

## **A Tale of Supertramp, Organic Fruit Juice**

Susan Green    The Burlington Free Press    June 10, 1977

Why is it that nothing ever happens quite normally in this state? Everything seems to be touched by some strange little twist of fate, perhaps just to remind us that we're mere specks in the great scheme of things.

The scheme of things Tuesday morning did not appear to hold much promise of an interview with Supertramp, the band that played rock music's swan song a Memorial Auditorium Monday. After a night of sheer chaos trying to hear the concert, I was too worn out to ask any intelligent questions of the three Englishmen, one Scotsman and one American who comprise Supertramp.

So, a tentative appointment was set up for the next morning with the group's publicist, who promised to round up the band members. The publicist was unable to locate anyone, so I calmly went about my business, which, in the early afternoon, included a shopping trip to a local health foods store.

As I was bending over a barrel of brown rice, out of the corner of my eye I spotted the guitarist-vocalist-composer of Supertramp squeezing organic grapefruits at the other end of the store.

I introduced myself to Roger Hodgson, whose high-pitched, intriguing voice had so captured the imaginations of the high-school-age audience the night before. He introduced me to the bass player, Dougie Thomson, and we made arrangements for an interview after completing our purchases.

Back in the kitchen, over a few cups of red clover tea, we got down to talking about Supertramp's brand of music.

"If we come play here again, we'll bring security with us," said Hodgson, a native of Oxford, England. "It's a nice place to play. There is nothing wrong with those kids (at the concert). There was a communication breakdown".

"We've always thought that our music was kind of contrary to violence. We like to hypnotize people with the light show. They get off on the words and the music," Thomson said in a lilting Glasgow Scots accent.

I asked them about the words in "School" from their popular album "Crime of the Century." For example: "Don't do this and don't do that, What are they trying to do? Make a good boy of

you, Do they know where isn't at? Don't criticize. They're old and wise, don't want the devil to, Come and put out your eyes...Maybe I'm mistaken expecting you to fight...."

Hodgson thought a moment. "There are two different types of revolutions in lyrics. One that just incites listeners to stand up and start shouting 'This is wrong. This is wrong.' Any one that suggests they become aware of what's really happening and change themselves and bring about a change. The world needs that now," he said.

"The song 'School' is putting down the educational system, which is easy for us, having been through it. Reaching the age we are (both 27) and looking back logically, it (school) didn't teach me much or what it did teach me was how not to educate a child."

Thomson added, "It's not so easy if you're in it. You obviously do get frustrated then." "There are many sides to Supertramp," Hodgson said. "There's a real boogie side, a jamming side, a jazzy side, a drama side - which really is 'Crime of the Century.' It just happens that one side took off. so people kind of labeled us into that."

Both men agreed that each band member had changed a great deal since coming to the U.S., and accordingly, their music has evolved into new realms, one of them being spiritual.

"Music itself is spiritual on all kinds of different levels," Hodgson said. "I'm a spiritual seeker. The thing that most musicians strive for - most musicians that I've idolized in the past - is success.

And then when they get there, they kind of fall apart because there's nowhere else to go. And then their writing falls to pieces. Most of the bands from the 1960s, I've seen them go that way. A lot of them either take to drugs or they take to their mansion or their car and they just divorce themselves from reality. Hopefully, if success does get a bit crazy, knowing that I'm looking for something else, will keep me sane."

What was that something else? "Well, just a meaning to my life. God has given me music.

Hopefully I can be a vehicle to learn more about myself and help other as well from what I learn," Hodgson said. We all got off on the Beatles' dream. The Beatles showed how music can change the world".

"We need some respect for each other's individuality," Thomson said.

"Rock music today seems to have a void of anything meaningful," Hodgson said. "In the '60s, there was really hope there, because it exploded, because people were singing about things that meant something. It's a cycle. Maybe it will explode again in the '70s."

"Yeah," Thomson said. "It's become unfashionable to express yourself...to care. People tend to knock it. But basically behind all the facades, everybody's just as confused as the next one."

He feels that America is "the hub of what's happening in the world. All the problems are here and all the answers. In England, people are still walking around with blinkers on. That stubbornness to change is what's going to cripple them, whereas here people are so willing to change."

"I always wonder where songs come from," Hodgson laughs. "If you knew how Supertramp came together seven years ago, you'd have to believe in some kind of guiding force. If that guiding force is there then there has to be a guiding force for all our music as well. All thoughts and music are extracted from the cosmos, I suppose. The music is just coming through me. I'm just a sort of transmitter. And so, the more positive and purer I make the transmitter, the better the music is going to be."

On their latest album, "Even in the Quietest Moments," there is a tune written to "Babaji," a "very high spirit a la Christ and Krishna."

"All my life," the song goes, "I felt that you were listening, Watching for ways to help me stay in tune. Lord of my dreams, although confusion, keeps trying to deceive, What is it that makes me believe in you?...Babaji, oh won't you come to me, Won't you help me face the music, Bring out so We can sing it out, Help us find it before we lose it..."

After a few hours of tea and conversation, the two rock and rollers rode off in their superterrific camper to the next town and the next show.

Was I impressed by their music and their mystery and their manners? Bloody well right I was.