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Colin Scot LP – Peter Gabriel's second outside session.

The first I knew of the debut Colin Scot album came via Barry Lazell's *Wax Fax* weekly column in the music paper *Sounds* in the early months of 1980. Lazell's column was focussed on discographies or obscure releases and successfully drew my attention to a number of rare records that ultimately would find their way into my collection. Lazell had covered Genesis in *Wax Fax* back in 1977 spread over five weeks and was the first discographer (to my knowledge) to attempt to detail the band's output. The subject of the column that caught my eye back in 1980 though was for a US reissue label, called Visa, which specialised in collectable or obscure albums. Amongst these was a record called *Colin Scot* (Visa IMP 1009) which Lazell dubbed a "superstar session (with Peter Gabriel etc.)".

At this point I had already made the transition from being just a fan to becoming a collector of Gabriel's work (both with and without Genesis) and had what I thought to be a very comprehensive collection of his recordings. So it wasn't difficult for me to commit to tracking down a copy of the *Colin Scot* album. A visit soon after to Lotus Records in Hanley (near Stoke) and my order was placed. This was the first time I had taken this sort of trouble to fill a gap in my collection and place my faith a record shop to get me an album "on import". I remember being warned by the guy behind the counter that it might take some time to get hold of it and indeed it was some months later when the shop called me to confirm the album had arrived.

When I picked the album up (and handed over what felt like a fortune - £5.50!!) my attention was drawn by a removable sticker which listed the stellar cast. Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman and Bob Fripp combined to conjure up images of a lost progressive rock classic. The bus ride home couldn't end soon enough! However, having got the album home for a listen, that initial joyful anticipation was soon clouded by disappointment and doubt. The album was a typical singer-songwriter's album (from 1971, the sleeve made clear), containing a style of music that I had long since moved on from by 1980.

Worse than that, Gabriel's contributions were difficult to detect. The aforementioned sticker aside, my copy of the album came with virtually no details, such as who was featured on which tracks and what they contributed to them. A few further spins of the album provided little help and while I became very familiar with its content in trying to identify just what Gabriel did and where he was featured, I never really warmed to the album as a whole. A small number of tracks stood out – 'Nite People' and 'Do the Dance, Davey' particularly – but the rest seemed a bit ordinary, in places just too smooth for my ears. I preferred music with a bit more meat on the bone as it were or stuff that took advantage to some degree of the modern technology then available to artists that were prepared to take a few risks. But that didn't stop me wondering why Gabriel was on this album in the first place, what contribution he had made to it and precisely when.

As bigger and better discographies appeared, my knowledge of this obscure album expanded but this just added to the need to find out more. Geoff Parkyn's *Genesis Illustrated Discography* published in 1983 confirmed the existence of the original UK release of the *Colin Scot* album (United Artists UAG 29154 issued in 1971) and Spencer Bright's *Peter Gabriel An Authorised Biography* from

1988 made reference to some of the famous participants and the aliases they had assumed on the album credits to avoid contractual implications. Gabriel's involvement in the *Colin Scot* album was therefore confirmed and while these sources threw a little more light on matters, it was in truth nothing more than a copy of the UK gatefold sleeve would have told me had I chased a copy of this down. (I recently discovered that my Visa import copy should have contained this information on its inner sleeve!) Nonetheless the missing details added to the intrigue with Gabriel appearing under the pseudonym "P. Angel Gabriel" along with a host of other peculiar names (Collins being "P.C. Genesis") listed under the heading 'Vocals'. (Note that a Dutch reissue of the album (on United Artists) sometime in the 70s retitled the album *Colin Scot with Friends* and proudly emblazoned the guest stars' names across an amended front cover. It would be interesting to know if the Dutch artwork offers any better information having revealed who was involved in this "Superstar Session".)

Further information on the album pretty much dried up for nearly 20 years. I'd occasionally dig out the Colin Scot album and play it to like-minded friends but with very little to tell him it remained nothing more than a curio within my album collection.

Thanks to the internet and a 2006 reissue on CD the background to this oddity within the Gabriel/Genesis discography (as well as those of Fripp, Yes, Lindisfarne and VdGG) can now just about be pieced together. I have ploughed the internet for reminiscences from those involved (including producer John Anthony) and found just one piece of substantial information to add to the sleeve notes that accompany the CD. It appears that most of the famous musicians involved in the recordings have long forgotten they were ever there. For Gabriel's part, he often recalls his first session with Cat Stevens (in early 1970) but his recollection concerning his contribution to *Colin Scot* around 12 months later has yet to find its way into print.

So I have Peter Hammill to thank for providing that small but important missing detail and this courtesy of a very obscure piece of audio from 1976 preserved on YouTube – search "Peter Hammill and Guy Evans talk about Robert Fripp" and you can hear the VdGG vocalist recall that he appeared on the *Colin Scot* album as part of a chorus of vocalists comprising Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Jon Anderson and Jane Relf (sister of former Yardbird, Keith Relf which must have pleased Gabriel, a confirmed fan of the band during his teenage years). (The CD sleeve notes/credits also include Steve Gould (Rare Bird), Alan Hull (Lindisfarne), Linda Hoyle (Affinity) and Anne Steuart (Tudor Lodge) among the gathering of backing vocalists.)

