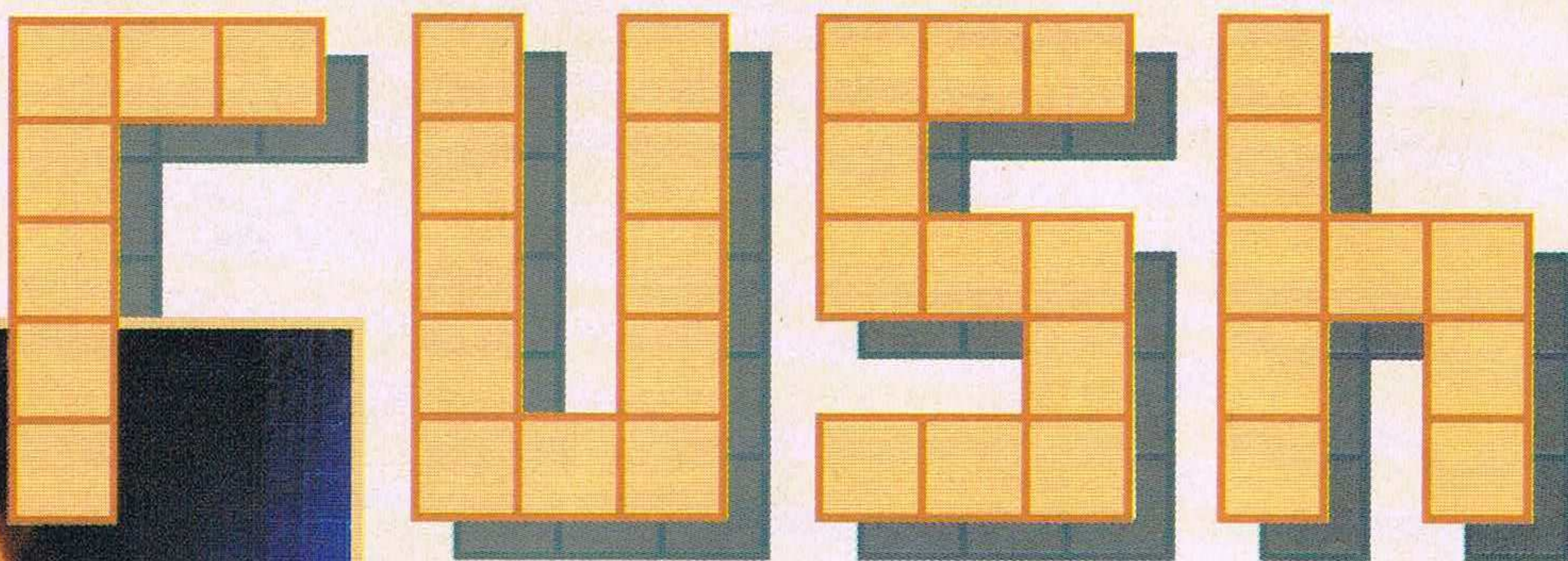
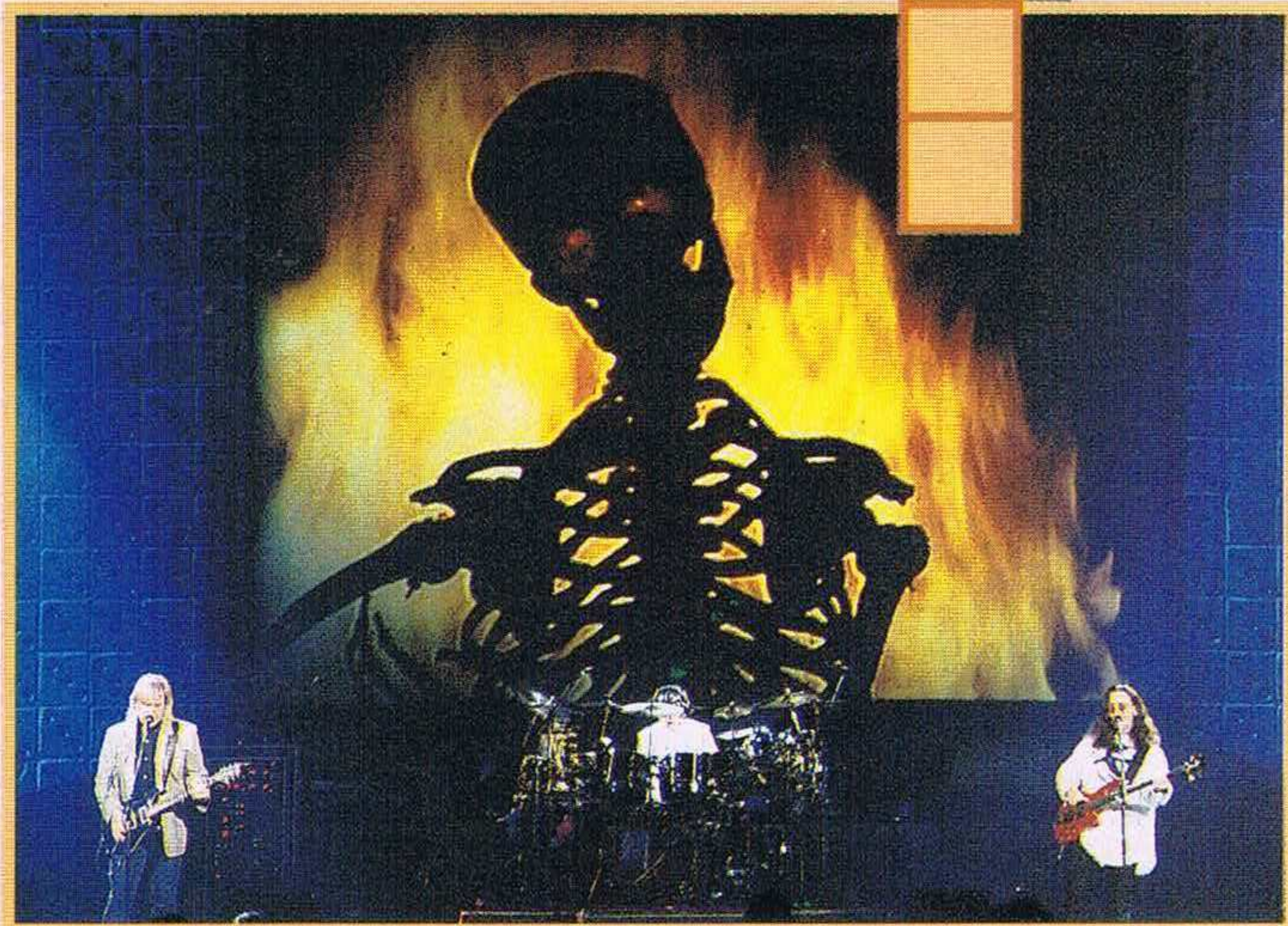


