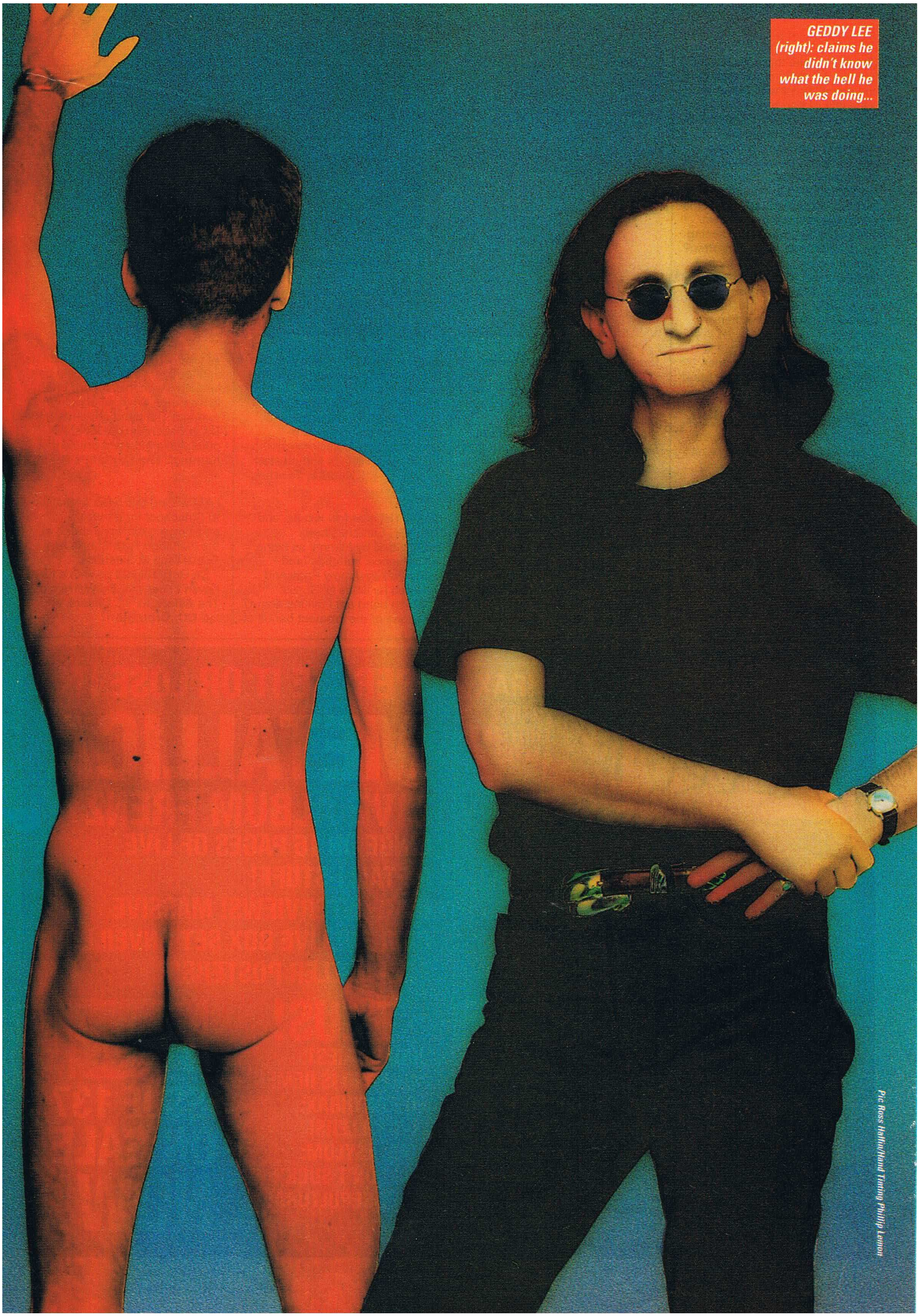


GEDDY LEE
(right): claims he
didn't know
what the hell he
was doing...



