Jon Anderson Biography

Jon Anderson is undoubtedly one of the most recognizable voices in progressive rock as the lead vocalist and creative force behind Yes. Anderson was the author and a major creative influence behind the ground-breaking album Fragile as well as the series of epic, complex pieces such as Awaken, Gates of Delirium and especially Close to the Edge which were central to the band's success. Additionally, Anderson co-authored the group's biggest hits, including I've Seen All Good People, Roundabout, and Owner Of A Lonely Heart. In addition, Anderson had great success with a series of albums he did with Vangelis, and most recently released the critically-acclaimed solo album entitled Survival and Other Stories.

Jon was born John Roy Anderson in Accrington, Lancashire, England, on October 25, 1944 to Albert and Kathleen Anderson, who were of Scottish (father) and Irish (mother) ancestry. Anderson dropped the "h" from his first name in 1970.

Early career
In 1962, Anderson joined The Warriors, where he and his brother Tony shared the role of lead vocalist. He quit this band in 1967, released two solo singles in 1968 under the pseudonym Hans Christian Anderson, and then briefly sang for the band The Gun. In March 1968, Anderson met bassist Chris Squire and joined him in a group called Mabel Greer's Toyshop, which included guitarist Peter Banks.

Yes
Anderson, Squire, and Banks went on to form Yes, with drummer Bill Bruford and keyboardist Tony Kaye. Their eponymous debut album was released in 1969. Amongst the line-up changes (Rick Wakeman would replace Kaye in 1971 and Alan White would replace Bruford in 1972) Jon stayed with the group until 1980, and this period is now known as the classic period of Yes. Jon was a major creative force and band leader throughout the period (describing himself as the 'team captain' and 'catalyst'; nicknamed by his band mates "Napoleon" for his diminutive stature and leadership of the band) and is recognized as the main instigator of the series of epics produced by Yes at the time. His role in creating such complex pieces as "Close to the Edge", "Awaken", and especially "The Gates of Delirium" is central, despite his limited instrumental abilities. Yes released 11 critically acclaimed albums (including one live album 'Yessongs' and one early compilation 'Yesterdays') between 1969 and 1979, including such classic titles as 'Fragile' (which contained the band's first hit “Roundabout”), 'Close To The Edge', 'Tales From The Topographic Oceans', 'Relayer' and 'Going For The One'.

Jon rejoined a reformed Yes in 1983, which produced their most commercially successful album '90125' with newcomer Trevor Rabin. After a second album 'Big Generator' and several world tours, Jon departed again in 1988 over the band's continued pursuit of major commercial success and mainstream radio play. In 1989, Anderson and other former Yes members formed the group Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe (ABWH), augmented by bassist Tony Levin who had played with drummer Bill Bruford in King Crimson. After the successful first ABWH album, a series of business deals caused ABWH to reunite with the then-current members of Yes (Squire, Rabin, White, Kaye), who had been out of the public eye while searching for a new lead singer. The resulting eight-man band assumed the name Yes, and the album 'Union' (1991) was assembled from various pieces of an in-progress second ABWH album as well as recordings that "Yes proper" had been working on, without Anderson. A successful tour followed, but the eight-man lineup of Yes never recorded a complete album together before splintering in 1992. Although many more personnel changes followed, Anderson would remain

with the band until 2004. The '90125' line-up recorded one more album in 1994 titled 'Talk'. The 'classic' line-up (Anderson, Squire, Wakeman, Howe, White) reformed with 'Keys To Ascension (1996) and Keys to Ascension 2 (1997). Wakeman was replaced by Igor Khoroshev, who was featured on 'Open Your Eyes' (1997) and 'The Ladder' (1999) along with guitarist Billy Sherwood. The album 'Magnification' released in 2001 marked the second album Yes recorded with an orchestra, the first being 'A Time And A Word' in 1970. In 2002, Rick Wakeman returned to the band to celebrate their 35th anniversary with a major worldwide tour. The band ceased to tour in 2004, partly due to health concerns regarding Anderson and Wakeman.

