#### **MARK SPICER**

Genesis's Foxtrot\*

One of the most ironic developments in *Billboard* chart history occurred in July 1986. when Genesis, basking in the success of having finally scored their first (and only) U.S. #1 hit with Invisible Touch were knocked out of the top spot just one week later by their former frontman Peter Gabriel, who, in turn, scored his first (and only) U.S. #1 with Sledgehammer. While I must admit to having a personal affection for their later records, I think it is safe to say that most fans would prefer to forget the slick, synthesizer-driven pop that characterized much of Genesis's output in the 1980s and 1990s, and instead look back fondly to the first half of the 1970s — the golden age of British progressive rock — when the group was famous for crafting epic rock pieces in which the multiple shifts of texture, affect, tonality and groove echo those typically found, say, in a large-scale symphonic work by Liszt or Holst. Like Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP), Gentle Giant, King Crimson, Jethro Tull, Soft Machine, Henry Cow, and their other compatriots in British progressive rock during this remarkable period, Genesis did not set out to create music that was immediately catchy or danceable (although one can certainly imagine dancing, however awkwardly, to many of their odd-metered grooves). Theirs was serious music intended for serious listeners. Indeed, as John Covach has put it, "there was the perception [among fans] that these musicians were attempting to shape a new kind of classical music — a body of music that would not disappear after a few weeks or months on the pop charts, but would instead be listened to (and perhaps even studied), like the music of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms, for years to come." (Covach, 1997: 4)

Figure 1 shows a chronology of Genesis albums released through October 1977, when guitarist Steve Hackett left the group and the three remaining members decided to continue as a trio. In this article, I will focus on their 1972 album *Foxtrot*, the second release from the "classic" Genesis lineup of Tony Banks on keyboards, Phil Collins on drums, Peter Gabriel on lead vocals, Steve Hackett on guitar, and Mike Rutherford on bass. The *Foxtrot* album, and the European tour supporting it, represented a key phase in the group's development, as Gabriel's penchant for mime and onstage theatrics — complete with elaborate changes of costume to portray some of the various characters as they appeared in the songs — began to give their concerts a distinctive style that set them apart from the other British progressive rock groups. Genesis had already attracted quite a cult following in the U.K., but in 1972 they quickly found themselves major stars on the continent, especially in Italy. Genesis biographer Armando Gallo has aptly diagnosed this phenomenon, noting that "[t]he Italians had never really identified with the twelve-bar syndrome of rock 'n' roll, and young fans and musicians who had grown up within Italy's strong classical and operatic traditions suddenly responded *en masse* to the English progressive scene." (Gallo, 1980: 40)

\* Portions of this article have been adapted from Spicer, 2000: 77-111.

Peter Gabriel's fondness for "dressing up in costumes [and] playing silly games" (about which he would later reminisce in his 1980 solo hit *Games Without Frontiers*) began famously at Genesis's Dublin concert on 28 September 1972, during the opening weeks of the *Foxtrot* tour, where, unbeknownst to his fellow band members, Gabriel appeared onstage wearing a red dress and a fox's head — thus mimicking the character depicted in Paul Whitehead's surrealistic cover painting for the *Foxtrot* album — to perform the finale of *The Musical Box*. (In her contribution to this collection, Laura Leante examines Gabriel's different onstage personae and use of mime in various live performances of this particular track.) Whitehead's trio of cover paintings for the *Trespass, Nursery Cryme*, and *Foxtrot* albums may be viewed at the artist's official website: paulwhitehead.com. Needless to say, the surrealistic images found on the album covers of many of the British progressive rock groups in the early 1970s contributed greatly to the overall reception of the genre, an important topic beyond the scope of the present article.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The first three Genesis albums failed to chart in their native Britain, but by January 1972 *Trespass* had reached #1 in Belgium, and by March, just prior to their first seven-date tour of Italy in April, *Nursery Cryme* had risen to #4 on the Italian charts. *Foxtrot* was Genesis's first U.K. hit album, reaching #12 in late 1972.

Figure 1: Chronology of Genesis albums through 1977 (U.K. releases)

Although their frontman's new-found flamboyance was undoubtedly a key factor in Genesis's sudden rise to stardom, Peter Gabriel — looking back on this period — has insisted that "whatever else was going on in the visual department, our central interest was always ... the writing, the composition of the music." Figure 2 shows the track listing for Foxtrot, along with the CD timings for each track. The lengths of the tracks are telling: with the exception of the brief acoustic guitar prelude *Horizons*, which opens Side 2, only the second track on Side 1, Time Table, even comes close to the four-minute mark. All of the tracks, moreover, are identified as having been composed jointly by the five band members, a practice that would continue through The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway, Gabriel's last recording with the group. From a compositional standpoint, Genesis's working method was not unlike that of many other rock groups then and now: while the initial musical ideas for sections of tracks might well have originated with an individual band member, the working out of these ideas into a finished piece was largely a result of group improvisation.4 I will offer a detailed analysis of the first and last tracks on Foxtrot, although, in the interest of teasing out those style features that are most important in defining Genesis's idiolect, I will also relate these tracks along the way to some other key pieces from the group's early period.

Figure 2: Track listing for *Foxtrot* 

Example 1a shows the beginning of Tony Banks's signature keyboard introduction to the album's opening track, *Watcher of the Skies*: a series of lush, hymn-like "string" chords performed on a Mellotron.<sup>5</sup> Following its mainstream debut in early 1967 as the instrument played by Paul McCartney to create the famous introductory "flute" passage for John Lennon's Beatles song *Strawberry Fields Forever*, the Mellotron soon became a staple within the arsenal of many progressive rock keyboardists. The Mellotron used a standard keyboard to engage selected banks of magnetic tapes, of actual sustaining orchestral instruments or voices, in between pinch rollers and an elongated capstan rod that pulled the tapes across heads. As each tape was only a few feet long, sounds could be sustained only for about ten seconds before a spring reset the tape with a snap. Mellotrons were notorious for malfunctioning on the road, as one might imagine, but, in the age before digital sampling, they were really the only practical way for the early-70s progressive groups to simulate the sound of a full choir or orchestra in their live performances.<sup>6</sup> Beginning with *Trespass*, Tony Banks exploited the instrument to its fullest capabilities throughout the early Genesis records, not only to create striking introductions (as in *Watcher*) but also to add orchestral weight at especially climactic moments in the songs (such as the finale to *Supper's Ready*, discussed below).

