

Progrock.com's Essentials Adds Three Remarkable Band to Its Roster!

Progressive rock is a genre known as much for its artists and albums as for the record labels that support them. Whether it's the 1970s originators (such as Charisma, Chrysalis, and Harvest) or the ones leading the charge today (such as Kscope and InsideOut Music), these labels have built strong reputations by consistently taking their clients and audiences in exhilaratingly fresh directions.

So, too, has boutique label Progrock.com's Essentials. Established in 2022 by Mark and Rayna Monforti, PRE has earned international acclaim for their expertise, personability, and impressive catalogue. After putting out a remaster of **Discipline's** third and best-selling sequence—1997's *Unfolded Like Staircase*—they signed and/or released albums from many other remarkable acts, including **Chester Thompson, Luz De Riada, Unitopia, United Progressive Fraternity, Don Schiff, Sonus Umbra, Phideaux,** and **Devil's Staircase**. Now, they're further cementing themselves as a premier place for prog rock by adding three more eminent names to their roster: **Ghost Of The Machine, Imaginaerium,** and **Solstice!**

Ghost Of The Machine Prepare for the Reign of *Empires and Kingdoms*

Named one of *PROG* magazine's best unsigned bands in a recent reader's poll, **Ghost Of The Machine** blew fans away with their incredible 2022 debut LP, *Scissorgames*. Comprised of **Nova Cascade/Harmony of Spheres' Charlie Bramald** and ex-**This Winter Machine** members **Mark Hagan, Andy Milner, Scott Owens, Stuart McAuley,** and **Graham Garbett**, the sextet's captivating and refined balance of emotional songwriting and vibrant instrumentation won over countless admirers. That's why it's so exciting that **Ghost Of The Machine** have signed with Progrock.com's Essentials for *Scissorgames'* sequel, *Empires Must Fall*.

"Our favorite epic track of 2022 was the opener to *Scissorgames*, 'Scissors,'" Mark Monforti explains. "Rayna and I were so amazed by it that we flew across an ocean to hear it live at Prog Fusion 5. Plus, the group puts in a lot of effort when making an album, and they do a great job marketing themselves, so we couldn't be more eager to help them build upon what they've already accomplished."

Unsurprisingly, **Bramald** is just as enthusiastic about the PRE partnership. "Mark and Rayna are extremely passionate about what we've created, and they have the vision to help us reach more ears," he comments. "In particular, they excel at getting music out there in both physical and digital formats (which is crucial because streaming has become a huge part of people discovering the latest releases). *Scissorgames* was a fully independent production, and we're happy with what we achieved, but we know that *Empires Must Fall* deserves a bigger reach. PRE is the perfect way to make that happen."

Indeed, *Empires Must Fall* is shaping up to be an even more extraordinary journey. In fact, **Bramald** mentions, it picks up precisely where *Scissor Games* leaves off. He elaborates: “Our first record concludes when the tyranny of the Puppet King is stopped by his final victim defending herself . . . with a pair of scissors! So, we want to explore the consequences of that final act throughout *Empires Must Fall*. That involves prompting listeners to ask themselves: ‘What does true justice look like? Is the Puppet King’s slayer—the newly crowned Empress of the Light—succeeding at being a benevolent ruler? What will it take to finally break the cycle of violence and coercion?’”

Although *Empires Must Fall* will maintain **Ghost Of The Machine**’s trademark anthemic hooks and beefy/melodic rock production, it also explores “denser and darker arrangements that” —**Bramald** promises—will “scratch that ‘prog’ itch while striking a careful balance between shorter, more accessible songs and those ‘epic’ length pieces.”

Ghost Of The Machine are currently recording *Empires Must Fall*, and they can’t wait to release it through PRE.

Imaginaerium Invite You to *The Siege*

Having already worked with Progrok.com’s Essentials to distribute his 2017 solo album—*King’s Ransom*—and multiple **Arena** collections, it’s fitting that veteran neo-prog keyboardist/composer **Clive Nolan** returns for **Imaginaerium**’s *The Siege* (the astounding follow-up to 2022’s *The Rise of Medici*). Led by **Nolan** and renowned Italian vocalist **Laura Piazzai**, **Imaginaerium**’s complex and operatic magnificence made that first outing an outstanding introduction to the band *and* a worthy addition to Nolan and Piazzai’s individual discographies. That said, there’s no question that *The Siege* will up the ante in every way.

