

RUSH

BACKSTAGE CLUB

MARCH 31, 1982

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

FOR WHOM THE BUS ROLLS

(continued)

Sunday, February 22. Davenport Iowa. It has rained steadily all afternoon. Through the leaded glass window of room 228, in "Jumer's Castle Lodge", (an unlikely Midwestern version of Bavarian Gothic!), is the bleak, colourless flatness of suburban Bettendorf, one of the Quad (Quint? Qued?) Cities. The work might be dreary.

I'm fortunate to be reading a hilarious book: "A Confederacy of Dunces", by John Kennedy Toole. It reminded me of Mervyn Peake or John Barth in its dark, erudite silliness. The perfect book for such a day. It soon has me laughing out loud.

As we board the bus to drive to the hall, Whitey tells me that Iowa has the highest percentage of millionaires in America. Who'd have thought it? Driving through Davenport, however, we do notice a lot of new, up-market cars, and a grander than usual display of huge, old Victorian monstrosities lines the residential streets.

A silver-haired lady drives by in a big brown Buick, sporting brilliantly colored, knitted Afghan seat covers! Her license plates proclaim her as "BETTE F". The ones on the car in front of us advise one to "B KOOL". Who can argue with that?

The hall is bad; in fact it's one of the absolute worst: a college gymnasium. The usual abysmal acoustics, of course. No seats for the audience, no room for our projections, bumbling stage and security people recruited from "Delta House", the most institutional of dressing rooms, and ask any student about the quality of college food! All this offers welcome to the weary traveller.

The dressing room! Walled around by the obligatory concrete blocks, painted in "Penitentiary beige"; one wall filled with shower stalls in "Hospital green", the other with metal lockers in a particularly offensive gash of "High School orange". The megawatt fluorescent lights glare greenishly down, on to sickly faces and purple lips. The hardest of metal chairs, finished in "Library brown", were manufactured without the least regard for human anatomy.

As it happens, I'm the only one in here, which speaks well for **my** good sense! I can't imagine where else anyone could go, but they've found somewhere. Maybe everybody went home, and left me here as a joke?

Anyway, I'm left alone to read, which is perhaps just as well; this book has me chuckling to myself frequently. Sure sign of something.

As Max's set finishes, the room is once again full of people and activity. Gathering towels and drinks for the stage, the crew file in and out in their final preparations for the show. Change into stage clothes, tape my shoelaces, give my watch to Kevin, and toss drumsticks around until the "five minute" call is given by Michael, when Ian takes me by "secret ways" up to the stage.

It goes fairly well tonight, with only very few interruptions of electronic and human error. Broon gives an enthusiastic report on the way we are sounding and playing, and he's a tough nut to please. (or is that crack?)

He was also interviewed today by the Japanese people, who have asked if I will speak with them briefly again. Expecting just some final questions, I consented, only to discover that they want some "Celebrity messages", the "Hello, I'm Neil Peart from the rock group Rush, and you're listening to the Rik Rox show, on. . .". Oh dear.

It is impossible to deliver these "hype lines" with any sincerity or conviction, and we stopped doing them years ago (perhaps after the first one).

Somehow, through the translator, with much Oriental consultation among themselves, they half-heartedly get a couple of general questions on tape. I sense they are disappointed, and do not understand my feelings, but I cannot bridge this gap.

As I am putting my coat on to go, the ever-persistent photographer, undaunted by previous failures to capture me in his lens, asks for just **one** picture- "with your coat on!" What!!

It's a five hour drive tonight, to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and a day off. Yaaayyyy!!! A day off on the road is a wonderful thing, the possibilities are immense! Maybe go swimming, play baseball, hockey, go to a movie, sleep all day, read a book, watch television, phone home, get falling-down drunk, et cetera.

I enjoy any of the above, while Alex has perfected the "vampire" day off; curtains closed, lights off, heat up full, watching T.V. in bed. Geddy will often be found leading the "Cinema Club" out to a show. We hope to rent some ice time in La Crosse, and play one of our funny flailing hockey games.