Let us focus now on the harmonic design of this Mellotron introduction. I will be dwelling on aspects of harmony in Genesis's music for a large portion of this article, since, perhaps more than any other single musical feature, I would argue that it is Tony Banks's eclectic harmonic palette, with its frequent chromatic twists and turns, that contributes most markedly to the distinctive "Genesis sound." Over a held pedal tone F-sharp in the left hand, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Transcribed from an interview in the 1990 BBC film *Genesis: A History* (available on video but not DVD). I highly recommend this film to the reader who wishes a more detailed account of the history of Genesis during their early period, including fascinating concert clips.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> When asked recently about how Genesis would typically compose their epic songs, Tony Banks confirmed that "a lot of things were sections we brought in, but as you develop them with the group you change them" (from a 23 November 2001 interview, available online at the official Genesis website: www.genesis-music.com).
<sup>5</sup> The initial inspiration for *Watcher of the Skies* came to Banks during the group's first Italian tour: "I wrote the lyrics … with Mike in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The initial inspiration for *Watcher of the Skies* came to Banks during the group's first Italian tour: "I wrote the lyrics ... with Mike in Naples. ... We were sitting out on top of this building, and it was a hot sunny day, and we were just looking out across a vast area of buildings and fields, and there wasn't a soul to be seen. It looked like the whole population had just deserted the planet, and that's what *Watcher of the Skies* is all about ... an alien being coming to the planet and seeing it completely deserted ..." (Gallo, 1980: 42)

<sup>1980: 42). &</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For a detailed description of the Mellotron and the myriad other keyboard instruments used in progressive rock, see Vail, 1993

opening right-hand progression oscillates three times between B major-seventh and C-sharp chords. This suggests an alternating IV7–V progression over a tonic pedal, and yet we are made to wait over two minutes, until the onset of the song's main groove, for the opening progression to resolve finally to its tonic; instead, the initial swerve away from this opening vamp is to a harmony that is completely unexpected — a B-flat major chord in second inversion (for ease of reading, I have chosen to spell the chord as B-flat major rather than its enharmonic equivalent, A-sharp major [III#], so as to avoid a complicated tangle of double sharps in the spellings of the subsequent chords). Though the effect of this harmonic move is quite abrupt and surprising, its voice leading is actually remarkably smooth: the bass slips down by semitone from F-sharp to F-natural, while, in the upper three parts, the middle voice is held as a common tone (E-sharp, enharmonically respelled as F-natural) as the remaining two voices ascend by step.

Two chords later, a doubly-chromatic mediant progression connects a B-flat minor to a G major triad, which initiates a brief chromaticized descending-fifths sequence leading via C major to an F-sharp major triad. By this point, of course, the introduction has drifted far from the tonic key of F-sharp major suggested by the opening vamp; accordingly, this F-sharp chord in context does not sound like a tonic arrival, but functions instead — however fleetingly — as the dominant chord of B minor. The subsequent progression moves through yet another series of chromatic chords, this time with the *uppermost* voice held on G-sharp as the lower voices snake up and down by step. I have labeled these chords above the staff according to their roots and quality, but since this progression again seems consciously to defy classical tonal syntax I have not attempted to make a functional harmonic analysis. As Kevin Holm-Hudson explains in a forthcoming article devoted to the subject, such "maximally-smooth" chromatic progressions were an integral feature of Banks's harmonic language, similar to that of many late-nineteenth century composers, and therefore made "Genesis's music notably more Romantic — in an authentic sense — than such contemporaries as Yes or Emerson. Lake & Palmer." I will have more to say about Banks's neo-Romantic harmonic language a little later, but, for now, let us move on to consider some other musical aspects of Watcher of the Skies.

Following several more unexpected chromatic twists and turns (not shown in the example), the Mellotron introduction finally settles back in to the opening two-chord vamp, at which point the other instruments — guitar, bass, and drums — are layered into the texture, building a gigantic crescendo into the beginning of the song proper. Example 1b shows a simplified transcription of the song's main groove. The term "groove" has long been used by pop and rock musicians to describe the repetitive rhythmic foundation upon which a song is built: for example, musicians speak of "locking in the groove" or "playing in the pocket" — which, of course, is a good thing, meaning that all the band members are somehow working in synch with one another. In an attempt to formalize the term for purposes of music analysis, I have elsewhere defined groove as "the tapestry of riffs — usually played by the drums, bass, rhythm guitar and/or keyboard in some combination — that work together to create the distinctive rhythmic/harmonic backdrop which identifies a song." (Spicer, 2004: 30) The main groove to *Watcher of the Skies* typifies a favorite, almost formulaic, type of texture to which

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See Holm-Hudson, 2008. Holm-Hudson asserts that Banks's affinity for such linear chromatic progressions reached its apex on the two Genesis albums immediately following Gabriel's departure, *A Trick of the Tail* and *Wind and Wuthering*, where several of the songs are credited solely to Banks rather than the group as a whole. He then goes on to analyze the voice-leading design in a number of chordal passages from these mid-period albums using so-called "neo-Riemannian" techniques, an important sub-discipline of music theory that has developed mainly in North America over the past decade or so. For a useful survey of neo-Riemannian concepts and progressions, see Roig-Francolí, 2002: 863-71. See also Capuzzo, 2004: 177–99.

