

Rush scores gold albums without Top 40 radio play

By JIM MILLICAN

The conventional wisdom of the popular music business dictates that, to succeed, a group must score hit songs on Top 40 radio to encourage album sales. As an alternative — if there is one — the music must be acceptable to FM-album-oriented rock stations.

That wisdom is being severely tested by the Toronto power rock trio Rush who have become Canada's biggest selling rock export without so much as a nod from hit radio. They have amassed their big record sales and become a huge concert attraction while Top 40 radio programmers have refused to touch the band. Even the more progressive FM element shies away from Rush.

Nationwide sales for Rush albums grow stronger with each new release. Their sixth and latest disc, *A Farewell to Kings*, became a gold album (signifying sales of 50,000 copies and more) less than three weeks after its release in early September and is still selling strong. All five of the group's previous albums have also gone gold.

Neil Peart, Rush percussionist, admits the group's sound "isn't conducive to a radio programmer looking for the lowest common denominator type of music." "Our sound does seem to be offensive to a large range of people like housewives or other people who want the radio on but don't really want to listen intently. We attract a definite response."

The alternative method that Rush has used to expose their product is disarmingly simple. Last year the group



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played nearly 300 dates, more than 200 of them in the United States.

"In the beginning" Peart said, "we were opening shows for other major acts but before long we were playing in front of our own fans, and a certain number of them will always go out and buy the new album. By this point in their careers most rock acts have reached the stage where they don't have to work as hard, but we've poured all the money we've made into a bigger and better show, so we're not actually in an economic position to slack off. But that's good. We took the position that if we got out and played for people, the lack of radio play wouldn't matter, and it hasn't."

In Winnipeg, Rush has been virtually ignored by the Top 40 radio stations. Yet sales for *A Farewell to*

Kings, are "steady and solid" according to Murray Posner, owner of Mothers Records on Portage Avenue. Sales in this country are now approaching 70,000.

Music director Pat St. John of CRFW said that although the station has been giving away copies of *A Farewell To Kings*, in a promotion contest, "RW is designed to play the hits, and current market acceptance indicates the song isn't a hit."

CKRC is playing *Closer To The Heart* a couple of times a day but "RC program director Billy Gorrie said that "Rush is basically very hard, hard rock which the station has determined appeals only to a very specific group, mostly males under 18." For that reason, since Top 40 radio stations try to target their programming to the 18 to 34 age group, and

with so few women interested in Rush, it would be ratings suicide to program much of their music.

At CKY, perhaps more tuned to heavy rock than any other Top 40 station in Winnipeg, music director Gary Christian confirmed that he gets requests for Rush. In response, Christian has added *Closer To The Heart* to CKY's playlist "in order to determine its popularity, however, the intensity and raunch of the music only make it applicable to the station sound in the evening."

In a city like Winnipeg if one station doesn't go with a group, there is no reason for the one on the other side of the street to play it, particularly something as rough as Rush. Thus, through the group's climb to prominence, only one of their 10 singles has had any radio play at all.

A Review

Piano duo Ferranti and Teicher present 'first-rate' performance

By RONALD GIBSON

The piano duo of Ferranti and Teicher appeared in a concert Thursday night before a large audience in the Centennial Concert Hall.

The piano has come a long way since Cristofori made the first one in 1709. After Erard devised his double escapement for grand pianos, in the 19th century, there has been little change in piano actions; but those early pianos were flimsy, and have given way to sturdier iron-framed instruments.

The great debate on the control of tone quality goes on, with science contending that a single note played by a finger, or a lead weight, or even an umbrella point, will sound exactly the same, if the weight is the same. Musicians have argued against this, but most have come to the realization that it is not necessarily the single note that gives us an individual kind of tone, but the sound, in relationship to all the other tones, and the proportion of each sound, and how it is balanced.

These words are intended to point to one of the

problems of playing the piano, and also to introduce the particular problems of two-piano playing. The piano is in essence, a percussive instrument, so that when two people play together, the problems of ensemble are very great. Then there are the additional problems of balance, of nuance, of duration and of interpretation of the printed page. All of these come into a successful piano partnership. It is a marriage of minds as well as of fingers, and the give-and-take of all duetting is one of the best disciplines a musician may encounter.

There have been many illustrious two-piano teams throughout the western world, and all have tackled and overcome these problems. The repertoire of original two-piano music is growing; but it cannot be said to be very large yet. In the case of Ferranti and Teicher, their repertoire includes a large number of arrangements of themes from many sources, such as the opera, movies, shows as well as theme music from other media.

