

ROLL • THE • BONES

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From the desk of Neil Peart...

June 18, 1991
Toronto

Hello again, everybody—

Here I am again with the latest news. We have just finished a new album, called *Roll The Bones*, which should be released in September. It contains ten new songs, including a long-awaited new instrumental called "Where's My Thing?" We are also presently planning a tour, which should commence in October sometime.

We are all really excited about the band at the moment, accelerating our plans for the tour even at the expense of our *holidays*. The recording went so smoothly and we had such a good time making *Roll The Bones*, and we are so pleased with the results of our work together that, for once in our lives, we're actually thinking that our future might be longer than *next year*!

Not that it's getting any *easier*, you understand; I think it's just that we're getting better... Anyway, the important thing is that we continue to be very happy working together, and can see it as a satisfying partnership for the foreseeable future. So maybe that will hold off the inevitable rumors about us breaking up—for at least another year.

And, without further ado, here we go with another session of Q & A—

I read somewhere that there was some sort of educational program on poetry which contained a lot of Neil's lyrics and was being used in some schools. Can you give me more details about this?

Cris Fuhrman,
Cupertino, CA

Right class—come to attention now; the lesson will begin.

But no—I think a few teachers have tried to reach their students by using song lyrics, ours among them, to illustrate things in their curricula, but as far as I know these are just individual efforts, and not part of an organized "program."

What are the words to the song "Didacts And Narpets"? I have listened closely but the majority of the words are still a mystery.

Lisa Gabriel,
Brecksville, OH
(and also Carl Puglisi
Berlin CT, and Travis
Williams, Naperville
IL)

Okay, I *may* have answered this before, but if not, the shouted words in that song represent an argument between Our Hero and the Didacts and Narpets—teachers and parents. I honestly can't remember what the actual words were, but they took up opposite positions like: "Work! Live! Earn! Give!" and like that.

On your bass drums you have "Scissors, Paper, Rock." Why was this not used to promote the tour? Do you see "Scissors, Paper, Rock" as yourselves?

Margo Lozoya,
Cotton, CA

The images on my bass drums came from the cover artwork of *Presto*, where it was a kind of "secondary image" appearing on the inside of the package, as we have often done before, like with the egg and clamp for *Grace Under Pressure*, or—here's a hint for the analytical—with the *Hold Your Fire* cover, where we confused everything by putting the secondary image *first*, so that the red spheres reflect the fireballs which appear in the main image, which appears inside. I know it's confusing, but we thought it *looked* nice.

Of course, the scissors, paper, stone metaphor comes from the song "Hand Over Fist," but we thought it made a nice picture as well, and wanted to use it somewhere, plus I thought it would be a nice device for the drum heads. As to whether these three symbols represent *us*—I'll never tell...

1/ Why isn't "he" at home in the song "Anagram"?

I agree that "he" *could* be at home—I guess he had to go out...

2/ During the last couple of years, artists like Peter Gabriel, Paul Simon, Sting, and Patrick O'Hearn have explored indigenous music from the other worlds. Also your music traces influences from these cultural worlds. Can you tell me why their music is so interesting and how it can fit into the music of Rush?

Alex Van Loon,
Holland

Hello again Alex—welcome back to our show! For me, one great thing about Rush is that there are no barriers—any style of music is an "acceptable" influence, providing it's interesting, and certainly we have drawn from a lot of them. Personally, I am very interested in learning about different rhythms and trying to apply them to my drumming, so that when I learn about Nigerian music, for example, it turns up as an influence in songs like "Territories" and "Scars." Sometimes the influences are even more subtle, like the instrumental section of "Superconductor" where I use a West African pop beat, or other times where I just use *variations* of a Caribbean or African rhythm. Or in "Tai Shan," where I built the drum patterns around the wood-block rhythm that the Buddhist monks use for their chants. Subtle, but a nice touch of authenticity, I think. Unlike some other artists, I am not interested in *emulating* the music of other cultures—I like rock!—but I do like to *learn* from other styles of music, and apply the resulting ideas in my own way.

What made you decide to switch from Simmons electronic pads to d-drum pads.

Kevin Horner,
Acton, MA

In a word: reliability...

