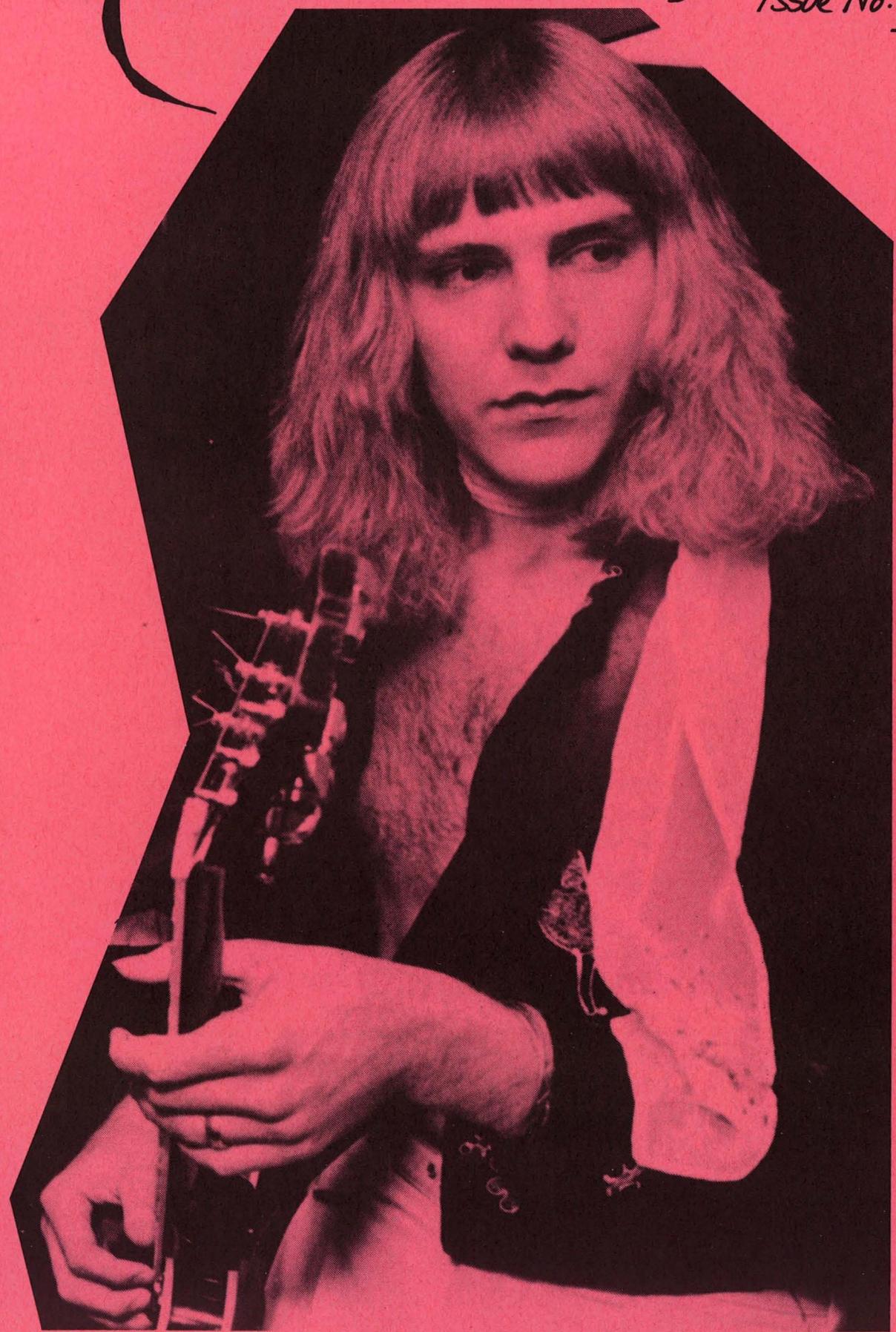


Spirit of *Rush*



Issue No. 31



ESPIRIT OF RUSH EDITORIAL

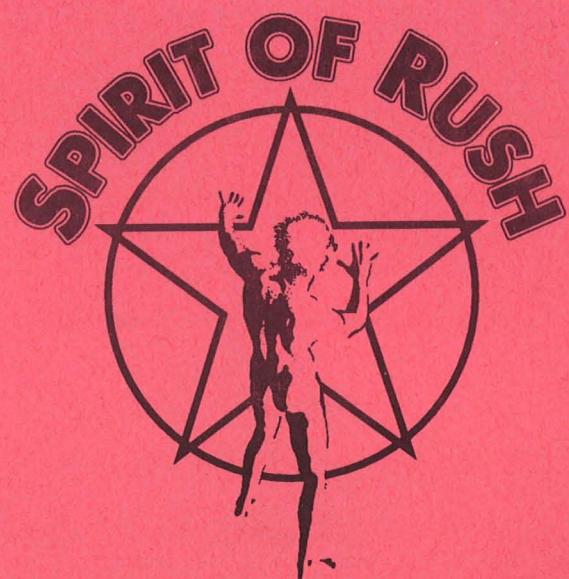
Hello and welcome to the last 'Spirit' of '95. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a merry christmas and a happy new year. 1996 should see the new album released in the summer, and the start of a major North American (world ?) tour by the band starting in the fall.

Thanks to everyone who has re-subscribed so promptly over the last two issues. Subscriptions are our lifes blood, we CANNOT survive without them. If you have a reminder about re-subscribing with this issue, please try and do so before christmas. We have our exclusive interview with Alex in our next issue (Jan). What a start to 1996 I'm sure you will agree, so you do not want to miss this great issue by not getting your subscriptions in by then do you?

Mr. Lifeson's solo album 'Victor' is due for release on January 9th (see our exclusive reviews this issue), it's release was delayed from October due to Alex getting back together with Geddy and Neil to start writing the new album, which they plan to start recording with Peter Collins once again producing early in the new year. Once you have your copy of 'Victor' send in your opinions/reviews for inclusion in issue number 33 (due out around Easter).

The pen pals page due to start this issue has been held over to the next, due to only two people wishing to place an ad. So come on, if you want a pen pals page send in your details.

The convention is still being planned to take place in the spring, however not many people have expressed an interest in attending. So if you want to be there but keep forgetting to send me the all important S.A.E now is the time. We are looking at venues in the Leicester and Birmingham areas at the momment if that's any help.



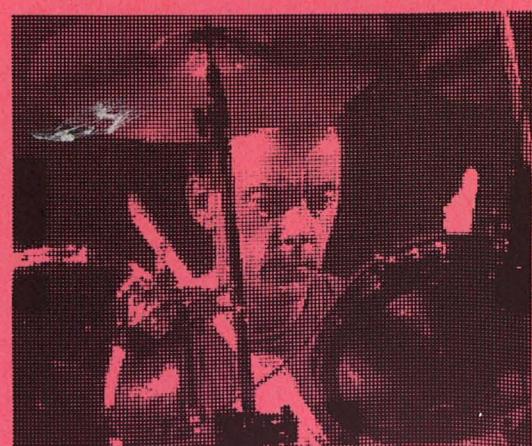
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Alex Lifeson

"Victor"

Alex Lifeson has been playing guitar and co-writing songs as a member of Rush for 20 years. Together with **Geddy Lee** and **Neil Peart** they've released 19 albums that have sold more than 30 million copies world wide. In 1994, for the first time in their career, the trio took an extended break from their established write-record-tour regimen. Lifeson took the rare opportunity to record his first solo album. Recorded over 10 months at his home studio just north of Toronto *Victor* is an unexpectedly dark, diverse and aggressive album -- with the guitarist playing and writing in anything but a predictable fashion. After recording most of the album himself he called in local session players, guitarist **Bill Bell**, bassist **Peter Cardinali** and drummer **Blake Manning**. Many of the demo tracks with Lifeson playing bass, keyboards and drum programming as well as guitar, remain. Primus' **Les Claypool** plays bass on one cut. Vocals were provided by **Lifeson, Edwin** from Mother Earth, acclaimed Canadian vocalist/songwriter **Dalbello**, and, on one antic track, Alex's wife **Charlene** with her friend **Esther**.

A week after completing the final mix of this, his first solo project, Lifeson answered a few questions about the making of *Victor*.

Why make a solo record when you're still part of such a successful group?

Rush works in a certain way and I think after so long we've established a pattern that we don't deviate from very much. I've always loved what we've done as a band but, at the same time, when you work with other people there's always compromise involved. And it's the same thing for each of the other guys -- it's a compromise for everyone.

Over the years I've learned that if I do hear something in my head in a complete version, I needed to find another outlet for it. And there's no problem with that. I have a much better understanding of that after getting all this music out of my system and hearing it exactly the way I always heard it. I feel much more balanced in term of where I want to go with Rush now, or where I think Rush should go.

Why make this album now?

Geddy's wife had a baby in May of '94 and he wanted a year off and nobody else had a problem with that. We've never had a long break off. During the last record I entertained the idea of doing a solo record when I had the time and opportunity. Here was the opportunity -- a year off with no other plans. And that stretched out to a year and a half, so it was ideal.

Why make the album at all?

I needed something that was going to push me. I'm by nature a bit of a lazy person. I'll start things but I may not follow them all the way through. I felt that at this point in my life I needed something that I was going to stick with, that I would work hard on, that would push me as close to my limits as I could get.

What kind of record did you hope to make?

I set out to make a record that was disturbing, that was going to cause people to ask me questions, that was going to cause me to think, that was really going to put me in an unfamiliar situation. This wasn't meant to be a showcase for my abilities as a guitarist -- I'm pretty confident with how I can play and what I can play. The challenge I was looking for was; I wanted to write songs. I wanted to make an emotional statement and I wanted to create things that were disturbing. I didn't want to make a record that would typically be made by someone like me from a band like Rush where you'd expect 50 minutes of all this textural guitar stuff and wailing away. I really wanted to downplay that. Even in the mixing I downplayed the role of the guitar.... *a little*. I think everything is still up front, but solos, for instance, I intentionally pulled back. I didn't push them up so that they were the only thing that you were hearing.

Was there an overall sound that you were trying to capture?

I wanted it to sound like a band playing off the floor, I wanted it to have that connection, that cohesion, that harmony amongst all the instruments mixed in the music. It wasn't always easy to do, but I didn't want a specific instrument to be a feature. I wanted the song to be the feature.

I also wanted a certain energy to what I was doing. There are some bands I enjoy -- like Alice in Chains and Soundgarden -- and I wanted to get back that same kind of mood and colouring in what I was doing.

Although all the tracks are very different from one another, is there a common thread that runs through the album?

Lyrically the record is linked thematically from beginning to end. I wanted to make a record solely dealing with the issues of love. I know the whole idea of writing about love has been done a gazillion times, but I wanted to make a record that dealt more with the darker side of love and the things it can cause people to do -- the hurt and the frustration and the anger. There's such a dark side to it that can cause so much grief and angst and, in a lot of cases, for nothing. There's no reason to put yourself through all that. It's easy to talk about, but when you're in the middle of that storm it feels like it will never be over. Those were the things I wanted to touch on.

What was it like playing with musicians other than Rush?

For the most part I recorded almost all the music myself before I invited the other musicians to come in and make their contribution. I wanted the songs to sound as finished as possible in the early, embryonic stage. The idea was to develop the songs as much as I could so I wouldn't get people in and say; just play what you think. Blake Manning, the drummer, came in and he stuck close to the patterns that I arranged. With the bass, Peter Cardinali came in for just a few songs and those had no guide bass. He's such a pro that I left them completely open for him -- I didn't want him influenced by anything that I had done before.

When Les Claypool came in and played I'd already done a basic bass pattern on there and that worked for the song, but I knew Les would take it way outside. That's what I wanted for "The Big Dance." I wanted it to be kind of annoying. Les is a great bass player and a very unique one and I knew he would play something that doesn't relate to the song -- maybe *rhythmically*, but his note selection was, just as I knew it would be, totally outside. Lyrically the song is uncomfortable and the characterization of Edwin's vocal performance adds another layer of abrasiveness to the song.

I met Edwin when I Mother Earth opened for Rush the last time we played Toronto, and after working with them and listening to their first CD, I asked him if he'd be interested in working on the project. After hearing the demo tapes he said he was interested but, at the time his group was working on their next release. To work around the schedule Edwin came up to my place for allnights after spending all day in the studio with I Mother Earth. He did an incredible job.

I also felt it was important to have a woman's voice on the album. I needed someone who could express the emotions and intensity of "Start Today." Dalbello fit the bill perfectly. She was *the* most professional person I've ever met or worked with. Her sense of *everything* was so keen it just blew me away. For me, "Start Today" has become one of the most important songs on the album.

Have you ever written lyrics before?

