RUSH

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GEDDY LEE
Rush 'rolls the bones' as they enter the 1990's

by Leslie Thomas

Is Rush a smarter band because it has learned to control the elements around them instead of the other way around? Geddy Lee - That's always a tough question to answer. I would say that the core elements around us are always in our control. But once again, the moment you let a record out of your hands, it's out of your control to a large degree. Then you can only hope that you can exert some kind of influence. Whether that actually happens or not depends upon a lot of things.

When Rush started out, you were a very heavy band. Were you a product of the environment around you?

I think that we always did what we wanted to do, and in that sense, almost every band is a product of its time in one way or another. The times were changing and so were we. The style of music that we had been working with, the very heart of it has always remained the same, but the influences on it and its goals as songwriters/musician, have been changing. Our music is always in a fluid state and that has always been the distillation of our earliest albums and albums over the last few years. Throughout the earlier stages, we were suburban kids that were trying to have our own sound. I think our music reflected the frustrations of that upbringing and as a result those early albums were very raw and had a derisive kind of edge to it.

Did the albums Hemispheres and Farewell To Kings set the stage for Rush on the '80s?

It was more than that. As we got more adept at using our instruments and more successful, our focus shifted slightly to other things. We've made some short cuts and some elements, the more adept we were to go through phases as musicians. When you know you can play really well, you want to show that, and I think that the challenges of being a technical band were very important to us during that Hemispheres, Farewell To Kings phase. That seemed to be the main priority to us. After that phase, I think that we got a lot of that out of our system and our needs were more of a sense of trying to be better songwriters, more concise songwriters, and trying to absorb and reflect the changes that were happening in rock music at the time.

Rush's roots were in the hard rock and there were more rhythmic influences that were obviously influenced and pressed into a pop music that was affecting us to a degree. So I think that we have always mirrored things around us to a degree, but some of those have been self-imposed.

All The Worlds A Stage was the first of your three live albums correct?

Yes, that was the first one.

Did that album sum up the achievements of Rush, Fly By Night, Caress Of Steel and 2112, thus allowing you to close the chapter on the past and move on to the future?

I think with this band, for some reason, every three albums we seem to enter into a new era by ending the previous one with a live album.

It's interesting that Rush can sum up a period in their musical careers with a live album, and then go forward from their and musically evolve without losing their audience, and then repeat that cycle three or four albums down the road with the same results.

Yeah, it seems to work like that doesn't it? I don't know if that's a proven fact, but I think that Rush's success has always been a little bit accidental at first and now we plan it in, but live albums do serve a lot of purposes for us, and because we keep going on as a band, it's a little bit more predictable. It's a little bit more intuitive and they never have to deal with those situations. It's like, 'Oh, we're still here,' so obviously we can't go on stage and play 15 albums all at once. Same thing, we can't do that.

There is always going to lose some songs forever, so we chronicle them on a live album, and then that way they will be preserved for somebody's interest anyway. We come up with situations where they don't even deserve to be there. But this is the only way to deal with them.

When did Neil start taking a more active role in the songwriting process of Rush?

Well, when he first joined the band, we invited him into that process. That's interesting because all of Rush's material in the beginning seems to have been generated more out of conceptual music that concentrated on the technical aspect of the music rather than the lyrics itself.

You have to remember that before Neil joined the band, our lyrics were very last minute and also seemed to be a necessary evil. We were very much motivated by music ourselves, and not so much by the lyrics. That was the way we spoke by the way Alex and I put the music together and when Neil came into the band, he just joined

Alex Lifeson

that thing without knowing what it was. The more we got to know Neil, the more we realized that his input, No. 1 lyrically and eventually rhythmically and musically, were important. Alex and I have never had this belief of the two of us, it has always been a three-way thing and it was our suggestion to Neil that he become involved in the lyrics and it was something that he had never thought about before. And once he started doing it he grew to like it and realized that it could be an important expression for him.

The tune "Working Man," seemed to be a pivotal song for Rush throughout the 70's. Was it?

That's true, it became a very important song for us. I think the No. 1 reason "Working Man" became so popular was because of its aggressive musical style and what the song said in very simplistic way legitimized it in the eyes of the people.

