



December 2023

Hey all!

December is upon us and here we are doing the last *Manticore* newsletter of 2023. It's sad and it's happy. Sad because it's always sad when a great year comes to an end. BUT it's happy because there's always something new in the wings that fresh and exciting. I believe it's always important to have something to look forward to. Even if it's something simple - it doesn't have to be, "Next September, I'm going to _____ (insert exotic vacation destination here)" - just SOMETHING. It could be, "Tomorrow I'm going to throw some logs in the backyard fire pit and have a dram of my favorite whisky while I work on the newsletter!"

Or “Friday nite, I’m going to call a friend to join me for some buffalo wings and watch the Ranger game!” Just something to put on the calendar for anticipatory pleasure. It is important to put it on the calendar, though. Once it’s on on the books, you should be locking yourself in for THAT activity. At least that’s how I do it. That’s a big source of enjoyment and quality of life for me. But I digress.....I’m certain there was a point to this train of thought, but it’s obviously been derailed.

November was a totally great month! *Manticore* played a kick-ass show with the fabulous War Child, Jethro Tull tribute band, at the historic Strand Theatre in Hudson Falls NY several weeks ago! What a fun time that was! Actually, the fun started when Michael Grin (keyboardist for War Child) called me two weeks before the show to tell me he was going to see Tull at the Beacon Theater that nite and he was planning on giving out flyers for OUR show afterwards. I replied that that’s what I like to do whenever possible before *Manticore* shows - but the conundrum here was that the Beacon is in NYC and nowhere near where we were going to be performing - my implication here being that he shouldn’t expect a great response from the flyers. Then he said, “well they’re going to be playing in Albany NEXT weekend - a week before our show and only an hour south of Hudson Falls. Wanna go up there and do it?” I pondered this and said, “if I’m going up to Albany, I’m not going to go up just to hand out flyers.....I’m going to get tix for the Tull show. But you’re seeing them tonite - you wouldn’t want to see them again next week, would you?” He said, “SURE!” I immediately went online and happened upon a pair of reasonably priced, front row balcony seats for the otherwise sold-out show. SCORE!! Once the tix were locked in, I right away



[Link to Nippertown review of the show](#)

opened my handy-dandy Photoshop app and made up a promo card, which I then sent right over to Staples for next-day printing. I had a hundred cards printed up and, just like that, we were in business. Spontaneity is a beautiful thing when it works.

I have to say, it's very gratifying when a venture pays off. After our Strand show, I heard from many of our patrons that they really loved the show and, you know, they were at the Tull concert at The Palace the previous weekend and there were a couple of crazy guys there giving out promotional cards afterward, hawking the ~~Anticore~~ War Child double-bill

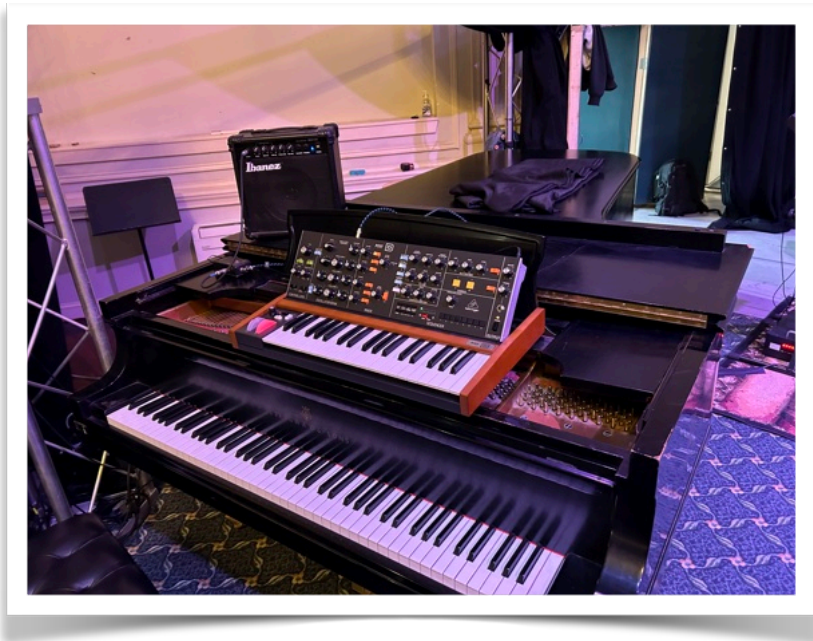


show. And they decided they had to come check it out and they're really glad they did. I'm really glad, too, because it was a spectacular show.

The six piece War Child blew the audience away with their recreation of a 70's-era Jethro Tull show and JT-appropriate costumes. They put on an outstanding performance doing many of Tull's more popular songs along with some deep tracks that are maybe not as well known. Then we came on, with our usual charm and bombast, and tore the house the rest of the way down. Needless to say, a good time was had by all and it was another show for the books.

