lot of light and shade into our sound." (And just within a year! - I.K.)

In UK Uriah Heep with LOOK AT YOURSELF went in at No.39 for the first time. Their traditional success in Germany had opened up large parts of Europe for them; inroads had been made into the USA and even Britain, critical reaction aside, could not ignore the band. Things were good but they were going to get better.

Ken Hensley recalls the events of 1972 as witnessing substantial changes in the music and the personnel of the band: "The relationship, musically and personally, between myself, Mick and David developed so quickly, it was spontaneous. And the three of us were increasingly becoming the nucleus of the band, looking to fill the other two places." The other two places were once again vacant. Both Ian Clarke and Paul Newton were not happy with Heep, for various reasons; Newton was the first to go, making way for Mark Clarke to come, though for a brief stay... Then, by mutual consent, drummer Ian Clarke left, which allowed the opportunity to approach Lee Kerslake, who had played with the Gods and with the disintegrating National Head Band (his own project).

It was not by chance that, much later, in 1974-1975, the British musical press was full of obscure rumours about a solo project of Kerslake's; the solo was not released after all, yet the rumours themselves prove the fact that he was a dark horse then. Kerslake had already declined one offer to join Uriah Heep immediately after Keith Baker had left but this time he was not going to let another opportunity slip to jump a speeding Heep express. Lee joined the band on November 23rd 1971 as a drummer.

Soon after Lee, bassist Gary Thain was offered to the band, who had crossed paths with Heep more than once during tours. Mick, in particular, had been impressed with him: "Gary just had a style about him, and every bass player that I've ever known has always loved his style." It was a style with melodic bass lines. Thain replaced Mark Clarke halfway through an American tour, and with just 'The Wizard' laid down for the next album.

When Lee and Gary joined the band everything just clicked into place. The proof of the pudding was in the following DEMONS AND WIZARDS album which is unrivaled up to now with the beauty of the music and the force of impact.

The album was recorded in March and April 1972 by the 'golden' staff of Heep engineers, Peter Gallen and Ashley Howe, at their alma mater, Lansdowne Studios, Lansdowne Ho, W 11, London.

From the outside DEMONS AND WIZARDS looked as a mystical surrealist fantasy offered by the group, with the cover design to be one of the first featuring Roger Dean's individualistic style of imagery, in many ways but a false illusion. DEMONS AND WIZARDS contains a mighty strong collection of good solid rock songs declared by Hensley in the sleeve notes as "just a collection of our songs that we had a good time recording".

More melodic 'Traveler in Time' and 'Poets Justice' are all thematically linked by their tales of fantasy, being in tune with parts of 'Rainbow Demon' and 'The Wizard' (co-written with Hensley by Mark Clarke). An outstanding bassist, Mark Clarke, participating in DEMONS AND WIZARDS only on the initial step, was not duly estimated in the Heep's history. Mark was leaving for a newly organized Tempest but Ken did not lose contact with him, and, thank goodness, he took part in Ken's solo projects of 1975 - 1980 both writing songs and preparing the phonography. Mark was not a star but he could be an ideal partner for Ken.

In spite of the numerous assertions of Heep that they appreciate brotherhood and collectivism, it was already in DEMONS AND WIZARDS that Ken was gradually pushed aside as the author; it is likely that his enormous royalties troubled the other Heep. There are two things written without Ken, and they, it must be owned, are far not the best. Thus, Hensley's leadership has another proof, without his direct efforts.

The album throws up several classics, notably, the two singles, 'The Wizards' and 'Easy Livin', that went into the charts all over the place and "helped the album to become the band's first truly international success", according to Bron. Most notes to DEMONS AND WIZARDS do not pay due attention to the two last songs which are usually united in one, 'Paradise / The Spell'. This track shows without doubt that Heep and Ken reached perfection in uniting Paradise and Hell in one inseparable unit, spelling and enchanting. If Ken had not written anything else but 'Paradise / The Spell' he may have been called "the king of musical passages" which he managed so perfectly. It was easier to do while Thain and Kerslake were playing ever so better to form that legendary "golden" Heep whose success was unsurpassable. "The band was really focused at that time," recalls Hensley. "We all wanted the same thing, were all willing to make the same sacrifices to achieve it and we were all very committed. It was the first album to feature that line-up and there was a magic in that combination of people that created so much energy and enthusiasm."

In Britain the album enjoyed an 11-week popularity in the charts with the peak at No.20. Today it still deserves recognition as one of Heep's finest moments.

If DEMONS AND WIZARDS had become the peak of the band's success by the summer of 1972 then THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY (No.28 in British hit-parade!), released just six months afterwards, represents a natural extension of the same grounds. Heavy mysticism of LOOK AT YOURSELF, turned into soft velvet phantasmagoria in DEMONS AND WIZARDS, became just a kind, airy tale.

The same studio, engineers, the personnel. The same good old Roger Dean designed the sleeve for the last time. The album became a real magic, with its gothic fairies and Merlin's apprentices, born by the fantasy of Tolkien and Stewart. And in spite of the fact that the band bears the name of an inveterate Judas and a regular villain, their tale in THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY is kind and philosophic; every song, from 'Sunrise' to 'Blind Eye', 'Echoes in the Dark', 'Rain' and 'Tales' (in particular), the succession being crowned with 'The Magician's Birthday', gives evidence that Heep had reached perfection in their unique, unreal music. It is Ken Hensley who has recently dismantled the myth about the initial idea of THE MAGICIAN as a rock opera. He declared that he himself would like to perform THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY in the symphony opera manner, starting with 'Tales' and filling the album with other compositions which had been left unfinished because of the hard conditions of their contract with Bronze who demanded the release of the record to the 1972 Christmas. What a pity!

Uriah Heep were building the perfect beast. If their lifestyle at the time, surpassing the luxury of the other stars, had some effect on their characters offstage, their music made that necessary contrast with their lifestyle that contributed into their creative development. "Uriah Heep used to have an image, now they have personality," wrote Melody Maker in 1973. "A new image has developed, but now it is more than an image, it is a character." And Heep undoubtedly had a character. But it was not just a collective personality, and even more than the sum of individual personalities.

In January 1973, after the fairy-like tours of the past year, a live album URIAH HEEP LIVE was recorded at the concert in Birmingham. It is a double album and a living testimony to the band's character (and personality) at the time.

Recording a live album, Heep paid a contribution to the fashions that made a lot of bands (now forgotten) release live albums between every two or three studio records. Heep could have managed a live album even earlier, for in the early 70-s, after LOOK AT YOURSELF, they were full of hits.

Lavishly packaged in a gatefold sleeve that houses an eight-page booklet, the album is memorable not just for its music but also for its inner sleeves adorned with press cuttings emphasizing how Heep had become a global commodity.

The album was glorious. Many fans decided that it was not necessary to buy studio records of the band when they had their live album. LIVE became a rare example of how to perform beautiful and strong studio things in live. There is no saying about concert tricks of the contemporary bands which lost a lot to their studio records; To polish every lucky drive for months with the help of the army of engineers and the other staff differs greatly from playing the unique sound in live within running seconds. It is at the concert that the real harmony of the group body reveals itself; no engineers can help you at the moment but the feeling of comradeship. Heep were great at this; more often than not their live songs surpassed their studio variants through the cascade of improvised passages which expose good taste and measure characteristic of the group. Heep were perfect at gigantic shows, feeling the least nuances in the stage behaviour of each other, which could last for hours in the endless tours. Their vocalist was particularly overloaded; it was not without reason that, two years later, Byron complained to new bassist Wetton that he had nearly lost his vocal cords for five years of "continuous yelling on the arenas".

Another stone to CD-culture: the CD version of the album "has lost" the last thing - rock and roll that is considered the best Uriah Heep did in that style. The only CD version of Shepperton show (1974), released in 1986 by Castle Communications, contains something like this. Alas, the lost rock and roll was not issued, which is a great loss to millions of new fans who have no opportunity to enjoy Heep superb improvisations in classic rock and roll. (In the later re-issues of LIVE Rock'n'roll was materialized as if by some magic, which we are very glad of. - I.K., 1995.)

The sleeve notes to the record of URIAH HEEP LIVE end with the best wish to those who had already heard the concert to sit comfortably and to enjoy the wonders of the four-side live album. By the way, the major events of 1970 to 1973 are commented in the notes. They said that drummer Kerslake had met Ken Hensley before. After the debut with David Anthony in The Moods Lee used to play together with Ken in The Gods. There also played Newton, the first bassist of Heep. After the split of National Head Band Lee was approached to join the three rising stars. After the final division of Keef Hartley's group Gary Thain continued his career with John Mayall. They say that Newton left Heep halfway through the American tour (in fact, it was Mark Clarke - I.K.), and then unemployed Gary Thain suddenly crossed the Atlantic not only to complete the tour with Heep but, as it turned out later, to become the best bassist in the Heep's history. DEMONS AND WIZARDS and THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY albums proved the monolithic proportions of the band and gather full seats everywhere, in Britain as well as in the continent, the USA and Japan even now.

After the release of the live album, sold in three million circulation (the unique case!), Heep reached the peak of their success on both sides of the Atlantic and it was a great challenge to the band: they were to survive on the dizzy height. The experience of show business proves that, actually, no band has succeeded in doing this; as a rule, the commercial success of talented groups turns into a deadlock and creative frustration. The release of two successive albums that are more or less alike is equal to the capital punishment for the band because the consumer starts setting his teeth on edge, though contradicting himself. The conservative fans begin to demand something new in the very moment when the band, resting on their laurels, are finally losing their form. To give a brief example, Status Quo, ZZ Top, Eagles fell victims to their two or three hits.

Heep chose the other way; they continued the experiment, coming to France and recording SWEET FREEDOM there (No.18 in UK). There is self-irony in it, indeed: it was on the peak of their success that Heep were the least free, as they had turned into a model capitalist enterprise with hundreds of employees to "bake" superhits. Later, in one of the songs of HIGH AND MIGHTY, Heep exposed themselves, a bit ironically, as prosperous businessmen. The change of the studio was, primarily for tax purposes which were always so high in UK that Bron and the band decided to break from established routine and record abroad, at Chateau d'Herouville.

The new album was recorded, as usual, in the shortest time, June and July 1973. This is the kind of album you would say a lot about. Probably, 'Stealin' is the most remarkable thing in it, but altogether the record brought many other discoveries, among them Thain's gift as a composer, which could not but influenced their music. Thain co-wrote in four songs out of eight, which is not bad at all, if to take into consideration a coming (and very sad, too) end of his career in Heep, as well as in music - and in life. The major staff of the album was written by Ken Hensley who tried, especially in the title song, to meet the expectations of their most conservative fans. Yet, in at least three compositions one can easily feel the flavour of new ideas, namely, in 'Circus' (by the way, written without Ken's part). When you hear it for the first time you may take his authorship for granted, but it was not there, though Ken is present, invisible, in every accord of this crystal clear, airy guitar ballad.

Hensley was inventing more and more new sounds, especially in 'If I Had the Time', 'Pilgrim'. You can listen to 'Pilgrim' on and on, and it works on your subconscious's, especially, after five-hour delight of Heep music. 'Pilgrim' was apparently written and performed under some drugs, thus itself turning into a kind of drug with a very strong effect that drives you mad. It sound like a bridge to the coming album (compare it with the 'Dreams' from WONDERWORLD!). It is not without a reason that it completes the album. Heep might put in the end just to hide it from critic obstructionism. The aim was done: critics "overslept" the song, they just did not perceive it, nor did they understand the next album.

The American CD version of SWEET FREEDOM was enlarged with two more compositions, those by Thain and Box, but they disappointed even the most zealous fans. Thank goodness, Gerry Bron saved the first issues from the additional critics.

SWEET FREEDOM came as "a good, solid album, throwing up 'Stealin", a highlight of that LP. SWEET FREEDOM is the kind of album you would expect from a band who had the world in their back pocket and were still striving to move on while consolidating their musical identity at the same time.

The press, who had never given the band a comfortable ride, had by now split into two factions; those who ritually slated them while acknowledging that the album would sell another million or two, and those who fully appreciated what the band were doing - a classic case of love them or hate them! Melody Maker gave SWEET FREEDOM the thumbs up, saying that Uriah Heep were now "enclosed at the top of their heap, and the six good tracks (out of eight) would keep them there for another millennium."

The album did well peaking at No.18 in the UK charts, yet 'Stealin' was not a hit in the motherland of Heep. Recording the album, though it had been a new experience, was certainly not without its difficulties. Ken recalls that it was what you may call a period of research, for they were in need of men whose musical identity would be kindred to theirs. They had become a quintet, though they were not quite aware of what and how they were going to play in such a group. Lee and Gary were alien to each other, and all of them felt somewhat nervous. But their joint energy helped them to succeed in saving all that had been achieved, and the new musicians, joining the group, opened the period of their break to the US. Within three years the band released six albums (Ken also released his solo project) and were on a continuous tour round the world. Is this not a record for a band that was constantly growing and did not stay the same?

CHAPTER SEVEN
1977-1980. ANOTHER RETROSPECT.

