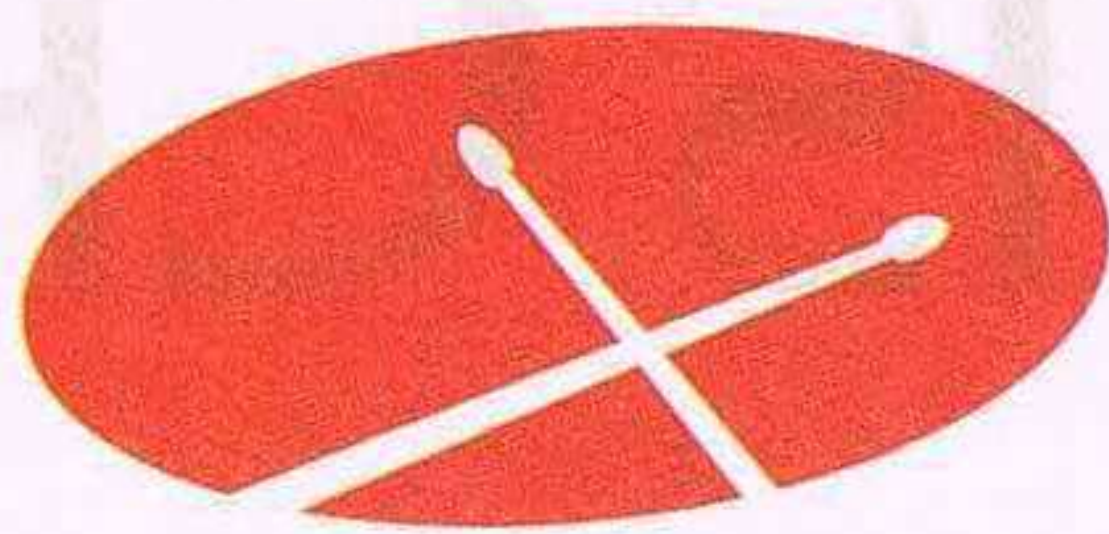


ASK A PRO



Neil Peart

Q I could fill every page of this magazine with words of praise for your drumming, percussive talents, and lyrical abilities (can I say that here?), but I would still fall short of expressing my feelings, and probably annoy the editors greatly. So instead, I'll go right to my question: With very few exceptions, you play matched grip with Rush. When you performed at the 1991 Buddy Rich Memorial concert, you played predominantly traditional grip. Was this for the sake of "technique" or for "authenticity," and what advantages do you find with each grip?

Christopher McAdam
Acton MA

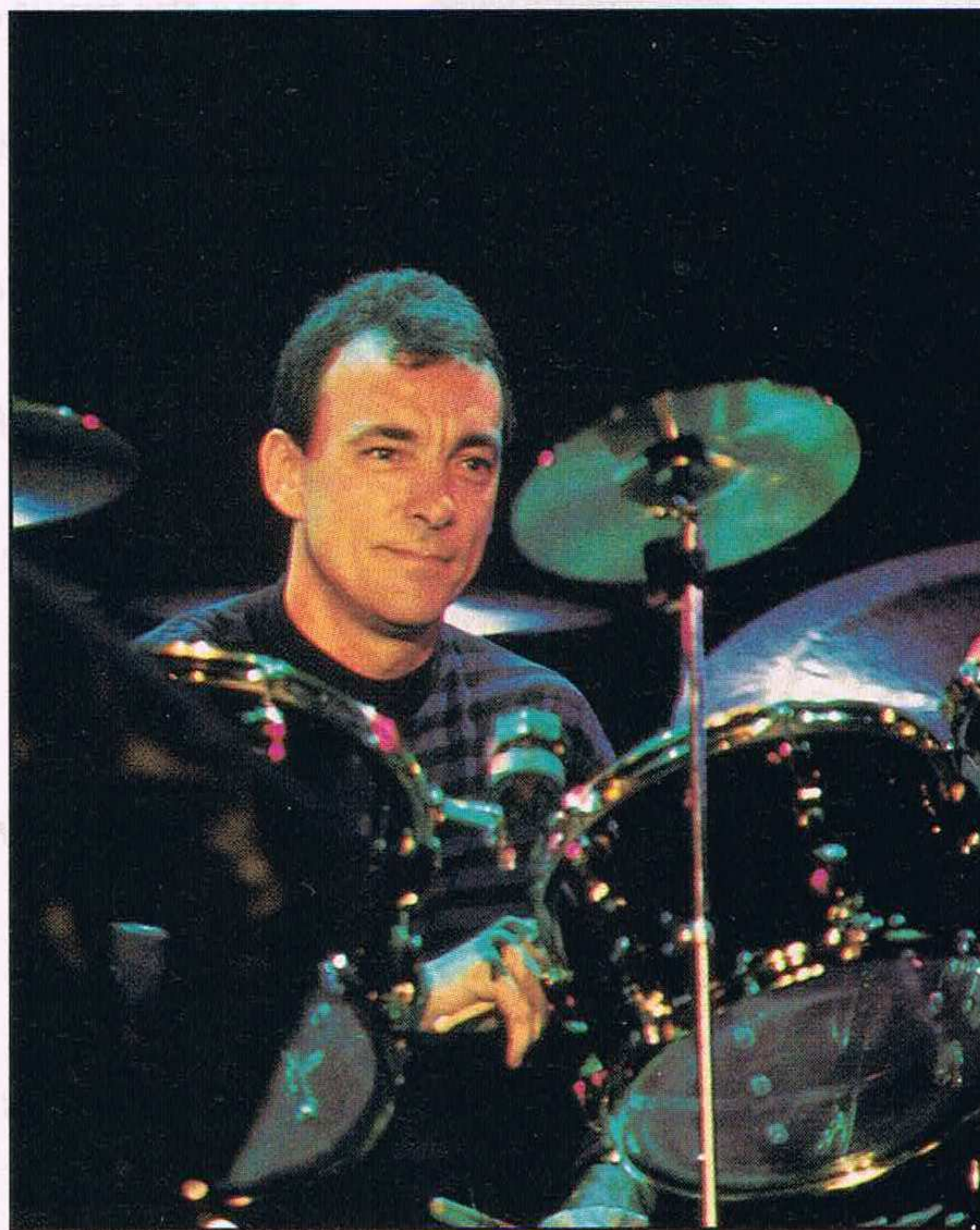
A Thanks Christopher; now you've got me blushing all red and stuff.... Anyway, here is a typically long-winded reply to your question:

