

Rush: conquering the world with 'Hemispheres'

by Len Senecal

No longer the target of critics' jeers that made undue remarks concerning the group's Canadian heritage, Toronto-based Rush have developed into one of rock music's main attractions. With a string of highly successful albums and the prestigious Juno award (presented yearly to the top Canadian musical

group) under their belt, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, and Neil Peart are currently on the road once again, pushing *Hemispheres*, their seventh Mercury LP.

But Rush hasn't always been filling concert halls and selling albums. Their first five years were spent playing the bar circuit of northern Ontario, doing mainly top-forties copy, while occasionally slipping in a few original tunes. Renting studio time, the group put together their first album, entitled simply *Rush* in 1974.

When none of the major record companies would back them, the band decided to release the LP independently, a risky move for the fledgling trio. As luck would have it, radio station WMMS in Cleveland gave their disc a listen. The Cleveland area soon became hooked on the band's hard rock workings, developing a cult following that led to Rush's signing on with Mercury records, and the band's first American tour.

added time to prepare for their sixth release, last fall's highly acclaimed *A Farewell To Kings*.

Recorded in England, *A Farewell To Kings* outpaced any of the band's previous studio releases, proving itself as a logical successor to *2112*. Just when many people were wondering where Rush could possibly go following the popularity of their two previous albums, the answers were provided in the forms of "Xanadu," "A Farewell To Kings," "Cygnus X-1," and the lovely "Closer to the Heart." Combining

"to be continued," which brings them to *Hemispheres*, the seventh and latest release from Rush.

Produced by longtime associate Terry Brown, *Hemispheres* opens with the side-long conclusion to "Cygnus X-1." Entitled "Book two-Hemispheres," the album takes off where "Cygnus X-1" ended. After falling into the black hole, the other side is revealed in book two as Alex Lifeson rips out a series of power chordings intertwined with harmonic picking and neat percussion pieces by Peart.



Neil Peart, percussion — his love for the epic novel transformed Rush into rock's foremost storytellers. (photo by Vin Carrella)

Geddy Lee's bass playing is stronger than ever, as are his vocals. In playing a series of characters Lee unfolds a variety of vocal changes. Some he has shown on earlier Rush recordings, while others are refreshingly unique to *Hemispheres*.

In some ways book two is strikingly familiar to *Careless of Steel's* "Fountains of Lamneth," in that it lays out an interesting guitar/drum attack that is repeated intermittently in the song. A maturity of style, however, raises this effort above any of Rush's previous recordings, as the band displays several varied uses of this flashback technique. Neil Peart's precise percussion parts and drum rolls move smoothly along throughout the song, mixing with Lee's bass to provide a solid background for Lifeson to work his articulate guitar playing around.

As the song suddenly shifts back to the closing passages from book one, an eerie feeling of suspense is generated through the

storytellers.

But even before the group had played a note in the United States, an apparent disaster struck them when drummer John Rutsey parted company with bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson. Mustachioed Neil Peart came to the rescue, more than filling Rutsey's shoes as the present Rush line-up toured the Americas together. His contributions, both as a musician and lyricist have enabled Rush to emerge from the rock slappile their first album had headed them for. The groups next effort, 1975's *Fly By Night* spawned the title cut as the band's first single, as well as unearthing "By Tor and the Snow Dog", an epic rock tale that foreshadowed the good things to come from the rapidly rising trio.

By the time their third long-player *Careless of Steel* had hit the racks in the same year, a definitive Rush style had been developed. Combining blitzkrieg rock and rollers like "Bastille Day," and "Think I'm Going Bald," with extended sagas "The Necromancer," and "Fountains of Lamneth," Rush had established themselves as the storytelling rock and rollers who delved into the J.R.R. Tolkein/Anne Raynd School of epic fantasy. With Alex Lifeson's powerchording, Geddy Lee's chameleon-like vocals, and Neil Peart's mystifying lyrics, Rush roared onward into their fourth album, the classic *2112*.

Reknowned as a true rock masterpiece, the side long "2112" tells the story of a brave individual and his fight for freedom in a future world dominated by the all powerful Solar Federation. With this album, Rush truly placed themselves in a class all alone. The following year the group released a double live set *All The World's A Stage*, the album that first achieved commercial success for Rush, selling well in excess of one million copies.

Capturing the group's intense in-concert excitement, *Stage* contained live renditions of such favorites as "2112," "Fly By Night," and "In The End." It also enabled the group to continue extensive touring throughout North America, as well as giving them

Moog Synthesizer and bass pedals with their already proven rock formula, Rush appeared as a mind-dazzling trio weaving beautiful lyrics and instrumentation with hard driving bass and spacey synthesized passages.

The album's last cut, "Cygnus X-1, book one, The Voyage" featured yet another chapter in the annals of Rush, concluding its lyrics with the words

Arenas (6,000 To 20,000)

11 RUSH/PAT TRAVERS—Albatross Productions, Col., Seattle, Wash., Nov. 7

15 RUSH/PAT TRAVERS—Albatross Productions/Double Tee Promotions, Col., Portland, Ore., Nov. 6

126 3 RUSH
Hemispheres
Mercury, 09M1-3743



Auditoriums (Under 6,000)

3 RUSH—Hemispheres, Mercury, 09M1-3743, Nov. 13

These excerpts from *Billboard Magazine* show the success of *HEMISPHERES*, as well as the recent Rush concert tour. Note the rapid rise of 66 places in the albums listing

(photo by Vin Costello) book one, an erie feeling of suspense is generated through the use of synthesizer mixed with a pair of

instrumental fade-ins containing familiar segments of the previous epic. Once again sweeping the synthesizer into focus, the group quickly vaults back into a guitar/drum attack fronted by Lee's searing vocals. With victory now attained the song blasts to a pseudo climax with an acoustic guitar and moralizing vocals putting the finishing touches on the two part tale.

Similar to many of the past Rush epics, the vocals must be thoroughly studied in order to gain a full appreciation of the music. In the case of book two, both segments must be digested if the listener is to obtain an adequate understanding of what Rush is attempting to present.

"The Sphere" opens side two in characteristic Rush rock and roll style, with Lee bellowing above hard hitting guitar and drums. Midway through the song, Lifeson and Peart combine for a pleasant guitar-bell interlude that crashes back into the closing verse. "The Trees" offers an interesting contrast to the rest of the album, as does "La Ville Strangiato," *Hemispheres* nine minute plus instrumental ending.

Running through flamenco, power riffing, and phase shifted guitars, combined with bass, drums, and an occasional synthesizer, the song offers each of the band members an opportunity to show off his wares in minute solo spots. Crisp snare drum and hi-hat beats accentuate Lifeson's only true guitar lead of the album, the lack of which could be termed *Hemispheres* only grave weakness.

As the three push full bore into the LP's concluding minutes, a new found air of maturity is present. Once condemned as "three chord Rush," Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, and Neil Peart have certainly come a long way from their days of rock obscurity.