



Bio information: **SOFT MACHINE**

Title: **SWITZERLAND 1974** (Cuneiform Rune 395/396) Format: CD/DVD

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FILE UNDER: CANTERBURY / JAZZ ROCK / FUSION

**Cuneiform Records Release Classic 1974 *Bundles*-Era Soft Machine Performance
Featuring Allan Holdsworth On Guitar
And Filmed at One of Europe's Most Esteemed Jazz Festivals
As A Dual DVD+CD Package**

At the end of 1973, the British band **Soft Machine** embarked on a fresh start. In December 1973, it added guitarist **Allan Holdsworth** (recently with **Jon Hiseman's Tempest**, and previously **Nucleus**) to its line-up, which then consisted of Soft Machine founding member and keyboardist **Mike Ratledge**, along with pianist and saxophonist **Karl Jenkins**, bass player **Roy Babbington**, and drummer **John Marshall**. Jenkins and Ratledge then composed a whole new repertoire, which the band road-tested on extensive tours of North America and continental Europe in the first half of 1974. That material eventually made up Soft Machine's eighth recording, the first not named after its order of release: the album **Bundles**, widely acknowledged as a jazz-rock / fusion classic. When released by **EMI's Harvest Label** in early 1975, **Bundles** would secure Soft Machine's role in the transcontinental jazz-rock pantheon alongside **Return To Forever** and **Mahavishnu Orchestra** in the USA, and **Nucleus**, **Brand X**, and **Isotope** in the UK.

Soft Machine's status in the international jazz/rock avant-garde was widely apparent even before **Bundles'** official release. On **July 4, 1974**, **Soft Machine** performed at the prestigious **Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland**, sharing the spotlight with such headliners as **Billy Cobham's Spectrum**, **Larry Coryell's Eleventh House** and the **Mahavishnu Orchestra**. This Montreux appearance was evidence that Soft Machine was a dominant presence on the widely popular jazz-rock scene of the time – a scene that the band had helped create, one that evolved out of the radically unique sound it had pioneered only a few years before. Soft Machine was an influential presence on both the rock and jazz scenes in the UK and the Continent throughout its lifetime, reflected in the band receiving invitations to prestigious festivals and high rankings in the music polls.

Cuneiform's **Switzerland 1974** is a DVD+CD set featuring their Montreux performance, captured just a couple of weeks before Soft Machine's studio sessions in London for **Bundles**. The hour-long set, licensed by Cuneiform from **Eagle Rock Entertainment** and the **Fondation du Festival de Jazz de Montreux**, is the only available visual document of Soft Machine's **Ratledge-Marshall-Jenkins-Babbington-Holdsworth** line-up. Soft Machine perform the entire **Bundles** album live, most notably the classic "**Hazard Profile**" suite, augmented with individual showcases for each member as well as a collective improvisation and brief snippets from **Six** and **Seven**. As well as retracing Soft Machine's transformation into one of the leading exponents of jazz-fusion, **Switzerland 1974** provides a rare chance to witness the genesis of **Allan Holdsworth's** unique, innovative and unbelievably fluid and dexterous playing, before he went on to universal acclaim with **Tony Williams' New Lifetime**, the prog-rock 'supergroup' **U.K.**, **Gong**, **Jean-Luc Ponty**, **Bill Bruford** and ultimately his own electric fusion groups.

Soon after, with **Karl Jenkins** firmly at the helm following Ratledge's retirement from music, the direction set by **Bundles** would serve as the template for Soft Machine's subsequent albums. Jazz fusion informed 1976's **Softs** and 1978's live release **Alive And Well – Recorded In Paris**, both with **John Etheridge** replacing Holdsworth on guitar. In 1981, Soft Machine released its final studio effort, **Land Of Cockayne**, and in 1984 it played a final series of gigs at London's Ronnie Scott's club. Decades later, a number of Soft Machine members would come together to form **Soft Machine Legacy**, a band dedicated to keeping Soft Machine's musical heritage alive. The **Soft Machine Legacy** presently consists of former Softs **John Etheridge**, **Roy Babbington** and **John Marshall** plus **Theo Travis** on saxes and flute – is. Meanwhile, **Allan Holdsworth** is still touring with his own trio while **Karl Jenkins** is enjoying spectacular success as a composer of classical/world music fusion.

Switzerland 1974 is the ninth Soft Machine CD released by Cuneiform. Each of Cuneiform's Soft Machine releases have focused on rare and previously unreleased recordings, documenting different lineups of the band, now extending about 7 years, from Autumn, 1967 to Summer, 1974. Tracing the evolution of Soft Machine's music over personnel and time; presenting rare tapes to the public, usually for the first time; and helping to expose this legendary band to new audiences in the 21st century, Cuneiform's Soft Machine recordings are essential for long-time Soft Machine fans and captivating introductions for those approaching the legendary band for the first time.

