Group rocks with expansive set

By Gary Budzak

The Columbus Dispatch

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Geddy Lee, lead singer and bassist for Rush, performs during Thursday's show at the Polaris Amphitheater.

Visuals showed guitarist Alex Lifeson grinning like a kid, bassist/singer Geddy Lee going into semiduckwalk mode, and Peart bashing his rotating drum kit with grim determination. When Lifeson did a childlike rendition of Happy Birthday for Q-FM, even Peart cracked a smile.

Rush started with several FM staples — Tom Sawyer, Distant Early Warning, New World Man, and Bell the Hornes — before playing Earthshaker, a standout on Vapour Trails.

Then the group switched among obscure album tracks (with help from fan polling on the Web site www.rushperisjon.com), new tunes and some old favorites. What sometimes has sounded sterile on disc rocked furiously in concert.

Big Money, Limelight, Working Man, Cygnus X-1, One Little Victory, Ceiling Unlimited and By Tor & The Snow Dog were among the gems of the 27-song, 2½-hour concert.

The "thinking man's rock group" drew 8,600 mostly male, brewha-swilling guitar and drum players. It was fascinating to see tipy dudes swaying and boogying as they listened, "Oh yeah, these were the priests of the temples of Syrinx."

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Today on the Town

• Rest of Shadows, Shadowbox Club, 8 p.m., Easton Town Center. Tickets: $10 to $25. Call 614-280-7825.
• Mark Oyserkis, 7 p.m., Dublin Community Recreation Center, 5000 Post Road. Tickets: $8 to $10. Call 614-410-4550.
• Free to Be. . . You and Me 2 and 7:30 p.m., Park Street Theater, 512 N. Park St. Tickets: $10 to $16. Call 614-224-6872.
• Friends and Lovers, 2 co's, 8 p.m., 790 N. High St. Tickets: $5 and $15. Call 614-470-2257.
• Paddy Meers, Otterbein Summer Theater, 8 p.m., Campus Center Theatre, 100 W. Home St., Wexner Center. Tickets: $10. Call 614-823-1109.
• The Missing Rubes of Nepal, Mustard Mystery Players, 8 p.m., Westerville Library, 502 Westerville St. Call 614-416-4400.
• Dave & Buster's, 3665 Park Mill Run Dr., Hilliard. Tickets: $32.95, including dinner. Call 614-771-1515.
• Levon Helm, Rare Earth, and Dr. Hook featuring Ray Sawyer, Ohio State Fair, 7 p.m., Celeste Center, Ohio Expo Center, 171 E. 17th Ave, for tickets and information. Call 614-464-3247 or 1-888-464-3876.
• Othello, Actors' Laboratory, 8 p.m., Schiller Park Amphitheater, German Village, free, with donations accepted. Call 614-444-6888.