

Yak: (l-r) Dave Speight, Martin Morgan, Gary Bennett.

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★ ON THE THRESHOLD...

# Yak

Over 20 years on, the Essex-based animal collective finally break away from the herd.

"THE THING THAT'S missing from us is a live gig," says Martin Morgan, chief protagonist of resurgent Essex instrumental proggers, Yak. "The band has not gigged since 1984, which is a long time."

Indeed, it is a long time. Yak first formed way back in December 1982 when, as an 18-year-old, Morgan bought his first polyphonic synthesizer and "was just coming up with riffs in unusual time signatures". But just 18 months of regular jamming later, the fledgling quartet went their separate ways. This, you might think, would've been the end of the Camel-influenced Yak, but no.

Martin eventually took himself and his keyboards out into the Essex countryside, but there was an itch that needed scratching. "It wasn't until 2003 that I really felt that some of the music was worth doing properly," he recalls. "We never really did anything [in 1982] but we did record it. I'm really grateful we did because I've got loads of cassettes."

Martin set about single-handedly re-writing and recording those loose jams into eight fully-finished tracks, which he self-released as a solo album called *Dark Side Of The Duck*. It was a lot of work.

"The main reason I didn't try recording it with other musicians is because my time is really pressed," Morgan says. He goes on to explain

how a full-time job and the 400-strong animal sanctuary he and his partner run in their spare time might sap one's interludes. "At 11 pm I either go to bed or go to the studio. I was grabbing 10 minutes here and there but I was determined to get the album out before I was 40. I made it with two months to spare."

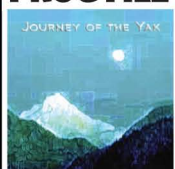
After getting the original band back together for a couple of years and a couple of live albums, it was clear that he needed more. "It was always going to be a jamming band - it was never going to get down to the serious crunching that I wanted," Morgan explains. "I'd written this new material and you couldn't just jam it - you had to learn it."

So he enlisted the talents of pro musicians, David Speight and Gary Bennett on drums and bass respectively, who laid their parts down in a couple of sessions and so *Journey Of The Yak* was completed.

"It's not everyone's cup of tea," Morgan admits. "Someone bought an album yesterday and told me they couldn't stand the second track because it wasn't in time. It's not supposed to be something you can dance to, unless you can dance in 7/8 time."

As Yak find themselves in 2010, it's time for that live gig. While Martin and crew have already been invited to perform at a continental festival later in the year, more have been considered. "We will have to do a trial gig before we go to Germany," he concedes. "I'm a bit worried about the gear not powering up when we get there." Even if they don't take their plug adapters, it's doubtful that Yak will be put out to pasture for another 20 years. **RR**

## PROG FILE



**Line-up:** Martin Morgan (keyboards), Dave Speight (drums), Gary Bennett (bass)  
**Sounds like:** Dave Greenslade jamming with Genesis

**Current release:** *Journey Of The Yak* was released on the band's own label in 2008.  
**Website:** www.yaksongs.com