

# The History of Rock Music: 1976-1989

New Wave, Punk-rock, Hardcore

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## Neo-progressive

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(These are excerpts from my book "[A History of Rock and Dance Music](#)")

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### *New York's progressive-rock 1981-85*

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It was inevitable that the experimental thrust of the new wave would eventually bring back progressive-rock.

It is significant that members of the old Canterbury school residing in New York (notably David Allen, Fred Frith, Chris Cutler) were drawn to the creative ferment of the new wave.

The Henry Cow alumni were the most prolific, especially after the new wave rediscovered them. **Gold Diggers** (may 1983 - ? 1983) by [Lindsay Cooper](#) (1), **Man Or Monkey?** (aug 1982 - ? 1982) by Chris Cutler's [Cassiber](#) (1), **Work Resumed On The Tower** (oct/nov 1983 - jul 1984) by [News from Babel](#) (1), featuring Cutler, Cooper, and Dagmar Krause, and **Slow Crimes** (sep 1981/jan 1982 - ? 1982) by Tim Hodgkinson's [Work](#) (1) were among the most original releases of the time, experimenting with syncopated polyrhythms, guitar noise, found sounds and operatic vocals.

[Fred Frith](#) (2) became one of the most original guitar soloists of his generation first with his revisionist take on "world dance" that yielded the demented vignettes of **Gravity** (aug 1979/jan 1980 - ? 1980) and **Speechless** (apr/aug 1980 - ? 1981), and then via a series of increasingly experimental works, starting with the three-movement dance score *The Technology Of Tears* (february 1987) that featured John Zorn on squealing alto saxophone and Christian Marclay on ridiculous samples, before heading into jazz and avantgarde. Frith would later venture into atonal folk-neoclassical fusion with Skeleton Crew's **Learn To Talk** (dec 1983 - ? 1984), featuring cellist Tom Cora; into ambient-industrial-exotic free jazz with Maybe Monday's **Saturn's Finger** (jul 1998 - sep 1999), featuring Miya Masaoka on koto and electronics and saxophonist Larry Ochs of the Rova Saxophone Quartet; into orchestral music with **Pacifica** (jul 1995/sep 1997 - jun 1998) and **Traffic Continues** (dec 1998 - mar 2000); into chamber jazz with **Freedom In Fragments**, composed in fall 1994 (feb 1999/jan 2000 - feb 2002); into ambient music with **Rivers And Tides** (jul 2002 - aug 2003); into electroacoustic music with **The Happy End**

**Problem**, premiered in may 2003 (feb 2004 - jan 2006); and into atonal aleatory music with **Impur** (may 1996 - jan 2006) for 100 performers.

These musicians would remain an inspiration for the new prog-rock generations.

A number of USA bands, although originating from the "no wave" milieu, drew inspiration from these progressive-rock masters.

John Lurie's [Lounge Lizards](#) (2) were a super-group that toyed with all-instrumental "fake jazz". The witty and amateurish approach of **Lounge Lizards** (jul 1980 - ? 1981), featuring John Lurie on sax, Arto Lindsay on guitar, Evan Lurie on keyboards, Steve Piccolo on bass and Anton Fier on drums, whose aim was both demented and nostalgic, soon mutated into a more serious endeavour into neurotic and mildly dissonant jazz, specializing in convoluted be-bop solos and alienated, nocturnal atmospheres. **Voice Of Chunk** (sep 1988/jan 1989 - ? 1989), featuring the impressive cast of John and Evan Lurie, Roy Nathanson on sax, Erik Sanko on bass, Curtis Fowlkes on trombone and Marc Ribot on guitar, was typical of their "adult" phase.

