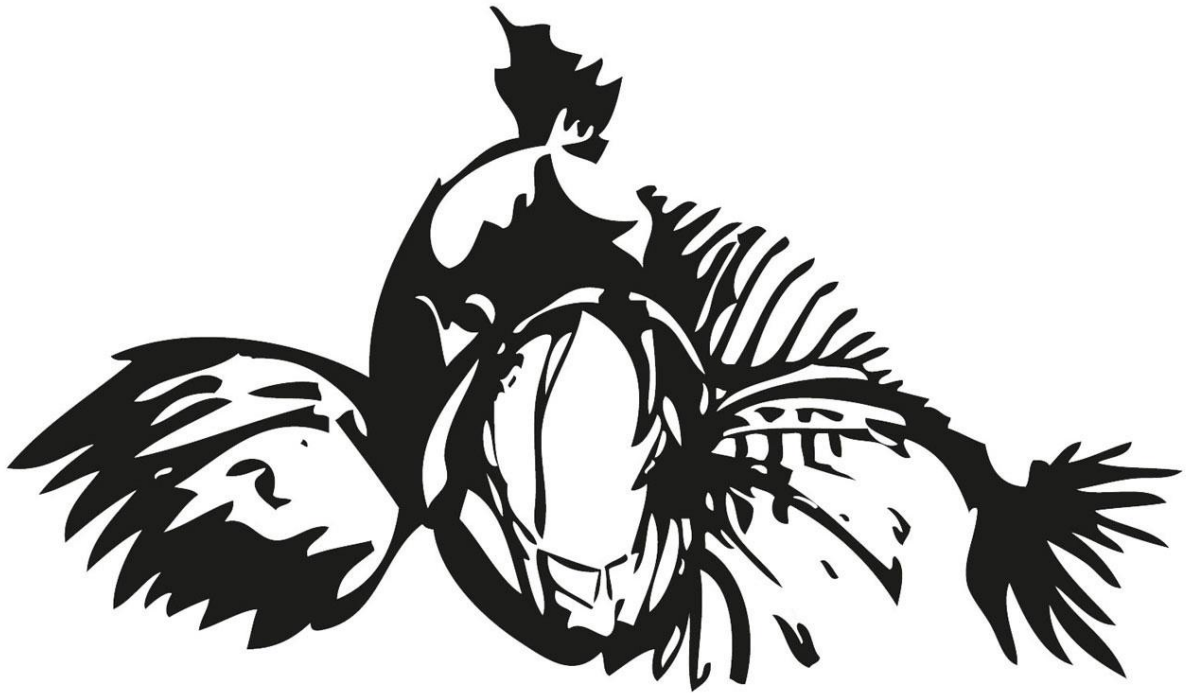


**THE WEEVER SANDS – OVERDONE. ABOUT ANIMALS IN PROG**

A downhill ride (question)



# The Weever Sands

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## **The Weever Sands – Overdone. About Animals in Prog**

### **A downhill ride (question)**

If you ask me what 'The Weever Sands' is all about – well, buggered If I know!<sup>1</sup> But maybe it all started because I felt somehow uneasy when Oldfield steered progressive rock ("Prog") away from the classical rock paradigm in the early 1970<sup>s</sup>. I mean, what he did was, what was so ingenious, was to create a whole new form of music, not from two turntables, two records, and a microphone<sup>2</sup> but from completely de-imagizing the music. Strip it down to the bone, and start just with a small cluster of notes... Take away the lyrics, replace them with vocalise. As if to say<sup>3</sup>: There, in the chords and melodies, is everything.<sup>4</sup> Take away the standard drums, take away the guitar solos and replace them with these incredible singing lines...

Indeed, there it is: the whole program to hide behind your music, some fifteen years before Shoegazing and Techno House, some twenty years before Post-Rock. Just repeating patterns that go on and on, moving slightly. No message, no image, no under the lights where we stand tall.<sup>5</sup> Mind-boggling, yes – but is there a price to pay?<sup>6</sup>

If we look at the cultural framework in which Oldfield's musical concept was devised, it's fair to say that some of the more important minimal music composers<sup>7</sup> and especially the leading artists of classical Prog were almost obsessed with 'nature' – as a very popular topic of that period in general and maybe also as a powerful inherent undertow<sup>8</sup> against watchers of the skies<sup>9</sup>, starship troopers<sup>10</sup>, lost space majors<sup>11</sup> and all the other cosmic debris.<sup>12</sup> In fact the importance of nature as a term of reference is rather manifest in an overload of respective concepts, symbols, and metaphors in visuals, lyrics, song and album titles, and even band names.