1/ At the St. Louis show, Rush began their encore with "The Big Money," and didn't play "The Spirit Of Radio," but at the June concerts, they played "The Spirit Of Radio" to start the encore, and didn't play "The Big Money." Why?

Early in the *Presto* tour we found that "Radio" was feeling a bit stale, so we put it aside for awhile. Then later we brought it back to alternate with "Big Mahoney," and eventually stayed with "Radio" as the better encore-opener.

2/ In my high school junior-year English class, our teacher played "Xanadu" for the class during our unit on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. She interpreted the instrumental lead-in as a sort of parallel to the violent imagery at the beginning of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," from which "Xanadu" draws. Is there any truth to this?

Dean Mentges,
University of Illinois

2/ Sure, why not?

1/ Did Alex play a keyboard at the San Antonio show of the *Presto* tour (and if so what instrument was it?)

Alex played a lot of "foot" keyboards throughout the show, but I think there was only one part he played with his fingers—the lead line in the bridges of "Time Stand Still."

2/ My other question relates to the song "Force Ten." You told Charles Henault this title referred to the Beaufort Wind Scale, but Bill Banascewicz quotes Geddy as saying it referred to the "tenth" song that was "forced" onto Hold Your Fire. Which is correct? (Or is there truth in both?)

Greg Seal
San Antonio, TX

2/ My quote is correct in the *literal* sense, though Geddy's is certainly true figuratively.

What is the real reason you switched from Tama (which is what I play and only because you played them) to Ludwig? If you could be specific because I read the *Modern Drummer* article and didn't see the reason for the switch.

Kevin Brown
Hurst TX

Well gee, Kevin, if you're thinking of the same *Modern Drummer* article I am, in which I

wrote about the choice, I thought it was pretty clear that I switched because I found, in a side-by-side test, that the Ludwigs *sounded* better. (What other reason—money? Drum companies don't have enough to buy me!) After the test, Tama assured me they could make a set which sounded "just like the Ludwigs," but that seemed kind of pointless!

1/ I recently got hold of *Grace Under Pressure*. I noticed that "The Enemy Within" was Part I of "Fear." I had already acquired "The Weapon" and "Witch Hunt," Parts II and III. Is this all of "Fear" or are there other parts that either haven't been released or are on other albums?

Those are the only three parts of "Fear."

2/ 2112 (the song) sounds like it could be much longer. Was it cut down for the album; are there other parts and will they ever be released?

The album version of 2112 is how it was designed to be; there are no other parts.

3/ I recently got a copy of *Visions* and read that "Oracle" from 2112 has never been played live. This surprised me and I was wondering if there was any specific reason for this.

It is true that "Oracle" was never played live, though the reason is quite prosaic. Way back in 1976, when that album was released, we were still opening most shows, and our set was usually about forty minutes long. Thus, even from the beginning we played an abbreviated version, even leaving out "Discovery" as well I think, and then later we tended just to play "Overture" and "The Temples Of Syrinx," to allow time for other songs.

4/ Who (what?) is Mongo? I would also be grateful for any tips on interpreting the lyrics as well, since their meaning has also eluded me.

Travis Williams

Naperville IL

4/ Mongo is a character in *Blazing Saddles*, and in one scene Sheriff Bart delivers a bomb to him, with the line "Candygram for Mongo!" Thus, *Anagram* for Mongo seemed natural. As for "meaning," that is really the wrong word—it is, after all, a word game—think more of impressions, images, and an internal logic to each line, or each verse. What I was after in that, as in other songs like "Presto" and "Hand Over Fist," is more of a sense of "resonance," so that the listener might *feel* something, rather than *think* it. With some people it works; with others, it doesn't.

1/ Who transcribes the music for each album for the published song books?

I don't know really; someone the publishing company hires.

2/ Does the band actually write out parts (in standard notation) in the studio, or do they simply work from tapes and memory?

Andrew Piercy
Manchester UK

From tapes and memory.

During the course of a tour do you change the show, or do you play basically the same set each concert?