Over the course of three decades, [Bill Laswell](#) (8) has proven to be one of the most prolific, influential and innovative musicians of the end of the 20th century. His career spans at least four musical genres (rock, jazz, funk and dub) and countless ensembles. His first project, Material, with Fred Maher on drums and Michael Beinhorn on electronic keyboards, was a spin-off of Daevid Allen's band. Their **Memory Serves** (? 1981 - ? 1981), featuring Fred Frith, Sonny Sharrock on guitar, Billy Bang on violin, George Lewis on trombone and Henry Threadgill on sax, documented Laswell's idea of austere funk and jazz fusion. Material focused on the "groove" with **One Down** (? 1982 - ? 1982). Laswell and Maher also recorded as Massacre, but their **Killing Time** (apr/jun 1981 - ? 1982) was a bit too cerebral. On the other hand, Laswell's first solo, **Baselines** (? 1982 - mar 1982), achieved an effervescent sound that stood as a summary of 20 years of crossover experiments, from Frank Zappa's big bands to David Byrne's ethno-funk combos. The EP **Praxis** (? 1984 - ? 1984) was an imaginative "lo-fi" work, with Laswell dueling a drum-machine. Laswell was one of the few rock musicians to be relevant in the history of jazz music, thanks to his collaborations with Herbie Hancock and to his tenure with Last Exit (Sonny Sharrock, Peter Brotzmann, Ronald Shannon Jackson). A new focus emerged with his second solo album, **Hear No Evil** (? 1988 - ? 1988), featuring L Shankar on violin, Zakir Hussain on percussion and Nicky Skopelitis on guitar, a session that indulged in instrumental jams of exotic new-age music, aiming for a sinister trance, a catatonic stream of consciousness, a sort of revisitation of raga-rock. Material's **Seven Souls** (? 1989 - ? 1989), featuring the usual wealth of guests, dressed up the band's "no disco" with a production derived from William Burroughs' "cut-up" technique. Yet another ensemble, Praxis, featuring two George Clinton collaborators (bassist Bootsy Collins and keyboardist Bernie Worrell) plus a mixmaster, a drummer and a guitarist (Buckethead), debuted with the EP **Transmutation** (? 1992 - sep 1992), devised jams of futuristic space-funk (such as *After Shock*) that merged Clinton, Hendrix, hip-hop, speedmetal, jazz-rock, psychedelia and dub. Blind Idiot God, John Zorn, Napalm Death's Mick Harris and the Boredoms' Yamatsuka Eye helped out on Praxis' chaotic and frantic (but also mostly disappointing) **Sacrifist** (? ? - ? 1993). Another all-star cast popped up on Material's **Hallucination Engine** (? ? - jan 1994), but the occasion only proved that Laswell's multiform persona was running out of steam. A number of pretentious collaborations defined his passion for gothic and ethnic new-age jazz, but only Axiom Ambient's **Lost In The Translation** (? 1994 - nov 1994), with Ginger Baker, Sonny Sharrock and Pharoah Sanders, was successful. Most of Laswell's energies were poured into ambient psychedelic dub, notably on Automaton's **Dub Terror Exhaust** (? 1994 - ? 1994) and Divination's **Akasha** (? 1995 - ? 1995), perhaps his best works of the 1990s. A

third avenue, which peaked with Possession's **Off World One** (? 1996 - ? 1996), had to do with ethnic music, and eventually led him to Indian devotional music. While none of them were flawless, subsequent albums became heterogeneous mosaics of hip-hop, jazz, dub, raga, electronica, drum'n'bass, etc: **Dub Chamber 3** (? 2000 - apr 2000), with a stellar combo comprising but, rock, jazz and Indian musicians; Tabla Beat Science's **Tala Matrix** (? 2000 - ? 2000), a project with master percussionists Zakir Hussein, Trilok Gurtu and Karsha Kale; **Radioaxom: A Dub Transmission** (? 2001 - jul 2001); and so forth. Much more intriguing when he is "constructing" rather than "deconstructing" music, Laswell has crossed more boundaries than anyone else and has invented more genres than he can name them (or, alas, fully explore them).

Open ensembles such as Arto Lindsay's Ambitious Lovers and Anton Fier's Golden Palominos were more similar to avant-jazz ensembles, although the music they played was avant-pop and even avant-dance.

