Subject: "A Trick of the Tail"
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 30 Apr 2004 10:51:57 GMT
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This morning, I'm listening to "Trick of the Tail" by Genesis.I'm a long time fan of Genesis, and own absolutely everything they ever did in vinyl. I mean, everything. I have obscure stuff that was weird and hard to find back when vinyl was the norm. So Genesis and Peter Gabriel have been favorites of mine forever.Having said that, I must say that Trick of the Tail is still just as enchanting as it ever was. I was always sad that Gabriel left just before this album, but he did just fine on his own. It allowed Phil Collins to flourish, even though this album is an imitation of the old "Gabriel Genesis." Nothing wrong with that. The changes that followed were popular and put Genesis on the map. Not willing to call them sell-outs, I liked 'em before and after. Same with Gabriel, going from Solsbury Hill to Sledgehammer.But I digress. Trick of the Tail was a slow, driving and enchanting album. It was easy for a teenager to miss, moving on to faster-paced more energetic albums. But Trick of the Tail grew on you. You were pulled in at first by Dance on Volcano and Squonk. But after a few plays, you become intrigued by Mad Man Moon and Trick of the Tail. Robbery Assault and Battery and Los Endos were good too. But soon you found yourself mezmerized by Entangled and Ripples. Those two and Squonk are etched into my mind, like an oh-so familar hymn from my youth.Set the way-back machine to 1979. I had a pair of

channel receiver. Source material consisted of a Technics turntable, Pioneer Reel-to-Reel and an Onkyo 4-head cassette. Really good stuff considering my budget, and it was the best I had ever heard at the time. I still think highly of that system; It was great equipment even by audiophile standards then or today.I was playing my Genesis albums on a Technics direct-drive turntable with an Audio-Technica gold limited edition AT20SL cartridge. Tracking weight set for a gram, anti-skating set for 0.8. Every time I played an album, I went through "that little ritual." Run a hair thin bead of cleaning fluid (never distilled water or alcohol, 70% or 99%) on the Discwasher, put the album on the turntable and rotate the platter backwards with my finger. Wipe the groves three times, and remove the debris from the Discwasher brush using its scraper brush each time.Then one pass across the needle with the Discwasher needle brush, which was about a million tiny little thin fibers designed specifically for the purpose. Letting the platter spin freely now, use the anti-static gun and squeeze it once, let up and squeeze again. Remove the gun to point out in free air to release the second time. Use just enough pressure on the handle each time so that the piezoelectric crystal generates enough voltage to ionize the air and not arc internally, making that buzzing sound and discharging its energy inside. Now, stop the platter, power it up to speed and lower the needle down to the surface with the hydraulic damper. Lights out, sit and enjoy.I'm telling you what, that was heaven. I remember thinking how lucky I was to have those moments. I felt like I was in a world of my own, that few were blessed enough to enjoy. Presumptuous, perhaps. But I guess that's what all audiophile's share, an elation with good music that makes us wonder if we have found the place that is nirvana. Surely, nothing else is as enchanted as

one could have told Wayne Parham 1979 that he would be listening to a hi-fi tube system in 2004. A quarter century later I would be listening to a system using technology that died a quarter century before.But here I am.I take my half-speed master copy of Trick of the Tail and place it on my Rega P2 turntable. Can't spin it backwards, it's a belt drive. So I power it up and let it spin forward instead, cleaing the record and gently helping it against the drag with assist from my finger. I see now why a separate cleaning platter is nice, and I am careful to maintain speed so

the belt isn't strained. Same cleaner from 25 years ago, cleaning the same album.What I couldn't have known then, was that Enchanted passes you through another gate when run through a system that's valved from phono stage to output iron. Ripples gives you just that. I mean, really. Across the ages comes those same warm and driving rhythms, but with even more warmth than before. It is truly magical. This is what tubes are for, an order-of-magnitude more involving than even the audiophile-approved lyricists are. You are absolutely thrown into another world, one where there is nothing but fond memories and the innocence of youth. It's the magic of the ages, a feeling of Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids right there in your midst.How in the hell do I re-enter the "real world" to get any work done?That's The Trick of the Tail.
