

# Mp3 Thieves' Kitchen - Head

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Thieves' Kitchen are an extraordinary genre-busting creative rock band from the UK, quite unlike anything you've ever heard before. They are intense, melodic and complex, occasionally quirky jazz, at other times rock-solid-rock, and at others, avant garde 5 MP3 Songs ROCK: Progressive Rock, JAZZ: Jazz Fusion

Details: THIEVES' KITCHEN BIO: Often compared to such groups as Yes, ELP, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, National Health, UK, Echolyn, Finneus Gauge, Hatfield and the North, Spock's Beard, and Bruford, TK are widely respected for having woven their own unique sound. Paul Beecham, bassist, first emailed guitarist Phil Mercy in the middle of 1998: Paul had heard of Phil from his 'Fear of Fantastic Flight' solo album, released on Mellow Records that year. At the time, Phil was working on a project with singer Simon Boys, and they had written a couple of tracks together that would later surface on debut album 'Head' as 'Time' and 'Integrity'. Phil had also been writing some more extended material but hadn't got a clue what to do with it - inspiration came when Paul and he met up for the first time at the Whitchurch Festival in Hampshire, UK. In the months following, they found that Mark Robotham, the drummer of Grey Lady Down, had become available, and, once he was on board, set about finding a keyboard player. This took a lot longer than initially expected, as several candidates pronounced the material 'too difficult to play'. Eventually, though, in the late summer of 1999, Wolfgang Kindl answered an advertisement TK had posted in his local music shop, and proved to be just the man for the job. With the band lineup complete, rehearsals started in earnest for the first album - 'Head'. 'Head' was released soon after in February 2000, to worldwide critical acclaim, and Thieves' Kitchen were lauded as innovators, with a sound that was fresh, original, genre-confounding and eclectic. In the autumn of 2000, with the success of the first album under their belts, the band decided to make a start on a follow-up album, rather than begin touring. This was also the time that Paul Beecham made the decision to leave Thieves' Kitchen, finding the pressures of work and family constraints conflicted with the time needed to devote to the band. Paul stayed - and stays - a close member of the TK family, and continued to have input with the second album, contributing compositional elements, and playing the oboe. The second album, 'Argot', featuring talented newcomer Andy Bonham on bass, found following a particularly profitable internet

search, was released in spring 2001, and was hailed as "a masterpiece", with the band being described as "one of the leading British Prog-acts of the new millennium". This second album was darker, more intense and complex than its predecessor, and many reviewers, whilst lauding it, declared that it was an album with depth, that not only benefited from, but positively required, repeated listenings. In the next two years, TK played live in both the UK, the US, and at the BajaProg festival in Mexico in March 2002. They were invited to perform at Progday in Chapel Hill, North Carolina USA in August 2002, but as it turned out, it would be a different lineup yet again for this event. Vocalist Simon Boys had come to the decision that finding time for both music and his young family was proving too difficult, and so it was that the band's gig at the Classic Rock Society bash in Rotherham in May 2003 proved to be Simon's swansong with TK. The hunt for a replacement for Simon's powerful vocals and emotive lyrics was not going well, until Andy mentioned a young singer he had previously worked with for a while, Amy Darby. The band were intrigued about the changes of direction that this may herald, and invited her to audition. And so it was that Amy took the mike at Progday, following a couple of warm-up gigs in the UK, and whilst on the 'tour' of America, Phil bought her a sizeable sedative herbal tea at a coffee shop in NY and talked her into staying on with TK and writing the lyrics for the band's next album, 'Shibboleth'. 'Shibboleth' developed a new side of Thieves' Kitchen, with Phil being inspired by Wolfgang's jazzy influences and Amy's lyrics. The material was a year in the writing, but it was worth the wait when it was finally released in September 2003. The critics were once more appreciative; "..enough twists and turns to dizzy a marmot" "...definitely original, and truly modern sound" are representative of the press response to the album. Disaffected with life in the UK, Wolfgang relocated back to his native Germany in 2004 where he has since married and started a family. He and the band formally and amicably parted company early in 2005. Looking back, each member of the band had to contend with some kind of significant personal upheaval in 2004/5 and TK, out of necessity, took a back seat in everyone's lives for well over a year. A search for a replacement for Wolfgang went poorly until Paul Beecham discovered that Thomas Johnson was working in England and contacted him on behalf of the band. An initial meeting at the Perch pub in Oxford went well and Thomas joined to begin writing material with Phil and Amy for the fourth album, "The Water Road". 2007 has been spent rehearsing and fine tuning the material ready for recording. The new writing partnership has produced more diverse material, dynamic and symphonic in structure. From the start, the band decided to approach the recording of this album differently. Contrary to the current style of

ProTools-dominated track laying it was agreed that we should record as much as possible live in the studio. Although modern technology will play a part, real and classic instruments such as the mellotron will be preferred to samples. Amy brings a host of new instruments to the mix and guests will provide yet more aural flavours. The emphasis is on feel, melody, intricacy and atmosphere. The story is still unfolding... Here's a REVIEW OF HEAD: One could hardly hope for a better debut album. Really. Thieves' Kitchen hail from England and their first-born, Head, was recorded and mixed through Dec '99 and Jan '00. It's thus still warm! Thieves' Kitchen is a standard rock quintet : Paul Beecham (bass), Wolfgang Kindl (keyboards), Phil Mercy (guitars), Mark Robotham (electric drums) and Simon Boys (vocals). Don't be afraid of the drums, they sound very good and you won't hear the difference. TK's music is the proud sibling of the British progressive tradition. One can hear sparks of Yes and Gentle Giant, with the rock feel of Grey Lady Down and an American touch a la Kansas in the vocal harmonies. But what stroke me up first was the ultra-powerful voice of Simon Boys. It took me some time to pin down who he reminded me of, but now I've found it - Ozzy Osbourne! Head is a collection of five tracks ranging from 7 to 19 minutes, with a total of 63 minutes. The opener, "Mute", hits where it counts : a mini-moog theme doubled by the guitar over a rock-hard syncopated rhythm section. "Time" passes by without being noticed but "The Return of the Ultragravy" is full of surprises. The album closes with the 19 minute "T.A.N.U.S.", an epic built around a simple riff and many variations. Simple but brilliantly executed. It is on this track that the musicians unleash all their energy, giving me the desire to see them on stage. A heavy rhythm section, scorching guitars, powerful vocals and intelligent music that won't go into the ultra-complex realms. The whole thing is perfectly produced - you'll never suspect this is an independent release. Finally, the artwork is beautiful and inventive. As I said, you couldn't ask for a better first album. Thieves' Kitchen has taken a strategic position on the "Best newcomer of 2000" grid. You better watch out for this band. Very strongly recommended.

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