

**B**illboard Magazine, October 7, 1978: This sextet features an unusual rock lineup in that two keyboard players are featured, along with the more standard guitar, bass and drum battery, plus a vocalist (Bobby Kimball). However, he yields the lead on three of the 10 exceptional pop rock cuts to three other members. Harmonies and instrumental work shine in this debut LP, which offers another rock twist in that the opening cut is an instrumental (“Child’s Anthem”). Best cuts: “I’ll Supply The Love,” “You Are The Flower,” “Girl Goodbye,” “Hold The Line.” Dealers: The group is comprised of six top notch session players with music to match. Play in-store, especially the single “Hold The Line.”

*Cashbox*, October 7, 1978: Consisting of such noted session players as Jeffrey and Steve Porcaro, David Paich and David Hungate, Toto is a sextet which has released a collection of accessible, sophisticated pop-rock confections. Needless to say, this album boasts clean, crisp instrumental work, but Toto also possesses several capable lead vocalists. The single “Hold The Line” is receiving chart action, and such songs as “I’ll Supply The Love” and “Georgy Porgy” are also worth investigating.

*Record World*, October 7, 1978 (“Hold The Line” review): This new group of Los Angeles studio musicians step out on disc here. The instrumentation is given equal and crafty leverage and the high harmony vocals are guaranteed top 40 material. The production on this David Paich tune is crisp and the elements combine for a strong debut.

Those reviews are from the industry press back in 1978. The professionals. They knew quality when they heard it. The mainstream press were less knowledgeable and therefore less enthusiastic. Some critics were skeptical at the outset, harshly judging this group of talented session musicians for their astonishing musical prowess, almost immediately dismissing them as too good to be able to come together as a band with any promise. *Rolling Stone* famously described the album as just “an excuse for back to back instrumental solos...” Sounds good to me!

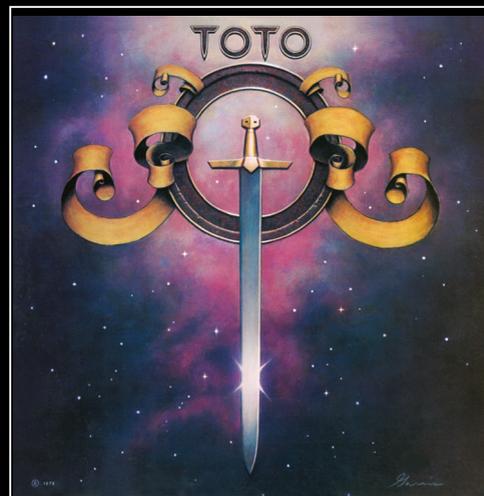
At least the band were in good company; the magazine also panned debut albums from Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and AC/DC.

I defer to British comedic legend John Cleese, discussing the first response to his Fawlty Towers script—now acknowledged as one of the best TV shows of all time. Cleese responded to an early analysis calling the script “a complete disaster” by stating: “*In this business I discovered that if you do something original, nobody gets it at the start.*”

Some may not have “got it” at the start, but at 40 years of age, the band Toto has outlived many of the publications responsible for questionable early reviews. They have also proven every possible critic wrong. 40 million times over. 40 million album sales, multiple #1 hits in multiple countries, endless sold out tours and a few Grammy Awards® for good measure. And they’re still writing, recording and touring. Respect for their music, talent and accomplishments is now universal. Some may not have understood it at the start, but they all get it now.

It’s 1977. A group of L.A.’s best session musicians and coincidentally, long-time friends, decide to form a band to write and perform their own music. They immediately score a deal with Columbia Records (now Sony).

Debut albums are something of a double-edged sword. They can either launch or bury an artist. A successful debut can be used as a credible platform to build a sustainable career upon, but if the debut falls stagnant, such a position is hard to recover from.



The thing was, before they had an album, Toto already had an advantage: the guys were already a band perfecting their craft, playing live together and making others sound good. Keyboardist, writer and vocalist David Paich along with bassist David Hungate and drummer Jeff Porcaro were alumni of the 1976 Boz Scaggs masterpiece *Silk Degrees*, with guitarist/writer/vocalist Steve Lukather and keyboard & synth wiz/writer Steve Porcaro connected from playing in Scaggs’ live band. The guys auditioned vocalist and writer Bobby Kimball from the failed group S.S. Fools. He was a perfect fit.

Toto was born.

The new band immediately set about breaking every rule aspiring bands should follow. First, despite touting Bobby Kimball as the band’s frontman, the remaining members, except for Jeff Porcaro and David Hungate, all sang lead and backing vocals. Kimball, Paich, Lukather and Steve Porcaro all featured at least

once on Toto. Despite this unusual arrangement, the album remained cohesive thanks to the band’s unique sound. And that’s where another cardinal rule was broken. The musical message was anything but narrow and predictable. In fact, the amazing diversity within the debut’s 10 tracks and 40 minutes of music, defied logic.

When challenged to allocate a genre for the album, “rock” just didn’t cover the necessary bases. Almost entirely written by David Paich, the debut covers all the elements that Toto would go on to be respected and admired for: rock, pop, jazz, progressive rock, R&B and even soul. In what would continue to frustrate critics, several of those genres could appear within one single song.

*Toto* clearly showcases what the band is all about. And even with a massive musical diversity from album to album, there are trademark sounds within this album that continue to be heard on each subsequent album right up to this day. Upon reflection you can hear just how much the debut album defined Toto’s sound.

The self-titled debut LP *Toto* was released October 15, 1978. It made an immediate impact with music fans, launching four singles, three of which were commercial hits: “Hold The Line” spent six weeks in the Top 10 and “I’ll Supply The Love” and “Georgy Porgy” also charted within the Top 50. The album was a worldwide success, charting from the USA (#9) to Japan, Australia, Germany, the UK and Sweden, just to name a few.

Make no mistake about it—Toto delivered a classic debut. It may have later been outshined by the multi-million-selling *Toto //*, but nothing would have been possible without this astounding debut.

Fans of intelligent, well-arranged music knew this was something special. The exquisite instrumentation of “Child’s Anthem” was just the beginning. Listening back to this fresh new master from original tapes is like being whisked back to the studio where it was recorded. The vibrancy and freshness of these songs is still there and the energy emanating from the performances is such that any artist would be proud of what was captured back in 1978. The Paich-sung “Manuela Run” defies its age, as does the progressive-leaning “Girl Goodbye,” which quickly became a live favorite. “Hold The Line” would become the band’s first essential hit that demands inclusion in every live performance and is known by a worldwide audience of fans and casual radio listeners alike.

The legend of Toto begins here.

