



Greg Lake is going it alone on an upcoming U.S. tour – playing songs and sharing stories of his time with King Crimson, Emerson Lake and Palmer and as a solo artist.

Fans can expect a generous dose of acoustic favorites from across his lengthy career in rock – including “Lucky Man,” “Still ... You Turn Me On” and “From the Beginning” – but Lake says the concert experience will expand out from there to include personal memories and key cover tunes, as well.

“Things that had a big influence upon me,” Lake told us, in [the latest SER Sitdown](#). “I hope it will be a mix of elements that people will enjoy. I suppose it all goes back to times and memories we’ve shared together. So, it’s a meeting, rather than a concert. Like a sort of town-hall meeting, or a social gathering, as much as anything else.”

**[COMING TOMORROW: Greg Lake takes over our One Track Mind feature to talk about key songs from Emerson Lake and Palmer, King Crimson's seminal debut and his collaborations with Gary Moore.]**

Lake was an original member of King Crimson, which produced a standard-bearing prog-rock debut in 1969, then left to form the genre’s first supergroup ELP in the early 1970s. He would become one of the most familiar voices in prog, rivaled only by Yes’ Jon Anderson and the Moody Blues’ Justin Hayward, before embarking on a solo career in the early 1980s. Emerson Lake and Palmer have reunited over the years, including last summer at the High Voltage Festival, but Lake says he’s focused now solo work.

Greg Lake’s new tour, called “Songs of a Lifetime,” begins April 15 ...

**NICK DERISO:** Let’s start by talking about your upcoming concert dates, which promise to be an intimate, once-in-a-lifetime experience for fans of your work.

**GREG LAKE:** I’m doing this tour alone. This is effectively a one-man show. That’s what they call it, though obviously it won’t be. There will be a lot of people involved in making it happen. I’ve written an autobiography, and I am releasing it as an audio book, as well as a printed book. I wanted to do a tour which kind of went along with that. The tour is called “Songs of a Lifetime.” What it is, is all of the songs of my life that really meant something. Some of them, of course, I wrote – and that’s why they mean a lot to me, but others were songs by other people that had a big influence upon me. It’s kind of a mixture of those things. I will be talking to the audience, perhaps telling some stories – answering people’s questions. I know it sounds pretty dull, one man with a guitar, but I want to make it a really interesting evening. I think that’s what interests me, the challenge of it.

**[SOMETHING ELSE! FEATURED ARTIST: [We dig into a few of our favorite moments from Emerson Lake and Palmer -- a list that spans everything from 'Trilogy' to 'Tarkus' to 'Black Moon.'](#)]**

**NICK DERISO:** Take us back to the debut album by King Crimson, and your initial collaborations with guitarist [Robert Fripp](#). Rather than sounding embryonic, the album arrived fully formed – almost as a kind of prog-rock template.

**GREG LAKE:** Robert and I went to the same guitar teacher when we were very young boys. We used to practice our lessons together. When I joined a band, Robert wasn’t in a band at all, and he used to come around and follow me as a guitar player. He’d travel in the van, along with my band. He just used to hang around the stage while we played. Sometimes, he’d do a duet with me. So, Robert and I knew each other’s playing intimately. We had the same guitar teacher; we learned the same guitar lessons – and we were dragged up the same way, basically. So I knew what he could play; he knew what I could play. That’s one of the things that was underpinning King Crimson – that Robert and I are almost one person, in a sense. I really know exactly what he’s going to play. Not so much nowadays, because we’ve grown up all those years apart, but certainly then, when the early King Crimson was formed.

**NICK DERISO:** Just that quickly, it seemed, you had left for a new supergroup with Keith Emerson and Carl Palmer – and the three of you would advance the boundaries of prog-rock considerably. The *Trilogy* album from 1972, in particular, brilliantly mixed multi-sectioned long-form compositions with punchier more digestible rock songs.

**GREG LAKE:** If I had to pick out our best album, I think that would be the best one for me. There's a few reasons for that, you know. First of all, I think, you described it very well – it's the point where it all comes together. The innovative conceptual thoughts, the musical dexterity, the bonding of the band as a sort of brotherhood, it all came together there. The other thing that locked in, as well, was that recording studios right at that time went from 8 track to 24 track, and also synthesizers changed from being monophonic to polyphonic. All of that happened at one time, and at the same time as ELP grew up. There's something else about *Trilogy*. It's got some strange property that's totally unique. I don't know of another album that sounds like that at all. I like the beauty of that album; there's a lot of beauty on *Trilogy*. The one thing it suffered from was an overdose of overdubs. When we came to perform it live, it was very difficult to replicate what we'd done on the recording. For that reason, a lot of *Trilogy* never got performed. Things like "Abaddon's Bolero," I don't know how many overdubs it had on it. Because, of course, once we had 24 tracks, we would record 10 tracks and then mix them down to 2! It was the new toy.

[**SOMETHING ELSE! REWIND:** [King Crimson's 'Condensed 20th Century Guide' illustrates how, from the first, the band acted as a sort of quality-assurance agent for rock music.](#)]

**NICK DERISO:** Later, you established a terrific collaborative relationship with [Gary Moore](#) through a pair of solo albums in the early 1980s. What was it like to work with a more overtly blues-based guitarist?

