

January 2023

Hey y'all!

Happy New Year!!

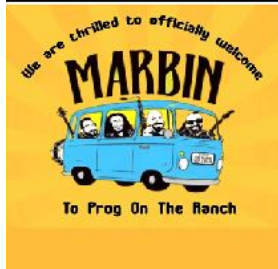
Wow! Just like THAT, 2022 is done and in the record book. 2023 promises to be a busy and exciting one. *Anticore* has an almost-full calendar to look forward to. It does have some breathing room in it, but essentially, it

realizes our main mission: to make the music of ELP available to anyone who needs it the whole year long and to perform it in a way that would make the lads proud - with raucous, energetic fervor and joie de vivre!

We'll start off the new year with [Prog on the Ranch 2023](#), on the first weekend in February. Day passes and full weekend tickets are still



Rachel Flowers
Paul Bielatowicz
Manticore
the tribute to Emerson Lake & Palmer



available at the [Crimson Sky Ranch](#) website. You can come for the entire weekend, Feb 3-5, or get a reasonably priced Day Pass to come just on Saturday, the 4th. You'll have the opportunity to see all the Saturday shows

and then end the day with a spectacular **Manticore** performance! Whichever you decide to do, we can guarantee that you'll have a wonderful, proggy experience that can't be beat!

Addendum onto the PotR bit - there's a chance we'll have a new addition to our little **Manticore** family making her debut performance down at the Crimson Sky Ranch in Florida.....yes, Ron may be getting his shiny, new custom-made Alembic Scorpion 5-string bass early, so those of you attending might possibly see the "new baby". Those of you that've been with us since pre-Halloween 2022 will remember the background piece that Ron wrote for our November Enewsletter. I'll attach it at the end of this enewsletter, for anyone that wasn't around or just happened to miss it, but in a nutshell, he contacted Alembic to have a new bass built to his specifications and is modeled after Greg Lake's unique-sounding instrument. It takes Alembic over a year to manufacture one of these

beauts, but it appears that his will be ready is less time than that. When I asked Ron for an update just a few minutes ago, here was his response:

“Nothing is definite as far as the Scorpion goes. Only thing definite is it’s fully paid for...

I was told it might be ready in January....might not though.

If it’s early to mid-January i would want go to Alembic to have it set up and dialed in by their luthier, James Fisher, and while I’m at it, get a tour of the factory and meet with the Alembic staff.

On the advice of Alembic and Trevor Lindsey, my dealer, no matter what, I’m having the Bass shipped. Safest way to ensure secure and safe transport.

So....I’m not going out there to pick it up.

My thought was, if it’s early enough in January I might have it for POTR, but in all likelihood not. I still might be going out there in January though.

Everything hinges on Alembic letting me know it’s ready.”

So there you have it. As Gilda Radner’s Miss Emily Latella used to say on SNL..... “Never mind!”

Ok, moving on, ASIDE from Prog on the Ranch, we traditionally take off the first few months of the year - from Jan through mid-April - due to all the typical winter bullshit: cold, snow, short days, unpredictable weather, and, most of all, dangerous roads. This year, PotR is an aberration. But while we’re on Winter Break, we normally update our set-list for the upcoming year, learn and add new material, and tighten up the set in places that the screws have loosened up. This year, I’ve encountered a new wrinkle: due to the fact that ELP’s more popular songs are so-freakin’ long and I have to keep our sets under 2 hours, for reasons that I’ll apprise y’all of in a future enewsletter, I’m in the uniquely precarious position of trying to put 10 lbs of *stuff* into a 5 lb bag.

On to the ***Depths Of The Lair*** portion of our publication. Here's the segment that we introduced in November, where we can give you Manticore background information and stories about the individuals on our team. This month's highlight is the story behind Little John's gong setup. Enjoy. (BTW, please drop us a line and let me know if this segment of the newsletter is interesting to you folks or if it's just a waste of space. Your replies and comments are always welcome.)

"The Gongs"

This whole crazy idea started a few years ago. I was very content playing with a couple of friends in a local cover band here on Long Island. We were playing some smaller venues and I used a nice, compact drum kit that I could break down in 20 minutes and be on my way home.



Then one day, some time in 2020, I got a call from Robert, who I have known for many years and have worked with in the past. The conversation went something like this: "Hey, so you know I'm doing this ELP thing, and I would like you to join." [editor's note: I believe my actual wording was: "I NEED you to join.] I took a moment to think and replied, "Thank you, but I don't think so." It's not that I wasn't flattered, but I hadn't played ELP music for many years and this is not something you just jump into. I knew it was a huge commitment.