Anton Fier (the drummer for Pere Ubu, the Feelies, the Lounge Lizards) formed the supergroup [Golden Palominos](#) (3) to play a futuristic jazz-funk-ethnic-rock crossover with a revolving cast of jazz, rock and avantgarde musicians (Arto Lindsay, Fred Frith, David Moss, John Zorn, Michael Beinhorn, Bill Laswell, Nick Skopelitis, Richard Thompson, Henry Kaiser, Jody Harris, Carla Bley, and countless vocalists). **Golden Palominos** (? 1983 - ? 1983) collated a number of calculated post-modernist jam sessions that turned the concept of counterpoint into the analogue of software programming. **Visions Of Excess** (? 1985 - ? 1985) perfected the idea, abstracting the very notion of rock'n'roll hedonism and transposing it into a sort of robotic theatre (with Fier in the role of the puppeteer). As Fier's alcoholism worsened, Golden Palominos' albums became more accessible, ethereal and unfocused: **Blast Of Silence** (? 1986 - ? 1986), **A Dead Horse** (? 1989 - ? 1989), **Drunk With Passion** (? 1991 - sep 1991). The method was rejuvenated on the song cycle of **This Is How It Feels** (jan/jun 1993 - sep 1993), a set of seductive monologues whispered in the night, that composed an analytical study of melancholy and sexuality, exuding a sense of exotic tragedy (and featuring the super-cast of Bernie Worrell, Bootsy Collins, Laswell, Skopelitis, two female vocalists, tapes and computers). While less accomplished, **Pure** (? 1994 - oct 1994) and **Dead Inside** (jun 1995/jun 1996 - oct 1996) were also pensive and ambitious works that refined his philosophy of life and art. A virtuoso of sleek and flawless productions, Fier was, first and foremost, an architect of sound, transcending all genres and all cliches.

The adult career of former DNA guitarist [Arto Lindsay](#) (14) focused on a convoluted form of Latin-funk-jazz fusion. Ambitious Lovers, the combo he formed with Swiss keyboardist Peter Scherer, penned works such as **Envy** (? 1984 - ? 1984) and the formally impeccable **Greed** (? 1988 - ? 1988) that merged Brazilian music, disco-music and avantgarde. This was the boldest experiment in dance music since Peter Gabriel and Talking Heads. The ballet music for **Pretty Ugly** (prem. jun 1986 and nov 1988 - ? 1990) marked the zenith of this phase, which soon evolved in a "pop" phase, with Lindsay crooning his Latin roots in the jungle of orchestral arrangements, as on **Lust** (? 1990 - ? 1990). Lindsay ended up wedding the appeal of abrasive, intellectual noise and the appeal of sensual, languid Brazilian music on albums such as **Prize** (? 1999 - oct 1999), which were post-rock's version of world-music.

That generation opened the floodgates to a wave of Canterbury-inspired progressive-rock combos that were as creative as utterly obscure: [However](#), the most faithful to the masters on **Sudden Dusk** (? 1980/? 1981 - dec 1981); [V-Effect](#), a sax/drums/bass trio that recorded the derivative but competent **Stop Those Songs** (? ? - dec 1983); [The Scene Is Now](#) (2), whose **Burn All Your Records** (? 1983/? 1985 - jun 1985) offered twenty surreal vignettes à la United States Of America arranged for orchestral, found and toy

instruments and whose **Tonight We Ride** (? 1987/? 1988 - ? 1988) delivered one of the best imitations of Pere Ubu's dada-pop; [Fish & Roses](#) (1), that introduced drummer Rick Brown and bassist Sue Garner on the lively and lyrical EP **Fish & Roses** (? 1987 - ? 1987) and the album **We Are Happy To Serve You** (? 1989 - aug 1989); Nick Didkovsky's [Dr Nerve](#) (1), a vastly more demanding and erudite ensemble, whose **Out To Bomb Fresh Kings** (? 1984 - ? 1984), bordered on free-jazz and the electronic avantgarde, and whose **Armed Observation** (? 1987 - ? 1987) applied minimalism and Frank Zappa's big-band scores with mathematical precision.