I won't go into too much detail, but for those of you that missed us, we hauled out The Strand's Steinway 9' concert grand piano for the show. What was the occasion? Marking the 50th Anniversary of the release of

Brain Salad Surgery, back in 1973, *Manticore* did the most intrepid thing we could think of....we played the entire Karn Evil 9 Suite! 1st, 2nd and 3rd impressions, in their entirety! A feat not attempted, to our knowledge, by any band since ELP did it originally on the BSS



tour, documented on the Welcome Back triple album in 1974. And what better use would I have for a Steinway grand than playing the KE9 second impression and having the minimoog (clone) on hand, it seemed the appropriate way to do it. What an incredible feeling it was, doing the full Karn Evil 9, the way it was originally recorded (with the Benny the Bouncer lead-in).

While we're on the subject - I was going to save this for later in the newsletter, but since we're talking about KE9 - I want to give our 'Core Fans an exclusive scoop.....I've been collaborating with the EMEAPP team for the last eight months or so, cooking up a suitable way to pay proper respect to ELP with the Brain Salad Surgery Release 50th Anniversary approaching. By the way, there seems to be some disagreement on what the release date actually was. Google & Wikipedia have it as Dec 7, 1973 while Carl Palmer seems to remember it, and posted it as November 19. While some may disparage Wikipedia as being unreliable, they do source all of their data. Upon scrutiny, Wikipedia sourced BPI (British Phonographic Industry) for its date, which I view as pretty well grounded. It's possible that November 19th was the US release date and December 7, the UK release. It's a minor point, but I figured I'd

just take a moment to clarify. EMEAPP and I chose to go with December 7th.


To continue, I journeyed over to Harleysville several weeks ago and did my part for our project.

The [EMEAPP](#) (Electronic Music Education And Preservation Project) team did a video recording of me playing

Karn Evil 9's 2nd impression on Keith Emerson's 9' Steinway concert grand piano and using his personal customized split minimoog, which was perched right up on top - exactly as Keith would've had it back in the day. In retrospect, the action on the Steinway is noticeably heavy - as it should be - and even though i'd gotten comfortable playing the piece on my

Yamaha Motif ES8, there were admittedly spots in the recording where the piano got the best of me. There are parts that are particularly fast and intricate, and even though I'd had several chances to practice it on a "real" piano prior to the recording, some of the more involved parts might've come out....um, let's just say



“not-as-crisply-as-I-would’ve-liked-them” and leave it at that, shall we? I was however satisfied with my overall performance and gestalt captured therein. C’est la vie. You all can be the judge when it’s released on December 7th. In addition to my solo rendition of 2nd impression, there will be several more videos by a few other artists, which I’m not at liberty to divulge just now. The project isn’t as expansive as I had initially proposed. The object was to have friends of EMEAPP come in and play pieces from the Brain Salad Surgery album on Keith’s and ELP’s authentic vintage gear. Originally, my plan for the celebration event was much more elaborate (and ultimately costly) than what was finally decided on, but I promise it will truly be a joy to watch and read about. We’ll make sure to link to it on the  Manticore page when EMEAPP puts it out.

On to Current Events! Manticore will be doing our final show of 2023 in two weeks for [Bellmore Concerts](#) at the Bellmore Playhouse - a multiplex movie theater on Bedford Avenue in Bellmore, NY - and you’re all invited, for the mere cost of a ticket. That’s right, if you buy a twenty dollar ticket, you’ll get a free invitation to the show! Sorry, I’m being ridiculous. We’d love it if you come. This will be our first time performing in this spankin’ new venue, and we’re expecting to sell it out in advance. You know, Manticore doesn’t play very often on our home turf - for a variety of reasons, but it’s true - so whenever we do, we try to make it specialer than usual. So, obviously, as I said previously, it’s the 50th anniversary of Brain Salad Surgery’s release, so we’ll be including Karn Evil 9’s 2nd impression in the set. But wait, there’s more! Notable New York entertainer and



guitarist Michael Ponella (member of 45RPM Beyond Fab and The Shoobies) will be opening for us and also joining us onstage for a song

that we've never played before in public. And as a special treat, in our tech crew, we'll have local legend Rob Russell (of Prognosis) taking care of lighting and we're bringing the incredible Joel Simches (renowned member of Total Mass Retain and sound engineer for Nektar) down from Boston to work our sound - no pressure, guys!



So that's about it for this last 'Core Fans Enewsletter of 2023. Keeping it short and sweet. Wishing everyone a joyous holiday season - whatever you celebrate - and if you have no "holiday affiliations", celebrate SOMETHING! And stay safe and

healthy throughout the Winter. There are lots of people getting sick out there, so wash your hands a lot (moisturize, too), try not to touch your face, and hydrate.

We'll be back to you some time in the new year to keep you up to date on what we're doing on our Winter break, our prep for *Manticore's* [Prog on the Ranch](#), with exciting new set additions for 2024, and new musical adventures



that will make for a rousing start to a magnificent upcoming year. Thank you for supporting live music, for helping us make sure that the legacy of Emerson Lake & Palmer survives in perpetuity!

Peace and love!

Rob Shepard and The  Manticore Team

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