"It is not merely, my pet, " said I, "that we lose money and comfort, and even temper sometimes; but that we incur the serious responsibility of spoiling every one who comes into our service, or has any dealings with us. I begin to be afraid that the fault is not entirely on one side, but that these people all turn out ill because we don't turn out very well ourselves.
Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

"Why did you change David Byron for John Lawton in 1976?", somebody asked Hensley a few years after such a remarkable event as the exile from Uriah Heep of one of the founders and the pet of the public. And what did Ken answer? He said that Roger Glover "had recommended John to him" (mind that "him" - not to Uriah Heep, nor to Gerry Bron, the producer, but to Ken Hensley! - I.K.). With his wonderful voice, Lawton had worked with Glenn Hughes and Ian Guilan. Besides, joining Heep, he knew quite a lot of Heep songs. On his audition, they came to the conclusion that John was able to give a new turn and a new image to Heep. that was the main reason for the choice. John Lawton left a bright tack behind him in the history of the band, as well as his successor John Sloman. Everything John Lawton did has brought hearty reminiscences, but his presence in the band coincided with the very hard times for them, when they were troubled with instability.

For the sake of the illusory career in Heep (and so it happened to be) whom Lawton had idolized in his youth, he left a rather popular West German second rate band Lucifer's Friend which had been formed on the ruins of one of the first German bands German Band. The band from Hamburg consisted of four Germans and an Englishman; they were organist Peter Hecht, bass-guitarist Dieter Horns, guitarist Peter Hesslein, drummer Joachim Rietenbach, and vocalist John Lawton. Lucifer's Friend's career started in 1970 with ASTRIX album. All the band's records were released in Germany by Miller, and some of them were licensed in the USA. Later all rights for the band's records were reserved after the famous Elektra. In the beginning of the 70-s the band recorded three famous albums at the German affiliate of Vertigo. They were: LUCIFER'S FRIEND (1971), WHERE GROUPIES KILLED THE BLUES (1972), I'M JUST A ROCK'N'ROLL SINGER (1973). After these records the drummer was changed for Herbert Bornhold. They started with imitating of Deep Purple and Uriah Heep. But BANQUET (1974) and MIND EXPLODING (1976) showed the elements of jazz rock. In 1977, after Lawton's departure to Uriah Heep, there came Mick Starrs, and the music style of the band changed - but instead of jazz or art rock (which would have been quite normal), the group started playing almost refined hard rock. The album of 1980 was released in England. (In the last two albums the keyboards are played by Adrian Askew).

For years the band had been experiencing a wonderful school as a hard rock backing for a brilliant showman, German composer, arranger and orchestra man, "king of parties" James Last. Many German music-lovers regarded Lucifers as a heating session group of "Vater James", who, sometimes, just for the sake of ambitions, let them out to "graze on the solo grass". However, in the end of the 70-s Lucifers eventually got their sovereignty. It was the joint work with James Last that could explain both their brilliant skills and their scholastic imitativeness and the bias to interpreting.

The next turn in their career happened in 1981, when Mick Starrs gracefully let the mike to John Lawton, then exiled from Uriah Heep, whom Lucifer's Friend used to record their last album MEAN MACHINE (1981). Since then they had not been Lucifer's friends any longer. Lawton released his first solo HEARTBEAT together with guitarist Peter Hesslein; later they gathered a new group, Rebel, and released two albums, REBEL and ZAR. Today Lawton is the co-owner of a flower-shop (it's an art in itself!). He still plays as a sessman, not quitting music; he and Hesslein are planning a new solo project.

But let us come back to the most contradictory, hard and legendary time. Uriah Heep's version of their own history classifies the end of the 70-s as the "period of speculation", the peak of which occurred after Wetton and Byron had left. To replace Wetton bassist Trevor Bolder (ex-David Bowie, Mick Ronson and reformed Spiders from Mars) was recruited. Enlisted to Heep, Bolder said: "I knew Heep were the right band for me." (No doubt! - I.K.)

But who would the new vocalist be? David Coverdale? He auditioned but no decision was made. Ian Hunter from Mett the Hoople or Gary Holton from Heavy Metal Kids? Neither of them. The new singer was to be John Lawton who had previously established his credentials in German based band Lucifer's Friend and featured in Roger Glover's BUTTERFLY BALL (leading vocals in 'Little Chalk Blue') which united the present and coming rock monsters, such as Glenn Hughes, David Coverdale, Ronnie James Dio, Tony Ashton, Mike Moran, Eddie Jobson, Eddie Hardin. Minding the previous group success, Eddie Hardin released WIZARD'S CONVENTION (1976) with the same Coverdale, Glover, Ashton, Hughes, very famous Ray Fenwick, Mark Nauseef, Pete York - together with the unsurpassed and legendary Rick van der Linden (remember TRACE of 1974). Eventually, in the 80-s the tradition was established with PHENOMENA 1, 2 & 3 (1985, 1987, 1993), WILD CONNECTION (1987) and FORCEFIELD 1 to 5 (1987-1992). Before hauling Lawton from the "Vaterland" over to England for audition, Heep got to hear a tape of him (God knows, how they managed to get it!). "Image-wise he wasn't quite what we were looking for," said Box later, "but his pipes were perfect and so we went for music end of it." As to Ken, whose opinion, apparently, was decisive, there is a legend that no sooner had he seen Lawton on TV, Hensley made the choice. The reality was, in my opinion, much more prosaic. But let us have a digression.

In the midst of the 70-s not only Russian but also British rock-lovers and rock-connoisseurs had a chance to heartily love the wonderful velvet baritone of David Coverdale. In 1976 Russian music-lovers got the copies of LUCIFER'S FRIEND, but as against their British counterparts in that crazy love for music our rock-lovers got only recorded tapes without the list of the personnel), and some of them took it for granted that it was Coverdale whose vocals they heard in LUCIFER!

Listening on and on, they just got more convinced in that mistaken identity. No wonder! It had passed a year since the fans heard this talented vocalist, while they did not know any news about him quitting Deep Purple on the liquidation of that prosperous business. Thus, the lack of information and striking similarity of the voices of Coverdale and Lawton caused many fruitless debates and useless talks.

It was not without a reason that I have remembered this old Soviet-ish anecdote which proves the phenomenal likeness between the two voices. If the voices were so much alike, then why would the venerable Uriah Heep neglect the venerable Coverdale? Heep would have been able to calm down the critics who accused the band of imitating Deep Purple. And the cooperation Hensley/Coverdale would have been more fruitful than that of Hensley/Lawton. Passing by Coverdale, the band, evidently, lost their chance. At the same time, they were saved from all the legal complications of the uncertain contract between Coverdale and Deep Purple. They were also saved from the inevitable problems with the rising star who was capricious, ambitious and demanding. The perspective to get a 'novice' who would slap the new colleagues on their shoulders with the air of superiority, apparently, terrified Heep to such a degree that they preferred unknown Lawton with his 'a la Coverdale' voice to the star.

Of course, Heep made the best possible use of Lawton's perspectives that opened in 1976. Yet, three years later they fully suffered all the drawbacks of their choice. If they wanted a vocalist "like David Byron", they succeeded in doing this only ten years later. And for the time the vocalist problem, which was so successfully solved by Smokie, AC/DC, Foreigner and Bad Company, was beyond Uriah Heep. And only Byron was "to blame"!

Anyhow, the three albums, recorded with Lawton, were very important in Heep's career, starting FIREFLY sold in the early part of 1977 and recorded in October and November 1976. The evidence to the efficiency and vulnerability of Lawton was proved by the last Lucifer album (with him) which was released in August 1976. Of course, Lawton had his drawbacks: he did not have the fullest head of hair like Byron; he was overweight; but his bluesy and powerful vocal style gave hope for the future. "He had a voice that I thought would give a new dimension," recalls Hensley.

The first album with Lawton displayed a renewed energy and was more stimulating than ever. It apparently claimed that Heep were starting anew. Like the other two albums, FIREFLY was recorded at Roundhouse Recording Studios (London), for some reasons, without Ashley Howe. As to many Heep fans, one can be sure to put FIREFLY on the same pedestal with MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY. As was brilliantly proved by Hensley, Heep could do wonderful music even without Byron. And Lawton's ecstatic, powerful voice had brought something into the group compositions that they had been ever lacking with Byron. In FIREFLY even Hensley sounds somewhat different, though you can easily trace in it the "Tales" from MAGICIAN and "Paradise/Spell" from DEMONS. Ken sounds as if imitating his former self, but it only adds some flavour to the album.

The first composition, 'The Hanging Tree' (Hensley/Williams), gives a special mood to the whole album, with its powerful synthesizer introduction and Lawton's cheerful vocals.

In the second composition, "Been Away Too Long", you can find Ken's passages from lyrics to hard rock, immaculate as they are. And Lawton's vocals are even more versatile and easily mounting than those of Byron's.

It would be better not to talk much about the third composition, but the fact that it would be later included into LP LIVE IN EUROPE as a ten-minute demonstration of Heep's abilities to do endless solo.

'Wise Man' is very nice and so soft! For a long time it was my favourite in the album. And it is so naturally associated with 'Rain' from MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY. Just wonderful!

Frog-leaping over a song, let us dwell on the 'Rollin' On'. Some Zeppelin-ish flavour is immediately felt, or, rather, heard in it. Once again, there is Ken's most delicate cobweb of sounds. If you compare it with HOUSE OF THE HOLY by Led Zeppelin, you can see that the original is inferior to the imitation (if any).

Last, but not least, 'Sympathy'. However strange it may seem, in 1977 this composition was far less popular than 'Wise Man'. For some reasons, it became superhit in Russia. As Lawton's legendary benefit (he was singing like he never did!), the song was charted as the best commercial of the album, and its author, Ken Hensley, proved once more that he was able to create things no worse than 'Easy Livin'".

The title song is a hundred per cent hit in its old/new sounding. "Firefly" was written as if for Byron (probably, the reason for Ken to sing it), yet at the same time it indicates something new in Hensley's style. The most delicate backing notes of the organ and the fantastic skills of the sound engineer (just no faults in the assemblage!). By the way, Ken is again too modest: his leading vocals are not even mentioned in the sleeve notes.

To sum up, in FIREFLY we have witnessed quite a new band, as if dropping off all the misgivings and aiming at their future. This is the best album since the times of MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY, recorded while their creative peak and the most self-sacrificing mood, Ken's in particular. No wonder, many music-lovers are unanimous to regard this album as Ken's another solo.

The release of the new album with the new vocalist caused the fatal short circuit, and with a recent history including electrocutions, drugs, death, changes in personnel and declining album and ticket sales it was hardly surprising. No wonder, their image needed a battering.

"We knew we were faded with an uphill task and that's the main reason we're doing this tour with Kiss," said Hensley.

"We chose them to support us," says Kiss's Paul Stanley, "and it was great having them with us. They were incredibly professional, and so consistent..."

Is it not funny? Kiss of 1977 CHOOSE Heep at the peak of their fame to stimulate (to "heat") the public before the Kiss show! There is something wrong in this situation: either Kiss take their dreams for the reality, or they were the first to feel the coming decline of the current idols and managed to use the last flashes of their fame.

Meanwhile, in England there was speculation as to how Uriah Heep would look. But the shows went well; and even the press seemed to enjoy themselves. It is notable that such a warm reception was given to the "archaic" hard rock band amidst the New Wave with its "disco" and "punk rock", in England. By the way, Mick Box was likely to be the first to notice that the new fashion certainly did not pose a threat to the good old rock.

And then came the Reading Festival, when they topped the bill on the opening night, setting things up nicely for the release of INNOCENT VICTIM (recorded in July and September 1977). Its first copies appeared in Russia as early as in January 1978, which indicated the growth of Heep's fame in the USSR. Not later than in 1981 the Russian issue of the album was allowed at Melodia - an unprecedented case! In truth, the glossy cover of the Russian issue was cut down, for fear of God knows what. "INNOCENT VICTIM had a slight edge on FIREFLY," reckons Box. "It was like another building situation, particularly in Europe again. We were doing moderately well in England and did a lot of festivals." The album, heavier than some its predecessors, spawned 'Free me' - a big single in several countries. And it was especially notable for the fact that it included two non-Hensley compositions: the over ambitious "The Dance" and the much superior "Choices", both written by American writer and a friend of Ken's, Jack Williams. Jack had assisted Heep in FIREFLY, co-writing "The Hanging Tree" with Hensley.

To compare it with the previous album, INNOCENT VICTIM, conceptually poor, was a very rough work, rather a collection of commercial hits than a personal record.

On listening to the first thing of the album, the most devoted fans tried to calm themselves down: "Bad luck, it happens, but wait until the second one!" The second, the third - things written by Bolder - were just the same. The fourth composition, one more "slip". Just roughly done rock'n'roll by Lawton, nothing more. At last, the vinyl track leads us to "Illusion", and there we are! The sweetest hit, refined by Ken, saves the first side of LP. But the real start you can find only on the second side. this is a true example of how the poor arrangement (not just Heep's problem!) nearly ruined the album.

"Free Me" is a masterpiece of commercial rock. Ken is here again to unite the ununitable: tragedy and solemnity. After "Free Me" the next song sounds simply dull. But "The Dance" by Williams is worth our attention.

We do not know how Ken's friend Williams and not Hensley himself appeared to be the author of "The Dance". Though there is a lot of evidence of Ken's presence in this song. Well, Hensley offered, Bron chose, and the band agreed. "The Dance", with its slightly eclectic a style, a "raggy", adds something to enrich Heep with some freakish quality. If you let the old fan a remark: were it a bit shorter and less pathetic, the song would have been a supper hit.

We can only feel sorry that the relationship Hensley/Williams did not resume. Note, that it was not only Jack who wrote in the Heep fashion, suffice it to mention "Take No Prisoners" by David Byron, with the compositions of organist Lou Stonebridge.

INNOCENT VICTIM was a breathtaking success on the continent, in Germany in particular, where Heep were idolized (and still are nowadays). On the release, INNOCENT VICTIM sold in million and was the biggest financial success for Heep. In Germany, the charts placed 'Wise Man' (FIREFLY), 'Lady in Black' (SALISBURY) and 'Free Me' (INNOCENT VICTIM) among the best twenty singles.

