

# HERE IN THE REAL WORLD.

Canadian techno-rockers RUSH are back with their finest album for nearly a decade. LYNDON NOON catches up with his boyhood heroes, while drummer NEIL PEART rambles on about a sense of re-birth and other profound topics.

Ah, Rush. Nearly twenty years together and still a kind of latter day phenom. Back in 1977 when they toured Britain for the first time, rendering our brains senseless with classics such as BY-TOR & THE SNOW DOG, power trios were supposed to be a thing of the past. Yet there they were, not caring a fig for fashion, steadfastly clinging to their convictions on how music should be played, and even wearing kaftans on stage for chrissakes. Time has come and gone since the days when Joe Strummer and his band of merry men ruled the charts, but Rush carry on. So what, if Guns'n'Roses are flavour of the month, Rush release their seventeenth album ROLL THE BONES and it crashes straight into the top 20. They are a band who inspire a fierce loyalty amongst their fans, who've grown almost organically with them. Whilst many teenage heroes of the late seventies like UFO and Uriah Heep, have long since been dismissed as the impetuosity of youth, Rush with their studious approach, remain a band whose following can quite happily reconcile sitting alongside the new George Michael opus. Neil Peart's appearance has changed considerably since I last clapped eyes on him, so have the rest of the band. Guitarist and blonde bombshell Alex Lifeson's looks no longer adorn the walls of teenage girls, bassist and lead vocalist Geddy Lee looks like a character from a Stephen King novel, and sadly Peart's rather dapper handle bar moustache has long since been consigned to the barber's floor. What hasn't changed very much is Peart's dedication to his art, and most especially his lyric writing. It could be argued in fact, that without him, Rush would have never progressed much further than the power chording displayed on their debut, when a certain John Rutsey played drums. When fate decreed that Rutsey's talents were no longer required, in stepped Peart and by the time the band's third album CARESS OF STEEL was released, his lyrical sophistication had irrevocably changed the face of the band. Gone were titles like WORKING MAN and WHAT YOU'RE DOING, in were such ditties as DIDACTS & NARPETS and PANACEA. He later courted controversy with 2112, which many observers maintained espoused the virtues of facism, a charge which was strenuously denied. As the lyrics became more inspired, so did the music. Albums like A FAREWELL TO KINGS and MOVING PICTURES still packed a punch to appease their predominantly male audience, but the music provided by Lifeson

and Lee was totally unique, as it married unpredictable time changes with memorable melodies. Then somewhere along the line Rush and I parted company. 1982's SIGNALS and it's successor GRACE UNDER PRESSURE were almost too clever for their own good, as the band in my view, headed down a musical blind alley. You could never doubt their sincerity as musicians to try and find new boundaries to cross, but somewhere along the line, it seemed the soul of the band had been sacrificed. However the new decade seems to have kick started the band back to life. The new album, whether by accident or design, recalls Rush at their very best, and the band seem excited about it too. Peart explains: "It was very enjoyable to make, and we suddenly have a new conviction about the band, a sense of rebirth. We cut our holidays short in order to start the record sooner, we finished it in 'record time', and now we're eager to get it out so people can hear it. We're even cutting our holidays short again in order to start a tour, then get on to the next record. We are psyched!"

The passion that Peart exudes has you almost believing the man. Can he really still be excited by the prospect of yet another world tour? After all these guys are far from being in the first flush of manhood.

"Being mature doesn't mean being dead. You just have to get out there and rock, keep your bones rolling, and stay out of the ruts. That has been true for this band as well. We have continued to learn and grow and change, but behind all that the important thing was just to keep moving."

But why the sudden enthusiasm?

"Through seventeen years and umpteen albums and tours together, we seldom stopped to look back, but neither did we look ahead much beyond the next album or tour. We just kept doing what seemed right, without worrying about the future - it would take care of itself. That is called being philosophical. That is also called a good excuse. But suddenly it's different - all at once it seems obvious that we have a long creative partnership ahead of us. Maybe we're







growing up a bit, I'm not sure, but I do know we're excited about this band in a whole new way."

This new sense of perspective seems to permeate the new album, especially on the opening cut DREAMLINE, with the line 'WE ARE ONLY IMMORTAL FOR A LIMITED TIME.' Had that realisation just hit them?

"Musicians are sometimes said to be immature. Not 'us' guys you understand, but some of our peers. Like them, we spent our adolescent years welded to our instruments, obsessed by music to the exclusion of nearly everything else in 'normal life'. And maybe that youthful seriousness, which in a way is growing up too fast, means that the adolescent sense of immortality and irresponsibility stays with us a little longer, into the time we're supposed to be adults. This is called the 'artistic temperament.' It's also a good excuse," he jokes.

"The point is, each of us experiences a time when we feel immortal, when time is not passing and we're never going to die. But it is a limited time offer - time 'does' pass, and soon enough the realities of life come crowding in on us, whether we're ready for them or not. I think we're now facing the real world."

Getting back to the new album. As mentioned before, Peart is not adverse to throwing his political two-penneth into the ring. This time it's in the shape of HERESY, a damning indictment of the last 50 years or so of communism in the USSR.

"I suppose. The deconstruction of the Eastern Bloc made some people happy; it made me mad. For generations those people had to line up for toilet paper, wear bad suits, drive nasty cars and drink bug spray to get high - and it was all a mistake? A heavy price to pay for somebody else's misguided ideology, it seems to me, and that waste of life must be the ultimate heresy."

Musically, it's in keeping with the great Rush tradition of unusual rhythm.

"The drum part in that song was inspired by a different part of the world. One hot night I lay under the stars on a rooftop in Togo, and heard the sound of drums from across the valley. Even on the edge of sleep the drumming moved me, the rhythm stayed in my head, and while working on the song I used variations of it and other West African influences. Depending on your point of view, that is either called cultural cross-pollination, or plundering the Third World."

I point out, that although Rush are always perceived as a 'heavy' band, much of their material is quite radio friendly. GHOST OF A CHANCE for example?

"There's some great guitar on that song, but don't tell Alex I said so. It's the kind of tune that we always think ought to be a massive hit single, but by this time we've learnt that it won't be, because we're too weird."

Finally, as the time allotted comes to a close and a rather fetching promotions lady hover's close, just what is ROLL THE BONES about?

"The essence of these songs is: If there's a chance, you might as well take it. So what if some parts of life are a crap shoot? Get out there and shoot the crap. A random universe doesn't have to be futile; we can change the odds, load the dice and roll again. Even if you try to take the sting out of life by embracing the prefab structure of Faith, you still have to gamble it's the right one. After all, you might have lived a good long life as an exemplary Christian, only to be met at the gates of heaven by Mohammed..."

Oh! I see. I think.