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RUSH: "UNEVEN? FOR SURE..."

That's how bass-swingin' frontman GEDDY LEE describes his band's career which spans three decades, and has seen them move from sci-fi costumes to sober suits. KIRK BLOWS listens to Geddy's musings on the Canadian trio's recorded output...

RUSH

(Mercury 1974)

"I haven't listened to it for at least ten years. The first version was done in an 8-track studio and we were doing a bar gig in Toronto at that time. We were finishing the shows at about 1 am and then we'd record from one to about nine, over a period of two weeks or so.

"It represented what we thought was the best of our material, but some of it was very old even back then. The first version of it we hated, it sounded really wimpy. We didn't real feel that the first producer knew what he was doing and that's how we got hooked up with Terry Brown.

"We went into this little 16-track studio and over two days we recorded two new tracks, one of which was 'Finding My Way'. He remixed everything else and then we were really excited about it."

GEDDY'S RATING: **1/2

FLY BY NIGHT

(Mercury 1975)

"John Rutsey, our original drummer, was having a lot of personal problems so it just didn't work out. So we had auditions and Neil (Peart) showed up. When he joined we just figured he was a great drummer and that was it. We rehearsed like crazy for a week and then went out on a North American tour with Uriah Heep and Manfred Mann's Earth Band. During that tour we got to know Neil and his vocabulary, and his kind of literacy led us to believe that maybe he could write some lyrics, because Alex (Lifeson) and I hated doing it.

"'Fly By Night' was a big leap, but in a sideways direction because of the nature of the lyrics and arrangements. Yet there was this other direction that had started to surface - snappier, shorter tunes, things that we had to write while on the road. But I think 'By-Tor & The Snow Dog', that was the first time we started doing longer, cinematic pieces."

GEDDY'S RATING: **1/2

CARESS OF STEEL

(Mercury 1975)

"We got really lost on that record. It was fun to make, but I think we really disappeared into the making of it. We were probably at our most indulgent. I think it's a kind of naive record in a way; we were

really into this romantic image of a long concept record, so really it was a big experiment. I guess it's a pretty uneven record."

