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THE BONUS IS MORE THAN PERFORMANCE.
With the release of Grace Under Pressure, Rush prepares to embark on a 1984 World Tour. Rush’s first concert venue of the tour was Atlantic City, New Jersey, where Free Music caught up with Alex Lifeson by telephone.

Free Music: It’s been a while since we’ve last talked to each other. I think the last time I spoke to you was in New York, when you guys did the three-nighter at Radio City Music Hall.

Lifesone: Yeah, that’s right.

F.M.: I thought we could talk about your new album and then a bit about yourself.

Lifesone: Sure.

F.M.: Would you say that Grace Under Pressure is a continuation from your last album Signals?

Lifesone: I think it’s a progression from Signals. I feel it’s a stronger record than Signals.

F.M.: As usual with Rush, your sound changes with each album. For instance with this album, several tracks are virtually dance tunes, which is very different for Rush. Lifeson: I don’t know. We’re more concerned now with rhythms than we are with time. In that sense I suppose it would be a little more danceable. With this album I’m trying to balance our influences from a lot of emotions, a reggae feel, a hard rock feel, the classic hard rock sound, and even a funkier sound, sort of like what the Talking Heads achieve. There are a lot of different types of music that can be incorporated in the sound, really that’s what I’m going for.

F.M.: On the new album your guitar work is definitely more upfront. Was that done through the production?

Lifesone: The emphasis on signals was more on the keyboards. This time around, we wanted to bring the emphasis a little more on the guitar. Also, with this album we worked with a different co-producer, Peter Henderson, who had a different approach to recording then what we normally do.

F.M.: Would you say that Peter Henderson preferred a bigger guitar sound for Rush?

Lifesone: I say drums and guitar would be more his taste. With Peter, he really didn’t know our music. He had heard a few things before, and had listened to Signals so he would have some background. Because we had been writing for two months, we had in mind exactly what we wanted to do, and with Peter, he would get the sounds to work together on the actual mix. I think it was really a combination of us knowing what we wanted to achieve and having Peter translate those ideas.

F.M.: Why did the recording of Grace Under Pressure take so long?

Lifesone: Well, it’s funny, we were so well prepared after spending two months writing and rehearsing that we thought, “right, we’ll go into the studio and do everything in weeks and it will be finished and that will be the end of it.” But once we got into the studio, things just took a long time. You can’t really help it sometimes. No matter how hard you work or how fast you work, there are certain things about recording that just take a long time. You know, you’re hunting around for a particular sound and you’re not satisfied until you get it and it may take a couple of days. There might be one song that just doesn’t seem quite right after working on it for two or three days. You can get hung up on a guitar solo that takes another two or three days because you want to get it right. All of these things add up. There were no problems. We weren’t bogged down with anything, but it just took a lot longer than we expected.

F.M.: Did the guitar solo on Kid Gloves take a great deal of thought to put together?

Lifesone: Yes, it did, actually. It was difficult to get a starting point on that one. The way I usually write solos, is I’ll throw around different ideas and I’ll keep playing until I look onto something and then I’ll keep that and then try something else, and start fitting that in. In the case of Kid Gloves, it was a little more systematic. I had a system all worked out before we got into the studio, and then it kind of fell into place. It was a harder, stronger sound which is a cross between the Gibson and the Fender. I got quite used to the neck, so then I got another one. I never thought I would leave Gibson to go to a Fender with the Vibrato arm.

F.M.: Who was photographed with the guitar?

Lifesone: A friend of ours, Robby Waylen, from Lee Studio. He was one of the tape operators at the studio. This guy was so together, he was amazing. He really knew everything that was going on there, he was a wonderful person who loved life to the fullest. Unfortunately he was killed in a car...
accident a year ago, so it was a song for him.

Suddenly —
You were gone
From all the lives
You left your mark upon

Lyrics by Dave 
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F.M. On the album, Grace Under Pressure. Neil's lyrics are different. He sounded quite angry and almost political, which in many ways is quite different to how he normally writes.

F.M. This album doesn't seem to have any ballads. Lifsan: Yeah, you're right. There's no acoustic guitar on it either. I think it just happened that way. I suppose we were in an angry period, musically and lyrically. We were getting the Globe and Mail delivered at our rehearsal lodge up in Horsehoe Valley every morning. The whole thing with the Korean Airlines happening and the break-down of the Nuclear Arms talks and you knew it was one thing after another. I think it picture of the band but it wasn't taken at the best of times. I don't know if it really as strong as we thought it could be.

F.M. Any thoughts on a solo project?
Lifsan: I've been thinking about that for a long time and I've wanted to do one, but I have nothing written. I don't have a direction or anything like that. I just thought it would be a great thing to work with some other musicians I've met along the way. I have a studio at home so I can do some work there; however, it's difficult when you're on the road for eight months and then record for

F.M. Alex, thank you for taking this time out from your busy schedule. The very best of luck on your new tour and I look forward to see you guys back home here soon.