Dan Wipperman
Urbandale IA

Strange name for a city that, Urbandale I mean—sort of means “city-valley” doesn’t it? Anyway, we do tend to settle on a selection of songs that we like and stay with it for the duration of a tour, with the exception of things like the above-named tradeoff between “The Big Money” and “The Spirit Of Radio,” or when we find a song has grown stale for us and we have to give it a rest for awhile.

On my Hold Your Fire cassette, towards the end of “Tai Shan” I hear a female singing (Aimee Mann?) What is she singing? It is very hard to hear.

C. Mark Kaefer
Basking Ridge NJ

It is indeed Aimee Mann in there, only she’s not exactly “singing” anything—we took her voice from one of the other songs and played it backwards, just as a nice texture which gave an eerie, pseudo-Chinese sound. And no, this is not backward-masking, or whatever those lunatics call it—there is *nothing* about the devil in there!

At the end of “Distant Early Warning” Mr. Lee sings “Absalom, Absalom.” I am wondering if this is in reference to King David’s son in the Bible, or the book by William Faulkner, or maybe another source that I am not aware of, but I am interested.

Steve Varnal
Peachtree City GA

Directly, the reference comes from the Faulkner book. After reading the novel, I was curious (like you) and looked up the name in the encyclopedia. Then, while writing that song, I had “obsolete, absolute” in there, and I thought how similar the word-shape was to “Absalom.” Since one of the main themes of the song was compassion, it occurred to me that the Biblical story was applicable—David’s lament for his son: “Would God I had died for thee,” seemed to be the ultimate expression of compassion. And that’s how it happened.

1/ Whose voice is on "The Camera Eye" that says "Let us through"? (I know it's trivial.)

Trivial maybe, but at least it's *fun*! We were looking for an urban sound effect, and we ended up using a part of *Superman*, when Clark Kent is arriving at the offices of the *Daily Planet* amid the traffic and bustle of Metropolis. No deeper meaning, I promise you.

2/ John Steinbeck in 1959 said he had "not felt the country for 20 years." He had been observing the changes "only from books and newspapers." Do you think touring has helped you "feel" the country, or people, or places? If so, has this helped you become a better writer?

Jay Roberts
Pope AFB, NC

I think touring *can* be a very broadening experience, though not if it's done in the usual rock band way. Airports, hotels, and arenas do not tell you much about a place; you have to make the effort to get out and see a city and the country around it, and try to meet people just as *people*, as a stranger. That takes some effort, but I think it's worth it—since I started getting out on my bicycle I have acquired a whole new affection for America. And yes I think it's especially important for a writer; that is one reason I am always so concerned about my privacy, and avoiding the pointless constrictions of fame. The only way to learn things is to be an *observer*—not the *observed*!

1/ Is the front cover of *Signals* a joke-to-be?

Hmm. Not *exactly* sure what you mean by this. Certainly it was meant to be a humorous pun for *other* types of signals, but then it would be a joke-that-was rather than a joke-to-be, no?

2/ Are the "he" and "she" in "Superconductor" generic or are they real personalities? Mikhail Gorbachev and Margaret Thatcher as a guess.

Andrew Leight
Petawawa Ont.

Nobody was specifically represented there, although I certainly had more "conventional" entertainment figures in mind, as opposed to politicians!

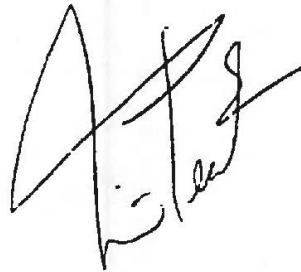
During the Presto tour I saw you perform three times and I was even more impressed with "Scars" after having seen you play it live. I noticed that you had a pedal designed to trigger the snare during certain parts of the song to keep your arms free. Could you explain what the device was that accomplished this and how the pedal was set up?

Brent Elliott
Lincoln NE

It's just a regular foot pedal really, made by a company called "Shark" which may or may not still be in business. Like a drum pad, it simply triggered a midi impulse into the Akai sampler, which then reproduced a sample of my snare (taken from "Grand Designs," as it happens, as are the tom samples used in the live version of "Closer To The Heart" last tour).

Whew! A *big* batch of questions this time. *Now* can I go and have some fun?

Thanks...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. J. G.' or similar, with a large 'A' and a stylized 'J' and 'G'.

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