What's on display? For example Roger Dean's organic landscapes<sup>13</sup>, sometimes obscured by clouds<sup>14</sup>, or islands<sup>15</sup>, ragged by numbered flows<sup>16</sup> and surrounded by topographic oceans<sup>17</sup> where you can listen to the sounds of the sea<sup>18</sup> and cast a pebble<sup>19</sup> until the water takes your

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sailor's Hornpipe; by: Mike Oldfield, Tubular Bells (Boxed, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Loungin'; by: Guru, Jazzmatazz (1993).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ripples; by: Genesis, A Trick Of The Tail (1976).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. David Bowie (Interview, June 16, 2002). Retrieved March 10, 2015, from [www.concertlivewire.com](http://www.concertlivewire.com).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Cowboys From Hell; by: Pantera, Cowboys From Hell (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. May Be A Price To Pay, by: The Alan Parsons Project, The Turn Of A Friendly Card (1980).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Looking For Mushrooms (Movie); by: Bruce Conner (1967), reworked in 1996 using "Poppy Nogood And The Phantom Band" by Terry Riley (1968) as soundtrack; It's Gonna Rain; by: Steve Reich (1965); Rainbow In Curved Air; by: Terry Riley (1967).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Undertow; by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Watcher Of The Skies; by: Genesis, Foxtrot (1972).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Starship Trooper; by: Yes, The Yes Album (1971).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Space Oddity; by: David Bowie, David Bowie/Space Oddity (1969).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Cosmic Debris; by: Frank Zappa, Apostrophe (') (1974).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Roger Dean, Yes Cover Art (1971-2011).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Obscured By Clouds; by: Pink Floyd, Obscured By Clouds (1972).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Islands (album); by: King Crimson (1971); Island; by: Renaissance, Renaissance (1969).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Firth Of Fifth; by: Genesis, Selling England By The Pound (1973).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Tales From Topographic Oceans (album), by: Yes (1973).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Sounds Of The Sea; by: Renaissance, Prologue (1972).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Take A Pebble; by: Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Emerson, Lake & Palmer (1970).

orders.<sup>20</sup> Maybe you want to watch the trees moving on Wuthering Heights<sup>21</sup> where you can talk to<sup>22</sup> or sleep on the wind<sup>23</sup>, or you venture down to the dancing water<sup>24</sup> and the seven stones<sup>25</sup>, haunted by a moonchild<sup>26</sup> and, later, by an angry sun.<sup>27</sup> But perhaps you prefer to dance on the slopes of the old volcano<sup>28</sup> where the vine<sup>29</sup> is growing and a flower...

A flower?<sup>30</sup> So be it<sup>31</sup>, but what about Oldfield? From a certain point of view<sup>32</sup>, one could even say that he was leading the movement. Ultimately nailing the common reverence for nature, he chose water as a leitmotiv and followed the symbol of pureness and origin from different perspectives through his whole body of work<sup>33</sup>, accompanied by various references to other classical elements (earth<sup>34</sup>, air<sup>35</sup>, ether/quintessence<sup>36</sup>).

Right, a perfect picture. Or – is it?<sup>37</sup> In fact, seen from a bird's-eye view, Prog's interest in nature was only rudimentarily represented by our immobile surroundings. At the end of the day, classical Prog's concept of nature boiled down to an unbridled ecstasy for the animal kingdom<sup>38</sup>. Within about one decade and just to name a few<sup>39</sup>, there are dogs<sup>40</sup>, cats<sup>41</sup>, ferrets<sup>42</sup>, foxes<sup>43</sup>, wolves<sup>44</sup>, mice<sup>45</sup>, rats<sup>46</sup>, worms<sup>47</sup>, lizards<sup>48</sup>, salamanders<sup>49</sup>, snakes<sup>50</sup>,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Can-Utility And The Coastliners; by: Genesis, Foxtrot (1972).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Wind & Wuthering (album cover), by: Genesis (1976).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. I Talk To The Wind; by: King Crimson, In the Court Of The Crimson King (1969).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A Pillow Of Winds; by: Pink Floyd, Meddle (1971).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Lady Of The Dancing Water; by: King Crimson, Lizard (1970).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Seven Stones; by: Genesis, Nursery Cryme (1971).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Moonchild; by: King Crimson, In The Court Of The Crimson King (1969).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Larks' Tongues In Aspic (album cover); by: King Crimson (1973).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Dance On A Volcano; by: Genesis, A Trick Of The Tail (1976).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. One For The Vine; by: Genesis, Wind & Wuthering (1976).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Supper's Ready; by: Genesis, Foxtrot (1972).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ian McDiarmid; in: Star Wars Episode VI: Return Of The Jedi (1983).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Alec Guinness; in: Star Wars Episode VI: Return Of The Jedi (1983).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Tubular Bells (album cover, 1973); Incantations (album cover, 1978); QE2 [Ship] (1980); Crises (album cover, 1983); The Lake (Discovery, 1984); Islands (album cover, 1986); Tubular Bells II (album cover, 1992); The Songs Of Distant Earth (album cover, 1994); Voyager (album cover, 1996); Tubular Bells 2003 (album cover, 2003); Man On The Rocks (album cover, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Hergest Ridge (album, 1974); Airborne (album cover, 1980); Earth Moving (album, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Airborne (album, 1980); Five Miles Out (album cover, 1982); The Wind Chimes (Islands, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. The Songs Of Distant Earth (1994); Tres Lunas (2002); Music Of The Spheres (2007).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Girlfriend Is Better; by: Talking Heads, Stop Making Sense (1984).