Pic: Ross Hallett/Photo Training Philip Lennon

THE BUMS RUSH!

Vicious dogs! Nazi scandals! Odd time signatures! Drumming ducks! Yeah, Canadian power trio RUSH's 20-year career has been a weird trip! From school days to the band's slammin' new album, 'Counterparts', frontman GEDDY LEE tells PAUL ELLIOTT the naked truth about Rush!

JAMMIN'!

TORONTO, CANADA, during the early '70s, Geddy Lee joins guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer John Rutsey in Rush.

"Alex I knew from school – we always got into trouble together. Then I found out he was a musician. We called ourselves 'musicians', although we could barely crawl, let alone walk! Alex was known as an incredible mooch – he would borrow everything – and he'd call me in this phoney nice voice, asking if he could borrow my amp. Word got out that I had one.

"Alex was playing with John Rutsey in a band called Rush. They'd play at a local coffee house – it was a drop-in centre on Friday and Saturday nights. Alex called me one day and said their bass player couldn't make the gig, and could I come down and jam? I did.

"I still see John Rutsey from time to time. He's a bodybuilder now. It's odd; I remember him as this skinny long-haired guy, and he's got a crew-cut now, bulging muscles and a thick neck. I'm sure I don't look the same to him, either!"

YOUNG, IMPRESSIONABLE, GOOFY!

1974. THEY record and release their first album.

"I was 20 when we made that record – we didn't know what the hell we were doing! We were into Zeppelin, The Who, Jeff Beck and The Yardbirds. And Cream were a big influence.

"We'd play bar gigs and then go into the studio from one till six in the morning. We didn't see a lotta daylight. It was tough, but when you're 20, who gives a shit? Your body recovers instantly.

"August of '74 we got our first tour, opening for Uriah Heep. It was fun; we were young, impressionable, goofy. We left home in a van and bounced around America for four months. I have great memories of that tour."

