Rush' could use worthless lyrics

The interesting Canadian rock and roll band, Rush, is in the middle of a year's tour and is garnering great attention across the country. At their concert in the Silver Dollar last Tuesday night, they played to a receptive audience.

Hard rock and roll albums are their trademark, and it seems they've been in their prime. Their powerhouse performance Tuesday night was certainly a testament to that. But Rush also revealed a few weaknesses in the band's current direction — weaknesses that must be resolved before any further growth can take place in the band.

First things first: their lyrics. One of the highlights of their last tour was the appearance of their live band, which was seen by the average record buyer. Rush was just another strong rock and roll band. Lead guitarist Alex Lifeson had a powerful style. Vocalist Geddy Lee had the most unusual vocal grates this side of Glee's. Noddy Holder and he managed to play credible bass as well. Nobody really heard from, or cared about, the band's drummer.

In the typical semi-literate style employed by most of the better rock and roll bands, Rush's lyrics were pure throwaway. Which was fine. Then came the change. When drummer John Rutsey departed, fellow Canadian Neil Peart took over the job. Only one problem resulted, however — Peart, Rush would have us believe, is a poet.

So, instead of the pedestrian "Blah, I love ya baby," lyrics that we have all come to know and love, Rush resurfaced with such titles as "At the Gates of Hades," "Rivendell," "The Necromancer," "Didactics and Narpets," and "Bacchus Plateau."

Who needs this? Luckily, in concert Rush plays at such a volume that most of those pretentious lyrics are obscured anyway. Unfortunately, one aspect of their performance — and in fact, one regrettable factor in the whole of their newest "Caress of Steel" album — cannot be hidden. Several of the tunes performed Tuesday (all new ones, incidentally) dragged and plodded semi-melodically while vocalist Lee tried to keep up, screaming lyrics like: "Panacea — passion pure/I can't resist your gentle lure/My heart will lie beside you/And my wandering body grieves."

What it all means is that Rush seem to be composing accompanying music to drummer Peart's pre-written lyrical "poetry." The result, of course, is an unevenness that is a considerable flaw in an already uneven band. Fortunately, Rush eventually could mean the proverbial kiss of death for Rush, as they straighten up and realize the glories of writing worthless lyrics.

But all this can't change the fact that within themselves the members of Rush form an exceptionally tight band. Guitarist Lifeson's huge Marshall amplifiers have to be heard live to be appreciated, and, even to those who find the band less than desirable, bassist Lee's voice sounded unusually strong in the live context.

In essence, all Rush needs is to drop the pretense and continue their rock and rolling. Perhaps they might do well to follow the course of Nazareth, the British group that occasionally covers other artists' work — songs by Joni Mitchell, Nils Lofgren, Bob Dylan and Leon Russell — and manage to make them sound exclusively their own.

But as a performing unit, Rush seems to be stronger than ever. Their performance Tuesday night drew a tremendous reaction from the capacity crowd in the Silver Dollar.
SILVER DOLLAR
PRESENTS
RUSH
Nov. 4 $3.50
Tickets On Sale At Discount Records, Recordland At The Meridian Mall And The Silver Dollar.