So Rob said, "Why don't you come over one night next week and we will just play a little?" I figured there'd be no harm in that. I'd go, play for a few hours and that would be it. So I did and afterward, he said, "What do you think?" Well, it was a ton of fun. I said, "I'll think about it." I had always thought to myself how great it would be to be able to find musicians who could actually pull off an ELP tribute band. Needless to say, I was hooked and committed to this craziness.

So now we come to the heart of the story....what I'm really writing about - THE GONGS.

Now committed, I would have to do Carl Palmer justice. Carl's drum kit and gongs were always an important part of his drumming, so I needed to step up my game. Back in the day (the 1970's), I used to have all the bells and whistles....literally! No, really, I had the whole deal, Slingerland chrome set with 2 racks of flying toms, timpani, gongs, tubular bells, everything! But then, I got a life, and I sold most of that stuff.....but I digress.



I now had to get some gongs. So I contacted a gong manufacturer and we discussed purchasing 2 gongs. One would be a 40" (their largest) and the smaller one would be a 26". I thought that would be sufficient. I bought them and tried them in rehearsal, hanging them on 2 makeshift gong stands. After playing with that setup for a couple of weeks, I realized they just weren't cutting it. The larger one sounded just ok and the smaller



one sounded like....well basically, a garbage-can lid! And if this was just at a rehearsal, I imagined it would sound even worse onstage. Carl's gongs dominated his setup, and the stage, and these were obviously not doing the trick. So, once again, I contacted my gong company and discussed buying a larger one. The representative said they didn't have anything larger but he was sure their artisans could make one. We decided on a 52".

So I would then have acceptable gongs - a 40" and a 52". But this didn't come without its share of anxiety. I had to bite my nails for a few months, hoping my dollars spent would produce what was needed. The artisans

were very proud of their work and I was excited to get a photo of all of them standing around the gong in its raw form, before taking it over for hand hammering and hand polishing to create an amazing, beautiful and massive finished product that weighed in at close to 100 lbs.



One of my issues is not knowing when to stop. So now that I have created this Gong Monster situation,



I needed to support it. 2 problems here: first, I needed stands. I shopped online and encountered nothing that looked enticing - or even adequate, which led me to do what I usually end up doing: create them myself. The way I figured it, they had to be sturdy enough to bear the weight of two behemoths, yet light enough to transport and easily set up. After several failed designs and constructs, I came up with my current setup, using tripod bases from heavy-duty speaker stands and sourcing out the remaining components from different industries. My second issue was a drum riser. Fortunately, creating a riser to support my arsenal wasn't problematic due to my


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spent a good part of my life in the woodworking business. I decided a good starting point was an 8'x8' platform. To make it portable, I used 4 - 4'x4' plywood sections, which I carpeted and installed with twist latches to lock them in place. Hmmmmm, that was ok for the kit, but did not accommodate the gongs. Back to the drawing board. The solution was to add 3 - 2'x2' wings, which I also carpeted



and added latches to, in order to be able to encompass the entire kit. Now, I had a set-up that was worthy of representing Carl Palmer, in the most intrepid and audacious Emerson Lake & Palmer tribute show in the Western Hemisphere: *Manticore!*



After our Winter Break is done and PotR is out of the way, the  calendar picks up at [The Linda - WAMC Performance Center](#) in Albany, NY. It'll be our first time performing there and we're always excited to add new venues to our ongoing tour. I'll supply more info as the event approaches, but what I REALLY want to discuss is early planning for our May 25 return engagement at





Month	Event	Location
Jan	OFF	
Feb 3-5	Prog on the Ranch	Masaryktown, FL
Mar	OFF	
April 22	The Linda-WAMC Performance Ctr	Albany, NY
May 25	Daryl's House Club	Pawling, NY
June 24	Colonial Theatre	Phoenixville, PA
July 22	Barann Ballroom	Island Park, NY
Aug 19	The Towne Crier	Beacon, NY
Nov 11	The Strand Theatre	Hudson Falls, NY

[Daryl's House Club](#) in Pawling, NY! If traveling for a show is something that you are capable of doing, we would love for you to put this event on your calendar. Admittedly, it is on a Thursday night, which is not convenient for anybody that works a regular workweek, but this particular



show will be videotaped live for posterity and having a full house is paramount to giving a great and memorable performance. We're asking all of our fans to make an effort to come to this show or at least let people know about it. [Daryl's House](#) is a very prestigious venue in the music world with an amazing sound system, a mouthwatering menu and very music-forward attitude that makes it all about the show the musicians you're seeing

and making sure the audience is having a good time. If you had to choose only one place to see  this year, this is the place!