[Mofungo](#) (2) applied the technique of free-jazz jams to the blues, country, reggae and ska songs of **Out Of Line** (fall 1982 - dec 1982). The cacophonous pop-funk of **Frederick Douglass** (? 1985 - summer 1985) and **Messenger Dogs Of The Gods** (? 1986 - summer 1986) and the more accessible **End Of The World Part 2** (? ? - mar 1987) were summarized on the heterodox and idiosyncratic roots-rock of **Bugged** (? 1988 - spring 1988).

The [Ordinaires](#) (2) were a chamber ensemble that mixed and integrated classical, folk, jazz, raga, minimalist, circus, heavy-metal, ska and marching-band cliches on **Ordinaires** (? 1985 - ? 1985) and **One** (? 1989 - apr 1989), two of the most eclectic albums of the era.

[Chuck Vrtacek](#) (3) pioneered do-it-yourself recording with the dadaistic collage of **Victory Through Grace** (sep 1980/may 1981 - ? 1981) and excelled at instrumental prog-rock on **Monkey On A Hard Roll** (oct 1984 - dec 1984), recorded by a sax-guitar-drums trio. He matured with the philosophical, pensive, somber, melodic and electronic vignettes of **Learning To Be Silent** (aug 1985/jan 1986 - ? 1986), and with the eponymous suite of **When Heaven Comes To Town** (? 1988 - ? 1988), that fused the early collage techniques and the new impressionistic sound. Vrtacek returned to prog-rock with a new project, [Forever Einstein](#) (1), a trio whose **Artificial Horizon** (feb/mar 1990 - ? 1990) and especially **Opportunity Crosses The Bridge** (aug 1991 - may 1992) relished instrumental music somewhere between King Crimson's convoluted jazz-rock, Frank Zappa's orchestral overtures and Gong's surreal music-hall.

The [Electronic Art Ensemble](#), a quartet of multi-instrumentalists who played electronic keyboards, electric instruments and percussion, straddled the border between Morton Subotnick, free jazz and progressive-rock on the six improvised jams of **Inquietude** (aug/dec 1981 - ? 1982).

### ***Washington and Richmond's progressive-rock 1977-84***

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Progressive-rock had been transplanted in Washington D.C. and in Virginia by the [Grits](#) (who never recorded anything) and Kit Watkins' [Happy The Man](#) (1), whose **Happy The Man** (late 1976 - ? 1977) was perhaps the first significant album of USA progressive-rock. Their heirs during the years of the new wave were the [Muffins](#) (2), the premiere progressive-rock band of their time, led by keyboardist and composer Dave Newhouse and based in the Washington area. **Manna/Mirage** (? 1977 - ? 1978) was the second classic of USA prog-rock, full of colorful, melodic suites that evoke Colosseum, Caravan and Soft Machine, not to mention *The Adventures Of Captain Boomerang*, worthy of Frank Zappa's nonsensical collages. The eclectic and eventful **185** (sep 1980 - ? 1981) could only hint at the marvelous live interplay of the band.

Saxophonist Danny Finney began his career with [Idiot Savant](#) (1), whose **Shakers In A**

**Tantrum Landscape** (mar/jul 1979 - ? 1979) contained improvised music for toy instruments and electronics, and then recorded the seminal **Wake Up You Must Remember** (fall 1983 - ? 1984) with the [Orthotonics](#) (1), one of the most surreal and unpredictable combos of the era. They eventually evolved into [Rattlemouth](#), and continued to mine Zappa's clownesque anti-jazz and Henry Cow's brainy anti-rock.

Fred Frith's Rift and Steve Feigenbaum's Cuneiform were the labels that helped the genre resurrect.

Notably, the new generation of prog-rockers preferred the subdued sound of Canterbury rather than the symphonic, baroque art-rock of Yes and Genesis. Clearly one was closer to the punk aesthetics than the other.