The last thing I wrote was "Making Memories" which was on Rush's second album. I haven't even tried it in 18 years! I found that once I got the first couple of lines down, it just started flowing out. It's very difficult for me to be objective about the lyrics. To me, reading them, they seem perhaps simplistic or something -- they all rhyme in this day and age of not rhyming -- but I think the job that Edwin and Dalbello did really got the ideas across emotionally.

Were you consciously trying to make a record that was different from your work with Rush?

No. Victor isn't a 180-degree turn away from Rush, it's a 90-degree detour out into left field.

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to benefit people living with AIDS nationally

*featuring sarah mclachlan,
blue rodeo, alex lifeson,
spirit of the west, odds,
ashley macisaac, holly cole,
junkhouse, barenaked ladies,
crash vegas, killjoys, daniel lanois
and many more...*

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KUMBAYA'95: A FABULOUS PRICE!

by Ray Wawrzyniak

When the announcement was made public that "Kumbaya'95" was to return to Toronto for its third annual donationfest, the decision was made quickly. Sure, the previous two years experience was filled with hours and hours of exposure to acts that really didn't quite deserve it, but, both Kumbaya'93 and '94 had given me the opportunity to see the rarest of all breeds; a member of Rush performing outside the safety of the band. Alex's performances at both previous fund-raisers were mere reason enough for me to withstand the indulgence of wanna-be-bands for the chance to see him strut his solo chops again.

As my friend Kevin and I made our way through the 75 minute drive up the QEW, we downshifted into our now third annual "State of the Band" address, as well as our fearless predictions for whom Alex would be playing with that afternoon. After all, again, all we knew was that Alex was playing, but with whom? For some reason, Kevin found my prediction of an Alex/Coolio rap fest to be out of the question. oh well, ...

Anyway, when we arrived in Toronto, Kevin and I picked up a copy of NOW magazine, a free local entertainment newspaper. The newspaper featured a minute-by-minute lineup of the acts that would be appearing at Kumbaya (which for the record, benefits Canadians suffering from AIDS). The line-up was scheduled to close with the last act coming on at 23:00, an act that was billed as "The Trangically Rush". Now, prior to the event, word had leaked that "The Tragically Hip", a huge band in Canada, would indeed be one of the two "surprise" acts that had been referenced on local radio the preceding week. Therefore, when Kevin and I saw this "Tragically Rush" billing, we immediately began predicting all the possibilities...

"OH MY GOD!!! I BET ALL THREE MEMBERS OF RUSH ARE HERE, AND THEY'RE GOING TO PLAY WITH THE HIP!!!".... "NO WAY!! IT'S GOING TO BE RUSH PLAYING SOLO, WITHOUT THE HIP!!!".... "NO, WAIT; I BET ALEX IS GOING TO PREMIERE SOME OF HIS SOLO STUFF WITH THE HIP AS BACKING BAND!!!".... "NO, I'VE GOT IT; RUSH IS GOING TO COME OUT, PLAY FIVE SONGS, AND THEN ANNOUNCE THEIR RETIREMENT!".... "WAIT; WHAT IF..."

Anyway, that went on for about, well, let's just say a long time.

Needless to say, when Kevin and I arrived at the new Molson Park Amphitheatre, we prepared (or should I say overprepared!!) ourselves to be a part of history.

Five or six songs/acts into the set, a band called The Boomers took the stage. The Boomers featured both the keyboard and bass player from The Dexters, the house band at The Orbit Room (Alex's place). This was the first real attention we had given the show, since it was just some pretenders (no, not The pretenders, just some pretenders...) that had opened up the afternoon. After a song, the band brought out Colin Lyndon, a blues guitar player, who jammed with The Boomers to another tune. All was going according to the schedule from NOW magazine up to this point. So, when Alex, and not Kim Mitchell as was listed, strolled out to play with Colin and the Boomers for the next song, we were taken by surprise.

Alex looked impeccably cool. Hair shorter than ever. Black shades. Long-sleeve black shirt. Black jeans. Black boots. Black Paul Reed Smith. Like I said, impeccably cool... Anyway, he and the others broke into a song that my contingent of four (please welcome Joe and Lori to our story...) was unfamiliar with. However, for some reason, it immediately became our "favourite song of all time". I'm sure that by the time you're reading this you've seen the tape of the television live-broadcast, so I won't bore you with the "he was so great" routine (but, for the record, he was...) After the song (played in front of a house half-full; I guess people didn't need to show up until later when the Junkhouse were scheduled)(HA!), Alex left.

Now, we just thought we were treated to a bonus. "He'll be back for the finale!", "That's not the last we'll be seeing of him!", "Wasn't he awesome?!!? I can't wait 'til later!!".

Alex left the stage at approximately 17:45. Then, well, ... Let's just say that what followed was NOT the greatest 6 hours and 45 minutes (but who was counting) of my life. Kevin, Joe, Lori and myself suffered through some of the worst live music anyone has ever had to experience. Not only was it terrible, but it was almost 7 straight hours worth of terrible!! The show began to run late, we began to go; "Only three more hours to go". It went on and on (much like this story...).

Anyway, to make a long story even longer, we were temporarily woken from our daze when the keyboard player from the Crash Test Dummies (you know, the band that wrote the cononant-laden rock anthem, 'Mmmm Mmmm Mmmm') came out and did a snails-paced version of "Battle Scar". We never considered the line "Bust the busters, screw the feeders" to be romantic, but, I guess it's all in the interpretation...

Anway, fast-forward to 00:45. A local DJ came out on stage, and we rushed to the front to get a good spot for the grande finale. My friend Kevin had his camera prepared (he only took one shot when Alex was on before, but we were safe knowing we'd get better ones later!). I was practicing my "ALL RIGHT ALEX" screams. Then came the announcement...

"O.K. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER FOR OUR GRAND FINALE. THE ALL-STAR CELEBRITY JAM!!!!"

Out on the stage strolled about 50 of the most hated (well, they are now) Canadian musicians I've ever seen. No Alex. No Ged. No Neil. No Tragically Hip. Just 50 idiots running around singing some drunken version of a Junkhouse song, followed by an even more pathetic version of that rock anthem, "Rocking in a Free World".

Well, you name the emotion. Anger. Frustration. Violation. More anger. We were shocked. We had all sat through almost eight hours of music, figuring THEY would be out. But to no avail...

Hey, look. Alex WAS great when he played. He looked cool. It was just great to see him on stage. But we were lead to believe there would be more. Much more. We have given a lot of money to the Kumbaya foundation over the last three years. Concert tickets. T-shirts. CD's You name it. If Alex's name was on it, we bought it. But, now, we felt like we were ripped off. We had put up with a lot of crap for one song. We could have left at 6:00.

Right now, the word 'Kumbaya' doesn't leave a good taste in my mouth. Will I be back for another one? I don't know.

We all did pay a fabulous price to see him play. Oh well, at least the sub was good...



Kumbaya

festival '95

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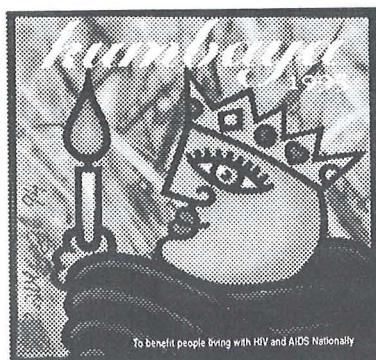
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Album Review - *VICTOR*

Like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates: you never quite know what you're gonna get from HRH King Lerxst. Having listened to the album only a couple of times I *can* say that it's heavier and weirder than any Rush album to date!

The album opens with '**Don't Care**', a heavy, grungy rocker with explicit lyrics (possibly about rape) and a vocal performance not a million miles away from James Hetfield gargling broken glass. '**Promise**' provides the first Rush-like chord sequence but there the similarities end. Another gruff vocal performance suits the lyrics which I think are about trying to kick a habit or addiction. The guitar solo is instantly recognisable as Alex.

The main riff to '**Start Today**' is very reminiscent of Led Zeppelin's 'Four Sticks', only heavier. The female vocalist sounds a bit like a young Geddy in places. The lyrics seem to be about relationships. The first instrumental track '**Mr X**' has a Satriani/Vai feel to it and has dense multi-layered guitars Jimmy Page would be proud of.

'**At The End**' is a dark, disturbing song with spoken lyrics from Alex (shades of 'Double Agent'), about a man looking back over his life before blowing his head off. The guitar solo is very bluesy: a feature of Alex's playing on this album. The ending reminds me of Eric Clapton's playing on 'Edge Of Darkness'.

'**Sending Out A Warning**' returns to the grunge/industrial feel which runs through the album. The riffs could be latter-day Rush material if Alex had used them in his and Geddy's writing sessions. '**Shut Up Shuttin' Up**' is hysterical. This is essentially another instrumental in the Steve Vai vein, but with Alex's wife Charlene and one of her friends, slagging off men (including Alex, presumably) for their toilet habits, jealousy, etc. Each verse ends with '*shut up and play the guitar*'. Alex comes in at the end screaming '**SHUT UP!!**', over and over. Great stuff!

'**Strip And Go Naked**' is another instrumental but with a more acoustic feel. Alex throws in some nice slide guitar work over the Steve Howe-like backing and another nice bluesy solo. More grunge/industrial riffs follow in '**The Big Dance**', and another lyric about relationships I think.

The title track '**Victor**', is a story spoken by Alex over a synth and drum machine backing. The lyrics are funny, yet disturbing and reminds me of one of Alex's equipment list stories from tour programmes. There are some nice sax lines in between the lyrics that may be samples played on a keyboard. The final track, '**I Am The Spirit**' is again grungy in places, but has some very Rush-like echo-laden guitar arpeggios.

If you were expecting a Rush-like album from Alex, forget it. Certainly his trademarks are there with some good bluesy guitar work thrown in, but, in the main, this is a very dark, at times disturbing, sometimes weird album. I suspect people will either love it or loathe it. Me, I love it. *Now It's Dark*.

ANDY PIERCY.

Many thanks to **SRO/Anthem** for providing the advanced tape.



VICTOR

The review.

As I'm sure most of you know, Rush made it on to Beavis and Butthead's show last year with "Stick it Out". Well, when I first listened to "Victor" the first thing that came into my mind was a Beavis and Butthead script! I can just see it now:

Butthead: Huh huh. Is this meant to be the guy from Rush?

Beavis: Yeh yeh, Rush, *INVISBLE AIRWAVES CRACKLE WITH LIFE!* Heh heh.

Butthead: SHUT UP Dum ass, huh huh..

Anyway, put it this way - this was NOT what I was expecting at all from Alex. The album isn't Rush, it isn't grunge, it isn't AOR. It is a bit of everything, from the Nine Inch Nails sounding "The Big Dance" to the poetic title track "Victor".

At the time I received "Victor" from SRO/Anthem, I didn't have a tape deck handy so I popped out to my car to listen to it. I was very surprised - I thought my speakers were going to blow! The first track, "Don't Care" is very loud and "in your face". The guitar has a sound that I can only describe as dark and menacing. I can't quite make up my mind about the lyrics though. I have two schools of thought about it - firstly it seems as though there is this guy who doesn't care about anything other than sleeping with his girlfriend, (it's a disturbing subject, to think that this guy's girlfriend loves him so much that she'll let him do anything to her). Secondly, the guy seems to love his girlfriend so much that all wants to do is be with her ALL the time. I can't decide between the theories so I'll let you lot make up your own minds when the album comes out in January!

No sooner has the opening track finished, and you think you have an idea of how the rest of the album will sound, then "Promise" starts. "Promise" reminded me of the song "I'll be there for you" by The Rembrants that did quite well in the charts here during the summer. The guitar sound is completely different to that of "Don't Care", (it is an almost clean sound with very little distortion), so I suppose that's why it sounds a bit like a pop song (sorry Alex!). The lyrics deal with love and how we should not be fooled into falling for the wrong person, i.e. a romance that is built on false promises but not that elusive thing we call love.

The third track "Start Today" really kicks. At the start of the song the guitar is very raw, with a punchy guitar riff that changes into a slow, melodic and quite relaxing ditty. When you hear the vocals for the first time you could be mistaken into thinking that it's Geddy, but a little later you will soon realise that it isn't - the vocals were provided by a Canadian vocalist called Lisa Dalbello, who I've not heard of before, but judging by her performance on the track I wouldn't mind hearing more of her work.

There is a common thread that runs through the first three tracks. In each one there is a very quiet, almost relaxed bridge section that slows everything right down. These sections add a lot of atmosphere to the songs. In "Don't Care", you can almost imagine that the drums are someone's heartbeat during the throws of passion!

Next we have "Mr. X.". It's the first of two instrumentals on the album. The track is quite short (it comes in at just under 3 minutes). Although it is short it is perfectly formed, with complex "twiddly bits" over a simple rhythm track. It actually sounds like something Joe Satriani would do!