Monday, February, 23. La Crosse, Wisconsin. We arrive around 4:30, and once again it's wake up, tumble off the bus and into the hotel, where I'm almost asleep again, sprawled fully clothed and shod on the bed, when Kevin arrives with the luggage.

We're staying at the "Radisson", definitely in the better class of hotels, along with the "Hyatt", "Four Seasons", and "Western International" groups. It's especially nice to spend a day off in a good hotel. I've asked Kevin to arrange for a typewriter here, so I can start hammering these notes into order and legibility.

Apparently the river out there is the Mississippi. That's what it says in this leaflet, anyway. Maybe it's a different one!

It is nice, though. The banks are groomed into a sort of park, and are covered with a pretty blanket of snow. It's one of those winter days formed entirely of metal; the water is lead, the sky magnesium, and the trees on the far shore are bare skeletons of wrought iron. Nice.

Kevin manages to track down a typewriter later in the day, but unfortunately the loathsome thing has it for me. This electrical obscenity is so contrary, and so full of a diabolical hatred for me, that it's scarcely credible.

Not only that, but this journal business is getting out of hand, I've been hunched at this distempered machine all day and into the night, flailing out almost eight boring pages. With shaking hands, and aching fingertips, I made a brief escape to Alex's room for dinner, but I was soon driven back to this-this-electrical sodomite!

Other people are out at movies, lying around, having fun, visiting each other, phoning home, falling-down-drunk, et cetera. It has occurred to me more than once during the keeping of this journal, that people who keep journals have less to write about!

I finally give typing a rest (!) about 3:00, and turn with pleasure to "A Confederacy of Dunces". This book is hilarious, I forced myself to stay awake until 4:30 to finish it, but it was worth it. Excellent, crazy book!

Tuesday, February 24. La Crosse. The hall is directly connected to the hotel, very thoughtfully, so the show is just an elevator ride away. It's a nice, modern building, with a stratospheric ceiling, and; wonder of wonders, it's warm inside!

The dressing rooms are clean, comfortable, and new; a labyrinth of inter-connected areas suitable for lounging, tuning, repairing, sleeping, reading, eating, and-et cetera.

Tonight it's my turn for equipment trouble; bass drum pedal, snare head, tom-tom head, cymbal stands, and warped sticks all joining in an inanimate conspiracy against me. This is very frustrating, and the constant distractions are very upsetting to the concentration.

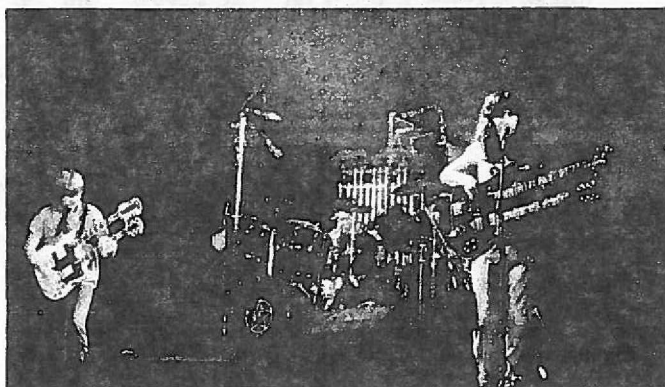
At such a sensitive time, my usual self-control is of no avail, and one can only frown fiercely, and curse them every one! Bllaaaaahh!!

Alex is particularly entertaining tonight, and a wordless exchange soon has me smiling again. Sometimes one can rise above such a night, although rarely, I find.

An interesting telepathy has grown among the three of us over the years. Between Geddy and myself, it's more of a musical thing; we'll suddenly play some new little accent together, without ever having spoken of it, while Alex can have me weak with laughter over a mutually understood private joke.

Broon took our portable video camera out to the mixing board tonight, and taped the show, which we looked at on the way to Chicago. Since we have never seen our own show, it's interesting in a "home-movie" kind of way, to see the projections and lighting effects that go on around us every night.

It's another five hour drive tonight, so I think I'll - get - some - zzzzzzzzz.



Wednesday, February 25. Chicago, Illinois. What?!!? Another day off? There must be some mistake, I mean, like we just had one!

