

Rush's Alex Lifeson:
His lot are in your Top 50.
But where?...

THE TOP 50 PROG ALBUMS *OF ALL TIME*

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We asked. You voted. Here then, are your choices for **The Top 50 Prog Albums Of All Time**. It makes for interesting reading too. And before we run for cover in anticipation of the expected deluge of "How can X be above Y?" and "Where the hell was Z?"-type letters, we'll just tell you that if you turn to page 11 you have a chance of winning the entire Top 50. Enjoy.

42 U.K.

(EG, 1978)

WE SAY: John Wetton, Allan Holdsworth, Eddie Jobson, Bill Bruford. What more can one say? Had punk and new wave not been grabbing all the headlines the union of these prog virtuosos would have been a huge deal. Listening to the likes of *In The Dead Of Night* some 30 years down the line, it really is a big deal.

YOU SAY: "When I'm met by Martians and they ask me what prog is, I'll offer them the first 13 minutes of this album." — *Christoph Lintermans, Belgium*

41 YES FRAGILE

(ATLANTIC, 1971)

WE SAY: The band's first album with ex-Strawbs keyboard player Rick Wakeman on board, and the beginning of their most fruitful period. The likes of *Roundabout*, *Heart Of The Sunrise* and *Long Distance Runaround* mixing Yes' quirky time changes with astonishingly melodic passages of delightful music.

YOU SAY: "This the album where Yes proved the potential for pop and rock music to break the barriers imposed by the blues and become seriously adventurous. Wakeman's contribution is immeasurable in terms of the depth and complexity of the arrangements."

— *Sam Spencer, Nottingham*

40 TOOL LATERALUS

(VOLCANO, 2001)

WE SAY: The band's third album, and arguably their most exploratory in a musical sense, took Tool's intense and thought-provoking prog metal straight to the top of the Billboard charts upon its release. A torrent of heady ideas and time signatures, delivered with serious intent.

YOU SAY: "Beautiful and heavy. The finest moment comes with the cosmic wipe-out of *Lateralus*, reaching out to infinity and from that enigmatic intro to its supernova finish."

— *Aiden, Stornoway*

39 RUSH A FAREWELL TO KINGS

(MERCURY, 1977)

WE SAY: It opens with the title track before exploding into *Xanadu*, based on Coleridge's epic poem *Kubla Khan*. And it closes with the equally bombastic *Cygnus X-1*. And in the middle you've got *Closer To The Heart*. 2112 might have been part conceptual, but with *A Farewell To Kings* Rush laid their prog credentials bare.

YOU SAY: "All great prog rock transports you on a lengthy flight of imagination. Rush's *A Farewell To Kings* is no exception." — *Pierre Watson*

38 PINK FLOYD MEDDLE

(EMI, 1971)

WE SAY: The point where the band's early experimentation came to fruition and easily the Floyd's most cohesive offering since their debut. In the likes of *Echoes* the

Floyd mapped out their future.

YOU SAY: "Handed down from my brother, an amazing album with stand-outs *Echoes* and *One Of These Days*. Is *Echoes* the best side of all time? Love the tactile cover too." — *Loz*

36 PORCUPINE TREE DEADWING

(LAVA, 2005)

WE SAY: Another epic work of tantalising proportions from Steven Wilson and his merry men. Based on a screenplay about a ghost story Wilson had written, and featuring Adrian Belew and Mikael Åkerfeldt, little wonder it became the band's (then) best-selling album.

YOU SAY: "Porcupine Tree match the best of '70s prog. With compelling melodies, haunting vocal and a dynamic ranging from intimate to downright menacing, it's the dog's proverbials."

— *Ian Bowes, York*

34 RUSH SNAKES & ARROWS

(ATLANTIC, 2007)

WE SAY: Based on the Buddhist Game of Self-Knowledge, Rush's 18th studio album was regarded by many as their best in many years. Focused, driven and rocking harder than they have for a while, both *Snakes & Arrows* and the ensuing live shows proved they had plenty left in the tank.

