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Abroad in Hollywood

**DORO PESCH AND
WARLOCK**

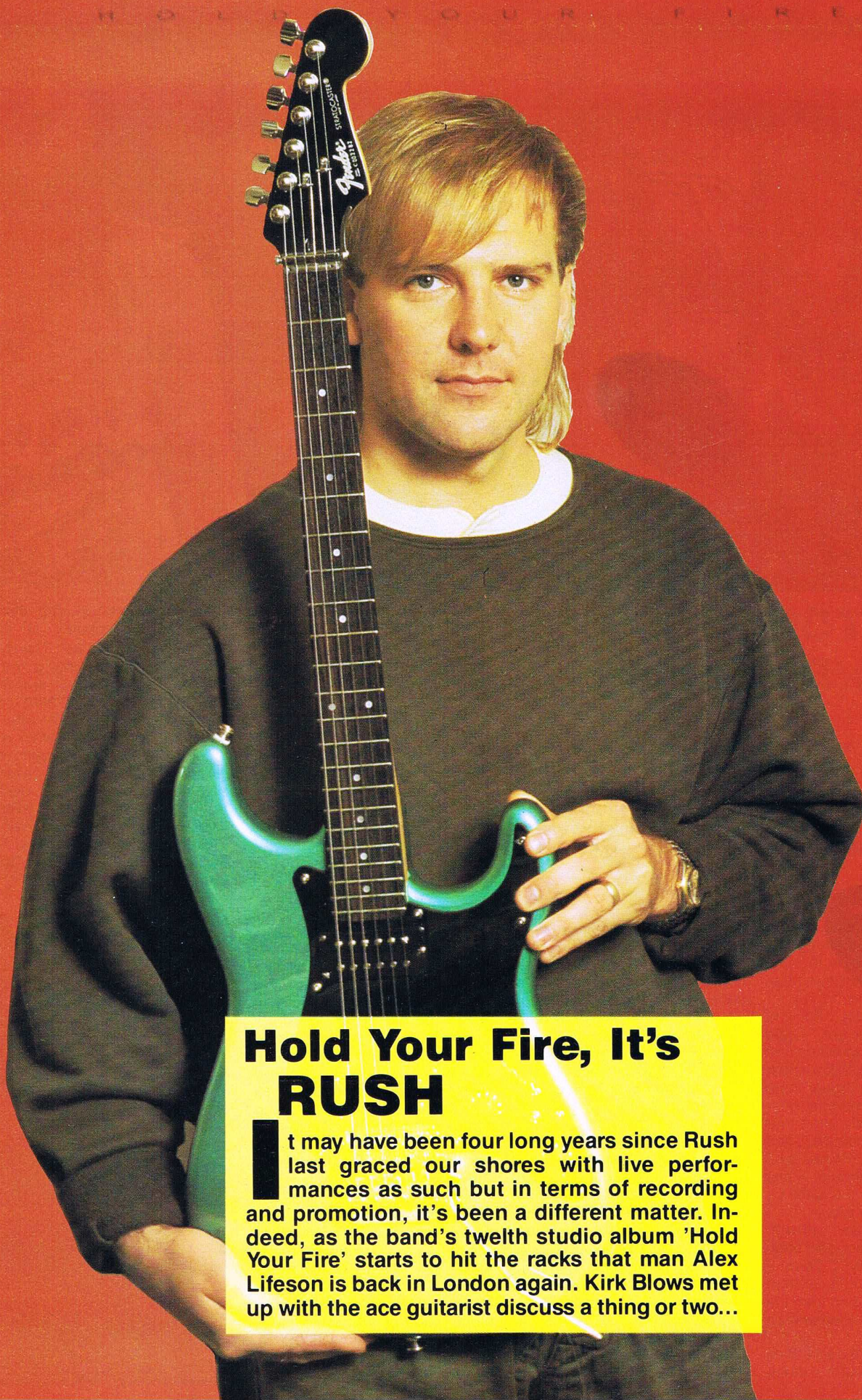
Hold Your Fire, It's

RUSH



RUSH

HOLD YOUR FIRE



Hold Your Fire, It's **RUSH**

It may have been four long years since Rush last graced our shores with live performances as such but in terms of recording and promotion, it's been a different matter. Indeed, as the band's twelfth studio album 'Hold Your Fire' starts to hit the racks that man Alex Lifeson is back in London again. Kirk Blows met up with the ace guitarist discuss a thing or two...

