

January 23, 1975... Genesis Lamb Lies Down on Broadway concert in Berkeley. 50 years ago. Really?

50 miles is such a very long time ago. Just noticed there will be a special re-release of the Genesis album Lamb Lies Down on Broadway in a few months, a 50th Anniversary sort of thing, although half a year later than it should be. That album ties into a lot of things in my life, including cycling.

I was very much into what is now called "Progressive English Rock" in my teens. I was also into electronics, and it was through building Heathkit receivers that I was introduced to radio stations like KSAN, KOME, KSJO, KFAT, the first three featuring music that was too long and perhaps a bit too cerebral for the normal Top-40 radio stations. I recall being in my bedroom, part of a converted garage at my parent's house, 15 years old, hearing an 11-minute-long song by War titled "Fidel's Fantasy" and could not believe how it instantly hooked me. This was music the likes of which I'd never heard before! Atom Heart Mother by Pink Floyd. The Yes album (by Yes). Anything and everything from Procol Harum. Emerson, Lake & Palmer too. And Genesis "The Musical Box" from their Nursery Cryme album. From "The Musical Box" came lines that, for some reason, stayed with me forever-

You stand there with your fixed expression
Casting doubt on all I have to say

Yeah, the usual thing of being young and feeling like nobody really understands you.

There was a record shop in Los Gatos, "The Galactic Zoo", that was promoted by KOME (think one of their DJ's, Greg Stone, might have owned the place?) and carried all the cool English releases and... you could sometimes buy "Import" albums (produced and shipped from England) a couple weeks ahead of their US pressings. They cost more but supposedly had better sound quality. And so it was that I found myself driving the "green bomb" (my parents station wagon) from Redwood City to Los Gatos to buy the Lamb Lies Down on Broadway album, just to be able to play what I'd heard on the radio as soon as possible. Every night I was listening to the genre that became known as Progressive English Rock from 10pm to 1am or so, three hours in which nothing was more important than my music. (I'll point out that it was only recently that I'd gotten my driver's license; previously I'd ridden my bike there, but around the time I was 18 I decided it was time to get a driver's license because, well, easier to do the boyfriend/girlfriend thing).

I went to a fair number of concerts, and remember the most-technically-amazing was the first time I saw Emerson Lake & Palmer at Winterland, Feb 1974. I'll never forget the opening of the show, with the synthesizer programmed to play by itself as it rose out from the bottom of the stage, playing "Welcome Back My Friends." Unbelievable.

But the most elaborate show had to be Lamb Lies Down on Broadway at the Berkeley Community Theater. By that time in my life, January 1975, almost 19, things in my life were heavy with confusion and conflict. Did I want to go further with bike racing? What about college? I was in my freshman year at Canada Jr College, but where to after that, and what were my plans for "life?" And the girlfriend stuff, with a long relationship that was beginning to time out, if that makes sense. At that time I desired stability, I wanted things to continue, and yet everything around me was changing. It all seemed so intense and difficult, but of course, in retrospect, much of it seems foolish and easy compared to "real" life later on.

Ultimately, that concert, that album, represents the point in time where a lot of things changed for me. My bike racing, my two years (long time for someone that age!) relationship with my girlfriend... maybe that's all that changed, but it seemed like a big deal at the time. A couple months later I met Karen, who I'd marry and raise a family with, open up a bike shop, and experience all manner of things I often didn't feel prepared for (which puts me in good company with everyone else I think). But there are constants, from distant past to today, that remain. I still ride a bike as much as possible, I still avoid driving as much as possible, and I still enjoy the same music I did way back when. And my former girlfriend (Jenny; I should have given her a name earlier!) and I are both in long marriages, each of us with two kids (one boy, one girl). In the end, everything works out as it should.

But was that really 50 years ago?