Soft Machine: from Early Days, to Switzerland 1974, & Beyond

Soft Machine, named after a novel by **William Burroughs**, was one of the most critically acclaimed, far-reaching and influential avant rock/ jazz-rock bands in the 20th Century. It was one of the very first groups to bring together jazz and rock, and fuse them into a single, creative music. But unlike the other pioneers of "jazz/rock", all of whom (**Nucleus**, **Miles Davis**, **Tony Williams Lifetime**, etc.) had made their reputation as jazzers first, Soft Machine began as a psychedelic rock band, playing the 'underground club' circuit alongside its friends **Pink Floyd**. Throughout the band's lifetime, its lineup would continually evolve, reflecting the metamorphosis in the band's sound from pop and rock to groundbreaking experiments with electric jazz. The band released its studio albums on major labels, and played numerous shows both at home and abroad. For over a decade, until it disbanded in the late 1970s, Soft Machine created groundbreaking and provocative music that stretched the outer limits of rock AND of jazz.

Soft Machine was formed in **Canterbury**, England in 1966 by **Daavid Allen** (guitar), **Robert Wyatt** (drums/vocals), **Kevin Ayers** (bass/vocals), and **Mike Ratledge** (keyboards). Radically innovative and vastly influential, its lineup and corresponding sound would continually transform, progress and evolve throughout the course of its lifetime, fascinating fans and influencing other musicians. Within a year after the band's founding, Allen was gone, a victim of immigration laws. In 1968, the trio toured the USA twice with the **Jimi Hendrix Experience** and recorded its self-titled first album. Immediately after the second Hendrix tour, Soft Machine disbanded. The group reformed in December, 1968, when the album was released, recruiting old friend and musical cohort **Hugh Hopper** (bass). This trio (Hopper, Ratledge, Wyatt) recorded *Volume Two* and toured until, in October, 1969, it grafted four additional members onto the group: **Elton Dean** (alto saxophone, saxello), **Mark Charig** (cornet), **Nick Evans** (trombone) and **Lyn Dobson** (soprano and tenor sax and flute). Financial and logistical realities caused the septet to be short-lived; by January, 1970, Charig and Evans were gone. By the time Soft Machine recorded its highly lauded *Third* album, in the spring of 1970, it was a quartet composed of Dean, Hopper, Ratledge, Wyatt.

After recording the *Fourth* album, Wyatt left the group and Soft Machine fell into disarray. Free-jazz drummer **Phil Howard** joined, but Howard only remained in Soft Machine a mere four months. Hopper and Ratledge were uncomfortable with the free-improv direction that Howard was taking the band in, and asked him to leave. Their decision created an aesthetic rift with Dean. Soft Machine recruited the versatile jazz drummer **John Marshall** (who had previously played with **Jack Bruce**, **John Surman**, **Nucleus**, **Graham Collier** and others) as Howard's replacement. Marshall and Howard each performed on one side of Soft Machine's *5* album, following which Dean left and was replaced by **Karl Jenkins** (soprano and baritone sax, oboe, pianos), another Nucleus alumnus. The quartet of Hopper, Jenkins, Marshall and Ratledge recorded Soft Machine's double album, *Six*. Feeling that he had said all he wanted to say within the confines of the group, Hopper left Soft Machine in April 1973, being replaced by yet another Nucleus alumnus (and veteran of **Delivery**, the **Mike Gibbs Band**, **Keith Tippett's Ovary Lodge** and **Solid Gold Cadillac**), **Roy Babbington** (electric six string bass). The resulting line-up recorded *Seven* as a quartet. It would bring in guest players – guitarist **Gary Boyle** and sax player **Art Themen** – for a May 1973 *NDR Jazz Workshop* programme (released by Cuneiform as a CD/DVD combo – Rune 305/306).

Restoration Work on SWITZERLAND 1974

Unlike the *NDR Jazz Workshop* DVD+CD combo, which was praised for its pristine sonics and visuals, *Switzerland 1974* had to be painstakingly assembled from 30 year old archival tapes which had been damaged. These problematic sources were much improved by video editor **Douglas Moon** and sound engineer **Udi Koomran**. But brief sections remained where there was no alternative but to use inferior sources as patches, and despite the engineers' best attempts to make the transitions as smooth as possible, there is a noticeable change in video quality and occasional saturation in the sound. This was deemed the best available option in light of this document's archival/historical importance. No other live recordings exist of the Soft Machine that created the jazz-rock landmark *Bundles*, and Cuneiform is honored to have had access to these tapes and the opportunity to visually and sonically restore this history, professionally as best it could, for future generations.