# BONE IDOLS



**'Roll The Bones' has been universally acclaimed as the finest RUSH album in many a moon. As the band prepare to return to the U.K. for their first gigs here in many years, ANDY BRADSHAW talks to guitarist ALEX LIFESON in Dallas, where, as you can judge from DENIS O'REGAN's spectacular pics, the Rush experience is definitely alive and well!**

In around forty minutes time, Rush will go on stage at the Reunion Arena in Dallas. The hall is already growing noisy as many thousands voices unite in a babble of incoherency. Deep in the bowels of the vast building, the door to a small ante-room swings open suddenly and in walks Alex Lifeson, with a modest smile of welcome daubed across his face. He sits down and looks intently across the table, as the tape recorder hums quietly into action.

It's been a long time since Rush were in Europe. This most unique of bands are about to change that, however, and they're looking forward to it:

"Yeah, the last time we were over there was with the 'Hold Your Fire' album. We tried to cut down our touring schedules after that, because it was such a stressful tour for the band. I think everybody had had enough of travelling and being away.

***"I think we tend to cringe a bit when we listen to the 'Caress Of Steel' period."***

We'd been touring quite a bit up to that point. After eight months on the road with 'Hold Your Fire', we came over to Europe and did the 'Show Of Hands' live record, came home and went into the studio to mix it. It all added up to one long dragged-out experience. So we took seven months off after that, which really rejuvenated us. Everybody felt so much better when we then began recording 'Presto'. Now we pace ourselves better and really enjoy touring again, so going back over to

Europe is going to be great for us."

