Canadian Guitar Summit: "Beyond Borders"

Rush

A show of hands

2112

Past... or future?
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IN STORE OCTOBER 17
Alex Lifeson, Ed Stone, Liona Boyd, and Rik Emmett all took part in a productive project entitled "Beyond Borders". Initially, it was a conceptual idea of Rik Emmett's (of another famed Canadian trio "Triumph"). This project was a non-commercial one, so it greatly appealed to Alex, Liona, and Ed. It was all done out of their love of music and guitar playing specifically. The final result was a six minute guitar instrumental piece with four completely different playing styles evident. This extremely experimental song was released as a "soundpage" in the "Guitar Player" magazine.

When it was in the conceptual stage Rik and Alex traded their ideas on cassette tapes through the mail. Soon, they all entered the studio and set to work. It was completed quite quickly but the end result is an expressive, wholesome composition.

The song itself is a very moody piece revolving around four opposite styles merged into one, flowing song. Alex's presence is very obvious and he did an exceptional solo in the beginning of the song. Overall, it's a nice piece that shows a great deal of creativity by every musician that took part in this respectable project.

When you work in a band like Rik and I do, you get used to playing in a certain way and having a certain attitude toward writing and performing. But when you do something like this with other musicians—especially the ones who represent a broad musical scope—it gives you a lot of freedom to do other things. For instance, here I approached my role from an atmospheric standpoint, and I tried to tie things together and do things that I normally wouldn't do on a Rush record. For "Beyond Borders" everybody basically had their parts worked out and knew what they were going to do, but because it was in a studio arena, it had a whole different perspective to it. The work was a little more precise, so things took longer. Since we were working on vinyl, we wanted to make sure it was done right. It was fun and very satisfying."

"Ed and Liona also contribute a lot of transition points and segues, in addition to the places where they were featured. The little bits that come in and out add a lot to the flow and work nicely, especially for something that was done in
basically a couple of days."

"After spending the day here in February when I recorded my guitar solo, I was reminded that I really love playing the guitar. When you do it all of the time, sometimes you forget that. When you perform in a concert hall, it becomes a job, you lose something. Playing the guitar is a wonderful feeling; it's a great expression!"

"Rush would never work without a click track. As soon as you get into the drum machines and syncing up sequencers, it's essential that you use one. Now we rely heavily on keyboards and sequencing. You can sync up five or six different sequences on different keyboards and have a fantastic atmosphere and sound texture. My part in Rush ends up being more of a stricter guitar part, instead of an instrumental thing. That's fine and it satisfies me in that context. When I got involved with this project, everything was just about finished, which enabled me to sit back and put my feet up and play whatever I wanted."

"In contexts such as this, rhythm is a function more of feel. You immediately start tapping your foot, because the music has a certain flow to it. One of the great things is that we didn't use a drummer or a rhythm section. It's strictly guitarists and nothing else, so we had the freedom to do whatever we wanted."

"I love playing the guitar; when you perform in a concert hall, sometimes you forget that."

—Alex Lifeson
When you first heard of the project, were you apprehensive about it?

I had a lot of reservations at first. I thought, "These players are very good; I'm gonna feel a little weird playing with them." But after talking to Rik, I felt better. I wasn't sure what the piece would sound like, but I thought it was a great idea. If we had recorded it together off the floor, the result would have been a lot different; we wouldn't have had the flow, and the piece wouldn't have been as interesting. When Rik first sent me his demo, I wondered, "What have I gotten myself into?" But once we got together, we joked around and plowed through it. It was fun, and it didn't hurt.

If Rush is a bit limiting, how do you expand yourself musically?

The limitations inside Rush are not that great, but they are there. There are certain things that you wouldn't try doing due to the particular combination of musicians working together and the direction. But apart from that, there is a world of sound and ideas that I can look into, although I'd love to work with some other people too. I have a particular style, and I'd like to explore how I can implement it in other music and songwriting. I've done a couple of things outside of Rush, which has been to experiment with them. Having a studio at home is another good way to have the luxury of getting into other music in a fairly big way, but without having to spend a lot of money and time. I don't feel that I have to market music done that way; I'm lucky enough to have the freedom to make that choice.

When you got involved with this project, did you see it as an opportunity to make a nationalistic statement?

