

CALL FOR PAPER For the First International Conference of the ACADPROG Network dedicated to progressive rock

Introduction to ACADPROG Network

Thanks to the initiative of Allan Moore, many researchers from various horizons have decided to create ACADPROG in 2011. From the beginning, this international network has decided to use their various fields of competences to study all the aspects of progressive rock, a style of music born at the end of the 1960s. In order for their work to acquire a certain visibility and for this new field of research to find a place within the field of popular music studies, **ACADPROG is organising its first international conference on the 10th, 11th and 12th december 2014 in Dijon (France)**, thanks to the support of the University of Burgundy, the GC and CIMEOS laboratories and some institutional partners.

Have you said prog rock ?

From a musical point of view, this trend is characterised by references to classical music (from the baroque to contemporary music) as well as jazz music, through its taste for long instrumental developments and its marked interest for sound innovation. Beyond the sound aspect, this music is also inspired by literature (especially heroic fantasy and science fiction) for its lyrics and illustrations, while it also included some theatricality in its performances. While most of the groups who new international fame in the middle of the 1970s originated from Great Britain (Pink Floyd, Soft Machine, Genesis, King Crimson, Yes, ELP, Van Der Graff Generator, Jethro Tull, Roxy Music, Hatfield and the North, Supertramp, UK, Marillion etc.), a few French, Italian, North American and Japanese bands also had an international career. However, at the beginning of the eighties, this musical trend was set aside by the critics, challenged by new emerging trends (punk and new wave) and partially neglected by the audience. Even though some artists stemming from this trend then branched off and improved their fame afterwards (for example Peter Gabriel, Genesis ou Phil Collins) most of them lost the support of the musical industry and thus lost their international exposure. In the written account (especially in newspapers) of the punk/new wave revolution, prog has become synonymous with endless guitar solos and outdated musical pomposity.

Is prog dead?

In reality, as most of the tales derived from the modern vocabulary, the idea that the prog “ dinosaur ” (quoting Robert Fripp) has hopelessly disappeared disqualifies itself by its unilaterally. If nobody can contest the fact that indie rock has markedly changed the face of popular music, continuity is just as valuable as a break in tradition. Thus, the musical industry often recalled musicians coming from prog to produce new wave records (Ray Shulman from Gentle Giant, Mike Howlett or Steve Hillage from Gong) and just the same, the film industry has also used musicians such as Vangelis who deeply modified the physiognomy of soundtracks. On the other hand, the commercial decline of certain famous progressive rock bands must not make us forget that some groups, labels, festivals have never ceased to promote this music. Nowadays, prog has left its print on many metal trends such as Dream Theater, Tool or Porcupine Tree and on jazz (for example at Metheny). Even better, some of the most popular indie rock bands, such as Radiohead, do not hesitate to claim the influence of classical composers and are using experimental approaches that link them on many aspects with prog rock. Other independent groups, as Flaming Lips or Mercury Rev are using the the mellotron. On the fringe of this movement, artists such as Fred Frith greatly contributed to

redefining impromptu music. In the same way, continuity also manifests itself in listening habits. Thus, many indie rock listeners continued to appreciate the prog groups they used to listen to and transmitted their passion to their children. In the context of numeric sound and its broadcast thanks to social networks, new generations are (re)discovering bands and artists forgotten in all the countries and of course the new prog rock bands. This taste can be verified thanks to the success of tribute bands dedicated to Genesis or Pink Floyd, some touring around the world, and the multiplication of reissued albums and the reformation of sixties or seventies prog bands.

Expectations of this conference:

In the academic field, some pioneering authors have paved the way for a systematic approach of the study of prog rock (Bill Martin, 1996 ; Edward Macan, 1997 ; Kevin Holm Hudson 2001, 2008 ; Christophe Pirenne 2005 ; John Covach & Mark Spice, 2010). However, the context has changed in so far as this musical trend seems to regain a significant place in the taste (of the listeners) and in the musical production, new questions arise, new debates, certainly of a multidisciplinary nature, must begin. So as to help these new questions to emerge, we are encouraging the researchers to come and present their findings and analyses in this conference. Here are some non exclusive pointers, questions and reflexion axes that, in our opinion, deserved to be debated on.

1. A critical re-reading of the canonical history of rock music.

According to a certain number of tales, progressive rock was swept away by the punk movement and by new wave at the beginning of the eighties. According to some, the decline of prog marked the birth of a new mass rock culture à la MTV, according to others, the triumph of new trends pointed towards a regeneration of rock.

Considering these two readings, supposing an aesthetic revolution is able to eradicate everything that preceded, how is it possible to reintegrate prog rock in a more subtle way within the story of rock as a whole? Is it possible to show some continuity and some rupture, particularly through the study of the destiny of some groups, some producers, some groups (samples?) of listeners, of countries, acting as satellites?

The point here would be not so much a wish to rehabilitate prog or to talk down their competitors, but rather to think about the ways the history of popular music is produced and regularly updated in its study. In particular, we would appreciate papers which, starting from prog rock, would also tackle the respective places of the winners and the vanquished in the academic or profane historiography of rock, more precisely, which would spot the various actors, objects and institutions that produce and reconfigure this history of rock.

