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TESLA, GILLAN, EUROPE,
OVERKILL, RUSH,
RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
Rush have an incredibly interesting track record - and that's an understatement. To understand the understated requires the status of a statesman without the need for overstatement as Geddy Lee acknowledges.

Howard Johnson rolls the bones and comes up sixes.

a different scenario in the States and Canada, but the days of the naked '2112' man cowering in the face of the massive red star emblazoned on the back of every rock track jacket has given way to a whole new kind of Rush aficionado:

"It's weird" he muses "because so many things about us have changed; there's a real variety of people who come to see the band. Over the years we've had many people who have been either turned on or turned off by what we were doing at that particular time - it's kinda like a constantly shifting sea - although there are obviously a good percentage of fans who have stuck with us precisely because they've been intrigued about where we were going."

And it is indeed pretty much through the band's music and their music alone that Rush aficionados have been able to make any kind of subjective judgement on the band. It's not that Lee, guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer Neil Peart have exactly shied away from the press, it's more the case that they haven't actively encouraged it either.

I think the problem that I've had with press is that I find myself constantly asking the question 'Is what I have to say THAT interesting?' Talking about yourself is kinda boring and when you have a run of thirty or forty interviews... well, let's say it doesn't make me jump for joy!"

But do you ever look at things from the fans' point of view and worry that they might be starved of information on the band?

"Sure. I guess it can be frustrating for the fans. I know when I really admire someone I am interested in reading about what makes them tick. But you have to balance that thought against the importance of protecting a bit of your own self and a sense of your own privacy. The funny thing is that the longer we've been around the more we enjoy talking. I mean, no-one in the band objects to a good conversation about music but there's something that's really soul-depressing about sitting with an interviewer who's just doing his job." Which I shan't take as a personal slight.

But seriously, Geddy opens up when we get into serious discussion of 'Roll The Bones'. The man has a passion for his music that transcends the usual hype in its very intensity. Does this make him heinously boring? No. Serious, but not boring. The very nature of Rush's intensity sets them outside the parameters of most workaday rock acts, and if Neil Peart can litter his rhetoric around the album release with such leaden lines as: "We have to remember the oracle's words, from Nike, the Greek goddess of victory" then there's always the balance of the addendum "...and lumpy athletic shoes" to bring things back out of the stellar system. Geddy loves the fact that I genuinely feel that Rush music in 1991 has a beautiful understatement about it. Not that the sum parts aren't complex, they certainly are. But the whole, with an added emphasis on the vocal attributes, never overplays its hand:

"It's the first time that I think we've ever been called 'understated'," he laughs. "Not that I disagree - I think that's pretty perceptive. 'Roll The Bones' isn't that dissociated from our last album 'Presto', it's just a step onwards. What really excites me about this album is that I think we have a stronger sense of melody in the vocals than ever before. I think that with each album we do there tends to be one area that we concentrate on more than any other and with 'Roll The Bones' it
My taste these days is pretty bizarre, I listen to lots of different stuff, from Heavy Metal to Haitian music. I believe that you really only develop your own sound when your influences are so diverse that your own stuff becomes a blend of totally disparate sounds. I do still like a good dose of Hard Rock. I've just been listening to the new Metallica album and I think that's fantastic. There is a new intelligence in the lyrics and the musical approach that I appreciate. That's what we always attempt to put across ourselves, particularly lyrically.

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Yes, there is a noticeable thematic approach on 'Roll The Bones':

"It's something that Neil picked up on first, and it was something that we all found ourselves developing an interest in. A lot of the songs revolve around the element of chance in different areas of life. 'Roll The Bones' is an adaptation of the old Southern American gamblers' phrase "roll dem bones" meaning the rolling of the dice. Taking a chance. There is an element of chance in the sphere of what we do as musicians, the chance element that comes into your sphere of writing, that point where you stumble across a series of notes that send could be such a thing as a performance which was too tight and hence a little sterile. I think that 'Roll The Bones' is in many ways one of our most human albums and that's the key to my enjoyment of where we are right now."

Where is Canada?? But seriously, this does raise the question of whether the band will be returning to Europe in support of the record. We really don't get to see enough of Rush these days:

"Yeah, I know what you mean. To be honest though, we'll be touring at home and in the U.S. first again and we are hoping to get over to Europe in the Spring of next year - which would be fine by me. I can't think of a better time to be over there. It's so beautiful at that time."

And the last time you were here the show was truly spectacular, one of the finest laser displays I've ever seen:

"Well we'll be trying to pull some different rabbits out of the hat this time again. Animation is a real treat to work with and I think that's going to be a big element of what we're gonna do. It's something we want to take a chance on."

Well of course it would be, Roll dem bones and see what happens!