

ROCK RAINBOW

RUSH

**Monster rabbits
upstage Canadian
power trio
(almost)!**

MEGAETH

**Mustaine on
new album
'Rust in Peace'**

EVERY MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE

Sleeping giants!

NO SWEAT

**Pure genius
from Dublin**

PAN REEP NETWORK

**'Prince meets
Bon Jovi? Us?
No way, siree!'**

SKID ROW

**Preparing to
go Back into
the studio**

FORBIDDEN

Twisted tales!



Ian Gillan • Warren Cress • Soundgarden • Balaram And The Angel
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Tonight, at the Summit Enormodome in Houston, Texas, the Canadian techno-trio RUSH are poised to unveil their multi-media 'Presto' tour live extravaganza. The lasers are primed, the computers are on-line, and the giant rabbits have been given their pre-show carrot juice sniffers. But something's gone wrong... Back at Houston Airport Kerrang! 's journo - a tired, but unemotional, PAUL HENDERSON - is standing cross-legged and accosting 'likely looking locals' to ask them, (very politely y' understand):

"EXCUSE ME, DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE RUSH ARE PLAYING TONIGHT?"

THERE'S NOBODY to meet me at Houston airport, no message, I haven't a clue which hotel I'm staying in, and I don't even know the name of the venue that Rush are playing tonight. They're on in three hours and there's an interview scheduled before the band take the stage...

After several embarrassing 'Excuse-me-do-you-happen-to-know-where-Rush-are-playing-tonight?' overtures to likely looking locals at the airport, an hour-and-a-half/\$50 cab ride later ("hey man, are you from Australia?"), I arrive at Houston's 16,000-seater Summit and make my presence known. Rush are playing there, and, surprisingly, I am expected.

"Do you know which hotel I'm booked into?" I enquire of the chap with the 'All Access' laminate.

"Er... no. But we usually stay at the Quality Inn. I'll try to find out for you. Anyway, Geddy's waiting. Are you ready to go?"

"No, I'm knackered, I'm thirsty, I'm dying for a piss and... Geddy? What about the other two?"

"Geddy before the show, and then Neil, then Alex - after the show. You didn't know you were going to interview them individually?" asks All Access.

"I know nowt," I reply, following him through the Summit's corridors, with a heavy bag digging a hole in my shoulder and feeling about as happy as a turkey two weeks before Christmas...

Finally, I'm sitting exhausted in front of

Geddy and hearing him explain, in a barely audible whisper: "Many an interviewer has called me a few days later and said, 'I can't hear a word you're saying on the tape!', so you'd better have lots of level on your cassette recorder. I have a tendency to fade away!..."

RUSH, TOO, it seems, came close to fading away recently. All appears hunky dory now, with 'Presto' in the charts and the band toting their impressively staged show around the US arena circuit.

But following their last tour, when illness - Geddy with his voice, Neil with a dose of flu running for weeks - and one problem after another conspired to cause the onset of intense dissatisfaction with touring, the probability of Rush never touring again was very high - and the prospect of Rush ceasing to exist at all was at least on the cards.

"'Dissatisfaction with touring' needs qualifying, though," stresses Geddy, keen to point out that it's not that they dislike playing. "It's the 'machine' and the inevitability of gig after gig - the kind of sameness and frustration of being in a million cities but not being able to see very much of any of them."

"And kind of being yanked out of your own personal environment. After as many years as we've been touring, we've come to value our private time and our time with our families pretty highly, so the call back to the road feels more and more like an intrusion every time."

"You try to keep an open mind to it, and this time we've been trying to keep a



RUSH ONSTAGE: 'enough computerised lighting to keep a small power station busy'



very positive outlook. We've gone to great lengths to end the tour as humbly as possible. But inevitably I know there will come a point where the novelty and the challenge wears off and it's really just a routine of going up there and trying to get the energy back night after night.

"We've organised the travel days better this time, made sure there are enough days off, and made sure that we don't work more than three weeks without going home for 10 days. Those kind of things really help. For myself, I try to make sure my family comes out whenever they can.

"But it's all necessary, and you just fly by saying, 'If I don't do this I'm not gonna last the tour and I'm never gonna want to do it again.'"

LATER, GUITARIST Alex Lifeson would add: "I really thought that it would

be a slim chance that we'd be going back on the road. But I think taking those seven months off, 'Presto' being such a joy to make, rehearsals coming together quickly... it's changed our whole attitude towards touring. So far it's been a lot of fun. Hopefully it'll remain that way."

Drummer Neil Peart would confirm: "It was a difficult decision to make, to do this tour or not. But essentially I felt that for me, for a band to be vital it needs to be playing live, and I wasn't ready to close that door.

"Rush was still very much the focus of my life and my work, so it seemed to me that I didn't have a choice! I put aside my doubts and just went for it.