### ***Boston's progressive-rock 1977-86***

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Another epicenter of progressive-rock was Boston, but here Canterbury and the 1970s were not a major influence. The main heroes were the [Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic](#) (11), who counted on the eclectic personalities of electronic keyboardist and composer Erik Lindgren, Mission Of Burma's ueber-guitarist Roger Miller (also on treated piano) and Mission Of Burma's tape manipulator Martin Swope. By fusing electronic avantgarde, classical music and jazz, the EP **Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic** (aug 1981/dec 1982 - ? 1983) and the full-length album **Magnetic Flip** (oct 1983/jan 1984 - ? 1984), with its triple-keyboard barbaric (almost hardcore) attack, coined a "progressive" language (aware of Carla Bley as well as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Glenn Branca as well as Jimi Hendrix) that finally updated the one invented by King Crimson and Colosseum in 1969. After another impressive EP, **Beat Of The Mesozoic** (mar/aug 1985 - ? 1985), the group disbanded, but Lindgren formed a new unit to record **Faultline** (jan/feb 1989 - ? 1989), possibly his most classic and mature musical statement, a model of tight playing and sophisticated composition.

The solo work of [Roger Miller](#) (1) was equally ambitious: **No Man Is Hurting Me** (? 1986 - may 1986) collected eccentric disco-pop gags à la Brian Eno as well as post-modernist instrumental suites, while **The Big Industry** (aug 1986/feb 1987 - ? 1987) focused on industrial mini-symphonies and emphatic lieder for "maximum electric piano".

### ***Western progressive-rock 1982-86***

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Arizona had [Cartoon](#) (1), whose **Music From Left Field** (? 1982 - ? 1983) had few rivals for melodies and arrangements. Three members of Cartoon (keyboardist Scott Brazieal, drummer Gary Parra and horn-player Herbert Diamant) formed [PFS](#) (1) in San Francisco and recorded **Illustrative Problems** (? 1985 - ? 1986), an equally ambitious and erudite album that integrates free-jazz, tape collages and classical music.

The Colorado-based ensemble [Thinking Plague](#), featuring bassist Bob Drake, played instrumental music reminiscent of Henry Cow and Frank Zappa, notably on **Moonsongs** (? 1984/? 1986 - ? 1986) and **In This Life** (feb 1988/summer 1988 - sep 1989).

Chicago's [Cheer-Accident](#), led by keyboardist/drummer Thymme Jones and producer Phil Bonnet, played off-kilter, dissonant pop on **Sever Roots Tree Dies** (? 1988 - ? 1988). Later, Jones would revisit Yes, Frank Zappa and King Crimson in lengthy suites such as

*Salad Days*, off **Salad Days** (may 1997/apr 1999 - oct 2000), and *The Autumn Wind is a Pirate*, off **Introducing Lemon** (jan/mar 2002 - sep 2003).

Also based in Chicago, the [Blitzoids](#) crafted two anarchic collages of found sounds, instrumental jams and pseudo-songs that could border both on dadaistic cacophony and on parodistic genre-bending: **Stealing From Helpless Children** (? 1987 - ? 1987) and **Look Up** (? 1989 - ? 1990).

In California, David Kerman's [5uu's](#), who had recorded the sci-fi concept **Bel Marduk And Tiamat** (? 1984 - ? 1985), and James Grigsby's Motor Totemist Guild, who had recorded the complex avantgarde jams of **Infra Dig** (? 1984 - ? 1984), merged to form [U Totem](#) (1), and released the most accomplished album of this crowd, **U Totem** (? 1989/? 1990 - ? 1990).

Two Frank Zappa alumni, both virtuoso guitarist, [Steve Vai](#) and [Adrian Belew](#) (1), carried out extravagant experiments on pop and rock. Belew's **Lone Rhino** (aug/sep 1981 - ? 1982), vaguely related to Robert Fripp's guitar experiments (not surprising, since Belew played with Fripp in King Crimson), boasted surrealistic vignettes that employed sound effects and microtones as well as disco beats.