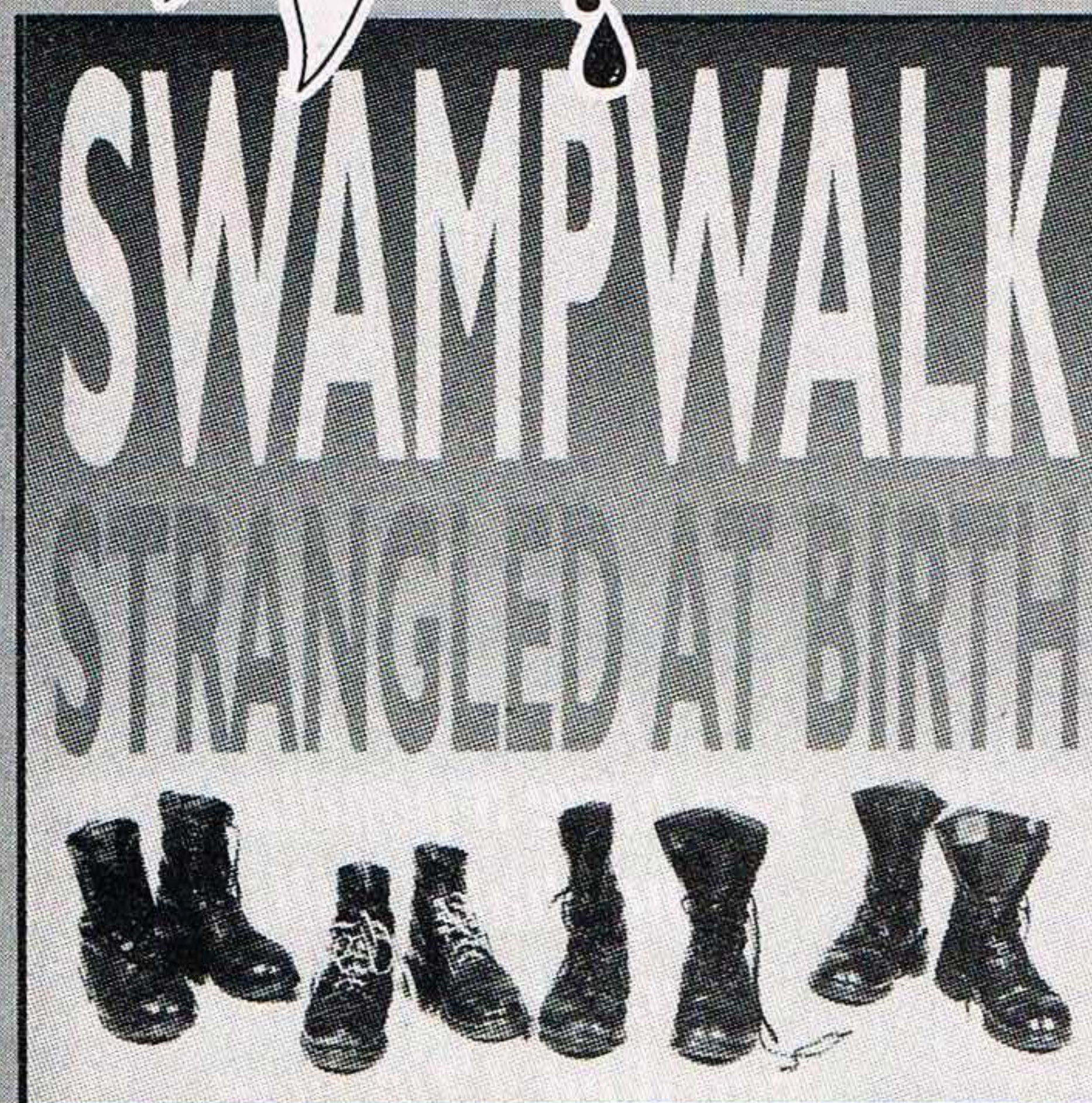
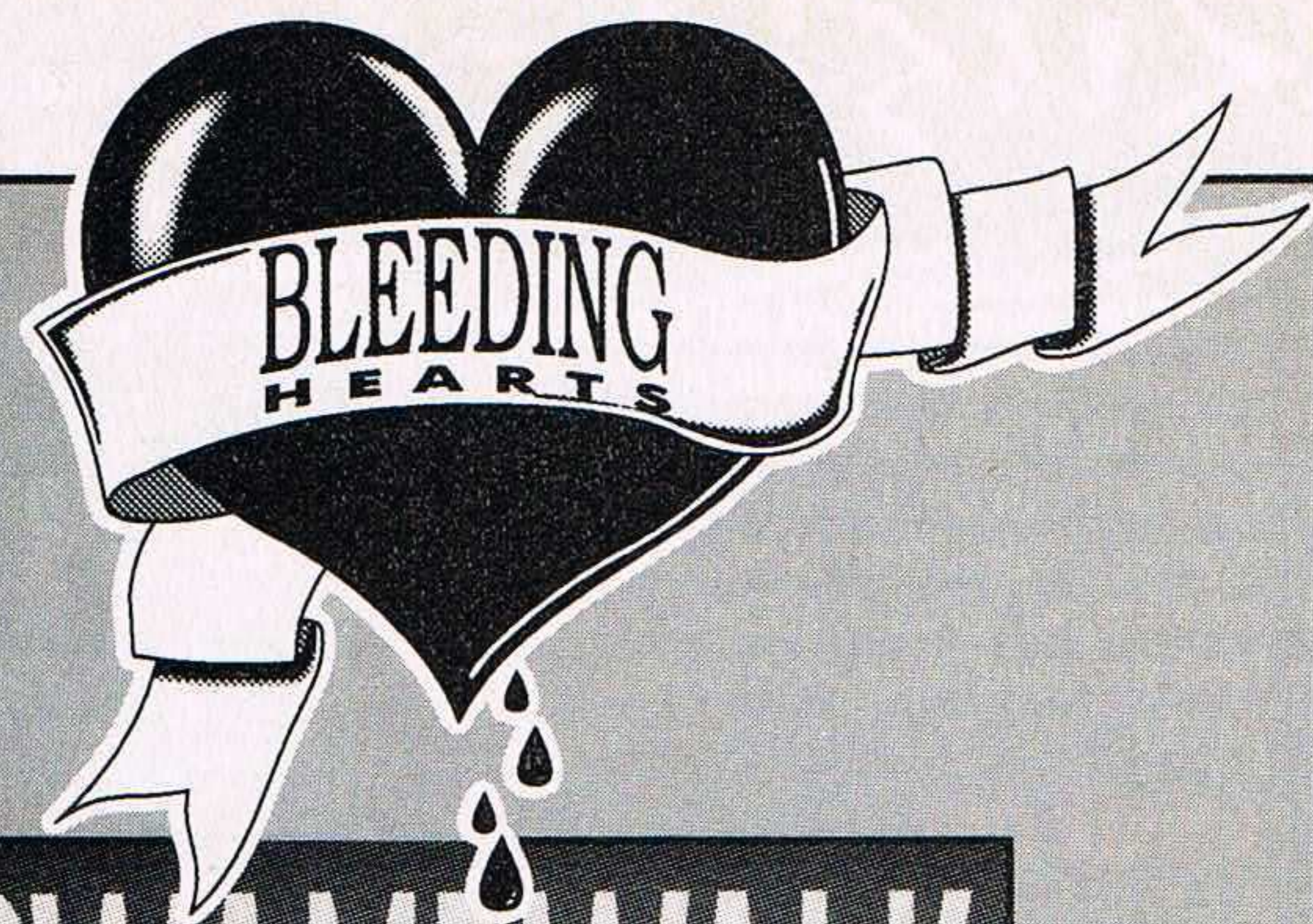
NEIL THE DUCK!