“Well I’m out on the road  
And the devil’s got my soul  
And I’m looking for the Lord  
In New York City  
Yeah I’m out on the run  
Got some heat, got a gun  
If they don’t find me soon  
It’ll be a damn pity” – “*Girl Goodbye*”

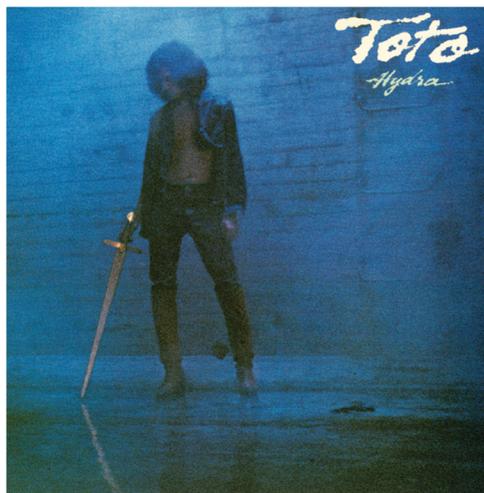
**D**ebut albums only become legend after time allows. But the critical and commercial success of *Toto* gave the band the leverage they needed with label Columbia Records and a sense that they'd made a mark. Now it was time to prove what they could really do.

So of course Toto, being who they are, made a completely over the top, grandiose prog-pop-rock record that once again failed to follow any rules or the blueprint of the debut.

It's 1979, Toto are gathering momentum on radio with a couple of very commercial hits, so what better way to kick off the new album than with a seven-and-a-half-minute progressive masterpiece to keep fans and critics guessing?

The now-classic title track "Hydra" is Toto and it's never sounded as good as it does here. The wide expanse of the track and the dramatic chord changes are fully exposed, not to mention the orchestral arrangement and the extended guitar solo.

*Hydra*, the album, is described as a commercial success, but it didn't match the debut's sales or impact. At least not to the mainstream. Toto fans delight in this album's excesses and the harder progressive edge. Bobby Kimball takes lead on four tracks, Luke just one (the album's hit single "99"), but it's David Paich singing the album's three most dramatic tracks ("Hydra," "Lorraine" and "All Us Boys") plus his domination of the songwriting that makes him the MVP of album number two. The song "White Sister," with its driving riffs, bombastic drumming and urgent delivery became an instant fan favorite, played to this day in the band's live sets.



In 2018, *Hydra* has never sounded quite like this. The new 'from scratch' mastering is a work of art. The process the band went through to make these the 'definitive masters' for all time was quite something. Longtime Toto collaborator Elliot Scheiner along with Gavin Lurssen and staff deserve the accolades. They reworked the first three records from original master tapes, with the band involved throughout the process.

The band's original 1/4-inch un-EQ'd tapes and 1/2-inch un-EQ'd 'takes and starts' were first put through the baking process, a necessary step after all these years to prevent the tape from falling apart when played, then digitized and sonically expanded for the results you're listening to here—on CD and the authentic vinyl experience.

Steve Lukather raves about the new audio: *"You hear these records like never before! It's like a blanket was taken off the speakers and it is clear and present...just killer. We were freaking out hearing parts that were buried, and the depth and clarity is truly inspiring. It's a whole new way of hearing all the old stuff."*

All of the studio albums featured here were also overseen by Elliot Scheiner, Gavin Lurssen and his team, with Lukather adding: *"The rest were already pretty good but we dusted them off and made them fresh. Gavin is a sonic genius, 100's of Grammys between them...NO hyper-compression bullshit!"*

This is exactly what all these remarkable records truly deserve. Sonic genius to match the musical genius within.



It's often called 'the difficult third album,' but don't tell that to Toto. There was no desire to play safe or repeat what had come before. This was their 'big rock record,' or in Lukather's words, "*the band's attempt to be an arena rock band,*" mainly to defy several critics, that in all truth, were probably envious of the collective skills within the band.

There was frustration with some critics that just didn't get Toto—too diverse, too polished, too damn good. Punk was in the air and musicians playing exceptionally well wasn't in vogue. And the band were tired of ballads being released at singles; "99" for instance, got a shot instead of the band's preference for "White Sister."

*Turn Back*, Toto's uncompromising 1981 release saw a tougher, guitar-dominated sound as the band premeditated. In many ways it was a more direct approach. The band worked with producer Geoff Workman (who has worked with The Cars, Queen, Journey and Foreigner amongst others) on this occasion, with Lukather crediting the famed engineer/producer with "*setting a new and very different sound for us.*"

The fiery "Goodbye Elenore" was popular on rock radio, with the band at their most natural best. Perhaps the fans and general radio listeners were more in tune with the band at the time.

For me, the Lukather-sung pomp-rocker "I Think I Could Stand You Forever" is a major highlight. A song with a sentimental heart, but big on riffs and big on melody. The classic Toto rocker, really. And "If It's The Last Night" is another track that needs more praise and attention. That's a rock 'n' roll anthem right there. The layers of production we take for granted now are just immense when compared to what else was around at the time.

Listening back to all these records today gives us a unique perspective. Because in hindsight these first three records are what built the Toto name. Every Lukather riff, every Kimball wail, every Paich piano or keyboard melody, every Steve Porcaro keyboard or synth fill and of course the super-charged rhythm section of David Hungate and Jeff Porcaro dominating. For a band with no set style or sound, they sure as hell still managed to sound like Toto all the time.

Hit single aside, the label sensed commercial stagnation and were pushing for a bigger return, even though the band were continuing their worldwide impact, with chart success in Australia, Sweden, Germany, Canada, Japan and Norway.

The band was restless.

Their response? Toto did what only Toto could do.

One of my favorite quotes is from a 2013 interview with UltimateClassicRock. Steve Lukather described the situation and mindset the guys were in: "*Fuck this, we're gonna go for it with the biggest, most obnoxiously overproduced record of all time,*" hilariously adding "*we were just trying not to get kicked off the label.*"

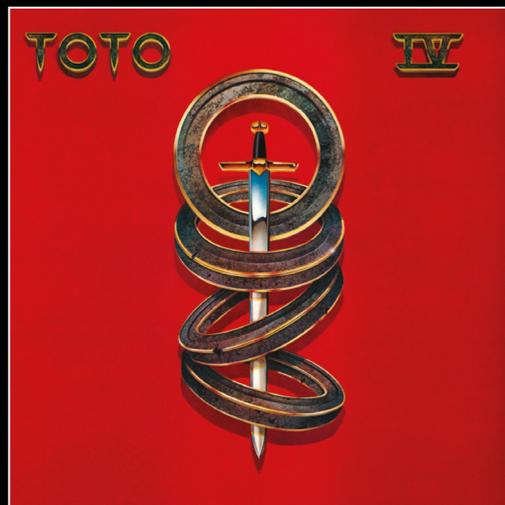
They nailed both objectives...

**W**ith the mindset of writing and recording *“the biggest, most obnoxiously overproduced record of all time,”* Toto, in just their fourth year together, set about changing history. The band that their peers had called *“collectively the best musicians on the planet,”* were on a mission.

