When Focus first broke on the International scene in 1972 rock music had been largely dominated by British and American bands. Although Holland had long been one of the European countries to produce a thriving rock scene, nobody really expected that a band would emerge which could successfully compete with the most powerful names of the day, and introduce a unique, original and incredibly successful brand of progressive rock into the bargain.

But Focus did more than bargain for a place in the sun. They swept to immediate popularity, particularly in Britain where the artistry of Jan Akkerman and Thijs Van Leer in particular, was welcomed with open arms by fans who didn’t care where they came from as long as they kept on playing.

It wasn’t long before Focus were voted brightest hope in the Melody Maker Poll of 1972, and the following year Jan Akkerman was voted top guitarist. Then came the conquest of America, where albums like “Moving Waves” and “Focus III” and singles “Sylvia” and “Hocus Focus” hit the charts.

Focus are intense, creative and highly intelligent men, with a background of study and varied interests in European classical music, Old English music (especially featuring the lute) as well as art and languages. When they first came to Britain Jan in particular was on his guard, determined not to be dragged into the rock machine. But success has mellowed them and they are probably happier now than at any time in their career.

Not that it has all been smooth. There have been traumas and upheavals within the ranks – a succession of bass players before Bert Reiter, and changes that brought ex-John Mayall, Zoot Money and Stone The Crows drummer Colin Allen in to replace Pierre Van Der Linden.

Thijs Van Leer is the group’s founder, a former member of the Dutch Conservatorium of Music and writer of the bulk of Focus’ material. Born in Amsterdam in 1948 he was educated at Hilversum Grammar School and Amsterdam University. He was awarded a degree for flute at Geneva Conservatoire and took orchestration and arranging tuition from Dutch composer Roger Van Otterloo. His organ master was the conductor and classical organist Anton Van Der Horst.
Focus came to London to record their first album "In And Out of Focus", no mean achievement in itself at that time. It was at the express wish of Jan that Pierre Van Der Linden, also a former member of Brainbox, replaced Clever on drums, and in 1971 Burt Rutiker took over from Cyril Havermans on bass.

Focus' impact on Britain was slow to start, but with each new album and each hard-working tour their success grew. At the 1972 Reading Festival they stopped the show and made every other act—some excited names among them—look stupid. The same thing happened at the Melody Maker Poll Awards concert the same year and indeed at every date on their autumn 1972 club and college tour.

THIJS VAN LEER at the age of three was the much praised pupil of renowned Dutch pianists Mario Stroo and Gerard Herveveld. At thirteen he was playing fine jazz variations of old standards like 'Stella By Moonlight'.

By the time he was nineteen he'd mastered the flute, proved himself as a Shakespearean actor, and even composed and sung a song in the style of Richard Rodgers.

Two years later, after studying at the Amsterdam Conservatory, he formed Focus.

Soon after he was proclaimed a major solo artist with the release, and success of his first album: 'Introspection'. Now comes his second: 'Introspection II'... the exploration of exciting and demanding new directions.

It confirms once again his ability as a flute player. It shows, most of all, his remarkable sense of style and form: his genius.

Two remarkable solo albums from THIJS VAN LEER

'INTROSPECTION' CBS 64589 'INTROSPECTION II' CBS 65915

on CBS Records & Tapes
1973 began for Focus in just the right way—with their first British concert tour, taking in 21 concerts in 23 dates. That’s the pressure at which Focus work. In April and May, they undertook another British tour. The last two concerts took place in London, the second of which was filmed for an Old Grey Whistle Test special. This recording was so successful that “Focus Live At The Rainbow” was released in September 1973.

Focus have toured America several times with great success. By September ’73 both the “Moving Waves” album and “Hocus Pocus” had sold over a million copies, qualifying the group for Gold Records awards.

In the 1973 Melody Maker Poll, Jan Akkerman took the most coveted award, being voted the world’s Top Guitarist, and Focus—whether collectively or individually appeared in every section of the Poll—no mean achievement for the 1972 Poll’s Brightest Hope for the year! Focus in Britain 1974 began with an amazing new single “Harem Scarem”, a new album “Hamburger Concerto” and an even more impressive concert tour.

This was also the year that Focus began its American breakthrough, though sadly in 1975 Colin Allen left the band and proved hard to replace. The problem forced Focus to cancel a planned British tour in autumn 1975.

The story ends happily—Pierre Van Der Linden, the band’s longest serving drummer is back in position ready for an extensive Spring 1976 tour.
CHARLIE

Charlie — another brand new band with a long history! One of the greatest illusions in the music business is that bands are supposed to come from nowhere and immediately become successful. It never happens like that — behind every overnight success is at least five years hard work, and when the world discovers Charlie (as for certain it will) it might like to know the single-minded determination that has held them together in their present form since April 1972. In that time Charlie, mainly under the guidance of lead vocalist and writer Terry Thomas (there’s no hyphen and it is his real name) have stuck resolutely to their principles. They have remained confident in their ability and their material and have waited for the right people to make the right offer before committing that material to tape. Polydor considered itself privileged to be on the receiving end.

Charlie’s career begins with Terry Thomas, 26-year-old North Londoner, 6’4” tall, blond hair and a Higher National Diploma in Electrical Engineering, the result of four years training at Hendon College of Technology.