"At the End" is pure poetry, with a hypnotic drum track and delicately placed guitar lines throughout. There are a serious amount of keyboards on this track - actually there are a serious amount of keyboards on the whole album! Anyway, "At the End" is the first track to feature Alex on vocals. It is a story about an old guy who has lost his wife at some point in the past, and has basically decided not to carry on living. It deals with the last few minutes of his life, looking through the family album, remembering how things were, to the point where he holds the gun to his head and prepares to pull the trigger. The bulk of Alex's vocals on the track are spoken, although the last few lines of the song are actually sung. To be honest, I'm not completely sure that it is Alex singing, but it does sound like him. Towards the end of the track there is a lot of bluesy guitar work - nice, clean and easy on the ears. It reminded me a bit of Dave Gilmour from Pink Floyd.

Track six is another track with a lot of loud, raw guitar sounds. Alex used one of his favourite toys on this track - a harmonizer. "Sending out a warning" starts with just the guitar, with a touch of harmonizing added to it for effect. To be completely honest this is not my favourite track on the album. I've listened to it god knows how many times, but I just can't get to grips with it. I also have no idea what it is about!

Well, what can I say about "**Shut up Shuttin' up**"? This is a fun track with a capital "F". It is very, very Steve Vai, with lots of wailing guitars and layers and layers of subtle rhythm tracks. There is even a guitar track that sounds a bit 70's disco, but hey! what the hell, live and let live that's what I say! It doesn't sound as if the lyrics were written for this track - it has Charlene (Alex's wife) and a friend of her's chattering away about "men" i.e. how we always want MORE from women and how we ALWAYS leave a mess wherever we are. A prime example is at the start of the song where the women are talking about OUR toilet habits: "There's more hair on the seat than his head" followed by "There's this hand print above the toilet - what is it so heavy they have to lean over?". Now perhaps I'm being a little bit paranoid here, but do all women think that of us?

Instrumental number 2, "**Strip and go Naked**", starts off just like the title suggests - a stripped down guitar sound with laid back acoustics and layers of other guitars (there may even be a mandolin or something in there as well). The track progresses and up tempo's throughout until there is a heavy beat and a loud guitar hammering out an almost "tribal" rhythm. I really love this track, this is what I expected to hear from Alex. The way the guitar intertwines throughout with different phrases and runs...absolutely fabulous.

I get the impression that "**The Big Dance**" may have been inspired by Nine Inch Nails, as it has seriously over powered guitars, bass and drums. Lots and lots of noise, but a good song none the less. With lines like "It's not for love but I'd gladly take your money" I get idea that the character in the song is the kind of guy that doesn't give a shit about feelings etc. Perhaps he's a male gold-digger. No doubt I'm wrong on this, I guess it is just how a person interprets the lyrics.

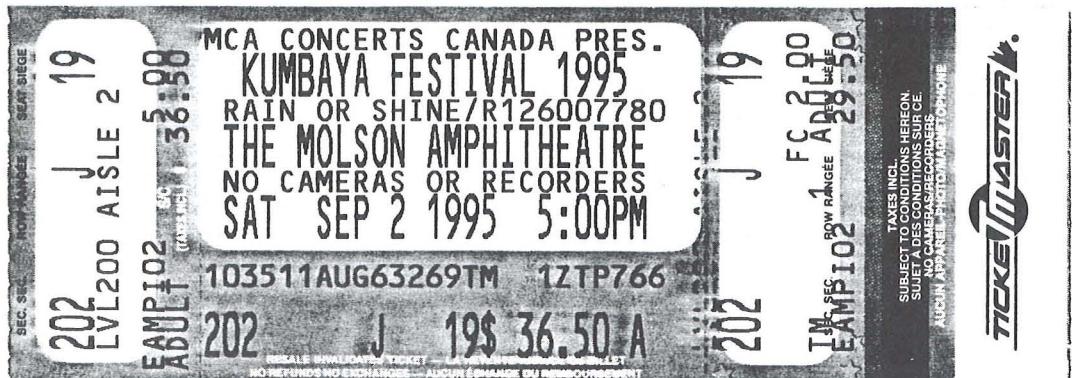
Hmmm, "**Victor**". Now this is bizarre. There is NO guitar at all on this track, not one chord, not one note, nothing. That doesn't mean it's a crap song, it's actually more like a poetry reading over subtle keyboards and rhythms. Alex tells the story of Victor, and his path through life from birth to the point that he kills his wife. I think one of the best lines in the song is, "His uncle got him a job in the Midland Counties Bank." I seem to remember a poem by W.H. Auden when I was at school (not that long ago) which is about a guy called Victor and his path through life and how he tries to kill his wife... wow! what an amazing coincidence. I do like this track, it is one of the most atmospheric songs I've ever heard. It's also the longest track on the album coming in at over 6 minutes.

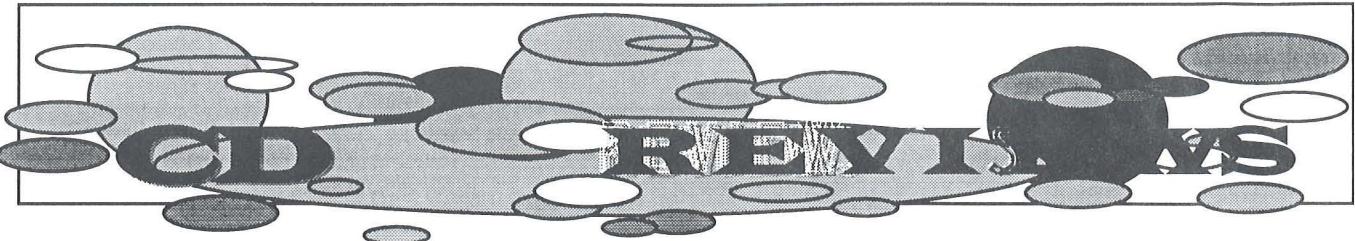
"**I am the Spirit**". I can't help thinking of "He-Man" when I say that, (ho hum), well this is an interesting number. There's a really excellent start to the track, very delicate and relaxing, then suddenly it's off in a completely different direction, up tempo loud and distorted vocals a la' U2. During the chorus, there is a guitar riff in the background that bares an uncanny resemblance to the riff from "**The Spirit of Radio**", but played at a different location on the guitar. I like this song a lot. The quiet bridge section is well done, with some clear cut guitar and quiet vocals.

Alex, you've done well, and this album deserves to do well. Due to some of the tracks it could be called a commercial album, but not by that much. If there is going to be a single I think it should be "**Promise**". Overall the album is very listenable, but I will warn people now, if you're not into heavy-sounding music, then you may not like it. On the other hand, if you do then I'm sure you'll enjoy it a great deal.

I'd like to use a few lines for a bit of self-indulgence. Pegi and Anna at SRO thank you very much for the help you've given us over the last six months. I hope this relationship continues. Thanks to Alex for allowing me to get an advance tape, and a special thanks to Anna for arranging the interview with Alex so quickly. You'll all be able to read it in the next issue of the mag.

Stewart Gilray





Hil! And welcome to another batch of CDs to tickle and tantalise you with, as reviewed by your old Uncle Tel. I hope you liked last issue's selection of goodies. And maybe ... just maybe, some of you even managed to purchase one or two. Once again, I'd like to start this issue by saying I'm only trying to give you all as honest an opinion as I can about each artist and album as I hear it. And to do this, I sometimes liken one band or singer or guitarist to someone that may be more familiar to you the listening, buying, public. this is in no way meant to be demeaning or detrimental to any and or artist. It's just easier this way, I hope you agree, anyway on with the reviews. * POOR, ** GOOD, *** V. GOOD, **** EXCELLENT, ***** GET IT OR REGRET IT.

ORANGE DELUXE - "NECKING" (GOODCD4)

This is another self-penned, produced, and even engineered album; by the vocalist/guitarist for the band "Cope". Other band members include Paul Bassett - guitar/vocals, rob Bassett - bass and Keith McCubbin - drums. Orange Deluxe first came to my attention when I was in a record store buying a "cracker" CD single and had a bit of spare change, and there in the bargain bin was this attractive,(and totally unknown to me at the time) CD single by the aforementioned band. Well that single opened a door for me, and now it gives me great pleasure to do the same for you, only in words, instead of music (you'll have to check them out yourself for that pleasure). This is a 13 track album, boasting 62 mins of sheer delight. Orange Deluxe are a heavier version of Oasis and Dodgy. Fine harmonious singing, and real fuzz-wah guitar slinging as you'd expect from two fine vocalist-guitarists. this is the sort of album that makes you want t play it to death. Each squeal of guitar pulsing from the speaker cabinets, and every drumbeat reverberating I your brain, just go to tell you that this band are gonna go from great to brilliant. ****

FU MANCHU - "DAREDEVIL" (BL9)

This is the second album to my knowledge, of this San Clemente, Californian grungey-type outfit that consists of Scott Hill - guitar/vocals, Ruben Romano - drums, Eddie Glass - guitar and Brad Davis - Bass. the first thing I noticed about this band was the vocals, which instantly reminded me of Ace Frehley, late of Kiss fame. Even the construction of some of the songs is uncannily familiar. But it has to be said that these guys can really lay it down. When I liken them to grunge that's only in the downright hard way they play. these blokes are a lot more listenable than your average Nirvana-type sound-alikes. the connection with Ace is more apt than grunge in reality. A very meaty sound, and excellent riffs abound in every track, making this 43 minutes of head-banging at its very best. ****

THE JEFF HEALY BAND- "COVER TO COVER" (ARISTA 74321-23888-2)

Well, well, well, this is Jeff's fourth album, after 3 very exceptional predecessors. One has to ask why does this extremely talented guitar player need to do a cover version album??? I can only think that either it's a contractual obligation album or our Jeffy is just showing us his roots!! Anyway, having said, and probably wrongly diagnosed his reasons, on with the music. There's the obvious stuff like a couple of Hendrix songs, a few Willie Dixon blues tracks, and even a fine cover of "As The Years Go passing By" which was also done by or very own Gary Moore on his album "Still Got The Blues" but Mr Healy has chosen some odd tracks to cover like an instrumental version of Led Zep's "Communication Breakdown", where the guitar part for Robert Plant's voice is even more like Mr Plant than even he would sound these days. And Stealers Wheel's "Stuck In The Middle Wit You" an odd choice indeed you might think. But, believe it or not, he does each and every interpretation of all of the 14 tracks real justice. With ;just under 60 minutes of harmonious rock blues this may or may not be the album to introduce Jeff Healey into your CD collection, 'cause I'm sure every track will appeal to someone out there who hasn't heard Jeff before)and that can't be many or is it???) ****

FLYTE REACTION - "CREATE A SMILE" (SPLEN003CD)

Once again, this is the fourth release from Flyte Reaction and Mick Crossley's singing and fantastic guitar work is in full evidence here. The album opens, as f course it should with the title track "Create A Smile". A jaunty little number with a very catchy chorus line and an underlying guitar that eventually comes full force once the singing stops. Then it's back to cheer you up as the song closes with chants of 'create a smile' into infinity. All very relaxing stuff this. The following two tracks are also brilliant in so much as they lighten and lift with their exuberant guitar and harmonising. Then it's straight into a lengthy 6 minute instrumental. This track makes you think of the Middle East of the Arabian Nights stories and also of spaghetti westerns all rolled into one. Mick Crossley did say to me that the intention of this album was to cheer you up when you're down, to lighten your day, not to be too over-serious. To "Create A Smile" and with a line that goes "I just love it here, the birds, the booze, the donkeys and me bottle of beer, and I'll punch you on the nose, if you say I'm a queer". Mick Crossley - guitars/vocals Dick Fiels - bass and Keith Chenery - drums. A really enjoyable album (really). ****

SISTER DOUBLE HAPPINESS - "HORSEY WATER" (SUB POP SPCD.137.337)

Sister Double Happiness are Gary Floyd - vocals, Ben Cohen - guitar, Danny Roman - guitar, Miles Montalbano - bass, and Lynn Perko - Drums. this aboriginal by area band is known for fervently playing ;blues edged, rock music around the emotive vocal of Gary Floyd. Lynn Perko's authoritative percussion backs the guitar wizardry of guitarists Ben and Danny and accompanied by the blazon bass work of Miles, and they are miles better than their name would have you think. These guys are anything but happy or sisterly sounding. they play hard, and violently, abut still manage to sound totally organised in what they do. This album is like each of the five members' individual personalities, their music is so powerful an uniquely impassioned with politics and personal pain that it really does hit home hard. Imagine ZZ Top, Free and Lynyrd Skynyrd and you're almost there, except SDH play harder and are definitely worth checking out (well this album is anyway). It's got to be yet another four stars. ***

SUNDIAL - "ACID YANTRA" (BBQCD 173)