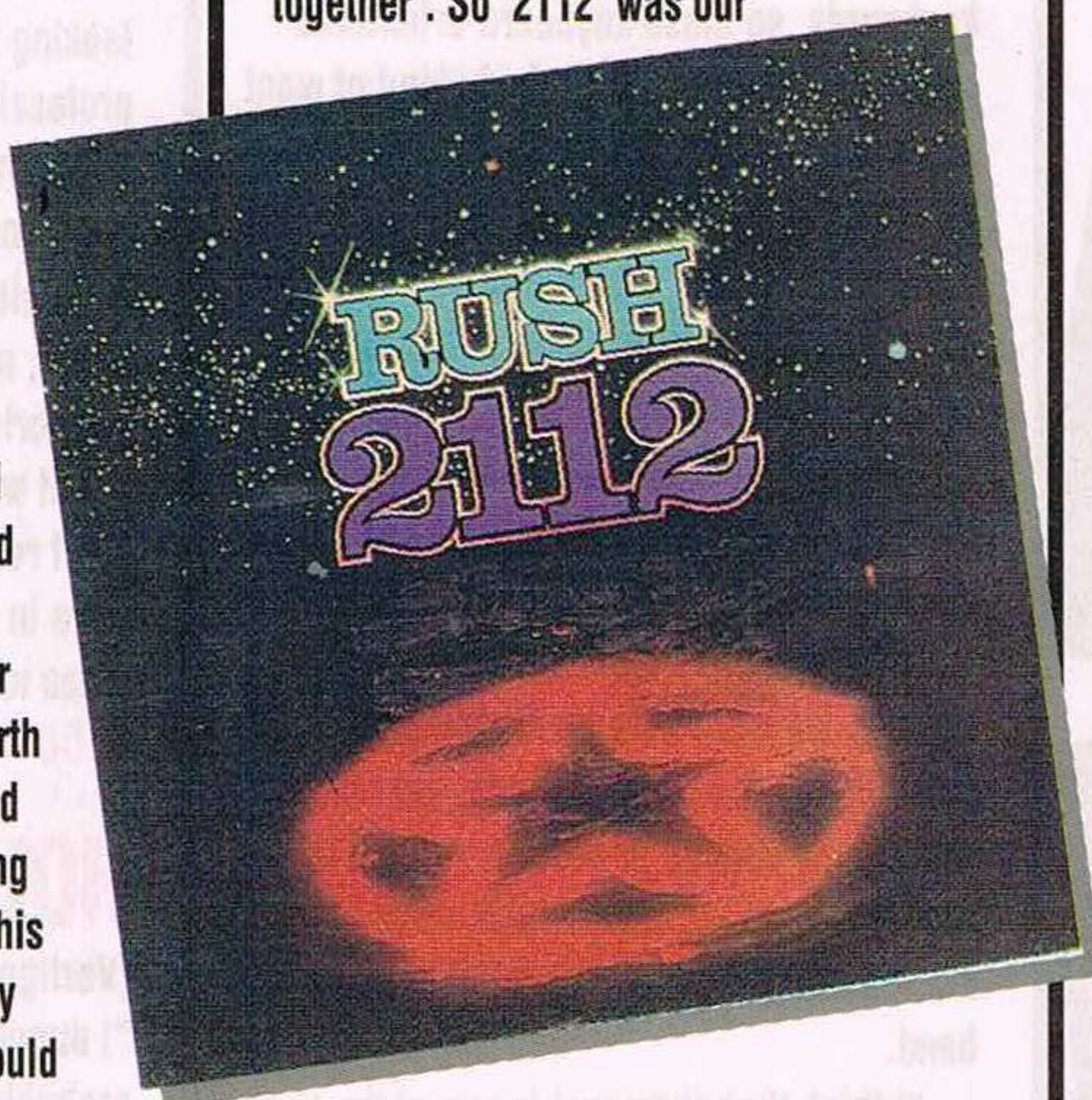
GEDDY'S RATING: **

2112

(Mercury 1976)

"That was the first album to me where we took a significant step. A lot of our experiments filtered down and that's the first album that exhibits a sound that we could call our own.

"I think we were pretty pissed off and a lot of that passion was channelled into the record. We were doing terribly and were thinking of packing it in. 'Caress Of Steel' had not gone over too well. I remember one drive we were doing, playing endless horrible gigs, and we were just talking about whether there was a point to going on. And we said 'Fuck it, let's hang together'. So '2112' was our



