

Vancouver's
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Georgia

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Time Out

RUSH

**Farewell to
Kings...
Hello to
Tom
Harrison**

BOB

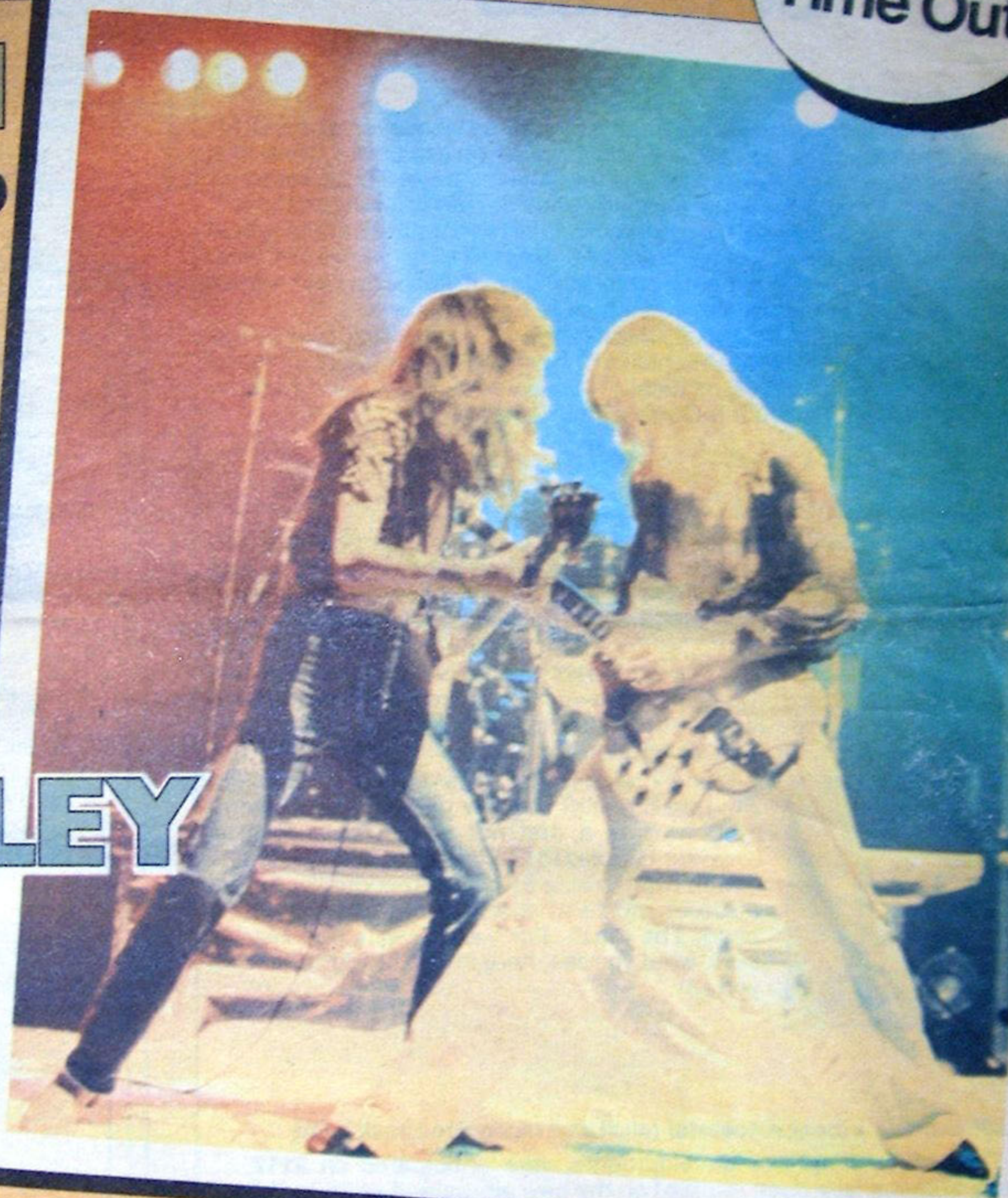
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Reggae
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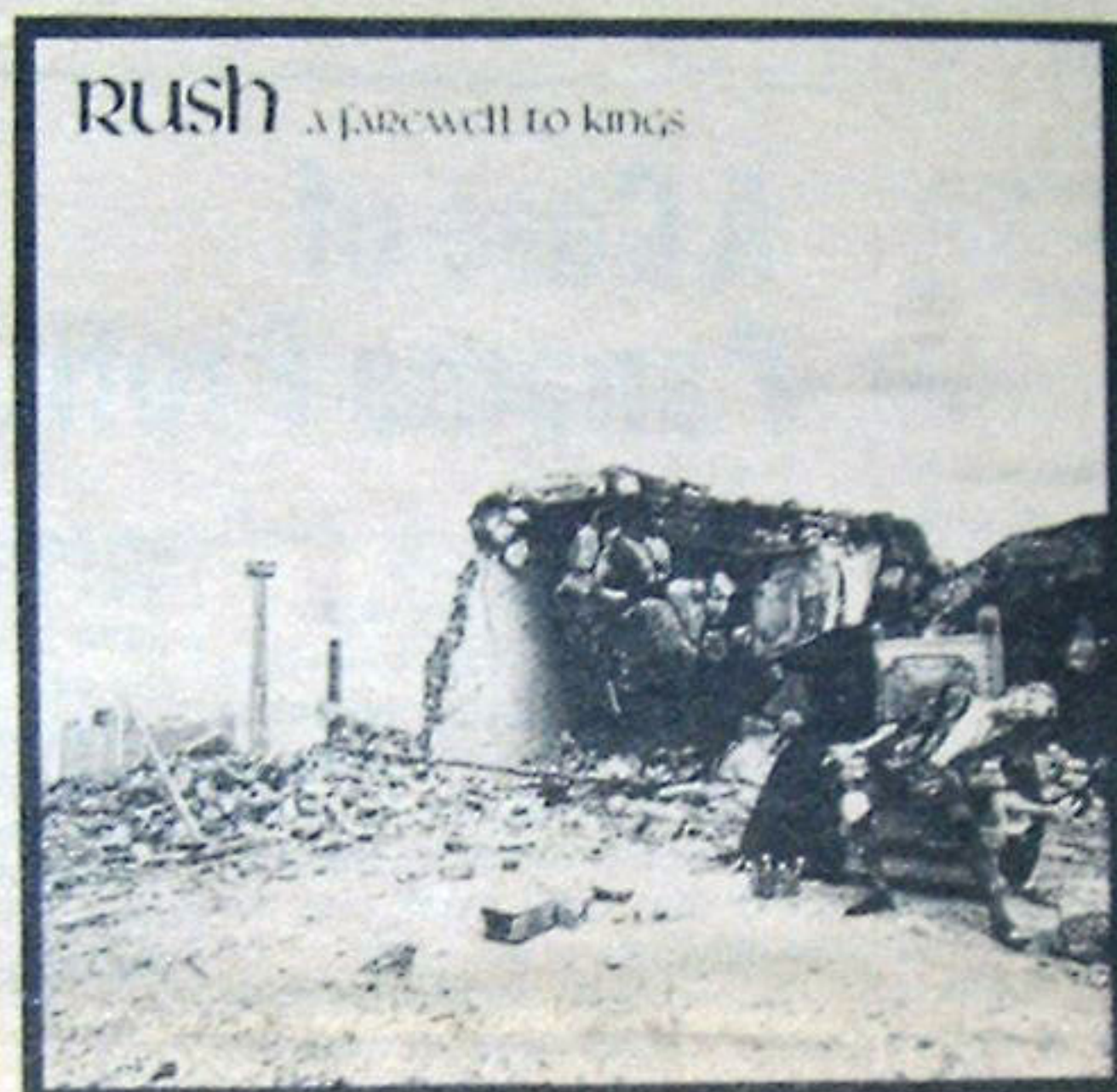