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The sheer lengths of the tracks rendered the majority of British progressive rock unsuitable for release as singles. Nevertheless, Genesis — likely at the urging of their record label, and in the quest for a U.K. radio hit — did release an edited version of *Watcher of the Skies* as a single in February 1973 (Charisma 103; the single failed to chart in the U.K.). In order to cut the track down from over seven minutes to less than four, the single edit begins squarely at the onset of the main groove, thus omitting entirely the Mellotron introduction as well as the reprise of this music that serves as the song's extended instrumental coda. In his contribution to this collection, Dai Griffiths explains why he prefers his progressive rock in shorter doses, and so he would probably enjoy this edited version. However, I'm sure that many Genesis fans would agree with me that without the dramatic build-up of the introduction — arguably the song's most striking feature — the single version of *Watcher* comes across as something of a letdown.

Genesis would resort time and time again in their songs, what I will call a "pedal-point groove." In a pedal-point groove, the bass and drums work together to create a driving rhythmic ostinato — such as the one based on the Morse-code-like staccato riff in this example — where, from a harmonic standpoint, the bass remains static on the tonic as chords move above the bass at varying speeds (I have identified these chords in two ways, both with conventional lead-sheet labels and a functional Roman numeral analysis below the staff). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, pedal-point grooves such as this had become a well-worn cliché of progressive rock as they had of funk (think James Brown's Sex Machine), and were already making frequent appearances in more commercial styles such as stadium rock (think Van Halen's Jump) and synth-pop (think Frankie Goes to Hollywood's Relax). Yet despite the cliché, Genesis in my opinion remain the masters of the pedal-point groove. Two other representative examples — both, coincidentally, in the key of D — are shown in Example 2.

The first is the main groove to *Back in NYC*, the opening track on Side 2 of *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Example 2a). Like many of their compatriots in British progressive rock, Genesis were particularly fond of writing grooves in odd time signatures, and 7/8 was one of their favorite of these odd meters (one recalls, for example, the central keyboard solo in *The Cinema Show*, and the verse groove to *Dance on a Volcano*, among several other examples in 7/8 time). In *Back in NYC*, the bass thuds the tonic note like a heartbeat on the downbeat of every measure, while the synthesizer and guitar play a broken-chord riff in unison, changing the harmony every other measure. The second is the groove that serves as the second chorus for *Squonk* from *A Trick of the Tail* (Example 2b). Here, the bass plays a frantic riff in mostly sixteenth notes — similar to the bass riff in *Watcher of the Skies*, accenting the tonic note in both its upper and lower octave — while this time the chords above the tonic pedal move much more rapidly. These "chords" are best thought of as a melody thickened with doublings in other voices rather than a true chord progression *per se* (notice that all of the chordal doublings in the *Squonk* chorus create major triads and are therefore fraught with cross relations, a feature quite typical of the harmonic language of rock).

While notated examples are a convenient way for us to examine the constituent riffs and harmonic design of these pedal-point grooves, they do nothing towards explaining the effects on the listener as these grooves are performed in real time: grooves, after all, are not fixed objects — they are designed to be repeated, and they make the body want to *move*. Furthermore, I am guilty of leaving out entirely in my transcriptions one of the most important components of these grooves — namely, Phil Collins's drums. There are many examples I could cite to illustrate the distinctive style of Collins's drumming, but one more track from *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway, Riding the Scree*, will have to suffice (I refer the reader in particular to the 1975 live version of the *Lamb* available on the 1998 *Genesis Archive 1967–75* CD boxed set). This entire track — which features at its opening a blistering Tony Banks keyboard solo on his lead synthesizer of choice in the mid-70s, the Arp Pro-Soloist — is underpinned by a relentless pedal-point groove in 9/8 time, irregularly subdivided as 2 + 2 + 2 + 3. Against Mike Rutherford's incessant bass riff, it is Phil Collins's drums that propel the groove

<sup>10</sup> Beginning with *Nursery Cryme*, Mike Rutherford often used bass pedals in conjunction with his electric bass to add extra muscle to the tonic pedal at especially climactic moments; listen, for example, to the booming entrance of the bass pedals that Rutherford deliberately saves for the third and final verse of *Back in NYC* (at 4:18).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Admittedly, Genesis themselves would later simplify their pedal-point grooves on their more commercially-accessible records during the 1980s and 1990s, often resorting to the well-worn stadium rock formula of repeated tonic eighth notes in the bass, as evinced by such radio-friendly singles as *Turn it on Again* (1980), *Abacab* (1981), and *No Son of Mine* (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Reginging with Aluxony Course, Miles Butherford often used because the second of the s

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> To date, probably the most illuminating study of grooves in pop and rock music is Hughes, 2003. Hughes distinguishes between two main types of groove: exotelic, "designed to create a sense of completeness at [its] end and then simply use repetition to generate a wave-like pulsation from completeness to incompleteness and back"; and autotelic (or "self-generating"), "designed to lead the listener to expect its beginning will follow its ending" (15). If we examine the main groove to Watcher of the Skies (Example 1b) along these lines, the staccato bass riff seems self-contained within each bar while, at the same time, the syncopated two beat pick-up figure at the end of each bar in the organ part seems constantly to push the groove forward into the next downbeat, thus creating a wonderful tension between exotelic and autotelic components within the same groove. A thoroughgoing examination of pedal-point grooves in Genesis is a topic that deserves an article all of its own, one which I hope to pursue at a later time.

forward in an ever-changing syncopated dialog with the bass (this is about as close to funk as any British progressive rock group would get).<sup>12</sup>

Before we move on, I'd like to make some additional remarks about Genesis's harmonic language. As the Beatles had done before them, Genesis possessed an uncanny natural ability to mimic and assimilate other musical styles outside of rock and pop and transform them into something fresh and unique. Like the majority of rock musicians, none of the members of Genesis ever received any formal training in harmony or voice leading, and yet Tony Banks did take piano lessons for some time as a young teenager, during which he learned to play several classical pieces by Rachmaninov and other composers. (Gallo, 1980: 125) The style of Romantic piano music certainly seems to have rubbed off on Banks indeed, another hallmark of the Genesis sound was his virtuosic keyboard solos, which often featured intricate chordal passagework and a highly erratic metric design, as in his piano introduction to Firth of Fifth from Selling England by the Pound, the opening bars of which are shown in Example 3.<sup>13</sup> I have sketched in a Roman numeral analysis below the staff in order to show that most of the chord changes in the Firth of Fifth intro fall entirely within what we might expect of the chromatic harmonic language of a nineteenth-century piano piece, with its frequent use of secondary dominants and modal mixture. However, when judged against the stylistic expectations of nineteenth-century harmony and voice leading, there are several "mistakes" — the "slash" chords in bars two and four, for example, and the chords with missing thirds in bar five. Like John Lennon's paraphrasing of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" in Because from Abbey Road (1969), the Firth of Fifth intro might be viewed then as an amalgam of the harmonic conventions of Romanticism and rock.<sup>14</sup>