When you're from a smaller country, you don't really think about nationalism. It doesn't occur to me that I'm a Canadian musician. I'm a musician, period. There are many good Canadian musicians, and probably some bad ones. We've become more visibly internationally, and the industry has grown a lot here. Record companies are more willing to take more chances on Canadian artists now; 10 or 15 years ago you had to go south of the border to accomplish anything on a large scale.

"About 15 years ago I studied classical guitar for about 12 months, and I regret not keeping it up. I remember the pieces that I originally learned, and if I practice for a while, I can get my fingers back into relative shape. Some of the things I know are fairly standard for grade-six level and include transcription of six lute, "Bourée In E Minor" by J. S. Bach, a couple of short works by Fernando Sor, and a few flamenco pieces. I also know a sonata by Scarlatti, which I heard on an album by Segovia. I always liked that piece, so I got the music and took the time to learn and practice it. I still don't play it very well, but I try. It's never too late to develop a style like that. Solo guitar is very satisfying; being able to play the guitar alone is one of the best things about being a musician. When

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Alex: Metro Radio Liverpool

with Kevin McDemster —— September 1987

Kevin McDemster: Hi ya Alex!
Alex Lifeson: Hi! How are you?
Kevin: I'm not bad sir, all the better talking to you.
Alex: Great, thank you very much.
Kevin: I'm sure it's cheered up alot of people in the Northwest as well, a very fleeting visit to the U.K., I believe.
Alex: Yeah, only for a couple of days and it's only promotional unfortunately. We plan on touring back here in England, I guess around April, I think the middle of April.
Kevin: We'll talk about that a little later on. The reason for this phone chat today, is of course, that Rush is about to release their new album in the U.K., is that right?
Alex: That's right.
Kevin: Now, the album is entitled 'Hold Your Fire'.
Alex: Yes, that's right.
Kevin: How long did it take you to record this album?
Alex: It took us about six months, but only four months of actual recording. We started recording in January and finished in mid June. We did it in five different studios, a couple of studios here, the Manor and Farmbridge in South England, then we went to beautiful Montserrat with it's swaying palm trees, which is always a bit of a treat. We also worked a bit in Toronto, which is our home town and finished up in Paris.
Kevin: It must have been pretty difficult to go into a studio in Montserrat, with all that scenery around you.
Alex: It sure was, with all the distractions it was alot easier to sit by the pool!
Kevin: Was alot of material for the album written before you went into the studio, or did you write some songs while you were in there?
Alex: No, it was all written before, it always is. We started writing at the end of September and continued writing until just before Christmas and took a break then. We like to always be prepared as much as possible before going into the studio. Studio's are very expensive places to start experimenting and writing songs, we have done that in the past, and the pressure's too great and it's always much better to be organized.

Kevin: One thing that you did surprise me slightly is that you went into the studio pretty quickly after the release of "Power Windows". There wasn't that long between the release of the album and you were back in the studio again.

Alex: Well, the album was released about two years ago (Power Windows). We went on tour sometime in November and the tour finished in May the following year (1986) and then we took that summer off. We started in September, so we started writing this album about a year after the release of Power Windows which for us is just about right. That gives us a release of about eighteen months.

Kevin: So with taking a break, you managed to get out of the grind of a tour then back in the studio again for an album, then back out on tour again.

Alex: Yes we like to take that break, it clears our heads a bit, after a tour obviously, because it's so long and grinding and rather stressful although we did take it a little bit easier on this last tour, it clears our heads so we can approach a new record with more energy.

Kevin: I've heard the new album, and it does seem to me, to be more of an up tempo record more than Power Windows. There seemed to be more faster, rockier songs on this album than on the last one. Was that a deliberate thing you set out to do or was that just the way the material came out?

Alex: Not really, it was just the way the material came out. We happened to be in that kind of mood. I think we were fired up, we were very energetic during the writing of this record and also very positive. I think it shows on the record, certainly in the way the songs were written, as well as the songs themselves. They do tend to be a little more high energy than a few of the records in the past, much more than Power Windows.

Kevin: One thing I have noticed on the new album is as far as you are personally concerned is that your guitar playing on say maybe the last three albums has been slightly understated where on the new album the guitar solo's are sort of in the old mold of Alex Lifeson guitar playing.

Alex: Possibly, with my guitar playing I think I could rather do something that is a little understated, I prefer to be in the background in the course of a song and perhaps get more value from less playing, so that it becomes more an instrument of the whole rather than a singular thing standing out on it's own. With solos, solos are a very fun thing for me to do. They come rather quickly and it's very spontaneous for me to do.