AT THE end of the tour, Neil Peart replaces Rutsey.

"I thought Neil was a weird duck! Uh, no, he wasn't a duck, folks! He was the third drummer we auditioned. It was a sweltering day and he drove up in a fancy car with a super-short haircut. Here was this huge guy, 6'2", playing this kit with really tiny bass drums, and he starts playing these triplets that just blew our minds! It sounded like a machine gun! Amazing.

"Within a minute, I knew this was the guy I wanted in the band,

KONTINUEZ OVER



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but Alex was pissed off because we promised we wouldn't commit to any drummer until we heard them all. I was really excited, talking to Neil, and Alex was being a real bad mood dude. Neil thought Alex was a real prick!"

VISION ON!

AT THE end of the year, Rush launch their second album, 'Fly By Night'. Peart emerges as the band's chief lyricist.

"Alex and I hated writing lyrics, and we noticed that Neil read a lot and had a great command of the English language. We said to him, 'Ever thought of writing lyrics?'. One of the first things he wrote was 'Anthem'. We told him: you got the job!"

"Neil's vision, his extreme thoughts, have been very stimulating for Alex and I. Neil was the last piece of the puzzle, a catalyst for Alex and I to do a lot of the music we'd dreamt of doing."

'SNOW JOKE!

'FLY BY Night' features 'By-Tor And The Snow Dog', the first of Rush's celebrated – and ridiculed – epics.

"A lot of those songs were born out of jokes, although people don't like to hear it. By-Tor was just a nickname our road manager had for dogs. They would run after you and bite you, so they were biters! And the Snow Dog was our manager's dog – just a big white dog."

"Neil just took these two goofy icons and used them to represent good and evil. It all snowballed and our songs became mini soundtracks."

