

ACCESS

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ALICE IN CHAINS • SANDBOX •
ALEX LIFESON • RUSTY • D.O.A.

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No More Secrets

Closer

Alex Lifeson appears misty-eyed after yet another long bout of gruelling brain-bash sessions, sorting out material for the forthcoming Rush opus due out in late spring. To add confusion to confusion, Lifeson is pulling double-duty. During construction of yet another piece of musical genius with 'Ged and Neil', he's in the midst of pulling promo stunts for his first foray into the solo world, *Victor*.

The setting is a gorgeous French-styled 'hotel' just north of Toronto. Gently placed in the barren winter wilderness of Ontario, such mesmerizing visions and peaceful soundscapes are destined to make an impact on a musically-led mind. After fetching his coffee we make our way to an ornate living area with bay windows facing a gorgeous backdrop of foliage and fresh-fallen snow. With laundry swirling in the background, Lifeson comments about the normality of living and craving a taste of city life once again. His monstrous abode has been on the market for two years.

Victor was created and recorded entirely in this place of meeting; a comforting home studio that met joyfully with Lifeson's idle hands. "I think I've always wanted to do something like *Victor*," Lifeson relishes thoughts of creation outside of his lifeline. "With the demands that recording takes from Rush, I really needed to have a good block of time which was equal to what we'd take with the band. That is normally eight or nine months from inception to final mixes. Geddy wanted to take a year off with his baby, Neil had things on his agenda for an additional six months. I looked at an 18-month period and said 'here's my opportunity to do something'. As it was, it took ten months to do all the recording and we finally finished the project on September tenth of last year. Then I had a couple of weeks off and began on the next Rush record. It was ok 'cause I get bored easily and I find I need to be focused on something to make me happy."

With over 20 years of professional musicianship under his belt, Lifeson is a rare breed of rocker, balancing intellectual stamina with powerful outbursts of the strings. *Victor's* youthful aggression harks back to a time in his career when Rush were poignantly categorized as the thinking man's metal band. "I suppose the cynical world is full of anger," he reaches for an explanation. "But I wanted to make a record that was dark, disturbing and unsettling."

But *Victor's* variety and full-bodied nature lies deeper than simple unrestrained power. "I wanted to do a lot of different things. I wanted to have a song or two that would be considered as very heavy and some other more sad, lonelier moments. I wanted to try and do a narrative over a song that had no guitar on it (the title track). It wasn't born out of

some dissatisfaction I had with Rush. This was something that purely started from my brain and my heart and carried through with no consideration with Rush at all."

The shocker, first and foremost, is the raging fury of social downfalls *Victor* recreates; mainly the harsher, more violent aspects of relationships gone bad. "I hadn't written lyrics in 18 years so I was scared shitless about that to be quite honest. Once I got a direction, it came pretty easily and quickly. I wanted to deal with a topic like love but approach it from the darker side. The anger, frustration, violence and angst that is created in relationships which start as loving relationships and end up as terrible nightmares or go beyond that and become stronger than they were in the beginning. Looking around me, a lot of people I knew were going through some kind of crisis in their relationship, or an individual emotional crisis. I felt like I had a lot to draw from — just from observation and experience."

Through *Victor's* blatant forcefulness and unrestrained temperament, someone could easily misconstrue the lyrics as being from one's own household. Did your wife throw a plate at you before she went to work today? "She wouldn't dare, because I brought the plate to her in bed," he retorts with a glow. "She gets breakfast in bed every weekend. I've never spoken about my personal life in any interview that I've done with Rush or otherwise. Our personal lives are very private and we try to maintain that privacy as much as we can. Every relationship has its highs and lows and I'm not immune from that. My relationship is excellent and I don't think I could find anything in it that I'm missing. But looking around at a lot of friends I have, they have been together as long as I have with my wife (incidentally, Charlene was his high school sweetheart when he was fifteen) and I thought that their relationships were stronger, but they collapsed."

The second nature of Rush fans dissecting the lyrics leaves no doubt they'll be tearing apart *Victor*. "My lyrics don't have anything to do with Rush lyrics. Neil writes on a whole different level than I do. I'm much more direct and simple in my lyrics. I'm dealing with emotional things. With Neil's lyrics, they are very multi-layered and you can take them in many different ways. But I think with my stuff it's a little more direct and hopefully it marries well with the music, and that the music creates a soundscape that the lyrics can sit on comfortably."

While all early demo work was created by Lifeson himself, he called in a trio of local session players: guitarist Bill Bell, drummer Blake Manning and longtime bassist Peter Cardinali (the former two, Lifeson had met at the Kumbaya summer festival). Other guests include famed bassist Les Claypool (Primus), acclaimed vocalist/songwriter Dalbello and Colleen Allen (sax player from local jazz/blues nest The Orbit Room).

However, the immediate threat to the world's oceans is the massive loss of fish stocks. The world's fisheries are being overfished, and the world's oceans are being polluted. The world's oceans are being overfished, and the world's oceans are being polluted. The world's oceans are being overfished, and the world's oceans are being polluted.

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“Giving others a structure doesn’t mean this isn’t just a problem that ‘the right have gotten’ and the poor people of credit.” But the people need to be more aware that it is just a part of what is going on, that there is always more to be done.

a colorful world of relatively stable trees. I started by climbing the tallest pine grove. I found the densest forest a hundred to two hundred years old. The old-growth forest was still well-developed in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and it was one of the few places in the state where you could still find a forest of old-growth trees. I found a forest of old-growth trees in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and it was one of the few places in the state where you could still find a forest of old-growth trees. I found a forest of old-growth trees in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, and it was one of the few places in the state where you could still find a forest of old-growth trees.

...and the fact that the ...

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"The idea came
from that point
where I had to
break and try hard
and control things
with my hands while
with David & I."