I was in a good mood. I'd just picked up the entire Rush back catalogue, courtesy of the exceedingly generous Phonogram press office, in order to replace those truly exhausted copies of '2112', 'Permanent Waves' and 'Grace Under Pressure' that were doing my stylus just no good at all, as well as plugging a few gaps that I'll admit to having in the fourteen album history of Toronto's finest. Including the band's current release 'Hold Your Fire', an album that to these ears is perhaps not as immediate as its two forerunners, 'Grace Under Pressure' and 'Power Windows', but does grow with every play, and ultimately is just as rewarding.

We're seated in the Phonogram conference room and Alex is looking a shade tired, but relaxed and ready to talk about 'Hold Your Fire'. I mention the difficulties the band had with 'Grace...' and the relative ease of 'Power Windows'. How was the recording of the new album?

"It was great", he says. "We were really well organised and well prepared for this record. All the technical problems that we've experienced in the past we'd sorted out well in advance. We actually finished portions of the recording early, which we've never done before. We did that, we finished early and yet we still went over budget!" he laughs. "But all the planning had been done and the map was complete when we started. I'd got caught on a couple of things with 'Power Windows' in that guitar parts had changed once the keyboards had been completed. And there'd been some song re-writes with the keyboards making the guitar parts useless and it was a kind of stressful situation. Whereas with this album I

was working on the guitar parts as the keyboards were being completed.

"So, in that sense everything went smoothly, which put us in a really good frame of mind. It made the whole thing a lot happier. Plus, the fact we went to five different studios for this record and enjoyed the different environments and inputs from those environments." Different environments indeed. While the initial planning had taken place back home in Canada, the

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recording commenced in England, first at The Manor in Oxford before moving on to Ridge Farm in Surrey, and then the weather must have got to them because it was then off to Monserat (what a hard life it is for some), back home to Toronto, and then across the water again, this time to gay Paris....

"It's great to be in a different environment for each stage of recording. Different influences, different input, different sets of problems to deal with. It's very good for the heart and mind, you know." But change is something very important to the band nowadays. And if you're familiar with most of Rush's material, you'll know that the name of Terry Brown no longer appears on their albums.

"Signals' was the last album with Terry. We just knew each other so well (he'd produced eleven albums in all) that there were no surprises anymore. There was no one to maybe bounce some ideas off, or to suggest a different direction. It had become quite safe." After the Peter Henderson produced 'Grace Under

Pressure' album, the band hauled in Peter Collins to work on 'Windows' and so successful was the collaboration we now see a second album from this partnership.

"This album was a joy to make for us." Alex confirms. "We enjoyed 'Power Windows' a lot but this album was just sheer fun. And our relationship with Peter is very good and we really respect him as a producer - he's perfect really in lots of ways for us."

So how does 'Hold Your

Fire' show a progression from the last album?

"I think that this record is probably related to 'Power Windows' in its songwriting style and perhaps more closely related to 'Grace...' in its production feel. It's got the aggressive kind of feel that 'Grace' had. I think that 'Grace' went a little overboard in reaction to 'Signals'. With 'Grace', the guitar came screaming back up front and was very driving. With 'Hold Your Fire', we've struck a good balance."

I seem to remember you once saying that you saw Rush's career as going in cycles and that 'Power

"My approach has always been to play less, but have it worth more"

Windows' was a closing of a particular phase for you. Has that changed now in retrospect?

"Yes, I think it has changed in retrospect," he says. "I think there are elements from all the past three or four albums on this one. This album recaps this period much better."

"The funny thing with this album was that we were

writing with Peter very much in mind and we felt we knew where he would criticise us. But we got in to the studio and he came in and said 'Well, everything sounds fine. Bye!' he says laughingly. "But then we sat down and started to get nit-picky about certain things. There were a couple of glaring problem areas that he pointed out. 'Mission' had a part in it that when I hear it now from the original work tapes just sounds terrible. But that song is much more powerful and glorious now on the album."

Do you deliberately set out to change the sound with each album or is it more of a sub-conscious progression?

"Yeah, I think it's primarily a sub-conscious thing. We don't really think about it. I think, in the back of our minds, we're aware of not wanting to repeat ourselves and I think that's an important attitude to have at least. It forces you to think ahead and try and find other areas and sources of inspiration."

On listening to the albums that Alex sees as making up the latest period in the history of Rush, the immediate point that stands out is that they're all tailor made for the Compact Disc market.