Did Neil start taking a more active role in the songwriting with Hemispheres and Farewell To Kings?

It started really with Fly By Night. Neil started writing lyrics, and I think he wrote about 40 percent of the lyrics on that album. From that point on, he was involved in the songwriting process and he just got better and better at it. We went through different phases of three-way input, but we all have specific things within the songwriting method that we do. We all have specialties that we lean towards, and out of that, the roles it came to individual song sorts of become defined. Lyrics just happened to become Neil's role.

Now I'm not saying that any of those roles are self-sufficient, we all have input with the songs, especially myself and Neil's lyrics because I have to sing them. There's a lot of dialogue going on back and forth on whatever we're doing at the time.

Has it been necessary for you to focus in on the visuals or the images that Neil makes with his lyrics?

Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it isn't. When it's not, I have to determine in my own mind how comfortable I am with what he is trying to say and can I give him any input to say in lyrics he is trying to say face to face. I think that is the most difficult thing about a lyricist because you write on your own. You're alone with your thoughts and you put it down on paper and you feel that this is what you are saying, maybe it's not clear what you are saying and maybe it's hard to be objective to see that. Sometimes you need a mirror to look at, something to bounce off what we are doing every once in a while to see where we are, to see what we are doing. Sometimes you lose sight of what you're doing.

The music that's produced by Rush is like a dialogue between Neil and yourself, and when you two can't communicate musically, Alex comes into the picture to fill in the gaps. Is that a fair observation of the band and the way you work?

No, I don't think so. It doesn't work like that. Actually, Alex and I work hand in hand to put the music together and Neil will add his specialty, lyrical ideas, and the three of us sit down and hash out the problems that we have and try to make them all work. That's how Rush writes a song.

How difficult has it been for Rush to maintain that standard of musical excellence that the album, Moving Pictures, set for the band?

And don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing the content or the integrity of your musical accomplishments before that.

No, I understand what you're saying. I think that when you talk about musical integrity, that thing either exists in you or it doesn't. That's present from day one. I don't think anybody thrives into that, but that in terms of success and in terms of spotlight, Moving Pictures was probably our highest point in terms of breaking down barriers, especially in breaking down barriers to accepting radio. From that album on, we had quite a different image on the radio level and since that album, radio has supported us to a large degree very well.

I bet that was a strange feeling to adjust to.

It was, but it seemed very little to the internal workings of the band. The day-to-day writing and thinking about what we are doing and how we are doing it - that's a long-term thing. From the beginning, we've always looked at our careers as a long-term thing. I guess the best way of putting it is this. We've always looked at our career and not trying to make just a couple of records which I think is a big difference between us and other bands. A lot of bands have individuals that have outside careers and the band is just something that they're in when it's convenient for them. We view Rush as being our career, and we take a very active part in it.

Is that one reason it takes the band a long time to put out an album?

We have always been concerned with the long-term view. Because of the slow way we work and the patience we have, there was never a hurry in the band to have a big hit right away. We knew we'd have some records that would be more successful than others, but basically the goal was to try and make a lot of records, to try to keep working on what we are doing, and to keep learning about the different aspects of what we're doing to the point that we end up with a very long career.

This past decade the two bands I've admired the most have been Rush and Genesis, and the very fact the two bands have kept the musical integrity intact despite radio's formats. You haven't conformed to your surroundings, the surroundings have conformed to you.

I don't think that it's ever easier, but the more success that you attain on doing things your own way, the easier it becomes. For some reason, people want proof that you know what you're doing. As soon as you give it to them then a lot of pressure goes off of you. I would say that we probably have more pressure put on us before 2112 than any point since then.

That seems rather odd that 2112 was a turning point for Rush?

After 2112, we seemed to break down a lot of barriers. And when I say a lot of pressure, I mean pressure from within our own circles. I still don't think that people that we work in terms of management and those immediately around us were convinced that those guys know what they're doing.

And 2112 unlocked the doors to the future?

