

Progression

The Quarterly Journal Of Progressive Music

COPERNICUS

Nothing Exists

1984/2010 (CD, 37:41)

AVANT-GARDE

RATING 10.5

Copernicus (Joseph Smalkowski) is a performance poet evoking the spirit of the great minds of the Beat Generation. He operated in the New York City downtown scene performing at CBGB's, Speakeasy, and Max's Kansas City. This reissue of his 1984 debut album falls between early Fugs (especially the idea behind that band's song "Nothing") and Coyote Poets Of The Universe. His improvised confrontations with the quantum world are supported by a 3-piece ensemble that whips up a psych-tinged, free-flowing jazz backdrop.

First cut "I Won't Hurt You" eases you into his alternative consciousness with an abstract, almost poppy, love song. After this, more menacing themes pervade the proceedings in a cosmic dadaesque stew. "Blood" unfurls from airy female background vocals and organ bleeps to full-blown chaos. "I Know What I Think" is true rock anarchy. Then there's the staggering 11-minute centerpiece rant "Let Me Rest," with its proudly fractured yet mournful instrumental buttress rising and falling as Copernicus ponders his inertia. This is either "out there" or profound, depending on one's point of view. Approach with caution. -- **WARREN BARKER**

STRICT 97
RPWL
STEWART & GASKIN
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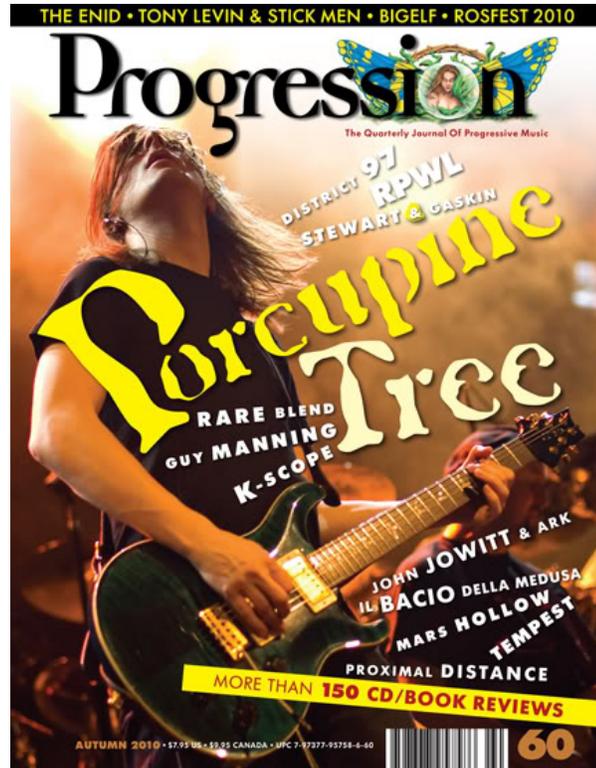


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Progression issue 60 (Fall 2010) now available!!



Progression Magazine issue No. 60 will be mailed soon to all domestic and international subscribers, and now is available for single-issue purchase. The publication's new design continues to evolve with expanded use of color photography. One of our best issues yet!

Featured in this information-packed 112-page issue:

* More than 150 CD and book reviews.

Porcupine Tree (cover story) – in-depth interviews with Steven Wilson and Gavin Harrison. Says Wilson: "The main thing with this band is always to find some way to keep the sound yet keep evolving, and set ourselves a challenge each time. Even if it's not musically that different, at least it is distinctive in its own way and has its own character."

The Enid – a definitive look at this classic progressive band through the eyes of Robert-John Godfrey and current bandmates. Says Godfrey: "The Enid started as the punk revolution exploded [1975]. And I mean no disrespect, but to be quite honest the dinosaurs – the supergroups of the day – actually overnight ceased to be. Keith Emerson couldn't get a gig."

Stick Men – Tony Levin and Pat Mastelotto discuss the evolution of this pioneering progressive ensemble. Says Levin: "I wanted to write on Stick and enhance that with another Stick player, no keyboards and not many vocals. In fact, ever since

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then the few vocals coming out of my writing are more shouting than singing. So it just seems like musically that's what I wanted to do."