The fourth album featured a mix of old and new approaches. The band went back to the more familiar commercial sound of their debut, but at the same time, opened up the recording process to outside guests, with the likes of Lenny Castro, Timothy B. Schmit, Tom Kelly, Joe Porcaro and James Newton Howard contributing to the record’s huge orchestral sound. This record also saw the first sighting of a young Mike Porcaro contributing a cello performance on “Good For You.”

Toto IV took the best part of a year to record. The band headed off to Abbey Road Studios in England for part of the recording process, with the legendary complex, Sunset Sound in Hollywood used as the main base. Sunset Sound has hosted such recording guests as Guns N’ Roses, the Beach Boys, the Rolling Stones, Van Halen, Prince and Led Zeppelin. Additional work was done at Hogg Manor in Sherman Oaks. Hogg Manor of course was the name given to David Paich’s home studio, which incidentally, was destroyed in the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

Engineers Greg Ladanyi (who also mixed) and Al Schmitt were critical to the album’s multi-layered sound and pristine mix. The label loved what they heard. The all-important marketing tagline was “Toto Brings IVh Their Greatest Album Yet.” They were right.



The 10-track album was released April 8, 1982 and had immediate impact. “Rosanna” was the lead song and Luke’s voice was the first vocal to be heard. His smooth, deeper tone contrasted brilliantly in the chorus with the higher, powerhouse voice of Bobby Kimball.

Billboard reviewed the single upon release, giving their approval by stating, *“The group’s strongest singles shot since ‘99’ is another compelling mid-tempo ballad. The arrangement is more complex than anything Toto’s known for, mixing rock power chords with softer passages.”*

A similar arrangement was employed for the album’s closing track, “Africa.” That’s right—let that just sink in a little—the album’s closing track was a song which, in the short term, became a worldwide hit and the band’s first and only US #1.

*Toto IV* was a fully-involved band collaboration, featuring wider writing credits, with Steve Porcaro providing the solo composition “It’s A Feeling,” which he also sang lead on. Lukather wrote and sang on “I Won’t Hold You Back,” with Paich and Kimball delivering the best vocals of their careers thus far elsewhere in the album.

The album would go on to win no less than six Grammy Awards® in the categories Album Of The Year, Producer Of The Year (credited to the band as a whole), Record Of The Year (for “Rosanna”), as well as Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocal(s) to Jerry Hey, David Paich & Jeff Porcaro (arrangers) for “Rosanna,” Best Vocal Arrangement for Two or More

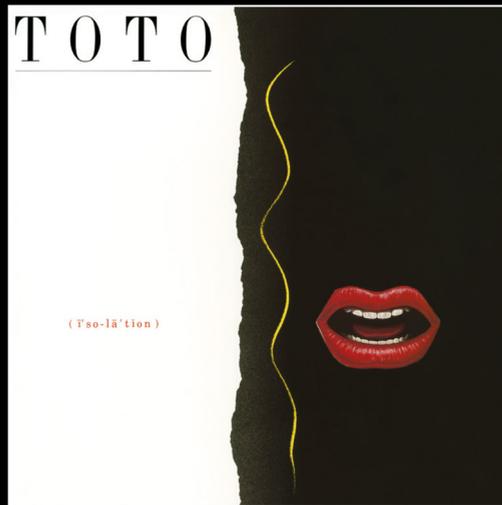
Voices for David Paich (arranger) for “Rosanna” and Best Engineered Recording, Non-Classical to Al Schmitt, David Leonard, Greg Ladanyi & Tom Knox (engineers) for the album *Toto IV*.

Incidentally, how many remember that Steve Lukather won an additional Grammy that year, for Best Rhythm & Blues Song, awarded to Bill Champlin, Jay Graydon & Steve Lukather (songwriters) for “Turn Your Love Around,” performed by George Benson?

“Africa,” with its unique tribal rhythms, quirky lyrics and that monstrous chorus, has taken on a life of its own over the years. It has been covered in just about every musical style known to man (and a few that previously weren’t). A quick browse of YouTube will find tributes to the song in pop, rock, metal, orchestral, power metal, acoustic, a cappella, choir, jazz, male, female and even comedy. The song has been sampled dozens of times, used in commercials, movies, TV shows (*South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Scrubs*) and even a video game. Then there’s actors Kristen Bell and Dax Shepard. The newlywed pair gave the “Africa” phenomenon another chapter with an epic music video tribute filmed on location in Africa (of course!). The pair stated that their *“sole objective was to rage hard and honor Toto properly.”*

Toto IV was *“our do or die record”* says Lukather, adding that they were all *“overwhelmed, but yet elated at the success”* of the album. It was a flawless record and it just doesn’t age. Although it has been repeatedly remastered and reissued over the years, this can now be described as the definitive version. It’s bigger and bolder than ever.

And the legacy of that Toto song will continue to live on.



For a band that had just broken through with their first #1 single, a multi-platinum-selling album, worldwide acclaim and radio and video play, the last thing you expect is turmoil. Unfortunately, that is exactly what Toto faced. Issues with designated frontman Bobby Kimball forced the band to act. At the same time, bassist David Hungate chose to step back from touring to establish himself as a session musician in Nashville.

Perhaps the fact that it wasn't one voice alone that defined the group made the loss of Bobby Kimball less traumatic compared to the many stories where change has signaled the beginning of the end for a band. With Lukather, Paich and Steve Porcaro all singing lead on *Toto IV* and Kimball only featuring as a partial lead on the album's two biggest hits, it didn't seem as big a hurdle to replace the original frontman.

The job fell to former LeRoux and Trillion vocalist Fergie Frederiksen, who marveled to me, before his untimely death in 2014, that he couldn't believe his luck in being asked to join what was one of the biggest bands in the world at the time. It was Jeff Porcaro that championed the decision to bring Fergie in. Lukather at the time was a big fan of Eric Martin (Mr. Big) and had him audition for the role. However, Jeff was determined that Fergie was the guy for the songs that would become the *Isolation* album.

Fergie Frederiksen's joining the band was the catalyst for a musical left turn. Because why would Toto take the easy path?

*Isolation* remains such a unique album in Toto's discography. Fergie's vocals were front and center for most of the record; the guys really threw him in the deep end, taking a risk they didn't have to take. Fergie sang lead on seven tracks and played a bigger role in the writing of the album, credited on four tracks. *Isolation* also marked the arrival of new bass player Mike Porcaro, brother to Steve and Jeff and someone who would become a much-loved fixture within the band.

The album didn't match the commercial success of *Toto IV*, but it wasn't for lack of songs or a strong frontman. It is almost impossible to follow on from the type of success *Toto IV* delivered. However, the album still achieved Gold status in the USA and was Top 10 in Europe and Japan. The Paich-sung "Stranger In Town" became another radio hit for the band.

