WORLD TO OVER 80 HIT SONGS

ALEX LIFESON
and
GEDDY LEE
of RUSH

RUSH
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
KING CRIMSON
SHANNON
WILLIE NELSON

POP:
PANAMA • HIGH ON EMOTION • STILL LOVING YOU • ROCK ME TONITE • ROUND AND ROUND • TWO SIDES OF LOVE • SHE'S MINE • LEAVE A TENDER MOMENT ALONE

SOUL:
STATE OF SHOCK • MY HEART'S DIVIDED • I SURRENDER • OUTRAGEOUS • SHOOT THE MOON

COUNTRY:
EVENING STAR • I DON'T KNOW A THING ABOUT LOVE • TO ME • ATLANTIC BLUE • LOVE OVER OLD TIMES
Rush is in a unique situation. They owe their success to no one but themselves and their fans. Now that they're on top, or at least somewhere near the crest, there are no favors that need to be repaid. They can stay out of the popular light and concentrate on making music — the thing they and their fans want the most.

Between 1974 and 1980, Rush watched four of their records go gold in the U.S. The press took notice, although seldom favorably, and radio stations virtually ignored them until the release of Permanent Waves. Extensive touring was what gained them their huge initial following. With the release of Moving Pictures, Signals and now Grace Under Pressure, Rush has all the press and radio play they can use. Not only do they choose their appearances carefully, they tend to purposely avoid the spotlight.

When Geddy Lee sang vocals with Bob and Doug McKenzie on "Take Off" that was about as close as any of the trio came to national television and the footlights of rock and roll. Neil Peart remains very private despite his lengthy and absorbing print interview. Even in his songwriting he's a storyteller and an observer, not one who pours out his emotions to the world. There seems to be even less known about guitarist Alex Lifeson. His speedy guitar riffs have been an unmistakable part of the group's mark on music.

Song Hits managed to catch Alex on the road to capture a glimpse of this ten-year-old band through the eyes of the group's quiet partner. We started off talking about the musical changes the band has been going through in the past few years.
Rich: Is the direction Rush takes something that changes consciously or spontaneously? 
Alex Lifeson: I would tend to think spontaneously. I don’t know that there is a constant effort to change direction. It’s very natural with us. A lot of the material comes from sound checks, little spontaneous sparks, when you’re getting warmed up before a sound check, and we put everything on tape and then catalog it, file it, and go through it all and pick any good ideas that we think are there, and start writing from there.

Rich: You changed producers on this album, which might seem to signal that the band was looking for a change in direction. 
Alex: It’s not a change in direction, just a change in approach, which in working with someone else you obviously relate to them differently. Jerry is a very close friend of ours and still is and the relationship we had as a band and producer was a certain way. We just wondered if perhaps with somebody else it would be different and it was.

Rich: How did the title for Grace Under Pressure come about? 
Alex: There was an Alex Caulville painting that we were thinking of possibly using for the album cover, but it was a little too powerful I think, and the idea for the title Grace Under Pressure, really fit that picture well. Although we decided not to use that picture we decided to stick with that title. We thought it was real appropriate considering we worked as long as we did on this record, there was a great deal of pressure all the way along and it showed a great deal of grace.

Rich: Who was the pressure coming from, yourselves or someone else? 
Alex: From all over. The fact that the producer scene was kind of screwed up, and we were pushing the studio time back, we were running overtime and the record company was waiting for the record—it was a tough one.

Rich: Does Grace Under Pressure take Rush, excuse the expression, away from the crunch and more toward the crackle?
Alex: I think we have always been. I don’t think we ever considered ourselves as a heavy metal band. We always considered ourselves more of a rock band. I think that it’s important that you are aware of what’s going on around you. We look at these things, and there’s a certain crispness to music right now and I think we’re definitely moving toward that.
Rich: Do you think Rush has peaked?
Alex: No, I'd say the excitement is still growing for us. I'm not so sure that we've hit the peak yet. The time of Moving Pictures was a very big time for us and I think Signals was a little more experimental. We had to try some different things. Just like Caress Of Steel was a transitional record for us. I think this record is an extension of that. I think there are some faults with Signals but it was an important learning experience for us.

Rich: Because each of you are very talented musicians — you basically have to be in a trio that does what you do — have you thought about doing a solo record?
Alex: I think we've all thought about doing a solo record working on our own or with other people, but it's certainly not a priority. I'd like to do it eventually. Just to work with other people would be a lot of fun. I have a small 16-track studio at home so I can wander down and work on some ideas if I like. Those ideas that you work on and you think, I'll hold onto this one, end up going on the next record anyway. I think that you really need to take a nice chunk of time and take some months off where I don't have to do anything but that. Right now that's a very difficult thing to do.

Rich: It doesn't seem like you're unhappy about that.
Alex: To an extent. Personally, I'd like to spend a little more time at home with my family. But you can't complain.

Rich: Rush has its fans and it has its fanatics. Those people that really go out of their way to become a part of Rush's life, does that bother you?
Alex: Yeah, I think it comes with the territory. It's to be expected. Most people understand that basically you are a very private person and privacy is important to you. If they confine it to the arena and the backstage area, when you're coming out of a show — and they stop you for a couple of quick words — I think that's the best way. I think most people will respect that. There are a few people that just don't really think and don't have the manners and they make it difficult for most. Basically, we are all very private people and probably Neil the most of the three of us. I think as far as he's concerned he's a musician on stage and plays drums and that's it. He's not really caught up in the rock and roll world, or the glamour of being in a rock band.

Rich: The whole band seems to have stayed away from that.
Alex: We try to, which isn't to say that we won't talk to fans after the show or at the hotel or whatever. I don't think you can be rude to people — we were all in that position too, hunting for autographs and wanting to have a couple of words with the musicians that we really respected.

Rich: You and the band have been together for well over 10 years. I have to imagine that after a time money doesn't have all that much to do with it — what is it that keeps you going?
Alex: Money was never the prime motivator. We always wanted to make the music that we wanted to make. Quite honestly we used to have a number of run-ins with the record company when we'd put out a record that wasn't commercially successful. But we believed in what we were doing and we went ahead and showed them that we could become commercially successful as well as artistically successful, which is our primary objective. In these 10 years we've managed to become financially set and all that, but that was never really the goal. The goal was to do the music that we really wanted to do and that we believed was right. We were lucky. We've done that. We've proved it to our record company, and we've had the support of management as well.