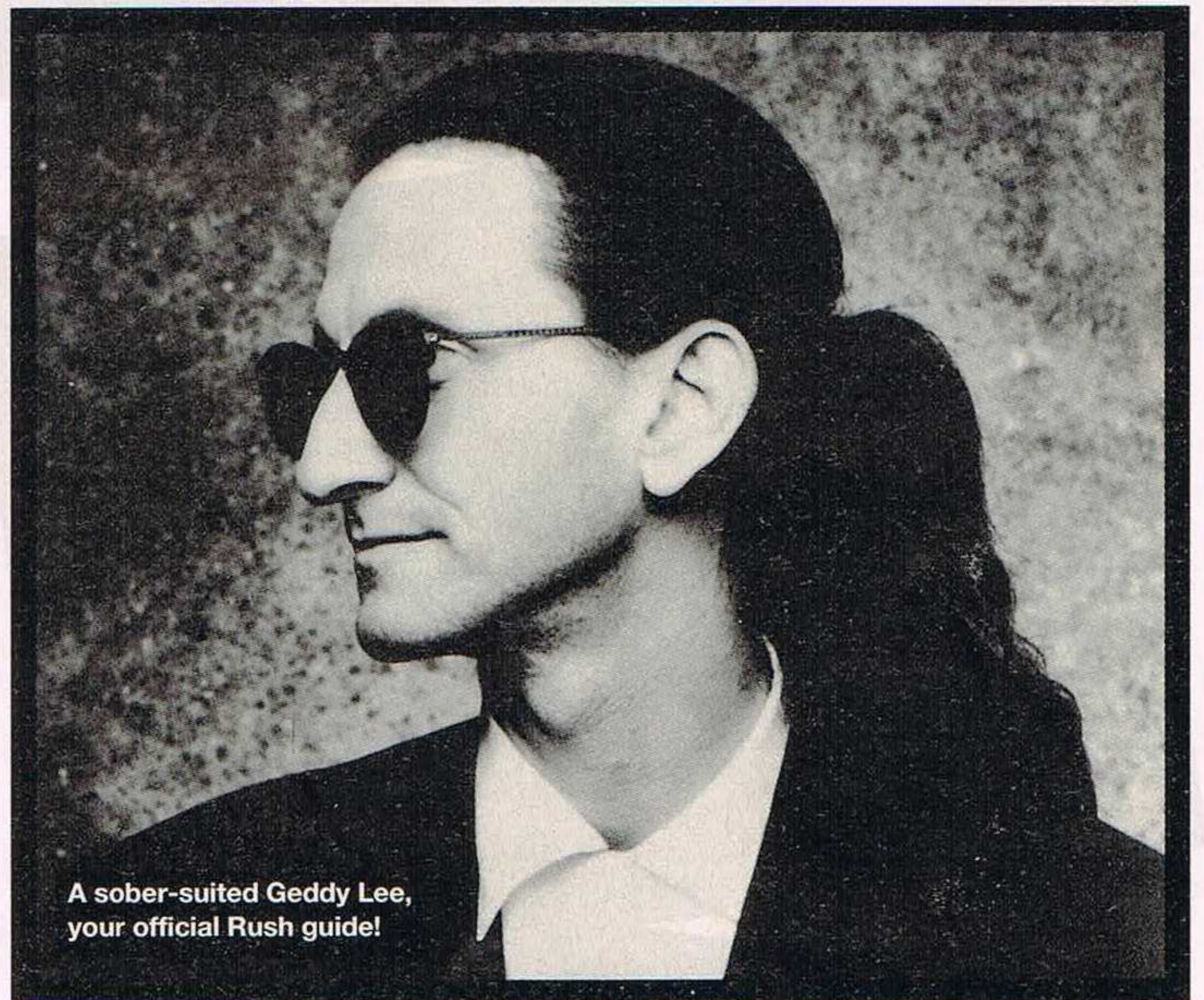
way of telling everybody else to fuck off!

"'Caress of Steel' was directionless and that to me is more self-indulgent than '2112', because that had a very definite direction. We surprised ourselves with it, and I listened to it a couple of years ago and I was surprised at how fresh it sounded even then. I really love the energy and I like the songs, so that's the first album I look back at proudly.

"It had tremendous impact and it was one of those records that just kept going. It kept introducing us to different kinds of people, though we were still just playing in America and Canada.

But we'd started headlining in certain cities. We were getting through."

GEDDY'S RATING: ****



A sober-suited Geddy Lee, your official Rush guide!

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

(Mercury 1976)

"We hadn't done a live album yet, so we were real curious to see if we could put one together. And it bought us time as well. We were making two records every year and a half, so we were moving too fast.

"It's a pretty trashy version of what we were all about. We didn't have a big budget and we recorded it over just three shows. I hated it then and I still hate it now. It's a personal thing."

GEDDY'S RATING: 1/2

A FAREWELL TO KINGS

(Mercury 1977)

It was our English period; we were Anglophiles, hanging around in Monmouth, Wales, enamoured with the whole idea of recording in a residential studio and away from home for the first time.

"We had a great time making it and we loved what we went through. We mixed in Advision in London, which was the studio we always wanted to work in because a lot of our favourite ELP and Yes records were done there. It kind of represented a club that we wanted to be part of.

"I know in Britain it did very well and 'Closer To The Heart' was the closest thing we've ever had to a hit single over there. So I think it's one of the records that introduced us to Britain."

