

SPOTLIGHT

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'70s survivors a '90s success story

Rush just keeps touring, recording

By Rick Bird
Post music writer

Mention rock icons still kicking around from the '70s and you may hear such names as Aerosmith, Yes, Pink Floyd, Lynyrd Skynyrd. Few, however, are likely to mention Rush.

The group hasn't won any Grammys or been involved in any sensational stories of drug abuse or rampages in hotel rooms.

All Rush has done is quietly put out 19 albums since the band formed in 1972.

Rush has had the same lineup since it started — vocalist Geddy Lee on bass, Alex Lifeson on guitar and Neil Peart on drums.

The hard-rocking Canadian trio brings its show to Riverfront Coliseum Friday night, touring in support of its "Counterpart" album, released last fall.

Rush is one of those groups that critics love to bash and the fans can't get enough of.

Rolling Stone magazine once called Rush "perennially second-billed metal plotters," going on to say Lee had a voice that sounded like a "cross between Donald Duck and Robert Plant."

It's a classic case of the critics be damned.

Rush has never had any problems

headlining shows in Cincinnati, or selling records here either.

"They are one of our biggest catalog sellers in the whole-hard rock field," said Doug Vogel, assistant manager at Record Alley in Florence, Ky.

Vogel says it's not surprising that the band's no-nonsense power-trio sound appeals to fans.

"It's heavy and it's stripped down. It's basic. The band never uses a lot of hooks or trendy stuff."

"It's just basic three-instrument rock. Their sound hasn't really changed since the '70s."

"It's a guitar and a voice."

The trio was honored just last weekend in its home country.

At the Juno Awards, the Canadian version of the Grammys, Rush was given a lifetime achievement award.

The ceremony produced perhaps the year's best quote from a rocker when drummer Peart said, "What is unnerving for us is, without music we would have to get a life. And without an audience we would have to get a job."

Lee thinks the secret to the group's success is its quest for perfection.

"Whenever we look in a mirror, we see something wrong with this or that. It always seems there's something we could do in our music that could be done a little better."

"That's what drives us professionally," Lee said in an interview after the Juno Awards.

"In terms of our psychology, our sense of humor keeps us going, and, with the decent people we surround ourselves with, it all keeps us rollin' along."

Rush keeps a loyal following partly because the band never seems to stop touring.

And drummer Peart says it's the live show that holds the prospect for perfection.

"By the time a record's finished, you're already conscious of the record's flaws."

"No live show can be without flaws, so every night you have the incentive to go up again and try to make the perfect show that will probably always elude you."

"That's the carrot on the stick in front of you that makes us keep going."



From left, Geddy Lee, Neil Peart and Alex Lifeson of Rush.

Rush: How we've hung on

■ "We've bridged so many stylistic changes and technical ones that they've tended to help us rather than hinder us," says Rush drummer Neil Peart. "It seems kind of incredible that we've made it this far, because there's so many factors involved."

■ "But we never let ourselves get frustrated," Peart adds. "Revolutions came along in the late '70s with punk and new-wave and all through the '80s with world music and electronic dance music and the '90s with the birth of real rock bands again and the whole alternative scene. Rather than being

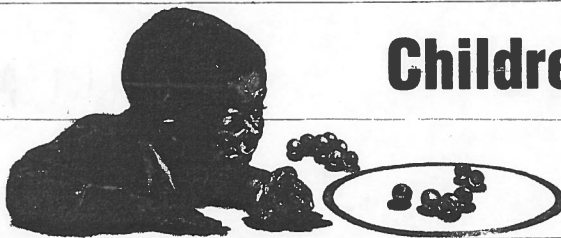
threats to us, they've all been nourishment. It's always been: 'Well, here's something fresh. Let's see how it can apply to us and how we can use it.'"

■ "Just watch what everyone is doing on stage," Peart says. "Watch Geddy and Alex's feet. Geddy is triggering keyboards, bass and vocals, and I'm triggering keyboards through drum pads. All of this stuff takes an enormous amount of work just to choreograph. And it's all in the service of trying to reproduce what we do on record to the live stage."

—Billboard Publications Inc.

If you go

- **What:** Rush concert
- **When:** 8 p.m. Friday
- **Where:** Riverfront Coliseum
- **Opening act:** Primes
- **Tickets:** \$22.50 (\$29.50 seats are sold out), available at Select-a-Seat outlets or by calling 721-1000



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