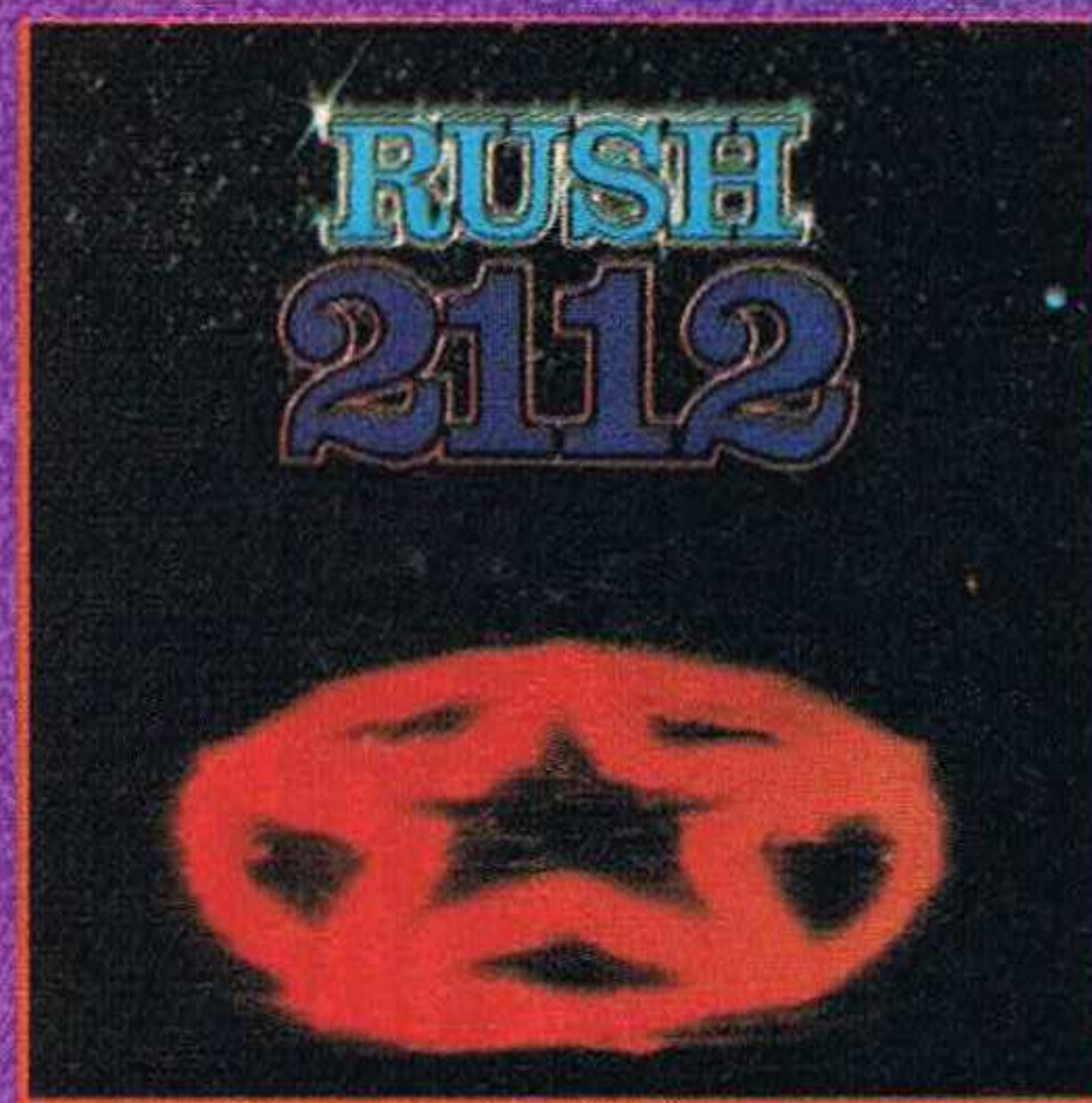
"Our producer Terry Brown kept telling us to write in a cinematic way. Alex and I loved it. Suddenly, there were no rules: we could do whatever we wanted. You could glue all these disjointed musical passages together and bingo! Because you have this abstract science fiction story, you can say it works!"

PARASITIC CRETINS!

IN 1976, Rush release the watershed concept album, '2112'. The album is inspired by Ayn Rand's individualist novel 'Anthem'. The NME subsequently – and ignorantly – brands Rush neo-Fascists!