GEDDY'S RATING: ***3/4

HEMISPHERES

(Mercury 1978)

"It's amazing how influential that album seemed to be. For us, though, there's nothing but painful associations with it. It was an extremely difficult record to make. We were really foolish, we came right off tour and went straight to Wales to record, and we hadn't written a bloody thing. So we wrote the whole album in the studio and a lot of them were very long pieces. We were very pig-headed about recording everything straight through without editing and we finally had to cave in. I remember doing 'La Villa Strangiato', we worked on that for about eleven days, which was the whole length of time it took us to record the 'Fly By Night' album!

"It was a very complex record and we kind of bit off more than we could chew. We finally did pull it off, but not without its costs personally. It was a painful record to do, but I listen to it now and I'm really proud of it. It's quite unusual and I'm proud of its complexity.

"The tour that followed the album was also extremely gruelling, there were days and days without any time off. Within the band we were happening, but we were disappearing into this vacuum and I don't think we were ever the same after that album and tour."

GEDDY'S RATING: ***

PERMANENT WAVES

(Mercury 1979)

"We didn't want to experience



'Hemispheres' again and we didn't want to be that far from home, so we opted to record in Canada. A new studio, a new engineer and it was great, a very positive result (*Don't you mean a total result?* - Ed). We made the whole thing in seven weeks, mixed it in (London's) Trident Studios, so it was a nice record. I've very good memories of that record.

"We were always a touring band, we were always on the road a lot...slowly we

were playing more cities and bigger halls. 'Spirit Of The Radio' was a regional hit, in Chicago it was a huge song, but in other places it was not so huge.

GEDDY'S RATING: ****

MOVING PICTURES

(Mercury 1981)

"That was entirely done at the Le Studio

(Quebec) in the dead of winter, and I remember them being pretty good sessions, with the exception of a couple of things. That was the first album we used a computerised mix-down on and I remember the computer started mixing itself. We had a real nightmare for five days, we had to shut everything down and go home.

"Technically it was a difficult record to mix, but it was very satisfying to record in a lot of ways. It's still one of my favourites, probably the most even record we may ever have made.

"After 'Hemispheres' we'd decided we'd had enough of doing those long, self-indulgent, drawn out epics. We wanted to make sure we had a more tuneful, concise version of what we were all about."

GEDDY'S RATING: *****

EXIT...STAGE LEFT

(Mercury 1981)

"The first live album was too raw for me and this one was too slick, and I think a lot of people view it that way. I think we went overboard trying to make the perfect sounding record, we mixed the life out of it to be perfectly honest. I get no joy out of that record."

GEDDY'S RATING: 1/2

SIGNALS

(Mercury 1982)

"I was playing and writing more on keyboards, so these keyboard-orientated songs came out and everybody kind of went along with it. Even Alex was happy with that direction at the time, it wasn't 'til afterwards that he went home and said, 'Hey, there's not enough guitar on this record for Chrissakes!'."

"So that record put us through a few changes, it was difficult to make and it was the beginning of the end of our relationship with Terry Brown. We knew we wanted to change, we were bored with doing the same things the same old way, but I think rather than change producers - which is probably what we should have done - we started changing the internal balance of the band.

"I think 'Subdivisions' is one of the best songs we've ever written and I'm really proud of it. The album runs the whole gamut; there's some very strong material, but there's really weak material like 'Countdown' on it, which I think is a pretty poor song."

GEDDY'S RATING: *1/2**

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

(Vertigo 1984)

"We made a decision we were gonna get a new producer. It was nothing against Terry, we just knew it was time to move on. We were all set to work with one, who seemed very excited about doing the project, and then at the last minute he pulled out and really left us screwed. It was Steve

Lillywhite. I never really quite understood why he pulled out, I think he got an offer to do Simple Minds. He really left us in the lurch and I didn't think it was a very honourable move on his part.

"The positive thing to come out of it was that we spoke to about 25 different guys and in that process of interviewing producers I learnt more about making records than in the ten years before that.

"Working with Peter Henderson was a very big adjustment and I found it difficult and unrewarding. There was some tension and the chemistry was not what I think we were looking for. It was a long and intense session and it was the last of its kind for me. I definitely had cabin fever by the time we finished.

