

Carl Palmer Solo Tour Comes to Fall River



by Jessica
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Using classical music as his main vehicle, Carl Palmer, former drummer of progressive rock band Emerson, Lake & Palmer (ELP), is performing instrumental rearrangements of classic ELP songs as part of a power trio for his most recent solo tour called "Pictures at an Exhibition." On Oct. 22, he will be playing the 22-minute song of the same name, plus unique adaptations by classical composers, at the Narrows Center for the Arts in Fall River.

"We have quite a comprehensive set list and will play for an hour and fifty minutes," said Palmer. "We are doing a classic piece called, 'Welcome Back, My Friends, to the Show That Never Ends,' and 'Tarkus.'"

They will also perform "Fanfare for the Common Man," by American composer Aaron Copland, as well as "Nut Rocker," a song by the instrumental ensemble B. Bumble and the Stingers, which was inspired by "March of the Wooden Soldiers," from Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's famous ballet, The Nutcracker, and covered by ELP.



By exchanging the synthesizer for guitar, Palmer said he thinks the music “stands on its own,” making it difficult to compare to ELP. He also believes guitar is a much better fit for him and holds guitarists in high regards.

“I didn’t really want to work with keyboards again and I wanted it to be as original as I could make it,” he said. “At the end of the day, I think it works incredibly well. It’s all about getting the right players because techniques of the guitar have really advanced compared to keyboards. The technology of keyboards has advanced, but the players are the same as they’ve always been. Guitar players have just improved immensely. They are really the leaders in musical expression. You can have two guitar players, give them the same guitar and they will both sound completely different. If you do that with two keyboard players, they’ll sound the same. That’s just the way it is.”

Palmer said finding the right musicians to tour with is important. Guitarist Paul Bielatowicz and bassist Simon Fitzpatrick join him.

“Paul has been with me for seven years now and Simon has been around since June 2010,” he said. “In England, we have lots of academies and institutes, so if you’re looking for a particular style of player there are many places to find them. I’ve got quite a few friends at various colleges in England, and I called them up and asked them who they had for students that were graduating that would like to come out with me and my band. The standards are so high at the schools that I can usually narrow it down to find the musicians I need.”

Because he respects music as an art form, he agreed to be

featured in "The Solo," a 35-minute film that portrays the drum solo as a work of physical art. Acclaimed U.K. filmmaker Andrew Cross asked him to be part of the project last year.

During its run in U.K. art museums, it received rave reviews from art and film critics. It just made its U.S. premiere on Oct. 8 at Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum as part of their Legends Series programming.

"Cross is a fan of mine and approached me saying, 'Would you like to make an art film of you playing the drums, doing things you wouldn't normally do in a concert environment?' and I said, 'Yes, I'd like to look at that,'" Palmer said. "I have various solos that could be filmed and mean much more on film than at an actual concert just because of the content of the solo, so we got together and made the film. It went very well."

Additionally, he recently launched a new iTunes mobile application, Play Carl Palmer's Drums, which was developed by Dynamic Websites. Designed for iPods, iPads and iPhones, the application allows users to download Palmer's drum kit so they can use their fingers to play along to music through their iTunes program. It includes rare Palmer archives and instant updates from his site.

The application was originally featured on his website nearly five years ago. After it was removed, fans let him know they wanted it back.



"We had people request it so this time we released it as something you can put right on your phone, rather than having

to go to my site like you did years ago to play the drums," he said.

To further please his fans, he holds a meet-and-greet session after each show to give them a chance to introduce themselves to him. He takes pleasure in meeting them for a handshake or autograph.

"Not only do I enjoy playing concerts, I like going out and saying hi to the people," he said. "I think it's a good thing to do. It's a big movement because over the years VIP tickets, golden circle tickets and general meet-and-greets have gotten more and more popular. Of course, there's a financial aspect to it because I usually sign autographs near the merchandise but people have an opportunity to get the added bonus of me being there to sign it for them. It's a way for me to say thank you to them. If they don't buy anything I still sign their stuff and take pictures with everyone."

While he believes the demand for meet-and-greets are at a high, he doesn't feel that the progressive rock movement that ELP was a huge part of in the '70s will ever be as popular as it once was. He enjoys the English band Porcupine Tree and the first album by Mars Volta, but thinks the genre won't make a comeback.

"The music will always be there, but I don't think the popularity it had in the '70s will return now," he said. "But, there will always be the odd breakthrough band that will exist and carry on, that's for sure."

After he wraps up the tour at the end of the month, Palmer will head to England to start a 10-day tour. In early 2012, he hopes to make a new album with the band Asia that also features John Wetton, Geoff Downes and Steve Howe, and tour later in the year for the bands' 30th anniversary.

"I've played in Asia for the last six years and we did roughly six or seven tours of North America in that time," said

Palmer. "I try to make sure I'm fit and healthy as an individual to make it as professional as we can. I prepare myself mentally and from a health point of view, as well. The art of playing encourages me because I want to go out and see if I can do it better. It's a continuous circle and I have fun doing it. I love what I do. If you enjoy doing something, you'll do it, but the fact that I enjoy it allows me to carry on doing it and have fun with it."

The Narrows Center for the Arts is located at 16 Anawan Street in Fall River. Tickets are \$48 advance and \$53 day of show. Tickets can be purchased online at www.ncfta.org.