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For the remainder of this article. I shall focus on the 23-minute epic Supper's Ready which occupies most of Side 2 of Foxtrot, an extraordinary composition that many Genesis aficionados tout as the group's masterpiece. Peter Gabriel has said that "Supper's Ready ... was extremely important for the band, ... a sort of centerpiece for our ambitions in terms of writing, and [our] most adventurous piece to date." <sup>15</sup> Cast almost entirely in the first person, the seven interconnected tableaux of Supper's Ready (see Figure 3) chronicle a young Englishman's twisted vision of the apocalypse — the classic conflict of good against evil as seen through a decidedly British lens. As Edward Macan has rightly pointed out, one of the most memorable features of British progressive rock was "its fascination with epic subject matter drawn from science fiction, mythology, and fantasy literature" — not unlike the subject matter of many nineteenth-century operas. (Macan, 1997: 1) Indeed, over the course of the Foxtrot album we encounter several mythical, historical, and science fiction characters, such as the alien visitor to Earth in Watcher of the Skies (memorably represented in concert performances by Gabriel's famous "bat wing" costume, as seen on the back cover of Genesis Live); King Canute, the medieval English king depicted in Can-Utility and the Coastliners; and Narcissus, Pythagoras, the Pied Piper, the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ikhnaton, and even "Winston Churchill dressed in drag," all of whom make an appearance during Supper's Ready. 16

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The drumming in *Riding the Scree* suggests also the complex polyrhythmic style of free jazz, a style that Collins was able to explore more fully in his work with the British fusion group Brand X during the late 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>13</sup> My thanks to one of my graduate stydeots in New York. Tem DoMices, for sharing with me his transcription of the *Firth of Fifth*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> My thanks to one of my graduate students in New York, Tom DeMicco, for sharing with me his transcription of the *Firth of Fifth* intro. For an extended analysis of *Firth of Fifth*, see Macan, 1997: 106–12; see also Enzio Temporelli, "Musica e Alchimia: Strutture Esoteriche e Matematiche Nella Musica Dei Genesis," available online at <a href="http://www.tonybanks.it/html/frame\_variematematica\_popun1.htm">http://www.tonybanks.it/html/frame\_variematematica\_popun1.htm</a>

http://www.tonybanks.it/html/frame\_variematematica\_popup1.htm.

14 For an analysis of *Because*, focusing on Lennon's seemingly naïve misappropriation of nineteenth-century harmonic syntax, see Spicer, 2001: 44–49.

From the aforementioned interview with Gabriel in the BBC film Genesis: A History.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> To be fair, the borrowing of themes and characters from mythology and science fiction formed only part of the typical subject matter for Genesis's lyrics. As John Covach notes in his recent rock history textbook, "Gabriel spun bizarre tales, most of which delivered stinging, if sometimes obscure, criticisms of British life and values" (Covach, 2006: 332). A case in point is the third track

Interspersed within the lyrics in Figure 3 are program notes (shown in square brackets) written by Gabriel himself as an aid to understanding the story, taken from a handbill customarily distributed to audience members on the *Foxtrot* tour. Gabriel's intentions here were perhaps merely practical rather than historical, yet one cannot ignore the strong echoes of nineteenth-century program music: one is reminded, for example, of the program written by Hector Berlioz to be distributed at performances of his *Fantastic Symphony* (1830).

Figure 3: Lyrics to Supper's Ready interspersed with program notes by Peter Gabriel.

In my earlier published article on Genesis (cited above), I offered a detailed analysis of each of the seven tableaux of *Supper's Ready*, tracing the song's unifying harmonic and thematic/motivic elements through an array of intertextual references to earlier styles and specific other pieces in order to highlight the important similarities and differences between multi-movement progressive rock works and large-scale works of the classical tradition. What follows is an abridged version — a "single edit," if you will — of my prior analysis.

Like most of the individual sections of *Supper's Ready*, the opening tableau *Lover's Leap* exhibits a self-contained miniature form of its own (see Example 4): an eight-bar verse in classical period form — a four-bar antecedent phrase followed by a four-bar modulating consequent — is answered by a four-bar refrain. Dominating the accompaniment is a continuous sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure played by two acoustic 12-string guitars (only the lower part is transcribed here) — a favorite instrumental texture in early Genesis, and another defining feature of their idiolect. The "organic" nature of this accompaniment — in which a distinctive shape is established in the first measure and then maintained on a bar-by-bar basis as the harmony changes, as we saw also in *Back in NYC* — is reminiscent of classical instrumental writing, recalling in particular the vivid piano accompaniments of nineteenth-century *Lieder*.

