

Over a year ago, XTC founder/guitarist Andy Partridge, original XTC keyboardist Barry Andrews and drummer Martyn Barker (longtime bandmate of Barry's in Shriekback) began to discuss convening as a trio to make improvisational music under the name "Monstrance." These three finally got together to record live for three days amassing nearly eight hours of material which was subsequently sorted and mixed by Future Sound Of London guitarist Stuart Rowe and engineer Merv Carswell yielding Monstrance's self-titled debut, a two disc set of overdub/edit-free music. The Monstrance album is being released on Partridge's Ape House label, distributed in the U.S. by Ryko Distribution April 3, 2007.

Originally Andrews asked Andy to play on Cormorant the last Shriekback album. Soon afterwards Partridge in turn brought up the concept of making a wholly improvised album, a project that had laid dormant since a casual chat with Barry on the street 10 years previous. Barry enlisted Martyn, his partner in Shriekback for some 25 years. Their plan was simplicity itself, "To go in a room and just play! Have nothing worked out and no theme to aim for; let's just see what happens," as Martyn Barker recalls. The trio set up shop in Headroom Studios in Andy's hometown of Swindon and very simply just started playing with some startling results:

*Crikey!what constelation and turbotlence we does.Sounds cummin out all wilde and bonkee with no one nowing ware we is all goin,but hoo cares? Not we, cos its hot good and liabull to berne your lips if them dirty girls sticks it in thair mouths all to kwik. - **Andy Partridge** (product of the secondary system)*

*The experience was Magical. From periods of Ambience to Weird time changes Like a conversation, a battle and a Journey that went somewhere or nowhere. Something will always trigger me off when Barry does his thing; the rhythms just pour out and it's so difficult to stop! And now Andy's guitar making suggestions to where we could go. Sometimes we went on and on looking for a way through! - **Martyn Barker***

*We all stand beneath it's dripping jowls and gaze into it's hateful glassy eyes till we can't stand it any more and stop playing, giggling a little. So did we all just say: 'godless, heartless enormous monster bunny!!' AT THE SAME TIME? You know, I think we did. - **Barry Andrews***

**[to read Monstrance's blogging in full visit: <http://apehouse.prevuz.com/>]**

When the dust settled, they listened back to the many hours of playing recorded and found a wealth of oftentimes gorgeous, sometimes ferocious but consistently inventive and challenging music and set about selecting the *crème de la crème* for release, distilling it down to a potent double CD with the aid of Messrs. Rowe and Carswell.

In recording as Monstrance, Andy and Barry rekindled a working relationship that had come to an end in the late '70's following the release of the first two XTC albums White Music and Go2 which featured Andrews on keyboards. After leaving XTC, Barry went on to release a solo EP, record Soldier with Iggy Pop, tour and record with Robert Fripp in the League of Gentlemen, finally forming Shriekback in 1981 with Martyn Barker joining for the recording of Care. 26 years later Shriekback have 10 albums to their credit in all, the most recent being 2005's Cormorant. Along the way, Andrews has lectured in Language in Art and Garden History at Lewisham College, made two solo albums, and contributed to Brian Eno's Another Day On Earth. Meanwhile, Barker has been busy in his time off from Shriekback recording and touring as a member of Billy Bragg's band the Blokes. He's also found

time to work with diverse artists including Joseph Arthur, Khaled, World Party, Ethan Johns, Mike Peters, and Ray Davies as well as Hal Wilner on the *Rogue's Gallery* collection on which he accompanied Nick Cave, Bryan Ferry and the Carthy family.

Andy Partridge of course continued on with XTC, releasing 10 albums for Virgin over the next 11 years, then two more once the band had won their freedom from that label. With XTC currently on hiatus, Andy has taken the opportunity to set up his own Ape House Records in order to release music by artists he loves and put out some of his own recordings. To date the Ape House catalogue boasts *Orpheus The Lowdown*, an intriguing tale set to music recorded by Peter Blegvad and Andy, as well as titles by Brighton's Milk & Honey Band and Canadian singer songwriter Veda Hille. These are all being released domestically in the U.S. in April 2007. In addition, to counter the tide of bootlegs of his material, Andy decided to delve into his archive and release some of the demos he's recorded over the years and also songs that never made onto XTC albums. So in 2006 he released the nine CD *Fuzzy Warbles Collectors Album*, compiling the first six volumes of the series that'd been previously been available as imports, adding two new volumes and a ninth disc of additional material all housed in deluxe packaging. Partridge is currently working on material for a solo album.

Monstrance tracklisting -

**disc one**

i lovely cosmonaut  
winterwerk  
black swan black  
mig  
oodoo  
ur tannoy  
little field

**disc 2**

pagoda tailfin  
chain gang  
torturetainment  
the floating world  
priapple

For more information on Ape House releases visit:

<http://www.ape.uk.net/>

For more information on Barry Andrews visit

<http://www.myspace.com/barryandrewsmusic>

For more information on Shriekback

<http://shriekback.com/>