



RUSH
Hold Your Fire
(Polygram)

Somewhere deep beneath this barrage of keyboards and synthesizers there's an album. You have to really search for it, but it *is* there, and it's worth the quest. Electronic overkill makes *Hold Your Fire* seem a little standoffish—it's hard to tell what's going on. Initially, I found this to be disappointing. All the wispy layers of fluff got me down, and I started thinking the group's name was Mush. I like a little sense of rhythm in my jams; with this disc I wasn't able to find a footing or anything sizable I could hold onto.

So I was prepared to write a review saying these guys are pretentious assholes. Fortunately, I didn't give up.

There is no middle ground with this album. Either you must resign it to a role of the most frivolous background music,

or put on headphones, turn off the lights, and let the sounds envelop you. My problem was that I was desperately trying to follow the music; sometimes, rather than follow, you have to simply allow yourself to be led.

Rush is a band mature both in age (they've been on the scene a *long* time) and musical attitude. These tunes are complex, and would be highly enjoyable while flying down the road at night in a fast sports car. At points, the album sounds so good you'd swear the CD format was developed solely for *Hold Your Fire*.

Neil Peart is a drummer's drummer. He plays lots and lots of notes. He doesn't go for power, opting instead for delicate precision, and stays on the cymbals more than the toms.

Geddy Lee is probably one of the better bassists around. Rather than sticking with anything so mundane as a solid beat, he's all over the place, and he's a ball to listen to. However, he has all but abandoned the falsetto screaming that was his trademark of yesteryear.

There is no guitarist on this album to speak of. Besides three or four solos and a couple of basic rhythm parts that are like water to a man in the desert, Alex Lifeson uses the guitar synthesizer almost exclusively, and it's somewhat of a drag for at least one listener. He *chimes* rather than strums. My advice to Alex, formerly a blazing guitar player: put away your sabre and bring back your axe.

"Time Stand Still" is my favorite cut on the record, and easily the most accessible. It's the most likely candidate for AOR

radio. The lyrics deal with making time stop, not for the sake of stagnation, but in order to more fully enjoy living. Here's an uplifting celebration of life; we're asked to "Make each impression a little bit stronger." The other song I really get off on is "Lock And Key," in which Rush presents the idea that, good or bad, humans possess a violent side, and to hide it away is to deny part of the complete self. Fittingly, this track contains Lifeson's most aggressive solo. Other than its self-conscious opening address, "Second Nature" is another fine song.

Though *Hold Your Fire* has nothing to do with metal, Rush used to be at the forefront of hard rock. In the shadow of the omnipotent Zeppelin, they (along with Rainbow) dominated bombastic metal in the mid-to-late-'70s. If you want to check me on my word, refer to their earlier catalogue, including *2112*, *Fly By Night*, and *Caress Of Steel*. Not only were they ambitious in terms of lyrical themes and composition, the whole band *flailed* on their instruments, and Lee's highstrung shrieks sent the listener rushing. Nowadays, they remain ambitious, but after completely abandoning the hard rock tradition, their direction has taken them off somewhere else. Instead of making you think of Led Zep, the band now sounds more like somebody along the lines of the Police. I hope they're happy, and it seems they've lost no amount of ambition. My hat's off to them, but I'd prefer "Temples Of Syrinx" to "Turn The Page" any day.

Jeff Clark