Yet similarities with nineteenth-century compositional practice are not just confined to the realm of texture. From a harmonic standpoint, like the piano intro to *Firth of Fifth, Lover's Leap* also features several of the characteristic quirks normally identified with composers of that era. The verse alone, for example, exhibits a tonally-ambiguous beginning, use of modal mixture (with harmonies "borrowed" from the parallel minor into E major, including the half-diminished supertonic in bar 1), as well as a modulation to the distant key of B-flat major (#IV) in bars 6–8, musically portraying the accompanying lyric, "I swear I saw your face change." Aside from obvious features of instrumentation (e.g., the use of an electric bass in conjunction with the 'cello), I would argue that the only elements sounding truly out of place in an otherwise very "nineteenth-century sounding" musical landscape are the speech-like syncopations in the vocal melody, which are more typical of a rock singing style as opposed to a classical one. <sup>18</sup>

With the onset of the second tableau we are drawn into a markedly different musical world (its main groove is shown in Example 5). In his review of the *Foxtrot* album in *Sounds* magazine (30 September 1972), Jerry Gilbert commented that *The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man* "nods rather obliquely in the direction of Bowie and seems to be about a supersonic space age farmer." Perhaps the most notable difference in texture between *Sanctuary Man* and the preceding music is the presence of the drums, which up until this point

on *Foxtrot, Get 'Em Out by Friday*, which, in a not-too-subtle attack on the U.K. council housing system, chronicles the plight of tenants threatened with eviction in a futuristic Britain where "the directors of Genetic Control" have announced "a 4ft restriction on humanoid height" so they "can fit twice as many in the same building site." This "social criticism" aspect of Genesis's lyrics would reach its peak in their follow-up album to *Foxtrot, Selling England by the Pound*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Compare, for example, the opening section to *The Musical Box* (from *Nursery Cryme*).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> On the studio version of *Supper's Ready*, Gabriel's voice during the verses of *Lover's Leap* has been double-tracked so as to sound simultaneously at pitch and at an octave higher, giving the singer's persona a kind of "split personality" in accordance with the message in the lyrics

the message in the lyrics.

19 It is evident from the lyrics that the *Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man* — "a fireman who looks after the fire" — is meant to represent Satan himself.

have remained tacet. Now the drums and bass work in tandem to create another classic Genesis pedal-point groove. Steve Hackett's electric guitar (not transcribed in the example) sidesteps, as it often does, the more traditional role of lead instrument in this section and is instead limited to playing sliding figures that help paint an atmospheric background for Tony Banks's fanfare-like organ part (notated in simplified form on the middle stave).

In stark contrast to the nineteenth-century harmony of Lover's Leap, the chord vocabulary of Sanctuary Man sits squarely in the tradition of post-1960s rock. First and foremost, the harmonic language of this section should be understood as modal rather than tonal: despite the A major key signature, G-natural —the lowered-seventh scale degree clearly has primacy over the leading-tone G-sharp, and the dominant chord is absent altogether, resulting in a predominantly Mixolydian harmonic environment.<sup>20</sup> A second paradigm of rock harmony occurs after the pedal point is broken, with the rising progression ii-iii (bars 8-9). Such stepwise passing of root-position chords is infrequent in classical tonality because of the characteristic stability of the perfect consonances measured above the bass. When it does occur there it is usually in limited and isolated contexts, such as the carefully voice-led deceptive progession V-vi. In rock harmony, on the other hand, it is relatively common to pass by step through root-position chords (e.g., the cadential progression bVI-bVII-I, used at the climax of the sixth tableau). Yet what betrays even more clearly this progression's rock derivation as opposed to any possible classical origins is its voice leading: as I have shown in Example 5, not only do we have a succession of root position triads, but also a succession of exposed parallel fifths. These fifths are not surprising, since Tony Banks tells us that he originally composed the Sanctuary Man progression on the guitar rather than at the keyboard. (Gallo, 1980: 15-16)

Let us now skip ahead to look at the climactic sixth tableau, in which we are made to witness "the Apocalypse of St. John in full progress." The music in this section is perhaps the most complex of the entire *Foxtrot* album, and so for the sake of practicality I will highlight just a few of its key passages. As its title informs us, the sixth tableau is entirely cast in a 9/8 meter; furthermore, the meter is subdivided into constant eighth notes, grouped most of the time as 2 + 2 + 2 + 3 (as we heard also in *Riding the Scree*). At the heart of the *Apocalypse in 9/8* is an extended organ solo over a relentless ostinato figure played by the bass and guitar — consisting of just three pitches, E, F-sharp, and B — effecting yet another extended pedal-point groove (the beginning of the organ solo is transcribed in Example 6a). Tony Banks has offered insights as to how this music was composed:

"The organ solo started off as a very tongue-in-cheek thing, I thought I'd play like Keith Emerson to see what it sounds like. There were little phrases in there that were supposed to be almost humorous in a way. The other idea on that was to just keep the notes simple, and I said [to Mike Rutherford], "If you can keep just to the three notes E, F sharp and B then I can do any chord I want on top of it." I could go major, minor, all sorts of things. It was great fun actually as I could go for the real dramatic stuff like a C major chord on top of that, which sounds very tense and that was how it was developed. I was very satisfied with the result of that."

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Many of rock's harmonic idioms owe an allegiance to blues traditions. The cadential progression bVII–IV–I, for example, can be understood as a variant of the V–IV–I progression that closes a typical twelve-bar blues, with bVII substituting for V, as it frequently does in rock harmony. Emphasizing its root motion in descending *fourths* rather than descending fifths, Walter Everett has coined the term "double-plagal cadence" for the bVII–IV–I progression; see, for example, Everett, 2001: 364. For a more extended discussion of modal harmony in rock music — and the use of the lowered seventh in particular — see Moore, 1995: 185–201.

<sup>21</sup> The pulsing eighth notes — and their accompanying repeated harmonies — at the beginning of the *Apocalypse in 9/8* (15:38 ff.) have long reminded me of the famous incessant "Augurs of Spring" chord in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1912). For a fuller analytical explanation of the harmonic and textural similarities with Stravinsky in this passage, see Spicer, 2000: 95–96.

<sup>22</sup> From a Banks interview by Alan Hewitt that originally appeared in *The Waiting Room* magazine (available online at twronline.net). Banks goes on to describe how the organ solo crystallized during an extended jam session in the studio involving a trio consisting of himself, Phil Collins, and Mike Rutherford. Interestingly, this foreshadows what was to become Genesis's preferred method for

Though originally intended then to be just "tongue-in-cheek," Banks creates in this section what must surely rank as one of the finest keyboard solos in all of progressive rock. As in *Sanctuary Man*, the tonal center is achieved by virtue of the constant repetition of E as a tonic pedal point in the bass/guitar ostinato. As Banks informs us, the limited pitch material of the ostinato accompaniment allowed him to take great liberties in the harmonic structure of his solo above ("I could go major, minor, all sorts of things"). This harmonic freedom can be heard from the very onset of the solo: he begins squarely in E major, then quickly introduces A-sharp (\*#4), invoking a Lydian quality; the modality continues to fluctuate two bars later with the introduction of G-natural (\*b3), and D-natural (\*b6), effecting a brief excursion into the Dorian mode.