<sup>38</sup> For the complex issue of animals and music see the comprehensive treatise by Martin Ullrich, Tiere und Musik; in: Roland Borgards (Hrsg): Tiere. Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch, Stuttgart 2016, S. 216 ff (in German).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. From A Deadbeat To An Old Greaser; by: Jethro Tull, Too Old To Rock 'n' Roll: Too Young To Die! (1976).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dog's Life; by: Gentle Giant, Octopus (1972); Dogs; by: Pink Floyd, Animals (1977).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Black Cat; by: Gentle Giant, Acquiring The Taste (1971); I've Lost My Cat; by: Van Der Graaf Generator, The Long Hello Vol. I (1974); Cat's Eye/Yellow Fever (Running); by: Van der Graaf Generator, The Quiet Zone/The Pleasuredome (1977); ...And The Mouse Police Never Sleeps; by: Jethro Tull, Heavy Horses (1978); Drama (album cover); by: Yes (1980); Cat Food; by: King Crimson, In The Wake Of Poseidon (1970); All In A Mouse's Night; by: Genesis, Wind & Wuthering (1976).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ferret & Featherbird; by: Van Der Graaf Generator, The Aerosol Grey Machine (1969).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Foxtrot (album cover), by: Genesis (1972); White Mountain; by: Genesis, Trespass (1970); ...And The Mouse Police Never Sleeps; by: Jethro Tull, Heavy Horses (1978).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. White Mountain; by: Genesis, Trespass (1970).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Lemmings (including Cog); by: Van Der Graaf Generator, Pawn Hearts (1971); One Brown Mouse; by: Jethro Tull, Heavy Horses (1978); All In A Mouse's Night; by: Genesis, Wind & Wuthering (1976).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. ...And The Mouse Police Never Sleeps; by: Jethro Tull, Heavy Horses (1978).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. The Trial; by: Pink Floyd, The Wall (1979); The Devil's Triangle (III. Garden of Worm); by: King Crimson, In The Wake Of Poseidon (1970).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Lizard Play; by: Van Der Graaf Generator, The Quiet Zone/The Pleasuredome (1977); Lizard (album); by: King Crimson (1970).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Salamander; by: Jethro Tull, Too Old To Rock 'n' Roll: Too Young To Die! (1976).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Relayer (album cover); by: Yes (1974); Point Of Know Return (album cover); by: Kansas (1977); The Lamia; by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974).

armadillos<sup>51</sup>, peacocks<sup>52</sup>, ostriches<sup>53</sup>, gulls<sup>54</sup>, larks<sup>55</sup>, vultures<sup>56</sup> and various other birds<sup>57</sup>, cows<sup>58</sup>, oxen<sup>59</sup>, horses<sup>60</sup>, camels<sup>61</sup>, moths<sup>62</sup>, spiders<sup>63</sup>, flies<sup>64</sup>, chameleons<sup>65</sup>, geese<sup>66</sup>, lambs<sup>67</sup>, pigs<sup>68</sup>, porcupines<sup>69</sup>, gorillas<sup>70</sup>, sea lions<sup>71</sup>, octopuses<sup>72</sup>, squids<sup>73</sup>, whales<sup>74</sup>, fish<sup>75</sup>, some ravens<sup>76</sup> and a lot of other sometimes small and sometimes furry specimen<sup>77</sup> – indeed, “all your animal deals”<sup>78</sup>, a tidal wave of *fauna*, “animals queuing at the gate”<sup>79</sup> quite literally, often highlighted by cover art and song and album titles and formally represented by Pink Floyd’s correspondent album.<sup>80</sup>

Now you may think: impressive, most impressive!<sup>81</sup>, but it seems that Oldfield wasn't really excited. It's quite intriguing to see how he obviously stayed completely unaffected by this aspect of the contemporary artistic mainstream. Even when his music left the framework of Prog in later years, almost no animals show up. How come? A closer look into Prog history might provide some answers.

Surprisingly, in the long run the animal paradigm turned out to be everything but bulletproof. When Prog resurfaced after its catnap in the late 70<sup>s</sup><sup>82</sup> it wasn't dead, but it smelled funny<sup>83</sup>, and the animals were almost gone. The combined efforts of the twenty or so leading NeoProg

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Tarkus (album cover); by: Emerson, Lake & Palmer (1971).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Bolero – The Peacock's Tale; by: King Crimson, Lizard (1970).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (album story); by: Genesis (1974).

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Islands; by: King Crimson, Islands (1971).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Larks' Tongues In Aspic (album); by: King Crimson (1973).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. The Vultures Fly High; by: Renaissance, Scheherazade And Other Stories (1975).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Yesshows (album cover); by: Yes (1980); Emerson, Lake & Palmer (album cover); by: Emerson, Lake & Palmer (1970); To Cry You A Song; by: Jethro Tull, Benefit (1970).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Atom Heart Mother (album cover); by: Pink Floyd (1970).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Severity Town; by: Grobschnitt, Rockpommel's Land (1977).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Heavy Horses (album); by: Jethro Tull (1978); Relayer (album cover); by: Yes (1974); Lucky Man; by: Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Emerson, Lake & Palmer (1970); Mad Man Moon; by: Genesis, A Trick Of The Tail (1976).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Camel (works, since 1973).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Moths; by: Jethro Tull, Heavy Horses (1978).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. A Passion Play, Part II; by: Jethro Tull, A Passion Play (1973).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Fly On A Windshield; by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Cirkus Including Entry Of The Chameleons; by: King Crimson, Lizard (1970).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Mother Goose; by: Jethro Tull, Aqualung (1971); (Music inspired by) The Snow Goose (album); by: Camel (1975).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (album); by: Genesis (1974); Cf. The Ancient: Giants Under The Sun; by: Yes, Tales From Topographic Oceans (1973).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Pigs (Three Different Ones); by: Pink Floyd, Animals (1977).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Back In N. Y. C.; by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Wot Gorilla?; by: Genesis, Wind & Wuthering (1976).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Sealion; by: Jethro Tull, War Child (1974).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Octopus (album); by: Gentle Giant (1972); Octopus; by: Van Der Graaf Generator, The Aerosol Grey Machine (1969).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Squid; by: Van Der Graaf Generator, The Aerosol Grey Machine (1969).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Don't Kill The Whale; by: Yes, Tormato (1978).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus); by: Yes, Fragile (1971).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. The Colony of Slippermen (The Arrival/A Visit to the Doktor/Raven); by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974); The Raven; by: The Alan Parsons Project, Tales Of Mystery And Imagination (1976).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. The Story Of The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles; by: Jethro Tull, A Passion Play (1973); Several Species Of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together In A Cave And Grooving With A Pict and Grantchester Meadows; by: Pink Floyd, Ummagumma (1969).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Thick As A Brick (album); by: Jethro Tull (1972).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. A Passion Play Part II; by: Jethro Tull, A Passion Play, 1973.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Animals (album); by: Pink Floyd (1977).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. David Prowse/James Earl Jones; in: Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back (1980).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Ian Anderson (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2015, from [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Be-Bop Tango (Of The Old Jazzmen's Church); by: Frank Zappa, Roxy & Elsewhere (1974).

