

RUSH A Show Of Hands

By Anne Leighton

Rush's live shows have always been fascinating spectacles for the audience, because the band likes to play their music just like the record. Yet nothing is ever *that* perfect. Hearing their current live album, *A SHOW OF HANDS*, it's easy to hear the emotion of Geddy Lee's voice, sometimes deviating steadiness of Neil Peart's drumming and a few bad notes from guitarist/key-boardist Alex Lifeson is wonderful, because it shows the band isn't afraid to show a little bit of flaws... or are they? Let's find out from Geddy Lee...

ANNE LEIGHTON: It's great that you have live albums, because when I can't find an old hit of yours, I know I can go to this album or *ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE* or *EXIT... STAGE LEFT*.

GEDDY LEE: Yeah, that's true. It's like a compilation. I guess *A SHOW OF HANDS* is more or less an anthology of the last four records. And each one seems to cover the most recent ground as opposed to putting out the same songs over and over again. The only song we felt we wanted to repeat on this album was "Closer To The Heart," because it's a song that seems to keep changing. And it almost seems like there's something quintessential about that song in us. It's something that exemplifies a part of us. I think that song speaks to everybody on a particular level verse after verse. I think the point of it being where you are and who you are have to be concerned about the same things. I think the song still holds true... even in a time when having causes is fashionable. But I don't think the song is anything different for any time. I think it's just a constant for things.

AL: So much of your music is involved with causes.

GL: I guess we seem to work best when we are complaining about something in the world around us bothering us. It might seem important to us at the time. It's not a very popular thing to do in the world of rock music. But there just seems to be so much to talk about regarding things that affect us in the way we work. It's the kind of world that we live in. And when you start thinking about those things, it makes you want to say something about it, which is why a song pops out of it. It just seems important.

AL: Neil writes most of the words; is it easy to sing another person's lyrics? And how do you make them your own?

GL: It can be easy if you agree whole-heartedly with what's being said and you like the way those words roll off your tongue. It can be very difficult if you're having problems with those two areas. That's when you have to really discuss what's going on in the song. And you have to make sure that you agree — at least in part — with what's being said. And if you don't feel like you have any kind of conviction with what's being said, then you can't sing it. You won't sound convincing. Sometimes if there's difficult lyrics, then a lot of conversation has to follow. I have to try and understand if Neil is intending that song to sound the way I'm getting it or if there's a different meaning intended. Or maybe he's not getting what he's intending to say across to me. If that's the case, then he's certainly not gonna get it across to outside people. Usually there's a lot of inter-relating between myself and him in order to get something that works. Sometimes even just a conversation might be inspiration for a new lyric. "Mission" was a direct relation to a conversation we had at my house. We had talked about a lot of topics.

He had written some lyrics. I was playing some musical things that I'd been fiddling around with. We talked about a couple of things: we had a conversation about creativity and being obsessed by music. We didn't have that choice that many of our friends had later in life, where they don't know what to do and they probably qualify to do more than ten things, but they have to decide on one thing. Their life is in turmoil. So that led to a conversation about reconciling the necessary elements of learning about yourselves, growth patterns and coming to conclusions about the things you've gone through. That led to the conversation for the song, "Open Secrets."

AL: A lot of people, who are obsessed with something, at a young age, will achieve. Then they might burn out and fade away. Did anything like that happen with this band?

GL: I think we all experience a kind of burnout. After the last tour, I went through a kind of burn-out. I worked so hard on the album and tour for *HOLD YOUR FIRE*. Physically, it was very difficult for me. My health wasn't very good. I kept getting colds and sore throats, which I wasn't used to getting. Part of that is that I'm not 19 on the road now.

I'm 34 on the road. So my body is reacting differently to that day-after-day abuse. I was very weary; I was very burnt out. Another reason that a live album seemed to make sense was to buy us a little time. We knew it would give us a four to six month break before we'd have to start writing some new material. And it would be a good time to get away from the band and not have to think about being in a rock band for six months. We needed more time to be human beings. Actually we all welcomed the break. We've been doing this since 1973; that's a lot of time. It's longer than most entire careers in rock and roll. I think it was a well-deserved 6 month break. It was quite a conservative break; some guys take off two years to go to India.

AL: Your voice sometimes sounds like a young boy's voice.

GL: Sometimes I am.

AL: I thought so. "Subdivisions" and "Mission" especially show a youth and innocence and sweetness to your voice. Perhaps you're old at the same time, like you've seen it all.

GL: Well, I haven't seen it all. There's a lot more to see. I certainly hope I haven't seen it all or it'd be a very

boiling ride from here on in. I think there's a lot more to see. Those songs all have a personal connection with my youth experiences. And maybe that's a key to why the vocals have that quality. They are born out of our influences. They're about being young, growing up and having your aspirations and being obsessed at a young age. My attitude was created by what the song meant to me. Neil wrote the lyrics to "Subdivision" and I could relate to them 100%. He's a kid from the suburbs, like myself. I'm from Willowdale, which is outside of Toronto.

AL: What's the trap of the suburbs?

GL: It's a very bland existence — very middle class. To me, the idea of hanging around a shopping mall is not stimulating on any level, except for going shopping. But when you live in the suburbs, that's your life. I think it's something to run away from. But there are so many people who think of that as heaven. I know there was a big mall called the West Edmonton Mall. There's waterfalls and beaches in the mall. To some people that's heaven. To me, it's a nightmare. So, it all depends on your sense of what you think is life. And that's opposite to mine.

AL: How close is the rock and roll heaven that you've gone through in comparison to how you pictured it?

GL: It's nothing at all like how I pictured it. There's no such thing, really. When I was a kid, I didn't know what my view of success really was. It was just an abstract series of goals and visualizations of what I

thought my goals were. And when I got there, it was a totally different thing. Maybe some people live in that world and their dreams came true. For me, it was a different kind of world. I thought it would be very glamorous and exciting. I thought I'd always love it, but that's not the case.

AL: I know. But certainly, there've been some good surprises?

GL: It's a great experience to go through that — being successful is definitely a trip in itself. There is a lot to be learned. It's a strange thing to discuss, but when people grow up, they say, "When I grow up, I want to be on easy street." What the hell is that? It doesn't really exist, because the more successful you get, the less you think about being successful. And the more you think about the other things. As you're struggling, maybe your concerns are more financial and success-oriented and ambitious. So, you achieve a relative amount of success and you don't worry about those things anymore. But there's another thing to replace that. Then there's a look at your life and your growth on different levels — your personal growth, your aesthetic growth, your cultural growth, your growth in terms of relationships with other human beings — your lovers or your wives. So there's always something else to concern yourself with. And some other way to direct that ambition is to direct that desire to improve. As far as I'm concerned, you keep climbing, but you just change ladders.