"'2112' was only controversial here. I think the guy who wrote that story was basically a parasitic cretin. This jerk

obviously had different political views to Neil's, and he had a really hard time separating capitalism from Fascism. I think



that was the crux of it. Here was Neil innocently walking into this conversation, and the guy had a loaded pen.

"It's nice that you can have a popular song that's still technical. We sneaked a 7/4 time signature into a hit single, which we viewed as a personal triumph!"
– GEDDY LEE

"I watched that conversation go down and then read the final result, and they don't seem very similar to me. The writer used anything Neil said to shape a case that Neil was a fascist. It was absurd. I remember the writer making references to concentration camps and shit like that, and

y'know, my folks were in concentration camps, so don't f**king talk to me about that. The guy was outta line."

POMP IT UP!

SCI-FI-fixated Jazz-fusionist Pomp Metal lives! In 1978, Rush issue 'Hemispheres' – their greatest self-indulgence.

a technically-driven record. We were very into odd time signatures – it was all very fusion-influenced. I think we needed to get that out of our system before we could ever go on to make any decent Rock music.

"I have no regrets about 'Hemispheres' – and yeah, it was completely self-indulgent; happily so. And it's funny how many fans bring that record up to me as their favourite. I go, 'Wow, you gotta be kidding!'"

"Yet as a player, for the pure enjoyment of playing, the stuff on 'Hemispheres' is the most challenging. 'La Villa Strangiato' is a player's piece of music, in the same way that Jazz is player's music. Since that time, we've been more interested in writing songs than suites."

"I think part of us is always trying to get over that self-



indulgent need to impress with chops, but it's hard to lose that. 'Hemispheres' and 'Moving

chart hit!

"I never expected that song to be a hit. It's nice that you can have a popular song that's still very technical. We sneaked a 7/4 time signature into a hit single, which we viewed as a personal triumph!"

DON'T BLAME ME!

ON 1982's 'Signals', keyboards begin to dominate the Rush sound. Geddy is the culprit!

"'Signals' was a big change. I guess it was kind of intentional. We didn't wanna repeat what we'd done with 'Moving Pictures', and I was fascinated by new technology."

"I saw the potential to bring new textures and sounds into our music, and Alex wasn't fighting me, even though he looks back on that record and feels he compromised himself a lot. He agreed to it at the time, so don't blame me!"

UP TO OUR NECKS!

1984. RUSH part with long-time producer Terry Brown to record 'Grace Under Pressure'.

"The making of 'Grace Under Pressure' was a completely obsessive time for me. I was very tunnel-visioned, ignoring everything else in my life. I was driven to find this perfect producer, and it just turned into a nightmare."

"So here we were trying to break away from our former producer for the first time, and it's all going horribly wrong. We ended up co-producing the

record with an engineer. It was a very difficult record to make. Months of isolation. I'm painting a bleak picture, aren't I? It was kinda bleak!