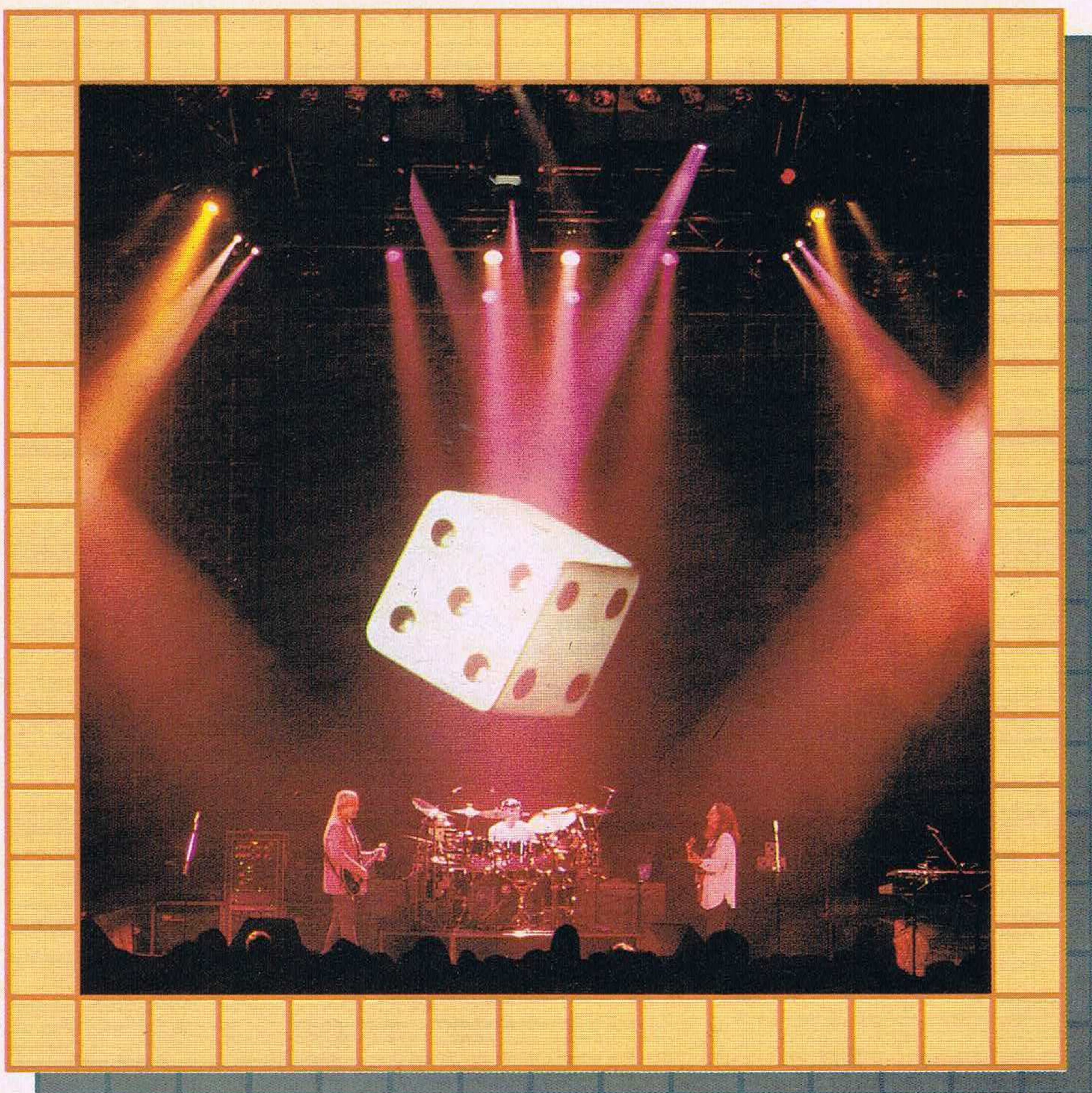
The renewed vigour the band have for their music is having a marked effect on the quality of their live performances, Alex believes:

"We were getting to the stage where we were becoming stale. Because you feel tired and run-down it affects everything you do; you get into a rut. I certainly feel much better about playing now than I have

for years. I now take time out to practise far more than I used to."

It would be safe to say that the individuals in Rush are all regarded as consummate musicians. But do they, because of the huge pressure of being 'super-musos' tend to confine their playing to the band, or do they enjoy jamming with other people?

"We certainly like to work with other good bands on the bill. Take Primus, for





example, who are supporting us right now. They're a brilliant bunch of people and superb musicians. And yeah, it's great to jam with them. We had one night in Seattle, where we just jammed for about forty minutes on some little atonal sequence. We got really into it. Do you know I haven't done that kind of thing in years, and it was so much fun. It takes you back to the reason why you do what you do in the first place: for the love of it."

Alex believes that this is a very exciting time for music, with all the different sub-cultures coming through. In the light of that, how does he think Rush are perceived? Because of the sheer range of their music, stylistically, dynamically and lyrically, do they offer something to everyone?