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Rush: Canada's most successful (and least recognized) rock band

By Tom Harrison

So, have you heard the new Rush?

Rush? The Toronto heavy metal band with all the used Led Zeppelin and Humble Pie riffs and the shrill vocals? The power trio that has five gold albums in Canada without the benefit of a hit single or FM radio play? The three piece hard rock band with the grand designs and space cookie concepts that is the number one act on its own label, Anthem? That has had a successful tour of Europe, and expects to perform in Vancouver September 13?

That's right, that's correct, but that's not quite accurate. The new Rush is/was all the above mentioned things but there's been some changes made and that's why the Rush being discussed here is the New Rush.

When Rush plays Vancouver this Tuesday, a substantial part of the group's act will be taken from their sixth and best album, *A Farewell To Kings*, an album that should change most people's opinion of Canada's most successful but least recognized rock band.

When you hear *A Farewell To Kings* the difference between the old Rush and the new is so obvious you have to wonder why you were so skeptical when the band released its live album last year with the announcement that the two record set was to serve as the closing summary of the first era in the band's musical development.

The range of the band's writing and playing has expanded noticeably. Rush's musical scope has broadened in general but whatever ambitious developments were anticipated on 2112, the band's fourth album, many of them have been realized on the new album and point to things still to come. The breathing space provided by the last album was time profitably spent.

"The live album was a creative hiatus and I think the new album definitely demonstrates how important it was to us."

Talking is Neil Peart, Rush's extraordinary drummer and chief lyric writer. He's calling from his home in Toronto to help introduce the new album, the new Rush.

"We needed the time not to think about writing material but to think about ourselves as musicians," he explains. "We wanted to work on the instruments we played naturally and expand to playing new ones, to play two instruments at one time on stage."

A Farewell To Kings has Peart playing orchestra bells, tubular bells, chimes and other percussion while bassist/singer Geddy Lee has taken up a double-necked guitar and bass pedal synthesizer and guitarist Alex Lifeson has been getting deeper into all manner of guitar as well as the bass pedal

synthesizer. *A Farewell To Kings* sounds like no other Rush album and Neil says the band can reproduce the album onstage.

"We needed to expand our sound because we felt constricted by the end of 2112 he continues. "We knew we had to do something. The live album gave us that time to make the necessary changes without adding the obvious fourth man which would have been taking the easy way out. We saw that we had to go for something really big."

It is possible to trace *A Farewell To Kings* back to the group's third lp, *Caress of Steel*. That lp was Rush's first attempt to head in a lighter, more melodic and adventurous direction after two best selling but pedestrian heavy metal albums. It was the first conscious attempt to progress to fields occupied by Genesis, ELP, and other art conscious bands that Rush deeply admired. Ironically, *Caress Of Steel* was the least successful of Rush's albums.

"That album takes a strange place in our history now," Neil says.

"We often talk about that lp because, looking back from our sixth album, we went through a lot of changes. It's more important to us emotionally because so much happened attendant upon the album, not just the making of the album or the writing of the music. After that album was released so many important things transpired. It's the least bestselling of any of our albums so consequently, at that time, your newest album is your most important and if the first two albums are selling better than your third then your record company, your management, your commercially minded people are very displeased. We were getting a lot of pressure from these quarters concerning our music and that album in particular. A lot of people were wishing we would make the first album over again five or six times in a row."

"Obviously these people are businessmen. I can understand how their minds work but mine doesn't work that way. It's just a simple progress: dollars equals dollars equals dollars."

"That started a lot of interesting experiences and a lot of questioning of what we were doing and why. We really had to come to grips with our situation."

Rush's collective response was 2112, a side of which is a futuristic allegory of the importance of music's place in the world as a symbol of freedom and the creative spirit. It was the group's answer to the businessman breathing down their necks.

"I think it was, yeah," Neil agrees. "Even today it's our most passionate album. It was us saying 'leave me alone!'"

"I started out even at the beginning of working on the story for 2112 wanting to do

something set in the future and I already had the title. And then we had all these feelings boiling in our veins so I wanted to say something very strongly with this futuristic tale. By the time I put both those things together I discovered the story was developing close to Ayn Rand's *Anthem* so I decided,

Rush's first release for Anthem (though *A Foot In Coldwater* and *Max Webster* both had Anthem releases available first.) Like 2112 the new album deals in fantasy, fiction, and literary themes. Rush is a serious band that thinks in terms of epic visions.

Side One consists of the title

inside; it's so frightening. I'm not into poetry and never have been but I just happened to see that one, *Kubla Khan*, and I wanted to read it because of the *Citizen Kane* connection. It just grabbed me; it was so powerful."

The title track of the album started life as just an idea Neil



'yeah, that's the way I'll go.'

