Fans Jam Floor Of Rush Concert

By Jeannine Lauber

The show was awful. The show was great. Depending on where your seats were, Thursday night's Rush concert at St. John Arena was one of the above.

As soon as the three-man hard rock trio took the stage, a tidal wave composed of human bodies came crashing toward them. Nearly all of the fans seated on the floor of the arena in folding chairs stamped forward about 10 yards. This resulted in a messy pileup of a few hundred angry, pushy people in the first 10 rows.

IN ORDER TO SEE the show, the fans, most of whom were in their late teens, had to stand on chairs for the entire two-hour performance.

This, coupled with ticket prices and the fact that a large portion of the crowd was obviously high, caused some fighting and a lot of shouting and bad-mouthing.

Security was a drastically ineffective group of teens.

From the bleachers it must have looked like a human snake pit screamed with writhing bodies. But, from the bleachers, it must have been a super show.

RUSH WAS AT its finest. Rush's brand of rock-'n'-roll is distinctive, especially when combined with the piercing vocals of Geddy Lee. The Rush style has remained pure and unadulterated even in an era where disco and C&amp;W strains have infiltrated in an attempt to please all of the people all of the time.

Sometimes that formula works, but when Lee, drummer Neil Peart and guitarist Alex Lifeson jam it's obvious they intend to continue blasting life into rock-'n'-roll.

Lee is getting older, and the struggle of road life is apparent on his thin, shallow face. Yet his voice has remained as powerful and clear as a siren in the night. One of the evening's best examples was his high-powered belting out of *Closer to the Heart*, one of Rush's biggest hits.

Many of the other selections came from the most recent LP, *Hemispheres*, including *Circumstances*, Cygnus X-1 Book II and the title cut.

BECAUSE THE decibel level was so high, most of the lyrics were unintelligible. That may have resulted in some confusion regarding Rush's visual space show of astral images projected on a giant screen behind the stage.

Half of their latest album recounts the adventures of a spaceship pilot plunging through a black hole in outer space.

The Trees, also from *Hemispheres*, is a beautiful song about the complexities of discrimination/desegregation which surely went unappreciated for lack of audible lyrics.

Peart writes all of Rush's lyrics.

OPENING ACT, April Wine, appeared to be a fairly good band of rock and rollers who, unlike Rush, inject C&amp;W into their music. That familiar country twang and an occasional harmonica chorus -- or two -- will restrict them from being classified as a true rock band, but the audience didn't seem to care.

They were busy clappin' their hands and stompin' their feet in a most "country hoedown" way.

April Wine was even called back to perform an encore -- rare among opening acts.

The show could have gone a lot smoother had there been better planning and production. But then again, rock concerts are notorious for eliciting such behavior. Comparatively speaking, Thursday night's show was probably "mild!"

In any event, it doesn't pay to get trampled when you can see the show in relative comfort for half the price from the bleachers.