"In some ways I can't help thinking that we're looked upon as the veterans, who've been around for ever. I guess some people accord you respect for that, even if they don't like what you do. It's interesting to see the diversity of the audience. We get everyone from kids in their early teens, right the way through to, shall we say, 'more mature' listeners."

How would Alex describe a Rush fan?

"I think there are a number of common elements. They tend to be well versed in everything that happens in the band, know all the lyrics and take the time out to go back across a number of albums to get into the history of what we've done."

***"I certainly feel much better about playing now than I have for years."***

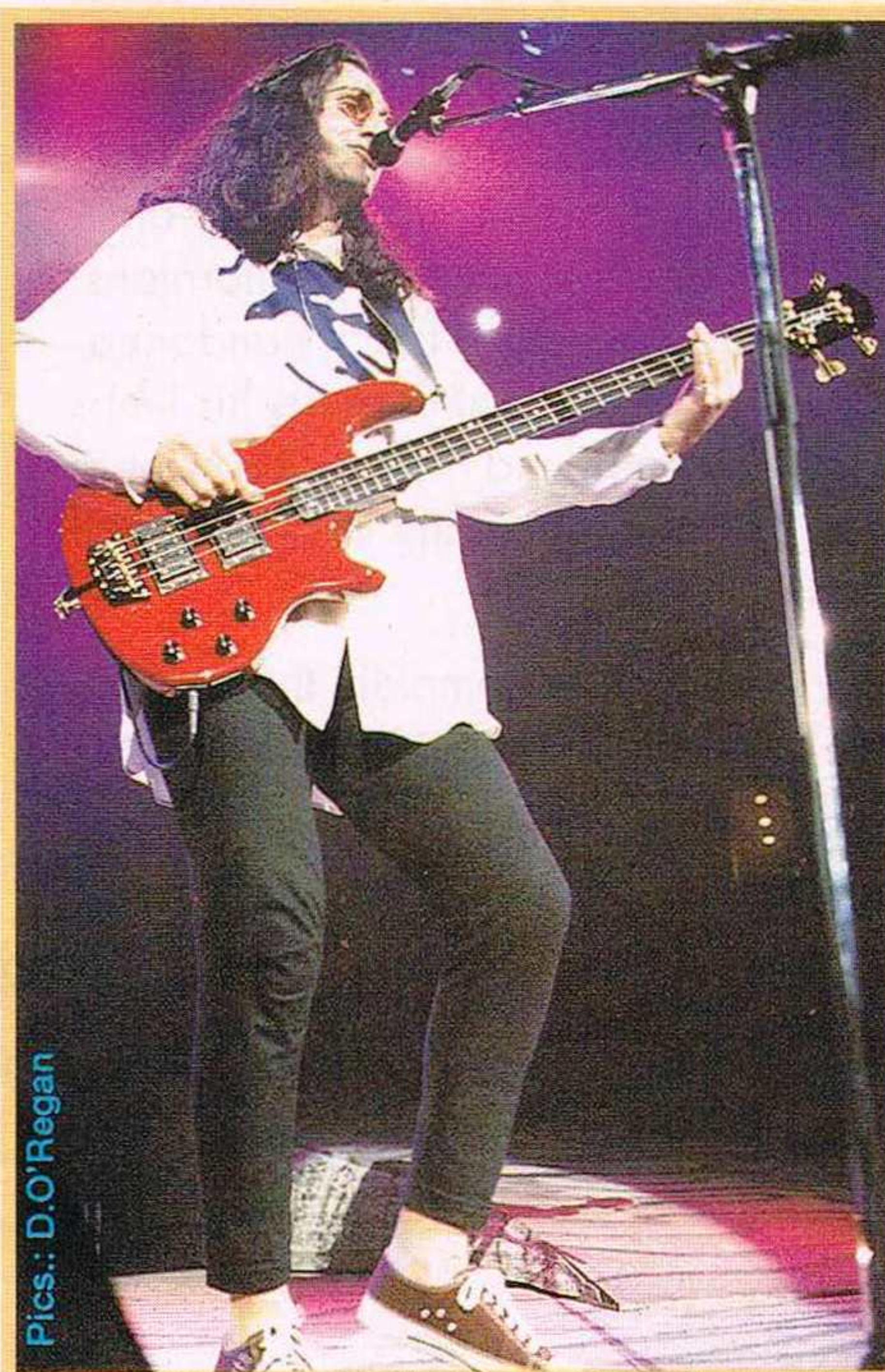
Do the songs that the fans request coincide with what the band themselves would choose?