In January 1978 Uriah Heep played in Basel (Switzerland) in support of new German band Scorpions. "Uriah Heep have always been one of my favourite English bands," says Scorps' guitarist Rudolph Schenker. "I always liked 'Gypsy' and 'Lady in Black'. One of my funniest memories though is of that support we played with them. Because we played another encore their singer (John Lawton) came up on stage to get us off. I thought he was going to beat us up!"

To tell you the truth, I doubt that Lawton was really going to beat Scorps up - more likely, Rudolph misinterpreted famous joker Lawton. Anyhow, Scorpions had undergone a very strong Heep influence. To understand this, you may listen attentively to the famous ballads of that German band.

FALLEN ANGEL, released in the Autumn 1978, was recorded for a longer time than usual, April to August. The band had settled into a comfortable studio recording again, with session musicians. It happened for the third time in Heep's career, and the press was warm, though not without ironical notes, probably, for the sake of self-respect. Surprisingly, Byron's departure coincided with the positive shift in critics. Could there be a connection?

In comparison with its predecessor, FALLEN ANGEL was more conceptual, and music-lovers were not so upset. The album opens with 'Woman in the Night', written by Box/Lawton/Kerslake (usually the opening was Ken's). The next song's name sounds a little funny in Russian: 'Falling in Love' in translation can also mean "Dropped in Love".

Song by song, and you suspect that Hensley had "lightened" the musical concept of the album, even in comparison with INNOCENT VICTIM. If Ken accused Heep of the commercialization in the end of the 70-s, then we have another evidence to it in the FALLEN ANGEL, nervous, rough, lacking usual grace. Yet Heep would not have been Heep, had they not demonstrated a masterpiece even in such a "decadent" album. It was 'Come Back to Me' that improved this rather dull album, alongside with 'Love or Nothing', a surprisingly beautiful song, driving us back to SWEET FREEDOM.

Strange it might seem, but Lawton's 'I'm Alive' sounds not bad at all. Another success was the title song.

The album is not totally bad. The cover looks nice, especially after the ugly "pistoplane", flying over HIGH AND MIGHTY in 1976. Of course, the FIREFLY cover is much better, and it resembles THE MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY, turning us back to the realm of childhood, with very soft pictures, or, rather, drawings, of Heep in the utterly delicate background. Unfortunately, to the new generations of fans they are lost forever. The sleeve of INNOCENT VICTIM is enchanting us with the eye of a nasty snake and drives back to the design of the first album which was as chaotic in its contents as it was in the sleeve design. The sleeve of the FALLEN ANGEL is designed in a different manner: a blood-stained maiden in the armour with the cleaver in her hands. Maybe, she is the fallen angel; if an angel turns into a woman, then he is definitely fallen. There is another example, Lawton's failure, but we shall come back to it later.

Let us return to the "period of speculation" of the legendary Heep. In the end of 1976 Gerry Bron who had made his point with HIGH AND MIGHTY, was now back in he comfortable producer's chair. Having produced FIREFLY, Bron shared his credit with Hensley producing INNOCENT VICTIM and THE FALLEN ANGEL. There has been plenty of debate about the role of Bron in the business of the band. Like any other group that had tasted fame, Heep were about to think that they could do without any boss and would be able to make unified decisions themselves. They were unaware though that the Lawton period of relative stability was about to end. Bron had contributed effectively into the success of the

band, too. Being manager, producer and record company boss nobody but Bron could possibly share all these responsibilities to everybody's benefit. Bron's dictatorship was the guarantee of the success.

Gerry Bron: "The whole problem stemmed from the songwriting and the fact that Ken ended up earning more because he wrote the songs. It allowed Ken to do so much more; he had his (motor) racing team interests, a big home with built-in studios and his collection of cars." Everything changed in 1976.

"I never made any secret of the fact that I'd just bought a Ferrari or a Rolls Royce," says Hensley.

Financially, Hensley was on a different plane, and it was leading to substantial resentment from the rest. Yet for a while they were to put up with his leadership for he was the "hit factory" as yet. "Everything he wrote he had to use," says Box, "and that's not right." Probably, Mick hints on the fact that it was he and not Ken Hensley who had founded the band. But who stopped Mick from putting forward his own hits which would as good as Ken's? The albums of the end of the 70-s, i.e. FIREFLY, were written mostly by Hensley; there was only one thing in FIREFLY written by Kerslake (by the way, the most impersonal one). The same is true about the songs of INNOCENT VICTIM written by the other Heep. As to me, the album would not have been too bad without Bolder/Box/Lawton's songs. In THE FALLEN ANGEL Hensley's songs are apparently in discord with the others' songs, the only exception being 'Come Back to Me' co-written with Lee Kerslake, and yet every accord in it reveals Hensley's shadow. Last, the most weighty argument in favour of Ken's exclusive position in Uriah Heep is the fact that even after Hensley's departure from the band, Heep cannot do without his songs in their shows.

What does Ken respond? "We were always on deadlines, and I hated deadlines because there was always a call for another twelve songs, and they all needed to be like 'Easy Livin'" and I could never respond to that. But maybe... I was as guilty as everybody else of enjoying the trappings of success."

It is impossible to drop the idea that there is a fairly self-critical and reasonable musician rather than an impudent upstart, ever so greedy; a musician, who had written most of the materials for the three albums within just two years, and all this without any support of the 60-s and, seemingly, without the young energy.

Nevertheless, it was the great part of the group work that contributed to the success of Ken's songs, and Bron had the final say as to the ultimate shape of each album: "The others all felt they weren't being given a chance to write songs and I got the blame for that because as the producer I picked up the songs."

Bron is somewhat cunning: in fact, he was not that adamant dictator masterminding his favourite Ken. Sometimes, for the sake of piece in the band, he picked up somebody else's (rather weak) songs which almost inevitably turned to be a failure afterwards.

However, the major rift at the time developed between John Lawton and Ken Hensley, the constant friction between the two resulting in the nearest thing to violence the group had seen, which did not improve the financial situation. The last straw happened to be the fatally permanent presence of Lawton's wife on the Heep road, which finally led to the vocalist getting chopped shortly after the Bilzen Festival in Belgium. (We hold the opinion of not to trouble either babies' diapers or marital linen of the Heep, so we are not going to discuss the intimate details of the reasons for Lawton to resign, as they had very little to do with the musical disagreement within the band. - I.K.)

Lawton resigned shortly after the recording of LIVE IN EUROPE and a few vocals of the studio album CONQUEST. Recorded in 1979, LIVE IN EUROPE was to be released only in 1986 by Castle Communications. Why the seven year delay? You may listen to the album but once, and it is clear that it was doomed to failure in 1979. It is unbelievable how past his best Lawton's vocals sound in it, past to such an extent that none but Ken Hensley was to sing that famous drive in 'July Morning'. The album is so disappointing that it is difficult to listen to it up to the end, though Lawton's versions of 'Easy Livin', 'Stealin' and 'Gypsy' are not without some interest.

Heep wasted no time in bringing ex-Lone Star vocalist John Sloman in as Lawton's replacement - and he did not close the list of the Heep vocalists.

Musically and visually, Sloman was the complete antithesis of Lawton. First of all, he was younger. Second, he was better looking. And third, he had all round musical ability: Sloman could sing, play keyboards and guitar. In the words of Box, the new frontman of Heep was "an all rounder".

It looked as if another personnel rush started as Kerslake followed Lawton, after seven years in the band. Lee departed, following "a blazing row", when the drummer accused Bron of favouritism towards Hensley's material: "I couldn't agree with the management's attitude - as far as he (Bron) was concerned the only person worth anything was Ken Hensley."

For God's sake! Lee is a superior drummer, but for all seven years he did not get it that Bron was absolutely right!

Though much of the next album had been completed up to the described events, Heep started re-recording with vocalist Sloman and new drummer Chris Slade, ex of Manfred Mann and familiar to the band through Bronze, home for both bands. It was not without reason that Manfred Mann, doing somewhere between Pink Floyd and Uriah Heep in the 70-s, was always welcome by good old Gerry Bron. Probably, Bron deliberately gave his support to various bands just to avoid the charge of Bronze's exclusively "Heep" dimension. (Remember that it was Bron who had made Motorhead famous.) Those were true Bronze motives in their relationship with Heep, which also contributed to Kerslake's departure, while some Russian sources mention only such reasons as the commercialization of Heep in the 70-s or the decline of their sales.

Under such circumstances, physically and morally exhausted, Heep emerged their CONQUEST in February 1980. No wonder, the album was unusually raw, yet nevertheless revolutionary as ever. It was also notable for the fact that this time Heep were their own producers with John Gallen as sound engineer. Gerry Bron was but an executive producer, which indicated the growing gap between the manager and the band. Not by chance, the cover depicts Heep in a hard effort of raising their fallen banner. A rare band could dare such self-criticism, yet Heep were there!

The album was conceptual. Anxious and "airy", the music of it sounds strange for classic Heep. Two songs were written by Bolder (which he was never able to repeat), and he also sings 'It ain't Easy' in the end. What a pity that his "newly born" vocals could not make his stoopy, lean and quite ordinary shape fit for a frontman.

Once again, Ken's shadow joins that of Lawton's, for much of the album was recorded with them. While listening to the album you feel sure that John I resigned in time, and John II was a proper replacement to him, whatever Ken may say. Sloman did not sing to make Kensley happy, but he managed to bring something Byron-wise with him, something that had almost vanished from Heep music while with Lawton. Sloman's vocal masterwork was 'Out on the Street'; the new vocalist turned to be tremendously sensitive (!) to Hensley's music. Unfortunately, he will never get another teacher like Ken Hensley. John was to change a lot of bands later and to be lost among session musicians. But back to CONQUEST. The very fact that the album was estimated as undone but worth attention speaks volumes for the band's ability to come up with great songs in their own right. The album was likely to indicate the new turning point for Heep. By the way, Robin Smith from Record Mirror could hardly contain himself, giving the record five stars - the ultimate rate. Some felt it was a confused Heep (and given recent events it had every right to be). Box acknowledges it was "a very difficult album to record", while Trevor Bolder describes the period as "a mess".

Yet, such a track as 'Feelings', a poppy kind of ballad, came to be commercial in the very best sense of the word, "a minor masterwork", said Sounds. And there was also Bolder's excellent 'Fools' featuring great guitar and brilliant harmonies, which entertained critics and music-lovers to their content. But in spite of all the enthusiasm the album was met with, it was shortly forgot and was re-issued in CD only in the end of 1990.

Probably, the album strayed into unHeep-like territory, for even at that time the music world was considering Heep as a source of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal of the end of 70-s and the beginning of 80-s. Remember such bands as Iron Maiden or Def Leppard. Most of the "metal" bands were citing Heep as a big inspiration. Iron Maiden's Steve Harris remembers seeing Heep for the first time in 1975: "The thing that gets me is that they're still obviously enjoying themselves. They are fighters but they're still having fun."

A "10th Anniversary" tour of the band was in support of Girlschool, attracting big crowds, but Hensley was obviously unhappy, primarily with Sloman: "The Band had chosen John and I had opposed that decision. He was a good musician and he looked great but I thought he had little going for him vocally. The way he interpreted songs was totally different to the way I had written them. I could understand wanting to move on but this was like the differences between Black Sabbath and Gino Vanelli." Perhaps, such a severe judgement was a bit early when the musician had not yet worked with the band. Eventually, Sloman could have a chance to overtake Heep's spirit and to show his ability. You can explain Ken's point of view, remembering that yet in 1979 he had preferred Peter Goalby to Sloman but the band did not agree with him. Resulting this dissension, a meeting was called up at Gerry Bron's office. Hensley explained his reasons and promptly resigned from Uriah Heep. It happened in 1980.

Since then Ken has recorded another solo album under the significant name of FREE SPIRIT, and organized a band named Shotgun, without a single record released by them.

The end of 70-s was commemorated by the tremendous attack of the "punk" and "disco" onto the European musical market. Some critics predicted the decline and fall of the epoch of hard rock not only in England but on the continent as well. In this situation, even the USA looked a refuge for good old hard rock. The declining sales of Heep albums and Ken's solo projects, and, probably, British taxes, influenced Ken's decision to immigrate to the US and gave him a chance to justify his own decision.

By that time American rockers Blackfoot were a success in the USA, once even charted as the best group of the year. The band were playing somewhat gloomy metal in the fashion of "southern boogie" and were interested in Ken's glorious name to do the European market. Who could resist such a name on the sleeve of an album! And so it happened. At least, in Russia Blackfoot were a relative success only with Ken.

Alas, Hensley succeeded only in turning independent Blackfoot into something like former Heep - and not in their best. Even Heep-1983 were much more of the original.

Today Ken Hensley is living very happily in his estate in St. Louis, arranging artist endorsements for a music company, while, on the occasional breaks in this ungrateful but beneficial activity, guesting on albums of WASP's and CINDERELLA's. He has also written a regular keyboard player manual.

Thus the classic Uriah Heep, that is, with Ken, ceased to be...

CHAPTER EIGHT 1986-1993. A LIGHT SHINES ON MY WAY

"Well, Master Copperfield!" said Uriah, meekly turning to me. "The thing hasn't took quite the turn that might have been expected."

Charles Dickens. David Copperfield.

Resulting the EQUATOR failure, there followed Goalby and Sinclair's departure in 1986. The hard task of the search for the proper replacement was on Mick Box, like it had been in 1981. He studied organist Phil Lanzon whose past was highlighted by Grand Prix, Sad Cafe and superband The Sweet. Phil was in Tasmania when he got a Heep call which he answered with no delay as he "had the same mentality" and, besides, he wrote as well.