Talking to fans today, it seems that like myself, many rate *Isolation* as one of the band's strongest and most enjoyable albums. Track by track, I rate it as a masterpiece of '80s rock music. Let's face it, the harder-edged sound of *Isolation* is infectious and the songs are unique and have stood the test of time; perhaps even improved over the years.

This new master offers so much more—I hear more keyboards, clearer bass and guitar riffs and more of the textures within the album like the harmonies in "Change Of Heart" and the orchestral parts of "How Does It Feel," plus one of my very favorite Toto songs, "Endless"—the clarity and dexterity of Lukather's sublime work on this song cannot be understated.

Fergie was a dominant and powerful vocalist and despite only appearing with the band for this one album, his name was forever etched into Toto history.

Album number six started life in exact comparison to that of the previous album *Isolation*. The band had successfully moved on from Bobby Kimball on that album, only to now be hit with a big problem with new vocalist Fergie Frederiksen—on this occasion he struggled to perform in the studio. Anxiety, which compounded the more the guys tried, took control. Initial progress in the studio was stalled and Frederiksen eventually let go. For the second time in two albums, the search for a new frontman was underway again.

Once again it was Jeff Porcaro that suggested and backed Joseph Williams for the role. Lukather had grown up with Joseph and his brother Mark, so knew him well. It worked. He gelled with the rest of the band and the recording of *Fahrenheit* was completed and of course sounded completely different than the preceding album.

For this record the band took another left turn, or maybe this time it was a right turn? Toto featured five of the most in-demand session players of the last decade, so their constant movement in and out of different styles always sounded natural and easily done.

*Fahrenheit* was a more pop-orientated record, featuring perhaps the most '80s sound of all their records. A Westcoast/jazzy undertone forms the musical base on several tracks. David Sanborn, Chuck Findley and Jerry Hey appeared as a brass section that could arguably be called 'the best of the best.'

Miles Davis was a megastar guest. He was a fan of the band and upon hearing the album asked Lukather to join his touring band. Steve Lukather: "*Miles was a revelation and he did it for free! He liked us...*"

Don Henley, Michael McDonald and Michael Sherwood, among others, all appeared as backing vocalists, showing the kind of pedigree of artist that the band was attracting. Some of Fergie Frederiksen's vocals were retained and used as part of the harmonies.

The band still managed to deliver some of the best rock anthems of the time—"Could This Be Love," "Till The End" and "We Can Make It Tonight" all remain on my Toto high-rotation playlist.

Once again, these new masters highlight parts previously forgotten. The keyboard riff in the closing moments of "Could This Be Love" is a natural highlight as is a more revealing guitar sound on several tracks, the opening track "Till The End" in particular (a favorite of Lukather's). "I'll Be Over You" and "Without Your Love" hit the charts, keeping Toto's winning streak in place. "Lea" was a hit in South Africa, but the band were still disappointed that they didn't have a hit with a Joseph Williams-sung single.

The subsequent tour was a great success, both critically and commercially, with Lukather telling me in a 2004 interview that Joseph "*came in, skinny, looked the part, way into it. Sang his dick off on the record. Painless, it was fun. Go on tour, killer fucking tour. Just ripped it, he was great every night.*"

The same couldn't be said about the band's videos, which by now were an essential part of marketing for acts in the '80s, driven by the mass appeal of MTV and other emerging music video shows. The band didn't consider shooting a video high priority—as the early clips clearly show! The differences between them could only be measured by the width of Bobby's moustache or the height of Luke's hair.

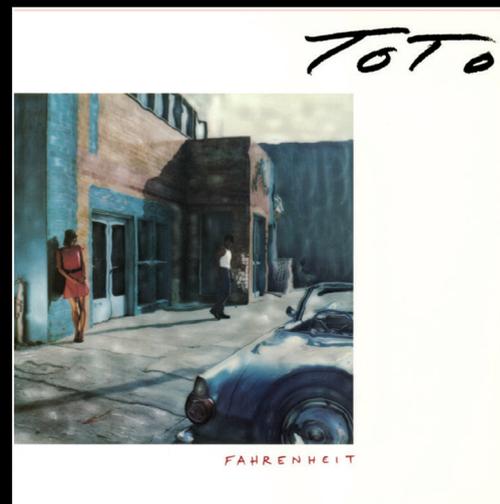
Who could forget the timeless cinematic classics such as the tough 'inner city' landscape of "Rosanna" or the advert for brown corduroy that was the performance-video "Hold The Line." Another favorite was in fact Jeff Porcaro's directorial debut for the single "Till The End." Featuring a smooth as silk, gliding Joseph Williams, dressed as what I am reliably informed was a Jimi Hendrix-inspired *Electric Ladyland*-style ensemble, the action is something I don't think I've seen since. A young dancer Paula Abdul also made her debut as the video's seductress. And Spinal Tap may have cornered the market on blackness, but one look at the distinguished "99" video and you'll see Toto owning 'none more white' like no other band in history.

I ask the question though—just how was it that Mike and Jeff Porcaro managed to look cool in every single video?

There are of course, some much better moments in video for Toto. "Stranger In Town," "Don't Chain My Heart" and "Melanie" all come to mind as great concept videos shot over the years.

Steve Lukather spoke candidly about the process: "*MTV ruined music for us. We're not actors; we're musicians. With MTV, the (music industry) machine came in and made everything (into) plastic music that was made for beautiful people who are plastic.*"

There is, of course, an upside with outlets like YouTube giving fans a trip back in time. Lukather sums it up nicely: "*You think I liked wearing stupid clothes and mullets? Now, thanks to the joy of the Internet, I will have to live with this forever. It's a good thing I have a sense of humor.*"



**T**he title most obviously signifies that this was Toto's seventh studio album, but for me 1988's *The Seventh One* was a title that held an almost mystic overtone. It was an intricate record, with depth and maturity that showed that Toto was still growing, still evolving. To start, it was the anthems that hooked me, the immediate hit of adrenaline each one would bring. The commercial hit "Pamela," the feel-good "Stop Loving You" and "Straight For The Heart," and don't forget the simply magnificent "Only The Children."