Ah-, but tomorrow we begin a marathon of five consecutive nights (groan), for which this "extra" day off is meant to compensate. Sure.

We'll be playing here for four of those nights, at the International Amphitheatre, to some 40,000 people in all. Chicago has long been a special city to us: it was one of the first areas to really support us, and it remains one of the biggest, both in numbers and enthusiasm.

And the city! I have grown to love some cities on the west coast; like Seattle, Portland, and Vancouver; and in the south Atlanta, New Orleans, and San Antonio; but with more experience and maturity, it is the fast pace and raw energy of cities like New York and Chicago that really inspires me.

I think of Chicago as a scaled-down New York. It has all the power and majesty in its best buildings, all the starkness and squalor in its worst. It has the culture and the energy in its streets, but seems a little less intimidating to the outsider.

We're staying at the "Ambassador East", a venerable, dignified old hotel. I first learned of it while reading John Stienbeck's "Travels With Charley", as he stayed here during his journey around America, in 1962 I think it was. Many things have no doubt changed since then, although the plumbing in my room is not one of them. It protests its age often and loudly.

I received an afternoon call from Geddy to join the "Cinema Club", as they were about to attend a matinee of "Tess". As this is one of my favourite books by Thomas Hardy, I immediately leaped out of bed, into a cab, and over to the Water Tower Place, to join them. Alas! even the matinee is already sold out.

We did, however, take the opportunity to walk back to the hotel, through these fascinating streets. The lights, the people, the buildings, the cars, the shops; the sounds and smells of the city are intoxicating.

Last year we had the good fortune to visit an apartment on the 95th floor of the John Hancock building. What a spectacular, breath-taking place, with a view stretching 50 miles or more. From way up in the sky, we looked down on a galaxy of city lights, lines and patterns stretching away forever. Wow!

Back in **our** world, some of the guys are going out to a hockey game tonight; while another eleven of us, myself included, commandeered three cabs, and go out to a Japanese restaurant. This is one of everybody's favourite things.

Breathes there a soul so steadfast; to savour the delights of sashimi, tempura, and teriyaki- and **not** get drunk on Sake? I only know of one, there may be more.

We call him "Vings", he is Alex's flight instructor, our occasional pilot, the friendliest of friends, and truly a "nice Jewish boy". A mother would be proud, as he drinks only Coca-Cola in the middle of this sushi madness, keeping pace with the hilarity by his own natural gusto and "joie de Vivre".

Back at the hotel, after the storm, he and I sit far into the night, discussing all things great and small. It was here in Chicago last year, that he made his first visit, and since then has become very close to us all. A fine friend, and a great talker.

Good night, already!

Thursday, February 26. Chicago. The International Amphitheatre: "Home of the International Livestock Exposition", announces a sign on the end wall. Although the sign is by no means small, it is easily swallowed in the dim immensity of the place.

As you might expect by this impressive title, it is a big old barn of a place, although it has been unsuccessfully camouflaged by countless layers of paint, in an attempt to disguise its ancient, and basically disreputable nature.

As in most large cities, we will be using limousines here. This is not so much for the glamour, but that they hold lots of people, and it is difficult for our buses to negotiate the narrow streets and heavy traffic. I'm not sure if it's because of the limos, or because it's a big show, but I often feel a tension on the way to the hall in one, which I never feel on the bus.

The day is frantic with people wanting things - pictures, autographs, decisions, plans, answers, time, opinions, attention-, a break, please!

A rear-projection film arrives today, which we have arranged to accompany part of "Red Barchetta". It looks great, like a giant computer game. It's all done with computer animation, and with the road racing away above the stage, one is drawn right into it! It's especially satisfying for Geddy, as it was one of his "special-projects", but we're all very excited about it, and can't wait to see it in the show.

Somehow the show is a bit of a downer for me, for reasons that are difficult to identify. It doesn't really affect the performance, I played fairly well, but something; my bio-rhythm, bad karma, vitamin imbalance, et cetera, made it a difficult, uphill struggle all the way. This kind of night comes along once in a while, all one can do is fight it out.

