

STAGELIFE



december 1977

ROD STEWART'S
SOLO TIPS & MANEUVERS

RUSH:
ARE THEY
AFRAID OF
HEAVY
METAL?

**JEAN-LUC
PONTY:**
STILL MILES
AHEAD

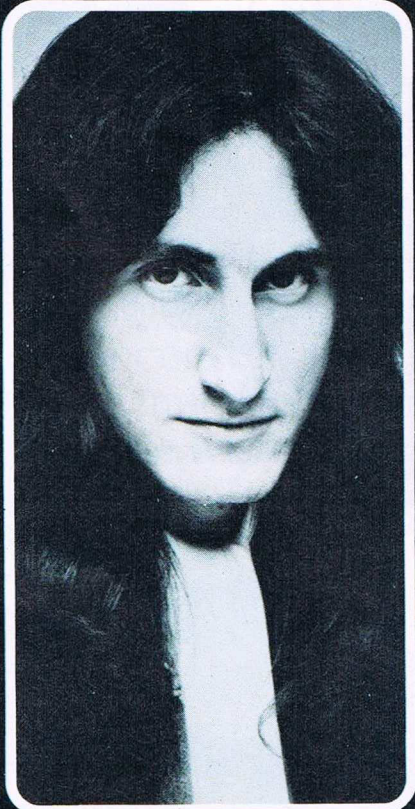
**LISA
DAL
BELLO**
ON RISING

By Jymn Parrett

First time these eyeballs hit upon Rush it was to the tune of their debut album. Repellent as the cover art was, I took it to the nearest turntable where the metal grunge of the music conquered any ill effects caused by packaging. Half way through "Finding My Way" these eardrums were pounding in time with the speaker fabric which was vibrating wildly one-eighth of an inch from my outer ears. Now this was heavy metal.

It was about a week after this discovery that I ran into Rush for the second time. This time it was in the flesh; they were playing the Whiskey A Go Go in L.A. Looking wasted and ready for the nearest mortuary, our young trio moved through three desultory nights, the last three before returning home to T.O. It had been a long tour and it was difficult to adjust to the confines of the Whiskey after a cross-country tour of the big halls opening for Kiss.

"We're \$14,000 in debt, we're tired and playing in this tiny place isn't helping matters," sighed Geddy in the seamy Whiskey dressing room, "The tour was O.K. The response was great and the guys in Kiss are all nice. Having a new drummer has definitely kept us fresh. Wait until our next album comes out. It'll be a little different than what you're hearing in this place. We're not into playing clubs."



RUSH REITERATION



Upstairs
Dec. 5-7
SHAWN PHILIPS

Downstairs
Dec. 5-10
Little Girl & Dreadful Snakes

Upstairs
Dec. 8-10
GROVER WASHINGTON JR

Downstairs
Little Girl & Dreadful Snakes

Upstairs
Dec. 12-13
FIGGY DUFF

Downstairs
Parts & Labour

Upstairs
Dec. 14
MOTORS

Downstairs
Parts & Labour

Upstairs
Dec. 15-17
DOMENIC TROIANO

Downstairs
Parts & Labour

Upstairs
Dec. 19-23
T.B.A.

Downstairs
Cahoots

Upstairs
Dec. 26-31
CUEBALL

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In order to recoup, Rush attacked the following *2112* with vengeance. "That album was our reaction to all those who came down on us after *Caress of Steel*," reveals Geddy, "which only made us work that much harder."

This time Neil's lyrics tuned into the music and the sci-fi nature of the music came through loud and clear. Best of all the band was back to playing and playing well. One moment serene and pastoral; the next explosions of electric guitar, bass and drums. Alex Lifeson came into his own with this album, featuring his most inspired playing since the debut LP.

As if anticipating a live record with the instrumental dynamics of *2112*, the double *All The World's A Stage* proved that there are indeed two Rushes. The studio group with its attention to detail and the live one with its bombardier metal drone. Even in the live record the studio mixing has taken a portion of the spontaneity in order to clarify the sound.

The 'studio Rush' entered its prime with the newest release, *A Farewell to Kings*. Two major compositions emerged from these sessions. "Cygnus XI" in ten minutes of involved Rush-rock for which Geddy said that "total concentration was needed." Then there's "Xanadu." Geddy tells us: "Neil wrote the lyrics during *Caress of Steel* and the music evolved during soundchecks. We ended up with about 4,000 versions over four or five months of touring. In April, 1977, we recorded a demo at Toronto Sound and we settled on that version. During those soundchecks we refined and refined and we're quite happy the way it turned out."

While saying the above, Geddy played me the demo and, although he was amused at the version, I couldn't believe the raw intensity of Rush recorded with a minimum of overdubs and just the essential ingredients.

It was Geddy's explanation of how Rush record that shed light on the sometimes sterile nature of the albums, *A Farewell to Kings* included. "It takes us about a month to record an album," explains Geddy, "and during that time we record the basic tracks—guitar, bass, drums—of all the songs. Once we get the right feel then we'll overdub a couple of guitars and then we'll leave it. After it's all done I come in and do the vocals. With *A Farewell to Kings* we recorded at Rockfield and I did the vocals separately at Advision in London."