YOU SAY: "Great playing, great songs stripped down with little keyboards. Their best album in years or maybe ever." — *Julian Curtis*

33 IQ SUBTERRANEA

(GEP, 1997)

WE SAY: An epic concept album about a man who's been the centre of experimentation being unleashed on the outside world — a sort of dark and perverse Truman

Camel, 1970:
Lunar apex.

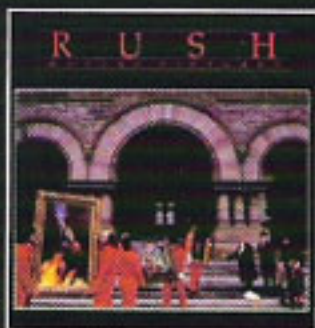
**35 CAMEL MOONMADNESS**

(DECCA, 1976)

WE SAY: The last album to feature the band's original line-up, and in which they conceptualised their own individual personalities. Following up ... *Snow Goose* was not an easy task, but with the likes of *Lunar Sea* and *Air Born*, Camel made a valiant attempt. One of the finest prog sleeves too.

YOU SAY: "Quite simply my favourite album by my favourite group. From my CD collection of over 1,100, if I could keep only one, this would be it!" — *Stephen Neish*

Rush can't believe that *Moving Pictures* is only at number 29.



29 RUSH

MOVING PICTURES (MERCURY, 1981)

WE SAY: Rush moved into the 80s with a new mindset, laid out on *Moving Pictures*. The likes of *Tom Sawyer*, *Limelight* and *Vital Signs* indicated the band's desire to move to shorter song frameworks, but *Red Barchetta* and the lengthy *Camera Eye* showed a prog heart still beat within.

YOU SAY: "Less sword and sorcery and more urban reflection, it pointed the way to the Rush's direction in the '80s. Modern prog at its finest." — Dave Preston, *Bury*

28 IQ



WE SAY: IQ's third album was released at pretty much the same time as Marillion's *Misplaced Childhood* and used to tend to get overlooked. Its high showing here proves it's worth however, proving why IQ have long been regarded as one of the 80s revival's best acts.

YOU SAY: "Stunning neo-prog recorded in the classic style. Afterwards, the band went from strength to strength and are now better than ever." — Pete McElroy

27 RUSH



WE SAY: Best known for side one's seven-part suite telling the story of a dystopian future (inspired by the Objectivist philosopher Ayn Rand), side two's shorter songs still

featured the brilliant *A Passage To Bangkok* and *Something For Nothing*. For many young metalheads, this album opened the door to a progressive world.

YOU SAY: "Epic stories of space and eastern mysteries by the ultimate prog power trio. Listen to 2112 and hear Lifeson at his peak!"

— Urban Mattsson

26 JETHRO TULL

THICK AS A BRICK



WE SAY: The mother of all concept albums? So say some. And who are we to disagree. Amazingly the only Tull album to feature in our Top 50, but surely their most progressive moment, featuring, as it does, one long continuous track. Little wonder we chose it for our Masterwork in our very first issue.

YOU SAY: "A send-up? OK, but with superbly paced passages of delicate music, followed by great rocking sections. Brilliant." — Julian Curtis

25 DREAM THEATER



WE SAY: A concept album about a man who discovers a past life, Dream Theater's fifth album was a follow-on from the song *Metropolis Pt. 1: The Miracle And The Sleeper* which had appeared on 1991's *Images And Words*. The first to feature keyboard player Jordan Rudess and widely regarded as one of DT's finest.

YOU SAY: "I never believed I would find an album that took me on a greater journey and left me more exhausted at its completion than *The Wall* had." — Gordon Sheppard, *Milton Keynes*

23 MIKE OLDFIELD



WE SAY: Take a prodigiously talented 18-year-old musician, give him some studio time and let his imagination run riot. It would not happen today, but in 1973 Mike Oldfield created the still astonishing soundscape that is *Tubular Bells*, showing prog rock was an increasingly diverse beast. We're glad he did.

YOU SAY: "Totally absorbing and trippy, once on the turntable it was stuck like glue — a late-night great. This was my pathway to future instrumental and avant-classical heaven. Cheers, Mike." — William Hill, *Worcester*

22 THE YES ALBUM



WE SAY: Steve Howe's first appearance with the band and Tony Kaye's last (for some time). Yes began to explore like never before on *The Yes Album*. The first

of three genuinely classic albums in a row from the band, any album that features *Yours Is No Disgrace*, *Starship Trooper* and *I've Seen All Good People* surely borders on the brilliant.