Afterwards, I feel drained, and somehow sad. Once again, this is hard to define: the French probably have a word for it, I guess it's because I've just done the thing I love to do, and I didn't enjoy it.

I rode back to the hotel with some of the crew, whose high-spirited bantering cheered me up a little, then I called home, which cheered me up a lot. I can't imagine living like this, without that warm nucleus of home always in the back of my mind. The continuity of a growing relationship, (and a growing family), is immeasurably important to the peace of mind of a professional "displaced person".

John Gill, a writer from the English "Sounds" paper, drops by my room, and we begin a conversational interview that lasts into the pre-dawn hours. He has been a good friend and supporter of ours for a couple of years now, and has written some of my favorite articles and reviews. He also loves to talk about things of no consequence just as I do!

Having solved most of the world's difficulties, and successfully catalogued the vagaries of human nature, we called it quits and parted, just as the dreadful, pale grey color began to illuminate the room.

Friday, February 27. Chicago. And it's another busy day. I have phone interviews with newspapers in Calgary and Indianapolis, both of which go well. We have found this to be the best way of doing interviews, as one can choose the day and time in advance, and initiate the phone call yourself, rather than waiting on someone else.

Newspaper interviews tend to be more satisfying, as even a disinterested journalist can usually muster a few interesting questions. Radio interviews, like radio programming, grow more and more restricted, and usually consist of (between commercials); "Where are you playing next"; "How did your group get together?"; and "What's your name again?"

Et cetera.

Over at the Amphitheatre, the only reminder of last night is a banner hanging from the upper balcony, bearing the chorus from Max's "Battlescar": BUST THE BUSTERS, SCREW THE FEEDERS, MAKE THE HEALERS, FEEL THE WAY I FEEL. Great.



NEIL PEART

Geddy has a copy of John Gill's review of the album, which I have been anxious to see. (It is rare indeed to be anxious to see any review, even good ones.) As usual, it's a literate, incisive declaration of support. He catches things that we only **hope** a discerning listener might notice; even the "haunted child" at the beginning of "Witch Hunt". Thank you, thank you!

The three of us, with towels and drinks, stand huddled together in the darkness, before the encore. The only light is from the audience; the mystic ritual of matches and lighters held aloft. We catch our breath, wipe away the sweat, and prepare ourselves for the final stretch: "La Villa Strangiato".

"Good one tonight!", remarked Geddy his breathless voice almost lost in the clamouring crowd.

I nodded agreement silently, as I realized that yes, it **had** been a good one! I had been so wrapped up in it, in a kind of smooth tunnel of concentration, that I hadn't yet paused to make that observation!

"Strangiato" goes just as well. Although we have been playing this song for about three years now, it not only remains very challenging, but continues to improve every year.

We bid our farewell to the audience, and set off for the dressing room at our usual rapid pace, oblivious to our surroundings; wet, worn, and wrung out, but pleased.

Once or twice in the course of every tour, there is a night of blessed excess; a night of raging joy, and volcanic decadence. It will begin as a party, but soon erupts into a full-scale celebration of high spirits, and pressure release.

Tonight is our second annual blow-out at the Italian Village; last year was so much fun we wanted to repeat it. And we did. Everyone is there: ourselves, our crew, Max and their crew, some of the wives, all of the drivers, personal friends, friends from our office and record company, and our hosts: the promoter and his people.

So we have about fifty people; eating, drinking, laughing, and talking. The level rises, and the pace accelerates; the room becomes a living thing. It vibrates, and boils, and roars and bubbles in a whirling storm of images.

It gathers force; the air is kinetic, charged with an electric joy and a magnetic camaraderie. There is no world outside this room, only THE PARTY! The party lives!

The wonderful accordion player, (a tale of his own!), comes bouncing out, to tumultuous applause, and the room erupts to yet a higher peak of sound and fury. He dances and capers madly about the whole room, playing and singing familiar standards, pausing only to wipe the sweat from behind his steaming glasses.