During the group's rest break Rush's management (SRO Productions which is owned by Vic Wilson and Ray Danniels) decided to set up their own label to handle their star group and a stable of other acts they managed as an alternative to having to work with Canadian record labels. Anthem was the name they chose for the label—it's taken in part from Ayn Rand and also a song title from the *Fly By Night* album.

"When we were looking for a name for our label we went through all our song titles and the dictionary. It's really difficult to find a title for anything that you know you're going to have to look at for the rest of your life. Anthem seemed to be a concise and positive statement of what we wanted to accomplish."

A Farewell To Kings is

cut, and *Xanadu*, an eleven minute opus recounting the story of one man's search for the fabled pleasure dome and immortality and the frightful cost he must pay when he gets there, that opens with these lines from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's opium-inspired poem, *Kubla Khan*: "To seek the sacred river Alph/To walk the caves of ice/To break my fast on honeydew/And drink the milk of Paradise."

"My original thought was 'Citizen Kane,'" says Neil explaining how the song was written. "I really wanted to do something aligned with *Citizen Kane* so I had this title written around that angle. Then I came across that poem and those four lines just etched like a burning image in my head. It hit me so strongly that all of a sudden the whole scope of the theme changed."

"It just made me freeze

entertained a year before anything was written for the new lp. It was at the urging of Geddy and Ray Danniels that the title evolved into a song and an album title. Even before the band left for England on last spring's brief European

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**Tom Shandel
is on holiday.**

ACTORS' WORKSHOP

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Bob Turner
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Music and Dance
Friday and Saturday evenings
8:30 P.M.
Tickets: \$3.00, available at
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tour and record the album at Rockfield studios in Wales the album cover art was being prepared based on a theme Rush described to cover artist Hugh Syme.

A composite photo taken from a demolition site in Buffalo, an empty sky with Toronto's Harbourcastle Hilton in the background, and a sinewy human model retouched to look like a grotesque puppet in the foreground, Syme's image chillingly evokes the musical concerns of Rush's title track.

The album's other major endeavor is 'Cygnus X-1.' Ten minutes in length, the composition is only part one of an epic length fantasy of Neil's which the band wishes to continue on the next album. Cygnus X-1 does exist. It's a black hole in the constellation of Cygnus. Neil read about it in a Time Magazine and decided to research it further. As he learned more, an idea for a concept length tale took shape.

In this song the singer is fascinated by what the black void could be and sets the controls of his space ship to take him close enough to investigate. Though Neil says he's not a particularly avid reader of science fiction he likes to use the idiom to get his ideas across.

"There's varying theories on Cygnus X-1," he explains. "My favourite one is that it's a crack in our dimension, our universe, our plain, and it leads to something different."

"I read a Scientific American article dealing with the same thing but from another point of view. It's black globules forming from dust, and gas, and particles that are eventually going to become a star."

"Science fiction is just an opening to your imagination. I think that's science fiction at its best: it throws your imagination wide open. There's no limit."

Rush's recent European tour provided the group with

an opportunity to try out some of their new material before they went into Rockfield to record their first album away from home. The press they received and the response of English audiences was tremendously gratifying for the group as most of their strongest influences were British artists they'd been trying to emulate.

"I think if we'd gone to England a year ago or before 2112 it wouldn't have been the same," says Neil realistically. "Then we probably would have been slagged by the press because of that same fact. But now, because we've established an independent identity, they appreciate us more."

At this point in their career the only other thing Neil, Geddy and Alex could want is a hit single. The group's success has been built almost totally by constant touring and a minimum of FM airplay. One song from the new lp, 'Closer To The Heart' conceivably could be the first hit.

"We're remaining philosophical about 'Closer To The Heart.' We'd all like to see it as a single and see it do well but we've had ten hit singles already that didn't go anywhere. That doesn't hurt us. We've got everything we need, really."

"I remember my frustration as a young musician dealing with people who said you can't do anything without a hit single yet I knew all my life it wasn't true. That's the evil thing that's always brought me down even through the evil years as a struggling musician trying to get something together. I faced that kind of enmity, that negative thinking. It dragged me down a lot."

"But all you have to do is be prepared to work and work hard all the time. If you're really into it, it's not bad at all. We really enjoy it, and even though we really don't need to now and can level off, we're still going off on a seven week tour."