It was during the recording of the third project, *Caress of Steel* (great title) that I next spoke with Rush. In the midst of the recording, during "No One At The Bridge," the group was flying high in anticipation of the album's release.

This was to be the Rush record that would not only cover all bases (heavy metal, progressive hard rock—as Rush like to call its music—but also softer, acoustic stuff) but also overshadow their previous work setting new standards and generally producing the all time Rush album.

It didn't quite turn out that way. Not only did *Caress of Steel* fail as financial product, it was greeted with particularly bad press. As to the latter, Rush was no stranger and could easily deal with it but pressure from the record company and the industry in general almost broke up the band. "We were either going to get another member, break up, or crack up," says Geddy. The truth be known, it was a limp effort; "The Necromancer" the only solid number other than a live staple, "Bastille Day." Although 'Professor' Peart's drumming was faultless throughout, his lyrics were becoming increasingly overblown.

(Just as Geddy was speaking those very words, the Whiskey hallway is filled with the sounds of Kim Fowley hustling Iggy Pop into recording Garland Jeffries' "Wild In The Street," followed by the sound of Iggy falling down the treacherous Whiskey stairs, slowly standing up, mumbling, "Ah don't need nobody..." Geddy remains impassive. After all, he's just spent the previous two months touring with Kiss.)

With the release of the second album, *Fly By Night*, Rush flexed its metal muscle with more caution, all but eliminating their previous gut pummeling raunch. Surely this couldn't be the same band of piledriving Canucks. Even the ton weight of the live "Best I Can" had been lightened to feather weight on this record. "By-Tor" was an interesting try but the live versions far exceeded this rendition. Even if Rush were infatuated with this new sound, they've come to treat it as immature (i.e. mature as being *A Farewell to Kings*). "I never play the first album and very rarely do I play the second one," advises Geddy nowadays, "We tried new things and it worked for us at the time but I'm much more interested in the period after *Fly By Night*."

That album did have something intriguing although it took me a couple of years to find out that it was new drummer Neil Peart who had so subtly altered the sound of Rush. Peart once told a reporter, in explanation of the replacement of John Rutsey by himself: "He was into simple, straightforward music—as the first Rush album suggests—and he didn't altogether agree with the directions Alex and Geddy planned for the future."

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album's out. We get so involved in the production as well as the song itself that we need Terry Brown's objective view as producer to set things straight."

"Take 'Cygnus XI' for instance. We knew what it was supposed to sound like and while we were recording it Terry kept stopping us saying that it wasn't right. There was a point when we thought we'd never finish it. My hands were becoming numb and they were vibrating (flexes fingers slightly) like this."

Jean-Luc Ponty

Strangely enough, there had been a real possibility that Ponty would never have joined Mahavishnu in the first place. After leaving Zappa, Jean-Luc had conceived a solo album and done a demo. However, due to business reasons, namely the lack of a recording contract, no management, and no band, Ponty was not in a position to start a solo career. This was not the only reason that he accepted McLaughlin's offer though.

"I always had a lot of admiration for John as a musician. I knew him for a long time and we had discussed the possibility of playing together many times and it never happened. I knew it was my last chance to do something with him because I was really on the edge of having my own band."

Upon the Wings Of Music (1975) became Ponty's first solo album from Atlantic records. At that time he described it as the first chapter of what he wanted to do with his band. Today, that view is changed.

"When I look at the first album with the insight of four years, it was like I had been frustrated without a contract, without any outlet to make an album. I

According to Geddy, the secret to Rush's recording success is that the group remain as friends. Geddy tells us:

"We each have our specialties and we stick to them more or less." He's right. The band is refreshing in their lack of 'star attitude' and there is little of the usual bickering.

The constant touring has no doubt kept Rush in the minds of both urban and rural areas. The band received rave reviews on its recent British tour which

shouldn't surprise anyone since Rush shows British influence in the complex arrangements and clean production.

Can Rush become bigger still? Sure. *A Farewell To Kings* proves the group can evolve into something a little different with each record. Geddy is uncertain what Rush albums of the future will sound like but his attitude shows the saving grace of the band. "I wouldn't be surprised what you'd find on upcoming Rush albums," smiles Geddy. And that's just great by me. □

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comes at once and moods shift into each other and make a whole."

The band, as of now, consists of Daryl Stuermer (guitar), Jamie Glazer (guitar), Ralphie Armstrong (bass), Allan Zavod (keyboards), and Steve Smith (drums).

Enigmatic Ocean is the newest release from Ponty and a more suitable title would be hard to find. The depth and flow of the music from the tranquil to the tempestuous is stunning. The stellar talents of guitarist Allan Holdsworth (Gong, New Tony Williams Lifetime, Soft Machine) is an unexpected bonus. Holdsworth was unavailable to tour so Jamie Glazer, a friend of Steve Smith's, has joined the band permanently.

"*Enigmatic Ocean* is a step further," Ponty explained, "from *Imaginary Voyage*. It's the same concept but I've added one guitar which gives me a fuller sound. I use more of the writing to a point where it truly sounds symphonic. There are no less solos. I feel even more comfortable playing than on the other ones. Composing is like performing. I've been performing for years and I've been improving every year." □



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