Let's see, I think that about wraps up the  Enewsletter for this month. I'm certain there will be some videos that will go up from the PotR show, so keep an eye on our FB page. Thank you all for signing on and for

caring enough to want to know what's going on in the world of **Manticore** and ELP. I'm hoping that by the time the next enewsletter comes out, Carl will have some idea of what he's doing to keep the Return of ELP Tour going.....maybe he'll do a Return of the Return of ELP thing nationwide or worldwide? He said he's planning on it, but that's the last thing he posted, so I'll let you know if I hear anything else. Oh, and that reminds me, since we're talking about Carl Palmer's Legacy, the inimitable [Paul Bielatowicz](#) - guitarist extraordinaire from CP's Legacy Band - aside from his appearance with **Manticore** at Prog on the Ranch, will be doing a solo house concert tour that will take him down to Florida this month and back FROM Florida next month. If you have space in your schedule for some incredible original music, and there happens to be a show not too far from you, you really need to check out his talent and his music. Here's a link to his tour and the exciting music he's produced: nosferatulive.com

Lastly, if there's anything that you'd like to know about **Manticore** - about what we do or how we do something or who we are - please don't hesitate to drop us a line and ask (we're very approachable and nice).

Happy New Year, everyone! Welcome to 2023. May you all have a wonderful, prosperous, healthy and safe year.

Peace and love!

Rob Shepard and The **Manticore** Team

www.ManticoreNY.com

@ManticoreNY



“A Scorpion is Born!”

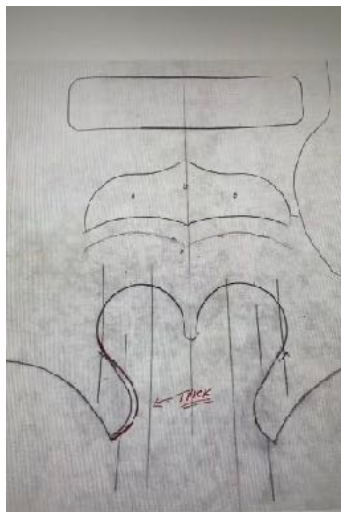
Back in 1977, with the release of their Works Volume 1 double album and its use of a 70 piece orchestra on the recording and subsequent concert tour, ELP had embarked on one of the most ambitious musical sojourns in the history of modern music.



On side 4 of the album, there are two pieces of music; Aaron Copeland’s “Fanfare for the Common Man” and an ELP original piece called “Pirates”. With both of these masterworks, we are treated to cutting edge performances by the band and an incredible blending of musical perfection with the orchestra.

We are also introduced to some amazing new sounds from Keith’s Yamaha GX-1 synthesizer and Greg Lake’s custom Alembic Scorpion 8-string bass guitar, which would come to be affectionately called his “Pirate Bass”. The sound of Greg’s Bass on these recordings and in the live performances (which I was lucky enough to have attended during this tour) was absolutely extraordinary.

Alembic, famous for their quality craftsmanship and attention to detail, as well as their unique patented signature electronic circuitry, is a favorite among such notable Bass greats as Stanley Clarke and John Entwistle, as well as Greg Lake.



Always intrigued by Greg’s beautiful Scorpion bass and that signature “Alembic sound” and never being able to capture anything that resembles it or is quite like it, I explored having one custom created for myself. So.....earlier this year, I decided to contact the artisan crafters at Alembic and have my own Scorpion built.

Working with my dealer, Trevor Lindsey (an amazing, talented bass player, touring musician and famous session man, himself), he helped me design the bass to my specific details. Every aspect of the build

is considered, including the woods selected and body contours, as well as things like adding an ornate Heart Omega carving at the tail end of the body and choices of headstock design (I chose to go with a style similar to Greg's).

The current basses that I use on stage are a Music Man StingRay and a Sterling, both are 5-string. So, I designed it as a 5-string. I like playing 5-string basses, I feel that the low B adds a dimension to so many of the ELP songs we play in our shows. I had the neck specifications matched most closely to my StingRay (with green side LED's).



Greg's Scorpion had some unique neck inlays, which were handmade by co-owner Susan Wickersham herself. She graciously worked with me, designing (2) custom inlays for my neck. A skull and crossbones (an homage to Greg and his Scorpion) and a Manticore (for obvious reasons).



Susan is a super nice lady who loved telling me about her time working with Greg Lake (he had 2 Scorpions built and several other Alembic basses and guitars) and how nice a man he was.. I was so thrilled to hear about all of it. Alembic takes great pride in their craftsmanship and the entire



process, start to finish, takes about a year or more per instrument.

I'm hoping to have it by the time we play our show at Prog on the Ranch in Florida, next year. I'll keep you updated.

Hope to see you all at our upcoming shows!

Peace,

Ron