Again this album is Sundial's fourth, if you don't include their 1st release "Return Journey" which was an album of leftovers, out-takes and oddities form the debut album. But, this, this is by far the best album from the boys; Gary Ramon - guitars, Mellotron, tone generator and vocals; Craig Adrienne - drums, tabla, bells, shakers, vocals; Jake Honeywill - bass, percussion. there's an abundance of feedback, fuzzed out, spacey guitar that would have Jimi freaking out. I don't think I can remember more guitar on an album for many, many years, although, this album is not so lyrically challenging as their debut, it is far better than the other albums in-between if that's not being too unfair. 'Cause all of their stuff is good, it's just that this one is far more musically outstanding. Blistering, psyched out acid rock at it's very, very best (rumour has it that the sundial may well be playing on the same bill as the Bevis Frond in Europe soon - let's hope they include London as well, because that would really be worth seeing; fine bands both). Exceptional album. ***** PICK OF THE CROP - ALMOST

MICK WILLS - "FERN HILL" (ACME AC8005CD)

This album was originally a vinyl only release, way back in 1988 on the Woronzow label. Now I'm happy to say it's been released on CD. This is a strange mix of blues and good old English folk music with some excellent fret work by Mick Wills, beautiful acoustic folk instrumentals augmented with some fine vocal tracks in-between by Jenny Brown. Also joined by Nick Saloman (the Bevis Frond) on acoustic guitar, electric dulcimer, bass, drums and lead guitar on the final track "She Looked Down". As I've already said, ;the album is a strange mix of blues and folk but the best is yet to come, some tracks were recorded in Nick Saloman's bedroom , some at Goldust Studio, Kent but best of all, one in a field in Sussex and another on Shoreham beach complete with the sound of waves breaking on the shore. Mick Will sure knows how and where to get the best sounds from his guitar. This is the sort of album you can relax to when you've had a hectic day, as I'm sure we all do from time to time. Beautiful playing from all on this album, of quaintness and charm - a great album for late nights and to wind down to. ****

THE BEVIS FROND - "SUPERSEEDER" (WORONZOW.WOO26CD)

Before I get to the music, I have to tell you about the album cover of this; Bevis's 12th album to date (including compilations released by Reckless Records over the years). I was told by a very reliable source that the logo and moniker for this cover is made up entirely of seeds of one sort or another, which took guitarist/vocalist Nick Saloman four days to arrange with a scalpel and tweezers. Some mammoth task huh??? The opening track "Superseded" stirs itself with the Indian sitar twanging it's way melodically to and fro until the thudding of Andy Ward's drumming and Adrian Shaw's bass come into full swing. An 11 minute psych/Indian onslaught ensues. Brilliant. The next track and all ;that follow are all totally different in sound, style and structure, which is The Bevis Frond's hallmark (never before have I heard so many different emotions on one album)_. "Stoned Train Driver" has Nick Saloman making his social comment on this very dodgy subject. Accompanied by his blues harp and some very tasty Wah-wah guitar. Track 6 "I Can't Cry" sees the return of "Bari Watts" guitarist extraordinaire and ex-stalwart of Nicks; bringing some stinging guitar work searing throughout this track. Only to return once again on track 12 "Sue Me", with it's references to Randy California and Jimi Hendrix, a blistering seven and a half minute guitar copulation between Bari Watts and his axe. Which brings me nicely to the longest and strongest track on the album "House Of Mountains" which boasts sixteen and a half minutes of sheer guitar heaven, Hendrix meets Trower but still uniquely Bevis Frond. If Jimi were alive today he'd certainly be impressed with this guy. No-one can capture and control guitar feedback and use it to augment a song like Jimi Hendrix could, until now that is, Nick Saloman - a guitar god.... so sue me if you don't believe me or better still, buy the album and see for yourself (Woronzow Records, 75 Melville Road, Walthamstow, London E17 6QT) ***** PICK OF THE CROP. As 75 minutes and 14 tracks later will testify that this new Bevis Frond release will surely be in everyone's collection, and deservedly so. From hard rock, psych, blues to acoustic bliss, check it out??

RITCHIE BLACKMORE'S RAINBOW - "STRANGER IN US ALL" (RCA 74321303372)

A welcome return this, from Ritchie and his new Rainbow, which is: Doogie White - vocals, John O'Reilly - drums, Greg Smith - bass and Paul Morris - keyboards. This new 10 track offering has two old re-workings included which are "Hall Of The Mountain King" and a vocal re-working of "Still I'm sad" which first surfaced as an instrumental from Rainbow's very first debut way back in 1975. Here augmented with Doogie White's fine voice which I must say sounds like a cross between old Rainbower's Graham Bonnet and Ronnie James Dio. This album sounds as if Ritchie had never been away from us at all. It's as Rainbow as any other release. They've done some exceptional singing and playing. Ritchie Blackmore should be very happy once more, 'cause he's still as good today as he was back in Deep Purple days, and with this new album I'm sure he'll be splashed all over the metal mags once more. The only thing I personally found with this CD is that the first two tracks "Wolf To The Moon" and "Cold Hearted Woman" wouldn't have been my choice of openers, (but who the hell am I to say) as the album doesn't really grab you till track 3 "Hunting Humans (Insatiable)". That's when they start to kick ass as the saying goes. Then maybe they could have left the opening tracks to follow (who knows??). All in all though, Ritchie and Co deliver the goods as well as they always do - powerful rock 'n' roll Blackmore style. What more can we ask of him?? Well done Ritchie - see you on tour.***

RUSH: The Rock Band's New Tour Has Everything; even Bunnies ~ 1994

Nowadays, any major band with a reasonable budget can have a visually dynamic show—but only Rush has bunnies. Which, as the Canadian band approaches its twentieth anniversary next year, only goes to prove that time hasn't dulled its sense of humor.

Nor can the stage show for its recent Counterparts tour, designed by the band's longtime lighting and set designer Howard Ungerleider, be accused of serving up any dull moments. The designer combined video projections and animation with a powerful light show, pyrotechnic displays, and the aforementioned inflatable rabbits, which were created by London-based Air Artists.

"One of the things that we do is create the illusion of a set without really using a set," Ungerleider says. "And because of the film and all the lighting and a few props, we can create the illusion that it's a huge stage set, when in essence it's not. And economically, that's really great. It gives the show a lot of space, an open ceiling—there isn't a bad house for this show."

For this tour, Ungerleider teamed up with a fellow Toronto-dweller, architect Rick Hopkins, who sketched out many of the staging plans.

"Back in August [1993], we started with a couple of schemes and ideas," Hopkins says. "We'd talk about things and I'd do some sketches and some drawings, sometimes computer renderings, and then come back with a series of perspectives and drawings and we'd talk about it again and it would go through another alteration."

Although the band regularly uses a standard, promoter-provided stage, Hopkins proposed adding the runways and wings to get the two mobile band members, Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson, further out into the audience.

Next, Ungerleider and Hopkins worked out the truss configuration. "We thought it would be really interesting if the band were playing inside some sort of geometrical form, but we realized that making a spiral would be a bit of a problem given the budget, so we substituted the curved trusses instead," Hopkins says. "Then, from the fact that they had sort of nested up there, Howard decided to move them in and fly them down. So we get a similar effect."

Other original ideas that fell by the wayside included a pixel board, which was changed to strips of MR-16s on a flying truss, and a video wall on a second level. "The video wall came out when we decided to have just the one level and put the lights on different elevations," Hopkins says. "And that's when we started building those bolt-shaped light stands, which were supposed to just be strewn loosely about the stage—but in the final design, Howard wanted them to be more symmetrical and controlled because the entire rig was very, very symmetrical."

Ungerleider explains that the concept for the bolt-shaped light stands was to give the visual implication that the band was the "nut" and the stage the "bolt" they fit into.

Forming the stationary part of that nut is the drum set, which is on an electronic rotation. "It's like a carousel—it works electrically," Ungerleider says. "Larry Allen, the drum tech, puts that whole thing together. It's electric, and he has a switch and he knows exactly where to go. All of this was done because drummer Neil Peart has two drum kits, and when he uses the back one he'd rather turn towards the audience than face his back to the audience."

All of the tour's custom trussing and the conventional lighting was supplied by one of Ungerleider's longtime associates, Long Island City, NY-based See Factor. The show's lighting equipment includes: 18 5[degrees]Berkeys, 260 PAR-64s, 40 XF-running lights inside of PAR-Scan moving fixtures with colour changers, ten 5ks with colour changers, 16 nine-light Mole lamps with colour changers for cyc lighting, nine HMI 1200 spotlights, five custom-made cone-shaped mirror balls, and 32 LSD Icons, of which Ungerleider is a big fan. There are also 200 Wybron colour changers on the system. Fog effects are provided by four High End F-100s and the trussing motors are all CM Hoists. For control, Ungerleider used a combination of three boards: a specially modified Avo 500, a See Factor Light Coordinator, and an Icon board.

"I really enjoy the [Icon] lamp, because aside from putting out many different kinds of multi-colour effects, it also allows you to rotate the gobos inside the lamp," Ungerleider says. "The light gives you a really amazing animated look at times, plus it puts out an incredible spectrum of colour. I also like that at times it looks like a laser. So you really maximize your effects without spending that much money."

Lasers had become something of a trademark for Rush and Ungerleider, as he was affiliated with Rocklite International and Laserlite F/X since 1986. He disassociated himself from them this past February, and is now exclusively available through his own company, Internal Affairs International. "I've used lasers for three tours, but the effects were getting tiring," Ungerleider says. "I figured pyro is a great change of pace, so I brought out a little bit of pyrotechnics, and left the lasers out. We use a light deck to get some neat effects that are sort of laser-like. With this show, people always see things that aren't there, and it's great. If you're creating an illusion like that, then you know that you're doing your job, which is fun."

Few hard rock bands can claim being a stranger to pyro, and Rush is no different, having used it in the late 70s, the early 80s, and now the 90s. "Pyrotek Special Effects of Toronto does all the legitimate theatre across Canada, like The Phantom of the Opera and Miss Saigon, and they do effects for the [Toronto] Blue Jays at the Skydome. They have a very, very great safety record, probably the best in the business, and they deliver what we want to perfection," Ungerleider says. "And they are one of the companies that has a modern digital controller with three fail-safe mechanisms, so it's impossible to go to a board and set off a cue without going through three codes."

The tour's pyro effects were designed by Douglas Lang Adams with Douglas Reid Schulte-Derne as the operator and Randal Douglas Bast as the tech. The pyro equipment includes: one Pyrotek 120-channel digital Matrix controller, one Pyrotek sequential firing system, 60 circuit devices, 18 flame projectors, six flash pots, 10 three-fluted gerb holders, and two LSX low smoke converters. Effects throughout the show comprise 24 sequential firing airbursts systems that are positioned above the band in the trussing; twelve ½-20 silver jets with silver embers firing 20' in criss-cross configurations; 18 10x12 silver gerbs in a 60' cascading waterfall; 18 flame projectors that fire brilliant 12' flames in three shots of six; six red flashes that slow burn brightly; 12 large Coliseum airbursts (in trussing above band);

24 airbursts in a chase pattern that fires in pairs from the trussing to a cluster over the audience; two Evil Rabbit gunshots shot towards the Good Rabbit and the resulting billowing smoke; and six concussion motors.

"We certainly have a lot of pyro," Ungerleider acknowledges. "We have the flame effects. We have what are called air bursts and gerb effects. We have red flares, and we have a lot of indoor aerial effects. We have waterfall fountains in different colours. We try to use them peacefully because we want to enhance a situation rather than it becoming a random effect."

Certainly the show's most memorable effect involves the famous inflatable rabbits. The Good Rabbit, stage right, is shot by the Evil Rabbit (complete with dangling cigarette) from stage left. Rush has had the rabbit theme going since its 1990 Presto tour. "The bunnies were actually left over from previous tours, but the evil, nasty bunny with the gun was remade by Air Effects of London," Ungerleider explains.

The animated film sequence that goes along with it was created by Ungerleider alone and lead singer Geddy Lee by working with longtime associate Norm Stangl from Toronto-based Spin Productions. "It's a very large company with really high-tech computer graphics, and they use Emerald Systems, which is a silicon graphics company," Ungerleider says. "The rabbit shooting, involving the inflatables and the film, was coordinated through headset cues. We knew what we were going to do, and we knew how long it took for the rabbits to deflate. And we knew where the rabbits were going to be on-stage, so we just slammed it up with the three projectors."

It took three 7k 35mm projectors rented from Associates & Ferren and positioned stage-left, stage-center, and stage-right to fill the three screens, which span 60' across, to pull the sequence off "The rabbits are inflated on cue by carpenters using fans backstage, and once the song is over, the film rolls, and everything is done visually from that point," Ungerleider explains. "The shooting of the gun is done visually with the film, and so is the exploding of the rabbit on the other side of the film. And it works really well together."