Bigelf – in-depth look at this band on the eve of its 20th anniversary. Says group leader Damon Fox: "One of the things I didn't realize 10 years ago is that we sort of have this torch-bearer mentality — carrying on this torch for '70s prog rock. We're bringing it forward so that people remember it, so kids know that this era was really cool and there are still new bands that people can see to remind them of that era."

District 97 – the story behind this young ensemble featuring a cellist and singer from American Idol fame. Says vocalist Leslie Hunt: "I told them, 'You guys are wizards, I want to sing in your band! I mean, you don't understand, I want to be involved!' I was wide-eyed, totally blown away."

Mars Hollow – a definitive look at this new, California-based progressive rock band. Says bassist/songwriter Kerry Chicoine: "We don't talk about outside influences or try to imitate sounds when we're writing songs and making music. We work hard. We play hard. And we have fun. We are who we are; we're not anybody else and don't pretend to be."

Manning – veteran British melodic progger Guy Manning looks back on 11 years heading his own band and working with the likes of Parallel or 90 Degrees and The Tangent. Says Manning: "My songs always tell narrative stories, so I like to bring these to life. Not only in the music and lyrics but in the accompanying artwork and onstage persona."

RPWL — one of Germany's leading neo-progressive acts, RPWL has come a long way since its days as a Pink Floyd tribute act. Says singer/keyboardist Yogi Lang: "When we started off in the late '90s, we were just four guys jamming over old Floyd songs and having fun onstage. But all of us were able to compose, so it was a natural development that we began doing our own songs."

Stewart & Gaskin – an examination how and why this songwriting duo has taken a different course, stylistically. Says Dave Stewart: "Fortunately, we've managed to get by without either of us having a regular job, which is my personal definition of success in the music business. Never mind about being famous — a pain in the arse as far as I'm concerned. If you can make enough money to stay alive while doing the music you like, then you've made it."

Rare Blend – an introduction to this hard-working Ohio band that crosses multiple progressive subgenres. Says guitarist Vic Samalot: "We do a lot of improvising at our home studio at band rehearsals. We would just turn on the recorders and see what would happen. And quite often we liked what happened!"

John Jowitt & arK – known for his work on the British neo-progressive scene with IQ, Jadis, Arena and many others, bassist/singer John Jowitt has settled into a new band of his own. Says Jowitt: "I had a vision in my mind's eye of how the songs should be, and finally got the chance to realize it."

Tempest – one of America's foremost Celtic rock bands, Tempest has honed its reputation as a consummate live act. Says front man Leif Sorbye: "We love our studio albums, but Tempest is primarily a live band. We have the most fun onstage. That's where we're at our best."

Bacio Della Medusa – introducing this superb young Italian band following the footsteps of classic greats such as Banco and PFM, lending a modern twist. Says flautist Eva Morelli: "We have moved toward more modern sounds and stylistic solutions that attempt to 'renew' rather than follow in something that was great and unique."

Proximal Distance– the story of how this "virtual" band has made music across the miles. Says guitarist/composer Gregg Johns: "We started talking and it came together a lot faster and sooner than we anticipated. It is really interesting to do this via the Internet."

K-Scope – an overview of this British "post-progressive" label. Says one label executive: "Post progressive says that the bands are influenced by progressive rock but are taking the genre in a different direction. It allows us to have a wide spectrum of bands on the label without anyone being put into a

spectrum of bands on the laser without anyone being put into a box that they are uncomfortable with."

ROSfest '10– a look back at the annual Rites of Spring Festival in its new home, Gettysburg Pa.

Progression is a full-size quarterly print publication that has been covering the progressive music scene since 1992. For more information including instructions on how to order a subscription or back issues, please peruse this website. Inquiries also may be directed to Publisher John Collinge via progmagazine@aol.com, and by calling (toll-free) 800-545-7371 or +978-970-2728.

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