For BIO INFORMATION about BANDMEMBERS on SWITZERLAND 1974

Karl Jenkins (b. 17 February 1944)

<http://www.karljenkins.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/KarlJenkinsMusic>
http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/mus/jenkins_karl.html

Allan Holdsworth (b. 6 August 1946)

<http://www.therealallanholdsworth.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/moonjune.allanholdsworth>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allan_Holdsworth
http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/mus/holdsworth_allan.html

Roy Babbington (b. 8 July 1940)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Babbington
http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/mus/babbington_roy.html

John Marshall (b. 28 August 1941)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stanley_Marshall
http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/mus/marshall_john.html

Mike Ratledge (b. 6 May 1943)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Ratledge
http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/mus/ratledge_mike.html

For MORE INFORMATION on SOFT MACHINE:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_Machine
<http://www.hulloder.nl>
<http://calyx.perso.neuf.fr/softmachine/>
<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/soft-machine-mn0000753685>
<http://www.johnetheridge.com/softmachinelegacy>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/128461313970887/>

For MORE INFORMATION on all SOFT MACHINE RECORDINGS on CUNEIFORM RECORDS:
www.cuneiformrecords.com/bandshtml/Softmachine.html

PROMOTIONAL PHOTO

A Digital [High-Resolution] version of this image is available for download on the **Soft Machine** artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com



OTHER **SOFT MACHINE** ARCHIVAL RECORDINGS RELEASED ON CUNEIFORM RECORDS



NDR Jazz Workshop – Hamburg, Germany 1973

(2010, Cuneiform Rune 305/306, CD/DVD)

Released for the very first time here is the Soft Machine's television broadcast, recorded for Germany's famous "NDR Jazz Workshop" on May 17, 1973. This performance was one of the earliest shows by the quartet of Roy Babbington, Karl Jenkins, John Marshall and Mike Ratledge. This was a very high profile appearance by the group and for this performance Soft Machine made it a special show. They performed a set of their repertoire in their quartet format and then for the second set they were augmented by two guests: guitarist Gary Boyle and saxist Art Themen. Additionally, Hugh Hopper had just left the group, but he makes a guest

appearance performing 1983; the only known live version of this composition. This long sought-after performance has never been seen since its original broadcast over 35 years ago. It is the single best quality video document that exists of the group, featuring clear and beautiful visuals and superb live stereo sound.

NDR Jazz Workshop Line-up:

- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- John Marshall – drums
- Karl Jenkins – oboe, s. sax, t. sax, recorder, electric piano, piano
- Roy Babbington – bass

Guests:

- Gary Boyle – guitar
- Art Themen – soprano sax, tenor sax
- Hugh Hopper – bass, tapeloops



Middle Earth Masters (2006, Cuneiform Rune 235, CD)

Middle Earth Masters captures the 1967-era Soft Machine trio in full concert glory, recorded live at London's legendary Middle Earth club. The performance is unbelievably freaky for 1967, with songs that feature unusual structures linked by wild solos and improvisations. Those of you who know and love the first Soft Machine album will be amazed at how much more insane and insanely loud the band actually were and also surprised to hear that Mike Ratledge was doing the crazy solo fuzz organ parts (ala the opening of Facelift) in 1967. Includes rare, previously unissued photos and a short essay by Michael King about these tapes and his work to make them sound as good as possible.

Middle Earth Masters Line-up:

- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals
- Kevin Ayers – bass, vocals
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals



Grides (2006, Cuneiform Rune 230/231, CD+DVD)

Grides presents the most famous version of the band recorded live at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam on October 25, 1970, in a high-quality, previously unreleased recording, just a few months after the release of Third and at the peak of their popularity. It showcases them in transition between releases, with the band performing 3 of the four works from Third, as well as some of the earliest recordings of material from the upcoming Fourth, including some very different arrangements to what would eventually end up on that release. Also included in this set is the first-ever DVD release by Soft Machine! It was recorded at the TV studios of Radio Bremen on the same date (March 23, 1971) as the radio session that Cuneiform released as *Virtually*, but is a completely different performance.

