BOOK REVIEW: BEYOND AND BEFORE: THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF YES
BY PETER BANKS

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Hammond’s myopic vision, his unrelenting determination, and his deep personal sorrows, but to his friends and supporters Hammond was a trying project. Perhaps, as Prial suggests, Hammond’s relationship to the Vanderbilts did him more good in his early years in music than his social skills. There are questions unanswered and undeveloped in this biography related to Hammond the man, such as his falling out with Aretha Franklin or his quick parting with Dylan.

Each chapter of this book comes (another assault on your pocketbook) with a wonderful “discography” that should slow down the pace of reading but will contribute to a great start in building a library of American music of the 20th century. It is quite something how much music Hammond had a role in, and this portion of the book is an important reminder of the times and genres Hammond touched.

As with all biographies there are problems and limitations. For those of us raised in the second half of the century, The Producer fails to deliver the same magic surrounding the discovery and signing of “our” heroes as it does around the early stars. There is not the dynamic between the performers and the broader American culture that there is related to Hammond’s insistence in the 1930s and ’40s that music be integrated. The Stevie Ray Vaughn segment is very thin, although it illustrates that even close to the end Hammond “still had it.”

Another reviewer accused Prial of being repetitive at times, which can be true. However, it is not a huge obstacle to enjoying the book, and, really, enjoyment is at least part of the point of popular biography. Another surely must be the discovery of unlikely “heroes,” such as a brush-cut New Yorker with a bundle of newspapers and an ever-present smile who may have had more of a role in the development of modern music than many luminaries. Readers will want more of their favorites, but embrace the book, as you will embrace John Hammond, flaws and all. Rediscover Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and Springsteen as “The Boss” here, and you will rediscover America in the 20th century.

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Red Deer College AB
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Beyond and Before: The Formative Years of Yes
PETER BANKS and BILLY JAMES
Golden Treasures, Bentonville, AR, 2003
221 pp.

Although many fans think that progressive rock giants Yes started with Steve Howe on guitar, Peter Banks was actually Yes’s first guitarist. No other period in the band’s history is more shrouded in mystery or controversy than the Banks era (1968–70). Of
the three official Yes guitarists, Peter Banks, Steve Howe, and Trevor Rabin, much less is known about Peter Banks than either of the others. Thankfully, that is remedied in Beyond and Before: The Formative Years of Yes, written by Banks with the help of Billy James. James, no stranger to the world of rock, has written definitive biographies of Grand Funk Railroad, the early Alice Cooper Group, the Mothers of Invention, and Captain Beefheart. James interviewed Banks for more than 200 hours to produce this book. Occasionally choppy and repetitive, the book reads like a long interview. Overall, however, it does provide a glimpse into the early years of Yes.

The tale begins in the swinging '60s in London with Banks’s first bands: the Devil’s Disciples, Syndicates, the Syn, and Mabel Greer’s Toyshop, which included bassist Chris Squire, the only musician who has appeared on every Yes album. The Syn made a name for itself with long, complex tracks like “14 Hour Technicolor Dream” and its rock opera, Flowerman, which predated the Who’s Tommy. Banks and Squire got together with former Warriors singer Jon Anderson, jazz drummer Bill Bruford, and Hammond player Tony Kaye, to form Yes’s first incarnation. Banks is credited with naming Yes. No other word has the positive connotation of yes, and in the “groovin’” world of the late 1960s, it seemed a natural.

In the book, Banks describes Yes’s early years of touring and the recording of its first two albums, Yes and Time and a Word. One interesting factoid is that Yes was greatly influenced by the Grateful Dead’s second album, Anthem of the Sun, especially the track “That’s It for the Other One.” Other influences on early Yes include Simon and Garfunkel, Leonard Bernstein, John McLaughlin, Crosby, Stills and Nash, and the Beatles—Yes covered Lennon and McCartney’s “Every Little Thing” on their first album.

Banks goes into detail about Yes’s early tours, including its historical performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London, where they opened for Cream’s last concert, and their opening at the same venue for Janis Joplin’s only London concert. Some of the most interesting parts of this book are Banks’s critiques and analyses of the first two Yes albums and their recording experiences. He provides a song-by-song look at each album, a description of their recording, and personal commentary about the music. Banks was fired from Yes shortly after the recording of Time and a Word, and Steve Howe entered Yes’s guitarfold. When Time was released in the US, the cover, different from the UK cover, included not Banks but Howe, who did not play on the album.