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The Moving Pictures tour set the name of Rush on a pedestal as one of the top grossing live bands of the year. This tour featured everything from the Grammy Nominated YYZ to the theatrics of Hemispheres. This was the first tour that the legendary percussion solo was included in YYZ.

This recording was recorded on the fourth and final night at the Chicago Ampetheatre in 1981. This show consists of a wide array of tunes from over the years and complies into what I believe to be one of their all-time best set lists. Some of the highlights of the concert are: Hemispheres: Prelude, The Camera Eye, and Working Man. The entire rarity of this recording is based on one two minute segment at the very end of the show after all the encores that were schedules were over. Alex, being the appreciative guy he is, steps out into the limelight and straps into the acoustic guitar and plays a song that "has never been recorded and you can't buy it anywhere, it's just for those who came tonight." Well, sorry to spoil the occasion Alex, but this selection is worthy of recognition everywhere, not just in Chicago. The tune he plays is unbelievable. It has a country sound to it and a rock feel. The power and mood pushing this song through every note is immeasurable. Maybe in the future we will see it on a studio track.

This is the last tour besides Signals that Rush settled MIDI live instead of Metal. The last several tours have been mainly based on technology more than the heavy metal of days gone by but like Robert Plant says, "You can't do the same thing forever in a day and call it free expression." I am glad that Rush has progressed but thank God we still have shows like this to listen to. This show consists of:

2112/Medley/Freewill/Limelight/Hemispheres: Prelude/The Camera Eye/YYZ/The Trees/Xanadu/The Spirit Of Radio/Red Barachetta/Beneath, Between, and Behind/Closer To the Heart/

Tom Sawyer/Vital Signs/Natural Science/Working Man/By-Tor And The Snow Dog/In The End/In The Mood/La Villa Strangiato/Alex solo.

If you would like a copy of "Rush ’n Roulette" send $10.00 to Rush On Stage, 314 Acadia Ave., Winston-Salem, NC 27127. All checks payable to: Eric Merola.

THE NECROMANCER
314 Acadia Ave.
Winston-Salem, NC 27127
In the annals of RUSH this album soars as yet another turning point in the never-ending musical crusade endured by the band. This album, "2112", was their fourth voyage into the studio and the outlook was dim. These recording sessions were to produce hopefully an album of vengeance for RUSH. Dejected by the dismal sales of their third LP "Caress Of Steel", they were looking for an album that would shake the all the way into 2112. Sure enough, Rush did just that.

After surviving the "Down The Tubes Tour", RUSH wondered if their careers were only meant to be three year stint. Despite being deeply in debt, they set into the studio and the fruit of the harvest was what many fans consider their most astonishing album even to the present.

The swirling winds of change begin the dawn of the album with the side-long, science-fiction epic 2112. Orchestral and very similarly to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. 2112 demonstrates the melodic diversity in the music RUSH creates. Ayn Rand is responsible for most of the lyrical influence on this album. The story told in the song is...
about a man who finds a glorious discovery; a guitar. But, when he reveals it to the "Priests", he is condemned for his discovery. The guitar is destroyed simply because of the fact that it wasn't normal culture. He is oppressed by his society and his discovery was forgotten.

The rest of the album discusses simple themes such as not getting something for nothing (in very general but political terms). Alex and Geddy also get their share of writing on this album with Alex's "Lessons" and Geddy's "Tears".

This LP put Rush back into the public eye and on the lighted stage. Record sales increased and so did the number of fans. I am sure that many people that are reading this article were introduced to to Rush with the release of 2112. If you would like to share your story with our readers about how you were first introduced to Rush please send it in. For me... well it's a long story. It started when I got "RUSH" for my first birthday...

---Brian Siskind

worldwide?

Alex: No, actually the album's been released worldwide. It's been out since the first week of September in North America. I believe the record company decided to hold off over here, for one of two of a thousand reasons.

Kevin: Their going to keep the British fans waiting a bit longer to hear the new album.

Alex: I wouldn't (laugh)! But the record company feels it's wisest to wait a little bit. So, unfortunately you have to wait a bit longer, but we're all really, really happy with the results of this record - I'm quite proud of it!

Kevin: I won't drag you into a conversation about record company politics because I know musicians don't like talking about record company politics.

Alex: Well, I'm sure they have their reasons. I'm sure their right. They know this market better than I do, I just play the thing!