The show also features video and more animation because the band members are keen on having a lot of humor in the show. Also, Geddy Lee's brother, Alan Weinrib, contributed to the show by directing the visuals for the number "Trees."

All of this and it fits in only six trucks? "Yeah, people think this is an eight- or 10-truck show," Ungerleider says. "But when you look at it, it appears to be a lot larger than it is."

Author unknown (from Internet).

From Canada's weekly newsmagazine, Maclean's (April 3, 1995)

"INTO AFRICA: Two weeks on the road through sun-parched savanna and medieval villages"

By Neil Peart

(Neil Peart is drummer and lyricist for the rock group Rush. His taste for two-wheeled adventures developed during the band's concert tours, through the daily challenge of riding his bicycle to work through American and Canadian cities)

The sun dropped behind a broken finger of stone, and we pedalled on. I crouched over the handlebars and peered into the dark, trying to avoid the patches of loose gravel, sandy ruts and large stones. My five companions were strung along the road ahead like wraiths, sensed only by moonglow on white helmets, tires crunching, and the occasional grunt or muttered curse. We had not planned on this—the Bicycle Africa itinerary didn't mention anything about pedalling through the dark savanna—but Africa laughs at plans. David Mozer, our guide, had tried to consider everything in planning our two-week tour of Mali, from the timing of each village's market day, the most colourful time to visit, to the schedule of the riverboat that had carried us and our bicycles down the Niger. But the riverboat had been a half-day late to the dusty river town of Mopti. We could stay overnight, but that would put us another whole day behind, and after two broiling days on the riverboat we were eager to get out in the open country and do some cycling. So we headed for Songo—60 km away, with only an hour of daylight remaining. David thought the full moon would be bright enough to ride by, and if the way proved too perilous we could simply camp beside the road. But once the harsh beauty of the savanna had shaded from twilight blue to silver and black, sleeping rough seemed less attractive—nothing lights the imagination like the dark. We kept riding.

Bicycle Africa has offered tours since 1983, exploring cultures and landscapes in many countries, from Tunisia to Zimbabwe, and from Kenya to Senegal. My first trip had been a month-long odyssey through Cameroon, which now stands as one of my richest experiences. At the time, though, it felt more like a gruelling ordeal, capped by a harrowing escape through war-torn Chad. I swore I'd never do anything like that again. But, as many travellers have discovered, Africa has a way of calling you back.

The following year, I cycled through Togo and Ghana with David, and now I was back a third time, beginning a two-week tour in Mali. Landlocked in the remote heart of West Africa, more than half the country is buried under the ever-encroaching Sahara. The rest is mainly Sahel, "the boarder," a belt of parched savanna fringing the desert. Mali is a thirsty land, and sometimes hungry when the rains fail. But the upper reaches of the Niger, the "strong brown god," loop through the southern part of the country, where farmers work their fields and fishermen ply the river with nets and poles. One gets the feeling that life goes on with difficulty, but generally without despair. This trip had begun in Bamako, the capital, where the six of us—apart from David and myself, there was a California firefighter, a psychiatrist from northern Italy and two sisters, from Seattle and San Francisco—boarded the riverboat for the two-day journey downriver. It was a perfect introduction to the pageant of West African life: angular canoes called pirogues worked along the shores, men poling at each end or stooping to gather in their nets. Some carried produce or firewood; others ferried people between the sand-castle villages—adobe cubes and rectangles surrounding the rounded mud turret of a mosque. Some villages were more temporary: beehive-shaped houses of woven straw belong to the "river people," the Bozo. We made several stops, the big boat churning into the muddy bottom and simple dropping its gangplank over the water. People scrambled off and on, shouting and laughing, singing and hawking their wares. One pirogue came alongside, heavy with bundles, boxes, women and babies, and suddenly flipped over—a chorus of shrieks as everyone went into the river. But in the African way of helping the larger family, people on our boat reached down to rescue the bundles, boxes, women and babies, and life went on.

In the larger town of Segou, we leaned on the rail as hundreds of people crowded along the shore, some wrestling on or off the boat along a narrow plank, some just watching, others selling fruit, vegetables and everything from cheap watches to baby clothes. A few of the Tuareg people stood out in their costume of head-to-toe indigo—dressed for the desert, but with no caravans to lead. They have begun to drift into the towns, trying to survive by selling their only lasting heritage: the art of elegantly crafted jewelry, filigreed scimitars and tooled-leather boxes. For centuries, the Tuareg had driven their camel trains across the Sahara, but trucks were taking over, and these proud nomads are becoming, like the Masai in East Africa, a colourful anachronism. Progress takes prisoners.

Two nights later, on the dark road to Songo, fatigue was setting in—not to mention hunger. After three hours of treacherous, anxious cycling, the moon finally illuminated a small sign at the roadside: “Campement de Songo 4 km,” pointing down a faint track in the bush. With mingled hope and trepidation we pedalled into the shadows, snagged by thorns, jolted by rocks and skidding in the sand. The campement was a thatched shelter on the edge of the lightless village, where we leaned our bikes with sighs of deep relief. David performed the inevitable African ritual of bargaining for our food and lodging, and villagers materialized with shy smiles and big basins of rice and sauce, a West African specialty. Two shotgun blasts echoed around us—to celebrate a local wedding, we were told—as we set up our mosquito tents under the stars.

Songo was our introduction to Dogon country. Like the Tuareg, the Dogon are a colourful anachronism; isolation and the strength of their culture have allowed them to endure for centuries without much change. But the Dogon are settled and concentrated, their villages and farms spread along the Bandiagara Escarpment—some built right into the cliffs, like the Anaszi cliff-dwellings of the American Southwest. Dogon carving is celebrated in the West as among the finest in Africa: like the art of our Renaissance, each detail of a granary door, a mask or post in the men’s meeting house reflects layers of allegory and a complex set rituals and symbols. It was easy to see why the French anthropologist Marcel Griaule spent 35 years studying the Dogon before publishing his definitive *Conversations with Ogotemmeli*. As we pedalled away, our only regret was that we couldn’t hope to comprehend it all, and we agreed that the only solution would be another visit—Africa always calls you back. But it calls collect and makes you pay. Our next two days offered long hours of bad riding through sand, rocks, thorns and heat, and life seemed reduced to a struggle to turn the pedals and find water. But in the way Africa has of rewarding your sufferings, we finally arrived at a medieval city sculpted of mud.

Djenne rose to prominence in the 13th century when the Empire of Mali brought wealth and refinement to the southern Sahara, and has been little altered since. Riding beneath a huge archway of adobe, we wound through the mud-walled streets to the Grande Mosquee, a massive structure of timber-reinforced mud built in 1905, replacing a similar mosque that had stood for nine centuries until it was leveled in a religious war. The minarets were capped with ostrich eggs, the exposed beams used as scaffolding to resurface the mud—each year, after the rains.

Sore from cycling, we hired a pirogue to carry us to the next town upriver. (David would want the record to show that the rest of us talked him into this.) “Environ six heures”—about six hours—we were assured, without mentioning that if, say, the motor died in our leaky old canoe, we would be stranded overnight on a desolate stretch of river with nothing to eat but rice gruel made from river water. These things weren’t planned, but of course they happened. You never saw six people so happy, 23 hours later, to climb on their bicycles and ride. Mali has no beach resorts or famous game parks, and so attracts few tourists. This is partly why visitors can travel back in time to medieval towns more true-to-life than anything in the “olde Worlde,” and to pueblo villages more vibrant than any in the American Southwest—because people still live in them, much as they always have. Isolated, they are free to not change.

Traditional African life is a cycle endlessly repeated, wheels within wheels. Dry seasons and rains are the larger rhythms in the closed circle of family, tradition, music, labor and laughter. In contrast to our Western compulsion to “change the changes”—sometimes for improvement, sometimes merely for novelty—in traditional Africa what was once truth and beauty is always truth and beauty. Homes, clothing, art, proverbs, dances, religion—even hairstyles; always there is style, a sense of esthetics and protocol in every aspect of life, but there are no “fashions.” In the cultural upheaval taking place in African cities, this has begun to shift—the young seem to like our revelations-per-minute approach to life—but in the villages of Mali, the old ways remain surprisingly constant. In a Dogon village of stone, mud and thatch, just at sunset, I stood looking over the houses from an adobe rooftop, where I was setting up my mosquito tent. The only sound I could hear was conversation—no radio, no TV, no traffic, just the murmur of people talking, from that house there, that one over there, another behind. As darkness fell, broken only by stars, a few kerosene lanterns and the rising moon, I climbed down to the courtyard and joined the rest of our group, sitting and talking with some of the villagers. These are the times that call you back to Africa.

Bicycle Africa (206-628-9314) organizes six to eight tours a year to various African destinations. Each tour takes two weeks and costs about \$1400 per person, including lodging, most meals and guide fees but not airfare (bicycles are carried free on most international flights). Participants should be moderately fit and capable of cycling an average of 60 km a day on good roads.

Rush Hour

David Bowker meets those
crazy Rock 'n' roll
dudes, **Rush**

The founder members of Rush, singer/bassist Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson, have been making music together for twenty two years. Drummer Neil Peart joined in '75 for their second album Fly By Night, and doubles as the bands' main lyricist. The longevity of the relationship owes a great deal to their disdain for Rock stardom's tawdry trappings.

Rush it seems prefer tennis to cramming their nostrils with illicit substances. They would rather be at home with their families in Toronto than attending wild parties. (Does anyone in Toronto ever hold wild parties?). Like that other notorious Rock 'n' Roll Hell-raiser Cliff Richard, Rush believe that it is better to be boring than dead.

"I don't think we ever considered ourselves Rock Stars," muses Alex. "Perhaps it's part of the Canadian character. Canadians do tend to be a little reserved. But we've always been outside the Rock circus.... there are responsibilities attached to being a parent.

"It's one thing to be on stage and have 20,000 people screaming at you..... but you still have to get up at 7.30 next morning to get breakfast for the kids... When we've toured it's always been pretty much like one big family..... it keeps you from getting isolated, and stops the focus being on you as some kind of Rock hero".

"Success has been a slow, steady climb. We've always written and recorded what we thought was the best we could do.. In retrospect, some of the things we did were not so great. Certainly, when I listen to some of our older records, I think, 'Thank God we've improved.'

"Geddy and I have been friends for a long time. I don't see Neil as much when we're off the road, but on tour we all spend ninety per cent of our time laughing together. That's really important, when you're in the kind of career we're in, and subject to all the pressures of touring... Some bands we've worked with arrive in different cars and buses, they have separate dressing rooms. They get on stage, jump around together and smile, then backstage, spend all their time backstabbing. It takes all the fun out of music"

Presto is the band's first album for Atlantic and seventeenth since forming. After parting company with Mercury, they suddenly found themselves with time on their hands for the first time in years.

"We had a seven month break. When we actually came to write and record, everything came much easier. We were revitalised. We'd normally spend a week to write and arrange two songs. With this album, we came in with so much excitement and enthusiasm. I'd done a little work at home and so had Geddy. Neil had three or four sets of lyrics... so we had some material. We wrote three songs the first week, three the following week, and we finished on the third week.... That meant that the remainder of the time could be spent on arrangement. That was unheard of for us - we'd been through two or three stages of arrangement by the time Rupert came along."

The Rupert in question was Rupert Hine, a producer/singer/songwriter who has also found the time to produce acts as diverse as Tina Turner, The Fixx and Chris de Burgh.

"We'd set aside ten days for pre-production," recalls Hine, "but it was finished in two days. It was as if it was all delivered to me as a package, ready to go. I said to the guys; 'I'm not sure you're getting your money's worth out of me'."

"The band are true professionals, who understand so well what gives them their own unique sound. I may have suggested losing a bridge here, inserting an extra chorus there, but ninety per cent of their arrangements were great ... I provided backing vocals on one or two tracks, War Paint being the most obvious example. Me and Geddy sang a line I'd come up with. I always make it clear before producing an album that I don't expect a writing credit for any ideas I come up with. Otherwise acts will become wary of producer's ideasunderstandably. If they've got a money-grabbing producer inventing so-called 'great ideas' to chip away at their royalties, it's a pretty ugly way to make a record."

"I see production as broad psychology ...it's to do with manoeuvring the spirits you're working with. I try to keep energy levels at a constant high, and if something doesn't go well, I'll put it off till another day and concentrate on something else. The artists

you're recording should be made to feel that everything's going well at all times because their performance depends on how good they're feeling."

