

# 1970s bands sell out to today's plastic pop

By Mark Lage  
Senior Reporter

The steps to success in the 1980s for 1970s rock 'n' roll stars have been fairly simple: Get the hair trimmed, put on some clean, brightly colored clothing, replace the rhythm section with some sort of synthetic thud and put out some videos with lots of good looking women in them.



And make sure everybody remembers what you did in the past.

The recent successes of artists such as Robert Plant, Yes, Aerosmith or Jethro Tull have little to do with the music of the '70s, good music or continued excellence over the years. It has more to do with good marketing the ability to see what sells now and to adapt oneself or one's band accordingly.

It's not hard to picture Robert Plant sitting around at home, getting bored and slightly less mega-rich and suddenly being struck by the realiza-

tion that everyone still remembers "Stairway to Heaven."

All he has to do is call up the computer center where today's pop music is really made, order up an album and then get on to the more important business of lining up video shoots and an appearance on MTV's "New Year's Rockin' Eve."

It is hard to believe that the man who appeared on that show's stage, under his multipastel lights, lip-synching his heart out on synthetic, sugary metal coming from a tape deck backstage somewhere, once sang about going to California to smoke his stuff and drink all his wine.

It's impossible not to feel downright sorry for Yes while watching anything from their '9012 Live" video release.

Old guys with their hair all puffed up, decked out in brightly-colored sweaters from the Cosby TV family line, playing synthetic, sugary metal is nothing short of pathetic. Especially considering songs like "Roundabout" or "Close to the Edge."

At least Jethro Tull's synthetic

metal comeback wasn't sugary. It was just weak and uninteresting. For some reason, '70s art rock seems to translate directly into bad imitations of Def Leppard in the '80s.

Aerosmith came back preaching temperance. I don't know what to make of that.

Mick Jagger, a hero from both the '60s and '70s, is still ugly (there isn't much he can do about that), but he is cleaned up a great deal and he did do away with his rhythm section. He even sports a pair of Reeboks in his video duet with David Bowie.

Like Jagger, Bowie didn't really need a comeback because he never really went away. He just steadily degenerated his music into synthetic, thudding pop. And enjoyed his greatest successes ever.

He also got Peter Frampton into his band, which, thankfully, is as far back as that '70s phenomenon has managed to get.

There's an obvious common thread running throughout all of this: synthetic, especially in the rhythm area. If there is a living, breathing rhythm section and the band hopes to

score big successes in the '80s, it's in big trouble. Unless the rhythm section can sound like machines, a la Van Halen and Def Leppard.

Brief aside: Ric Savage of Def Leppard was voted one of the best five rock 'n' roll bass players in the world in the Rolling Stone readers' poll, which is fairly amazing because anyone with two functioning hands can learn to play bass as well as Ric Savage in about 10 minutes, no exaggeration.

Of course, there are many '70s performers who have either continued to make good records in the '80s or have at least influenced them greatly, like Lou Reed, The Clash and Alex Chilton.

But they are all being commercially overshadowed by the acts described above, whose only contribution to this decade has been money-making imitations of the already horrible pop music made by newer bands.



John Bruce/Daily Nebraskan

## Disc jockeys say '70s tunes are similar to today's music

By Lisa Donovan  
Senior Reporter

Like the spinning disc, one Lincoln radio personality said music trends go in circles.

According to Rod Meyer, a radio personality for KFRX station, much of today's music style is similar to the sounds that crossed the air waves about 10 to 15 years ago.

"The '70s are far enough back that people can begin to appreciate it (the music)," Meyer said.



Right now, Meyer said, new singer/songwriters are beginning to emerge. Artists like Tracy Chapman, R.E.M. and U2 sing sociopolitical songs much like Carol King's and Cat Stevens' music of the early '70s.

"A lot of artists are trying to make a lot of statements," said J.J. Cook, another KFRX air personality.

Cook said it is apparent that people miss the old music by the number of remakes.

Cook lists Will to Power's "Freebird Medley" and Poison's remake of Kenny Loggins' and Jim Messina's, "Your Mama Don't Dance" as two of the recent popular remakes.

Overall, the music of the '70s has a bad image, Meyer said, because critics didn't think music by bands of the early '70s like Seals and Croft and America was musically adventurous.

"But that doesn't mean it was bad," he said. As the '70s progressed, a dance craze over, thanks to movies like Saturday Night Fever, Cook said.

"In the mid- to late-70s there was a disco boom," Meyer said.

In about 1986 and 1987, Meyer said, there was another disco boom, but it was called dance music.

Although KFRX discontinued their Saturday night dance music show, KRNU, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln station, continues

their special dance music programming.

Ron Eis, KRNU air personality, hosts a show Monday nights at 10 p.m. which plays female artist dance music.

"Half the music I play is re-mixes of 12 inch singles," said Eis, a junior broadcasting major.

"I'll probably play no more than three or four slow songs out of 26," Eis said.

According to Eis, the dance music is a spin-off of disco, but it's different because it's modern.

"It's more advanced, more studio-ized," he said. "A lot of what we hear is done by a computer."

One Lincoln night club manager said music technology has added to the dance music aura.

"Drums have been taken over by drum machines and pianos have been taken over by synthesizers," said Mike Roberts, advertising and promotions director at Celebration.

This modernization has been combined with the dance music to create technopop, Eis said.

Technopop, Cook said, is urban music with a rock edge. The tempo is more varied and a bit faster than disco, because technopop involves guitars and the music is more synthesized.

Eis identifies Janet Jackson and Madonna as the two most influential artists on the 1980s dance/technopop craze.

"You can't turn on the radio without hearing a song that sounds like Madonna or Control-influenced," he said.

Although this dance/technopop craze may fade, Eis said, it will never completely die because this type of music always branches, but still retains its roots.

"I don't think it (disco) died," Eis said. "It changed. There will still be die-hard dancers."

Dancing is one of the few things just about everyone can participate in, according to Mike Roberts, advertising and promotions director at Celebration.

Roberts said the dance-music trend peaked in Lincoln in 1985 for a good 18 months, but he attributes that to the mystique the club was enjoying because it was new.

Although many say that dance music is dead, Roberts said he doesn't see that.



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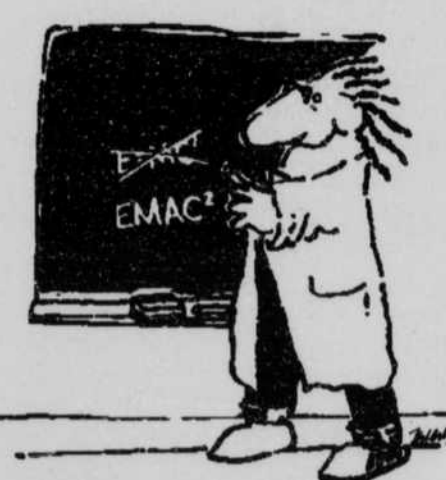
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