



FAD GADGETS

Rhodri Marsden on three of the latest must-have gizmos currently putting the prog in progress.

DEVIALET ASTRA

Hi-fi amplifiers are generally thought of as rather uninteresting objects, performing basic functions without drawing too much attention to themselves. French audio brand Devialet, however, have no truck with this kind of attitude. The exterior casing of this amp matches the finesse of the audio engineering within; inspired by Art Deco, it's designed in partnership with the Opéra National de Paris and decorated with 23-carat gold leaf that's hand-applied by master gilders at Les Ateliers Gohard. Yours for \$27,000 (£21,269). Sorry, could you not put your mug of tea on it? Thanks. www.devialet.com



BEHRINGER WAVE

It's been four years since Behringer trailed the imminent arrival of the Wave, a simulation (some might say knock-off) of the PPG Wave 2.2, a German-built synth from the mid-1980s that was beloved of Tangerine Dream, Marillion, Journey and Rush, among others. Amid growing accusations from the pro audio community that the Wave was vapourware and Behringer were all talk and no trousers, the firm posted a rather hurt rebuttal on social media and mentioned in passing that the Wave was (and is) now shipping. You may now begin arpeggiating extravagantly. www.behringer.com



TRANSPARENT SPEAKER

Those of us who delight in minimalist concrete buildings and hold a grudge against King Charles III for once describing the National Theatre as "a nuclear power station in the middle of London" will appreciate this piece of Swedish engineering, which reclaims brutalism in the form of a high-end Bluetooth/Wi-Fi speaker made from 70% recycled aluminium and designed, strangely, to be placed in a corner, "utilising reflections from the walls to create an even more immersive soundscape". It comes with a pair of white cotton gloves, because why not? www.transpa.net



MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...



Wendy James (inset) gets heavy with Iron Butterfly. L-R: Erik Brann, Ron Bushy, Lee Dorman, Doug Ingle.

WENDY JAMES

A hip-hop sample of **Iron Butterfly's** most celebrated song led ex-Transvision Vamp singer Wendy James on an investigative trail.

"Iron Butterfly came up on my radar because of hip-hop. I moved to New York in 2002 and got heavily into East Coast hip-hop. As a musician and a producer of my own material, I was interested in how rap groups utilised these amazing samples, mainly from 70s soul. I was doing geology of how they put their music together and their production values were so much more impactful than a typical white rock'n'roll record. And then Nas's song, *Thief's Theme*, came up and I was like, 'That main riff has to be a sample - no way did they write that music!' I started digging around and it was *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* by Iron Butterfly. So I went round to my friend's house on St Mark's Place and I said, 'Have you heard this track?' and he went, 'Of course! It's *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* by Iron Butterfly. Everyone knows that!' And so I then did my research on Iron Butterfly. When singer/organist Doug Ingle wrote this song, he was so drunk when he was recording it and slurring it so badly that '*In the Garden Of Eden*' came out as '*In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida*'. I think that's amazing, but I've never done that

myself. I love alcohol, but I don't use it when I'm writing and recording; I always keep a straight mind because otherwise I can't make accurate decisions. Also, Iron Butterfly were booked to play Woodstock and they had problems travelling there so their manager called the festival's organisers and said, 'Send a helicopter and we'll be there on time.' The organisers replied back using an acoustic where if you took the first letter of each line in the telegram, it spelled out, 'FUCK YOU!'

Obviously, I'm a fan of the song and actually sampled it myself - a little bit of drum and bass from the drum solo in the middle and I made this beat for a song called *Ler's Not Keep Fucking Up* and that lyric is taken from Grace Slick at Altamont where she was trying to calm down the audience. That drum beat is phenomenal!

It's a fantastic, heavy riff that you can trance out to. If you've had a couple of drinks or some drugs, you can stick your head in the speakers and really get into it for a while." **JM**

The Shape Of History is out now. See www.thewendyjames.com for more.



PROG IN BRIEF

Celebrated Icelandic theremin player **Hekla** (right) returns with *Tunnur*, released on March 14 via Phantom Limb. The album was recorded in rural France and she's augmented by voice, cello and the church organ of Kristján Hannar. She headlines Cafe Oto in London on March 5. For more see www.facebook.com/heklahelena.



Van der Graaf Generator's 1978 album *World Record* is re-released as a double-CD and Blu-ray clamshell via Esoteric on March 26. The original album has been remastered and the second disc features a remix by Stephen W Taylor. The Blu-ray includes 5.1 surround sound and stereo mixes. See www.vandergraafgenerator.co.uk.

Prog pioneers **Camel** are revisiting the 80s with the re-release of their 1984 live album *Pressure Points: Live In Concert*. It's issued as a two-CD and Blu-ray set on March 29 via Esoteric. The expanded album package also contains previously unreleased material from the original concert. See www.camelproductions.com.