Los Angeles nurtured [Djam Karet](#) (13) one of the most original and aggressive acts of the time. After a few self-produced cassettes, particularly **The Ritual Continues** (mar 1982/? 1987 - summer 1989), the first test of how avantgarde, psychedelia, progressive-rock and heavy-metal could be combined in formidable instrumental pieces came with **Reflections From The Firepool** (sep 1988/may 1989 - ? 1989). Among echoes of Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Yes and Hawkwind, Djam Karet developed a personal style that had no precedents. The electronic acid-rock of **Suspension & Displacement** (jul 1990/apr 1991 - ? 1991) and the brutal jazzcore of **Burning The Hard City** (jul 1990/apr 1991 - ? 1991) explored two sides of that sound. **The Devouring** (mar 1996/mar 1997 - sep 1997) fused them again, and presented a tight trio, both magniloquent and seismic, taking on articulate and symphonic pieces that were both emphatic and baroque, capable of laying acrobatic bridges between the most disparate genres.

### *International progressive-rock 1983-87*

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At about the same time, a very radical form of progressive-rock came out of Japan with [After Dinner](#), possibly the best disciples of the Art Bears world-wide, especially on their second album **Paradise Of Replica** (jun/sep 1989 - end 1989), and [YBO2](#), probably the best disciples of King Crimson, especially on **Alienation** (feb/mar 1986 - ? 1986), featuring KK Null on guitar and Tatsuya Yoshida on drums.

While commercial success was on the side of diligent imitations of western fads, such as Loudness and Anthem's million-seller imitations of Deep Purple and Van Halen, a new generation of avantgarde rock musician was being raised. This yielded a creative explosion in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

[High Rise](#) (2), featuring guitarist Munehiro Narita and bassist Asahito Nanjo, were a brutal, improvisational, punkish power-trio that recorded the relentless and extreme **High Rise II** (? 1986 - ? 1986), and the ultimate space-rock album, the legendary **Live** (? 1994 - ? 1994).

After a number of EPs, Tatsuya Yoshida's [Ruins](#) (2) found their true voice in the versatile

and cartoonish improvisations of **Stonehenge** (? 1988/? 1989 - ? 1990), somewhere between Magma's futuristic cabaret and John Zorn's thrash-jazz, while **Hyderomastgroningem** (dec 1993 - may 1995) blended Red Crayola's dementia and Art Bears' pomp.

[Hijokaidan](#), the brainchild of guitarist Yoshiyuki "Jojo" Hiroshige, produced albums of progressive cacophony halfway between psychedelic freakout and space-rock such as **Viva Angel** (jun 1983 - nov 1983), with a side-long improvised noise jam. The loud relentless free-form sonic onslaughts of the 74-minute **Modern** (feb 1989 - ? 1989) and the 77-minute **Romance** (oct 1990 - dec 1990) helped usher in Japanese noisecore.

Likewise in Germany, [Caspar Brötzmann Massaker](#) (2) wed progressive-rock, jazz and psychedelic noise in a powerful and sophisticated kind of space-rock. The tentative **Tribe** (aug 1987 - ? 1988) merely introduced a revolutionary guitarists obsessed with Jimi Hendrix, but the four terrifying jams of **Der Abend Der Schwarzen Folklore** (sep 1991 - jul 1992) roamed a moral "wasteland" that was beyond space-rock, and the apocalyptic **Koksofen** (jan 1993 - jun 1993) chronicled the end of the western civilization.

Britain, the homeland of progressive-rock, was notably poor in new talents. Derek "Fish" Dick's [Marillion](#) were the stars. **Script For A Jester's Tear** (dec 1982 - mar 1983) mixed soothing ballads and lengthy suites, but subsequent albums simply aimed for pop mainstream.