The organ solo continues for over two and a half minutes, culminating in a melodic sequence that rises to a spectacular climax on a high C-natural. At this point the vocal makes an impassioned return ("666 is no longer alone"), and here — for the first time in *Supper's Ready*— we are bathed in the massive orchestral timbre of a Mellotron chordal accompaniment, an effect that seems to have been consciously saved for this climactic moment, shown in Example 6b. Following this passage, the tonality quickly modulates from E major to B-flat major, signaling a brief yet triumphant reprise of the music from the refrain of the first tableau (20:11 ff.). This *Lover's Leap* refrain is densely orchestrated, complete with tubular bells, snare-drum rolls, and electric-guitar tremolos.

An immediate segue (20:47) takes us into the seventh and final tableau, where we are presented with nothing less than a full-fledged recapitulation — what Nors Josephson describes as a "Lisztian, symphonic apotheosis" — of the A major *Sanctuary Man* theme from the second tableau. (Josephson, 1992: 84) In live performances, Peter Gabriel would typically sing this final section of *Supper's Ready* suspended like an angel above the stage, expressing visually the idea that the ordeal is over and that good has ultimately prevailed over evil. It is no accident that Gabriel's lyrics for *As Sure as Eggs is Eggs (Aching Men's Feet)* contain the most explicit strategic intertextual reference of the entire piece: a recasting of William Blake's famous poem about building a "new Jerusalem" on English soil, as immortalized in C. Hubert H. Parry's rousing World War I hymn *Jerusalem* (1916).<sup>23</sup> One can hardly imagine a more fitting conclusion for this decidedly British retelling of the story of the apocalypse.

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It would take a book-length study to do justice to this remarkable album in all its richness and complexity. Accordingly, there are many wonderful moments on *Foxtrot* that I have not considered in this article, but I do hope that my analysis will inspire others to tackle Genesis's music with a similar degree of rigor. I have said before that writing about Genesis is especially significant for me. As I was growing up in the late 1970s and early 1980s — and playing in as many pop and rock bands as I did classical music ensembles — this group, and the *Foxtrot* album in particular, was one of the main reasons why I came to love music and to love thinking about music. The international symposium that has spawned this collection of

composing new pieces beginning with the 1978 album ... And Then There Were Three ..., when the group was in fact reduced to just these three members.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Parry's *Jerusalem* is perhaps the most famous and beloved of all Anglican hymns. In concert, Peter Gabriel made the reference to the hymn even more explicit through the bizarre story he told as a lead-in to *Supper's Ready*, which culminated in his whistling an odd, jazzy reinvention of the tune he called "Jerusalem Boogie" (one can hear Gabriel's story on the live version of *Supper's Ready* available on *Genesis Archive 1967–75*). Certainly Banks, Gabriel, and Rutherford would have known the hymn from their boyhood years spent at the exclusive Charterhouse school, where no doubt they would have often sung the hymn at morning assembly. Gabriel has described the importance of hymn singing in shaping his early musical experience: "Hymns used to be the only musical moment at Charterhouse. ... [T]he organ in Chapel was magnificent and the playing was great. ... Everyone would stand up and scream their heads off. ... It was really emotional, and people would come out of Chapel feeling like they were on top of the world" (Gallo, 1980: 14). For a discussion of the profound influence of Anglican church music on many of the classic British progressive rock groups, see Macan, 1992: 102–103.

articles is proof enough that there are many others who also care a great deal about this music, those whose formative years were similarly shaped by both a classical and a rock aesthetic. And as if we need further proof, there are now dozens of Genesis tribute bands scattered around the globe (including, by my count, fourteen groups based in Italy alone), all dedicated to performing these epic songs, note-for-note from the original studio recordings, as perfectly as they can.<sup>24</sup> It seems then that John Covach's prediction has in fact already come true: that classic British progressive rock is music which will be listened to — and studied — for many years to come.

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<sup>24</sup> Despite the statement to the contrary on the group's official website, rumors of an impending reunion of the classic early-70s lineup continue to circulate voraciously among Genesis fans. This seems all the more unlikely now that the 1980s lineup of Collins, Banks, and Rutherford have announced that they will be reuniting, without Gabriel and Hackett, for a 2007 world tour

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## Figure 1: Chronology of Genesis albums through 1977 (U.K. releases)

From Genesis to Revelation (March 1969) Trespass (October 1970)

Soon after recording *Trespass* (June–July 1970), guitarist and founding member Anthony Phillips leaves the group, and Phil Collins replaces John Mayhew on drums. A few months later (January 1971), Steve Hackett joins the group on guitar to complete the "classic" Genesis lineup: Banks, Collins, Gabriel, Hackett, and Rutherford.

Nursery Cryme (November 1971)
Foxtrot (October 1972)
Genesis Live (July 1973)
Selling England by the Pound (October 1973)
The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway (November 1974)

Following the *Lamb* tour, Peter Gabriel announces in August 1975 that he is leaving the group. After a failed search for a new frontman to replace Gabriel, Phil Collins assumes the dual role of lead vocalist and drummer.

A Trick of the Tail (February 1976)
Wind and Wuthering (1976; released January 1, 1977)
Seconds Out (double live album, released October 1977)

Following the *Wind and Wuthering* tour, Steve Hackett announces in October 1977 that he is leaving the group. Tony Banks, Phil Collins, and Mike Rutherford decide to continue as a trio, augmented for live performances by U.S. session musicians Daryl Stuermer on guitar and Chester Thompson on drums. Genesis quickly rises to international megastatus...