YOU SAY: "Yes at their most ebullient and accessible. Kicking off with the irresistible riff of *Yours...*, *Starship Trooper* at nine and a half minutes gives a glimpse of what's to come..." — Martyn Collier, *Burton-On-Trent*

20 DREAM THEATER



WE SAY: The band's first for new label Roadrunner proved you didn't have to be on a major label to sell loads. Just an understanding label. Roadrunner gave DT time and space, they delivered with their most consistent and highest charting album in the US.

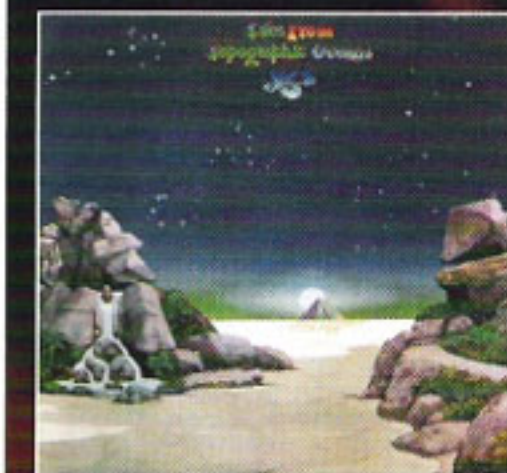
24 YES

TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS

(ATLANTIC, 1973)

WE SAY: An expansive double album featuring just four pieces of music and housed in one of prog rock's most recognisable gatefold sleeves, *Tales...* also prompted the departure of Rick Wakeman from the band and is often cited as the perfect example of when prog rock began to lose the plot. Still, you lot still seem to love it.

YOU SAY: "I've been having an affair with this beautiful double album for years. Thrilling pure vocals, Steve's guitar on *The Ancient* and the sighing, dying close make it a true progressive album of its time." — Susan Dean, *Stanley*





NICKY WIRE

Manic Street Preachers bassist Nicky Wire grew up adoring Canadian prog metal maestros Rush. And why not? As a man with an eye for detail, here Nicky leads Philip Wilding through his musings on the band's iconic artwork.

The title track from the latest Manic Street Preachers album, *Journal For Plague Lovers* owes, by bassist Nicky Wire's own admission, much to one of his favourite bands.

"That song was designed to play like Rush and Magazine, it has that *Spirit Of The Radio* energy, it's taken us to get to this age to pull it off I think," says Wire, "It's got that Neil Peart hi-hat drumming, it's even got some fancy bass, it feels like a euphoric Rush moment and we were in Rockfield recording it; I even got my old black and white Rickenbacker bass out for it. We love Rockfield, it's always resonated with us, I remember poring over the sleeve for *A Farewell To Kings* and *Hemispheres* and finding out that they were recorded there and being so excited by the fact that they were done in Wales."

Wire, a long-time Rush fan, discovered the band through his older brother and on the last band's last UK tour went along with Manics' singer James Dean Bradfield to Wembley Arena to interview Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee for *Classic Rock*.

"I was so nervous, I remember writing down my questions and rehearsing them beforehand," he admits. "It was like I was getting ready for a gig, I was checking what clothes to wear, looking in the mirror. And I was very aware that I didn't want to waste their time before the gig. I'd have loved to have talked to Neil about his lyrics too, but I like the fact that he's this man of mystery who doesn't do too many interviews. I was drained after that interview, honestly, doing that and the best man's speech at James' wedding, those two things were so much harder than playing to 70,000 people at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff."



Rush



RUSH FLY BY NIGHT



RUSH (Mercury, 1974)

Just for the graphic pink logo really, the shock of it and it's such a weird album, there's no Neil, but it still has a song like *Working Man*. The cover has that immediacy that I like. It was between this and *Hemispheres* to make the list of sleeves I like, but that cover's a bit too prog for me. I really like Geddy's vocals too, that rasping live feel; that thrill of the new, you know? I even love the photos on the back; John Rutsey looks like a young Roger Taylor, that whole pretty boy thing.



