



SEPTEMBER, 1980

SUPERTRAMP

Supertramp, a rock band distinguished by, among other things, its occasional use of the clarinet as a lead instrument, first played Paris in 1971. Eight people were in the audience and six of them were carrying tickets bought by the promoter. Five years later, they played to 10,000 Parisians and last year, five times that number counted themselves fortunate to see this extraordinary group of four Englishmen and their American drummer.

On the second night of their SRO stand in Paris, Supertramp accomplished a feat that had eluded them in some thirty previous attempts: they captured on tape a performance that met the exacting standards they have always set for themselves. Both the passion and the technology peaked on November 29th, 1979, and the result is Supertramp's first live album, *Paris*. It was the 108th concert of the world tour following the release of *Breakfast in America*. The lp's title song was in its fifth week at number one in France. The audience at Le Pavillon propelled the group to produce the best it had to offer and the tapes, for once, captured every note.

In the United States, *Breakfast in America* and its three hit singles transformed Supertramp in a few short weeks from a critic's and cult band into a superstar attraction. In Canada and Europe, they had sold multi-platinum for half a decade and to finally equal that in America was an important milestone. It is crucial in perceiving *Paris* that it not be viewed as a follow-up to *Breakfast*. It is rather a summation of all that came before it. Of the live album's sixteen tracks, only three are from the band's last lp. Seven are from *Crime of the Century*, three from *Crisis What Crisis?*, and two from *Even in the Quietest Moments*. One song, "You Started Laughing," has never before been on an album but was initially recorded for *Crisis*. It appeared as the B-side of their single "Lady," and has been an "extra" concert song ever since.

At the outset, Supertramp established a simple criterion for their first live recording: the new renditions of the songs included had to improve on the studio versions previously released. And, needless to say, the recording quality had to satisfy the meticulous ears of the musicians who had conceived and executed those earlier albums as well as please those of the millions who had bought them.

Russel Pope and Peter Henderson co-produced *Paris*. Pope has mixed Supertramp's concert sound for ten years and Henderson, after engineering *Quietest Moments*, co-produced *Breakfast* with the band. Together they have delivered a sound quality for this album that is clean, rich and detailed. From the slashing growl of the guitars in "Bloody Well Right" to the clarity of the cymbals in "From Now On," *Paris* sets a new standard for live recording.

As for the band's performance, more superlatives would be superfluous at this stage in their career. The songs of Rick Davies and Roger Hodgson have never seemed more fresh and buoyant. The band makes an effortless, chameleon change from Roger's sardonic sprightliness for Rick's moodier, funkier material. It's distinct but so seamless that it often goes unnoticed. John Helliwell's sax and woodwinds bop and sway throughout and his fractured Franglais introduction to "Breakfast in America" epitomizes their subtle wit. As with most great bands in concert, the true heroes are the rhythm section, Dougie Thomson on bass and Bob C. Benberg on drums. If possible, Supertramp's material seems even more compelling live. Animated by the organic passion of a hundred-odd gigs (over four hundred since the release of *Crime*), the songs burst into new flower. *Dreamer*, for example, has a tension and a tautness that stretches it to its limit.

Paris is the culmination of Supertramp's first decade. When they signed to A&M ten years ago, the artistic and commercial success they've enjoyed was only whispered promise. Early next year, they return to the studio to begin their successor to *Breakfast in America*. The best, they insist, is yet to come. The only question remaining is, were those two hardy souls, who actually bought tickets for Supertramp's first gig in Paris, at the show the magical night this album was born. Something tells me they must have been.

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SUPERTRAMP: A Chronology

- 1970 Rick Davies recruits Roger Hodgson for a band he's forming. They take their name from *The Autobiography of a Supertramp*, published in 1910 by R.H. Davies. Their first album, *Supertramp* is released.
- 1971 *Indelibly Stamped* is released.
- 1973 The band is revamped with the additions of Dougie Thomson, John A. Helliwell, and Bob C. Benberg, a drummer from Glendale, California. The new aggregation settles into an English cottage called Southcombe to begin work on their next album.
- 1974 *Crime of the Century* is released and goes to number one on the English charts with its single, "Dreamer," breaking into the Top Ten. The band tours England and Europe.
- 1975 In March, they play their first American date in Milwaukee. *Crime* has been on the U.S. charts for eight months. In November, *Crisis, What Crisis?* is released.
- 1976 In February, the band begins its first world tour covering England, Europe, the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.
- 1977 They record and release *Even in the Quietest Moments* and again tour the world.
- 1978 *Breakfast in America* is written and recorded.
- 1979 *Breakfast* is released in March and the group has three hit singles from it in the U.S. It sells over 11 million world wide, going platinum-plus in nine countries and gold in nine more. From March through December they play 111 dates around the world highlighted by the biggest single concert of any group in 1979, their August appearance before 106,000 fans at the Canadian National Exposition in Toronto, and by the recording of their live album on one extraordinary night in Paris on November 29th.
- 1980 The first half of the year is spent mixing *Paris* for release and in October, Supertramp's first live album reaches the public.