His face is aglow with happiness, as the crowd enthusiastically accompanies every song; singing, clapping, dancing, and just plain yelling! Alex provides a brilliant display of interpretive dance; "The-Napkin-Drunk-Dance", and the announcement of Dave Berman's birthday brings a fresh explosion into the room. All around, there is ceaseless laughter, and the constant roar of shouted conversations. People are at the tables, on the tables, and under the tables!

It was a **wonderful** party!



GEDDY LEE

Saturday, February 28. Chicago. The day begins with a phone call to the "Detroit Free Press", then I turn to my notebook. I've got to try and find some words to describe last night. This is no easy thing. Last night! Oy!

Over at the Amphitheatre, we move into Day Three of the Marathon. There are definitely a lot of drawn faces and tired eyes today (my own included!). We all share the self-inflicted malady for which there is no pity-, and no cure! The flesh may be weak, but spirits are still high, and the party is the main topic of conversation.

Miraculously, the "BUST THE BUSTERS" banner still hangs proudly above stage left. A radio station has been running a banner contest each night, so there have been many come and go, but only this one remains. Again!

Three consecutive shows usually finds us at our peak, and tonight is no exception. By now the show has begun to feel very natural, and precise, flowing smoothly from song to song.

Ironically, I usually become more self-critical at this point. When everything is generally very good, the small flaws and errors tend to take on undue importance.

This then causes the Great and Terrible Sin of over-concentration; that which causes Geddy to forget words he has sung for years, Alex to forget a solo he has played 200 times, and myself to commit the simplest and silliest of errors.

I can feel this starting to happen tonight, as I stumble on a few small parts that have been giving me trouble. Nothing that a listener could detect, usually even the other guys in the band wouldn't know; just a small mental hesitation, or the poor execution of a favorite pattern, just enough to mar an otherwise good performance, in my mind.

Broon comes in after the show, and is very enthusiastic. In fact; he says it was "hot!" I've said before that you can't fool Broon, but I don't know about this. He says there were a few little problems, but that the show felt great! Hmmm.

Maybe it wasn't so bad?

I'm too tired.

Sunday, March 1. Chicago. Brrrinnng! Brrrinnng! Brrrinnng! Brrinnng! Brrinnng! Brrinnng! Brrinnng! Brrinnng! Brrri--click---

Me: (croaking whisper) "hello"

Him: (nervous yell) "DIS NEEL PERT?"

Me: (suspicious croak) "who is this?"

Him: (confident bellow) "S'RICK! AH TROO' A MAG'ZEEN ON DA STAGE, 'JA GEDDIT?"

Now, as it happens, I remember Larry gave me a magazine that had been thrown on the stage. It was called "The Twilight Zone," and contained information about Rod Serling, screenplays, and modern fiction in a similar vein. It was interesting, and since the donor's name and address was scrawled on the (torn) cover, I had intended to write and thank the person.

Me: (sigh) "Yes,...yes," I, uh, got it, thank you, it's, uh, it's really nice.

Very interesting..., uh, thanks a lot."

Him: (accusing shout) "HEY, YOU SLEEPIN'!"

Me: (trying) "Well, yes..., I was...but never mind. Thanks a lot..., really.

Uh, good-bye now... Thanks again."

Him: (uncertain shout) "UH, YEAH... RIGHT, BYE."

(Go back to sleep, go back to sleep, don't wake up anymore, you'll feel terrible, go - back - to - sleep...)

Later in the day, we have a meeting with Ray, in which we discuss so many crucial things, that we never even get to talk about them all, let alone decide! It's so hard to talk seriously about events one or two years in the future!

We map out a general plan taking us into 1983; when to tour, when to record, and (most important) when to have time off. Ray has been trying to re-negotiate our recording contract, but we remain undecided whether to endure the dissatisfaction of our present relationship; or risk greater dissatisfaction in the upheaval of seeking another. (Sound familiar?)

In many ways, today really should be a day off. It was originally scheduled to be one, but when three shows here sold out so quickly, they naturally wanted us to do four, and we were faced with an awkward decision. Do we waive our usual three-consecutive-days maximum, stretching ourselves to five (including an immovable Milwaukee show), or not play for some of our potential audience here. Well, we made our decision, knowing that it would only hurt ourselves, and not the shows.