"We tend to get a lot of requests for songs from the 'Moving Pictures' album, older stuff from 'Farewell To Kings' like 'Xanadu', as well as newer numbers."

"We recognise that we have to play a fair percentage of older material, and to be honest we enjoy it. We're doing some old tunes now that we haven't played live in a long time. It gives us a chance to get out from behind the keyboards and rock out a little."

With Rush having such a long career, stretching back almost beyond the horizon of contemporary Hard Rock, are there any phases which they now regard with some degree of embarrassment, or cringe slightly at the memory? Alex nods slowly and answers laconically:

"Well, yeah, I think we tend to cringe a bit when we listen to the 'Caress Of Steel'



Pics.: D.O'Regan

period. It seems so 'young' to us now. But we recognise that it was a time that we had to go through. I think a lot of bands are a little embarrassed by some of the early things they do, not ashamed, just... yeah, embarrassed."

Alex admits to rarely listening to the early records, except by chance. Last year, for example, he heard all of 'Hemispheres' on the radio:

"I was surprised how good it sounded. Some of the stuff on the first side is a bit too 'dark' I think, but the rest of it holds up well."

Rush have very much moved away from epic to the more direct approach in their song-writing. This is also reflected in their attitude to recording:

"The recording of 'Roll The Bones' was very fresh and happened very quickly. I think it's important that we do that. We tend to become too involved in the details and lose the overview as a result. It's the feel that counts."

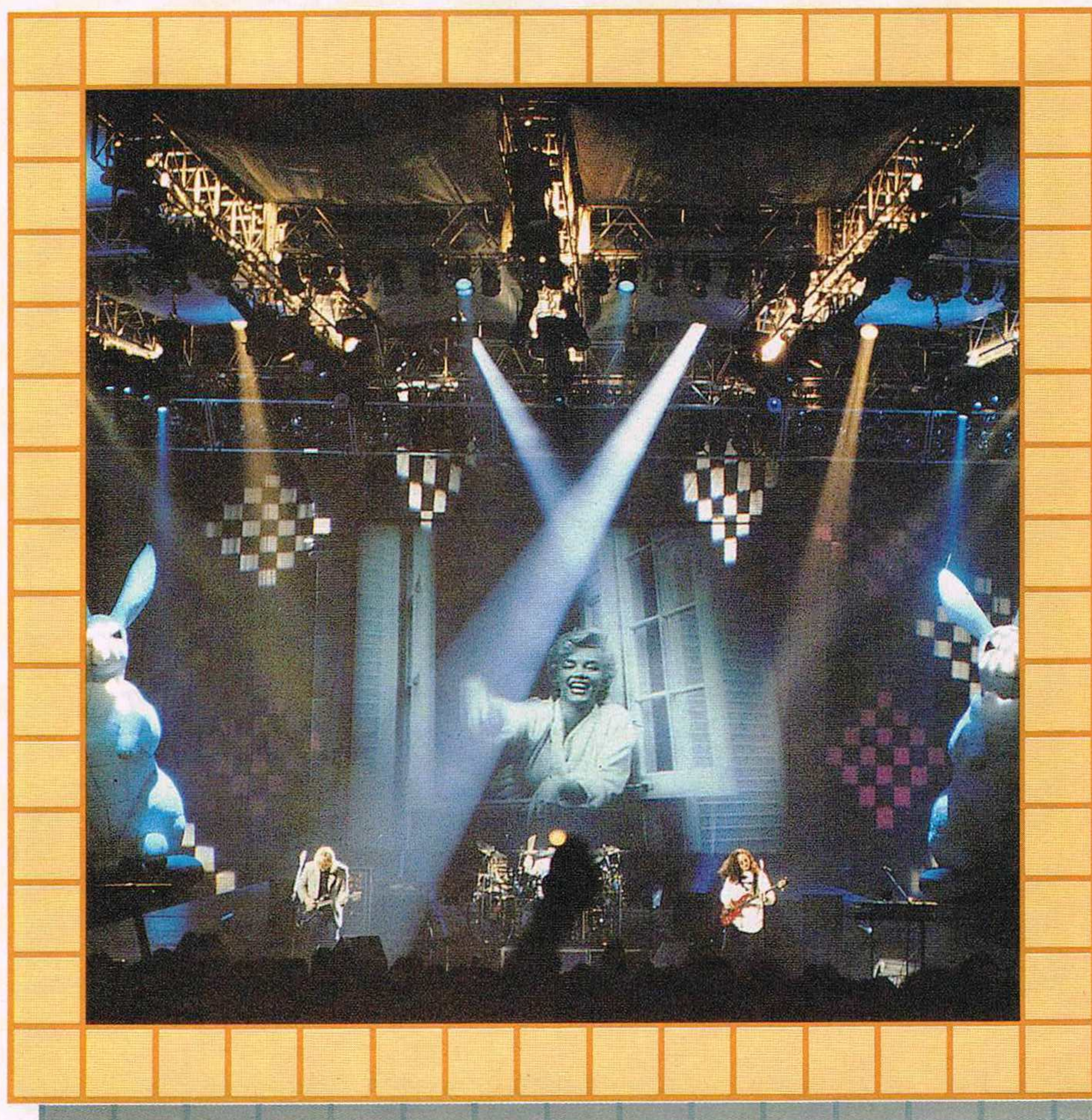
As if to back this up, Alex explains how some of the solos that made it on the new album were actually first takes demoed on 8-track before the main recording began:

