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DOLLY PARTON



Recognition Is Only Half the Fun

Rush Audiences Grow Quickly as Critics Catch on Slowly

by Max Thaler

Rush are something of a classic North American rock band. They are young—in their early twenties—good looking, and dedicated to producing concert rock of the highest caliber, involving a sophisticated light show, extended arrangements, epic lyric writing, and the kind of musical attack that gets audiences rocking out of their seats.

"When they toured Britain recently they surprised a lot of people by selling out and getting a standing ovation at their gigs—not bad for a band virtually unknown here until recently."

Not bad for a band that had no critical respect for about four long years, despite ever-enlargening audiences and record-buying support. The kind, quoted words above, written by English *Melody Maker's* excellent correspondent Chris Welch, tell a long

tale, one that Neil Peart, Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson are tiring of. But they will ultimately have the last laugh.

Simply, Rush has never been appreciated by the critics, and none of their albums qualify as "critics' choices." Their concerts are likewise either misconstrued, ignored or often misjudged by most critics despite public reactions to the contrary. One *New Musical Express* headline ran as follows: "The Rush Phenomenon—This band has fans. Lots of them. They sold out the Free Trade Hall and surprised even the promoters." Obviously they didn't surprise the fans—enough of them, anyway, to sell the hall out.

Fortunately, stateside writers have been catching on, although the movement is still on the mostly local, groundswell level. Meaning, local

newspapers, which are often closer to their readers' reactions than most of the "nationals," have been boosting Rush.

"Like a breath of fresh air in the misty haze of hard rock there stands a relatively new phenomenon with an ever-expanding following that calls itself Rush. For the edification of those ignorant few who think that Rush is just something you get when you smoke . . ." begins Mike Derovlany's July, 1977 review in *The Good Times*. Pete Bishop, in the *Pittsburgh Press*, following Rush's sixth successful gig in Pittsburgh, praises them for their best set ever.

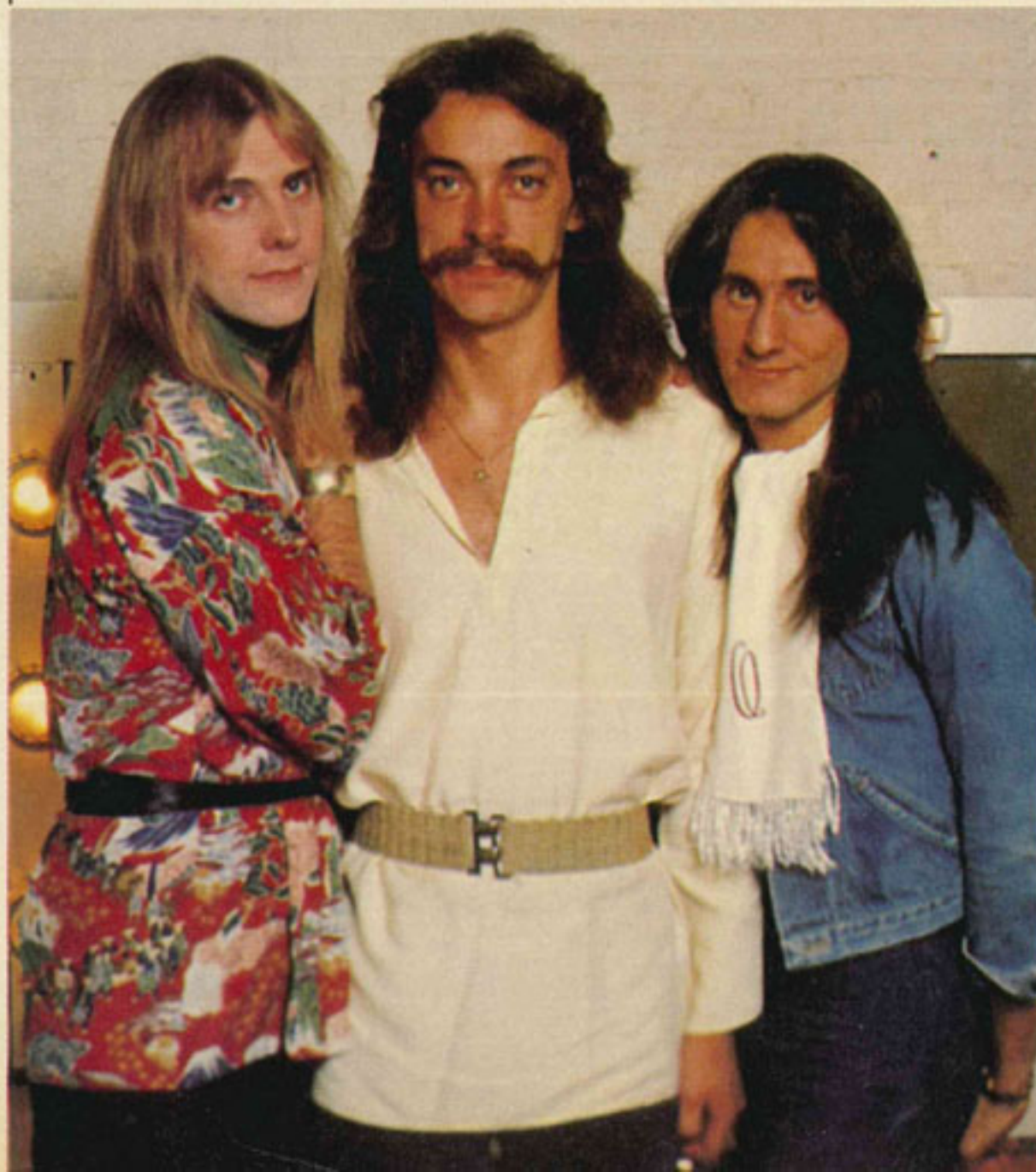
Rush Whips Up a Perfect Frenzy. The Rush is Starting to Hit. A Caress of Steel. Rush: Hard Rock, Intelligent Lyrics. The headlines tell their stories; Rush is a crowd-pleaser, with or without the slow-to-react critical press.

