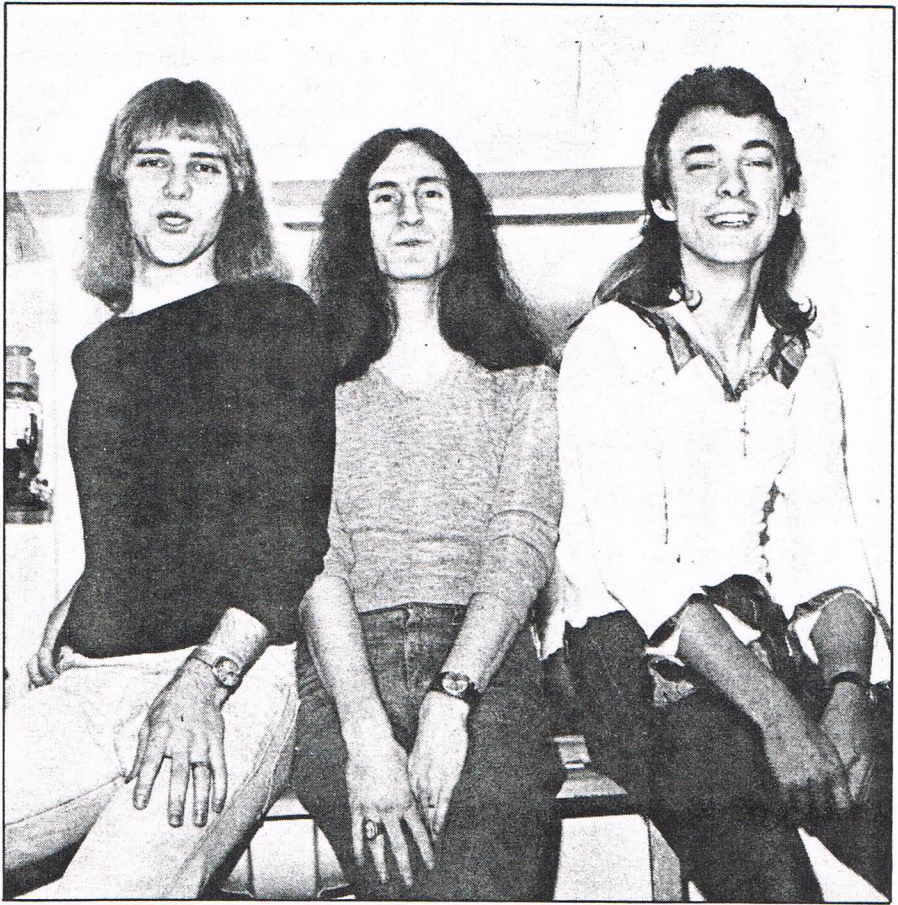


RUSH



Michael N. Morris

Pebbles & Bam-Bam In Alphaville

by Rick Johnson

The first thing you notice about Rush, according to one observer, is that they're not as gross-looking as Bachman-Turner Overdrive and they have a somewhat lower thud weight than most other Canadian bands. True enough — Canuck rockers do seem to have some sort of an uglier-than-thou competition going among themselves along with a tendency to pounce on unsuspecting ears like a carnivorous dumptruck.

But Rush isn't exactly a bunch of Joni Mitchell cupcakes either, as anyone who's caught one of their numerous appearances with Kiss or increasing number of headlining gigs can attest to.

Mistaken assumptions and bent comparisons have confounded the

band from the very beginning. "We've been compared to everybody from the New York Dolls to Led Zeppelin and Humble Pie, but all those comparisons are just superficial," asserts vocalist Geddy Lee, who along with guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer Neil Peart make up one of the few remaining classic power trios. "Like, Robert Plant and I both have high voices so they expect us to play 'Whole Lotta Love.'"

"It's not like we're suffering from The Dreaded Led Zep Stigma," explains Neil in his best imitation of a foot-odor commercial. "We're essentially pursuing the same idea as them — playing rock & roll but saying something too." Two mints in one.

It indeed would appear that Rush, who are the number two group in Canada after the late BTO and very big as well in the northern half of this country, aren't just after terrorist audiences playing frisbee with plastic explosives and taking hostages at random. "We get frustrated when they're just out for a good time and we're not getting through," Neil complains. "Our favorite audiences are the ones that sit and listen to the song and go wild afterwards."

Seeing the band's main thrust as re-zoning the elusive progressive artisms of bands like Yes and Genesis for a three-piece formula, he doesn't think that heavy metal as a strict jungle doctrine will be staying around much longer. "It was great for a while, but no type of music can stay in that embryonic stage for long. I mean, why just do teenage my-period-is-late tunes when you can put some meaning behind it? We like to tell stories and hide things in our songs for people to figure out."

Their latest project is an epic science fiction slab called *2112*, which will take up an entire side of their next album, due this month. Set in the city of Megadon on another planet (Earth having been snuffed in 2062) in the cartoon light of the future, it concerns a society where everything is controlled by quasi-religious Priests who take all their orders from gigantic banks of computers called Temples. All individuality and creativity have been stamped out and everyone treadmills out their lives in a cathode palsy of day-to-day nullness.

"The Temples totally control everything — work, education, even entertainment," says Neil, who came up with the entire conceptual whoopee cushion and wrote all the lyrics. "All their music has been taken to the final limits of the average. It's total commercialism that's put out strictly for people to like."

Luckily enough for the Megadunces, a curious young punk accidentally stumbles upon the ruins of a great university one day. He starts digging around in the rubble and comes across a room of perfectly preserved artifacts he's never seen before. Books, magazines, WIN buttons, hula hoops, records, the home version of Match Game '84 — all kinds of things that don't exist in 2112. He keeps it a secret and goes back every night to sort through the cheese of the past.

Then one night he makes the fateful discovery — an electric guitar — and eventually sets out to change the world. What finally happens is a "double surprise ending" according to Neil, who declined to fill in the details but assured me it's "a real Hitchcock killer."

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