bands over roughly thirty years resulted in the sparse population of a giraffe<sup>84</sup>, a chameleon<sup>85</sup>, a rat<sup>86</sup>, an elephant<sup>87</sup>, a fly<sup>88</sup>, a butterfly<sup>89</sup>, a bug<sup>90</sup>, a dragonfly<sup>91</sup>, a fox<sup>92</sup>, a squirrel<sup>93</sup>, some mice<sup>94</sup>, a lizard<sup>95</sup>, a scorpion<sup>96</sup>, a chameleon<sup>97</sup>, some birds<sup>98</sup>, some dogs<sup>99</sup>, a lion<sup>100</sup>, some snakes and serpents<sup>101</sup>, a salamander<sup>102</sup>, some deer<sup>103</sup>, and a dinosaur<sup>104</sup>; several bands of that genre dropped the paradigm completely.<sup>105</sup>

Well, no more songs from the wood?<sup>106</sup> Indeed, even when RetroProg started to reinterpret the classical era, there is no real revival for our creeping, walking, flying friends. While a considerable number of the twenty or so leading RetroProg bands showed absolutely no interest<sup>107</sup>, the rest took a period of about twenty-five years to come up with a lion<sup>108</sup>, some leopards<sup>109</sup>, a lizard<sup>110</sup>, some locusts<sup>111</sup>, a moth<sup>112</sup> and some other insects<sup>113</sup>, a dog<sup>114</sup>, some wolves<sup>115</sup>, some monkeys<sup>116</sup>, two separate gorillas<sup>117</sup>, a chicken<sup>118</sup>, a swan<sup>119</sup>, a hawk<sup>120</sup>, some crows<sup>121</sup>, some butterflies<sup>122</sup>, a bear<sup>123</sup>, a rabbit<sup>124</sup>, a cat<sup>125</sup>, a fish<sup>126</sup>, a catfish<sup>127</sup>, a rumble

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Giraffe Chariot; by: Jadis, Understand (2000).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. She Chameleon; by: Marillion, Fugazi (1984).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Rat Racing; by: Pallas, Live Our Lives (2000).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Elephants Never Grow Old; by: Pendragon, The Rest Of (1991).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Fly Man (album); by: Clepsydra (1993).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. The Butterfly Man; by: Arena, Immortal? (2000).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Bug Eye; by: Galahad, Following Ghost (1998).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. The Dragonfly From The Sun (album); by: Deyss (2000).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Foxing The Fox; by: Landmarq, Solitary Witness (1992).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. The Squirrel; by: Asgard, Arkana (1992).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Sugar Mice; by: Marillion, Clutching At Straws (1987); Mouse (album); by: Aragon (1995).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. The Lizard; by: Enchant, Break (1998).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. La Mort Du Scorpion; by: Nemo, Présages (2003).

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Kameleon; by: Abraxas, Abraxas (1996).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Sister Bluebird; by: Pendragon, The Window Of Life (1993/2006); Birds Of Paradise; by: Pendragon, As Good As Gold (1996); Eagles; by: Clepsydra, More Grains Of Sand (1994); Cuckoo; by: Chandelier, Facing Gravity (1992); Somewhere But Yesterday, 1. Owls; by: Citizen Cain, Somewhere But Yesterday (1994).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Chiens En Laisse; by: Nemo, Révolu\$ion (2011).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Songs From The Lion's Cage (album); by: Arena (1995).

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Sidewinder; by: Galahad, Empires Never Last (2007); Serpents In Camouflage (album); by: Citizen Cain (1992).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Salamander; by: Arena, Contagion (2003).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. And We'll Go Hunting Deer; by: Pendragon, Acoustically Challenged (2002).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Dinosaur; by: Pallas, The River Sessions 2 (2005).