Figure 2: Track listing for Foxtrot

Side 1: Watcher of the Skies (7:19) Time Table (4:40)

Get 'Em Out by Friday (8:35)

Can-Utility and the Coastliners (5:43)

Side 2:

Horizons (1:38)

Supper's Ready (22:58)

(All tracks "composed, arranged, and performed by Genesis")

# Figure 3: Lyrics to "Supper's Ready" interspersed with program notes by Peter Gabriel. ("Supper's Ready" has been quoted with kind permission of Genesis and Hit & Run Music Publishing Ltd.)

#### I. "Lover's Leap"

[In which two lovers are lost in each other's eyes, and found again transformed in the bodies of another male and female.]

Walking across the sitting room, I turn the television off.
Sitting beside you, I look into your eyes.
As the sound of motor cars fades in the night time,
I swear I saw your face change, it didn't seem quite right.
... And it's hello babe, with your guardian eyes so blue,
Hey my baby, don't you know our love is true?

Coming closer with our eyes, a distance falls around our bodies. Out in the garden, the moon seems very bright.

Six saintly shrouded men move across the lawn slowly,
The seventh walks in front with a cross held high in hand.

... And it's hey babe, your supper's waiting for you,
Hey my baby, don't you know our love is true?

I've been so far from here, Far from your warm arms. It's good to feel you again. It's been a long time. Hasn't it?

#### II. "The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man"

[The lovers come across a town dominated by two characters: one a benevolent farmer and the other a head of a highly disciplined scientific religion. The latter likes to be known as "The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man" and claims to contain a secret new ingredient capable of fighting fire. This is a falsehood, an untruth, a whopper and a taradiddle; or to put it in clearer terms, a lie.]

I know a farmer who looks after the farm, With water clear, he cares for all his harvest. I know a fireman who looks after the fire.

You, can't you see he's fooled you all?
Yes, he's here again, can't you see he's fooled you all?
Share his peace,
Sign the lease.
He's a supersonic scientist,
He's the Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man.
Look, look into my mouth he cries.

And all the children lost down many paths, I bet my life, you'll walk inside

Hand in hand,

gland in gland.

With a spoonful of miracle,

He's the Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary.

We will rock you, rock you little snake,

We will keep you snug and warm.

III. "Ikhnaton and Istacon and Their Band of Merry Men"

[Who the lovers see clad in greys and purples, awaiting to be summoned out of the ground. At the G.E.S.M.'s command they put forth from the bowels of the earth, to attack all those without an upto-date "Eternal Life Licence", which were obtainable at the head office of the G.E.S.M.'s religion.]

Wearing feelings on our faces while our faces took a rest, We walked across the fields to see the children of the West, But we saw a host of dark skinned warriors standing still below the ground,

Waiting for battle.

The fight's begun, they've been released.

Killing foe for peace ... bang, bang, bang ... bang, bang, bang ...

And they're giving me a wonderful potion,

'Cos I cannot contain my emotion.

And even though I'm feeling good,

Something tells me I'd better activate my prayer capsule.

Today's a day to celebrate, the foe have met their fate.

The order for rejoicing and dancing has come from our warlord.

#### IV. "How Dare I Be So Beautiful?"

[In which our intrepid heroes investigate the aftermath of the battle and discover a solitary figure, obsessed by his own image. They witness an unusual transmutation, and are pulled into their own reflections in the water.]

Wandering in the chaos the battle has left,

We climb up the mountain of human flesh

To a plateau of green grass, and green trees full of life.

A young figure sits still by her pool,

He's been stamped "Human Bacon" by some butchery tool.

(He is you)

Social Security took care of this lad,

We watch in reverence as Narcissus is turned into a flower.

A flower?

#### V. "Willow Farm"

[Climbing out of the pool, they are once again in a different existence. They're right in the middle of a myriad of bright colours, filled with all manner of objects, plants, animals and humans. Life flows freely and everything is mindlessly busy. At random, a whistle blows and every single thing is instantly changed into another.]

If you go down to Willow Farm, to look for butterflies, flutterbyes, gutterflies Open your eyes, it's full of surprise, everyone lies, like the focks [sic] on the rocks, and the musical box.

Oh, there's Mum & Dad, and good and bad, and everyone's happy to be here.

There's Winston Churchill dressed in drag, He used to be a British flag, plastic bag. What a drag. The frog was a prince, the prince was a brick, the brick was an egg, and the egg was a bird.

Hadn't you heard?

Yes, we're happy as fish, and gorgeous as geese, and wonderfully clean in the morning.
We've got everything, we're growing everything,

We've got some in,
We've got some out,
We've got some wild things floating about ...
Everyone, we're changing everyone,
You name them all,
We've had them here,
And the real stars are still to appear.

#### ALL CHANGE!

Feel your body melt:

Mum to mud to mad to dad

Dad diddley office, Dad diddley office,
You're all full of ball.

Dad to dam to dum to mum

Mum diddley washing, Mum diddley washing,
You're all full of ball.

Let me hear your lies, we're living this up to our eyes.

Ooee-ooee-ooee-oowaa

Momma I want you now.

And as you listen to my voice
To look for hidden doors, tidy floors, more applause.
You've been here all the time,
Like it or not, like what you got,
You're under the soil,
Yes deep in the soil.
So we'll end with a whistle and end with a bang
and all of us fit in our places.

VI. "Apocalypse in 9/8 (Co-Starring the Delicious Talents of Gabble Ratchet)" [At one whistle the lovers become seeds in the soil, where they recognise other seeds to be people from the world in which they had originated. While they wait for Spring, they are returned to their old world to see the Apocalypse of St John in full progress. The seven trumpeteers cause a sensation, the fox keeps throwing sixes, and Pythagoras (a Greek extra) is deliriously happy as he manages to put exactly the right amount of milk and honey on his corn flakes.]

With the guards of Magog, swarming around,
The Pied Piper takes his children underground.
The Dragon's coming out of the sea,
With the shimmering silver head of wisdom looking at me.
He brings down the fire from the skies,
You can tell he's doing well by the look in human eyes.
You'd better not compromise.
It won't be easy.