2. A british style?

For many authors, fans, news writers, artists, prog rock is “ typically ” and essentially british. This can indeed be confirmed by the way certain bands of the seventies, coming from Continental Europe (especially the Italians from PFM) have been anglicised so they could reach a wider international audience. However, you only need to surf on the Web to realise that a great number of specialized blogs leave room for chronicles concerning Hungarian, Danish, Japanese, Belgian, Czechoslovakian bands of the seventies and eighties. As far as the present time is concerned, the list widens even more and is even more colorful. One can expect papers and presentations that could let us see (and hear) the national, regional, or even local dimension of prog rock, and quantify the order of magnitude of this production. Here again, papers dealing with the organization of festivals, the audience, the specialised records shops, the bands, the record labels, the radio stations, the fanzines the blogs etc ... would be welcome.

3. What is prog, really?

If we mention the history of a musical trend, its national and stylistic adaptations, one can wonder about the very “ nature ” of this trend. For even if a stylistic pigeonhole causes controversies and reinventions, nevertheless, this pigeonhole is also capable of containing the entirety of the various

social actors (musicians, industry, amateurs, journalists) who all agree on certain characteristics of this musical genre. We would first of all be very interested by contributions which would try to prove (or disprove) the specificity of this genre. Is it possible to talk about a particular instrumentation, a certain way of playing the music, of composing, of working in recording studios, of performing onstage, of attending concerts, of listening to music at home? Has prog federated certain audiences, certain social groups, is it urban, suburban, rural? is there a specificity in the lyrics, the authors, the narrative, the graphism, the body language, the eras, the way of performing the music and the way of understanding the time (musical or not) of the ethics linked to prog? If this proves to be true, how is it possible to underline these common traits if we consider that the british “dinosaurs” are not the only representatives of this trend? As the adjective “ progressive ” would suggest, is there a connection between this trend of music (if it exists) and musical progression (if this notion is relevant or significant). At the very least, is it possible to retrace the “ factors ” encouraging the amateurs or the authors to claim this music is progressive? Are there links between political avant-garde and certain trends in rock music? If so, is it possible to distinguish some characteristics (the relationships with the industry, the political parties, the tour organisations etc ...) which confirm the existence of this avant-garde?

We are encouraging the perspectives which would use a comparative method, especially the perspectives dealing with pioneers, satellites, rebels, traitors, sympathisers, similes, road companions, prog heirs, or in other words, anything permitting to remove the focus from prog and to take into account both controversies and approvals.

Pluridisciplinarity

We are hoping that this conference will be an opportunity to institute a dialog and to cross reference different disciplines and approaches. Which is why we encourage specialists in philosophy, musicology, sociology, information and communication, anthropology, ethnology, as well as musicians, professionals to participate. With the same open spirit, we heartily welcome communications about music in its many aspects: visual culture, recordings, performances, body language, organology and production spaces, professionals and fans, cinema and film music, Websites, literature and texts, journalists and stars, festivals, labels, etc ...

Publications:

At the end of the conference, we will proceed to a publication of a certain number of articles illustrating this meeting. Moreover, the organisers have already made contacts with several editors so that a second book will be released, focusing on progressive rock.

Speakers and guest personalities:

We are happy to announce that Franco Fabbri (University de Turin, ex Stormy Six. Italie), Bernard Gueffier (directeur du label Muséa, France) and Bill Bruford (Yes, King Crimson, Genesis, UK, Earthworks) have already responded favourably to our invitation. Concerts and films viewings will also be organised.

Paper formats and deadlines:

The paper or workshop suggestions, in English or in French, must be sent to philippe.gonin@u-bourgogne.fr and francois.ribac@u-bourgogne.fr for **july 30th, 2014 at the latest**.

The suggestions should include a short biography (family name, given name, address, function and institution, email address, and an abstract of 3000 to 4000 signs).

The scientific committee will transmit its answer via email on september 15, 2014.

The conference will take place in English and French.

Although it is by no means mandatory, we encourage the participants whose papers have been accepted to attend the full conference. Meal will normally be paid by the conference organisers.

Organising committee:

Chris Atton (Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, UK)

Philippe Gonin (Université de Bourgogne, France)

Allan Moore (University of Surrey, UK)

Christophe Pirenne (Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgique)

François Ribac (Université de Bourgogne, France)

Justin Williams (University of Bristol, UK)

Selective bibliography:

Martin B. (1996) *Music of Yes: Structure and Vision in Progressive Rock* (Feedback: The Series in Contemporary Music, Vol. 1) Open Court Publishing Company

Macan E. (1997) *Rocking the Classics: English Progressive Rock and the Counterculture*. Oxford University Press

Holm Hudson K. (2001) *Progressive Rock Reconsidered* (Composer Resource Manuals). Routledge

Holm Hudson K. (2008) *Genesis and The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. Ashgate popular and folk music series

Pirenne C. (2005) *Le rock progressif anglais (1967-1977)*. Honoré Champion

Spicer M.S. & Covach J. R. (2010) *Sounding Out Pop: Analytical Essays in Popular Music*. University of Michigan Press