In all their playing, there is a well-rehearsed discipline. They maintain a live rhythm, and they also play with a great variety of tone color. Of course, there is a show aspect to their performance. Lighting plays a not insignificant part, and it provided some delightful chiaroscuro. They are quite entertaining when they speak, although some of their more apocryphal stories, we had laughed or cried at, in our bit.

There were a goodly number of well-loved tunes in the first part of the program. A pot-pourri at the start, included the Beatles' song Yesterday. Debussy was represented in his Clair de Lune; and Ravel by his Bolero. There were also many highlights from Bizet's Carmen; and a tune written to honor an Olympic winner, Nadia's Theme — quite tender — quite impressionistic — rather similar to Palmgren's May Night. The first half finished with tunes from Richard Rogers's The Sound of Music; and these tunes wear well.

The second half involved a

change of attire, akin to Liberace. Lecuona's Malaguena was played, and followed by a group of tunes from Hollywood movies — The Apartment, Midnight Cowboy and Exodus. Strangely, these had less impact than the Rogers tunes. African Echoes was played on prepared pianos, similar to that required by John Cage; and the affects were quite intriguing.

In the main, the techniques used in the arrangements is still that of Franz Liszt, with a few more glissandos going both ways, and scales of descending thirds. Some might describe this performance as slick; but it is much more, than mere showmanship. There is really first rate pianism there, that would stand up anywhere, without any additional trappings.

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Butterfly auditions planned

The Manitoba Opera Association will hold auditions for minor roles in *Madame Butterfly* and *Macbeth* Sunday afternoon (Nov. 6) in the Centennial Concert Hall.

Opera singers must have prepared two arias and

should contact the association's administrative director Bruce Lang at the group's office, 555 Main Street prior to tryouts.

The association will provide an accompanist.

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Wine Guide

German vintage trio 'glorious'

By NATHAN CHROMAN
 The Los Angeles Times

German wines are presenting a delightful problem. The vintages of 1971, '75 and '76 have been so extraordinary that wine drinkers are indecisive about which to favor.

What a rare experience to have three glorious vintages to heighten German wine tasting and provide the unique pleasures not found in off years!

It's too early to evaluate the 1977 vintage, currently believed similar to 1970. Ten million hectolitres is anticipated. The super-great vintage of '76 produced eight million.

North Americans have not resolved what to eat with German wines. Most are unwilling to drink the flowery fruitiness with traditional beef and sea food. Most agree that a great German sweet wine is hardly a fit companion for fast foods like hamburgers and hot dogs.

Bernhard Breuer, founder of the German wine academy and managing director of his family's export company Scholl and Hillebrand, suggests there are now dry wines that would be proper mates for the same dishes enjoyed with a French white Burgundy or California Chardonnay. He claims that as his wines — particularly in the Kabinett Spatlese and Auslese category — begin to lose some of their fruity character, they also part with sweetness, giving the impression of a dry table wine. Therefore, in time, fine German bottles, including many '71s, are perfect candidates for conventional North American dinner fare.

Breuer confirmed this in the home of Les Amis du Vin director John Movius where six '71 wines were served with pates, light cheeses, fruit and cake. The '71s have dried out a bit, making them quite companionable to most white wine dishes. All were from Breuer's firm. The wines were Schloss Vollrads Blaugold, Kabinett; Kiedricher Sandgrub Spatlese, Schloss Eltz; Johannsberger Klaus, Auslese; Landgraf Von Hessen; Obermuller Scharzberg.

Kabinett, Saar-Winzer-verein; Ockfener Bockstein, Auslese, Staatliche Weinbaudomane, and Serriger Vogelsang, Spatlese, Vereinigte Hospitien.

The '71s demonstrated a fine aging condition described in German as edelfirne, not unlike the prized, slightly Madeirized taste of older French champagnes and white burgundies. Breuer believes it is the edelfirne taste that can be matched to most "white wine

foods." The tasting compared the vintages of 1975 and '76 with '71. It was the '76 that again captured my fancy. Perhaps it is the fatness and depth of flavor that is so captivating. These wines are now in the full flower of youth with noses and tastes that fill rooms and overwhelm palates.

In descending order of preference are these 1976s: Rudesheimer Berg Rottland, Auslese, Weingut G. Breuer;

Ockfener Bockstein, Auslese, Staatliche Weinbaudomane; Ockfener Bockstein Spatlese Staatsweingut; Kiedricher Sandgrub, Spatlese, Schloss Groenensteyn, and Schloss Vollrads Blaugold Kabinett and Scharzhofberger Spatlese Kabinett Egonmuller.

All were worthy of drinking, including the lesser priced bottles. You can be assured that if you pick one up you will not be able to put it down.

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