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/keyboards 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 record 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 is to have a certain amount of 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 that matter. I think it's just a constant for things.

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

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're not just thinking about what's being said, and you can't sing it. You won't sound convincing. Sometimes it's like there's a difficult lyrics, then a lot of conversation has to follow. I have to try and understand it. 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. But 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 a lot about a topic.

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 had later in life, where they didn't know what to do and they probably quality to do more than ten things, but they have to decide on one thing. Their life is in turmoil. So that tied 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 experienced a kind of burnout. After the last tour, I went through a kind of burn-out, I worked so hard on this 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 tour 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 of our careers in rock and roll. I think it was a well-deserved 6 month break. It was a very conservative break; some guys took 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 if it'd be a very
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 lot at your life and your growth on different levels — your personal growth, your aesthetic growths, 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. A some other way to deal with ambition is to direct that desire to improve. As far as I'm concerned, you keep climbing, but you just change ladders.