

Tripping the Light Fantastic

GENESIS Let There Be Light

A free trip to Philadelphia to see Genesis in concert. Wow! Sounds like fun, count me in.

Jeez, it's a bit like hard work getting there. Like it's really tuff trying to read the breakfast menu at 7am beside Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, when you've been on a plane for hours, you're not hungry, you didn't bring your togs and a Royal Hawaiian Hotel orange juice costs \$US6.95

It's also tuff finding Philadelphia when you haven't got a map. Travelling with the concert promoter, Mr Hugh Lynn, there's no map in the hire car — but there is a telephone. So matters can be discussed with the Auckland office as we travel south from New York at an orderly 50 mph. But soon we find ourselves in the suburbs of Philly and not sure which way to turn.

Giggling gets us nowhere, so we decide to follow an overhead railway that *must* go into town, but end up in what must be the most depressed real estate in Philly. As the dour Bill Carter of the Screaming Blue Messiahs said of the very same street, "It's not a place to stall your car ..."

But we eventually arrive, and moments later we're ensconced in the lounge of the Four Seasons, the same hotel in which Genesis are staying. Good God Almighty. Upmarket? Foodtown shopping bags are *uncool* here, mate! In fact the only slice of reality I encountered in three days at the hotel was Phil Collins' legs. Nobody else would dare commute in the Four Seasons' lift in a T-shirt and shorts.

Genesis are BIG in Philadelphia — the four nights at the 17,000 seater venue sold out in four hours. The biggest grossing concert in America that week; the total box-office take was \$US1,214,773. The Spectrum Stadium was the site of Rocky's victory fight (shortly after he ran up Philly's art museum steps; we walked up), and the security staff are courteous and speak English.

On the plane across America we had read a Phil Collins interview in *Rolling Stone*, a Phil Collins interview in *Playboy* and it made us want to



Phil Collins in the spotlight.

ask questions of the other members of Genesis, questions about ... Phil Collins. But at the appointed time for interviews — the afternoon of the first concert — Phil is unlikely to be available. Good, I reason, he's over-interviewed. I volunteer to ask questions of keyboardist Tony Banks, as it's invariably the quiet ones that run the show.

After tennis, Mr Banks and Mr Rutherford arrive. While the latter speaks to Mr Hogg of the *NZ Herald*, I face Tony Banks at the other end of the room. As Mr Hogg pursues questions concerning the solo star Mr Collins, Tony Banks' attention drifts to Mike Rutherford's answers and he politely apologises before resuming his line of thought.

Ten years ago, did you expect to be embarking on a major tour in 1986?

"No. We did our first single in 1968, Mike and I were in the original group. There's no way you'd think you'd still be going now. The group is more

popular than it was last year."

Every member of the band is active with solo work. Are you going through a phase of workaholicism?

"No, not really, not in my case. I do a lot of music and a lot of things outside music. We've been doing Genesis as a part-time thing since about 1978, 50/50 with other things. Phil likes to work the most, but then he has the most offers of work. So he has more to choose from."

Behind the Lines

In recent years Tony Banks has done two film soundtracks, the best of which are compiled on the album *Soundtracks*, and he is also partial to being home with his family. He thinks of himself as "more of a country person than a town person."

So do you write songs in seclusion and bring them to a Genesis session?

"No, the last two albums we've written the whole thing in the studio, we haven't done anything before, we just improvise and the songs crystallise over a period of weeks. Some songs happen very quickly and we record as soon as it has any shape at all."

"What most people consider to be the classic Genesis tracks have all been written by the group as a whole. 'Supper's Ready' from the early days and much of *The Lamb Lies Down on*

Broadway — these kinds of songs have always been written by all the people that were in the group at the time."

"We got to the stage with the LP *Then There Were Three* where it was mainly individual songs by Mike and I and the group were performing them. It was almost like we were session musicians on each others' songs."

"We wanted to get back to group writing and on *Duke* we did three or four group-written songs — they were the much stronger songs on the LP. 'Turn it On Again' and 'Duchess.' *Abacab* was mainly group written and the last two albums totally. There's no song that would've been anything like the way it is if the three of us hadn't been in the room at the same time."

Why have you not done a compilation or "best of" LP?

"We'd probably never agree on what the best tracks are — I'm certain the audience wouldn't agree. It would be very difficult to make a single album, because you'd want to include a song like 'Supper's Ready', which is half the side of an album. Hopefully people will go back into the past and listen to the earlier albums. An album like *Trespass* that sold nothing at the time it was out, about 5000, it's probably sold 500,000 now."

You've had one Genesis reunion concert with Peter Gabriel to raise money for the WOMAD festival. Is that likely to be repeated?

"It's not important to us, it was nice to do it. Peter Gabriel and Genesis have been apart 11 years — it's a long time. It might happen again but it's not something we plan to do."

And Then There Were Three

When you were looking for a replacement for Gabriel, were you reluctant to use your drummer, Phil Collins, as the new singer?

"He's got a good voice and he'd obviously done a lot of singing on the Genesis albums, but we were never sure he could do the powerful singing which is always a very important part of Genesis music. We even went so far as trying someone on the song 'Squonk' on *Trick of the Tale*. But we couldn't find anyone and we decided that he would sing all the songs on the album."

The rest is history — Genesis got another drummer instead of another singer.

"The audience found it very easy to accept someone from the band. It would have been difficult for old fans to find somebody else out front."

In the early days of Genesis visual qualities were very important. Have you grown tired of theatrics?

"I still think Genesis is a very visual band, but

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Daryl Stuermer, Phil Collins.

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