"We gave sound quality a lot of thought, particularly

with this album. Not CD so much but about recording digitally. We were a bit nervous about it, so we recorded bass and drums analog, and then vocals, guitar and keyboards digitally after that. So CD is really the way to hear it. That's the way we were hearing it all the way along in the studio. The CD is so dynamic, I mean, every-

thing's there. It certainly translates best in that format."

So with the band's all too obvious desires to continue experimenting and progressing, I wonder if the world of video is one that holds special attraction in any way. It does, in fact, surprise me to learn that for this album the band

thought to. While "Time Stands Still" is just one of Peart's attempts at putting across the feeling of appreciating the richness of a period of time in retrospect, I found Alex talking along similar lines, almost in a sub-conscious fashion, as we started to talk about other things, the mid-Seventies period for

was an album from that period for many people." I'd just wondered if the band were aware of holding onto the people that were buying Rush albums in those days.

"There's a large proportion of our audience," he says, "that were buying our records ten years ago that are still buying them now, yes. They're still interested in what we're doing and they've grown

but you can't stand at the same place for ten years. '2112' was a unique album, it was an ambitious album, particularly for a three piece. And we're proud of it, certainly we're very, very proud to it. But we can't write and record the same thing over and over again." Certainly, as far as this writer is concerned there's little to doubt the remarkable loyalty that Rush's audience continues to show. Alex agrees totally. "I agree, very much so. That's great because they're passionate about what we do and are very critical of what we do. And it's great to know that people care that much. It gives us the chance to explore new directions and experiment, and that's why I think we're still together after thirteen years of touring."

Thirteen years is a long time in any business. So how does Alex think his guitar playing has developed over those years?

"I think my guitar playing has changed over the years. I think stylistically they may have been subtle changes but it has changed. My approach to playing guitar in this band has always been to play less, but have it worth more, and I work, I think, very hard at that. And I think I do that fairly well. I've always approached the instrument as being part of the band. I don't fall into the typical, say, heavy metal trend of

"I think I love playing the guitar more than I ever have"

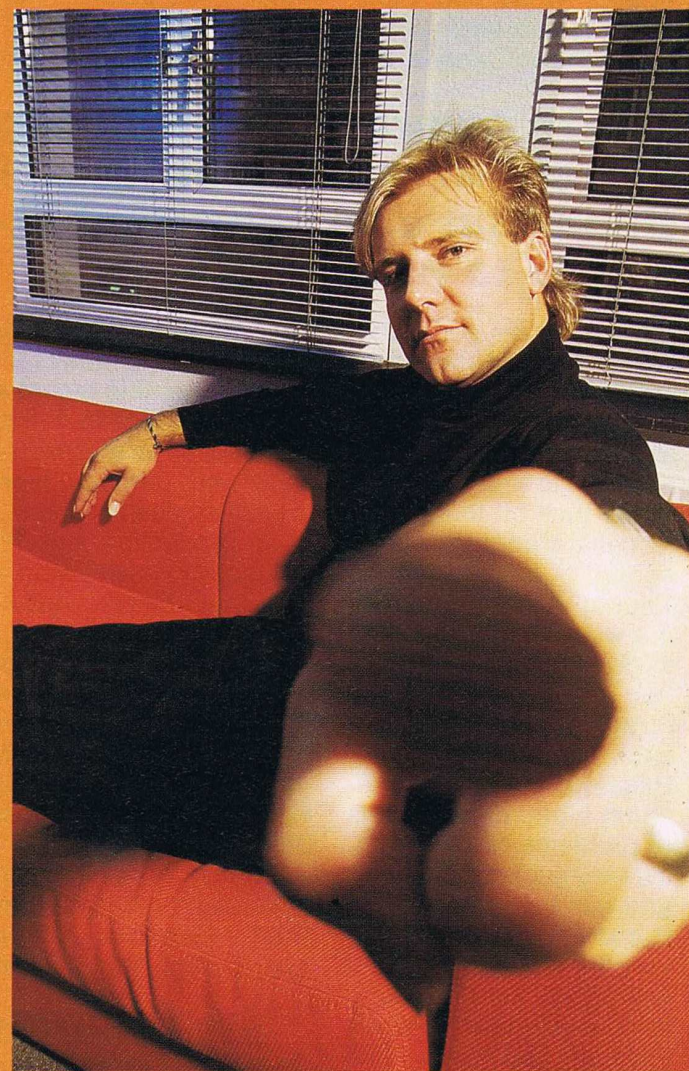
have recorded just one so far.