The jewel in the crown, however, was once again the album's closing track: "Home Of The Brave." The song is a masterpiece in capturing raw emotion and projecting it in a way that you can't help but engage with. Even harder to do that in the studio, but this song encompasses so much energy. It is the climatic final anthem that assumes the mantra of an opera, ensuring listeners are left exhausted upon its conclusion. The song runs nearly 7 minutes, feels like just 4, but it could have gone 20. Paich, Lukather, Williams & Jimmy Webb were credited as writers. David Paich: *"We called upon an old friend, the legendary songwriter Jimmy Webb to help us navigate our way thru the lyrics."*

I still remember walking down a cold, wet street in Brighton, England in 1993, a foreigner heading for nightshift at a 7/11 during a bleak winter. It was the only job I could find, but I had a regular companion for those long, unfortunate walks. It was a well-worn cassette of *The Seventh One* running in my Walkman, keeping me from thinking of the inevitable bags of shit I would have thrown at me by intoxicated customers at three in the morning, or the lighter fuel-snorting vagrants that would pop in randomly to steal stuff and tell you what an asshole you were. But when I had this tape playing I was lost in the songs, soaking up the energy of this album, and in particular "Home Of The Brave," thinking, *"Just how does anyone manage to write such a breathtaking song? How do they capture such energy and how did they know this is the kind of song I wanted to hear?"*



Capturing lightning in a bottle, they call it. Defined as 'performing a rare feat, a moment of creative brilliance.' Can you think of a more perfect explanation? Toto have captured 'lightning in a bottle' and so many memorable moments over forty years of 'creative brilliance.'

I can't imagine how many times I wished the 7/11 had a cassette deck instead of blaring the dreck presented on BBC Radio One. I could have zoned out all shift.

*The Seventh One* was my favorite Toto album for a long time. It still is, on certain days. And that's the glorious truth about Toto and their vast catalogue of styles and sounds. Favorite albums can depend upon the listener's mood, the cycle of the moon or the purpose for playing it in the first place—driving, relaxing, working or working out.

*"There's something for everybody here folks, come check this remarkable band out..."*

*The Seventh One* became so much more than just an 'anthems' record. Over time, it has been the more understated tracks that I came to appreciate. I don't think there is a finer song than "Mushanga," a song that stands as another perfect example of everything that makes Toto music so great and so unique. Layers of vocals, subtle one moment then unapologetically grandiose, horns, tribal rhythms, orchestral passages. And good hooks. Don't forget that every song has a hook you can hang your hat on.

"A Thousand Years" is another one, the moody ballad that leads to perhaps one of Toto's most underrated songs, "These Chains." I could (and have) get lost in these songs for hours.

Joseph Williams delivered a performance of a lifetime and the album overall was critically acclaimed and fan appreciated, but commercially it was a far bigger hit throughout Europe than in the USA. Sadly, this glorious record was the last to feature Joseph Williams until the more recent reunion.

Williams was a strong contributor in the writing department here. If you've listened to his solo works, you can easily hear his influence over this album. It was almost unbelievable that the band would at the time lose such a valued member, but personal demons made the decision inevitable.

But what's anything to these guys, but just another challenge to take on and overcome. Little did they know that the biggest challenge yet was just around the corner.

Toto's eighth studio album is one that will always be tied to the tragic, untimely death of drumming legend Jeff Porcaro. Jeff was a prolific performer, acting as the backbone on literally thousands of records --from Boz Scaggs, Michael Jackson, Joe Cocker, Richard Marx, Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd, John Fogerty and countless others --all while driving Toto, the band he formed with David Paich, to stardom. His unique rhythmic approach was the foundation of Toto's sound, with Paich telling *Modern Drummer* in 1992 that Jeff wasn't just a drummer; "he was an all-around musician."

The loss of Joseph Williams after *The Seventh One* found the guys with no front-man at the beginning stages of writing and recording for what would become *Kingdom Of Desire*. All eyes turned to lead guitarist and part-time vocalist Steve Lukather who had, in-between Toto duties, released his debut solo album, Lukather, acting as guitarist and vocalist, as well as fronting a solo band for select live dates. He reluctantly assumed the role and admirably delivered his best vocal performance to date on an album that was surprisingly tougher and more guitar driven than ever before.

The pared-down line-up of Lukather, Paich, Mike and Jeff Porcaro created a rock masterpiece, and when *Isolation* or *The Seventh One* isn't propped on top of the podium, this is my favorite Toto record. It came at a time when rock was riding high and if you absorb everything this album has to offer, you'll see that it is one of Lukather's finest moments as a guitar player. He simply dominates this lengthy, free-flowing hard rock record.

Interestingly, the guys decided to make a small switch in the album's original track sequence, flipping the positions of "Kick Down The Walls" and "Only You" from the original CD, breaking up the two back to back ballads that were "The Other Side" and "Only You."

In a break from tradition, the bulk of the songwriting was credited to the band as a whole and for the first time, an outsider supplied two tracks. Acclaimed guitarist/producer Danny Kortchmar helmed the recording of "Kick Down The Walls," while he also penned the title track "Kingdom Of Desire." The mood and the message of that song fit the album to a tee.

Tragically, just as the band was set for meetings about the upcoming tour's setlist, Jeff Porcaro died August 5, 1992 of an undiagnosed heart condition, attributed to a family history of similar problems and a hardening of his arteries in the months prior. He was just 38.

Not many 38-year-olds can claim a life full of achievements such as Jeff could. AllMusic called Jeff "arguably the most highly regarded studio drummer in rock from the mid-'70s to the early '90s." Jeff was posthumously inducted into the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame in 1993.

With a complete tour booked and a crew of 40 on the payroll, the immediate desire to cancel all plans was soon overcome with the need to continue on for the sake of others, even though the band would never be the same.

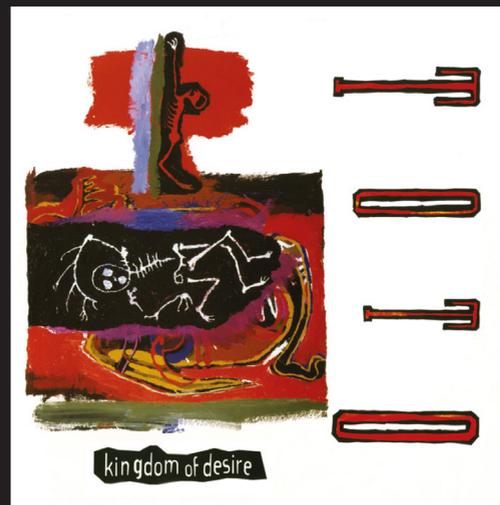
In stepped drummer Simon Phillips, another highly-regarded session musician from England. With credits that included Jeff Beck, The Who, Judas Priest, Tears for Fears, Mike Oldfield, Michael Schenker and Gary Moore, Simon was the only drummer considered and the only one asked to fill-in for the *Kingdom Of Desire* tour. He would soon be named as the band's permanent drummer, staying on for a 12-year tenure. The band credits him with helping them continue on after the tragic loss of Jeff.

Unfortunately Toto aren't immune from tragedy, and it could be argued that the guys have endured more than their fair share. Especially for such a tightknit group. Jeff Porcaro was taken long before his time and brother Mike Porcaro is also no longer with us, cursed by the diagnosis of ALS, which I think is a particularly cruel disease to hit anyone that gets their passion and drive from movement. I wouldn't wish this or any debilitating disease upon anyone, but imagine a musician being robbed of the ability to play their instrument.