Kevin: Your in the U.K. just to do promotion as you've already

---continued next month---
Limelight

Living on a lighted stage
Approaches the unreal
For those who think and feel
In touch with some reality
Beyond the guilded cage

Cast in this unlikely role,
Ill-equipped to act
With insufficient tact
One must put up barriers
To keep oneself intact

Living in the limelight
The universal dream
For those who wish to seem
Those who wish to be
Must put aside the alienation
Get on with the fascination
The real relation
The underlying theme

Living in a fisheye lens
Caught in the camera eye
I have no heart to lie
I can't pretend a stranger
Is a long-awaited friend

All the world's indeed a stage
And we are merely players
Performers and portrayers
Each another's audience
Outside the gilded cage

Lyrics by Neil Peart

Analysis

Limelight is a very appropriate title for a song Neil wrote about coming in terms with life "on a lighted stage." In less modern times, limelight was literally that—a brilliant light created by the oxidation of lime and used in theaters to throw an intense beam of light upon a particular actor. Hollywood with all its glamour gave the term new meaning when it created entertainers and movie stars whom the public adored and worshipped. Rock and Roll promoters then picked up this hype and created their own demigods.

Because these industries created superstars, the public has come to expect more than just performance from the players. While the entertainer may be expected to pander their audience, it's not fair to expect this from the actor or musician. Yet, people continue to expect the player to play the role of a star. The role is supposed to go something like this:

First, the star is somehow better than everyone else. He or she is not only supposed to perform, but there is also the additional duty of making people reevaluate their lives. The star is supposed to smile warmly for the camera on each and every occasion. They're supposed to enjoy being famous. In writing Limelight, Neil takes exception to this.

What it is then, that's so terrible about being a star? "Caught in the camera eye" clues one into realizing the terrible invasion of privacy the performer must suffer through. Those of us "who wish to seem" can't possibly know what it is like to have little or no privacy. When people seek to know everything about a star and pry into
their personal life, they create the alienation Neil must "put aside."

"I can't pretend a stranger is a long awaited friend" cues one into realizing that Neil cannot accept the role of "Oh, it's nice to meet you. Yes, of course, I'll pose for a picture. Yes, it's great being famous."

One should not conclude from this song that Neil is unfriendly. When he can meet people on equal terms, I'm sure he is as nice as the next person. But by being "cast in this unlikely role" and all unfair trappings of the aura of the star, he has to "put up barriers." A lot of people may not understand that. I'd suggest they listen to LIMELIGHT.

by Jay Roberts

---QUeSTIONS---

#1 Why did Rush decide to call themselves "Rush"?
#2 What does "Yyz" stand for or mean?
#3 What will be the name of the new live? Me and a friend are racking our brains for famous quotes because we are sure the title will have 'stage' in it ("All The World's A Stage", and "Exit...Stage Left").
#4 Has "Rivendell" ever been performed live? I wonder since it is the only Rush song that doesn't feature drums.
#5 If Polygram drops Rush, then who will pick them up?

---Peter M. Renfro

Ans. #1 There wasn't really a particular reason for the band to call themselves "Rush". I guess it just fit the times ('68-'69). After all, they were still teenagers when they first formed.

Ans. #2 "Yyz" stemmed from the code lettering on Toronto Airport luggage tags. In concert, Geddy introduces the song as "Yzzed" (which is the french pronunciation for "Yyz").

Ans. #3 Well, unless you haven't been keeping up with current events, the live album is to be entitled "A Show Of Hands". It is to be released Oct. 17. It will consist of (in order): The Big Money/Subdivisions/Marathon/Turn The Page/Manhattan Project/Mission/Distant Early Warning/Mystic Rhythms/Witch Hunt/Force Ton/Time Stand Still/Red Sector A/Closer To Heart. We cannot understand why Closer To The Heart is on the new live album when it is on Exit. We also do not know where the drum solo will be put. It will probably be put at the end of Closer To The Heart.

Ans. #4 No, "Rivendell" has never been performed live to our knowledge.

Ans. #5 If Polygram does drop Rush, Rush will either hang it up, or go back to their original label, "Moon" records.

---Canadian Guitar Summit contin.---

you play by yourself, the guitar sounds so beautiful because of the combination of harmonies and melodies that are possible."
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Geddy Lee personality

Born July 29, 1953
Home Toronto, Canada
First Song Learned 'For Your Love' (Yardbirds)
Family Married, one child
Personal favorite Rush album
Hold Your Fire
Goal Make better music
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