"We're a 'musician' band, and all of us love to play. The vitality of this band has always been touring. It's what made us popular. We didn't have airplay, we didn't have media support; it was strictly touring.

KONTINUEZ OVER

"We toyed for a very long time with the idea of adding another player on this tour, but in the end we just couldn't bring ourselves to do it" - GEDDY LEE

GEDDY LEE (wearing shades) and ghostly blue 20-foot high furry rabbit

EXCUSE ME

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going out and playing and opening shows for other bands, that drew us a following in the first place."

WOULD IT be fair comment, then, to say that Rush almost split up after the last tour?

Alex: "I remember sitting in the control room when we were finishing the live album, 'A Show Off Hands', and asking Neil and Geddy what we were gonna do about the next tour. But both Neil and Geddy said they just didn't wanna talk about it, and I thought, 'Well, this could be it'."

"The more time we had off, the more I thought, 'Well, it's not so bad, not touring. We can still make records, and maybe touring just isn't that important...'. Then everything just fell in place and it came right round again! But I think that's probably the closest that we've come to."

One of Rush's complaints about touring in the past, is that they have too many things to do on stage—too many "black boxes" and buttons to push. As you're still touring as a three-piece, what's changed this tour?

Geddy: "We toyed for a very long time with the idea of adding another player on this tour, but in the end we just couldn't bring ourselves to do it. We just felt that what our fans have come to expect from us is just to see the three of us. With us, I think it would look odd. And I think it would feel odd... although part of me says, 'But it would be so great just to play bass and sing all night', y'know?"

BUT INSTEAD of the option of adding another musician we've just reorganised the electronic side of things much better. It still keeps me pretty busy, but Alex has taken a lot of those parts—some of the weight from my shoulders! Neil's doing quite a lot as well—lots of complicated triggering things. I've been able to have a lot less keyboards physically on stage, so it makes the whole set a little less intimidating. I think it's a nice thing at this point to get away from those big stacks of junk.

"Fortunately too, we've brought back some older songs to the show that have broken it up a bit, so there are some songs that are not nearly as technological, where we can take a bit of a breather from that. I think it's paced the set nicely, so we're not always 'trapped'."

Nevertheless, it's obvious that there's still an awful lot of hardware around—although most of it is off stage rather than on: back-projected thematic 'movies', enough computerised lighting to keep a small power station busy, lasers, enough bundles of sound-generating components and wires to make Rush sound at times like a 50-piece electronically equipped orchestra rather than a three-piece rock combo... not to mention 20-foot high furry rabbits.

In terms of staging, Rush must have

"It was a difficult decision to make, to do this tour or not. But essentially I felt that for me, for a band to be vital it needs to be playing live, and I wasn't ready to close that door"—NEIL PEART

spent a bundle on this tour, with an overall visual display probably bettered only by the gargantuan productions of Pink Floyd. The audience obviously love it, often cheering just as much for a particular lighting change as for the music.

Neil: "Yeah, I noticed that, actually. I'm a bit of a fan of opera and I notice when I go to an opera that when the curtain goes up for Act Three and there's a beautiful set, the audience cheers for it. It seems kinda funny to cheer for the set designer, but... it's a beautiful thing, y'know? It's no insult to the music, and I think we're all confident enough about what we do that we don't feel threatened by the lights."

"Our live performances are really far more than the music. Not to be crass about it, I'd like to think that people go home and think, 'That was really worth spending an evening of my life and \$20', or whatever it costs them."

AFTER YEARS of putting out albums and touring, Rush have obviously built up a pool of very loyal fans, many of whom are going to react ecstatically to their shows no matter how well they play—especially when faced with such a 'multi-media' production. Is it therefore difficult, I wondered, to come off stage and know whether they've played a good show or not?

Geddy: "That's a very good question. I think we know when we've played well. I think the bigger you get, and the bigger your name—or the myth of what you are—gets, and the more spectacular the show is, there's a kind of excitement factor that comes along with it."

"But I think you inherently know when you haven't played your best. I think all musicians know in their hearts, when they walk off stage, whether they played like bums or not."

"If mistakes are made, they're subtle. I think you do get to a point where the mistakes you make are mostly noticeable by yourself or maybe the sound guy who's mixing you every night. But it's very rare that giant mistakes happen."

"I always forget words. I don't think there's a singer alive that remembers all his lyrics. But that's more of a mental lapse than a flub."

"There are certain nights when you just

"Britain is a long and expensive way to go with a big show for just half-a-dozen dates. We can't play a lot of those places that we did 10 years ago"—ALEX LIFESON

don't feel on top of it, where you feel like you gotta work a lot harder to stay in the pocket. And there are other nights—which I think is more of a danger—where it's quite the opposite. You're playing so automatically that you're not really putting much into the show. I think that's sometimes more noticeable by a crowd than where you make the odd clunker here and there..."