<sup>105</sup> Cf. the works of IQ, Now, Collage, It Bites, Twelfth Night.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Songs From The Wood (album); by: Jethro Tull (1977).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. the works of Anekdoten, Wobbler, Ånglagård, IZZ, Cairo, Kaipa (II, after 2002), Transatlantic.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Enda The Lion; by: Glass Hammer, Perelandra (1995).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Leopards; by: Big Train, English Electric Part Two (2013).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. The Lizard King; by: Magenta, The Twenty Seven Club (2013).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Man & The Locust, Parts 1 And 2; by: Discipline, Chaos Out Of Order (1988); Locust To Bethlehem; by: echolyn, echolyn (2012).

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Moth Of Many Flames; by: Spock's Beard, Feel Euphoria (Special Edition) (2003).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Hyönteisiä Voi Rakastaa (album); by: Höyry-Kone (1995).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Astral Dog; by: The Flower Kings, Flower Power (1999).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. The Wolf Gave Chase; by: Glass Hammer, Perilous (2012); Ulv I Fårakläder; by: Sinkadus, Cirkus (1999).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Monkey Business; by: The Flower Kings, Unfold The Future (2002); Lazy Monkey; by: The Flower Kings, Desolation Rose (Media Book LTD Edition, 2013); Powder Monkey; by: Big Train, Gathering Speed (2004).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Nick 'n Neal Live In Europe. Two Separate Gorillas (album); by: Spock's Beard (2000).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Chicken Farmer Song; by: The Flower Kings, Space Revolver (2000).

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Swan Hunter; by: Big Big Train, English Electric Part Two (2013).

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Hawks Circle The Mountains; by: White Willow, Terminal Twilight (2011).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. The Iron Crows (from Claude Debussy's La Mer); by: The Tangent, L'Etagère Du Travail (2013).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Curator Of Butterflies; by: Big Big Train, English Electric Part Two (2013).

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Karhunkaato; by: Höyry-Kone, Huoni Parturi (1997).

<sup>124</sup> Cf. The Velveteen Rabbit; by: echolyn, echolyn (1991).

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Felix The Cat; by: Glass Hammer, Perelandra (1995).

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Kala; by: Höyry-Kone, Huoni Parturi (1997).

<sup>127</sup> Cf. The Light – VII. The Return Of The Horrible Catfish Man; by: Spock's Beard, The Light (1995).

fish<sup>128</sup>, some horses<sup>129</sup>, a mammoth<sup>130</sup>, some snakes<sup>131</sup>, some spiders<sup>132</sup>, a chameleon<sup>133</sup>, a porcupine<sup>134</sup>, a sloth<sup>135</sup>, and a bat.<sup>136</sup>

Okay, last exit ProgMetal? But about a third of the roughly twenty more important bands in that area skipped it completely<sup>137</sup>, and over the span of around thirty years a serpent<sup>138</sup>, a mosquito<sup>139</sup>, a firefly<sup>140</sup>, a cuckoo<sup>141</sup>, an eagle<sup>142</sup>, a locust<sup>143</sup>, another anonymous insect<sup>144</sup>, a humming bird<sup>145</sup>, some dogs (young and old)<sup>146</sup>, a cat<sup>147</sup>, a moth<sup>148</sup>, a butterfly<sup>149</sup>, some condors<sup>150</sup>, a serious conflict between birds and snakes<sup>151</sup>, a gorilla with a pitchfork<sup>152</sup>, a rat<sup>153</sup>, a chameleon<sup>154</sup>, a swan<sup>155</sup>, and even a mastodon and its friends<sup>156</sup> can't really save the day. As a defining parameter, animals are gone from Prog today. You might say: Now their reign has come to an end.<sup>157</sup> What could be the reasons for this distinct change?

Early in search of a unique artistic concept amidst the creative melting pot of the Canterbury Scene, Oldfield must have noticed that the use of the animal paradigm there was very special: In quantitative terms, it was relatively moderate; some of the fifteen or so leading bands simply didn't use it<sup>158</sup>, the rest referred to a butterfly<sup>159</sup>, a toad<sup>160</sup>, to owl & bear<sup>161</sup>, some

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. Rumble Fish Twist; by: The Flower Kings, Space Revolver (2000).

<sup>129</sup> Cf. No More White Horses; by: Landberk, Lonely Land (1992).

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Mammoth (album); by: Beardfish (2011).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Temple Of The Snakes; by: The Flower Kings, Back In The World Of Adventures (1995).

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Spiders In Undergrowth; by: Citizen Cain, Skies Darken (2012).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Chameleon (album); by: Magenta (2011).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Porcupine Rain; by: Mostly Autumn, For All We Shared (1998).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Sloth; by: Magenta, Seven (2004).

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Bat Out Of Basildon; by: The Tangent, Not As Good As The Book (2008).

<sup>137</sup> Cf. the works of Anacrusis, Pagan's Mind, Shadow Gallery, Threshold, Tool, Watchtower.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. The Serpent's Kiss; by: Symphony X, Paradise Lost (2007).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Mosquito (Album); by: Psychotic Waltz (1994).

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Firefly; by: Fates Warning, Darkness In A Different Light (2013).

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Cuckoo's Nest; by: Queensrÿche, Hear In The Now Frontier (1997).

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Cosmic Fusion, 3. The Passing Of An Eagle; by: Ayreon, Into The Electric Castle (1998).

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Locust; by: Psychotic Waltz, Bleeding (1996).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Insect; by: Voivod, Negatron (1995).