Returning to the actual music for a second, with Hammill's statement that the backing vocalists appeared as an ensemble, it seems clear to me now that Gabriel is most likely among the collection of voices that you can hear on the tracks 'Nite People' (penned by Scot) and 'Lead Us' (penned by Neil Innes) which are the only two tracks on the album that feature the choral backing. However those expecting to pick him (or anyone, except Anne Stuart who provides the 'Top C', for that matter) out of the crowd will be disappointed. Jon Anderson does have the distinction of being clearly heard singing in unison with Scot on the song 'Hey Sandy', which I now understand, was written in the memory of Sandra Scheuer, one of four students killed at Kent State University in 1970. (Neil Young's 'Ohio' famously dealt with the politics of this ugly scene in contemporary American History.) So, fans of Yes get a slightly richer deal than do the Genesis ones. Interesting for Gabriel buffs is the inclusion of several songs credited to Martin Hall (Wolverhampton based poet associated with Gabriel's early solo career, most notably on the song 'Excuse Me' but also

responsible for the lyrics to ‘Get the Guns’ (recorded by Alan Ross) and ‘You Never Know’ (recorded by Charlie Drake). However, there is no evidence at all to link Gabriel to the Martin Hall songs contained on *Colin Scot*.

In a rare review of the CD reissue, esteemed King Crimson biographer Sid Smith states for the record (see sidsmith.blogspot.co.uk) that Gabriel, Hammill and Jon Anderson are featured on ‘Lead Us’, but doesn’t namecheck Collins, Relf or Steuart in the same manner. Either Sid Smith has got this from someone involved in the record (he is after all a respected expert on the career of Robert Fripp); or it’s supposition based on the credits; or he’s heard the same audio clip of Hammill on Youtube as I have. Oddly though, Smith makes no such claim for ‘Nite People’ preferring instead to highlight the contributions of Fripp and VdGG drummer Guy Evans. That may simply be the reviewer needing to make the interview insightful and varied without name- checking every single contribution by any one of the special guests, although Fripp is mentioned three times and Anderson twice. I personally think that Gabriel is featured on both tracks but it would be nice to get this confirmed from a reliable source, such as the man himself...

So how did Gabriel get involved in this album, when was he involved and when in 1971 did the resulting record find its first release? These are all questions that have plagued me for years and now I feel I am very close to finding answers.

The answer to the first question is fairly simple – albeit one based on supposition rather than hard fact. Producer John Anthony was at this point house producer for the Famous Charisma Label and had made albums with VdGG, Rare Bird, Lindisfarne and of course Genesis’ *Trespass*. Anthony also produced an album for Affinity (featuring Linda Hoyle) as well as a demo session with Yes (before they signed to Atlantic) and therefore it’s most likely that Gabriel (along with members of all the above bands) was invited to sing at the sessions at the request of his then producer.

Precise dates for Gabriel’s involvement in the sessions are unknown although recording dates are given for each of the four bonus tracks included on the 2006 CD, which reveal that the album sessions took place between January and March 1971. Given that Gabriel, Collins, Hammill et al are known to have all sung their parts together, could it be they did so during a break in, or immediately following, the *Six Bob Tour* in early February 1971? Or maybe the singers got together during a short period of inactivity for all concerned at the end of February or during mid-March? One of the CD bonus cuts is an alternate take of ‘Nite People’ without backing vocals and this is dated 2 February 1971. Assuming the backing vocals were added later to whatever take was actually used on the album, any of the above slots are possible. It’s likely though that Gabriel’s wedding on 17 March 1971 probably favours February.

An interesting fact confirmed by the CD sleeve notes is that the album sessions were finished ahead of securing an album deal for its release. (It’s not known if Charisma was offered this option but it seems ridiculous to think that they weren’t.) United Artists were approached and elected to sign Scot to the label and chose ‘Hey Sandy’/‘Nite People’ (United Artists UP 31526) as a single ahead of the album. Demo copies of the single show a release date of 11 June 1971 (revised from 4.6.71 - see cat45.com) and are clearly marked “from the forthcoming album *Colin Scot*”. A very rare mini feature/interview published in the 7 August 1971 issue of *Disc and Music Echo*, refers to the recently released album which suggests either late June or early July as the likely release date. The same article confirms that the identities of the host of famous (some not then famous) participants could

not be revealed for contractual reasons. The search for further references in the UK music press goes on and perhaps one day a confirmed date could well emerge.

The album didn't have the commercial impact that Scot was hoping for (and wasn't helped by the need to keep the musicians' identities a secret) and United Artists weren't involved in his subsequent career. His links with the Charisma artists involved in this record were maintained for a couple of years or so as there is evidence of him supporting VdGG later that year and he played at the Great Western Festival in May 1972 where Peter Gabriel appeared with the central portion of his head shaved, but that's another story...

Colin Scot passed away in 1999 having made just 2 further albums in the 70s for Warner Bros and were it not for his famous friends' involvement in his debut album would be all but forgotten except by his small but very devoted group of fans that continue to reminisce through the power of the internet about this practically unknown folk singer.

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