Goalby was replaced by Stef Fontaine. "He was despairingly bad," says Mick. "I couldn't believe anyone could be so unprofessional. He had a great voice but his discipline was something else. He'd go for a walk during rehearsals and then get lost. He even missed a gig in San-Francisco once!"

After the American tour Fontaine was chopped. "That sorry chapter was to be the last hiccup in Heep's long career," says Box. And he proved to be right. Starting with 1987, Heep have got their most stable personnel.

Mick found a replacement to Fontaine, and what a replacement it was! Canadian Bernie Shaw was a real godsend to Heep in 80-s; but it cleared up a bit later, while at first he was just ex-Grand Prix, Praying Wantis and Stratus vocalist. Box had checked Shaw out at Stratus' farewell show at the Marquee, on the advice of former Grand Prix tour manager Howard Menzies, and felt that it was all right. "It was like everything falling into place," says Mick. Shaw remembered covering Heep songs during his early days with Cold Sweat in Canada, and he felt honoured at being invited to join such a legendary band as Heep!

Heep had severed their old management connections the year before, linking up with the Miracle Group of Companies. "I'd known the band for several years," says boss Steve Parker, "and had always been impressed by their tenacity. When the opportunity arose, I didn't need to think twice." But the real difference between Uriah Heep and many other bands who have built up large histories is one of attitude. Unlike many, Heep have always tried to extend their horizons, visiting new countries and experimenting with new ideas.

Heep had ventured into the most of the Iron Curtain countries, and in the end of 1987 they undertook an even more challenging project - Russia. Under the "glasnost" and "perestroika" there was a great turn to rock music in the USSR, and it was Hungarian promoter Laslo Hegedus (a close contact of Miracle) who helped to secure the deal. Uriah Heep became the first Western rock band to play in the motherland of "Stolichnaya" and black caviar!

Ten consecutive nights for Russian music-lovers became something more than just an achievement for Uriah Heep but a major breakthrough for western music in general, opening the door for the like of Scorpions, Bon Jovi, Motley Crue, Status Quo, Wishbone Ash, Nazareth, AC/DC, Iron Maiden and the others.

"We were so aware of being ambassadors of the West," said Mick Box to Music Week. "If we'd have gone there and created rock and roll havoc it could have been iron curtains for other bands wanting to go. We were definitely testing the water... It was important to let people know exactly where we were musically," explained Box who obviously thought Russia was inhabited by Java men in respect to rock.

More significantly, the events in Moscow became the launching point for the new line-up in Heep's career, the concerts being recorded and subsequently issued in the form of commemorative LIVE IN MOSCOW album, in spite of all the unfavourable financial conditions. It was their first release at Legacy Records and the fourth live recording in their career. The most notable thing about LIVE IN MOSCOW is the inclusion of three new tracks, 'Mister Majestic' (Phil Lanzon composition) among them.

In Britain "the Soviet excursion" was widely covered by the media and served to re-establish Heep's name on the wave of popular "perestroika". "It's funny," Box told Kerrang's journalist. "Because our profile hasn't been that big in England recently some people think that we're dead and buried. But in the last 17 years there hasn't been one year where we haven't toured extensively." (Like "Around the World in Eighty Days".)

Following up Moscow dates, Heep were the first Western rock band to tour Prague, to have four sell-out shows in East Berlin and to play for more than 80,000 people in Bulgaria.

After the "iron curtain" tour, Heep returned to Britain for the Reading Festival in August 1988, winning much acclaim and all the laurels of the day. Resulting this fantastic re-emergence of the band, Raw's Dave Ling called them "Band of the day". It was the rare case when the press was not wrong as to Uriah Heep! Having their portion of the unusual press praise, Heep went on UK tour with sleaze merchants The Dog D'Amour in tow.

With the release of the new RAGING SILENCE album in 1989 took up another tour to Russia, this time it was Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) with nearly 100,000 people at the concert. Then Vroslav (Poland), six concerts in Brazil, the open show in East Berlin, shows in Britain, at London's Astoria where the RAGING THROUGH THE SILENCE video was shot. Tours to Greece, Spain, Finland and even to Estonia.

Thus Heep visited 37 countries within 1989, all of which were immediately captured by Box's guitar. "I love the road," says Bernie Shaw. "I just can't get enough of it." Lanzon was even more enthusiastic about touring. Heep looked ready to cross the borders for another twenty years. The band in high spirits, Bolder was sure that the last two years were the most delightful for him in Heep history.

"Talk to Mick Box (and if you get the opportunity then do so, because he'll certainly talk back) and he'll reflect back on the history of Heep with a glint in his eyes and a smile on his face, and like any seasoned traveler who's just returned from a momentous journey he'll, along with Lee Kerslake, Trevor Bolder and, indeed, Ken Hensley, recall the highs and lows, ups and downs, with genuine affection. They won't have regretted a single minute of it. They've had their share of happy days alright, but they're not over yet, that's for sure," say sleeve notes to the triple CD TWO DECADES IN ROCK.

However, stop shedding tears of emotion and come back to 1985 when the band named Uriah Heep was nearly forgotten. And they would have been forgotten, had Box not re-grouped approaching new keyboard player with Ken-wise style. Unfortunately, unlike Ken, Phil was not a big composer, nor was he soft and lyrical, judging by his play.

But new frontman Bernie Shaw, with his fresh, clear and vivid vocals, was a real godsend for Heep. He is neither David Byron, nor John Lawton, he is Bernie Shaw, one of the most interesting and remarkable rock singers of the 80-s. Shaw came to Heep when they were at their lowest and had nothing to do but to try their hits of the past. Bernie was right in place: he succeeded in doing what neither Lawton, nor Goalby did - in mastering the traditional "classic Heep" vocal. Thanks to this the long-delayed live album with the maximum of old hits turned into the reality.

The impossible happened: the nostalgic and yet fresh vocal, the new interpretation of the old hits launched the band into the customarily glorious orbit. Shaw and Lanzon played what they had heard from the early childhood and dreamt of playing on stage themselves. All this could not but inspired them and fed the source of their optimism; Heep-87, the phenomenon of the fantastic re-emergence, was saved when it seemed hopeless.

The history making concert of Heep, to my mind, was played in Moscow at Olympic Stadium. I managed to get there over 2,500 kilometers. All the sensations of that memorial day of 15 December 1987 are still vivid.

Ten concerts gave Heep in Moscow from 7 to 16 December. Thank goodness, there were no disasters, no "mourning" and, thus, no delays or cancellations - like what happened while Pink Floyd tour two years later. The first publicity for Heep was done by the best Russian showmen ("Vzglyad"). I can recollect now the face and voice of showman Alexander Lubimov who announced twice the coming tour of Uriah Heep in the USSR and showed a few clips with Byron and Lawton. Lubimov seemed excited like the rest of us; he confused words and terms, mentioning Ken, 'July Morning', Mick. Later, Vzglyad would take a short interview of Bernie Shaw and Mick Box, and the latter would tell candid Dmitry Zakharov traditional anecdotes about his favourite guitar stolen right before the departure.

The concert managers did not bother themselves with any publicity but for an advertising board near the entrance to Olympic with the proud text "Urai (their spelling!) Heep in Moscow". The media would rush into the matter later - and I shall tell about it.

Nobody knows about how much Gosconcert profited on the tour, but there is no doubt that Heep did not get much. Yet the tickets cost, on the average, 4 roubles each (prices of 1987), and the Olympic collected totally about 180,000 people. Naturally, ticket-boxes were emptied, but everybody who really wanted got what he wanted. Anyhow, my friend and I bought tickets right before the beginning of the concert, getting relatively suitable seats, if to take into consideration the 30 metre distance between the stage and the first rows. At more than an hour before the beginning of the concert an enormous crowd of fans started moving towards the stadium, and soon all the tiers were filled in but for the guarded circle.

My companion learnt about the coming Heep tour and did not hesitate a second to go to Moscow to see "live" Heep. And imagine how surprised we were to meet another fan from our own city who solemnly answered our non-verbal question "And you here too?" with his "Could it be any other way?" The concerts were visited by Heep-lovers from all the Soviet Union; there were "experienced" fans as well as "freshmen", mostly in their thirties. It is incredible, but most of them managed to visit concerts of Wishbone Ash (no publicity at all) in Leningrad at the same time. By the way, some of music-lovers liked Wishbone Ash better.

But let us come back to the prelude of the magic show. Loaded with pepsi and salmon sandwiches (good old times when salmon and caviar sandwiches sold at affordable prices!), fans were proceeding to their seats. All of us knew that the heating band would be Zemlyane (Earth-Dwellers), Heep's own choice, probably, on principle "the least evil of the inevitable evil". Naturally, we did not approve their choice and thought that such a legendary concert did not need any "heating", least of all by Zemlyane. Was there any necessity in emphasizing the wretchedness of the Soviet rock? The most incredible thing was that Zemlyane, after nine days of joint work, using the same instruments and the same sound and light operators as Heep, had not made any progress. The joint work did not show even in the quality of the sound: there was just a cacophony and noise, and it was impossible to recognize a word though they were singing in Russian. The public were openly playing fools to survive the half an hour torment organized by our compatriots. Then we were sent out of the hall, for no comprehensive reason, and kept in tormenting ignorance for another forty minutes. Even the sandwiches did not compensate the superlong pause, enhanced by the frightening number of the policemen, who seemed to have come from all the ends of our country and were as if looking for some probable victims.

The waiting was grew unbearable. Nobody knew what the new Heep was like and what the new sound would be like. We were excited and agitated at a time. Nobody was eager to hear another EQUATOR or to see another Pete Goalby. Nobody wanted to get disappointed once and forever...

Long drawn-out boom of low frequency forestalled the concert in the dark. The flash of light (though the light equipment did not belong to Heep and was rather modest) blinded and deafened us, but only for a moment; we could clearly hear 'Bird of Prey', the opening song of the true Heep!

The next moment brought relaxation. The peak came when Bernie Shaw started singing. Byron had been dead for two years, but his renewed and improved spirit seemed to reincarnate in the Heep's new vocalist. Some of us, mainly, those in the back rows, just could not believe in the miracle of the reincarnation and started observing the stage with field and spy glasses in search of the familiar moustached visage. The challenge was to save every precious moment of the action, as no recording was allowed.

The sound came superb, we could hear every Mick's passage, every note, every key in any point of the hall, in spite of the horrid acoustics. The vocals were particularly good, so that we understood every word of Bernie though singing, naturally, in English. The Heep's sound engineers, manipulating that huge desk, did not eat their bread for nothing! The stage was rather small, and, with all those amplifiers, there was very little space left for Bernie and Mick to run. Nevertheless, we had already learnt that they were "our" Heep, hundred per cent. When it came to "Stealin", and Shaw was assiduously leading every note of it, we forgot about our aching hands and vocal cords.

Heep did sixteen compositions at that show, though they also included not quite independent things like Kerslake's fantastic solo and Mick's passages. What a pity that the live record of the concert did not contain either Lee's solo and vocals, or Phil's keyboard solo and him singing "Moscow Nights".

New Heep things followed, some of them later included into the RAGING SILENCE album. Yet, we were eager to hear 'July Morning'. A long waiting it was, Heep making an extra show: while Lee's percussion solo, Bolder and Lanzon on the right side, Box and Shaw on the left - descended from the platform and, to the ultimate police terror and to our content, crossed the 30 metre "dead" zone, reached the front rows and started shaking hands with the public. You may imagine how confident were they in their magic music and well they knew their public not to be afraid of "the people", reaching each person in the front row, and thus creating the atmosphere of brotherhood. By doing this, Heep protested against the 30 metre "security" and did everything possible to make us feel that we were together. They became "ours" for always.

At last Mick picked up his acoustic guitar and started 'Rainbow Demon' from DEMONS AND WIZARDS. That was classic! The public were unable to whistle or scream, we were just howling with raptures. Right then, the pitch darkness, followed by a flash of all the lamps, - and there it started, "July Morning". The atmosphere in the hall was heated to the peak; some of us were lost in the fantastic irreality, others were singing together with Heep. The difference between old fans and freshmen who, probably, heard Heep for the first time in their lives faded away. If I only could find the right words to describe what was going on, with both Heep and the public singing 'July Morning' in unison like some super choir! Shaw performed it no worse than Byron and much, much better than Lawton or Goalby. Bernie's voice, like some time machine, almost physically pulled us to the beginning of the 70-s. No wonder, after Moscow tour Heep re-emerged. Thanks to Bernie Shaw, their vocals at the Olympic were quite close to their own ideal sample.

Nearly a two hour show with a lot of super hits was crowned with Box's seven minute solo. Box was doing wonders with his guitars which were handed to him one after another, like pancakes. We were witnessing one of the ten best rock guitarists in the world. There was no doubting it.

Next came 'Gypsy', ornamented with Kerslake's and Lanzon's solo. Lawton, fantastically mastering all Ken's tricks, was almost lying on the keyboards, playing with his elbows, feet, head and back. In his enthusiasm, he knocked down one of the stands and a crowd of operators were to come to his rescue.

Apart from Lanzon's incident, there were also minor breaks in the operation of sound and the supply of "fresh" guitars. Yet, on the whole, the operators' work was great, and breaks, inevitable at any big show, did not trouble us much. Heep did not eat the bread of idleness - the enormous heaps of towels by them were used up in no time.

