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# STAINED GLASS

RUSH  
'Power Windows'  
(Vertigo VERH 31)  
KKKK

I HAVE agonised long and hard over this latest opus from Rush and I still can't honestly say I'm much the wiser as to what is going on here overall. Mr Barton seems to have put an astute finger on the problem when he



**ALEX LIFESON:**  
over powering windows?

suggested that this album harks back to their 'Hemispheres' period, my least favourite Rush venture and the time when I largely lost interest in the band (see 'Afterimages' issue 67). But the curious turn of events here is that 'Power Windows' is still one of Rush's most compelling works to date.

Where 'Power Windows' scores decisively over 'Hemispheres' is in the strength and directness (after a fashion) of Neil Peart's lyrics. The last couple of Rush albums have seen Peart producing some of his finest lyrics ever, their economy and precision have been quite excellent. Here he allows himself a little more reign and, personally, I'm not convinced that's an altogether smart move. But he seems to be in the process of breaking out into wholly new ground.

This is Peart's most politically biased work and *biased* not, as you might reasonably expect, in favour of the Rambo-style of extremism with which he's been associated in the past. Happily, Peart appears to have undergone some kind of Centrist shift in his views and there are some sharply observed 'protest songs' contained herein. That said, there are still some things packed into these songs that, given the limited time I've had to live with them, I've been unable to decode. Having been a Rush fan of many

years standing, I've always thought I was pretty much in tune with what they're all about, but this album aims a little over my head and I wonder if Rush haven't somehow lost sight of who they're supposed to be writing for – aside from themselves that is.

This is a complex, top-heavy work that gets caught up in its own enthusiasm. You cannot fault Rush for their musicianship, which is uniformly superb; notice especially Peart's drumming on 'Mystic Rhythms', Alex Lifeson's heavy guitar approach to 'Territories' and Geddy Lee's quite excellent bubbling bass lines on 'Grand Designs' and 'Middletown Dreams'. But they get carried away, it seems, and co-producer Peter Collins (Nick Kershaw, Gary Moore, etc) has done nothing to pull them back into line. There's a great beauty in simplicity, particularly when, as here, Peart is attempting to make some very valid social and political points. Listen to a song like U2's 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday' and its message is *enhanced* not diminished by the simplicity of the arrangement and delivery.

Still, compelling, as I said, this most certainly *is*. Peart coins some of his most powerful lines on this album: 'So much poison in power/The principles get left out', cries Geddy on 'Grand Designs'; 'We break the surface

*tension!* With our wild genetic (at least, I think he says 'genetic') dreams'. And over on the other side Peart has Lee decrying that we 'Don't feed the people/But we feed the machines' ('Territories'). Peart has the bit between his teeth and although he rambles elsewhere, when he does find his mark he strikes home with considerable venom.

Which brings us to the album's killer (quite literally) track and Rush's most cogent slice of inductive yet released, 'Manhattan Project'. This album would be worth buying for this track alone. The 'Manhattan Project' refers to America's pooling of Europe's finest scientific minds, 'the brightest boys', to create the world's first atomic bomb, 'to play with the biggest toys'. The result, as Peart wryly observes, was 'more than they bargained for'. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were laid to waste and the world 'would be changed for evermore'. Here the OTT arranging, with string support and vocal effects, it not out of place. This is gripping stuff and should on no account be missed.

This is a fine album performed to Rush's customary exacting standards. My criticism is only that it's *too* involved, *too* overpowering for most of us to come to grips with.

DAVE DICKSON

**MORE REVIEWZ PAGE 20**

## RUSH: 'The Big Money' (Vertigo)

RUSH NEVER cease to amaze me, they're one of the few bands always willing to experiment and try something new and different with each release. And here once again we hear Messrs Lee, Lifeson and Peart melt da grooves with some interesting sounds. If you wanna keep up with the Joneses I strongly urge you to purchase this wee gem, and don't let the naff sleeve put you off.