Hines's approach obviously paid off, as Lifeson describes making the album as ..."One of the happiest recording experiences of my life. We went to a studio in Toronto and spent two days putting down all the guide tracks. Stephen Tayler (the albums engineer and Hines's recording partner) is a brilliant, brilliant engineer. He got good drum sounds in a matter of minutes. "At the end of each day I'd get a copy of the track which would probably be bass and drums ... then I'd take that back to my TEAC eight-track at home and work out a basic guitar arrangement. I'd do everything to a time code, so if we got anything we thought we could keep on my version, we'd just drop it into the master. I did the solo from Chain Lightning that way ... recorded it backwards at home, and we just popped it into the mix. The orchestrated guitars in the second verse of The Pass were done in the same way.

"When we're writing, we normally separate ourselves. Geddy and I set ourselves up in a corner with the TEAC and work from eleven in the morning until five in the afternoon. Then Neil will pop in and we'll discuss arrangements and lyrics. Then we'll break for dinner and continue working through the evening. It's really quite loose ...but we're all there at all times. There's a lot of group work on lyrics and song arrangements.

"If we suffer a creative block, we just struggle and keep at it. Often you'll find that an idea wasn't working for a reason - i.e. the idea stank! We only ever write as many songs as we need and for Presto, the goal was eleven. We never write twenty songs and choose the best. We feel that all eleven are the best."

"As far as guitars are concerned, I use Strats or Signatures. Live, I stick with the Signatures. They're made in Canada. They started developing them about five years ago, and I was involved from the start. The particular guitars I use are a Strat design, with a very transparent sound to them.

"The amps I use vary a little prior to going into rehearsal, but at the moment I'm using a Gallien-Krueger 2000 CPL into a Series 400 Mesa Boogie 2 power amp and two twin-twelve GK Celestion cabinets.. I used to use Dean Markleys, but I had quite a few break down on me

"In the studio I'll have the GK set-up, as I would on stage... perhaps twelve different amps set up so I can work through them, trying out different combinations A touch of EQ here and there, and away you go ... just by a little manipulation on a given set-up we can continue without being caught up in a lot of time consuming technical crap.

"Many of the guitar sounds on Presto are arrived at by combining different instruments. The riff on Super Conductor was a Strat and Signature doubled. In the second verse we added an Antoria, which really fills out the bottom end. It's a very beefy-sounding guitar; always useful when you want something thick and bassy.

"For the acoustic guitar sound I had in mind to double the Washburn, which has a very rich sound, with a Dove, which is a little softer. Then I have a Gibson G55 which I keep strung to a natural tuning. I added that during the verses to notch the song up dynamically. When we came down to mic, we found the Dove was drowned out by the fatness of the Washburn, so all you finally hear are the Washburn and the G55. Everything went so smoothly that when we went in to record the guitars at Toronto, I was finished within the first week. So consequently, we finished all the recording three weeks ahead of time ...It was so great. Such a relief. We spent a few weeks enjoying the summer, and when it came time to mix, we'd forgotten the songs, and everything sounded so much fresher. Stephen worked quickly - he'd go in at noon, set up the mix and we'd come in at four to provide our input and be left standing around, saying "Well ... that's pretty great..."

"Throughout recording, we'd play games to wind down. An album takes a lot out of you. You become socially retarded ...you're so focused on what you're doing that it's important to play games. At the studio where we did the basic tracks, they had volleyball, so we'd take out a bottle of Scotch and play volleyball until three in the morning. Of course, it'd get more interesting as the game went on, and the bottles became emptier!"

Ah. So you do Rock 'n' roll, then. When you're not playing...

"Tennis! On tour, me and Geddy play tennis for two hours a day. That's the whole point of being on tour ...to improve our game! It's very boring being on the road at this stage of our lives. Getting up on stage is great and satisfying, but it's the other twenty-two hours, sitting in a bus or a hotel room, that are a bit of a grind. Geddy and I have been playing tennis together for about ten years. Neil gets his bike out and cycles for fifty miles. We're all fitter now than we ever were.

"In the early days we did drugs. It was never a problem for us ...we always kept it at a recreational level. But as you get older you're not as resilient as you were. It's a lot tougher to wake up with a hangover when you're 36 than at 26. We're all straight nowadays, because drugs tend to affect your playing. Playing has always been a great responsibility for us."

Music, that is. Not tennis.

THE MAKING OF A KILLER SOUND

ALEX LIFESON by John Swenson : GUITAR WORLD NOV '81

The Rush success story is a paradox of rock history. Ten years ago the band was nothing more than a Led Zeppelin copy act playing bars and parties around Toronto. When established record companies all passed on their demo, Rush released a first album privately and its phenomenal grassroots success prompted Mercury records to sign them.

Through the mid-seventies Rush built up a reputation as one of America's top Heavy Metal groups, yet the band was either overlooked or scorned by all but its dedicated fans. "We had a pretty raw, uncompromising sound," pointed out Rush lead guitarist Alex Lifeson, "and that image really stuck with us."

In the last two years Rush has inched along a painstaking road away from the headbanger tradition toward a sound based more on music than decibel level. The group's Permanent Waves LP became the first Rush album to merit extensive radio airplay, while the new album, Moving Pictures, became the basis for a whole new sound.

"The idea on this tour," Lifeson said recently after an excellent sold-out performance at New York's Madison Square Garden, "was to bring the stage sound down a lot more and really build up the PA system. Whatever we needed to hear, rather than having it come from behind, put it in the monitors. If you want to hear the guitar spread across the stage, put it through the monitors rather than cranking it up on stage. I think it's really helped our sound a lot. It's not as blaring off the stage anymore. The whole system sounds different - there's a lot more fidelity to it."

Lifeson went on to explain that the switch in amplification changed an approach the group had been using since its inception. "The way we used to run things, we had a lot of amps. A long time ago we decided when we were playing high schools and bars, we decided we'd split the stage up. Geddy (Lee, Rush's bassist) would put a cabinet on his side. As we played bigger halls it became a couple of cabinets on each side so that there was a uniform sound coming off stage rather than guitar over here and bass over there and drums in the middle. We thought we would try something different and bring the sound down. I'd gotten some new amps and Ged wanted to bring his sound down anyway, with the keyboards he spends a lot of his time in front of his line so he'd like to be able to hear his keyboards a little better. I eliminated the amps on his side, he eliminated the amps on my side and he used a little Fender twin as a monitor for my guitar. He has it down really low, it's like a direct guitar."

The difference in the group's sound is even better out in the audience. Previous Rush concerts I had heard were pretty much undifferentiated noise, but this night at the Garden everything was crisp and distinct, with Lifeson's many guitar effects sounding particularly good. "I have a lot more control of what I play now," he said. "Everything sounds a lot better. When you hit a chord, the chord sustains a little better, it doesn't break up. The strings are more clearly defined from each other. It makes you tend to play better, I guess it's coming through much better than before. Out front it's made a really big difference. I've heard some live tapes that John Erickson, who's mixing for us now, has done. He mixes in a different style than our previous sound man did. He used to mix louder, he used louder effects a lot, there was a lot of movement through the sound. John uses a minimal amount of effects and rather than riding a guitar, pushing up the fader on the board, he'll just EQ it, he'll add a little more of a certain frequency, so that the instrument stands out but doesn't actually get louder, it just becomes more prominent in the mix. Because of this style of mixing, the sound is not as loud, yet it has a little more tonal dynamics. You can hear things a lot clearer."

Lifeson has had a chance to compare different types of Heavy Metal amplification over the past decade. "When we first started gigging," he recalled, "I had a 410Traynor. Since that time a lot of different amps have come out. I had a GBX for a while, it was made by a Canadian company and it was all solid state. I didn't like the sound of that, I got rid of those after about six months. That was around 1970. Then I got Marshalls and I used them right up until about 1976, when I switched to Hiwatts. After the GBX I decided I'd never go back to transistorized amps, they just didn't have the sound that tube amps have so I went to Hiwatts and I used those for the last few years. On this tour I switched to Marshalls again. They're the Marshall combos, the 212s. The Hiwatts are inefficient but they push and they have a particular sound which I liked at the time. We were in England and I saw Bill Bruford and Allan Holdsworth was using two Marshall combos and it sounded amazing. I rented one and tried it out while we made Moving Pictures and I ended up using it pretty well exclusively. I was very happy with the results. The Marshalls

I used in the past were two 412 cabinets, well, actually I had about four of them at the time, and the 100-Watt heads. The 212 is a single unit with the head built in and it has a much tighter sound than the larger cabinets did. They're not as loud but they can be quite loud. They have a really nice bass sound and the high end which is usually quite shrill on Marshall amps is a lot smoother. Plus they've got reverb which actually isn't bad for a spring-type reverb. One thing I never liked was the Fender, they always had a really boingy reverb, it was very sensitive, when you bumped into it the amp would go crazy. But this reverb has a nice echo to it".

"It's a whole different thing when you get on stage with an amp that sounds good in the studio," Lifeson noted. "Often it doesn't sound as good, but we got onstage and it sounded just as good without being loud or having that razor's edge coming directly out to the back of the hall that if you cross you get hurt. Especially the Hiwatts have a mean top end after you got about twenty feet in front of the amps. You don't need the volume to have the power. You can feel the sounds but it's not as bad on your ears."

One of the most distinctive features of Rush's sound is Lifeson's intriguing guitar playing, which contrasts fat slabs of bleating chords against searing single line runs and weird, extraterrestrial-sounding fills. For the most part during the set he used a Gibson ES 335 but switched off to several other guitars at different times. "I never really had a lot of luck with guitars I'd use on the road," Lifeson admitted. "I always stuck with my 335, but at the beginning of this tour I got a Howard Roberts Fusion that I love, it's a great guitar. I use that for 'Hemispheres,' 'Tom Sawyer,' 'Camera Eye' and the medley at the end of the night. It's the dark guitar with the single cutaway - it looks like an oversized hollow-body Les Paul, which is basically what it is, it's a hybrid of the Howard Roberts and a Les Paul. It's a hollow-body guitar but it has a maple spar that runs down the center of the body so it's got the weight and density yet it has the acoustic qualities, like at a lower volume setting it's nice and clear, not fat and undefined like the Les Paul usually is. The back pickup is one of the hot Gibson pickups and the other one has a certain coiling to it that's a little more topy, which you can use in that front, rhythm position. I have a couple of Strats that finally after about a year I've gotten used to playing. I've got two of those on the road with me and they're set up a little differently. The white one's a little heavier so it feels better to play. The red one has a flatter neck, a rosewood neck, and the body is lighter so it doesn't have that really powerful sound to it at a high volume, it's a little more frayed."

The band's new amplification setup has helped Lifeson's guitar accessories as well. The rich, spongy texture his treated 335 gets in the new sound adds a dimension to an overall approach that seems to improve with each record. "The first time I used a Roland Chorus I fell in love with it," he said. "I really like what the chorus effect does to your sound, it really broadens it and gives it nice movement. It takes off any rough edge and gives it that greater size. The first time I used it was on Farewell To Kings. It's pretty well a single-purpose effect but when you combine it with other things you can pull off some neat tricks. I've got two Chorus units, an Electro Harmonix Electric Mistress, which is a phasing unit, that blends well with the Chorus. I have the Maestro parametric filter just to add the little spots here and there. That's usually where I make my changes in the hall. If the sound is particularly honky in the mid-range I'll adjust it on the parametric and I can usually either pull that out or add where I need to add. I've got an MXR Distortion Plus just for the certain spots in the set where I want to hit a really fat sustained note that carries on for an hour and a half, it's really good for that. I have a Mutron octave divider which I don't use too much, just in a couple of spots."

Lifeson uses plenty of effects but doesn't swear by them - he's not happy with echo units and in some places he's actually replaced synthetic parts from the recordings with manual playing. "I'm using a Roland Space Echo now which I can't say I'm too keen on. I've been using it for a long time and it's fairly versatile on the echo and it has a built-in chorus on it, but the quality of the echo is not the same as, say, the Echo-Plex. For guitar, Echo-Plex has a really nice echo. It's meaty and it sounds like the note that's going in, whereas with the Space Echo it comes back sounding really compressed and small. I've really sort of pulled back on echo and I just use it as a slight echo in the background on certain spots."

At several points in the set Lifeson plays an acoustic guitar fastened to an instrument stand. "I'm using an Ovation Adonis and an Ovation Classic," he said of his acoustics, "not because I think they sound great on their own, but because onstage they're probably the best guitar you can use, the way they have the pickups set up and the controllability of the instrument. When you have a monitor fifteen feet away from you and you're playing an acoustic guitar into it, it's really easy for the guitar to pick up the vibration of a certain note and start resonating like crazy. I had an Epiphone Classic that I'd spend hours a day trying to EQ out. It was EQ'd like crazy so it didn't go wild onstage. It didn't sound good although it was a good sounding guitar on its own. Eventually what we did is put a bolt through it and tighten the top and bottom of the body so the guitar wouldn't resonate as much and that corrected about sixty or seventy percent of the problem but it was still a chore to EQ it. When I go the Ovation Classic I plugged it in and it was clear, no distortion, it sounded good and it was very easy to work with".