'Gypsy' was followed by the other songs, though their order differed from that of LIVE IN MOSCOW. 'Easy Livin' was played with great animation; two more songs followed - and the band left the stage. The fading lights indicated the end of the show. But the public was determined: play Heep all day long, they would not have compensated our thirst for live music! We felt desperate. Nobody moved to go. Nobody made any allowances. Ten minutes passed. There appeared Lee Kerslake and cried into the hall: "Rock'n'roll all right?" Good gracious! "Of course, all right!" - cried the audience in approval, though we did not understand a word from Lee's speech, understanding him quite well at the same time. Lee drank something from a bottle and gave out a tremendous percussion solo. He was so taken away that started shouting out a rock drummer shaman song. To support him, the other Heep jumped onto the stage and performed 'Look at Yourself' with great enthusiasm. That was fantastic! Waving their wet towels, Heep, live and genuine, were leaving the stage and we, exhausted and emptied, but happy, were leaving the hall.

We had just witnessed the greatest show. People were walking solemnly, there was no need in words. Even the police squad were silent. Heep showed themselves great psychologists - unlike Gosconcert, with all their efforts to block any possible way of contact between Heep and the public.

Heep promised to come back in a year, and they kept their word: another Heep show took place in Leningrad. That tour did not have any publicity at all. To make a video, our TV and the tour company hired a chosen mob of fans, about 800 of them, on 12 December at 15 p.m. The mob pretended enthusiastic fans in that very "dead" zone that separated the stage from the public, while Heep were playing the five songs chosen for the video. The film was released only in the end of 1990. And instead of the promised videotrack of the Moscow concert, we got only two videobooks with London's Astoria and some nameless concert hall, almost identical.

To our surprise, the then Soviet media covered the Heep mission very widely. Based on what was published, the sarcastic Crocodile (Soviet satirical magazine) put forward three ideas: 1) Heep had been dreaming of the Soviet tour for all 17 years of their career; 2) the Soviet public had been dreaming of greeting Heep for the same 17 years; 3) Mick Box admired the Zemlyane's music for he had not heard anything of the kind before.

Crocodile: "Mick, what can you say about the Soviet public?"

Mick Box: "They are all right. They seemed not in the least afraid of the police. Be it in our country, such a number of policemen would have numbed all the audience. Your public is also easy to communicate with, half a word is enough. We do not look for fans, fans are looking for us. We do not like the importunate questions of your journalists about drugs..." However different be Russian transliterations of the name of "Uriah Heep", a lot of newspapers gave much space to the: Pionerskaya Pravda and Komsomolskaya Zhizn, Ogonyok and Komsomolka, Arguments and Facts and Smena, Soviet Culture and Rovesnik, etc.

Zemlyane were also paid due attention: The Innocent Victim (Crocodile), Zemlyane Played Themselves (Komsomolka). Soviet Culture cited (pseudo)-Kerslake: "The Soviet band were stunning. We have heard nothing like this before." Just compare it with the Kerslake of Rovesnik: "Excuse me, but there was nothing like rock in what I heard. I listened to their drummer very attentively. He used only a small part of his percussion set. Why? I am sorry to say, but it looks amateurish."

Student Meridian discovered that Bernie Shaw liked Whitesnake, Aerosmith and Iron Maiden, and Mick was enthusiastic about his son's progress in playing guitar. Box was talking much about music and, not without an effort, put forward a

"theory": "We play what we feel deep in our hearts." Just so! But the most eloquent was Kerslake, recommending not to lose our chance and seize the day. Lee gave a long interview to Rovesnik, where, besides the above-cited observation about Zemlyane, he told about himself: "I am forty, and twenty years of the age I have been sitting at my drums. I do what I want to do, and I am going to do it as far as I can. While I can I am happy."

Kerslake about Mick Box: "I have grown into a professional only in Heep. I am very thankful to Mick Box for life; but for him, I would have stayed an ordinary drummer in the "backing" groups."

Kerslake about fans: "Our fans are growing old together with us, but what is funny, they demand that we should play the same music we played fifteen years ago when we were young. But it is impossible!"

Kerslake about Ken Hensley: "Ken is my friend, and I love him dearly. He is wonderful, but he cannot play any more. He drinks too much..."

Kerslake about the band named Uriah Heep: "The old Heep are only Mick and I. It so happened that we have changed a lot of musicians, yet I like the present personnel."

Recovering after the Moscow Heep tour, while enjoying LIVE IN MOSCOW, we were waiting for the new album.

RAGING SILENCE was released in May 1989. The new album was recorded and mixed in London within two months.

"We immediately wanted to get Ashley Howe in to produce," recalls Mick, "but he had some commitments so he came over (from his New York residence!) for pre-production and introduced Richard Dodd to us (who had just done a great job with George Harrison's CLOUD NINE album and with the Traveling Wilbury's. He brought a freshness, he brought the live power onto record and I thought he enticed out of Bernie a lot of different styles. I think Bernie learnt a lot from him. And I was very pleased to see the whole thing grow."

Shaw regarded the recording of the album as a useful experience: "I've never learnt so much in so little time. They brought a lot out of me that I didn't even realize I had."

The most stunning feature of Raging Silence is its remarkable freshness. They grabbed Heep's traditional character. The album was recognized as one of the year's best hard rock albums. Energetic 'Blood Red Roses' had been written for the album by Peter Goalby. In 'Cry Freedom' they had rock solid winner, inspired and inspired by their travels behind the "Iron Curtain", the song opens with the Russian words sounded by a Maria Zaikova. 'Hold Your Head Up', the old Argent hit, was just wonderful, nearly a masterwork. The next song (once a hit of Australian Little River Band) was an emotive ballad full of hope.

The press really admired the way in which this particular Heep held true to its traditional values (by the way, trampled down not once by the same press in the past).

"That stems from a conscious search for new ways of doing things," says Box. "We are attracting new fans all the time. Indeed, for some people RAGING SILENCE will be the first Heep album they're heard, and then they discover that there's a whole history to us."

It was a great technique. But while in Moscow of 1987 we witnessed the genuine Heep, it was not the same in 1989.

Lanzon did not find it necessary to play Ken-wise. However, Phil had never thought about himself as a full-fledged Ken's replacement, and once he said straight: "I just happened to play in a band named Uriah Heep." Box-89 is a different Box. And was has happened to clear, gentle voice of Bernie Shaw? What we hear in RAGING SILENCE is very good but quite different a vocal, though Bernie's name gives credit to the album as usual. (Is it the very case when the studio sound loses to video which shows the charms of the vocalist on stage?)

In spite of its originality and freshness, RAGING SILENCE strikingly resembles the Heep works of the first half of the 80-s. The record is too much like a patch-work, yet the fans have forgiven the band.

Though RAGING SILENCE album and the video-89 are related to real Heep only through the name, Heep records and videofilms are as popular in the musical market as twenty years ago. Trying to buy a desired Uriah Heep record at London's HMV, I heard the ever so familiar "All sold", but for the first time in English. The albums of the band are literally swept away in no time in the shops of both UK and the USA. Not so long ago I asked my friend in New York to buy the American issue of the RAGING SILENCE with 'Look at Yourself' (Bernie Shaw!), but alas, he was late: All sold! Who could imagine this in the city which has never been a refuge for Heep! Last, but not least, another proof of Heep commercial stability was the release of the anniversary vinyl album (five records) and the CD triple TWO DECADES IN THE ROCK in 1990. In a fortnight you would not buy a copy in the shops. The only place to buy them was a small shop in the outskirts of London where, five minutes before closing, the shop assistants failed to change a damaged box - it was the last one!

Heep songs are on the radio; two more anniversary records, with enigmatic re-makes, were released - all sold in no time.

The appropriate final for the anniversary chaos of the year was the release of DIFFERENT WORLD, the last album of the band, 21 year after their first one.

Bolder was the producer instead of Richard Dodd - another sign of disagreement in the band. Bolder's name was not magic, and the album resulted as a dead copy of RAGING SILENCE, but for a couple songs. It did not please the fans at all, especially as to the low quality of the sound.

The previous works of the band, HEAD FIRST, for example, still leave hope for some unexpected turns, in spite of the fact that in 1990-1991 the band were obviously in their lowest. Heep met 1990 with another anniversary CD which included the interview of musical critic Chris Tetley with the band, 'Gypsy' from LIVE IN MOSCOW and 'Cry Freedom'. Alas, the musical press have resumed their old tradition of not mentioning Heep's name...

Indeed, the band is in crisis. You cannot release two sour records, one by one, trying to heat the public interest with the old rarities, as if straight from pharaoh's tomb, full of the yesterday's optimism and self-flattering stories (remember "The Beatles Story" of the 60-s). Yet, there is always hope. Ken is alive (let him live long) though his promised single did not appear in either in 1992 or later, in spite of all the tidings. But who knows? Perhaps he could save the band, if approached?..

Such thoughts cannot but come to the devoted fans while listening to the last Heep albums. Heep need rescue! Just have look at the number of session musicians who "help" to do DIFFERENT WORLD album which was recorded for a long time and wondered from studio to studio! We have nothing against well-known studio percussionist Frank Riccotti, but why second drummer Brett Morgan? Is Kerslake not one of the best hard rock drummers any longer?

Like in 1987, good old works came to their rescue, and the market was fed with CD RARITIES FROM THE BRONZE AGE (released by Sequel Records) in the end of 1991. In September 1993 another "brand"new collection of old hits LANSLOWNE TAPES was issued, with some unknown tracks to attract attention.

In July 1993, all of a sudden, Uriah Heep appeared at the second-rate festival in Urmala (Latvia) as "honored guests". Brief, pre-sounded show of the materialized phantoms did not contribute either to the festival or to Heep. Besides, Mick Box will detest the Latvian cuisine for the rest of his life.

From October to November 1993 Heep took a tour round North America with such veterans of rock as Nazareth and Blue Oyster Cult. The band met 1994 in the rusted armour and celebrated it with the tour in their traditional refuge - Germany, accompanied by the old friends, Wishbone Ash and Girlschool. Strenuous tours are going on and on?

Heep tested their fate not once, yet their fortune was always smiling to them. They will come back by all means, either in their present group (alas, not golden), or in the old one, with the exception of Byron and Thain gone forever. We can only wait and hope for the best - to touch the Wonderworld of Uriah Heep in...?

CHAPTER NINE KEN HENSLEY. THE WANDERER.

"What an amazing place London was to me when I saw it in the distance, and how I believed all the adventures of all my favourite heroes to be constantly enacting and re-enacting there, and how I vaguely made it out in my own mind to be fuller of wonders and wickedness than all the cities of the earth..."

"... We're so very umble," he returned, "And having such a knowl edge of our own umbleness, we must really take care that we're not pushed to the wall by them as isn't umble. All stratagems are fair in love, sir..."

Charles Dickens, David Copperfield.

Ken Hensley is most famous for the years spent in Uriah Heep whose music, by many reasons, is believed to personify the whole decade, sensational, magnificent and progressive. Ken's contribution to the trade-mark of Uriah Heep was the most weighty. He seems not to have left the band with his legendary organ and guitar, while Heep seem to have lost almost everything, if not all.

In the studio chronicles Ken's history may be traced from the Gods playing bluesy rock in the second half of the 60-s and having started on the ruins of Hearts. Among the first musicians there were Greg Lake and then very young Mick Taylor. But by the time they signed the contract with Columbia (!) and recorded two albums, GENESIS (1968) and TO SAMUEL A SON (1969), both Lake and Taylor had left the band, while Ken Hensley had appeared (guitar, keyboards, vocals).

It is curious, but the percussions have been accompanying Ken's career, and Hensley may be placed among the multi-instrumentalists. Alongside with Ken, Gods had Lee Kerslake (percussions), Joe Konas (guitar, vocals) and John Glasscock (bass-guitar). Both Gods' albums were later re-issued (!), and Harvest launched a little known collection (1976) based on those albums. The collection is an unattainable dream of the fans now.

Those were proper albums, in search of their own style, passing over from blues to an extravagant psychedelia. If, by some miracle, we had a chance to listen to those rarities today, we could, probably, get the answers to many questions about the enigma of the musical phenomenon named Hensley. (By 1995 there have been released in CD GENESIS (Gods, 1968) by Repertoire Records; ORGASM (Head Machine, 1970) by TRC Records, Germany; WEED (Weed, 1971). In the last two albums Ken Hensley takes part under the name of Ken Lesley. - I.K.)

Meanwhile, guitarist Cliff Bennett joined the Gods. It did not take him much time to grow his hair long and to think about the band's future. He was going to enlarge the group, while Glasscock announced his departure as joining Jethro Tull. Eventually, Konas turned into a bassist and Hensley concentrated on guitar. Bennett organized quite a new band Toe Fat who stamped themselves into the musical annals with the two albums, Toe Fat-1 (Parlophone, 1970) and Toe Fat-2 (Regal Zonophone, 1971). Definitely, Ken Hensley was running after two hares at a time, though he did not believe in the success of either. Only after his enthronement in Heep in 1970, prudent Ken quit both "VIE" (Translator's note: VIE is the abbreviation for a Russian pseudo rock bands called "vocal and instrumental ensemble", or VIE, officially allowed by the Soviet power. Here the word is used to denote half amateur, half professional bands.) that had nourished him and launched into the world of rock. Another reason for Ken to prefer Heep was the final break of his relationship with Bennett. Finding himself unbound, Ken joined his efforts with a Mick and a David from a Spices band, later Uriah Heep. He started his career in Heep as a session musician, like he did in the Gods and Toe Fat in the past and would do in Blackfoot, WASP, Cinderella in the future. Heep is notable for making him linger there for ten years.

