No bums, Rush; they wow Coliseum audience

By Anastasia Passino

Rush is a rock 'n' roll band that has always gotten the bummers of bums raps from critics. I honestly don't understand why. The Canadian trio is rated by the music world as one of the best bands in rock, and their music is popular with fans. Perhaps it is because the group's music is an off-center, indescribable melding of several strands of rock music that most rock critics deplore—heavy metal, art rock and jazz-rock styles. Rush is only one of these. The band is original—and isn't that good?

Critics' views have never hampered the public's enthusiasm for Rush and a capacity crowd at the Coliseum last night was vocal in its approval of the group's performance. (Rush will appear again tomorrow.)

Instrumentally, the group has always been a knockout. Its songs are those multi-part, highly involved flights harking back to the '60s, the show-off kind of pieces that were popular in the early '70s.

In the pop song oriented world, these can seem ponderous, but if one immerses oneself in Alex Lifeson's slick guitar playing and Geddy Lee's full sounding keyboards, listening can be as pleasant as listening to early Ye's often was.

Unfortunately, much of the media applies its basic Clash standards to everyone. So naturally, drummer Neil Peart's fascination with science fiction and the future come off nerdy and the group's material seems virtuoso and overemotional.

By their own standards, they bring it off beautifully. Over the solid sounding instrumental basicly four instruments since Lee plays bass and keyboards about equally, the group's Pharaoh feel: Geddy Lee's staccato-develops-a-taste-for-em vocals.

But Lee's voice, wonder of wonders, has finally begun to deepen and acquire some resonance. It no longer will attract every dog in five counties. This was starting to unfold in the group's latest album "Signs," recorded with a firebrand — perhaps intended to replace Lee's vocals as a dog attraction.

Also noticeable was the lyrical change. The band had been a stab at describing some of the experiences that might relate more closely to their teen-aged audience. "Subdivisions" was kept down to traditionally provocative.

With its recent, cuter album, the group seems to have a realistic view of life. Their concert here in May 1981, the last in this area, was wearing at a band that always left it all out on the line for the people who really count: those who buy the tickets.

This time, the group was lively, mobile and at ease. Even the lights were brighter, which added a more exuberant, less contained feel to the show.

Surprisingly, the group dispensed with most of its more recent heavy rock favorites early in the show. "Two Lovers," "Farewell," "Farewell" and even "Subdivisions." It left its very old and now rather atypical "In the Mood" for the set closer. But the rather old song order is hardly a big drawback for a group that creates moods through drawn-out instrumental flights rather than through short songs.

Opening act Rory Gallagher also brought back some memories that is has kept secret longer than it was a decade ago. In the right hands, like Gallagher's, it can still come out with the same steamy verse to its old songs. Certain pieces, like the set closer "The Big Chord," a perfect example of the band's "Stairway To Heaven" establishment of a cadence to the audience. The crowd responded by demanding an encore.