I only met Mike once in person. It was in Sydney, 2008, and it wasn't for long, because Mike kept to himself and seldom hung around after the show. He was exactly as described by Luke—humble, a heart of gold, quiet and an utterly sweet guy. I don't even remember what we said, because it wouldn't have been much, but I will always remember his super kind demeanor. Mike lost his battle with ALS on March 15, 2015.

One-time vocalist Fergie Frederiksen lost his long battle with ill-health a year earlier, January 18, 2014. Despite only fronting the band for one album, Fergie's legacy lived on due to the strength and popularity of the *Isolation* record. He may have been fired from the band, but there were no hard feelings between the guys and I know they were in touch during his illness and before his death.

It's the true definition of family and class to watch the band support their mates that needed financial and moral support in hard times.





It would take three years for the band to release their ninth album *Tambu*, their first without Jeff Porcaro. Toto were again a four-piece as per the *Kingdom Of Desire* album. New recruit, drummer Simon Phillips, was fitting in as well as anyone could have hoped. Steve Porcaro was there to help out the guys, mirroring his more limited role on the previous album.

Once again Lukather handled lead vocal duties throughout, with David Paich adding a few lead lines. But Paich wasn't a part-time player—this album has a particularly strong keyboard presence, proving what an unsung hero he has been throughout the band's career. Yes, he has played on a thousand records, but I often wonder if David has been paid his fair dues outside of the high esteem in which his peers hold him. He has spent a career making others sound great, as well as being one of the prime influences of Toto's overall sound and a key songwriter from day one.

Steve Lukather: *"I played a lot of piano on this record and Dave played a lot of synths. I had written a lot of piano ballads and Dave said, 'You play that—I'll find another part' and most of this was cut live, no guitar. I overdubbed 90% of the guitars. Simon's new presence did change the sound...how could it not?...but we thought we had some good stuff on there."*

*Tambu* was, in essence, another new start for the band. The mellower, lyrically darker album reflected the mood of the past few years. It was a mature, lengthy and complex record. It also contains what I consider one of the best Toto ballads ever, "I Will Remember." The song deserved more than the chart success achieved in the UK and parts of Europe.

Steve Lukather: *"Co-producer and Grammy® legend producer-engineer Elliot Scheiner brought an organic feel to the record and we wanted to make a left turn after Kingdom Of Desire. 'I Will Remember' will always have a place in my heart for many reasons. My dear brother Miguel Ferrer starred in the coolest video we ever did and he is now gone...it will always remind me of our amazing times as wild men in Hollywood!"*

On a more personal note, I didn't take to this album like I had others. I don't think it is as strong as the albums either side of it, but at the same time, I talk to other Toto fans that swear by this album and didn't like *Kingdom Of Desire* as much. That's just the way it is with Toto, so much diversity...everyone has their favorite albums and songs.

Interestingly, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers drummer Stan Lynch had recently left that band after an 18-year tenure and joined Toto, not as a drummer, but as a significant writer for this album, contributing on six tracks. Interestingly other co-writers with Lukather and Paich were Glen Ballard (Alanis Morissette, Wilson Phillips, Michael Jackson, Van Halen, Aerosmith), who co-wrote two tracks, with friends of the band and previous writing guests Randy Goodrum and Fee Waybill also appearing.

Songwriting has always been a strength of this band. Naturally, without writing skills, the best session musicians in the world (as they were) wouldn't get far under their own moniker, unless they had the songs to back up the skills. And Toto certainly did.

Toto have over the years written individually and collectively. David Paich: *"Sometimes writing alone, you hit a creative brick wall. That's where the collaborative process can open doors and be more productive, allowing contributions and different perspectives that free you as a songwriter to dig even deeper."*

Steve Lukather: *"So many ways to write a song. We just do it. Everyone jumps in."*

"I was born in the land of the sun  
 And the tall green grass  
 And I don't understand  
 How all this has come to pass  
 How we've come to surround ourselves  
 In a sea of thieves  
 In a land without learning  
 Only the fools believe

I went driving last night  
 On a dark canyon road  
 Had the sky to myself  
 But I wasn't alone  
 Had the pain of my lifetime  
 For my company  
 How did it end up like this  
 For you and me" – *"I Will Remember"*

The *XX* compilation was a tribute to the band's twenty-year career, from formation in 1977 through to the time of this release in 1997. The album features unreleased offcuts and demos along with live cuts from a recent trip to South Africa.

*XX* features a couple of amazing studio cuts that highlight Bobby Kimball's finest upper range vocals. "Right Part Of Me," which is described as David Paich's tribute to Elton John, is quite the orchestral epic. And opening the set is "Goin' Home," a track that defies the traditional definition of an 'offcut.' It is classic anthemic Toto from start to finish.



Steve Lukather: "This was a B-side bonus cut record made up of things that didn't fit on a particular record, and we had a 20th Anniversary and no product. Our then-manager Hartley got us a little money and Elliot Scheiner came in and finished a few things with us and it was a gift to the deep-cut Toto fans."

But for me, this release is all about that song. You know the one. The near 12-minute live version of "Africa," recorded in South Africa with a local choir and five additional percussionists found by Simon Phillips. 18 accomplished musicians, doing what they do best, playing by the seat of their pants, makes for a voyage into musical bliss.

Toto live is a completely different experience than Toto on record. As it should be. But there are live concerts and then there are live experiences. Seeing Toto live is an experience. It's never the same and you never quite know what the guys will play—besides those three tracks!

When attending a Toto show, you are attending with others of the same mind and opinion as you. It is such a warm friendly environment and it feels like a family reunion. Always familiar faces, always familiar smiles.

The main aspect however is the guys on stage. You are witnessing a group of the very best musicians on the planet. If a top tier artist was recording and a guitar ace was needed, Luke would get the call. Keyboards? Gotta have David Paich. On bass,

the king of rhythm, Mike Porcaro. Keyboards and orchestral arrangements? No one better than Steve Porcaro. We've already talked about what a gun Jeff Porcaro was, but Simon Phillips was just as in-demand on the other side of the Atlantic.

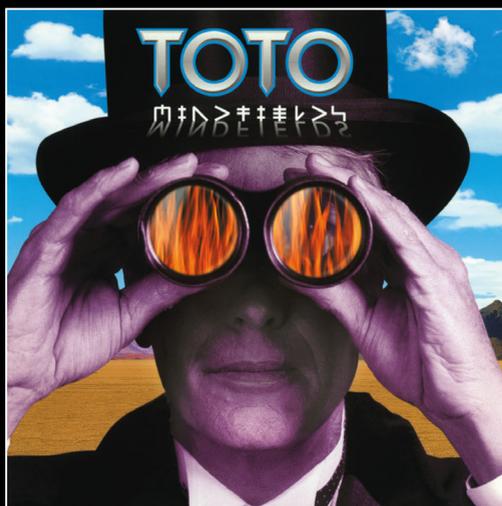
Collectively they are "the tightest band on the planet" and watching them is a joy to behold. In a cool one-on-one interview in 1993, guitar pioneer Eddie Van Halen, who once formed a one-time "band" Phunnot with Lukather, described Toto to him: "I've never seen a band play tighter than you guys. You, Paich, the Porcaros—rest in peace, Jeff—are probably the best musicians collectively in any band."