THE EXPENSE of bringing such a big production to the UK, combined with Rush's general re-think on touring, makes it look as if Britain is highly unlikely to get the chance to make any kind of judgement of the band's 'Presto' tour performances.

Geddy: "It's important for us to play there. We've got very dedicated fans there, and we do appreciate that. The problem is we only get over there every four or five years, and for all the reasons that we've talked about, it's really inevitable."

"Understandably, I'm sure the British fans would like to see us over every tour. But as much as we'd like to be there, I don't think it's possible. It's a tough thing to organise."

"I feel very good about this tour and this show. I think it's a good show, and I'd like to take it around the world. But whether we can do that sanely remains to be seen. We kind of agreed to this tour in a 'let's take-it-one-month-at-a-time-and-see-how-long-it-can-last' way... if everything goes well, we'll keep extending it."

Alex: "Britain is a long and expensive way to go with a big show for just half-a-dozen dates. We can't play a lot of those places that we did 10 years ago. We could do the NEC, SECC and Wembley—where we could put on the full show—but really that's it."

"Plus, we're not really big enough in Europe to go and do big dates there. We could scale-down the show but it's not very satisfying to do those kind of gigs. So unfortunately we tend to stay away from going over."

SO WILL we ever see Rush playing these shores again? My own impression is that there's a strong chance that before long Rush could well exist only as a recording band.

But maybe even that is questionable given Neil Peart's comments that "for a band to be vital, it needs to be playing live", and Geddy Lee's admission that, "probably all our goals that we set out to achieve within Rush have been fulfilled".

A lot of between-the-lines reading could point to 'Presto' being Rush's cue to jump into the magician's hat and disappear. So what's the deal, Neil?

"With the last album in particular, we were in a wide open position where our Phonogram record contract had expired and we were absolutely free to work or not work as we saw fit."

"The three of us got together in the most informal way and said, 'Well guys, what do you want to do?' We decided that we really wanted to make another record. I can certainly see another one in the future..."

ONE X ONE = THREE

GEDDY LEE



NEIL PEART



ALEX LIFESON



EVEN THOUGH I dislike interviewing band members individually, an advantage of one-to-one conversations is that you get a feel for the different personalities. But there again, appearances can be deceptive. Probably no one presents their 'real' self when questioned by someone they've never met before.

Far better then, I decided, to let each one member have his say about the other two. None of them seemed to happy with the idea, although—with the exception of Neil Peart—when pressed they were at least willing to offer basic sketches.

Geddy: "Alex is very out-going, very gregarious," he begins thoughtfully, taking time to choose his words carefully, "... a funny guy. There are not very many serious bones in his body. He loves to have a good time, and as a musician he's very instinctive. He's not a premeditative or composition-oriented kind of guy. I think that's one of his strongest attributes.

"He's also very technical minded—very scientific in his approach to a lot of things. The way his mind works, you could call him a music scientist.

"Neil is very solitary. Very self-sufficient—to a point. His interests are wide, varied and exhausting. He has very much the same kind of personality that a long-distance runner or a marathon swimmer would have—almost unquenchable drive.

"He's one of the most remarkable people I've ever met, and probably ever will meet. If something's not a challenge, it's not interesting for him. He's incredibly well read. He's certainly not without a sense of humour, but he can be very distant.

"He's not an easy person for a stranger to come in contact with, I think. But once you know him he's a very warm and funny guy."

And where does Geddy Lee fit in?

"You'll have to ask them! They'll tell you. I'm sure between the two of them

you'll get some semblance of what kind of goof I am."

ALEX: "NEIL is quite a private, very insular person. But at the same time he can be very open and really, really funny. He's got a great sense of humour.

"Geddy's also got a really... twisted sense of humour. He's a lot of fun, and he's up for anything. But he tends to be a bit of a worrier. He worries more than any of us about how the show's going, about this or that. Everything is very important to him. He can get himself worked-up at times.

"I'm probably in the middle somewhere. I think I'm pretty easy-going, and I'm quite a spontaneous person. I don't worry too much about things I don't need to worry about. I sort of go with the flow. How American! How Californian!

"It shows in our writing, even. When Geddy and I get together to start working, the stuff that I write always happens very quickly; whereas Geddy's a lot more

methodical, and he'll work on something until he knows it's the right thing. But I think we're all a bit perfectionist in our own way.

"Maybe Neil and I are not perfectionists so much as organisational nuts—both Virgos! Very nit-picking about organisation, but slobbs at heart!"

NEIL, ON the other hand, is having none of it. A 'very private person', as Alex put it, he is also reticent to expose the privacy of his colleagues:

"No! That's a nightmare question when you know somebody so well. It's like saying, 'Sum up your wife in a paragraph', or something. You kind of feel it's futile."

What about whether the differences between the three of you is a strength when you work together?

Neil: "Yes, absolutely. To me the most important kinds of people in the world are those who make me laugh and those who make me think. Those two guys exemplify both of those qualities..."