<sup>145</sup> Cf. El Colibri; by: Mekong Delta, The Principle Of Doubt (1989).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Puppies On Acid; by: Dream Theater, Once In A LIVEtime (1998); Sleeping Dogs; by: Psychotic Waltz, A Social Grace (1990); The Baying Of The Hounds; by: Opeth, Ghost Reveries (2005); Dognition; by: Voivod, Katorz (2006).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Temple Of The Cat; by: Ayreon, Ayreonauts Only (2000).

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Flame To The Moth; by: Pain Of Salvation, Scarsick (2007).

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Butterfly; by: Psychotic Waltz, Into The Everflow (1992).

<sup>150</sup> Cf. The Lonely Views Of Condors; by: Sieges Even, The Art Of Navigation By The Stars (2005).

<sup>151</sup> Cf. The Bird-Serpent War/Cataclysm; by: Symphony X, V (The New Mythology Suite) (2000).

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Gorilla With A Pitchfork; by: Magellan, Impossible Figures (2003).

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Angel Rat (album); by: Voivod (1991).

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Chameleon Carneval; by: Andromeda, Extension Of The Wish – Definitive Extension (2001).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Swan Song; by: Ayreon, The Final Experiment (1995).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. The ProgMetal-related works of Mastodon: The March Of The Fire Ants/Workhorse/Elephant Man (Remission, 2002); Megalodon (Leviathan, 2004); The Wolf Is Loose (Blood Mountain, 2006).

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Watcher Of The Skies; by: Genesis, Foxtrot (1972).

<sup>158</sup> Cf. the works of Wilde Flowers, Egg, Quiet Sun, Delivery, Khan, Gilgamesh.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Butterfly Dance; by: Kevin Ayers, Singing The Bruise – The BBC Sessions 1970-1972 (1996).

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Toad Of Toad Hall; by: National Health, D.S. al Coda (1982).

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Hibou, Anemone And Bear; by: Soft Machine, Volume 2 (1969).

pigs<sup>162</sup>, some snakes<sup>163</sup>, some crabs<sup>164</sup>, some amphibians<sup>165</sup>, a gibbon<sup>166</sup>, some dogs<sup>167</sup>, an oyster and a flying fish<sup>168</sup>, some tropical fish<sup>169</sup>, a centipede<sup>170</sup>, a lobster<sup>171</sup>, a nameless animal<sup>172</sup>, a mole and its friends<sup>173</sup>, some mice<sup>174</sup>, some elephants<sup>175</sup>, a bull<sup>176</sup>, and a cow.<sup>177</sup> Regarding quality however it is significant that – beside the common and jazzy way of using the animal paradigm for pure nonsense and onomatopoeia – the musical gold standard of the Canterbury scene was an unmistakably political statement, and it was devised and performed by a cow with a human first name. Yes, Oldfield was right there when his six-string colleague Fred Frith and the other brilliant musicians of Henry Cow laid down the foundations for a critical anti-mainstream attitude and 'Rock in Opposition'. Oldfield must have realized that – at least in retrospect – this phenomenon would function as a defining moment for Prog's true face regarding the animal paradigm. In a creative rage against the machine<sup>178</sup>, Henry Cow turned the friendly productive livestock in a mouthpiece for a massive attack<sup>179</sup> on the conservative establishment, revealing the animal as a genuine political mask or metaphor and establishing the harmless ruminant and Fritz the Cat<sup>180</sup> as brothers in arms.

The circle is now complete.<sup>181</sup> For large parts of the Prog movement in the 1970<sup>s</sup>, animals represented a kind of missing link or metaphorical compromise between the socio-political topics of its albums and the dominance of nature as a reference framework.<sup>182</sup> Strange as it might be, the worm as judge in classical Prog's last hooray<sup>183</sup> could be seen as the rear guard of a giant flock led by the Canterbury cow. With the beginning of the 1980<sup>s</sup> and the paling of nature as the commanding paradigm, NeoProg and all the following sub-genres of Prog were

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Pig; by: Soft Machine, Volume 2 (1969); Love To Love You (And Tonight Pigs Will Fly); by: Caravan, In The Land Of Grey And Pink (1971).

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Land Of The Bag Snake; by: Soft Machine, Bundles (1975); Ballad Of Mr. Snake; by: Kevin Ayers, Too Old To Die Young (1998/1972, 1975, 1976); Snakehips' Dream; by: Nucleus, Solar Plexus (1971).

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Gigantic Land Crabs In Earth Takeover Bid; by: Hatfield And The North, Hatfield And The North (1973).

<sup>165</sup> Cf. The Bryden 2-Step (For Amphibians), Pt 1 & 2; by: National Health, Of Queues And Cures (1978).

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Stanley Stamp's Gibbon Album; by: Soft Machine, BBC Radio 1971-1974 (2003).

<sup>167</sup> Cf. The Dog, The Dog, He's At It Again; by: Caravan, For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night (1973); Beware Of The Dog; by: Kevin Ayers, Bananamour (1973); Blind Dog At St. Dunstons (album); by: Caravan (1976); Son Of Platesmashing Dog; by: Hatfield And The North, Hatwise Choice (2005/1974).

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Oyster And The Flying Fish; by: Kevin Ayers, Singing The Bruise – The BBC Sessions 1970-1972 (1996).

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Tropical Fish/Selene; by: Gong, Camenbert Electrique (1971).