"I thought I'd get a steel string so I got the Adonis to replace this Gibson Dove I had. I didn't have any problems with the Dove but still it was kind of touchy. With the Adonis, it's bright sounding but it has a really interesting individual sound, having the graphite top and everything. But I don't think I would use them in the studio".
The one thing about guitars that drives Lifeson crazy is that people always ask him first about the double-neck guitar he uses on stage. "I use a double neck on one song," he complained. "We were at a point just after the live album when we were deciding whether we wanted to add a fourth member to the band to play keyboards or guitar, or whether we were going to learn to use new instruments, which is what we did do. Geddy started using a mini moog and I added the double neck. 'Xanadu,' which we were writing at the time, was a perfect candidate for the twelve-string in the chorus so I used the double-neck. I've used it on a couple of songs in the studio but I only use it in one song in the set, and I don't particularly like playing it. I guess I harbor ill will toward it because every time I see a picture of me with a guitar, it's the double-neck!"

AN ALEX LIFESON AXEOLOGY

Lifeson has been known to play two guitars (an acoustic and a 335) at the same time on stage. In addition to these special uses (to which he adds the much-photographed double-neck) Lifeson's axes include the stalwart axe, the Gibson ES 335; a hybrid-looking Howard Roberts Fusion with Les Paul overtones; a white Stratocaster and a red one with a rosewood neck; an Ovation Adonis and an Ovation Classic.

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SIGNALS

Dear Mick,

WANTED: Re-assurance that things are not falling apart on the Rush front!

Consider the evidence:

1. No new product. It is now two years since Counterparts, but it looks increasingly likely that it will be another year before a new release. A three year gap is not uncommon these days, with bands like Pink Floyd, Metallica and Queensryche all stretching their fans' patience to the limit, but Rush? Never!
2. The solo album syndrome. It is seldom a good sign when a band member brings out a solo effort, however good. Once they get the taste for it and the control it brings..... Examples? Steve Hackett and Rick Wakeman.
3. Alex Lifeson's comments in he last issue regarding the prospects of a European tour, or lack of it. Will April 1992 be remembered as the last time the band came to these shores? At best it will be 1997 before they return and, as things stand at present, one wonders what sort of venue they will be able to play when they get here.

These factors, coupled with the unhappy and baffling drop in subscribers to this very fanzine, make me just a little apprehensive when it comes to looking to the future. I fervently hope that this is not the beginning of the end and that the new album does emerge, but for the first time ever, I feel rather pessimistic about the long-term prospects of my favourite band. Of course nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be proved wrong and maybe it's just a case of me over-reacting to the latest news. I certainly hope so. Best Wishes.

Dave Lack
Romford

Mick,

Thank you for another fine issue of 'SOR'. I'm glad you made the decision to continue with size A4 with issue #29. I'm sorry to hear the readership and subscriptions have fallen to a dangerous level but I commend you and your staff for 'sticking it out'.

I realise it must be difficult for you to keep up the fan base in the UK, especially when the band doesn't tour there as frequent as the US, but your undying effort in keeping the fanzine operational even in the driest of times does not go unnoticed. Me personally, I'll be a die hard Rush fan till I'm in my grave. So for me and the many others like myself 'SOR', 'A Show Of Fans', 'Backstage Club' and all the others that come and go - it 'all' means a lot!

In your last editorial you indicated that the latest Rush ultradisc release 'Signals' (UDCD 614) was a big mistake due to the missing vocals in 'The Weapon'? I would like to clarify on this. The mobile fidelity sound LAB, masters all of its products directly from original master tapes - never from production copies often used in mass reproduction. They insist on using the actual session masters to ensure that their discs don't suffer the loss of musical information inherent in mastering from advanced generation source tapes. MFSL engineers carefully scrutinise the master tapes, checking for any damage caused by improper storage.

In regards to the 'Signals' master tapes there was probably a lot of cleaning up to be accomplished. If even minute damage is detected, specially developed restoration techniques are applied. The damage to the vocal segment in 'The Weapon' was so deteriorated that the missing segment had to be dropped in order to save the rest of the track. If restoration attempts fail, the master tape must be rejected. However, successful restoration results in extending the life of an irreplaceable original master. Therefore the decision had to be made, drop the damaged vocals or reject the 'Signals' ultradisc altogether.

The order of release for these 24-Karat gold collectors items are obviously in sequence of best sellers. I have to disagree on the comment 'A bigt mistake'. Rush fans should be greatly appreciative that the MFSL decided to release the disc even 'with' this simple flaw. If anything, it made it more unique.

'To have, or not to have', that is the question you have to ask yourself.

Jerry 'Broon Jr.' Brown
Florida

Dear Mick,

Many thanks for Issue 30 which popped through the letterbox earlier this week.

What was once again an excellent issue featured a collection of letters all referring to the disappointing number of subscribers Spirit Of Rush currently has. Almost without exception these letters complained that the fall in subscribers was caused directly by the lack of publicity the band experiences in Britain.

Whilst the lack of publicity is of course a factor, I believe that the real reason why the number of subscribers to The Spirit Of Rush has fallen is much more simple. Namely the failure of the band to appear here on tour on a regular basis.

I was lucky to be an early fan of the band seeing them on their first British tour in (I think) '77. In those days Rush seemed almost to live here, I must have seen the band at least a dozen times by '79, at such venues as the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and the Hammersmith (Odeon) Apollo. As a result the band were on the lips of every true rock fan in Britain (not to mention engraved on many thousands of school desks!).

Whilst I appreciate tastes in music have changed since the late seventies there are still hundreds of thousands - if not millions - of rock fans in Britain. Sadly, the vast majority of young rock fans, due I believe directly to the band's refusal to tour this country at regular intervals, either haven't heard of Rush or have heard of them but think that they have long since disbanded and gone their separate ways.

Many of my friends are Rush fans and we all look forward with eager anticipation to each Rush tour. To be frank I was expecting to hear news of the next tour in '96 when I read the editorial of Issue 30, but there was to be none of it. Indeed at best it appears the band might arrive here early in '97 although judging by the interview with Alex Lifeson even that may not materialise.

By spring '97 Rush will have toured this country just 3 times in the previous 16 years. That, quite frankly, is unacceptable by any standards. Quite how the band expects to maintain its popularity when it tours on such a rare basis is beyond me. I cannot think of any other rock band even fit to open shows for Rush who tour with such infrequency as our favourite band does. I am afraid the very simple reason why your readership is falling is that Rush appear to treat us almost as second class citizens. I personally believe that the band's treatment of their loyal fans in Britain is very poor to say the least.

The financial side of the operation is of course, something else to consider. I do not profess to know how much it costs the band to travel to Europe but it cannot be cheap. Again, I do not know what the attendance's were at the European mainland shows in '92, but I do know that attendance's at the British shows were disappointing. In '88 the band sold out all it's seven shows in the UK. In '92 it did not sell out a single show - the two NEC shows failed to sell out compared to '88 when three concerts sold out in record time. In addition the gig at the Sheffield Arena was far from a sell out whilst at Wembley the two shows followed a similar pattern and the optional third date booked by the band at Wembley never got past the provisional stage due to a lack of sales. This, I am sure, is a direct result of not only a lack of promotion but also the failure of the band to play here regularly. (**Ed's note:** The first night at the NEC in '88 [Thurs] was NOT a sell out having been added late, in advance of the filming which would take place on the Saturday for the [ASOH] video/album. The shows in '92' did not sell out in my opinion because no thought went into where the band should play at all. One night at Wembley, NEC, Sheffield, would have been enough. With the other shows spread out around the country; e.g. - perhaps Aberdeen as a second show in Scotland; one down on the south coast - Brighton, Southampton or Bournemouth spring to mind; one in Newcastle, Liverpool or Manchester; and definitely one in Ireland, Belfast or Dublin. If fans did not have to make 200/300 mile round trips to venues within a 150 radius of each other perhaps more shows would have sold out.)

Record sales of Rush albums are also on the decline in Britain with the latest Counterparts album disappearing without trace from the charts within a couple of weeks. I am convinced this is also a major factor in the band not coming to Britain. Why come here when they can go to places where their popularity remains as strong as ever?

I hope you publish this letter in your next issue. I realise that it will probably receive a lot of criticism but I believe that what is written here is fact, not fiction and that many fans of the band will agree with my views. I desperately hope to see the band again though I think this is getting more unlikely by the day. Indeed, a Canadian friend of mine who is close to band contacts has told me that the word in Canada is that it is extremely unlikely that the band will come here again. That would be a crying shame but I believe it to be a distinct possibility.

So my message is plain and simple, don't just blame the promoters for lack of readership or exposure, blame the band as well. If they are not interested in coming here every couple of years on tour then they cannot expect exposure in the press, on the radio or on the television and neither can we. In closing I'd like to thank you for your continued efforts in keeping all us Rush fans in touch with the latest developments and I look forward with keen interest to Issue 31.

Richard E. Pennell
Manchester

Dear Mick,

I must confess and apologise as this is the first time that I have put pen to paper on any subject since reading your brilliant fanzine since approximately 1989. I have been a 100% die-hard Rush fan since 1979, I don't listen to anything else, as other types of music don't really interest me and I'm too old for all the chart crap that they keep turning out and ripping all the kids off with.

I think that I speak for all of the genuine Rush fans when I say that we get a rough deal when it comes to media coverage and such like. The band now seems to have been forgotten altogether by the so-called popular heavy rock magazines. Therefore you deserve even more credit for keeping us all informed of what's going on. I think the get-together is a brilliant idea and it's nice to see that it has the backing of Anthem. I have enclosed an SAE and I wonder if you could let me know, nearer the time, of the exact date of the event, and how much the tickets would be exactly, then I can send you a cheque. (**Thanks for the SAE Mick. Not many people have sent them yet. If you**

would like to attend the convention, [it will take place next spring in Leicester or Birmingham] you MUST send me [editorial address] a SAE stating how many tickets you would like, which will be used after Christmas to send you details of the event - Ed.)

I am sorry to hear that subscriptions are falling, but whatever actions you decide on the future of the fanzine, please keep up the excellent work, because it really is appreciated and enjoyed by us loyal Rush supporters. Many thanks.

Mick Waterhouse
Doncaster

To all at the Spirit Of Rush,

Enclosed is my cheque for renewal of my subscription to your worthy publication. I am sorry to hear that membership and, presumably, interest is on the slide, but I hope that there is a sizeable enough hard-core of fans that will keep you going at least until the next album is released. I have been receiving your magazine since the last tour although I had been aware of your existence for some time before. I don't know if I qualify as one of the oldest die-hards around, but I first encountered Rush in 1976 when my playlist consisted of Led Zep Deep Purple, Kiss, Ted Nugent, Yes, Black Sabbath (with Ozzy!) and Wishbone Ash - Hands up who remembers them? **(The band are still going strong, with a new album just out and a fan club convention in Leicester taking place on Sunday 3rd Dec, which the band will be playing at. Some of us at 'Spirit' will be attending. See ya there! - Ed.)**

A classmate of similar tastes lent me a copy of All The World's A Stage that he'd picked up at a second hand shop in Shepherd's Bush - he never got it back! It simply blew me away I think because of the energy that comes across as well as the unusual vocals. As I write this the abiding memory of the time is the riff from Working Man - it sent shivers down my spine then and it still does now. I saw them live for the first time in June the following year at Hammersmith and then again in early '78 on the Farewell To Kings tour and I've managed to see them on every tour sine although I haven't got my act together to see them in Canada..... Yet.

I've often been asked why I like them so much and, as with all music, it is so subjective. I just like the songs they write, the fact that they are not afraid to experiment with their styles, and that they put on stunning shows. Unlike other bands who 'play safe' for the masses (Iron Maiden, Genesis) you never quite know what you are going to get with the next Rush album, but you know it will be interesting. I don't think that much of their music is that accessible or radio friendly, and by that I mean you have to actually LISTEN and PAY ATTENTION to their songs instead of have them playing in the background. **(Spot on - I couldn't have put it better myself, try putting a Rush tape on in your car with a friend who's never heard them before. ['What's this crap' is one I've heard many times] - Ed.)** Also I don't believe there is anyone who can be termed a casual Rush listener - in my experience you either like them or you don't and most people I know don't. Sad individuals all of them.

Naturally I have every official album plus a couple of dodgy live recordings and as for favourite songs there are a few that have stood out down the years for one reason and another, and in no particular order they are:

La Villa Strangiato, 2112 - Overture/Syrinx, Marathon, Spirit Of Radio, Xanadu, Dreamline, Working Man, By-Tor.

Anyways, keep up the good work and anyone else out there who reads this make sure that you don't give up on the band or SOR.