"But I look back at it now and I think we made a pretty good record, in spite of all that. I think there's a lot of great songs, and by that time Alex's Yugoslavian blood was boiling from all the people who were saying the guitar was really mixed down on 'Signals', so he was determined to bring the guitar up."

GEDDY'S RATING: *3/4**

POWER WINDOWS

(Vertigo 1985)

"We worked with a great team on 'Power Windows', Peter Collins is a great producer and a lovely man. We were back in England and we had a lot of fun making that record. Peter Collins was really what we were looking for, he was very positive, professional and *decisive*. I think that's the key word, that's what you need most, somebody who cuts out the ruffle and would snap his fingers whenever we were faffing about, as he would say. I have very good memories of that record.

"It was a very creative atmosphere; I can't remember a time when the three of us were in the studio so much contributing ideas to other each other's parts."

GEDDY'S RATING: ***1/2**

HOLD YOUR FIRE

(Vertigo 1987)

"I dunno (about the two year gap), we probably started to get old then. We started taking longer breaks, more time off the road, more time between records. That was the time when touring was the thing we liked least. Our tours were getting shorter, we were very unhappy on the road - Neil in particular. It was an uncertain and searching time for us.

"We were all developing our own



personalities, our own special interests and I think it was starting to show that we wanted more time apart. What kept us together was the fact that we still made good music together, but other than that we were kind of confused.

"I think it's a good record, quite unusual, a little bit dark, a little bit of a sidestep. But I think there's some really lovely moments on it and I like it."

GEDDY'S RATING: *3/4**

A SHOW OF HANDS

(Vertigo 1989)

"My favourite of the three (double live albums). It's the only one I can bear to listen to. Yeah, I'm pleased with that, I think that's a pretty good live album. It's a pretty honest representation.

"I think we wanted to buy some time from a personal point of view. The touring thing was not making us too happy then and we definitely wanted to update our sound. We definitely had a bee in our bonnet about the last two live albums, so this was a way of getting that out of our system."

GEDDY'S RATING: ***

PRESTO

(Atlantic 1989)

"When you're working with new people you always want to put your best foot forward. We wanted them (the new label) to like the record. It was the first one we did with

Rupert Hine producing. I was happy with the album at the time, but I'm not very happy with it when I listen to it now. I think it sounds soggy, it sounds kinda mushy to me. It doesn't sound strident or tough enough. But I think there's some great songs and I think we got a lot out of our relationship with Rupert. He really helped us get a looser sound on record and performance-wise he was a good influence. It was a positive relationship."