Vocal and lyrical style

It is a commonly held misconception that Jon Anderson sings falsetto, a vocal technique which artificially produces high, airy notes by using only the ligamentous edges of the vocal cords; however, Jon Anderson does not sing falsetto. His normal singing (and speaking) voice is naturally above the tenor range. In a 2008 interview with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Jon stated, "I'm an alto tenor and I can sing certain high notes, but I could never sing falsetto, so I go and hit them high." He is also noted for singing in his original Lancastrian accent.

Anderson is also responsible for most of the mystically-themed lyrics and concepts which are part of many Yes releases. These elements are crucial components of the classic Yes sound. The lyrics are frequently inspired by various books Anderson has enjoyed, from Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' to Hermann Hesse's 'Siddhartha'. A footnote in Paramahansa Yogananda's 'Autobiography of a Yogi' inspired an entire double album 'Tales From Topographic Oceans' (1973). Recurring themes include environmentalism, pacifism and sun-worship.

Post Yes

In 1970 Anderson appeared as a featured guest singer on King Crimson's 'Lizard' album, on the track "Prince Rupert Awakes". The tune was outside the range of the group's then-vocalist, Gordon Haskell.

In September 1975 Anderson appeared on the Vangelis album 'Heaven and Hell'.

In 1979 Anderson composed the score for a ballet 'Ursprung'. 'Ursprung' was part of a grouping of three dance works collectively entitled 'Underground Rumours' which was commissioned and performed by The Scottish Ballet. The choreographer was Royston Maldoom, the set and costume designer was Graham Bowers, and the lighting designer was David Hersey. The principal dancers were Andrea Durant and Paul Russell.

In early 1980 when Anderson and Wakeman left Yes, Jon Anderson started recording again with Vangelis and by summer 1980 Jon & Vangelis had released 'Short Stories', followed in November by Jon's solo album 'Song of Seven' and a major UK tour with The New Life Band. Jon would record four celebrated albums with Oscar winner Vangelis, each of which sold over a million copies worldwide.

In 1981 Anderson appeared on Rick Wakeman's concept album '1984'.

In 1982 Anderson released the album 'Animation', which featured Jack Bruce, David Sancious and Simon Phillips. A major tour ensued which included a high profile live radio broadcast on the King Biscuit Flower Hour.

In 1983 Anderson appeared on Mike Oldfield's "In High Places" from the album 'Crises' as well as another song called "Shine" (In 2010 Jon's vocals from “In High Places” were sampled on Kanye

West's track “Dark Fantasy” from his 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' CD). In 1983 Anderson also appeared on Bela Fleck and the Flecktones album 'Outbound', which also featured Adrian Belew.

In 1984 Anderson appeared on the song "Cage Of Freedom" from the 1984 soundtrack for a re-release of the silent Fritz Lang film 'Metropolis'.

In 1985 Anderson's song "This Time it Was Really Right" was featured on the soundtrack for the movie 'St. Elmo's Fire'. He also sang "Silver Train" and "Christie" on the film soundtrack 'Scream for Help'. Along with Tangerine Dream Anderson appeared on the song "Loved by the Sun" for the film 'Legend' directed by Ridley Scott. Jon also released the critically acclaimed Christmas album 'Three Ships' that year (reissued in 2007 with bonus tracks).

The 1986 film 'Biggles: Adventures in Time' features a song sung by Anderson.

In 1987 Anderson sang on "Moonlight Desires" on Gowan's album 'Great Dirty World'.

In 1988 Anderson released the CD 'In the City Of Angels', and sang on the song "Stop Loving You" on the Toto album 'The Seventh One'.

In 1992 Anderson appeared on Kitaro's album 'Dream', adding both lyrics and vocals to three songs: "Lady of Dreams", "Island of Life" and "Agreement". Jon toured the far east and the US with Kitaro in 1992.

In 1993 Anderson appeared on the song "Along The Amazon" which he co-wrote for guitarist Charlie Bisharat's album of the same name.

In 1994 Anderson released two albums: 'Deseo' and 'Change We Must'. He also sang on the 7th Level children's video game Tuneland.

In 1995 Anderson released 'Angel's Embrace', his first CD comprising mainly of instrumental ambient / meditation music.