JP Srivalsan
Ickenham, Middlesex

Dear Mick,

Thank you for sending me that latest copy of SOR. I was delighted and surprised to see that you had included my interview with Alex. I am sorry to hear that the membership has fallen away. I'm sure this is only temporarily caused by the lay off the band has had. Secondly I am very interested in the 'gathering'. Any information you can send me (there should be a SAE enclosed) on this event would be much appreciated. (**See Mick Waterhouse's letter re the 'Gathering' - Ed.**)

Finally, congratulations on all the good work. SOR looks great and is a pleasure to read. I wonder how many SOR members play instruments and are in bands that play Rush songs. I only ask because I am in a three-piece band and we all enjoy to play Rush numbers. The freaky thing is two thirds of the band share christian names with the members of Rush. The drummer is called Neil, the bass player is Alex, and then there's me on guitars and vocals and I'm ... well, my name begins with 'G' at any rate, and if you take that and combine it with my middle name you can get a Geddy of sorts. It's a different spelling of course. I personally would like to see an evening where bands who enjoy playing Rush numbers can come together and perform them in a 'Rush Tribute Gig' situation. Are there any others that think like me? (**Many Rush fans [and readers of 'Spirit'] are in bands/play an instrument. We are trying to trace a UK Rush covers band which is doing the rounds in the Midlands area. Anyone know how to contact them or who they are? Let us know! - Ed.**)

Gareth E. Smith
Plymouth

Dear Mick,

Thanks for including our picture and a review of the Tiles CD in issue #30 of SOR. Please relay our appreciation to Uncle Tel for his kind assessment (the Asia and Rutsey-era Rush comparisons are new for us!). Your readers can find our CD throughout Europe in the Dream Circle/Polydor label. Although released in Germany in June, shipments were delayed for the rest of Europe until September. Tiles was scheduled to tour Europe in October, but just like our press tour, it was postponed. Supposedly, we will open for the Kansas European tour in January '96. However, we are understandably skeptical.

That's enough of that, let's talk about SOR and Rush. Issue #30 is excellent, as are the extra back issues! It's good to know the band is back in action. I was hoping the extra time between albums meant a double studio album was in the works, but Alex's solo CD is a nice surprise. The Rolling Stone review segment in issue #20 was amusing and precisely why I seldom read the magazine. RS is more concerned with trends and fashion, and consistently derides most progressive rock bands. You are welcome to print this letter in the Signals portion of SOR. Since dedicated European fans cross the Atlantic to catch a few Rush shows, I may be able to help with information. The midwest offers a great way to see a bunch of shows without too much driving. Rush usually plays two shows in Detroit, Chicago (2), Cleveland, Indianapolis, Milwaukee Cincinnati, Hamilton, ONT, Toronto, Buffalo, etc. You get the idea. I'll usually catch several shows and never drive more than 4 hours. Contact me and I'll do what I can to help.

Anyway, thanks again - and thanks to all SOR readers for tolerating our intrusion into your domain. It's difficult for progressive bands to find their audience. You can imagine how tough it is for us to get radio airplay when Rush hardly gets it! Try and support new progressive bands like Enchant, Cairo, Magellan, Iluvatar, Echolyn, etc. Something has to fill the void between Rush albums! Also check out the new Kansas and Saga CD's, they're excellent.

e-mail: TilesFiles@aol.com

WWW:<http://www.motor-city/tomb/tiles.html> (Tiles Home Page up soon!)

Chris Herin/Tiles
Trenton, MI, USA

"The Why Why whats... ?"

A few weeks ago I embarked on something of a potentially traumatic mission involving a new pub, a strange band and an old friend – all linked by that strange bond which connects readers of this hallowed publication – and innocently initiated by a gig listing in a Midlands music magazine. The band in question went, and perhaps still go, by the name YYZ, and are best summed up as a 'tribute act'. To who I hope is not in doubt.

Anyway, my mind was agog with ideas of what this outfit would be. A threesome? look-a-likes? (surely not), all capes and kaftans or jackets and ties? backscreen projections, dry ice...

It might appear that I was getting carried away to extremes of some disturbing significance, but I assure you it was purely a ten-minute thing. But the concept of seeing 'Rush' in a pub (O'Neill's in Curzon Street) was 'doing my head in' to put it mildly and in layman's terms. So I gave O'Neill's a bell and got what appeared to be the cleaning lady on the other end. Hence the headline above (Birmingham accent optional). She'd never heard of them, of course. And the Three Amoebas were due to play that night (my listings mag said this outfit were supporting YYZ).

Somewhat deflated I hung up. And tried again later, when a marginally more helpful barman told me the band had cancelled but could be coming back next month. He had no idea how to contact them.

And so this issue's Trivia special on YYZ, the only Rush tribute band I've ever (nearly) come across has been shot down in flames (probably by AB/CD or Back In Black or whatever they're called). If anyone reading this –YYZ themselves maybe – get in touch. I'd still like to see, and talk to you – there might even be a SOR convention gig coming your way next spring.

Things of which someone, somewhere has "never heard of mate", part II: Alex Lifeson's long overdue solo LP is a source of yet more ignorance. And the sad thing is that the someone, somewhere who hasn't heard of this milestone in music history works in the press office at Atlantic Records no less. Now if anyone *ought* to have an inkling about this particular subject... Rumour has it that the great restauranter's (what a menu!) debut solo platter (*Victor - 82852*,

You can't write that!

Part II of the old album reviews idea from the last issue. Can't tell whether this guy is up or down on *Hemispheres*, or the band. Either way he seems very excited about the chording, meter, belabor and bejesus...

● *Hemispheres* album review, Rolling Stone, 22 March 1979

Fans will doubtless find *Hemispheres* another good, solid Rush album. And it's time to appraise the non-fans as well, because this power trio uniquely bridges the gap between heavy metal and sterile technology (sort of where Blue Oyster Cult used to work before going to soft rock). The spine of Rush's sound is Alex Lifeson's broad, ringing guitar playing. Drummer Neil Peart is fluent at a large double kit, also adding colorations on various bells and blocks. Geddy Lee plays bass figures that fall just short of melodies, but his extremely high voice – either a triumphant cry or a grating yowl – is still a bone of contention. Though Lee can control his singing, he's often unnecessarily strident. The pick to click here is "Circumstances", whose chorus reworks the tidal stresses of "Something For Nothing" in sprung rhythm and whose lyrics are the most personable, least didactic on the record. "Hemispheres", the obligatory space opera, was meant to expand on "Cygnus X-1" from *A Farewell To Kings*, but the musical and thematic references are only tangential; on the new LP the words belabor the bejesus out of the heart/mind dichotomy and skimp on the science fiction. "The Trees" is an attractively droll political fable with a gorgeously rendered classical guitar intro (one of Lifeson's arcane strengths). But the real new ground is Rush's first stab at an instrumental: "La Villa Strangiato" boasts taut riffing, acute solos, flawless phrasing, the discipline to sound effortless and enough energy to flow in torrents. Overall, especially in "La Villa Strangiato", Lifeson, Peart and Lee prove themselves masters of every power-trio convention. In fact, these guys have the chops and drive to break out of the largely artificial bounds of the format, and they constantly threaten to do so but never quite manage. If they don't succeed soon, complacency may set in. Already the lyrics are approaching a singsong regularity of meter, and the melodies are beginning to lean too heavily on mere chording. I affirm this band's ability to rock out, but I really want to give Rush a hard shove in the direction it's already heading.

Michael Bloom

which I guess is his plane's registration) will finally be served in January, while he has time to promote it during a break from cooking up new recipes with the band that doesn't play between entrees in The Orbit Room.

[Incidentally, if you're looking for an alternative for your xmas stocking now that the Lerxt solo LP has been delayed, you could do a lot worse than this year's Radiohead, Cast or Oasis albums, but I know this isn't the record reviews page.]

Things of which someone, somewhere (hopefully) has "never heard of young candidate", part III: an almost relevant confession since we're on the subject of unknowns. Belated thanks to Neil Peart for helping me pass my 'O' Level General Studies exam too many years ago to mention. The literature section of the exam involved writing about two favourite poems, but typically – and ridiculously given I was doing

the English student thing to death – I could only remember one poem that I'd ever read, let alone liked. So alongside Keats' *Ode To A Nightingale* (with "beaded bubbles winking at the brim" alliteration lovers) I extolled the virtues of a largely unknown Canadian poet who also occasionally drums in a rock band. My rationale was that the examiner would never have heard of him – and so wouldn't dispute his existence in the literary context – or that he'd be a Rush fan and thus dutifully pass me as a member of the flock. The only problem was remembering a lyric that at least rhymed. I went for *The Twilight Zone* (no, seriously): "You have entered the twilight zone, beyond this world strange things are known..."

Ah the naivete of a long-haired denim-clad acne-ridden 16-year-old. Might just as well have gone for *There Was A Young Man From Nantucket...*

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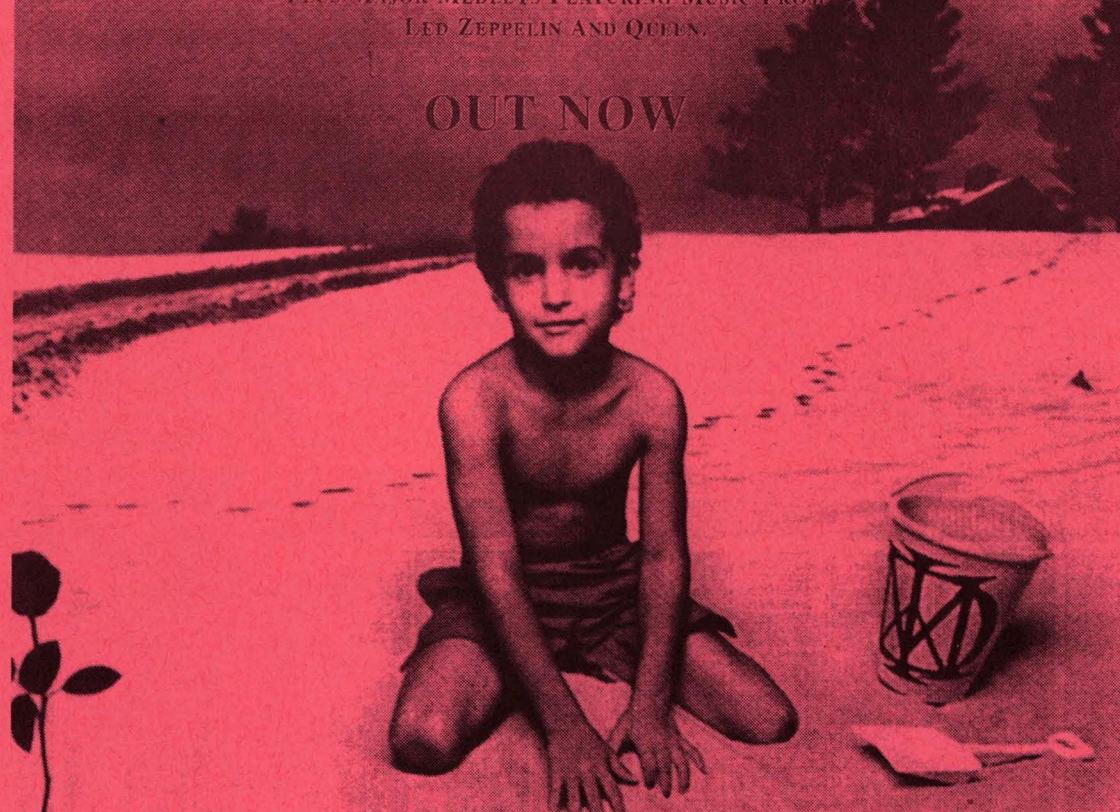
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"There Is A Lake Between Sun & Moon"

By Pye Dubois

*There is a lake between Sun & Moon
Not too many know about
Some go there for their high noon
Some go there for their midnight moon
It is a moment between silence and shout
"Maybe you", might as well mean
"Why the Sun, why the Sun"
Say yes,
Say yes,
Ah, say yes to self esteem*

*We want to escape,
Because we don't want to fall in
The signs are clear
And so is the fear
We do not trust the firmness of the ground
Then say yes,
Say yes
Ah, say yes to self esteem*

*There is a fine line between actor and audience
This is the fine line
The fine line of living
This moment, experience
This spin deliverance
Do what you do
In no ordinary way
Say what you need to say
In no ordinary way
And sing what must be sung
In no ordinary way
Say yes,
Ah, please, please
Say yes to self esteem*

*Some go there for their high noon
Some go there for their midnight moon
It is the moment between silence and shout
This is a fine place
Faces, face to face
These bonfire eyes in the lake of sky
It is our light
To land and leave
Never so dark to unravel the weave
Never give up and never say die
Do what you need to do
In no ordinary way
Say what you need to say
In no ordinary way
And sing what must be sung
In no ordinary way*