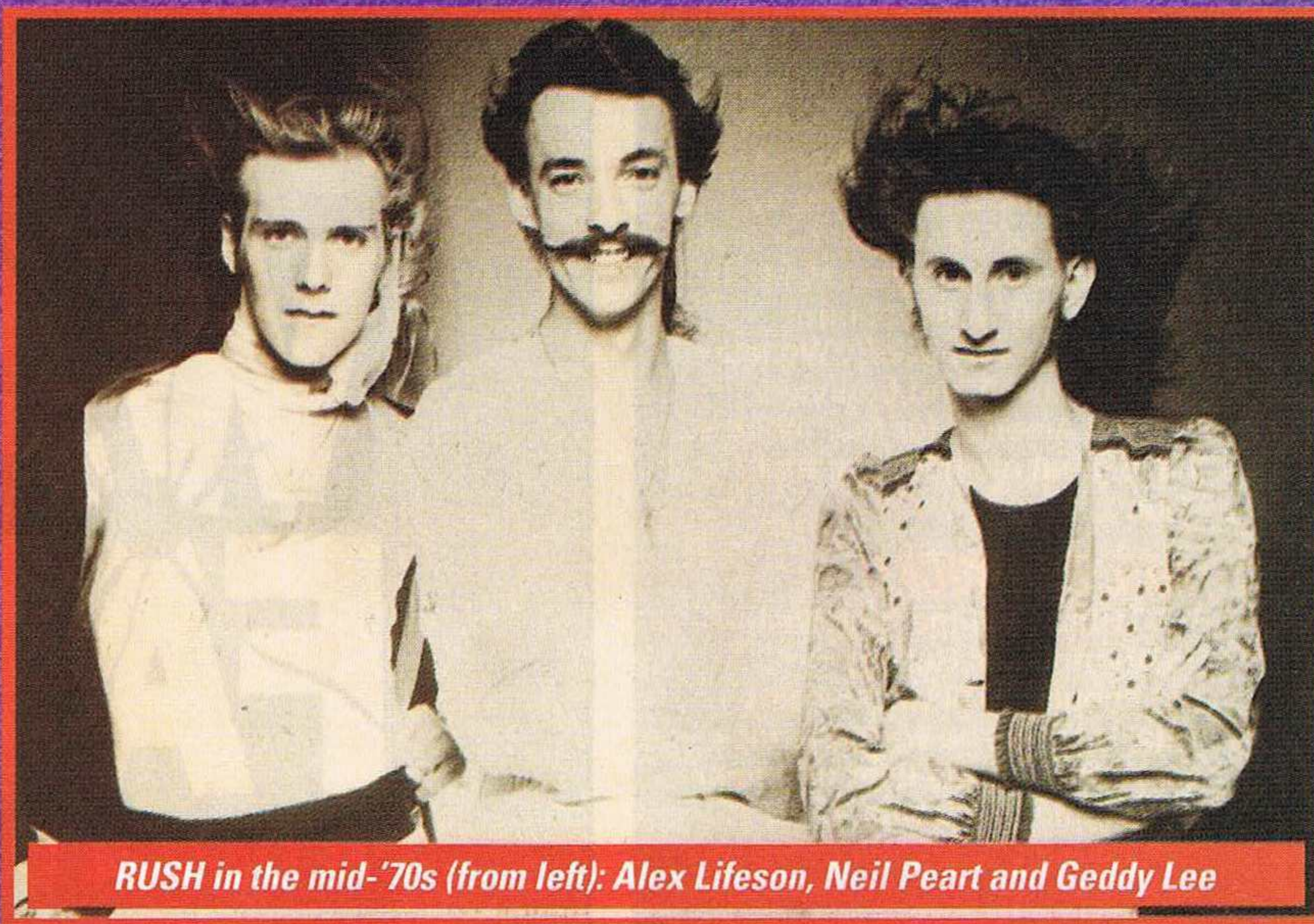
"We worked at Le Studio in Quebec through the Winter; it was 35 degrees below zero, snow up to our necks. It's a dark record for a good reason. Those were turbulent times, we were on our own. It took a lot out of me."

SLAMMIN'!

1993. RUSH release 'Counterparts', their 15th studio album.

"In some ways, these are the simplest songs we've ever put together. We focussed on sonics. We wanted impact and immediacy."

"The new record is a bit of a reaction against the comparatively smaller, slicker sound of 'Roll The Bones'. We wanted this album to be coarse and large and spontaneous, a little more slamming! I guess we had some extra angst floating around!"



RUSH in the mid-'70s (from left): Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart and Geddy Lee

"I think it's a good thing when you can't tell what you're on about – you're lost in the passion of doing it. And whether we were on some sort of high horse or not, I don't think it matters. Musically, that period was really important to us."

"'Hemispheres' was very much

'Pictures' are light years apart, yet they're only a couple of records apart."

GREETINGS FROM HITSVILLE!

1980. WITH 'The Spirit Of Radio', Rush score their only Top 20 UK