With the rise of Uriah Heep in the beginning of the 70-s, Ken activated his own ambitions to record his first solo album PROUD WORDS ON A DUSTY SHELF. Made together with Thain, Kerslake and extra bas-guitarist Dave Paul, the album contained very little keyboards and a lot of guitar. That first project has become Ken's best solo record up to now. Though Ken's solo projects were not anything outstanding in comparison with Heep music, they never fell as low as some of the Heep projects.

Among the most serious obstacles in Ken's solo career were the scanty circulations of Bronze, re-distributed between vertigo and Island; it was next to impossible to come across Heep in the Bronze territory. Heep were mostly sacrificed to Mercury and, particularly, Island. By the time of the success of the albums MAGICIAN'S BIRTHDAY and SWEET FREEDOM and Heep becoming rock monsters, Ken's first solo album stunned the fans who thus received four splendid albums and no less splendid Ken's solo - all within a year. Even the then Soviet fans, who, by that time, had not had a chance to enjoy Ken's leadership in Heep, received the first leader's solo with more than respect, but with awe!

Naturally, Ken is the only author in the album, as Gerry Bron is the only producer, Peter Gallen - the only engineer, Lee Kerslake - the only drummer, Gary Thain and Dave Paul (from Lee Kerslake's National Head Band) - the only bassists. The album was recorded in the prime of Heep's career, September 1971 to September 1972. With all this, Ken managed to use not a single song (but for 'Rain') of the album in those of Heep's whom he also presented with his composer talent. 'Rain' of Ken's album is inferior to Byron's version, yet it sounds more hard and solid. This is the only case when Heep allowed self-remake, for the first and for the last time.

Even the most captious fans did not find any faults with the first side of the record, but the repeated grounds on the second one sounded somewhat tedious. Even Hensley cannot run after two hares at a time. He had a chance not be so egoistic at least thrice ('When Evening Comes', 'Proud Words', 'Fortune'), if he had given these things to Heep where, polished by the group, they would have taken their proper place in the band's history ('Fortune', in particular).

The first album was crossing the boundaries of self-expression, putting forward a lot of musical ideas that had been stored since the 60-s, with the support of such a producer as Gerry Bron, while the second one, EAGER TO PLEASE, did not rise that high.

In his next solo project, Ken crowned the rhythm section with Mark Clarke whom he knew a little, and with Bugs Pemberton whom he did not know at all.

The record, in comparison with its predecessor, was far less expressive; there were not any touching compositions, and two of the eleven songs were not written by Ken. It looked more like pre-start testing, before going with the new group, or like a quick revenge for Byron's first project.

Besides, as usual, Ken did not bother himself "digesting" his own revelations, too much ahead of time. Resulting, the album sounded somewhat sour for the year, especially, in comparison with Byron's pushing record. Thank goodness, Time has put things in their right places. Well, I have mentioned this before.

EAGER TO PLEASE holds up a soft, unobtrusive style, with some experimental flavour about it, mainly in using the brass and the strings. Was he a little tired at the time?.. Unlike PROUD WORDS, the album was not a success even in Russia (a stable criterion to test the degree of popularity as well as the quality of a music).

But just in a year, when Heep were enlivened with the turbulent young blood of Wetton, Lawton, Bolder and Sloman, Ken obviously felt encouraged enough to abandon his solo career for five years.

In 1980 things changed, and Ken's third solo FREE SPIRIT was launched into life after his departure from the band. The name of the record speaks for itself, yet it also speaks for Ken's unscrupulous selfishness: it was in Heep that he was always absolutely free, and it was in Heep that he had reached his prime. As to FREE SPIRIT, we can appreciate the wonderfully balanced arrangements, but even the most devoted "Ken-lovers" would not call it a symbol of a really free spirit.

An old friend of Ken's, Jack Williams is mentioned as the co-author in the album. Since Ken's departure to the USA, the friendship seen quite a lot of each other. Yet, much of the album was written by Ken Hensley, the incorrigible individualist, trying to perfect his own music.

The way 'New York' and 'The System' were arranged was a revelation, and 'No More' was the height of Ken's lyricism to prove that Ken Hensley was, is and will be the "masterpiece machine".

The album was produced by Ken himself, with John Gallen engineering. The cover portrays the author surrounded with an innumerable number of musical instruments, which produces the effect (or the illusion) that the album was recorded by Ken Hensley the Multi-Instrumentalist. Of course, Maestro is universal, but not in this very album (though it was rated much higher than Heep's ABOMINOX of 1982). Ken was assisted by his old and new friends, Trevor Bolder, Denny Ball, Mark Clarke, Kenny Jones ('The Who') and ex-Deep Purple's Ian Paice.

Anyhow, the album was a success, yet due to the irreversible fall of Heep's rating, it did not raise much enthusiasm.

Among Ken's albums it was always rated second, No. 1 given, naturally, to the PROUD WORDS... (The names of the albums prove that Ken is the most modest man in the world.)

In fact, Ken's solo albums have not been issued in CD until recently with the only and pleasant exception of THE BEST (1990) by Sequel Records, which is a promising sign. Later, in Germany, they would issue all three solo albums in a pack, but it would happen later, and we are to travel three years back in time.

Sequel Records released a collection of fifteen songs for the fans to judge, yet there was nothing new there. As usual, the collectors managed to drop everything really big, especially from the first two albums. Thank goodness, BEST included the really best songs from EAGER TO PLEASE: 'The House of the Hill', 'Winter or Summer', 'Take and Take'. The record does not do justice to Ken. It is a pity that the younger generation, brought up on CD's, come across Ken's music for the first time in such a way, as if across some half-forgotten "singer Hensley" of the far-off times.

This collection was a much better gift to an experienced fan, eager to have Hensley on CD. And the gift was appreciated: the record sold in no time in UK and grew very dear (literally) in Russia.

Sequel Records were lucky with the trick, and we paid twice but did not regret it.

A few words about Hensley's mysterious band Shot Gun: it was properly announced and registered to exist. Yet there has not been a piece of information about its personnel or records for three years. The Chief could pour some light on this mystery, if he wished. As to now, we only know that our proud wanderer prefers to live in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, the country with a much milder climate both for the weather and taxes, and a wider space than in his native land.

In his estate he has a studio and a car collection. Ken does very well, but like any other musician, he contacts with his colleagues. Resulting, there are many thanks for help and support from Dio (1993), Glenn Hughes (1992), Graham Bonnet (1993), Poison (1990). They are grateful to Ken Hensley himself and to the associated companies Ampeg and St. Louis Music.

Perhaps, his present position is more favourable, for his banking account lets him be more independent from the moods of the fans and go in for musical experiments and composing for himself.

By and by, it has cleared out that Ken, who had not played heavy metal until 1980, was always deeply interested in this style. Anyhow, there is not any obvious reason for the step Ken undertook in 1982 when he accepted the offer of a very young American heavy southern boogie Blackfoot.

Ken's strikingly Indian-like appearance served an exotic publicity for the outrunner and met the claims of the Blackfoot who were Sioux and had gained the reputation of a steady hard rock band by 1982. The band attracted intense attention of the public, second only to the triumphal tour of the unforgettable Kola Beldy (Translator's note: Kola Beldy, for a Russian, is a symbol of a vulgarization of an indigenous tradition in singing, which produces a clown-like effect. - T.K.): the public crowded to his shows either to listen to him or to gaze at that Northern wonder - God knows what they expected to see.

But back to Blackfoot. In 1981, in Florida they played moderately well, teaming with AXE, though their live album was pretty sour, and, eventually, their music ran out. Anyhow, it was Blackfoot whom Ken chose for his risky experiments with heavy metal. For some time he was a session musician and co-author of three compositions in SIOGO album. With Ken in the group, Blackfoot grew very proud and made Hensley/Williams's 'Send Me an Angel' the title song of SIOGO. The song was beautiful and full of inner energy. On the whole, their relationship with Ken softened their music. Their first joint album was also notable for its cover where Hensley presented himself in quite a new - and very respectable - image, with his hair styled in a different, non-romantic, very-far-from-Indian way which gave him a look of respectability, which, at the first sight, was not quite customary. (Remember, the last on the right?) But, perhaps, we are all wrong, for in the background of Blackfoot faces, not marked with wisdom, even Bon Scott of 1979 would have looked a true intellectual.

But the next year album VERTICAL SMILES revealed the most striking metamorphosis that happened to both Ken and Blackfoot. The album went practically unnoticed by the critics and the public, though it did not deserve such a fate, in spite of the more and more evident Heep's flavour that the once so ordinary American hard rock band was starting smelling. Eventually Ken joined the group. No word about Ken Hensley Music was in the press. With the only two songs co-authored, one of the two leading guitarists, Charlie Hargrett, was chopped (with great thanks for the work done). And Hensley went on, turning Rick Medlock's vocals into something Heep-wise.

Ken's influence revealed itself. Once again, he proved his reputation of a gem-cutter and a teacher. In 'Morning Dew' (old Nazareth's hit), Medlock was singing in Ken's style, and the guitars sounded a dead copy of Heep. The second song used to be a hit of a Chicago, but the Blackfoot version of 'Living in the Limelight' was definitely much better. 'Young Girl' does not mention Hensley's authorship, yet one cannot but feel that instead of Blackfoot there is an old, overplayed Heep. The last song 'In for the Kill' is the most obvious one. Ken began to realize that he had obviously confused the door; and Blackfoot suspected that Hensley had helped them to get rid of their old fans but had not provided any new. The fans felt that the new image of the band looked somewhat artificial. No matter, those ill-fated albums were produced by remarkable people, the album being recorded in Georgia, nearly in Ken's neighbourhood. By some versions, it was the contract system of Blackfoot that put an end to the incredible mixture of Ken and that southern boogie band.

There followed a few year pause when Ken appeared in the famous Heep video Easy Livin' (1985). He looked a man in his prime, full of whim and vigour, with his eyes sparkling, like no heavy drinker would have looked. He sounded very objective speaking about Heep's history, showing much respect towards all of them. What if those sparkling eyes were revealing his subconscious desire to return to Heep? Judging by his comments to the Heep's history, Ken is far from being indifferent to either their success or their failure. Another proof is Gerry Bron's (!) appearance in the same close-up with Ken.

In the second half of the 80-s, after the "Indian rock failure", Ken was invited to WASP, a super heavy metal band, on the approach of Blackie Lawless himself. Considering the previous experience, Ken came to the right conclusion and joined WASP on the session terms, never taking part in their tours. As to the studio sound, you cannot say that Ken is not heard. He is there! Sometimes, as the backing keyboards, introducing his surprising lyricism into their most heavy things. Their first joint record THE HEADLESS CHILDREN (1989) displayed Ken's efforts to ennoble WASP with some harmony and polyphony, playing his favourite instruments nor worse than he used to do. It was not an easy task, for the competition was very sharp in the 80-s. Probably, WASP's offer to Ken was not just a mere wish of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants to get an extravagant publicity, but also a desire to support the rock vet morally and materially. Remember, WASP played Ken's 'Easy Livin'" yet in 1986 (!). The most surprising fact is that Ken's relationship with WASP did not stop at once, though there were tidings about the coming fall of WASP in 1990 (which might be possible, considering Blackfoot story).

Blackie Lawless loved his new partner enough to announce himself the producer of Ken's new solo which was planned in 1992, but has not been released yet. Funny enough, WASP's CRIMSON IDOL without Ken still sounded slightly changed, in the way Blackfoot had sounded once. Perhaps, it is Ken's free spirit that 'spoils' every musician who had a chance to deal with him. Probably, Ken decided not to release his new project in the USA where he is not widely famous, and his music is not to the American taste. One may also doubt the expedience of Blackie producing Ken's new projects. I cannot recollect a case where a mature lion would sing in unison with a gentle doe. And this is precisely what the two of them will show in a duet, there styles in music being extremely opposite to each other.

In the end of the 80-s, the sudden all American nostalgia for good old rock appeared to be very useful to Grand Dad Hensley. In 1990 he was approached by Cinderella. Tom Keifer who had released two "very 'eavy" albums, NIGHT SONGS (1986) and LONG COLD WINTER (1988), suddenly thought better and decided to improve the melodical grounds of Cinderella. To do this, he invited such veterans as Ken Hensley and John Paul Jones. There is even less of Ken in their album than in WASP's tracks. Since he is not the only keyboard player there, it is very difficult to judge where his part is.

That time, it was a clear cut publicity matter. Cinderella succeeded in doing such things, and in addition, their music had just gained from so well experienced "old boys".

Ken was 48 in 1993. In this connection, it is reasonable to remember his so called friends, like Lee Kerslake who was loudly informing the world about Ken Hensley's pseudo alcoholism and spiritual decay. God save us from our own friends, and we will manage our own enemies.

There is still hope that one beautiful day a man named Ken Hensley will bring joy to all his fans when he will resume his relationship with Uriah Heep. He simply has no right to deprive us of his magic melodies, his new wonderful songs, each of them based on its own stunning melody. As usual, these melodies will be dissembled and spread onto many bands at their gigs. He will not be able to deprive us of his sensual approach that has enriched his music, his playing, his vocals.

Ken is in our subconscious for ever. It was the subconscious that attracted us so much to his music. He will live on in us till the end of our days, and his portraits will take their place in all music schools, side by side with Mozart, Rossini, Lennon and Ian Anderson...

We will better stop here, for Ken has been already placed too high, acquiring features that have less and less in common with a real man named Ken Hensley who lives in St. Louis.

What else could explain the colossal sales of Heep records, while the press were so hostile and critical?