The psychedelic movement lent England its best progressive bands. The [Magic Mushroom Band](#), influenced by Pink Floyd and Gong, began to emancipate themselves from their models with **Process Of Illumination** (late 1989/early 1990 - ? 1990) and ended up joining the rave scene. [Mandragora](#)'s **Head First** (fall 1990 - ? 1991) fused world-music and cosmic music, sounding at times like Ash Ra Tempel and Tangerine Dream.

Quebec's progressive scene was much closer to France (and thus Britain) than the USA.

[René Lussier](#) (1) cut his teeth in Conventum, a guitar quartet plus violin that debuted on **À L'Affût d'un Complot** (aug 1977 - nov 1977). He formed a duo with saxophonist Jean Derome, Les Granules, that played socially-aware free jazz and folk-rock on **Soyez Vigilants Restez Vivants** (feb 1985/feb 1986 - ? 1986) in a vein similar to Lol Coxhill's **Welfare State**. His unique jazz-rock vision emerged on **Le Tresor De La Langue** (apr 1987/oct 1989 - dec 1989), featuring saxophonist Jean Derome, Fred Frith and Tom Cora, and on **Le Corps De L'Ouvrage** (? 1991/? 1994 - ? 1994), scored for an ensemble of seven horns, bass and guitar, and inspired by Frank Zappa's orchestral music.

Another member of Conventum, Andre Duchesne, continued the experiment of that group with [Les Quatre Guitaristes de l'Apocalypso-Bar](#), a guitar quartet plus drums, on **Tournée Mondiale** (jan 1987 - ? 1987), inspired by Jimi Hendrix, Robert Fripp and Fred Frith.

Their associate [Jean Derome](#), a prolific composer of soundtracks, debuted solo with the austere pop-jazz lieder of **Confitures De Gagaku** (jan/mar 1988 - ? 1988). Derome's style was the quintessence of the fusion between classical, jazz, rock and avantgarde advocated by ensembles such as Art Zoyd and Univers Zero.

[Miriodor](#), also from Quebec and led by pianist Pascal Globensky, played symphonic rock but, unlike the jazz/neoclassical groups (Art Zoyd, Univers Zero), worked on material that was inspired by circus, fair and vaudeville music, a method refined on **Miriodor** (jan 1988 - ? 1988) but perhaps best demonstrated on a later work, **Mekano** (? 2000/? 2001 - sep 2001).

Notable prog-rock works from Europe included: **Sagan Om Den Irlandska Algen** (? 1982/? 1983 - ? 1984) by Ilsidurs Bane, masters of Swedish symphonic rock, Kultivator's **Barndomens Stigar** (jul/oct 1980 - ? 1981), also from Sweden, and Solaris' **Marsbéli Kronikak** (? 1983 - ? 1983) from Hungary.

[Hector Zazou](#) (1) in France fused classical, cabaret and rock music on **Geographies** (? 1982 - ? 1984).

### ***British sound painters, 1980-83***

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The long and strange journey of bassist John Wardle, better known as [Jah Wobble](#) (2), started with Public Image Ltd's dark dub symphonies. His solo career opened with the funk and jazz ballads of **Betrayal** (? 1979/? 1980 - may 1980), set against an hallucinated (dub-tinged) background. He, too, contributed to the emergence of "lo-fi pop" with **Bedroom Album** (? 1981/? 1982 - feb 1983), a humble collection of funereal and introspective dirges recorded in his bedroom. But the multiform experiments of the 1980s led to quite different, and formally impeccable, works in his middle age: the ethno-psychedelic jazz-rock of **Without Judgement** (? 1989 - nov 1989), credited to the Invaders Of The Heart, the world-music set to dance beats of **Rising Above Bedlam** (? 1991 - oct 1991), the baroque dub-jazz chamber music of **Heaven And Earth** (? 1995 - nov 1995), the five-movement **Requiem** (? 1997 - aug 1997), the East-West fusion of **Umbra Sumus** (? 1998 - jun 1998), the mystical, Celtic, tribal psychedelic dub of Deep Space's **Deep Space** (? 1999 - apr 1999) and **Beach Fervour Spare** (? 2000 - apr 2000) featuring Can's Jaki Leibezeit on drums, the super-fusion of **Live in Concert** (oct 2001 - mar 2002) with Solaris (Wobble, Bill Laswell on bass, Harold Budd on keyboards, Graham Haynes on cornet, Jaki Leibezeit on drums), mostly occupied by the suite *The Mystery of Twilight*, etc. If only a couple of these (**Bedroom Album**, **Without Judgement**) were fully successful, Jah Wobble remained for two decades one of the most challenging musicians to emerge from the punk generation.