Encased in my permanent memory was witnessing a jaw-dropping rendition of "Africa," performed on the *Falling In Between* tour, where after an extended jam, the guys would one by one take a bow and exit the stage, eventually leaving only drummer Simon Phillips alone on stage to close the song and the concert. Literally an unforgettable moment.

Fortunately, the band has captured many of their unforgettable performances over the years, with live CDs and DVDs: *Toto Live*, *Absolutely Live*, *Livefields*, *Live In Amsterdam* (celebrating their 25th anniversary), *Falling In Between Live*, *Live In Poland* (to celebrate 35 years) and the archival *Live At Montreux 1991* release. Just listen to the glorious eight-minute-plus "Rosanna" on the band's 1993 release *Absolutely Live*. The extraordinary keyboard solo from David Paich followed by some jamming Lukather guitar work. Priceless.

The band has toured the world relentlessly since their debut. To see it in writing is quite daunting. It would be easier to list the years they haven't toured, but that doesn't do the guys justice: 1979, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, with 2018 dates booked and selling out and plans for 2019.

I wonder what the band will do to celebrate their 50th Anniversary in 2028?



Promotional activity in Europe for the *XX* release saw Bobby Kimball join David Paich to talk to the press, with the duo finding reconciliation that would lead to Bobby's full-time return to Toto. In 1999 the epic *Mindfields* album was released. I think 'epic' is a good word to describe it, as this is the band's longest studio album, clocking in at over 79 minutes and featuring the band's longest-ever studio cut, the 9-minute-plus smoldering blues of "High Price Of Hate."

The 14-track opus saw writing contributions from everyone, creating a quite eclectic album that once again celebrated the diversity in Toto's music. Long songs, and extended instrumental sections, saw the band cover rock, hard rock, blues, R&B and tender ballads, plus a free-flowing 8-minute epic in three parts to close the album. It was very much a Toto album. And for the second time in this box set, there's a track flip. The smooth opening track "After You're Gone" is moved back to where "Cruel" was originally located (track 12), promoting "Cruel" to the opening track.

*Mindfields* to me is one of the band's best sounding records. The perfectly balanced mix gave all instruments a clear sound and allowed the diversity the sonic space it needed. The Toto/Elliott Scheiner-produced album was released in March 1999 in Europe and Japan, but in the USA, a domestic release didn't occur until November 1999, further proof of the band's continuing European popularity.

If we're picking favorites, it is a mid-album triple that keeps drawing me in. The edgy rock of "Caught In The Balance" (that guitar tone!), followed by the tender Lukather-sung ballad "Last Love," then the feel-good melodic rock of "Mad About You" show the diversity within the record while delivering three knockout choruses.

Following *Mindfields*, the guys continued to tour, but what followed would be the longest break between studio albums for the band since forming. They would celebrate their 25th Anniversary in 2003 with a new tour and a subsequent celebratory DVD release, *Live In Amsterdam*.

*Mindfields* was the band's most collaborative album in terms of co-writers, with writing contributions from Paich, Lukather, Kimball, Simon Phillips, Mike Porcaro and Joseph Williams, Stan Lynch and Randy Goodrum and Jed Leiber. And while the core lineup of the band has remained fairly constant over the years, there is a substantial cast of guests that have played an important part in the Toto sound—both in the studio and live—that haven't been mentioned among these liners to date. Those guests are acknowledged here.

Lenny Castro – percussion; Marty Paich – string arrangements; Joe Porcaro – percussion; Timothy B. Schmit – backing vocals; Richard Page – backing vocals; Chris Thompson – backing vocals; Greg Phillinganes – keyboards, lead and backing vocals; Keith Carlock – drums; Greg Ladanyi – engineer; CJ Vanston – keyboards, production; Trevor Lukather – backing vocals; Steve McMillan – mixing; Michael McDonald – background vocals; Tal Wilkenfeld – bass guitar; Leland Sklar – bass guitar; Tony Spinner – guitars, backing vocals, lead vocals; John Jessel – keyboards, backing vocals; Tom Kelly – backing vocals; Bob Ludwig – mastering; Mark T. Williams – arrangements; John James – live vocals; Donna McDaniel – live vocals; Jenny Douglas-McRae – live vocals; Chris Trujillo – percussion; Nathan East – bass, vocals; Chuck Findley, Gary Grant, Jim Horn, James Pankow, Tom Scott and Bill Reichenbach, Jr. – brass; James Newton Howard – orchestral arrangements.

The Toto family is a large one.

**T**he most significant part of this Toto 40th Anniversary release is the new material. The first disc of this set being played by many I'm sure. For the purists out there, this could be the final disc played. If that is the case, what a journey to take—from the debut until now. Toto have delivered some astonishing music. Their evolving sound and growing maturity have been ever-present. Whether you started as a fan of the debut, or perhaps a more recent convert, hypnotized by one of the several thousand “Africa” covers on YouTube, Toto is our band.

These session guys from Grant High in Van Nuys (except for David Paich) have made their 40 trips around the sun count for more than your average Joe. And their voyage has influenced millions of others.

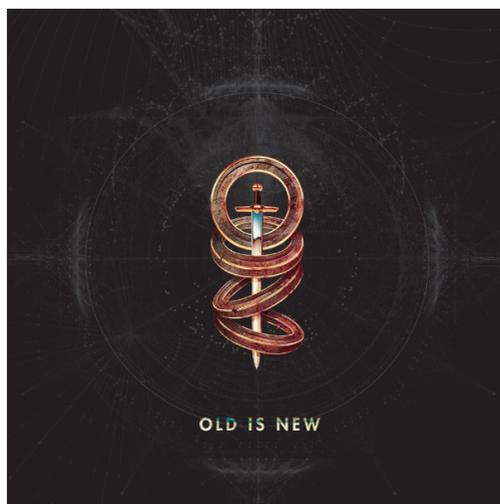
The final disc features all-new material. Well, mostly. It's certainly all previously unheard. After this project was given the green light, the band and Sony went back into the vaults to pull out master tapes from the original sessions. Discovered were several tracks that were partially finished or recorded at different times in the distant past; left off different records for different reasons.

The band decided to complete the tracks, updating them to sit alongside four brand-new 2017 songs written and recorded especially for this occasion. The best of both worlds.

The five archive tracks were all from a period 1981-1984, meaning we get to hear Jeff Freaking Porcaro again! Mike's there too, along with David Hungate.