FLY BY NIGHT (Mercury, 1975)

I got into Rush through my older brother and I remember him bringing this home and it ended up being one of the first things I drew in art at school. Of course, there was someone in my class who had it painted on his jacket. I like the coldness of it and the way the owl just stares at you. The typography is bland by Rush standards, but there's something about that stark blue and even though it's obvious - *Fly By Night*, here's an owl - but when you're 14 you appreciate the obvious.



ART FOR
ART'S
SAKE

2112 (Mercury, 1976)

It's a design classic; I always use it as a reference point and the colours they used; the blues, red, purple and black, it's not something you see used a lot. Plus the whole symbol, timeless, surely their most enduring image? I still stare at that cover, I love the whole 70s feel of it, it's as iconic as *Dark Side...*, but no-one ever says that as it's almost not cool to take Rush as seriously as Pink Floyd. I still have my 2112 dog-tags too, I wear them onstage all the time.



RUSH
2112



Rush

a farewell to kings



A FAREWELL TO KINGS

(Mercury, 1977)

I always find that cover slightly disturbing, it's got that Hipgnosis feel; Muse covers remind me of it a little. That deterioration, that figure, it's all so drab and so brave, that great typeface they used too, it really is one of my favourites and it's my favourite Rush album, musically speaking, even if *Cygnus XI* does test your patience. That walking bass riff in *Xanadu*, that's like something off the first Stone Roses album. They even have a pop song about manic depression on there, I could just go on and on about that album...



PERMANENT WAVES

(Mercury, 1980)

The mythology that spread around our school about that cover, the blacked out headline, that there was another version that existed with the words on [the band did have to alter some of the original artwork after objections from Coca-Cola and *The Chicago Tribune*]. So every time you went in a record shop you always had to look for it, it was like the Holy Grail. It was the album they went over ground with, that only happens once, we had *Design...*, they had *Spirit...*. If Neil Young had written those lyrics, he'd have been called a genius.



RUSH

MOVING PICTURES



MOVING PICTURES

(Mercury, 1981)

I find this cover a little disturbing, there's a sense of loss to it, that picture of the fire. Brave artwork and one that you pick up details of as you go along. Neil standing in the middle of the picture, it's quite surreal, but has a really confident feel to it. I remember realising that my brother was growing up, it was Bonfire Night and we were larking about and he wanted to go in to watch Rush do *Tom Sawyer* on TOTP and I couldn't believe he didn't want to stay out and let off fireworks.





RUSH
ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE



RECORDED LIVE

**ALL THE
WORLD'S A
STAGE/EXIT
STAGE LEFT**

(Mercury, 1976/1981)

The idea at the time was that the live album was an important deal and now you never see bands doing them. *All The World's...* had that stark set-up, the empty stage, the starman and it was gatefold sleeve with all those pictures, I loved that. It really seemed to be the summation of that period for them musically too. *Exit...* had a gloss cover and three photos! Though, I still really liked the way they reintroduced the girl from *Permanent Waves* and the guys from *Moving Pictures* on the sleeve, that collage feel to it.





S I G N A L S



SIGNALS (Mercury, 1982)