2112 seemed to be the answer to that, and I think from that point on, even though there is always pressure, external pressures, I think that it solidified our immediate circle to the point where the people that we worked with clearly believed we knew what we were doing. Now, whether we did or not I don't know, but the fact that they believed it made it easier for them to fight the secondary pressures from that point on.

Have you ever gotten the feeling at some point in the last 15 years that some people genuinely wanted Rush to fail?

Yes I have. Of course your fans don't want you to, but people love overnight success stories and they like slaying dragons, or I told you so. They like seeing people that have been successful for a long time all the sudden not be successful. I guess that is just the pettiness that exists in those people.

Your last live LP, A Show Of Hands, sums up Grace Under Pressure. Power Windows and Hold Your Fire. I guess that meant that Rush was getting ready to usher in a new era?

realized on page 14
Tillis casts light on long shadow

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Yes I did. I think everybody goes through that type of growing up. Didn't you? I had a famous father so people didn't scrutinize my move like they did you?

Everyone has a rebellious streak in them that usually comes out in their teen's and their twenty's. If they don't do it then, they will until they're thirty-five.

How many songs did you write on your Arista debut?

I co-wrote seven of them. My husband wrote several things with me and other close friends and some were by him on the album. Your husband's last project, Billie, didn't work out for various reasons. Does your success in any way help lesson the blow he felt because of the circumstances of that project?

I'm sure it does, Bob is an incredible songwriter on his own and has had a very successful career as a songwriter. He was twenty-six years old when we got married and he is sixty-six. He's got a whole wall full of gold and platinum records.

Country music the past ten years has gone through some interesting cycles that offended some of the older establishments it defied the younger generation. Have those cycles affected you as a song writer? Any?

Some artist ignore those things, but I can't say that I ignore them because that would mean they are creating in a vacuum. You can't let yourself be affected by trends because what's hip today is often out of style tomorrow. The classics in country music are classics because they are loved by more than one generation. People find comfort in things that don't change, and that's why I think you found this resurgence in traditional country the past couple of years.

Change isn't something people in country music are used to is it?

Let me say this. People often rebel against music being new today, new tomorrow and new the next day after that. People want something new tomorrow because they know it's going to be old today. Country music is a little different. It's like going to the swimming hole where you are always going to be afraid of. Your system won't experience a meltdown. Their new album, Blind is not some mind-blowing album. I'm not saying altered going experience bad, but bad that this C.O.C. sound is going to leave you gasping for air.

Blind is power. Blind is a groove. Blind is 13 songs of sheer intensity that gets your heart pounding and your feet stomping from "These Shred Temptations," to "Mine Are The Eyes Of God," where C.O.C. brings out the metal edge with a sharpness so polished, it's as if though the bull and into the -sh "It Dance Of Their Own," do not get to you. the haunting sounds of "Shallow Ground," will, in the land of C.O.C., there are no such things. Everything is Blind introduces to the C.O.C. faithful a new member of the crew, guitarist Pepper Keenan. He is a master of the six string, wrenching guitar parts but also provides the vocalisation of the album's highlight cut, "Vote A Way"

Overall, Blind is an unqualified success in my personal collection. The C.O.C. project has been incredibly successful, and riveting on their new album, we are very much looking forward to their performance in a few weeks. It's a great combination of vocals, guitar riffs and an overall sound that is very much in keeping with the style of the band.

Lita Ford

Dangerous Curves

Records

By Chris Silver

Dangerous Curves is right. Ever since this pop bombshell shot her W.A.S.P. skin, she's been driving the airwaves crazy. She's got a new album out, and it's a real winner. The album features some great songs, and Lita Ford is on top of her game again.

Lita Ford is not a pop star. She never was. She's the real deal. She puts those thoughts in her head. After listening to the first two cuts, "Larger Than Life," and "What Do Ya Know," I kept asking myself, "Lita Ford, what did you do there? What?"

She is a true musician and a performer. She is a woman who has a deep passion for music and who has never allowed that passion to fade. Her music is not only powerful, but it is also incredibly impressive.

Lita Ford's music is a reflection of her personality. She is a woman who is not afraid to be herself, and her music shows that. Her music is powerful, and it is powerful because it is authentic.

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