The second half of the book recalls Banks’s life after Yes and his subsequent attempts to form groups and play music. Shortly after leaving Yes, he became the guitar replacement for Mick Abrahams in Blodwyn Pig, but this pairing did not last long. For a short time, he lived with King Crimson’s guitarist, Robert Fripp, which makes for interesting reading. Banks’s next group, Flash, was formed with singer Colin Carter. Flash made three albums, two of which are excellent. Eventually, however, the rigors of the road and dealing with record companies and fickle band members took their toll, and Flash broke up. As he did with the Yes albums, Banks provides a commentary on the three Flash albums and their tours. His critically praised solo album, Two Sides of Peter Banks (1973), was also released during this period.
During the middle to late 1970s, Banks formed several versions of a group called Empire, and he moved to Los Angeles. There were three distinct versions of Empire, none of which ever really took off. Changing musical tastes, including disco and punk rock, and difficult band members caused Empire to lose steam before it had really begun. Banks describes various studio sessions with Roger Ruskin Spear, Pete Townshend (on his bizarre and rare tribute to Indian guru Meher Baba), Lonnie Donegan, and Lionel Ritchie (on his smash single “Hello”). Banks was basically inactive during the 1980s, although there were a few musical moments with a band called the Teabags. Then, in the 1990s, he recorded a number of acclaimed solo albums, including *Instinct*, *Self Contained*, and *Reduction*.

Throughout the book, one gets the distinct impression that Banks has a mouthful of sour grapes and a very dull axe to grind, but he does have much to complain about. For a long time, Yes barely acknowledged their Banks era. After many legal actions, Banks finally was awarded the right to claim himself as an “ex-member” of Yes. One of the most painful events in Banks’s rocky career took place during Yes’s “Union” tour in 1992, which combined various versions of Yes. It included two guitarists, Rabin and Howe; two keyboardists, Rick Wakeman and Tony Kaye; two percussionists, Alan White and Bill Bruford; bassist Christ Squire; and singer Jon Anderson. Banks was invited to play during the encore at the Los Angeles Forum. However, Steve Howe apparently was too insecure or jealous to have three guitarists at the gig, and he did not permit Banks to appear. As a result, Banks was left waiting at the backstage bar. While the *Union* album was not very good, both fans and critics acclaimed the tour, which was indeed fantastic.

Banks’s sour-grapes attitude is not just the result of imagined happenings. More than anything, *Beyond and Before* is a cautionary tale. Despite performing on Yes albums and compilations and making a number of solo albums, Banks has not received royalty payments for much of his work. He advises anyone considering a musical or artistic career to be careful and to work out royalty rates before any work is released. Certainly, anyone interested in a musical or artistic career should read *Beyond and Before*.

In spite of his many career setbacks and his bitterness, Banks continues to work. Since the slight at the Los Angeles Forum, he has started appearing at Yes fan conventions to the delight of many. He has compiled some live BBC material on *Something’s Coming BBC Recordings*, which has been released under various titles, including *Astral Traveler*, *Beyond and Before*, and *Dear Father*. For those interested in pre-Yes material, Banks has compiled the import CD *Can I Play You Something*, which includes the Devil’s Disciples, the Syn, and Mabel Greer’s Toyshop, who perform what later became Yes music. Banks also discusses the possibility of the original five band members reuniting for a couple of gigs. One can only wish!

Rhino Records has recently released in re-mastered form both of Yes’s first two albums with bonus tracks. For those unfamiliar with Yes’s early music, these albums provide a unique glimpse into the history of this great band. What makes the albums so distinctive is that they show a Yes that is musically hungry, with an energy and focus
that is not apparent on later releases, with the possible exception of 90125. There have also been reissues of the Syn material, *Original Syn* and *Original Syn 1965–2004*, under Chris Squire’s supervision. Apparently, Banks may be asked to join the Syn reunion.

*Beyond and Before* contains photos from all periods of Bank’s life (including his recent marriage), a detailed discography, websites of interest, and a detailed gig list for Yes and Flash. The book will be of interest to music historians and anyone interested in rock music, even those who are not Yes fans.

ROBERT G. WEINER
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**European Film Music**

*Miguel Mera and David Burnand* (Eds)
Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2006
206 pp.

The history of film music scholarship is riddled with neglect. While a number of correctives have been offered, most pertain to US cinema and few offer analyses of scores or songs that fall outside the classical Hollywood model. *European Film Music*, a recent addition to Ashgate’s *Popular and Folk Music Series*, makes inroads toward bridging that gap even as it opens the door to a greater disciplinary divide. The Ashgate series places film music under a different heading, grouping it not just with the popular, but also with folk music. This move reflects a larger cultural shift, one called a “new urgency” by the series’s general editor, Derek B. Scott, which turns to popular musicology to counter an evolutionary conception of music history. Scott’s exigency is echoed by film studies’ current attention to sound, which aims to re-evaluate both the story of the cinema and the reading of particular films. Standing on the intersection between these two fields, *European Film Music* constructs a conversation of sorts between 13 scholars, largely but not solely from film studies and musicology. The collection approaches the subject from a range of methodologies that allows the articles to inflect one another and even to provide implicit critique. Nevertheless, the text remains plagued by two problems: the categorization of film music and the boundaries of the European film.

In their introduction editors Miguel Mera and David Burnand recognize the obstacles to identifying European cinema. Does a European film embrace particular national qualities or attempt to efface borders? Is it defined by the nationalities of those that produce it or by the concerns of the film itself? Can there be a notion of European cinema that is not grounded in its opposition to Hollywood? The editors briefly review the literature on these questions, yet, rather than come to a conclusion, they further complicate the situation by adding music to the mix. As an art form with its own historical trajectory, music speaks about Europe in different ways than does...