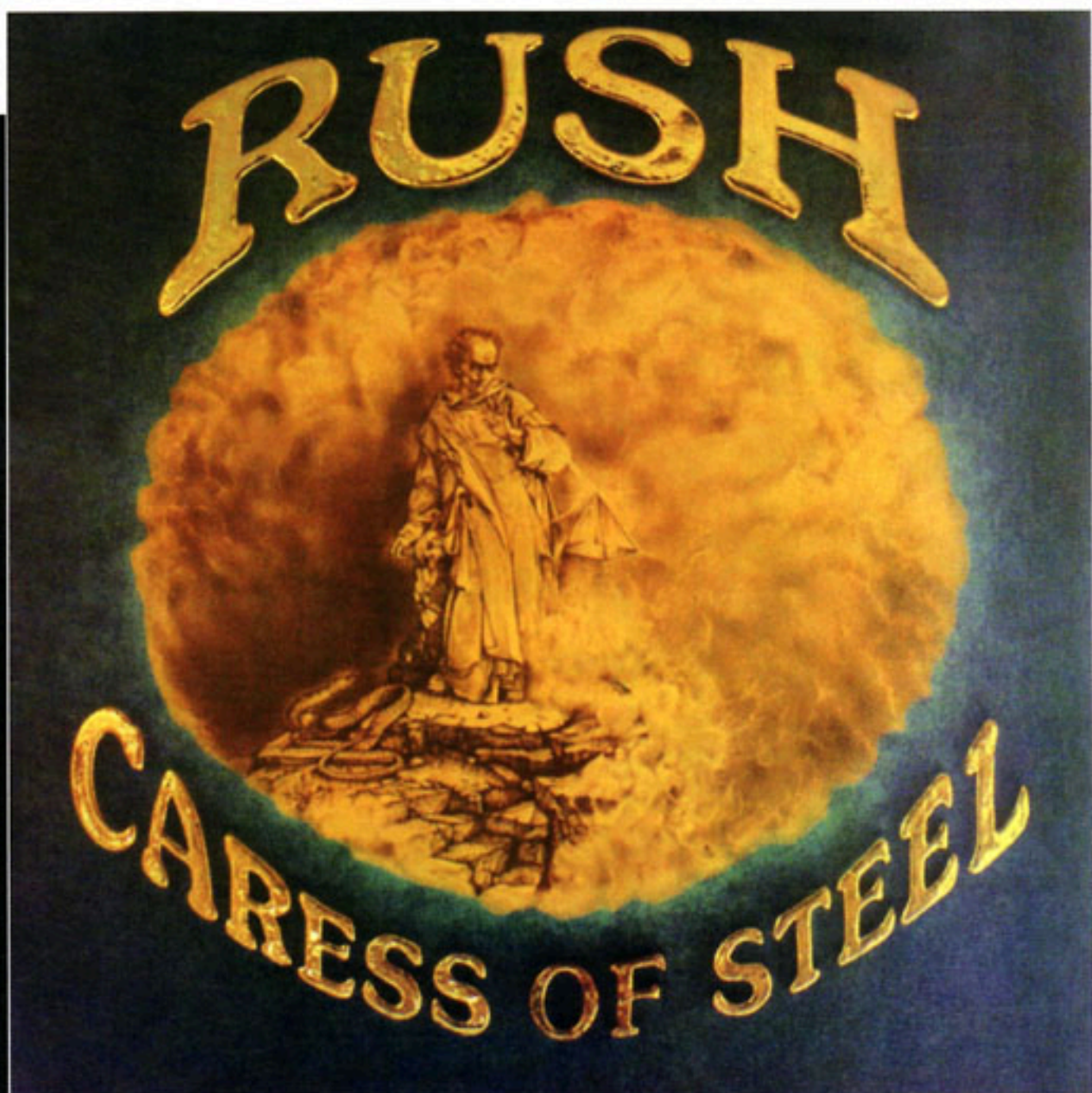
I really like it, it's so striking, it's post-rock in a way and they changed the logo dramatically. The Dalmatian, the red of the hydrant and then the shadow it casts; always thinking as a band. I know a lot people didn't like it and they were following *Moving Pictures*, which was tough, but *Subdivisions*, that dark intro, could have been on a New Order album. Then you also had *The Analog Kid* on there too - two classic Rush songs those. I think they were a band who were striving to sound modern.



CARESS OF STEEL

(Mercury, 1975)

A great album title and with songs like *Bastille Day* and *Lakeside Park* it was a real part of that Rush mythology growing up in Wales, but I just don't like that cover. It's meant to be this bubbling steel, this molten metal, but that figure, it's all bit too Tolkienesque for me. Even at the time the cover never drew me in. It's a weird record all over, a transitional album, things like *I Think I'm Going Bald*; it was like something out of TS Eliot.



POWER WINDOWS

(Mercury, 1985)

It was between that and *Grace Under Pressure*. That was a great concept, but with a terrible painting, sub-Dali, surrealism at its worst. *Power Windows* is even worse, I don't like it at all, there's no warmth, no ideology, it's just so very off-putting. I like it as an album, but I even hate the band logo they used. It's never been on any other of their albums, there's too much space between the letters. Take a look at it...