GEDDY'S RATING: *1/2**

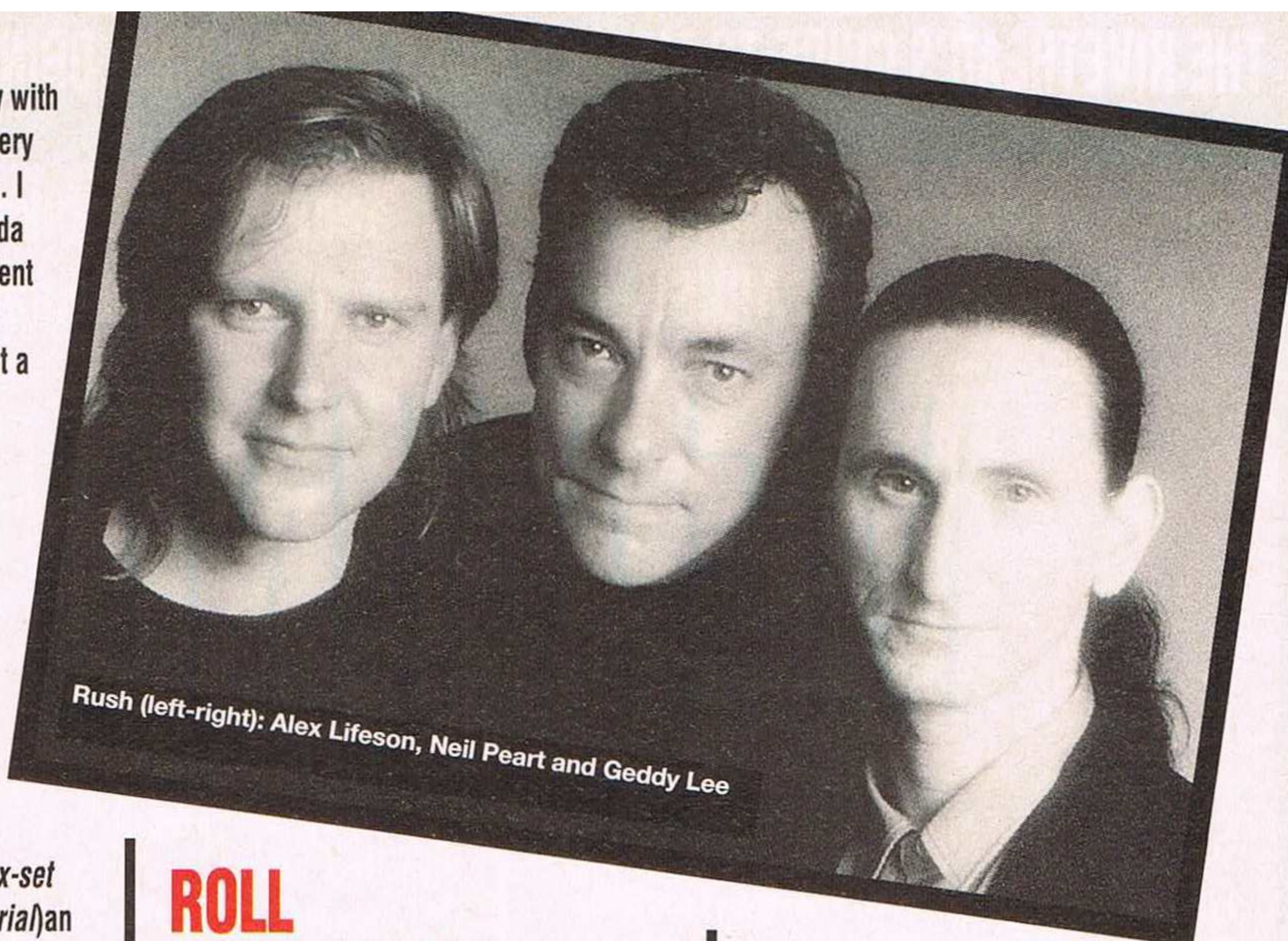
CHRONICLES

(Vertigo 1990)

"I don't consider 'Chronicles' (a box-set compilation of the early Rush material) an album. That was a record company obligation. They were going to release it and they sent us some things to okay, and I have to say I wasn't too pleased about the idea of it coming out, so I didn't take much interest in it. I guess if I had made a loud enough noise I probably could have changed some things but I didn't.

"The selection of tracks I thought was okay, but the packaging was terrible. That's what I regret about it, not getting involved and making them spend some money to put out a nicer box-set or something that people would have wanted. It's not a Rush album."

GEDDY'S RATING: Zero



ROLL THE BONES

(Atlantic 1991)

"We really got a great groove on this record in terms of writing. The songs are strong and there's a nice blend of melodic and aggressive stuff...kind of tying us to the past a little bit, but at the same time bringing in new things, a new melodic attitude, a different way of doing vocals, a different arranging style.

"There's something more natural about the songs live. The keyboard side of the band has been put in a nice perspective. I still feel like it's the three of us as a trio, with other stuff going on, as opposed to

past records - 'Power Windows', 'Hold Your Fire' and, to a degree, 'Presto' - where it was more 'Shall I play keyboards or shall I play bass?'. Now there's no question, the bass comes first and the keyboards are an arrangement tool, and I think it's refocused us as a trio.

"You look back on our body of work and it's uneven, for sure, but I think there's a lot of valid things that have gone on. I suppose there will be an end, I don't know when that will be and I don't think you can predict when it's gonna be. It just happens, suddenly it's over."

GEDDY'S RATING: **1/2**

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