Variety, that index of world entertainment, once summed it up: "It's an old story for rock groups in the 'heavy metal' or 'power rock' category. Traditionally, practitioners of this overly amplified sound, including Grand Funk Railroad, Aerosmith, Uriah Heep, Kiss, and others have met nothing more friendly than a stone wall when it comes to the powers who control airplay." (This was after Rush had sold out a Chicago auditorium nine days before the gig.)

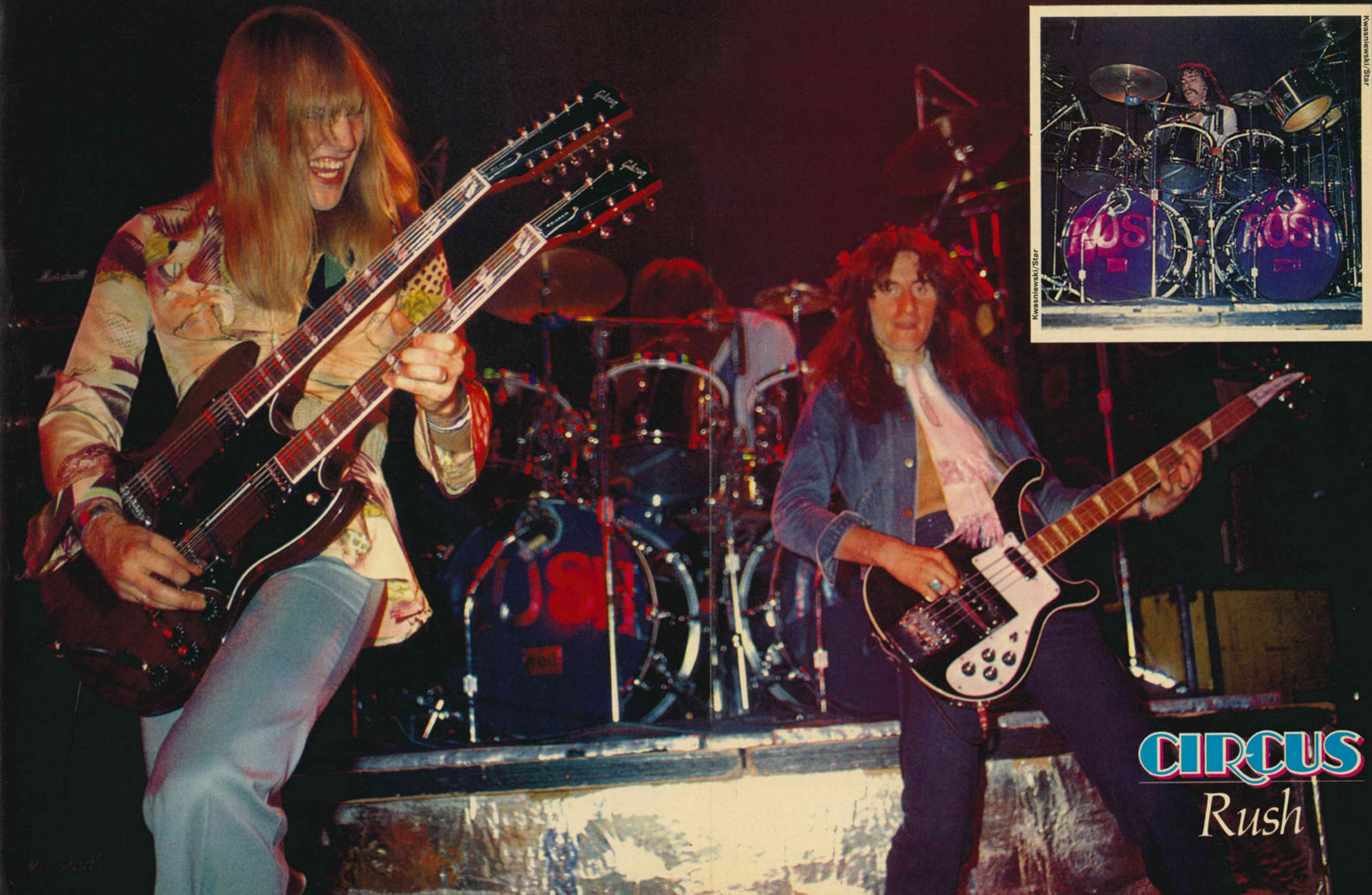
But Neil Peart's message, "Be Honest," does a better job of explaining their direct line to their fans. "Our music has to be an honest statement of what we want to hear and what we want to play. Honesty is the keynote, the principle which we try to apply to everything we do—the music, the business, our personal relationships with each other." For young people, a rock band couldn't dedicate itself to better goals. And, luckily, Rush plays the kind of hard-driving rock that backs them up pretty well.

Paul Rambali, in *NME*, caught the critics/fans dichotomy cold: "Rush's ability in their chosen field is unquestionable. No matter how overworked the basic idea may be, they attack it with enough ferocious zest and almost obsessive dedication that the results really did sound alive and, to the crowd at least, fresh." You bet!

Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart and Geddy Lee, backstage before a recent gig. Rush plays in excess of two hundred concerts a year, half in the US.



Kwasniewski/Star



CIRCUS
Rush

A Farewell to Kings—Rush (Mercury)

by Michael Bloom

Granted that it's hard to be a trio—everybody in the group has to work hard: any slack and the sound puddles out immediately—intelligent song-writing for threesomes is possibly the most neglected art in rock & roll. How nice to have a Rush available to us, then, for so neatly cataloguing all of the regulation power-trio styles. Where once they were just another Led Zeppelin clone, they've now broadened their style to echo practically every innovative guitar-based band this side of King Crimson. Within one song alone—the 11-minute “Xanadu”—Rush borrow from Black Sabbath, the Groundhogs, Nazareth, Wishbone Ash (a four-piece, but their two guitarists always acted like extensions of each other), and even ELP. And, to put things in historical perspective, they've even abstracted “A Farewell to Kings” from an old Steppenwolf political tract, “The Monster.”

Despite which, I can see liking Rush. Their compositions may be pretentious, but they're not vainglorious. This group is trying to record statements, not commodities. The message of *A Farewell to Kings* is that individuals should think for themselves, and it seems a shame that if anyone genuinely learns to do so, he'll certainly give up Rush instantly in favor of better music.