RUSH
Monster rabbits upstage Canadian power trio (almost)!

MEGADETH
Mustaine on new album 'Rust in Peace'

EVERY MOTHER'S NIGHTMARE
Sleeping giants!

NO SWEAT
Pure genius from Dublin

KERRANG!

DAN REED NETWORK
'Prince meets Bon Jovi? Us? No way, squire!'

SKID ROW
Preparing to go Bach into the studio

FORBIDDEN
Twisted tales!
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 snifters. But something’s gone wrong... Back at Houston Airport ‘Kerrang!’ centre - a tired, but unemotional, PAUL HENDERSON - is standing cross-legged and accosting ‘likely looking locals’ to ask them, (very politely you understand):

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

HERE’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/550 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?” 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 now,” 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 sameess and frustration of being in a million cities but not being able to see very much of any of them.

“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
very positive outlook. We’ve gone to great lengths to ensure the tour is as humanly routed 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
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.

ould 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 Of 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
good right again. But I think that's
probably the most honest thing that we've come
out with.

One of Rush's complaints about touring
in the past, is that they have too many
tings 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've tried 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
things going on. 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
ting 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
tings 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 Behind-the-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
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 opus, and I notice when I
go to any show 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 performances are really far
more than just music. To be able to
sing, I'd like to think that people go
together and think, 'That was really
worth spending an evening of your life and $20'
or whatever it costs them.'

After years of putting out
albums and touring, Rush have
obviously built up a pool of
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
to stage and know whether they've played
a good show or not?

Geddy: "That's a very good question.
I think when we've played well, I
think the bigger you get, and the bigger
your name - or the myth of what you are -
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
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. We'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 explain...

"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 and still remain to be seen.
We kind of agreed to this tour in a
'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.

"But, 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.

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
that we just can't achieve within Rush have
been fulfilled.

A lot of between-the-lines reading could
point to 'Presto' being Rush's last 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...
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 predeterminative 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 personality 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 methodised, 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 slots 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...”