In the pages of *Modern Drummer* we have all been able to learn a lot about the history of drums and drumming, and I find that very interesting. I remember reading in one article about the theory that the traditional grip originally evolved to accommodate military drums, which hung down to the player's right—to allow the fortunate guy to march while he played. Obviously, this would make the "cradling" grip more suitable for the left hand.

As the drumset evolved, and drummers no longer had to carry their drums (except out to the van), they still often mounted their snare drums on a stand that way—tilted down to the right—in order to continue the *traditional* way of playing. Drummers are often purists—sometimes religiously so—and so we all accepted the "received wisdom" that the traditional grip was correct, while the matched grip was lazy or unsophisticated.

Thus, when I began taking drum lessons, on Day One I was taught the tra-

ditional grip, and learned all my rudiments that way: hours of practicing on a pillow playing endless slow "ma-ma-das" and "pa-ra-did-dles." Simply put, when I later switched to the matched grip, I wasn't about to go through all *that* again just to learn something I'd already worked so long at. So I continued to play the



"finer" rudiments with traditional grip, switching back and forth when I had to. Thus, as you noted, for the Buddy Rich Memorial concert—which required a lot of that style of playing—I mainly used the traditional grip, while with Rush I almost always use the matched grip, except for the occasional rudimental passages.

But still the question remains: Why did I change? Well...another article that appeared in *MD* a while back was written by a doctor, who demonstrated that the matched grip was superior from a physiological standpoint; it utilized more muscles than the traditional grip and thus allowed greater control, power, and stamina. After a few years of playing, I had

found that to be true for me, and also that the matched grip permitted a greater range of left-hand flexibility—especially around an expanding kit. As drumming has progressed through the past twenty-five years or so, more emphasis has been put upon the left hand—not only to deliver a powerful backbeat on the snare, but to be more ambidextrous, more versatile and positive around the toms, cymbals, hi-hat, and even electronic pads.

There is no doubt that people play beautifully with either grip, so I don't consider this a question of pure right-and-wrong. In other words, there's nothing to *argue* about! Drummers who have learned with the matched grip from early on are able to play a smooth and delicate double-stroke, while there are drummers who can lay down a powerful backbeat all night long with the traditional grip. But as one who has learned both grips, and has spent a lot of time practicing with each, I would have to say that, objectively, the matched grip compromises nothing and gains a bit of versatility for the left hand. (It seems to me that if the traditional left-hand grip *were* truly superior, it would have

evolved into the grip used by both hands—and we'd all look *really* funny.) Thus, if I were starting again, I would spend all those hours beating out rudiments on the pillow with matched grip.

Of course, the bottom line is what works for *you*—nothing changes that. But even us purists shouldn't be afraid of what simply makes sense. As an analogy, it's difficult to imagine anyone playing marimba or timpani with a mallet cradled in the left hand, so why should it be a superior technique on another multiphonic percussion instrument—the drumset?

That's what I think, anyway....



NEIL PEART



Ludwig Super Classic Series

For a Neil Peart Poster, send \$3 to Ludwig Industries, Neil Peart Poster,
P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515

LUDWIG

photo by Andrew McNaughton