Despite his great polyphonic gift, Hensley did not try classics but for his first - and last - attempt in 1970 and, to a certain extent, in his 1975 solo. There are lots of reasons, and one of them is that Ken understands the genesis of rock, which has proved - even for the ultimate blockheads - that rock is the most perfect form of polyphony. It is in rock that the world of music reveals itself, and its eternal value stays actual in spite of a great amount of new and old musical styles.

So, what will he do, he who is overwhelmed with the burden of his own masterworks of the past? Each new thing of his will be compared to the works of the 70-s. Will this comparison turn fatal?.. All his life he has been accused of selfishness: it was he who was to blame for Heep failures because of his dictatorship... Critics forget that, just on the opposite, Ken felt nearly embarrassed about his own gift; he preferred to stay untrumpeted many times and presented Heep with many musical ideas under the mask of so called co-authorship. Knowing he was head above the rest, he had to bend himself down for the sake of the group interests. He avoided the status of rock idol quite consciously. Who knows, if he had started a solo career, would he have become a self-complacent genius?

Perhaps, if not for his ever so biting opponents, Ken would not have been able to do what he did. Maybe, we should be thankful to Gerry Bron and all the fifteen Heep who did not allow Ken's talent to grow into a self-complacence from the very beginning. Probably, we should also appreciate the critics who have contributed into Ken's personality we know nowadays.

Resulting all the circumstances, Ken Hensley is one of those who have caught the magic tune. If some experts gather to classify all the works created by The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Golden Earring, Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Queen, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Nazareth, Kansas, Styx, Dire Straits, Foreigner, EL&P, 10CC, and many other bands, in search of outstanding, notable melodies and unique compositions, the result may be striking: in pure arithmetic dimensions, Heep will give none the less an amount than The Beatles together with Paul McCartney. There is no doubting it.

Ask any Heep fan to recollect on the spot some Heep's compositions that are popular up to now. He will call (together with us): 'Gypsy', 'Park', 'Lady in Black', 'Look at Yourself', 'July Morning' (the fifth!), 'Easy Livin'', 'Dreams', 'Rain', 'Sunrise', 'Sweet Lorraine'... We have reckoned ten of them - and it is just the early Heep. Later would come to life 'Sweet Freedom', 'Stealin'', 'Wise Man', 'Free Me', 'Sympathy', 'Come Back to Me', and more. Even now fans remember these songs nearly by heart, and they love them! Just to think that all these treasures were written by one man. His name is Ken Hensley, by the way.

Too many super bands cover the lack of composing gift with the mask of arrangements and sound engineering. Just compare 'Another Brick in the Wall' on the studio PINK FLOYD of 1979 with their LIVE of 1988 (without the unique studio arrangements). Little is left of the song, because there is little melody in it!

Too many bands prayed to their talented leaders too long and too much, thus turning them into a self-complacent lot.

Too many bands lack any composing gift at all.

Ken Hensley's fate was different. But why "was"?

P.S. Do you feel that the end of the chapter is missing? Exactly. The second half of 1993 brought stunning news: Ken visited UK for the project of his retrospective album (the release was planned for the beginning of 1994), which includes famous things as well as those recorded before with such musicians as Paul Kossoff and Simon Kirke. It will be followed with (pull yourself together!)... a new solo project where Ken Hensley includes songs written from 1986 till nowadays.

CHAPTER TEN
DAVID BYRON. THE LAST RETROSPECT.

"Now you know the beginning, middle and end, and all about it. We won't mention the subject to one another any more; neither, of course, will you mention it to anybody else. This is my grumpy, frumpy story, and we'll keep it to ourselves..."
Charles Dickens, David Copperfield.

The story of a man named David Byron is much shorter and much more dramatic than that of Ken Hensley. Unaware of that, David made it his life objective to gradually destroy himself, which he most successfully did, meeting his death 28 February, 1985, at the age of 38.

Unlike Ken Hensley, he did not have the bright gift of composing; unlike Lee Kerslake, he was lacking the professional punctiliousness; neither was he marked with Mick Box's quiet amicability and his devotion to technicality. Yet it was Byron who was nearer than anybody else to the spirit of music professed by Ken Hensley and the other Heep. And it was the joint efforts of David, Ken and the Heep altogether, that presented the phenomenon of "Uriah Heep". All the subsequent vocalists were doomed to the inevitable comparison with David, which invariably proved his uniqueness. The short-lived union of the most outstanding vocalist, rock-composer and guitarist of the time became unique in their understanding each other with half word and half look. The collisions that started in 1974 between the magic trio revealed not only David's fatal habit, but also the weakness of a man who was not used to meet the blows of fate and to perceive the reality. Suddenly, David decided that it was only his vocals and his fantastic charm that provided the success of Heep in 1974.

Following, Byron's solo career made the pet of the public aware of what he was really worth without Ken and Heep. David had nerve enough to admit the truth in the memorable talk in 1981, when the remaining Heep came to invite him back to the band without Hensley.

But this will happen 6 years later, and now David was recording his first solo project to spite the leader whom he got sick and tired with. Yet he was unaware of the fact that his musical dimension was just the same with Ken. Suffice it to look at the personnel in his album: Box plays the guitar, Kerslake does the percussions in turns with a Pete Thompson; the keyboards player is Lou Stonebridge, thoroughly reproducing... Ken's style of keyboard playing!

This unexpected discovery, instead of joy and understanding that the true value of their joint work was much more important than all the unworthy and petty squabbles, made David choose his own way. Like a naughty child deprived of his favourite toy, he changed his style abruptly, quit Heep and... suffered a shattering failure.

It was incredible, but Byron's vocals only agreed with Hensley's music, though David did not know about it while recording his first album TAKE NO PRISONERS. The album was recorded in the shortest possible time, within February 1975. Probably, some half-finished things were at hand. His first album was interesting in its way, though, in fact, it was a remake from Heep. Many fans greeted the album with enthusiasm; it started with big sales and much of praise, but it was not going on for a long time. Rather quickly, fans made it out that Heep were making the same sound in the same style - but with much more taste.

The most interesting feature of Byron's album was the list of people whom he thanked for their participation in the recording of the album: grateful thanks to Mr. Wetton for the Mellotrons (!) and to Mr. Ken Hensley for the Acoustic guitar.

How happened so? And what about his rivalry with Wetton or his rift with Maestro Hensley? It is simple. There was not any conflict. There was some disagreement which developed into an uncompromising confrontation much later than 1975; neither Byron, nor his opponents were able to stop it in good time. Yet they were unanimous in music, at least, in the year of Byron's debut. In his interview with Chris Tetley, Byron excused his departure by reasons of fear at Heep turning into a super band and of his desire to extend his musical and personal dimensions beyond any particular band, be it even Uriah Heep.

Anyhow, a year later, Byron quit Heep finally. Why and how - it does not really matter. What really mattered was what was following: Byron knocked up his own band Rough Diamond, inviting his old pal Geoff Britton, notable for the fact that he was chopped from Paul McCartney's Wings and was going in for karate, which was quite proper for a session drummer. The third partner became "ever former" Clem Clempson, a guitarist who used to play in such bands as Humble Pie and Collosseum. The fourth was keyboard player Damon Butcher, the fifth - bassist Willie Bath. The new band was immediately referred to as "quintet of failures" by the press. Byron seemed to do everything possible to provide a failure for their first record, for he did not recruit any of those who helped him to make his first solo. Probably, Byron was one of those people who prefer a running kiss and an irrevocable quarrel.

With all this, in January 1977, there appeared the first (and the last) record of the "quintet of failures" under the name of ROUGH DIAMOND (probably, being "rough" in both senses).

Almost all the songs were written by Byron in co-authorship with the whole group. The album was an uncommon failure; probably, it was from force of inertia that the record had a chance to sound on the radio before it was duly judged and forgotten. Fans followed suit, a little later. In Russia, the ROUGH DIAMOND records passed into oblivion very soon.

The verdict was absolutely just: the musicians played inefficiently, the melodic ground was rough, as if to match the name (without the word "diamond" which was of no relation to the subject matter). Byron obviously hurried up with his album so that it was released raw for the public judgement, which brought to nought all the reassuring results of the starting tour activities of the band who played the songs of Heep and Byron . At first, even critics were satisfied to meet the good old Heep repertoire. But the same critics compared the studio record, compiled from hastily chosen compositions, to a dinner at a railway station restaurant: full stomach, but no taste.

Naturally, the failure was followed with financial problems, tours and records were declined. In October 1977 Byron resigned Rough Diamond, leaving it in death agony. The last struggle was not long.

If Byron was troubled with the results of the failure of ROUGH DIAMOND, he did not show it, and before his end, released two more solo albums, practically unknown.

There is no surprising it: the interest in rock had been levelling off by the end of the 70-s, and that was that. The first victims were second rate bands and musicians, Byron among them. Next came the turn for super bands, Heep included - and they survived this scrape, though not without serious losses.

Nevertheless, Byron's financial resources, apparently, let him enjoy his narcissism: BABY FACED KILLER was released in 1978, ON THE ROCKS in 1982 (the last one by the Byron Band; poor David, he still hoped that somebody remembered his name!) Yet Byron reached the objective he had declared: all his musical projects consisted of diverse materials (with occasional masterworks), and the musicians... changed regularly.

What had David been doing for three years till his sudden death from heart attack in 1985? We do not know. One is for certain: in 1981, when Bolder and Box came to persuade David to come back, Byron preferred his solo career to returning to Heep without Hensley, though David had not met him since 1976.

Coming back to the time of relationship with Heep, we may refer to 'Gypsy' as to one of the few masterworks of Byron's composer talent. Without Byron, Heep would not have taken place (Ken would, undoubtedly, have). Heep could have taken place with Ken, even without Box, though it would have been a different band. Heep became Heep only due to the unique union of Box, Byron and Hensley.

All those games of pride deprived us of the highest-quality Heep of 1970 - 1975, and drove David to death which was the result of depression and despair.

He had chosen the departure to non-existence nine years before his official death, depriving himself of the team work and contact with the public at mighty rock gigs where he will stay an idol for ever.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
EMIGRANTS: WETTON. HEEP IN ASIA.

... "Be umble, Uriah," says father to me, "and you'll get on." It was what was always being dinned into you and me at school; it's what goes down best. Be umble, and you'll do! And really it ain't done bad!" It was the first time it had ever occurred to me, that this detestable cant of false humility might have originated out of the Heep family. I had seen the harvest, but had never thought of the seed.

Charles Dickens, David Copperfield.

Seventeen years ago Wetton dealt with Heep to that extent that he spent a little more than a year in the middle 70-s. But in the end of the 70-s it turned out that Wetton was more than just one of the twenty three who had passed through the legendary "Pharaohs' Tomb". A decade later, it became clear that Wetton phenomenon was rooted in Uriah Heep. It was in Heep (as well as in all the other bands he used to play) that Wetton was lucky to play with the outstanding musicians and keyboard players. He had been lucky from the very beginning, when, in the early 70-s, quite unknown, he fell into the hands of his old friend Robert Fripp in King Crimson and played with such musicians as Bill Bruford, Mel Collins, Bryan Ferry, David Cross, Phil Manzanera and Eddie Jobson. It was after them that Wetton fell into the hands of Ken Hensley. Wetton phenomenon is not easily comprehensible. His attractiveness to so famous "comrades-in-arms" can be explained by the only reason: John Wetton was (and is) a generator of ideas, a unique arranger and just a stunning personality. In his bands UK and Asia, he has developed all that he inherited from King Crimson and Uriah Heep. There is no over exaggerating to say that Asia is the live embodiment of how Heep were evolving from the end of the 70-s to the beginning of the 80-s.

Today there is a Uriah Heep band who are in some relation to the primal Heep sound. At the same time, we can see and hear Asia who are much closer to the original Heep, thanks to Wetton. Eddie Jobson and Geoff Downes, playing superb keyboards, their relationship with John, and Asia's music, obviously drawn towards the primal Heep, altogether let us affirm with certainty that our "discovery" is true.

The young musician, named Wetton (born 12 July, 1949 in Derby, UK), first appeared on the musical horizon (there is no considering Mogul Thrash) in the group of Family in June 1971. By his lucky stars, it was Wetton who came last and became first and famous to soft rock fans at large.

In September 1972 he made a new step in his career, joining King Crimson who were on the edge of crisis. Yet, we must pay tribute to Robert Fripp who, once again, as if according to his own schedule, succeeded in gathering another "golden" group for King Crimson: John Wetton, David Cross, Bill Bruford, Jamie Muir (a percussionist who did not stamp a deep footprint in the history of the band).

It was in King Crimson that John Wetton did his first vocals, replacing Boz Barrell who had, in his turn, replaced Greg Lake. Unexpectedly, Wetton's vocals, unique and fresh, went in harmony with the fantastic music of King Crimson. He took an active part in forming the band.

Still, by September 1974 King Crimson had been in permanent crisis. Wetton found himself a close comrade-in-arms with Bryan Ferry, whose music had experienced strong influence of Bryan Eno who, in his turn, used to play with Fripp, etc. The music was but a lightened version of King Crimson. Wetton was also welcome in Roxy Music, by the way, making very useful acquaintances, Eddie Jobson among them. Eddie's style was close to those of Emerson, Lake and Hensley at a time. (It was Eddie's ill fortune that Bryan Ferry played quite different music where keyboards were the third rate instrument. Eddie resigned Roxy Music and came to Wetton's UK, much later though.)

