Rush evolves into superstardom

By Anastasia Pantaleo

It's taken 10 years of playing and recording, periods of misunderstanding, criticism, media apathy and dislike and then finally the undeniable adoration of millions of fans — no one doubts it anymore — for Rush to be the hottest group ever to come out of Canada.

The Toronto-based trio will be playing the second night of a two-night stand tonight at the Richfield Coliseum.

Calling from Chicago, drummer Neil Peart commented on the band's sure path to superstardom: "We've never had a big hit single and we still don't get radio airplay. We've had to fight hard for the freedom to do what we want, and to maintain it is a constant battle.

"You have to be aware of how many people want to tell you what to do. I play music I like to play or I don't play at all. What can they say? Not wanting to make money is the ultimate argument.

The joke is if we did have what we were told to do, we would have no success.

Rush has changed in the course of 10 years, a change that Peart views as evolutionary: "We never had to make a radical change; we were never totally on the wrong course. The major difference is that now I think we're pretty good, but even then we weren't very good. It took us awhile to learn certain things, how to focus on the vocals — how to write in a rhythm that is best for Geddy. That isn't as easy as it sounds."

One change that has evolved with the band's latest albums is lyricist Peart's move away from the science fiction grand ambitions of the parody-like style of lyrics that had fascinated him for so long, into concrete, personal lyrics dealing with people and situations.

"At a certain point in your life when you are growing up, you are devoted to pulling yourself together," Peart explained. "You have new, different, profound ideas, I know I did. There comes a point when you can look back a little because you have established principles and values, and you can start to apply them.

"One of the most difficult problems I dealt with establishing values. Now we can apply them. There are so many different principles, but the applications are infinite.

"Rush's complex, serious lyrics always have invited analysis, criticism and praise. But Peart casts a suspicious eye at people — including musicians themselves — who take too seriously a band's role in influencing people.

"I can't really expect people to take something away from our music, that's presumptuous. I must want to go away feeling good about my performance. If I deliver a good show, that's what matters. I can't concern myself with how anyone else sees us."

Peart is critical of the hype that creates "imperialistic" stars like Bruce Springsteen. "That whole Messiah complex is created by the media and music industry. Sometimes musicians will go along with it because they think it's a gag. But how can anyone think they'll make a person re-evaluate their lives after sharing an hour or two, or should anyone even attempt it? It doesn't make me mad; it just makes me laugh.

"Still, Peart has been something of an inspiration to kids in one area. He's widely regarded as one of rock's premier drummers. That's sort of inspiration he sees as both practical and not particularly life-altering."

"If I can inspire someone to copy stuff I do and work hard on his drumming so that he becomes a better musician, I don't think there's any harm done."

Drummer Neil Peart of the Toronto-based trio Rush says the group has had to struggle for artistic freedom. Rush will perform tonight at the Coliseum.

Hot hits
The following are Billboard's hit record hits for the week ending tomorrow as reported on Billboard's list of hit records issued by Billboard magazine.

1. "Don't Look Back" - Rush
2. "Waves" - Marillion
3. "Don't Stop" - Dire Straits
4. "Running With The Gun" - Journey
5. "Shinin'" - Eagles

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