


WORDS & MUSIC 

Pat Kramer w/ Rick Wakeman

Rick Wakeman is known as the eminent keyboard player for Yes, as well as a prolific solo artist.

His classically based music prompted a whole new trend in progressive rock in the 1970's. Now on tour with his 19-year-old keyboard playing son, Adam, Wakeman has just finished recording *Classical Connection II*, (a follow-up to *Classical Connection*) an album not yet available in the United States. Still, Wakeman is excited about getting out and playing selections from his solo works in this all-instrumental tour. Although he enjoyed his reunion tours with Yes members Jon Anderson, Bill Bruford and Steve Howe two years ago, Wakeman will not be part of the next Yes album, nor of any Yes tours in the near future. In this interview, Rick Wakeman recounts time spent with Yes, what it's like touring with his teenage son, and describes his latest record *Classical Connections II*.

ET: How are you enjoying your tour so far?

Wakeman: It's great, it's been a lot of fun. We originally set out to do 20 shows in the U.K. and ended up doing 45. We then got booked for shows in Europe, Japan, South America and South Africa. The album's doing real well in all of those countries. The only place it's not out is the USA. But we had a meeting and decided to play in the U.S. anyway, to keep the band tight. We're the only band on the road promoting an album that's not out. We sort of do everything backwards.

ET: Well sooner or later you'll have the album out.

Wakeman: Ya, in the year 2000 it will probably appear.

ET: Since I can't hear it can you tell me about it?

Wakeman: It's an instrumental classical rock album which features my son and myself. It's hard to describe actually.

ET: Is your son a keyboard player as well?

Wakeman: Yes, he was in the studio recording his own album; he has a 2-year deal, and there was a gap in time between when he finished recording it and was set to promote. So I said to him jokingly, "Do you fancy coming out on tour with me?" And he said, "Sure, why not."

ET: Well, how is it going?

Wakeman: It's great. It's really funny looking over at him. I mean,

he's really an astonishing player. He looks so young. He's terrified. **ET:** How would you describe his talents, compared to what yours were at that age?

Wakeman: He's further ahead than I was, technically. But in my defense, there's a lot more musical equipment and possibilities at his disposal that weren't around

sort of joined in later in the process.

ET: Who else is in the band other than you and Adam?

Wakeman: My bass player is Alan Thompson. He's worked with Andy Summers and John Martin. My drummer is Tony Fernandez. He's been with me since 1975.

at a grand piano and I'm quite happy to play there too.

ET: You did the last Yes tour two-years ago. How did that feel?

Wakeman: It was great fun. I really enjoyed it. I set out to have a nice time. I sat down with my wife the night before I left and she said, "Do you think there will be lots of arguments and lots of outs?"

Yes?

Wakeman: Well, the guys who had it in California, Trevor Rabin, Tony Kaye, Alan White and Chris Squire, still have the name and they are, at the moment, recording an album with Anderson doing vocals. That's, basically, where it stands.

ET: So the lawsuit got dropped and that's all done?

Wakeman: Yes, that was all dropped. I mean, I just threw my hands up in the air when things like lawsuits started flying around. Yes had the possibility, if not the probability, of being the best band of it's kind, ever, in producing music. The problems, which have always been caused by management, I personally feel, have wrecked it. I think there's been a lot of damage done to Yes by people on the periphery.

ET: So, are you thinking of putting together another Yes album after your tour?

Wakeman: The guys will be doing another Yes album but unfortunately, there's a big political argument going on right now between Yes' management and my management, so it looks highly unlikely that I'll be playing on it.

ET: So you don't think there will be a future with you and Yes right now.

Wakeman: I take it as it comes. I don't look over my shoulder anymore. I look to see what's in front of me. If the management sorts out their difficulties and there's a place for me to play I'll be quite happy. If there isn't, then I'll be quite happy to do what I'm doing.

ET: Do members of the audience ever ask for Yes material?

Wakeman: No, I've never had anyone shout out for a Yes song in 23 years. It'll probably happen now, you realize. To me, there is no way you can do any Yes stuff unless you have Jon singing it.

ET: Well, even without a record out, you seem to be still in demand, with five shows booked in Southern California next week.

Wakeman: I know, it's been really good, actually. It surprises me at times but it's like, I'm either becoming part of the dreaded establishment or people are coming to see if I'm still alive.

Rick Wakeman is very much alive and will show why he is known to have the fastest fingers in the business in upcoming shows on this solo tour, at the Ventura Theater, June 26, and The Coach House, June 25 and 27. ■



"I think there's been a lot of damage to Yes by people on the periphery." (Wakeman)

when I was his age. Technically, he's stunning. He has this great advantage over me in that he has a great voice.

ET: Do you each play solos, or do you play together in this show?

Wakeman: We have two keyboard rigs set up on stage and we play together, all the time.

ET: When you wrote the music did you write him into it?

Wakeman: Some of it was already recorded because I was in the middle of the album when we decided that Adam was going to come out on tour. Then the record company said, "if Adam is going to come out on tour, we want him on the album as well," so Adam

ET: What songs do you do in the show?

Wakeman: It's entirely instrumental. Apart from the new stuff (*Classical Connection II*), we do older songs from *King Arthur* and the *Knights of the Round Table*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*.

ET: Are you comfortable as a solo artist now?

Wakeman: This sounds like a political answer but I'm comfortable with wherever I am at the time. If I'm working within a band, then I'm quite happy there. I do classical concerts where I sit down

And I said, "Probably, but I'm going to keep clear of it all because I want to have a really nice time." If I can have a really nice time, and help the band have a nice time, that's got to get over to the audience.

ET: You've always gotten along with the rest of the band, haven't you?

Wakeman: I've never had any problems actually. The major problem there sort of came in the early and mid '80s. I was in, sort of, a lucky position; there was no animosity between myself and any of the band members at all.

ET: Where does it stand now in terms of the usage of the name