"I just threw them down to fill in the space, but when it came to it, there was no need to re-record them. So on 'Bravado', 'Roll The Bones' and 'Ghost Of A Chance', what you've got is as spontaneous as it can get!"

At this point, Alex glances at his watch.

"Hey, I gotta go!, I'm on stage in ten minutes and I've got to get changed! Listen, we'll talk after the show..." And with that he bustles out of the room.

The last time I saw Rush live was on the 'Exit Stage Left' tour in 1982, a full ten years ago. What is extraordinary is that Rush today look younger, tighter and more





enthusiastic than they did back then. They open up with 'Force 10' which blisters into 'Limelight' from 'Moving Pictures'. The arena erupts as the latter finishes, the roar barely has time to subside before the band spur the crowd on further with 'Freewill'.

Suddenly you see what Alex Lifeson was talking about. There are smiles on the faces at each point of the musical triangle formed by the three musicians. Hell those guys are having fun! Geddy Lee's bouncing around the stage with Lennon shades perched upon that famous hooter,

hair performing follicular gymnastics in every direction; Lifeson interacting with the crowd, hardly sparing a glance for his fingers which are working out like an aerobics class for neurotic Californians; Neil Peart, wearing a black bandanna and an air of concentration as his limbs assault in compound rhythms the skins and pads that orchestrate the backbone of the band.

Only a fool could complain that there aren't enough favourites in the set, from the massive immodesty of 'Big Money' to the

mellow tints of 'Closer To The Heart' to 'Xanadu', 'Tom Sawyer' and beyond, the list is a goldmine.

Curiously, the stage is naked. But the space around it is filled by a light show, which looks like a Vari-light convention. The screen at the back is filled by computer animated clips that could fry your brain if you weren't careful. It's going to save someone somewhere a fortune on drugs.

Rush have developed a sense of humour too. During 'Superconductor', two enormous inflatable white rabbits

***"We had one night in Seattle, where we jammed with Primus for about forty minutes. I haven't done that kind of thing in years."***



materialise out of enormous inflatable top hats and begin bouncing and jiggling in time with the music.

The encore is magnificent too, a heady medley of 'Spirit Of Radio', 'Overture', 'Finding My Way', 'La Villa Strangiato', 'Red Barchetta' and a cunning segue back into 'Spirit Of Radio'. It works, it rocks and it kicks serious ass, as they say in Dallas.

When a showered and somewhat battle-weary Alex Lifeson reappears backstage sometime later to resume our chat, the expression on his face suggests that he knows that they played a great set. But he does go on to reveal that even Rush can make mistakes:

"Yeah, we do get the occasional mental blanks. I had a great one tonight at the end of 'Where's My Thing', I became completely distracted and got hopelessly lost! But I think I managed to bluff it... didn't I?"

He did of course, Rush are too good to look like amateurs. As Alex sipped at a glass of wine, he looked forward to the future for Rush. He says that they aren't going to be in a huge hurry to follow-up 'Roll The Bones'. They'll take it easy and keep it fresh. But were there any solo projects on the horizon?

"No. The key is to have the full range of your artistic expression within the scope of the band. And we have that. We're not frustrated at not being able to do what we want to do. We've been lucky that our record sales early on in our career persuaded the record company that what we were doing was right. So now they leave us alone and let us just get on with it!"

And who can argue with that?