Grides Line-up:

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, e.piano
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals



Live in Paris May 2nd, 1972 (2004, Cuneiform Rune 195/196, CDx2)

The Soft Machine line-up of Dean, Hopper, Marshall and Ratledge lasted under half a year and recorded just one half of an album (side two of "5"). **Live in Paris** is a rare recording of this quartet during that lineup's final days; Dean left Soft Machine later that month. It is also a special, rare example of a Soft Machine concert recorded and released in its entirety. Live in Paris shows Soft Machine playing in top form. As Aymeric Leroy points out in the liner notes, "the music illustrates main composers Ratledge and Hopper's shift in compositional style towards looser and more minimalistic themes." The tracklisting consists of works from "Third" and "5" in often significantly different versions, as well as several pieces not recorded elsewhere.

Live in Paris May 2nd, 1972 Line-up:

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, e.piano
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- John Marshall – drums
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ



Backwards (2002, Cuneiform Rune 170, CD)

Backwards is comprised of recordings from three different eras of the band: First on the CD is a recording of the quartet from May, 1970, made just about the time that the band had finished recording their Third album. This may be the single finest recording of the quartet version of the band, surpassing even their official studio releases. Next is two performances from November, 1969, featuring the septet version of Soft Machine. Since the only other available material by this version of the band is 20' of BBC recordings, this is an invaluable addition to the band's recorded legacy. Lastly there is Robert Wyatt's original demo of "Moon In June", which would eventually appear on Third. The first half of this demo version was recorded in the USA in the

fall of 1968, after Soft Machine had disbanded after their 2nd US tour, but before the band reformed for their 2nd album. Then, in 1969, the trio version of Soft Machine recorded the ending to their piece, and spliced on the final half.

Backwards Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello (#1-5)
- Mark Charig – cornet (#4-5)
- Nick Evans – trombone (#4-5)
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals
- Lyn Dobson – s. sax, tenor sax (#4-5)



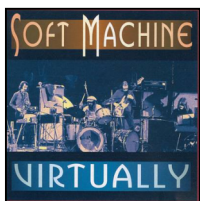
Noisette (2000, Cuneiform Rune 130, CD)

Noisette is the third in our Soft Machine series, recorded January 4th, 1970 at the same concert as "Facelift" on Third, by the short-lived quintet formation of the group: Elton Dean & Lyn Dobson-reeds, Hugh Hopper-bass, Mike Ratledge-keyboards & Robert Wyatt-drums & vocals. Noisette features the rest of the concert, & showcases a band in transition from their earlier psychedelic/ progressive sound towards the jazz rock sound of Third & Fourth. It features the quintet performing versions of material from their 1st two albums as well as material not available on their studio albums. Mastered directly off of the 30 year old 15ips master tapes, this release boasts superb live sound for the time period, & includes rare,

unseen photos and liner notes by Aymeric Leroy.

Noisette Line-up:

- Elton Dean – alto sax, saxello,
- Lyn Dobson – s. sax, flute, vocals
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals

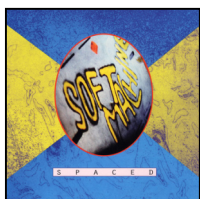


Virtually (1998, Cuneiform Rune 100, CD)

The previously unreleased show captured on **Virtually**, recorded 3/23/71, presents the classic quartet Softs [Elton Dean/Mike Ratledge/Hugh Hopper/Robert Wyatt] during their final European tour & just 4 months before their dissolution. The recording [licensed from German radio & taken from the master tapes] is superb for the time period, & the performance really sparkles, with everyone shinning, although special note must be made of Robert's drumming, as he plays with more gusto on this show than most from this period. With versions of all the tracks from Fourth, most of Third and much more, this 78' release, which captures the entire concert, is absolutely essential for any Soft Machine fan.

Virtually Line-up:

- Elton Dean - alto sax, saxello, e. piano
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Robert Wyatt – drums, vocals



Spaced (1996, Cuneiform Rune 90, CD)

Spaced is previously unreleased studio recordings recorded in early/mid 1969 by the "classic" Soft Machine trio line-up of Hugh Hopper [bass], Mike Ratledge [electric piano/organ] and Robert Wyatt [drums]. These heavily manipulated/ looped/etc. recordings were originally presented as the backdrop to a multi-media work entitled Spaced. After it's week-long performance, the tapes were forgotten for over two decades until rediscovered by Mike King. These recordings feature the band at their most radical, and while they would never again use the studio in such an extreme fashion, the work done here definitely influenced later works such as Third and Hugh's 1984. With liner notes by Hugh and Bob Woolford.

Spaced Line-up:

- Hugh Hopper – bass
- Mike Ratledge – electric piano, organ
- Robert Wyatt – drums
- Brian Hopper - saxophone