"Yeah, just one, for 'Time Stands Still' (the current UK single). "It's not an area that particularly interests us really. We never really feel comfortable with it. If it's an interesting and creative idea, sure, but I think if you didn't have to do them then we probably wouldn't. We'd probably get away with not doing them at all but it really means a lot to some people that really try to support the band, such as the record company and management. It's a tool for them to promote us.

"But as soon as you come up with an original concept, it's copied very, very quickly these days. I mean, on one of our last videos, we thought we were doing something innovative, and now I see millions of videos like that!"

(I'm not sure if Alex appreciated the implications of that or not.)

"Hold Your Fire" may well be Rush's 14th album in all, and yes, this is 1987 and the days of "By-Tor And The Snow Dog", "2112" and "Hemispheres" may apparently be well and truly over, but that's not to say Rush albums are no longer thematical in any way. Indeed, it may be the theme of "time" that sparked much of the inspiration behind this album. It is also obviously a subject that the individual members of the band have given a lot of



Pic: Tony Mottram

example.

"I wonder perhaps if there's a connection made to a happy time in one's life or, you know, a girlfriend that you had, so as you listen to an album and there's a connection to what was going on in your life at that point. I don't say that that is always the case, but I think it has something to do with it, a certain time that generated a certain feeling, and maybe '2112'

"I see a lot of things in Metallica that I saw in Rush ten or fifteen years ago"

up with the band. They've followed our course.

"But I don't deny that there is also a portion of our older audience that have decided that '2112' was the last good album we did. Certainly, they're entitled to their opinions and feelings,

the guitar being the predominant instrument throughout. For us, you have to have interplay between all the instruments."

Does Alex feel fully satisfied then that Rush is still the appropriate vehicle

"I like to think we still have a good portion of that youthful energy"

for his guitar ambitions?

"Yes, I'm perfectly satisfied with my role within Rush and what I've developed as my expertise as a guitarist. I don't feel a great desire to express myself outside of Rush, but I have a studio at home, and I mess around a bit and I really enjoy it.

"I love playing the guitar. I think I love it more than I ever have and it gives me a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction."

What then does Alex think of the more guitar orientated heavy acts that are making an impact on the hard rock scene at the moment?

"The whole heavy metal movement doesn't really appeal to me right now," he states. "Not as it currently is, no. I think maybe in the earlier stages of our career we considered ourselves as a heavy metal band, but that was back in the days when Zeppelin and Purple were heavy metal bands. Heavy metal bands of today are quite different, and it's become very formulated. We enjoy playing hard rock but it's always been more important for us to develop our music and push ourselves to our limits.

"But that's not to say I think any of it's garbage or anything. Many of these bands are really sincere about their music and care very much about what they're doing. I know Metallica does, it's very important to them what they're doing. And that's great. In fact, I saw a lot of things in them that I saw in Rush ten or fifteen years ago. Particularly, that youthful energy. I like to think we still have a good portion of that youthful energy, and perhaps it's tempered a little with

er....maturity (he laughs) and experience."

"But you learn how to apply that in different places in songwriting and sound and how to put something across. Just from the experience of

complexities that continue to make each Rush album so intriguing, while the first single in the States 'Force Ten' is gaining tons of airplay as we speak. By this point, the band will have just commenced a tour that will take them across Canada and America before Xmas, and then some European dates, tentatively scheduled for April, so keep your



playing and recording so long.

"You know, we do stuff where my eyes water, or I get goose-bumps all over and there's no shortage of that kind of emotion in our music, in listening to it and in our response."

So, it's all happening now. 'Hold Your Fire' maintains the band's consistency, featuring the subtle

fingers crossed, folks. Also on the horizon is the band's third live album, which unlike the previous two, will be drawn from three different tours. And so the end of Chapter Three.....

KIRK BLOWS

ON THE AIR

The rock jocks on the metal and hard rock shows around the UK are arguably the men with their fingers on the pulse of what is happening north of Watford and south of Gravesend. METAL HAMMER has asked those DJs to report on what is happening in their own areas. This month, we take reports from Tom Russell (Radio Clyde), in Scotland, Chris Tetley (Radio Piccadilly), in Manchester, and Phil Easton (Radio City), in Liverpool.

Next month, the net(work) spreads wider.