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Centipede (works, 1970-1975).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Lobster in Cleavage Probe; by: Hatfield And The North, Hatfield And The North (1973).

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Dynamite/I Am Your Animal; By: Gong, Camenbert Electrique (1971).

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Matching Mole: Instant Kitten/Immediate Kitten/Horse (Matching Mole, 1972/Reissue 2012).

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Nirvana For Mice; by: Henry Cow, Legend (1973).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Elephants, by: National Health, National Health (1977).

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Bull-Dance; by: Nucleus, Labyrinth (1973).

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Henry Cow (works, 1973-1978).

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Rage Against The Machine (works, since 1991).

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Massive Attack (works, since 1987).

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Fritz the Cat; by Robert Crumb, since 1959.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. David Prowse/James Earl Jones; in: Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope (1977). – Note: In their Proto-Prog race, The Beach Boys and The Beatles already hailed the animal, from a seemingly innocent title of a mind-blowing album (Pet Sounds; by: The Beach Boys, 1966) to aggressive wildlife in odd time signatures (Good Morning Good Morning; by: The Beatles, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, 1967). The Beach Boy's planned follow up to *Pet Sounds* with the title *Smile* was published only in 2004, in a condensed version. Ironically, it includes an energetic remnant of a concept dealing with the four (basic) elements called *Mrs. O'Leary's Cow*, referring to said animal as a firestarter.

<sup>182</sup> It remains to be demonstrated if, how and to what extent the "first wave" of the Anglo-American animal rights discussion in the 1970<sup>s</sup> is openly or subconsciously mirrored or promoted in this result. If we presume this connection, it would mean to state an approach that reaches out beyond the animal in a generic sense towards the individual being as a bearer of rights. It might be worth inquiring: The movie genre transported the "nature strikes back" paradigm in a spectacular orchestration, from *Them!*, 1954, via (e.g.) *Frogs*, 1972, and *Jaws*, 1975, to *Wolven*, 1981, and in classical British Prog we find the story of a violated nature told e.g. in *Attack Of The Giant Hogweed* by Genesis (Nursery Cryme, 1971) and *Don't Kill The Whale* by Yes (Tormato, 1978).

<sup>183</sup> Cf. The Trial; by: Pink Floyd, The Wall (1979).

no longer artistically obliged or even inclined to discuss the epic issue of society's inner machinations with a detour via tank-like armadillos<sup>184</sup>, Orwell's animal farm<sup>185</sup>, or the manual of human behaviour that Simon & Garfunkel had offered so clear-sightedly<sup>186</sup> even before the rise of Prog. Today, washed over by the changing times, open-minded musicians and composers are free to deliberately re-use this aspect of the 1970<sup>s</sup> in a maybe slightly ironic fashion, perfectly represented by Neo-Psychedelia group 'Animal Collective' in 2000 and Tosin Abasi's ProgMetal project 'Animals as Leaders' in 2009.

Back in 1973 this, truly, wasn't Oldfield's way. Looking for a place in space and time where his music could unfold without the weight of distinct expectations, preconceptions and a thunderstorm of associations, he steered clear of 'Rock in Opposition' and the gang wars<sup>187</sup>, neon wheels<sup>188</sup>, housing speculation<sup>189</sup>, religious disputes<sup>190</sup> and general warfare<sup>191</sup> of 21<sup>st</sup> century's urban schizoid man.<sup>192</sup> His music was designed to breathe stability, tranquillity, and peace of mind, and it seems that, at least on earth, the three-dimensional equivalent was the (English) countryside. Physically being there and conceptually inhaling the spirit, soon a certain rural vibe swept through all the layers of his work: the tunes, the musical texture, the orchestration, the phrasing. Personally, known to have a fondness for the canine species<sup>193</sup>, Oldfield may also have enjoyed the side-effects of the new-found stability. Simple as it was: Stick to men's truest companions (dog & horse<sup>194</sup>) or to the representatives of a new age of harmony and peace (butterfly<sup>195</sup>, dolphin<sup>196</sup>, ray<sup>197</sup>), and the animal paradigm would re-enter your artistic concept without endangering the mission.<sup>198</sup> In the end, Oldfield created this unparalleled body of work throughout the 1970<sup>s</sup>, leaving us amazed and at the same time mulling over the crucial question: How to create a complex and progressive and at the same time abstract and completely self-sufficient music without walking into the rural or urban image trap?<sup>199</sup>

Is it possible to learn this power?<sup>200</sup> Seen thru' these architects eyes<sup>201</sup>, some answers have

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<sup>184</sup> Cf. Tarkus (album cover); by: Emerson, Lake & Palmer (1971).

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Animals (album); by: Pink Floyd (1977).

<sup>186</sup> Cf. At The Zoo; by: Simon & Garfunkel, Bookends (1968).

<sup>187</sup> Cf. The Battle Of Epping Forest; by: Genesis, Selling England By The Pound (1973); Back In N.Y.C.; by: Genesis, The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974).

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Pictures Of A City (Including 42<sup>nd</sup> At Treadmill); by: King Crimson, In The Wake Of Poseidon (1970).

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Get 'em Out By Friday; by: Genesis, Foxtrot (1972).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. My God; by: Jethro Tull, Aqualung (1971).

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Gates Of Delirium; by: Yes; Relayer (1974).