Vincent Reilly's project [Durutti Column](#) (1) rediscovered instrumental music. The impressionistic guitar music of **The Return** (apr 1979 - jan 1980) was inspired by Robert Fripp's "frippertronics", Brian Eno's ambient music and new-age music.

Former Be Bop Deluxe guitarist [Bill Nelson](#) (1) turned to impressionistic vignettes à la Brian Eno on albums such as **Sounding The Ritual Echo** (? 1981 - may 1981) and, best of all, **Chance Encounters In The Garden Of Lights** (? 1987 - nov 1987). His lo-fi pop enhanced with avantgarde techniques and touches of ambient/cosmic music would be influential on the independent singer-songwriters of the 1980s.

Former Yellow Magic Orchestra keyboardist [Ryuichi Sakamoto](#) (3) attempted a fusion of western music and eastern sensibility on **Ongaku Zukan** (? 1983 - nov 1984), better known as **Illustrated Musical Encyclopedia**, which led to the funky-ethnic electronic muzak of **Neo Geo** (? 1987 - jul 1987) and **Beauty** (? 1989 - nov 1989), influenced by Peter Gabriel, Talking Heads and Brian Eno.

[David Sylvian](#) (3) may have been the most ambitious of the new-wave veterans. A clever and sensitive student of Ryuichi Sakamoto, Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, Peter Gabriel and, last but not least, Holger Czukay, Sylvian coined a form of "exotic ambient dance ballad" that bordered on the avantgarde and on progressive-rock. **Brilliant Trees** (late 1983/early 1984 - jul 1984), featuring trumpet players Jon Hassell, Mark Isham and Kenny Wheeler, besides Czukay and bassist Danny Thompson, wed romantic crooning and eastern

spirituality in a new form of avantgarde ballad. Minimalist, ambient and psychedelic ingredients were mixed in a smooth and fluid substance that recalled both jazz-rock and new-age music. The suites *Words With The Shaman* (1985) and *Steel Cathedrals* (1985) were even more effective in harmonizing atmospheric timbres, hypnotic beats and aquatic keyboards, and in evoking tribal ceremonies deep into the jungle. The fusion of archaic folklore and futuristic technology, which had been a dominant theme since the early Jon Hassell records, was transported into a new dimension. The ambitious **Gone To Earth** (? 1985/? 1986 - sep 1986) offered lengthy, sleepy compositions of that ambient psychedelic funk-jazz-rock that occasionally suggested Van Morrison's **Astral Weeks** and Robert Wyatt's **Rock Bottom** (albeit without an appropriate cast of players). The humbler, acoustic-based **Secrets Of The Beehive** (? 1987 - oct 1987), arranged by Sakamoto and featuring Mark Isham and David Torn, was a more lyrical and personal work. The static patterns of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (1991) and the "symphonic poem" *Approaching Silence* (1994), devoured by metallic timbres that drive sudden bursts of electronic clusters, as well as the electroacoustic pastiche of **When Loud Weather Buffeted Naoshima** (? 2006 - aug 2007), proved Sylvian's semi-classical aspirations.

[Virginia Astley](#) (1) was an austere and solitary artist who penned the melancholy chamber sonatas, mostly driven by piano and flute melodies, of **From Gardens Where We Feel Secure** (apr 1982/jan 1983 - jul 1983).

English-Indian vocalist [Sheila Chandra](#) (1) carried out the most daring experiments on the voice, particularly in the epic-length collage of *Nada Brahma* (1985).

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