“We’re beyond thrilled to have **Laura** (one of the premier singers in progressive music) and **Clive** (one of the premier songwriters in progressive music) on our roster. **Clive** has a knack for finding exceptional vocalists and **Laura** is a perfect example of that. Both are at their absolute best on *The Siege*, and Rayna and I are delighted to be a part of it,” Mark Monforti rejoices.

Likewise, **Nolan** clarifies, bringing **Imaginaerium**’s second LP to PRE was a no-brainer since he “knew that their passion for the genre was strong.” He reflects: “Before we even got close to signing, Mark started piecing together a strategy for the record, and he was more than willing to invest his time and energy towards it. As record companies go, that’s a great sign of what’s to come.”

Fascinatingly, **Nolan** confesses, *The Siege* started “by accident,” as he was originally “planning to work on a different project with **Laura**” that focused on her reinterpreting some of his older songs. He continues: “I

thought that the set would benefit from one new track . . . which became two . . . and then three! Before I knew it, I had written most of a new Imaginaerium album. Like the previous one, it's historically themed, yet there are quite a few surprises to be found, too. For instance, I wanted **Laura** to take her voice into new and exciting places."

Naturally, **Piazzai** offers an equally passionate yet unique perspective on joining the PRE family: "I initially met Mark in 2023 (at Italy's 2Days Prog + 1 Festival), and I was immediately impressed by the work he and Rayna put into their merchandising and efficiency. I thought that Imaginaerium would be a superb fit for them, so I mentioned it to **Clive** and we had a meeting that basically sealed the deal. The Monforti's pour their hearts into every aspect of PRE, and they're always checking to see if there's anything their artists need. They do their best to make you feel comfortable every step of the way."

As for *The Siege*, **Piazzai** echoes **Nolan's** sentiments, confirming that it will be "a very important and very different release." Specifically, she explains that they've "completely changed sounds and time period, so the record is significantly unpredictable as it taps into prog rock, traditional rock, and even Viking and medieval music (alongside many other surprises)."

Judging by their mutual enthusiasm for *The Siege* and each other, **Imaginaerium** and PRE are an ideal match.



Solstice Solidify Their Brilliance with *Light Up* Successor and Live Blu-ray Package

Founded by guitarist **Andy Glass** and bolstered by an amazingly diverse line-up, **Solstice** have been a leading force in symphonic progressive rock since they emerged with 1984's *Silent Dance*. Four decades and six studio LPs later, they've upheld their excellence at every turn, with 2022's *Light Up* frequently being touted as their magnum opus. Obviously, expectations are high for their upcoming eighth full-length set, and with the support of Progrock.com's Essentials, their most beautifully sophisticated and moving compositions are still to come. To help whet audiences' appetites, **Solstice** and PRE will first issue *Return to Cropredy – Live* (a captivating and comprehensive Blu-ray that captures the auditory and visual peaks of **Solstice's** live performances). It's set to arrive before the end of 2024.

"**Andy** has navigated over 40 years of music and marketing, and Solstice is a wonderful addition to our roster. Their albums continue to resonate with prog fans, and their latest one upholds that trend," Mark Monforti cheers.

Given that *Light Up* and its thematic/chronological predecessor—2020's *Sia*—came out on Giant Electric Pea, it might seem odd for **Solstice** to switch to PRE for the concluding chapter of the trilogy. According to **Glass**, though, the decision was easy and necessary: "Our last two records were successful, but I wanted to give our next one an even better chance of reaching as many people as possible. It was my friend (and

cherished prog community supporter) Cheryl Griffiths, as well as **Ghost Of The Machine's Charlie Bramald**, who connected me with the Monfortis. These days, the music industry is all about having a resilient DIY ethic, and we needed to work with folks who shared our levels of focus and drive. Rayna and Mark are willing to embrace new ideas with that famous American 'can do!' spirit."

Glass also praises **Solstice's** current incarnation for bringing "newfound creativity and energy" to their work. "When **Jess Holland** joined us on *Sia*, she became the creative partner I'd long missed," hee reminisces. "Her performance in the studio and onstage is nothing short of inspirational. Incredibly, *Sia* was her first experience fronting a band, and you can hear her growth on *Light Up*. Of course, our forthcoming sequence will continue that journey as we arrive fully formed."

Clearly, **Solstice** are poised to expand their artistry and audience with their inaugural PRE record.

To purchase these albums closer to their release dates—and view shipping details for the U.S.A. and the Netherlands—see the [official Progrock.com's Essentials website](#). Also, be sure to follow PRE on [Facebook](#) and [X!](#)