Many interesting musicians passed through Roxy Music, among them was Andy McKay, later playing with Wetton occasionally; first rate guitarist Phil Manzanera who, later, became an irreplaceable colleague of Wetton's for years. Wetton left Ferry in March 1975, straight to Heep, untouched with whatsoever influence on the part of the band. The Uriah Heep atmosphere of 1976 did appeal to him: Wetton was not inclined to take part in the collisions; he did not want to share the fate of some of his predecessors. The prodigal son returned to Ferry who by then had managed to bury (and to galvanize a bit later) Roxy Music and formed a new group, Bryan Ferry Band. In 1976 the band was improved with our hero. Wetton took part in the debut record of the newly born band as a bassist and backing vocalist. This way, he was lingering there up to July 1977, until he dived into the least known, nearly five year period of his life, mostly hushed up by rock books. Till 1981 Wetton lived nor less interesting a life: from July 1977 to November 1978 there was born a new team of the four old friends (each of them with his own legend): Eddie Jobson (keyboards, electric violin), Bill Bruford (drums), Allan Holdsworth (guitar) and Wetton (leader, vocals, bass). For a year and a half of their existence, the band managed to release a record at E.G. Records, recorded within two months. Much of the authorship was Wetton/Jobson's - they regained all the years of apprenticeship and disregard they had suffered in the other bands.

However, with all their notable ambitions, the newly formed UK band did not succeed in getting rid of the fixed similarity to King Crimson, Uriah Heep and to Emerson, Lake and Palmer all at a time. UK Did not manage to become a super band, its personnel reducing to three members in 1978. The most unique feature of the new group was the combination of electric violin, keyboards and vocals. Note, solo guitar was absent! With this group, UK released the DANGER MONEY album recorded in December 1978 and January 1979. Drummer Bruford was replaced in the middle of the recording by ex-Frank Zappa's Terry Bozzio. All the material was written by Wetton/Jobson. Indeed, it may be the most remarkable UK album. It is unique as to its keyboards and vocals, as well as its expression. With all this UK seemed a natural successor to classic Heep and to Emerson, Lake and Palmer band.

DANGER MONEY became their "Wonderworld" for UK, first of all, due to the splendid organ. It was the more surprising, because King Crimson and Roxy Music (the alma mater of Wetton and Jobson) never made organ their main instrument. But remember the role of organ in Heep!

You look for another proof that Wetton thought in tune with Ken Hensley! If it was Hensley who utterly "commercialized" Heep's sound in the late 70-s, then it was Wetton who developed old Heep traditions.

As usual in such cases, nobody appreciated that self-sacrifice... This time, once again, Wetton's great achievements in classical music and his prophetic revelations in UK band were delayed for the descendants.

Under the influence of a more than moderate commercial success, Wetton notably lightened his music in his solo projects and started playing keyboards himself. In spite of Manzanera's guitar and Wetton's vocals, the music was becoming less and less attractive.

Another mysterious event in the life of the declining band was the release of live NIGHT AFTER NIGHT that same year in Tokyo. The record was splendid but... none the less, a commercial failure, like its predecessor. It is worth remembering that ELP broke up right in the peak of their commercial success in 1979. UK was, at least, formally, disbanded.

Rock literature presents the period that followed the break of UK as Wetton's meditation about how to better organize Asia. In fact, Wetton worked hard releasing solo albums together with his old friend Manzanera. Thanks to Wetton's fantastic collection KING'S ROAD 1972-1980, we can learn more about that period of his creative activity.

To crown that vague period in the life of the future super star in rock, Wetton, without any visible reason, found himself in Wishbone Ash, on the terms of a partner to replace Ted Turner, a temporarily gone vocalist and bassist. Wetton's perspectives as to Wishbone Ash turned out to be a "short player"; his vocals mixed with the leading vocal did not sound their best. Why on earth did Wetton join that remarkable but very uneven band? It is still beyond comprehension.

By the way, this band was related to Heep not only through Wetton but also through the fact of their simultaneous Russian tour in 1987. Alongside with his relationship with Wishbone Ash, Wetton organized another band, called Asia, between 1980 and 1981.

A rock encyclopedia claims that Wetton united with Steve Howe in 1980. Supposedly, Howe tempted ex-Buggles' Downes, when in Yes, into joining Wetton. The third member of the super trio, before he joined Wetton, had successfully quit another trio ELP and had had a lot of problems with his own team P.M. (Post Meridiem) who had released an uncommonly impersonal LP. It is easy to guess that the third one was Carl Palmer, super drummer of super bands. Thus, eventually, the band was formed in 1981, and not in 1980.

In spite of the British origins of the members, the new band was registered in Los-Angeles, USA. The new-born band was guaranteed a success, despite their most abstruse music. Very soon, the band gained a place on the radio and in the record market. Their debut album, under the same name, went into the first charts of hit-parades in the USA, and it sold in more than 2 million copies.

Funny enough, but it was due to the big sales that critics accused the band of the consequences: allegedly, American teenagers became spoilt while being devoted fans of Asia, backing their rear, and buying their records in innumerable quantities.

Critics began to speak about the unprecedented and inexplicable success of the new band in both UK and the USA.

According to the Soviet magazine Rovesnik, things ran as follows: "The very first record of Asia was marked as "platinum", and the 'Heat of the Moment' still goes in hit-parades. Their second album ALPHA seemed a bit sour to the public and critics in comparison with the first one, which was quite solid, though not without a slight pop flavour about it. Probably, the excuse could be found in Wetton's departure, though his replacement was Greg Lake... (! - I.K.). In 1985 Howe resigned Asia to organize another super band GTR, together with ex-Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett (by the way, Downes was the producer). Palmer re-animated Atomic Rooster, the band of his youth. In 1985, surviving all the personnel changes, Asia recorded their third album ASTRA. An English musical columnist remarked: "Like the first two albums, this one also starts with "A". There is nothing more to say about it."

Here is another domestic rock encyclopedia to say: "...It is the first real super band of the Eighties... They play soft music, without sharp contrasts, which is a unique synthesis of the styles the members of the band used to play before. The romantic sound that marks their present compositions was mainly due to the efforts of famous producer and sound engineer Mike Stone. The first album of the band was a colossal success and became "platinum", but the public gave a much cooler reception to the following records. In 1983 ex-ELP Greg Lake came to replace Wetton. Yet he left for the renewed trio Emerson, Lake and Powell, just in two years. And then Wetton came back again. The 1985 record did not mention Steve Howe who had organized GTR together with Steve Hackett. Howe was replaced by ex-Cobra's Mandy Meyer who once used to go tours with Krokus."

And now to the true facts. It is difficult to understand the "Asians" choosing such a pretentious and shallow name for the band. But their commercial success was quite obvious and conditioned by the personnel. To answer the accusations of the too "rough" and "abstruse" music, Wetton said: "Now, at last, we have enough money not to play commercial music but to do what we want..." If Asia was organized as a band to play music "for one's private satisfaction", then they were satisfying something boundless, indeed.

The main person to be "to blame" for this was Steve Howe, brought up on the chaos and nonsense of Asia's predecessors. It was only in 1985, after his departure, that Asia's music became more "Asian"... It drove closer to the ideas of the members, among whom Geoff Downes was most remarkable. By that time, he had not yet had a chance to become famous in Yes, though he had had a chance to save their DRAMA album in 1980. As an extra-class musician, he became famous but in Asia. The proof to it was the first album written by Wetton/Downes. Since Howe's part in composing is very small, the album has been very popular with the public up to now. There are many interesting compositions, though in alternation with pretty boring things. We may say that the popularity of the 1982 album was not quite justified; to a certain extent, it was a mere chance.

ALPHA (1983) appeared to be more balanced and even, written by the same authors and recorded by the same group in February and May 1983 at Canadian studios. Contrary to the above-mentioned tales, the vocals of the album have nothing to do with Lake, as they belong to Wetton. I have an impression that the compilers of encyclopedias do not bother themselves with referring to the sleeve notes, Yes, Wetton departed from Asia for some time, for the sake of his creative search. Yes, Lake replaced him, but only at the gigs... Eventually, Lake did not find his home in Asia, and Wetton's return was pre-determined. ASTRA, recorded with the new personnel, after John's "second advent" to Asia, became the peak of their music. It is remarkably even and professional, based on the finest ideas of Wetton and Downes together with Palmer. Quite unknown, Mandy Meyer, who came to replace Howe, looks head above his predecessor.

The album takes your breath away, and such compositions as 'Go', 'Voice of America', 'Countdown to Zero', 'After the War' are real masterworks. DANGER MONEY(UK, 1979) aside, Wetton did nothing like this. No wonder, this work was not a commercial success. Probably, this is one of the reasons, why the group kept silence, broken only in 1990 with THEN AND NOW album which was a collection of old and new materials of Asia. Like once in UK, there was no permanent guitarist; instead, they had session players Ron Komie, Steve Lukather, Scott Gorham and even Mandy Meyer, which names indicate that some compositions included into the album had obviously spent more than a year in the storerooms of the studios.

In 1990 the decline of the musical quality and the degradation of Wetton became obvious, since only two compositions were written by him. The band actually disintegrated. The Moscow tour in November 1990, which followed the release of the record became the final accord of Asia of the Eighties, a temporary guitarist being Pat Thrall. Later they released CD LIVE and the videoverision shown in Russia only in the end of 1993.

Today we only know that Wetton worked very hard with Phil Manzanera, his old colleague from the times of Roxy Music.

Their joint project of 1987, titled so modestly and simply WETTON / MANZANERA, is especially worth mentioning. John played as a multi-instrumentalist: vocals, bass, keyboards. Manzanera played solo guitar and keyboards. There appeared such famous figures as drummer Allan White (ex-Yes), keyboard player Vic Emerson and backing vocalist Kevin Godley, famous by 10CC / Godley & Creme. You can make certain that in this list it is Wetton who was, is and will be the center of gravitation for all outstanding rock musicians of our time. In spite of all the numerous attacks of the critics, Wetton is undoubtedly a big authority among musicians, always going ahead of his time.

In the early 90-s, though in Wetton's absence, Downes re-animated Asia, resurrecting the group in the form close to the original and accumulating the experience of the best contemporary keyboard players, Ken Hensley, in particular. Probably, unaware of this, Geoff is developing old Heep ideas in the new Asia. There came new vocalist and bass-guitarist: John Payne who used to play with Roger Daltrey and with Electric Light Orchestra after Jeff Lynne's departure. Carl Palmer keeps his fidelity to Asia, at one and the same time playing in Asia and in Emerson, Lake and Palmer as a member of both groups.

Asia and Geoff Downes as the producer of ASIA-92 managed to combine the incompatible: Steve Howe re-appeared in the band, this time together with guitarist Al Pitrelli. Howe has a special role: he plays acoustic guitar, mandolin and 12 string guitar. (By the way, Queen invited Howe to play Spanish guitar for the recording of their 'Innuendo'). Thank God, Al Pitrelli plays only lead&rhythm guitars! It is Howe who is born for unique solos.

Resulting, Asia, with this personnel, released a phenomenal album. Almost all the music was written by Downes, two things written by Downes/Lake. Thus, Greg Lake's shadow is hovering over the band like the phantom of Hamlet's father, while the rest of the ASIA-92 group withdraw themselves from composing.

On the whole, AQUA is saved only by Downes' keyboards. Just to think of it in the times of the domination of guitar rock and the other exotics! The triumphal issue of the record was a bit clouded because Palmer, Steve Howe and Al Pitrelli could not take part in the tours. The tours were conducted with Downes, Payne, drummer Trevor Thornton and guitarist Vinny Burns. (In the middle of 1994 ARIA album was released. It is a stunning record, with its deep melodies, arrangements, inside energy and the magic of sad music. - I.K.,1995)

The traditions of Hensley, Emerson and Lord go on developing into the 90-s, which lets hope that Uriah Heep were, are and will be alive, though the "original" Heep stopped their progressive evolution in 1991. Wetton's Asia has come to a dead end. Hensley, for all his fruitless experimentation with Blackfoot, W.A.S.P., Cinderella and other heavy metal monsters, is in a deadlock. Yet, all of them have a unique chance: they may resurrect a super band under the name of Uriah Heep, where each of them will find their place: prominent guitarist Mick Box, prominent drummer Lee Kerslake, prominent bassist Trevor Bolder, prominent multi-instrumentalist John Wetton, keyboard player and inspirer of all Heep's victories Ken Hensley. Such a super group would appear a mighty break to the revival of the public interest towards the band. It would also contribute to the birth of quite a new music, which chance is too unique to neglect it.

There is Ken Hensley, connoisseur of modern American and British rock music. Surely, the fruit of his ideas has ripened, like it happened in 1966, on the eve of his coming to a young English band called Uriah Heep. There is matchless Wetton. (The only possible rival to him may be Phil Collins.) Apart from relatively unemployed Wetton and Hensley, there is yet "partly employed" Bernie Shaw. Bernie is splendid to do lead and backing vocals, which have never been "a Cinderella" in Heep, but helped to "pull" the group at the gigs and studio.

Wetton could go for a wonderful second frontman; his vocals, though not quite rock mighty, yet are very sensual (and contributed a lot to Asia's position among the leading rock bands). Last, Wetton is the only Heep who proved that even after his departure he was worth the ex-Heep title, while some venerable ex-Heeps did not succeed in doing it. It was only Byron who had managed it, but wasn't the price too high! In spite of his unsociable and hasty character, comparable only with that of Ken's, Wetton appeared to be the only Heep who gained the world popularity in the post-Heep epoch.

Certainly, our fantastic project is unlikely to last long: too many dazzling stars at a time. But years run fast: Heep and Asia played in unison, critics are unanimous about them. Even artist Roger Dean designs Asia's covers, like he used to do

for Uriah Heep. Heep's fans, sooner or later, pass over to Asia, and vice versa... We may claim that there still would have been Heep without Wetton, but there would not have been any Wetton without Heep.

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