MUSICALLY, Terry began writing in 1967 while playing in one of the several North London bands — this particular outfit featured Simon Kirke on drums and Jimmy McCulloch on guitar. It was however in another band, Axe, that the nucleus of Charlie was formed. Original Axe man was bass-player John Anderson, 25, from North London. “We wanted a lead guitarist, advertised, auditioned Terry who proceeded to take over the whole band!”

In 1969, Terry was sent to Portugal by the communications firm for whom he worked. “We’d installed some equipment there and I had to make sure it worked.” Before leaving, Axe auditioned for a replacement lead guitarist. Enter Martin Smith, 26, from Wool Green who got the job, though not for long!

Back to Portugal where Terry’s “equipment” is working so well he is spending all day lying on the beach and playing guitar. Inevitably, a band is soon formed called Objective — very multinational in its lineup — which soon gained considerable success, not so much with the summer tourists as with the Portuguese themselves in the winter months. Terry thinks the ‘d left before it actually happened’ that one of Objective’s singles even made the top of the Portuguese charts.

Throughout his two years in Portugal, Terry kept in touch with old Axe men and decided on his return to have a jam session with a lot of old mates.

The then Axe bass player introduced drummer Steve Gadd, 26, from Tottenham, Martin Smith returned and several others too. From this session Charlie was formed in December 1971. John Anderson (note the ‘d’ please?) joined in April ’72 and then the work really started. Much of the next three years should be quietly forgotten, involving as they do, managers about whom the band remains tight lipped, and a recording contract where a single took six months to record and then was never released!

So what kept Charlie going through three seemingly bleak years? Apart from their day-time jobs (Martin — hairdresser in Chelsea salon; John — technical officer with the GPO and Steve — accounts adviser at the Sunday Times) — they turned professional in September 1975. It was the continual and growing encouragement from audiences wherever they played. They remember with particular pride, backing Tim Rose and Tim Hardin on tour and on both occasions being to cut down their own spot and they were going down better than the stars!

Charlie begin working again in January 1976 after a year’s planned lay-off. The encouragement will be even stronger and early followers will recognise several numbers on their debut album which have so admirably stood the test of time.

You already know the Terry Thomas story. Now briefly, the musical histories of —

Steve Gadd: (Drums)
First band called the Gokks which he joined at 14, replacing Richard Hudson of Hudson Ford. He stayed with them for five years, then had three more years with the Eyes, before being introduced to Terry Thomas by Charlie’s first bass player.

Equipment: Ludwig 12”, 14”, 16” and 19” Tom Tom, 22” bass drum, super sensitive snare and cymbals.

Martin Smith: (lead guitar)
From self- confessing unmusical beginnings. Martin has played with just about every type of musical outfit — originally in Shadows-type band, then a soul band, he learned to use a bottle neck and switched to blues. “Before that I’d never heard of any of the blues greats, but it was blues that opened my ears to music.” Then came a rock ‘n’ roll showband, a folk duo, even a strict tempo dance band. Then he was introduced to Axe who wanted a replacement lead guitar for departing Terry. “Sad! The band fell apart, but when Terry returned I wanted to latch on to him again.” Now shares lead guitar duties.

Equipment: 1969 Les Paul Junior customised by Sam Li; Fender Tremonti and Fender Dual Roman.

John Anderson: (bass)
The only one not to play an instrument before leaving school. Later learned rhythm guitar and bought a bass very cheaply from a friend. Coincidentally discovered some friends needed a bass player and became founder of Axe. End of story!

Equipment: Early 1969 Fender Precision; Ampeg SVT bass system.

Terry Thomas: Equipment: 1962 Gibson SG with three humbucking pickups. 1965 Fender Maple-neck Telecaster; Fender showman amp.

The turning point came eventually in August 1974 when Richard Dale, previously a booker for the late Sundown chain, was sufficiently impressed to want to manage the band full time. Richard interested Trident studios, whose production company was responsible for the first two Queen albums and by April 1975 the first album was recorded. In October the band signed with Barry Dickens at M.A.M. who in turn completed a contract with Polydor.
"The Guvnor's put the word out, get Charlie's Fantasy Girls and bring 'em in!"

Their first album
FANTASY GIRLS
Grab the Album and collect the reward

FOCUS

New single out soon from their latest album

Also available Focus
Honeymoon Concerto
In And Out Of Focus
Focus 3
ACROSS

3. A little smoke? (5)
8. Kingly (5)
10. Latin (5)
11. Contraction (3)
12. Rot (5)
13. Refined (7)
15. Stop (5)
18. Poorly (3)
19. Merited (6)
21. Influences (7)
22. Part (4)
23. Holiday (4)
24. Curative (7)
26. Called up (6)
29. Container (3)
31. Force (5)
32. Associate (7)
34. Essential (5)
35. Atmosphere (3)
36. Commence (5)
37. Airman (5)
38. Wanderer (5)

DOWN

1. Measurer (5)
2. Dog (7)
4. Tilt (4)
5. Squabble (6)
6. Lobby (5)
7. Motive (5)
9. Drink (3)
12. Erased (7)
14. Fairy (3)
16. Spirit (5)
17. Margins (5)
19. Moral (7)
20. Animal (5)
21. Grant (5)
23. Pigeon (7)
24. Sheep (6)
25. Vehicle (3)
27. Letter (5)
28. Forename (5)
30. Bird (5)
32. Dad (4)
33. Zero (3)

Some light entertainment brought to you by the people who know a thing or two about the subject. SONY.