In 1996 Anderson released the CD 'Toltec'; an album made up of 13 tracks divided into three parts that tells the tale of the Toltec, a Native American concept of a group of people who have been all over the earth, existing within different cultures throughout the centuries.

In 1997 Jon released two albums: 'The Promise Ring', a CD of Celtic-inspired songs, and 'Earth Mother Earth', an effort recorded in Anderson's home studio where he plays most of the instruments, and is accompanied on vocals by his wife Jane.

In 1998 Anderson released 'The More You Know'; an exploration of his more commercial music.

In 1999 Anderson appeared on the song "The Only Thing I Need" by act 4Him; it was recorded for a multi-group album called 'Streams'.

In 2004 Anderson appeared with the Contemporary Youth Orchestra of Cleveland. The concert was recorded but only released to the orchestra members.

In 2005 Anderson embarked on a series of successful solo tours. The resulting live DVD 'Tour of The Universe' was released that year.

In 2006 Anderson appeared with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra (East Coast Troupe) during two December 16 shows in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to play "Roundabout".

In 2007 Anderson contributed vocals to an album 'Culture of Ascent' by American progressive rock group Glass Hammer; and appeared as part of a vocal ensemble on the track "Repentance" from the Dream Theater album 'Systematic Chaos'. In 2007 Anderson toured both the USA and England with The Paul Green School of Rock Music.

In 2008 Anderson appeared on the song "Sadness of Flowing" which he co-wrote for Peter Machajdik's album 'Namah'. He made similar contributions to a remastering of Tommy Zvoncheck's album 'ZKG'. One of Jon Anderson's passions is his painting and he uses his art as yet another channel for his creativity and self expression. His artwork is available to view on his official website.

Throughout 2009 and 2010 Jon Anderson toured the US and Europe solo, and in 2010 he toured the UK with former Yes band mate Rick Wakeman. Anderson and Wakeman released the critically acclaimed album 'The Living Tree' in 2010 on Voiceprint Records / Gonzo MultiMedia, UK. On May 24, 2010 Jon shared the stage with the 112 member Cleveland Contemporary Youth Orchestra and 60 member student chorus. The concert was filmed and shown on HDNet.

In the spring and summer of 2011 Anderson toured the northeast US to full capacity audiences – the tour was a major success. June 14, 2011 marked the official release of Jon Anderson's new album 'Survival & Other Stories' on Voiceprint Records / Gonzo MultiMedia. The album received rave reviews by critics and fans alike worldwide along with substantial airplay. Two new songs written by Jon, with music by Michael Mollure, titled “The Highest Pass' and “Waking Up” were included in the film 'The Highest Pass' released in August 2011. In the fall of 2011 Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman reunited for a tour of the northeast US and some dates in Canada. Once again the tour was a huge success with concert goers and the music press. Plans for more US and UK dates are currently in the works in support of the recent CD release 'Anderson / Wakeman – The Living Tree In Concert Part One' (featuring live tracks from the duo's 2010 UK tour) on Gonzo MultiMedia, UK.

On October 25, 2012, Jon Anderson's 67th birthday, his latest musical masterwork, a 21-minute opus titled 'OPEN' was released digitally. A return to the long-form composition that Jon Anderson is best known for, (“Close To The Edge”, “Gates of Delirium”, "Revealing" and “Awaken”), OPEN is a 21-minute exhilarating musical journey; a pioneering effort that weaves intricate melodic and harmonic themes within a classical music framework whilst showcasing Anderson's iconic vocals and timeless melodies throughout. In many ways OPEN is a return to Jon Anderson's musical roots, as Yes music continually flows through his veins, making it only natural to revisit now and again. Coupled with wonderful orchestration by his neighbor and good friend Stefan Podell, messages of peace, love, light and freedom are further explored within OPEN, making listening an uplifting and joyous experience!

Jon completed several successful solo tours in 2012, and most recently a tour of Australia in Spring 2013. He is also recording new material for his next CD release, as well as recording the follow-up to OPEN titled 'Ever'.

Jon Anderson's official website: www.JonAnderson.com
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