**TOM RUSSELL,
RADIO CLYDE,
GLASGOW.95.10
MHz FM/261m**

1. RUSH Hold Your Fire

2. KISS Crazy Nights
3. AEROSMITH Permanent Vacation
4. LION Dangerous Attraction
5. DEF LEPPARD Hysteria

"Two interesting items from my neck of the woods this month

particularly for those fans out there that take an interest in the live scene. Firstly, one of the most popular live venues in Glasgow, up until recently, The Venue is making a welcome return. Though it was put out of action six months ago by a totally unwelcome and uninvited fire I'm well pleased to now learn that the place is set to open up again very shortly. Glasgow needs venues like The Venue that provide lots of up and coming new bands the chance to play and gain exposure. Well done The Venue, it'll be nice to have you back.

"On a sadder note, and while we're still on the subject of live venues, I've now heard that the Glasgow Apollo, that long lost bastion of live rock shows that has been laying dormant for a near eternity now has finally been demolished. Scene of some truly memorable gigs and to be remembered for some epic live recordings, namely Status Quo "Live", AC/DC "If You

Want Blood" and Rush "Exit Stage Left", I know I'll sorely miss the place and I think a few others might as well. Glasgow Apollo R.I.P.

"I've also been fairly busy on the interview front over the last month, so listen out for interviews with Alex Lifeson of Rush, Messrs. Simmons and Stanley of Kiss, Cinderella, and the heaviest of the lot, Bad News, all being aired about now. That's your lot for this month!"

**PHIL EASTON,
RADIO CITY,
LIVERPOOL.
96.7 FM/194**

1. RUSH Hold Your Fire
2. KISS Crazy Nights
3. YES The Big Generator
4. EXUMER Unearthed
5. MICHAEL BOLTON The Hunger

"Good news for local band Torino. After many years of playing the local live circuit, I now hear that the band have signed to FM Records and hopefully we'll be hearing the fruits of this liason very shortly. Good luck, lads!

"Also creating quite a bit of interest in the area are Liver-

pool band, The Quest. They've yet to gain a massive profile across the country as such but up here they've gained a really good response to all their gigs. One to watch out for!

"It's been quite busy on the interview front over recent times and those that have had the pleasure of my company lately have been Aerosmith, Kiss and Rush, and these are going out about now.

Also coming up we've got a young Mr. Ian Anderson from Jethro Tull and Michael Schenker interviewed so listen out for those.

"And one final word, if a certain Ian Gillan (who?) is reading, then you can rest assured that yes, at very long last, your wedding present should be just arriving at any minute. Okay, it may have taken a couple of years but then again a specially commissioned portrait of Paul McCartney is certainly worth waiting for. (Is it?) It's certainly more interesting than that speech that I gave on the big day.

"All the best, folks."

**CHRIS TETLEY,
PICCADILLY**

RADIO, MANCHESTER. 103 FM/261 medium wave

1. **WARLOCK** Triumph And Agony
2. **RUSH** Hold Your Fire
3. **KISS** Crazy Nights
4. **KEEL** Keel
5. **ALICE COOPER** Raise Your Fist And Yell

"Lots from me this month. Firstly, listen out for The Quest. They recently just won the Yamaha British Band Competition and now all set for the World finals out in Japan. These finals are taking place at the Budokan, so good luck to the boys. They've also recorded sessions for Piccadilly so you might be familiar with them already.

"Also, just witnessed an absolutely superb gig; Guns 'N Roses, and Faster Pussycat at the Manchester Apollo, and an absolute scorcher it was too. And ones that I'm looking forward to are the 20th Anniversary Jethro Tull gigs, and Vow Wow. The latter are appearing at the International and Piccadilly Radio are recording the gig (12th November).

"So what else is happening? Well, my series of Chris Tetley interview picture discs are being released, 15 so far, and more are to follow. Titles already available include the Alice Cooper story, the Kiss story, Zodiac Mindwarp, the Bon Jovi story....plug, plug!! "And last but not least, those good folk down at Phonogram have requested my assistance in compiling a sixty minute cassette featuring selections from their hot new rock releases and yours truly will be providing a bit of chat between the cuts. These classic recordings will then be distributed around selected retail outlets for continuous play. Who said chart return shops?

And that's it from me."

PAUL ANTHONY, SIGNAL RADIO, STOKE-ON-TRENT. 257 MW 1170 KH 102.6 FM

1. **KISS** Crazy Nights
2. **RUSH** Hold Your Fire
3. **PHENOMENA II**
4. **ALICE COOPER** Raise Your Fist And Yell
5. **M.S.G.** Perfect Timing