**GREG LAKE:** It was a strange time, because when ELP sort of retired, or semiretired, we didn't really break up, we just stopped playing – just because we wanted to do other things. Just get away from being ELP, really. But for a while I felt awfully dislocated. For the last decade, the only musical identity I had was ELP and, all of a sudden, it stopped. For a while, I was just sort of spun. I really had no sense of direction, because I had every freedom in the world and yet all of musical fabric had been stripped immediately by the band not being there anymore. So it was a question of doing something different. I started to work with all kinds of people. I worked with Toto for a while. When we finally did get together in the same band, I learned a lot about Gary. He's not really blues. He played the blues, but he chose that as a career. In truth, the spirit of Gary Moore is Irish. That was not the music he played professionally. But when you hear him play sort of an Irish jig or a ballad, it would break your heart.

**NICK DERISO:** Those initial solo projects combined prog rock with pop music in a way that Yes later had great success with. There seemed to be a lot of promise there. Do you have a sense as to why your career away from Emerson Lake and Palmer didn't immediately take flight?

**GREG LAKE:** I moved onto a label called Chrysalis Records, and I think when they signed me, they thought I was just going to take over for ELP and sell platinum records instantly. That doesn't happen. When you leave a band, the public doesn't just automatically swap their allegiance and their loyalty from that act to you being a solo artist. It's something you have to earn. I think what happened was, when Chrysalis saw the initial sales (for 1981's *Greg Lake*). As I recall, it was somewhere around 100,000 – which if you were had those sales today someone would be throwing a champagne party. Then, of course, they looked at the sales compared to ELP and they thought: 'Whoa, maybe this is not going to be as successful.' I think at that point, they pulled out a lot of support – which would have made the album probably two or three times as a successful as it was. I think that was a factor. Maybe I'm overexaggerating the amount by which it affected it, but it certainly did affect it. I don't know how good the album was, but I certainly made it with 100 percent commitment. So did Gary.

[**SOMETHING ELSE! REWIND:** [Remembering when ELP's Carl Palmer remade "Fanfare for the Common Man" as something loud. No, not loud. Make that furiously, bashingly, skull-crackingly loud.](#)]

**NICK DERISO:** Is it true that "Lucky Man" – the track you're most associated with – was based on a childhood poem?

**GREG LAKE:** That song actually never changed from the time I originally wrote it, when I was like 12-and-a-half years old. I asked for a guitar, and my mother had bought it. The first four chords I learned, I made this song out of them. That was "Lucky Man." Nothing happened to it. I couldn't have recorded it at the time, of course, but I just remembered it, for some reason, word for word. Quite often, in the early days, when I would write a song, I wouldn't finish it. I would come up with the initial idea, I may write a verse. But then I would stop there. It was only for amusement. For some reason, though, I finished "Lucky Man," right to the end. So there was something unusual about that, really. During the writing process, it unfolded in some sort of natural, almost predestined way. Then when ELP made the first record, it got used on that album.

**NICK DERISO:** These are the kinds of stories that will resonate with your fans, I suspect, on the upcoming tour. I love the interactive idea, which dovetails perfectly with today's social media-driven focus on connecting the audience and performer.

**GREG LAKE:** There is this sort of nostalgia, to put it in a word. People are interested in what probably was the best times of their lives, when we were all young. It's an obvious thing to say, but the music of King Crimson and ELP was for a lot of people the sort of backdrop of their youth – amongst other bands, of course. In a way, I think people are interested to reflect back on that, to relive and understand more about what happened then. It's a nice place to go, your youth or your formative years. I don't see anything bad in it. What could be bad in reflecting on the years you really loved, the festivals you went to that you remember fondly, or a favorite ELP song? Those are the memories that people bring to the table. Then, what might interest them are the things that were happening in my life. Although they know me well through the songs, they don't really know much of the other stuff. What I'm trying to do in my autobiography is to write about the other stuff. I mean, there's no point in my writing about ELP with the orchestra at Madison Square Garden – because everybody saw it, or they've heard it. It's just another trotted-out story. Things that are interesting were the stories that fill in the background. Anyone who's not into ELP or King Crimson would probably be mightily bored. Anyone who's followed the bands, I think, will be fascinated.

**GREG LAKE'S 'SONGS OF A LIFETIME' U.S. TOUR**

*Dates are still being added. For more information, go to [Greg Lake's Web site](#).*

- APRIL 15: Wilbur Theatre, Boston, MA
- APRIL 19: Keswick Theatre, Philadelphia, PA
- APRIL 20: Tarrytown Music Hall, Tarrytown, NY
- APRIL 21: Ridgefield Playhouse, Ridgefield, CT
- APRIL 22: NYCB Theatre at Westbury, NY
- APRIL 24: The Birchmere, Alexandria, VA
- APRIL 25: Carolina Theatre of Durham, NC
- APRIL 26: Variety Playhouse Theatre, Atlanta, GA

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Author: [Nick DeRiso](#) Nick DeRiso, writing from various kudzu-covered locales across the Deep South, has explored jazz, blues, roots and rock music for Gannett News Service and USA Today, Blues Revue Magazine, AllAboutJazz.com, Rock.com, Popdose, Living Blues magazine, the Louisiana Folklife Program and NoDepression.com, among others. He's also been programmer and host for a series of radio shows across the same genres. So, yeah, you could call it an obsession.

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