666 is no longer alone,
He's getting out the marrow in your back bone.
And the seven trumpets blowing sweet rock and roll,
Gonna blow right down inside your soul.
Pythagoras with the looking-glass, reflecting the full moon,
In blood, he's writing the lyrics of a brand new tune.

And it's hey babe, with your guardian eyes so blue. Hey my baby, don't you know our love is true? I've been so far from here.

Far from your loving arms, Now I'm back again, and baby it's going to work out fine.

VII. "As Sure as Eggs is Eggs (Aching Men's Feet)" [Above all else an egg is an egg. "And did those feet ..." making ends meet.]

Can't you feel our souls ignite, Shedding ever changing colours, in the darkness of the fading night? Like the river joins the ocean, as the germ in a seed grows, We have finally been freed to get back home.

There's an angel standing in the sun, and he's crying with a loud voice, "This is the supper of the mighty one".

Lord of Lord's,

King of King's,

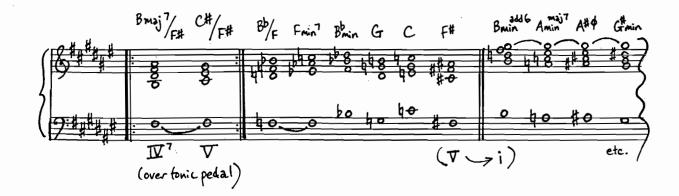
Has returned to lead his children home,

To take them to the new Jerusalem.

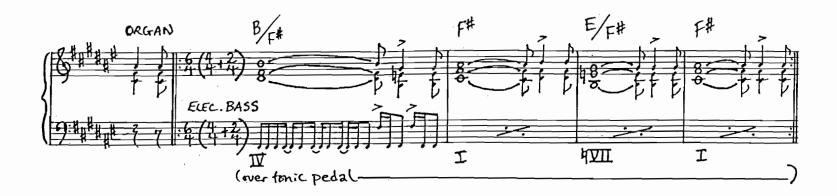
[Jerusalem = place of peace.]

# Example 1: "Watcher of the Skies"

## a) Mellotron introduction

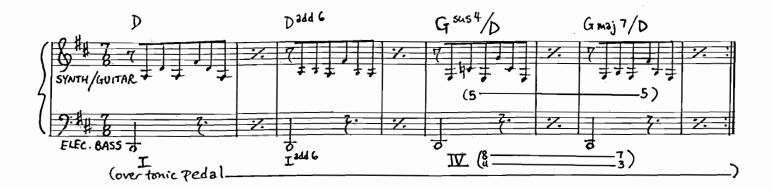


## b) Main groove (from 2:17)



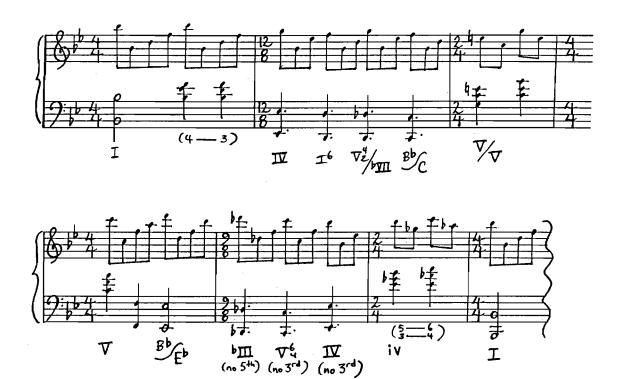
## Example 2: Two other representative Genesis "pedal-point" grooves

a) "Back in NYC" (The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway)



b) "Squonk" (A Trick of the Tail)

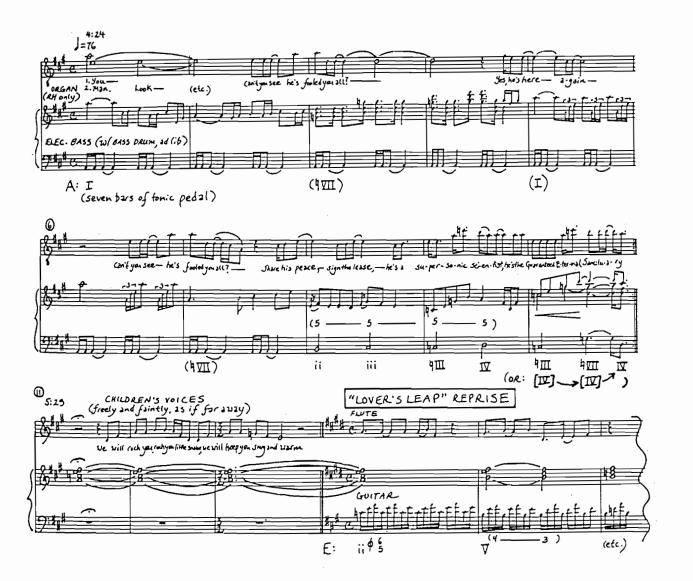




Example 4: Opening tableau, "Lover's Leap"



Example 5: Second tableau, "The Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man"



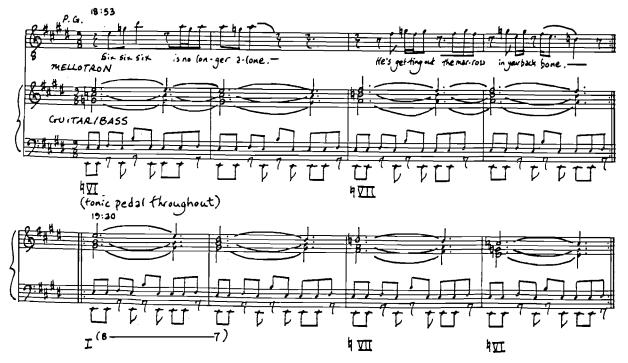
## Example 6: Sixth tableau, "Apocalypse in 9/8"

a) From the beginning of the organ solo



# (Example 6 continued)

b) From the Mellotron/vocal entrance



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