There's one aspect of these past recordings that I didn't consider until Steve Lukather talked about it. The guys are sitting there listening to parts recorded by their 20-year-old selves. And now they get to play alongside those parts. It's an extraordinary thing to contemplate.

*“We re-wrote new sections of the old stuff and inserted it into the old tracks,” says Lukather, “and then we played to our keepable parts from when we were like 22-25 years old. We overdubbed on those keeping Jeff and Mike and Jeff and Hungate's parts and basic track parts and guitars and piano. We needed to keep the spirit of things from the old era. It was wild playing to my 24-year-old self or whatever it was... old school.”*



Let's look at the songs individually:

### 1 - ALONE

This is classic Toto. Well, classic updated Toto. The great Vinnie Colaiuta guests as drummer on this track and delivers a serious groove as expected. Luke adds bass and all guitar parts, with Paich and Steve Porcaro handling their regular duties. Joseph Williams sounds a million bucks on this anthemic rocker.

### 2 - DEVIL'S TOWER

One of the earliest tracks, featuring Jeff Porcaro and David Hungate in their full glory. The original drums, bass, piano, organ and electric guitars are kept from the 1981 track. Vocals and additional guitars newly added. The opening bars of this song are an immediate throwback to the band's earliest sound, but the rest of the track now sounds more contemporary, especially the way it has been mixed and mastered. It's a free-flowing Toto rocker that could easily fit on either the last album *Toto XIV* or *Toto IV*.

### 3 - FEARFUL HEART

This is a beauty. Featuring Jeff Porcaro, Steve Porcaro (on synths), Mike Porcaro with Steve Lukather (guitar and piano) and David Paich (keyboards). Joseph Williams takes over the track with a lead and backing vocal that controls the melodies of the song. The rhythm pumps hard and the layers of keys make this a complex track that at times sounds unlike anything the band has done before, yet still classic Toto.

### 4 - SPANISH SEA

“Spanish Sea” is another of the new “old” tracks. Written and recorded during the Isolation sessions, the band wasn't happy with the original chorus and chose to abandon it. In 2017 Toto wrote a new chorus and recorded that, along with a new Joseph Williams lead vocal to go with David Paich's vocals. Additional guitar parts were then added as well as new synth parts and a solo to make it sound as fresh as the all-new tracks. You can hear the classic Jeff & Mike Porcaro rhythm section instantly, along with Lenny Castro's percussion fills. The song is pure Toto and yes, you can definitely hear a hint of “Africa.” *“It was unreal how good it felt to play with Jeff 25 years later,”* added Lukather, *“and Mike who has been gone two years now...It's just a different vibe and man, it really is cool to hear Jeff and Mike. It's instantly them isn't it!”* It sure is.

### 5 - IN A LITTLE WHILE

We head back to 1981 for this beautiful, soulful ballad. The Steve Porcaro-written tune has input from the rest of the guys to help turn it into a band song. Lukather's familiar tone jumps in for a newly recorded vocal—he really does the song proud. Jeff Porcaro and David Hungate supply the subtle rhythm, while the hints of Steve Porcaro and David Paich keyboards run alongside Luke's acoustic guitar. Joseph Williams' backing vocals and Lenny Castro percussion add even more layers.

### 6 - CHELSEA

This is one of the brand-new tracks, which to these ears sounds more classic than some of the classic tracks here! The guys captured the vibe of the '80s here, with some great Joseph Williams vocals giving this track the feel of the *Fahrenheit* album.

### 7 - CHASE THE RAIN

Here is another very delicate song, with light percussion and a somewhat dramatic feel. This song belongs to Steve Porcaro. Steve provides almost all keyboards, bass and the lead vocal. Nashville's session king Shannon Forrest taps into the spirit of the band for the drum parts, just as he is now doing on tour. The song was written by Steve Porcaro with Steve Lukather and Joseph Williams. The other three new tracks were, for the record, written by the four guys together.

### 8 - OH WHY

David Paich wrote and sings this quirky little number that breezes along, except for a bridge that sounds right off one of those first three records. Luke calls it *“his Beatles tune.”* Lukather adds all guitars and a little sitar for good measure. It's actually a keyboard-heavy track, with new vocals impossible to tell that they didn't come with the song's original parts.

### 9 - STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

This big rocker comes out of nowhere, especially in contrast to the last song. This is Toto at their heavy, bombastic best, with all dials turned to 11. Vinnie Colaiuta is beating the hell out of the drums, with Joseph providing one of his more aggressive vocals in recent years. Luke's killing it on guitars and bass, which is prominent in the mix, giving the song a big fat sound and a fitting conclusion to this disc of material. A dramatic new track.

### 10 - WE'LL KEEP ON RUNNING - WHAT SO NOT & TOTO FEAT. SKRILLEX

Toto meets EDM on this new original track that the guys wrote together with electronic act What So Not on the spot. Lukather: *“We recorded it in one night, then Emoh from What So Not took like three years to fully realize it, messing with all the tracks EDM style. It's a catchy tune. Old meets young. An experiment gone right.”*

# TOTO

**O**n reaching the extraordinary milestone of 40 active years as a band, there is some reflection from the guys on the achievement and what the legacy of the band is. But there's always so much going on, the band hasn't used this occasion to look back. They still have both eyes on the future.

Toto still has a lot to say and a lot to play.

To conclude the conversation that the *All In* 40th Anniversary release has inspired, I would like to extend a thanks to the band and everyone, top to bottom, involved in the writing, performing, recording and releasing of Toto music these past 40 years. I have had a taste of life on the road and it is not at all easy, nor very conducive to anything that resembles a 'normal' life.

So while these guys have the most amazing careers and are clearly still having a ball, it isn't without sacrifices that we as fans don't see.

It has been a great honor to be asked to write these essays and I conclude with a message on behalf of the millions of fans and followers of Toto—to the band, I simply say, thank you.

*Steve Lukather: "We never dreamed of 40 years. We thought 10 was perhaps a grandiose idea yet here we are and really having a second career almost. It has been fantastic reconnecting to our original home at Sony and working with new and excited people and us as a band will always keep the spirit of Jeff and Mike with every groove we play."*

*"Why do we still do it? Something keeps sucking us back in, like there is more to do. If for no other reason than to honor Jeff and Mike and prove to ourselves—even at 60-60+ years old...rock 'n' roll the way WE do it is not dead."*

*"We always fell between the cracks style-wise. That's what pissed off the critics. The same band that did 'Hold The Line' did 'Georgy' too..."*

"Hold The Line," "Georgy Porgy," "Africa," "Stranger In Town," "Home Of The Brave" and a whole lot more....

*Andrew McNeice is a Tasmanian-based journalist and writer; owner of MelodicRock.com; lifelong Toto fan; and the author of previous liner notes for Loverboy, Starship, Terry Brock and Toto's 35th Anniversary DVD Live From Poland.*