I feel stiff outside, and empty inside. My fingers feel fat and swollen, and the muscles in my arms are stretching the skin. Mentally I feel very introverted, insulated against the world by a barrier of self-protection. I have often noticed that I am never aware of being in a "bad mood", until I come into contact with others, and my impatience and sourness has a chance to reflect off of them.

This is not a day to have to face the world, and especially not a world of strangers, but one really can't call up and apologize to 10,000 people- "I can't make it today, uh, something came up, I, uh, swear- it did, I..."



ALEX LIFESON

Kevin came over to tell me that a particularly obnoxious group of people outside has succeeded to angering not only the hotel staff, and Kevin himself, but even the usually good-natured Alex, with their offensive lack of manners and demand of "HEY, GIMME YER AUTOGRAPH", "C'MERE TAKE A PITCHER WID MY GIRLFRIEND", "SIGNS DIS TO RALPH, WILL YA". Sigh. We don't usually try to avoid our fans, but he suggests that I might prefer to slip under the street and out through the "Ambassador West". Under the circumstances, and my state of mind, I accept. I don't think I can deal with that today.

I can only reason that this type of person; like careless drivers and the people who throw firecrackers and bottles around at concerts; represents a small minority of the kind that manages to offend everyone in their world.

I have never turned down even a rude request for an autograph, and I make the time to answer the interesting fan letters that come into my hands, but I can feel no more remorse for dodging these people, than for throwing away an illiterate, senseless letter. A guy can only do so much! I'd rather do it for nice people!

The dressing room here boasts a washer and dryer, which is very convenient indeed, and they have been rotating constantly for the whole four days. Such an opportunity is not to be missed and no-one is missing it!

In the main room of the dressing room area, there is a "Space Invaders" game, and an electronic pinball game, thus the air is continually punctuated by whirrs, buzzes, booms, clicks, electronic warbles, and high-pitched cries of "Nuke the Games!"

I sit in one of the ante-rooms, buried in a book or my notebook, keeping as much as I can to myself. I hate to expose or inflict a black mood like this.

On stage, a certain amount of "automatic pilot" starts to seep in to my mental processes. I'm sure this must happen to everybody in any job. Once I have reached a point of good physical tone, and my brain is focussed into the rhythm and patterns of concentration, I find myself sometimes drifting away for a few seconds, while my body and part of my mind continues to work.

Like Geddy has said, when you "come back" sometimes you have to wonder: "What have I been playing? What words did I sing?" It is always right, though; I guess that, like a plane, things must be well under control before the "automatic pilot" can be activated. Let us hope so!

As always, we give it everything we have left; and as always, there is still enough. Like I said, the show won't suffer; we will. Afterwards, the dressing room is very still and quiet. The crew must load out tonight; after three nights of being free after the show, everyone is busy.

Eventually, we gather our things, say good-bye for another year to the people who work there, and drive off through the deserted parking lot, cans and broken glass glittering in the lights.

There was a rumour that Milwaukee had been picked up and carried away by outer space aliens - but I guess it isn't true, so tomorrow it's onto the bus again, and off to the Arena there. And then **finally** a day off.

And tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. And Milwaukee, and St. Louis, and Louisville. And Detroit, and Toronto, and Montreal.

Et cetera.

Et cetera.

Amen.

RUSH

permanent waves



RUSH

EXIT...STAGE LEFT

CONTEST

Every time RUSH puts out a new album, they write their name in a new way. Now it's time for you to show us how you think RUSH should draw their name for their next album. We can't promise that it will be used, but 10 people will win the SPECIAL EDITION E P version of Passage to Bangkok and Free Will. This E P was given out to radio stations only, which means this album will be a collectors item in a few years!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Send in as many drawings as you want, and in one month Hugh Syme will announce the ten winners.

THE RUSH BACKSTAGE CLUB
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TORONTO, ONTARIO
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Closing date of contest:
AUGUST 1st, 1982

Rush

R U S H
MOVING PICTURES

R U S H

RUSH has just finished writing their new album, and should be released in the late Summer or early Fall.