Heavy side of Rush

Simon Kinnersley reports from Pittsburgh on the Canadian heavy metal trio who open a British tour on Sunday

There's a thick and omnipresent blanket of smog that hangs menacingly over Pittsburgh. It fits snugly, horizontally to horizon, in a way that almost suggests that some heavenly carpet-fitter dropped by to help them out with the finer points.

I am told during my ride from the airport that Pittsburgh is a bit smoggy, although having no idea what it is like, I only know how much more smoggy it is than New York. I am told that it has been raining and that rain in the city only means one thing: it's going to be even more smoggy in the city.

As we drive into the suburbs, I see the famous Primanti Brothers restaurant, a place that I have heard a lot about. I can't decide whether to stop for lunch or not. I am not sure if it's worth the trouble, but I am curious to see what it's like.

We arrive at our hotel, the Sheraton, where I am staying, and I am told that it is a very nice hotel, but I am not really interested in hotels. I just want to get to the show and see how it is.

I am told that the show is going to be great, and I am excited to see it. I have heard a lot about Rush, and I am really looking forward to seeing them live.

The show is fantastic. I am amazed by how good they sound. I have never seen a band play so well. The energy is incredible, and the crowd is going wild.

I am told that the setlist is great, and I am grateful to have seen it live. Rush is a really incredible band, and I am glad that I got to see them live.

After the show, I am told that I should go to the airport and catch a flight to New York. I am a bit hesitant, but I am told that it is the best way to get there.

I am told that I should take a cab to the airport, and I am grateful for the advice. It is a long trip, and I am glad that I have someone to help me with it.

I am grateful to have been able to see Rush live. They are an incredible band, and I am glad that I got to see them.

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks

To a Degree Lee

Lee Hendricks
Rush: 'It's easy to go over the edge'

from page 14

rock band. I'd like us to become a hard edge band with more textures that'll be a lot more interesting to listen to.

One cannot help feeling that rather than having the front pair of musicians caring around frantically trying to play the multitude of instruments each has taken on, it might make a lot more sense to bring in a full-size keyboards player. This remark is greeted with some disdain as Lee refers back to decorative and suchlike.

It transpires that this injection of greater melody into their music has been a very deliberate step and one which the band as a whole is eager to take. "We claim that in the past we were content to bash out almost any simplistic line, there is now a good deal more thought and application going into it."

All of them are now trying to work more closely together (something he admits hasn't always happened in the past) to create a more varied array of sounds and effects.

In spite of all these good intentions it was painfully obvious at the gig that they still pull in a less-than-pleasing habit among mainstream American rock bands of trying to blast the audience out of the back of the hall. This strikes me as scarcely reconcilable with all this talk of melody, texture and so forth.

"We have a reputation for that, it's true. We're loud, there's no denying that. We've always liked playing at certain volume levels, to take up space, I guess. It's something we're working on, we're trying to keep the volume down, trying to keep control and at the same time looking for more sophisticated sort of hardback sound."

"Working in the kind of space and sort of rock music that we are, it's a fine line to walk. It's easy to go over the edge, but at the same time if you don't get to the right point it leaves an uneasy emptiness in the sound. It's something we have to live with. I mean, if you don't get it right it can break you in two".

With all the more volatile and mercurial musical developments that have emerged in the last 12 months or so, it has become painfully apparent to many of the less adventurous bands that there is no longer any place for either them or their music. Lee, however, strongly refutes any suggestion that there is any danger of this happening to Rush.

"I think we're something apart from trends. We're not a trendy band, fall back and none of us feel that that music is threatening us. More importantly, our audiences are growing, so it still has to be in vogue with those people. I think we appeal to a mentality, and there's still a lot of that mentality".

In spite of the very sizeable following that they obviously now enjoy in the States it seems that they still receive little attention on the radio. It's unlikely, of course, unless they suddenly start cutting three-minute spectacles, that they'll ever make it onto the AM stations. Nevertheless it seems that, with the odd notable exception, they're none too well-represented on the more rock-orientated FM wavebands either.

Surprisingly it's a situation that they seem quite resigned to, working on the basic theory that the different stations have never been particularly interested, so there's little reason why they should worry.

As to underline this point, they were invited into a local Pittsburgh studio the previous day and the producer had never even heard of them. The result was a two minute conversation that revolved around a discussion of their itinerary and where they'd been. This, they said, was not at all unusual.

So they have a tour like crazy. "Simply because it's the only way we get exposed", says Lee without a trace of either frustration or bitterness. "It's the only way we can exist and keep our faces from starving. We've been doing it pretty well non-stop for three years and we've grown to enjoy it.

"I don't think we'll ever be the kind of band whose records will sell themselves. We'll have to go out and sell them. Our music is up to seeing us, so we're in it right up to our necks and we've got to stay there."
