

[Greg Lake](#)'s resume reads like a who's who of classic rock. If only Lake were known as the first singer/bassist for King Crimson, his iconic status would still be secure.

But Lake chose to leave King Crimson and form a trio with Keith Emerson and Carl Palmer. ELP went on to sell over 30 million albums throughout the '70s by fusing rock with classical music. Almost universally disdained by most critics, ELP managed to even work in some top 20 singles ("Lucky Man" and "From the Beginning") amidst the pseudo-intellectual interpretations of classical compositions.

Essentially, Emerson, Lake and Palmer can be seen as the forefathers of progressive rock. Now, touring as a duo, [Lake and Emerson](#) are writing new songs and getting ready for a summertime ELP reunion.

Lake was kind enough to take some time before an appearance in Las Vegas to chat about things past, present and future.

Did you really write "Lucky Man" when you were 12?

Yes, that's true. When I wrote it, it was just this simple little fantasy song. It was never intended to be recorded. I had made it up for my own amusement really. For some reason, it stuck in my mind. It wasn't until many years later when ELP were recording our first record, that we came to the end of the session and we didn't have any more material to record. Everyone just looked at each other and asked if any of us had any more songs. We had room for one more song. Nobody had anything. We had to fill out the album. I said, well, look, all I could think of was that I had written this song when I was a kid. I played it and Keith looked at me with this look that meant that he did not want to put that song on the record. It was just filler. That song ended up being the most popular song we ever recorded.

Do you get tired of playing it?

No, I've never had that feeling. It's a strange, rather perverse feeling that artists deny their success. I suppose it looks cool. To me, it's a lot of bollocks. If the audience has bought that album because they loved that song, then it is your duty to play it for them. When you make a record, it's like writing out a check. There's a promise to pay later.

Are the shows as a duo with Keith Emerson all acoustic?

No, not at all. Because we told the promoters that it was only going to be the two of us, they assumed it was going to be unplugged. It's a long way from being unplugged. There is every kind of technology involved that you can imagine. Keith and I were in the studio in London doing some songwriting and just for pleasure, we played a few of the old tunes. When we did it, we stopped and thought that it sounding interesting. We wanted to show the audience how these songs were created, show the original forms. It's like a 360-degree perspective on many of the pieces.

Is it all ELP and do the set lists change from night to night?

We stay pretty consistent. As the shows continue, we will include a few more things and swap some things around just for fun. We certainly take on some unusual things that will surprise some people. There will be things that people will not be suspecting.

How did you come to play bass with The Who on their "Real Good Looking Boy" single?

I've played with Roger Daltry quite a lot since we both work with the same charity. I've known him all of my life, really.

ELP sold over 30 million albums in the '70s. What was it about the band's sound that brought such widespread popularity?

I think it was because we were different. What made it different was that the roots of ELP were European. Most rock and roll is American, blues and jazz. That was a striking difference. It was something that was refreshing to people.

Most of ELP's songs were very long and not conducive to getting on the radio. Did the level of popularity the band achieve surprise you?

We were not surprised in that sense. From a commercial standpoint, we never expected to be on the radio as much as we were, to be accepted as much as we were. ELP broke a lot of new ground. Before ELP, you rarely saw a band record a song over three minutes, never mind recording something like *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Our record company did not want to put it out. They actually refused to release it.

I understand Carl Palmer will join you and Keith for an ELP reunion in the summer. Wasn't it in 2004 that you said you would never take part in such a reunion?

Well, times and attitudes do change. This one is going to happen. It will be in London. It will be a bit of a test. If it goes well, we might keep touring and maybe record some new stuff.

Greg Lake and Keith Emerson perform tonight and tomorrow night at the Granada Theater