<sup>192</sup> Cf. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schizoid Man; by: King Crimson, In The Court Of The Crimson King (1969).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Ruthie-Ruthie; by: Frank Zappa, You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 1 (1988).

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Hergest Ridge (album cover, 1974); On Horseback (Ommadawn, 1975).

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Platinum (album cover, 1979).

<sup>196</sup> Cf. The Millennium Bell (album cover, 1999).

<sup>197</sup> Cf. The Songs Of Distant Earth (album cover, 1994).

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Mark Hamill; in: Star Wars Episode VI: Return Of The Jedi (1983).

<sup>199</sup> Make no mistake: A perfect answer to this question would be a slap in the face of one of the dialectic driving forces behind the post-Beatles flow of innovation in pop/rock. In his brilliant book "Yeah Yeah Yeah. The Story of modern Pop" (London 2013/2014), Bob Stanley points at the cultural move from urban to rural in the late 1960<sup>s</sup>, then reflected in the emergence of British Folk Rock. Stanley uses the album cover of Led Zeppelin IV (1971; picture of a farmer on an urban house wall) to illustrate the proximity of folk and pop-culture and describes the following merger of folk rock and pop. Defining modern pop not with regards to content but as an endeavor to sell and communicate, for Stanley pop (in this definition including even Prog) is "essentially urban" (p. 111; see also p. 295 et sqq.).

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Hayden Christensen; in: Star Wars Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith (2005).

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Thru' These Architects Eyes; by: David Bowie, 1. Outside (1995).



been sketched since then, but I guess none of them were really perfect. It is true that the funk's all ready for whoever want some<sup>202</sup>, but a fusion of funk and other groove-based styles like Jazz, Techno Funk, HipHop or R&B with the conceptual openness, complexity, virtuosity and mainly analogue vibe of Prog is, at least to my ears, indelibly stamped with an urban feeling or image. Even when the music is completely or mostly instrumental, the far-reaching historical and socio-political backgrounds of these genres and the often-excessive use of electronics mark the city as the place to fight it out. Listen to the high-end freestyle masterpieces of Innerzone Orchestra<sup>203</sup>, Cinematic Orchestra<sup>204</sup>, or Kammerflimmer Kollektief<sup>205</sup> and see if you want to follow me.

Post-Rock again came up with quite a huge variety of bands and answers how to focus on the music. Directly picking up Oldfield's loose ends, they all bowed to the master in their own special way<sup>206</sup>, but if you look at some of their most outstanding achievements, no real solution emerges: While Godspeed You! Black Emperor<sup>207</sup> charged their ultra-slowly changing clusters of notes with layers of political statements via spoken word or cover art, others even more or less explicitly tipped their hats to Oldfield's vision of a serene rural life, offering changing seasons, dew and horses in advanced folk style and Farfisa excitement (Gastr del Sol<sup>208</sup>), vocalise, ethereal comfort, Iceland Folk, and gusher sound samples (Sigur Rós<sup>209</sup>), or waterfalls, everglades, hillsides, and immediate musical quotes (Tortoise<sup>210</sup>)...

Well, all of this is open to debate, but in any case, I am deadly serious about us havin' fun<sup>211</sup>: Already more than twenty years into this Age of Adz<sup>212</sup> with a head full of ideas that are drivin' me insane<sup>213</sup>, almost everything seems artistically dispensable – except an animal to carry the music on its thorny back! And so, if you're resting in the shade of a HOWARD JOHNSON's<sup>214</sup> with a few more Margaritas and the right company<sup>215</sup>, I guess you might enjoy some of these little Post-Prog tunes provided by our ferocious looking fish. But I know you're probably in a hurry to go get something to eat<sup>216</sup>, so after more or less stating the obvious we're basically left with a kind of tomb raider situation, you know? It's just unfinished business<sup>217</sup>...

*The Weever Sands, 2016/2019*

*All tracks and more information at [www.The-Weever-Sands.com](http://www.The-Weever-Sands.com)*

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. Without A Doubt; by: The Roots, Things Fall Apart (1998).

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Programmed (1999).

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Motion (1999).

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Mäander (1999)/Incommunicado (2000).

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Your Own Special Way; by: Genesis, Wind & Wuthering (1977).

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Lift Yr. Skinny Fists Like Antennas To Heaven (2000).

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Camoufleur (1998).

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Ágætis byrjun (1999).

<sup>210</sup> Cf. TNT (1998); compare the beginning of 'Ten-Day Interval' with the beginning of 'The Lake' by Mike Oldfield, Discovery (1984).

<sup>211</sup> Cf. People In Tha Middle; by: Spearhead, Home (1994).

<sup>212</sup> Cf. The Age Of Adz (album); by: Sufjan Stevens (2010).

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Maggie's Farm; by Bob Dylan, Bringing It All Back Home (1965).

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Severity Town; by: Grobschnitt, Rockpommel's Land (1977).

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Once Upon A Time; by: Frank Zappa, You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 1 (1988).

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Don't Eat The Yellow Snow; by: Frank Zappa, You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vol. 1 (1988).

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Tomb Raider, Unfinished Business, Eidos Interactive (1998, PC/Mac). See our own shy attempt to answer the open question at [www.The-Weever-Sands.com/About/Q&A/Answer - An uphill battle](http://www.The-Weever-Sands.com/About/Q&A/Answer-An-uphill-battle).