Attention all planets of the Solar Federation. We have assumed control. We have assumed control...
'Heavy Metal Lives' thunders GEOFF 'Keraannng' BARTON (again) as the Priests Of The Temple Of Syrinx, alias RUSH, lay waste to Planet Earth (well, Sheffield).

assumed control
and a rush fell over the hall, a
painfully long rush that was
only broken by an abrupt—

ker-annng!

Suddenly, Lifeless's guitar
was back in action, the riff to 'Bout Time' began. Suddenly, the crowd went bananas. Suddenly, I knew I shouldn't have been so sceptical. Suddenly the storm began.

Uncertainties forgotten. Rush excite on-stage confidence. Lifeless, on the left, young and blond-haired, dressed in black, plays his guitar vigorously, viciously. Drummer Neil Peart twirls his sticks with the same precision as his moustache and hits those skins hard. Geddy Lee's bass grows like a gorilla on hell. Gods, how all doubts to the wind. Rush are some band.

After his 'How are you doing England?' rap, Lee introduces 'Anthem' which in turn is preceded by 'Lakeview Park'. Rush gain impetus and the kids lap it up. Lee and Lifeless, the front men, sweep their guitar necks up and around in unison, good and posy without being pretentious, while music hits top gear and then smoothly slips into overdrive.

For a three-man band, Rush make a lot of noise. As a guitarist, Lifeless is everywhere, riffing, picking, shaking, plucking and strumming all within the space of about seconds. Geddy, as well as playing a mean, dirty sounding bass and singing, also contributes mini Moog passages, playing the instrument's foot-keyboard with his feet. Peart is a flashy, powerful drummer with an amazing amount of equipment at his disposal. All amounts to, as I say, a lot of noise.

'2112' is next up, along with cheers from the audience. Great stuff this, and not without its subtext. The effect of a dazzling flashbulb being more than contrasted by some extraordinarily mellow sequences. '2112', as you know, is Rush's tour de force, a science fiction tale set to music, all about life in the future when the world has buckled under the dictatorial rule of the Priests of the Temple Of Syrinx.

Live, it comes to life, so to speak, even more so than on album. Whenever the presence of the Priests is announced, lights flash out from the stage into the audience, highlighting the menace in the words. And after Lee sings 'my livelihood spills over' when the hero of the story dies, all hell breaks loose, the guitar-bass-drums triumvirate create a well-nigh solid wall of sound.

'Xanadu' follows, a brand new number which has both Lee and Lifeless playing double-necked guitars, an amazing sight. Multi-faceted, immediately captivating, with an abundance of Moog swirlings, it's a potential classic. Can't wait to hear it on the new album (which, if you're interested, will also include a fifteen-minute song about black holes in space).

'You Don't Get Something For Nothing' more direct heavy metal, high and low and prepares us for 'By-Tor And The Snow Dog', also leading into 'The Necromancer' somehow along the way. A fearsome rendition of this, you can almost hear the grinding of teeth and the slashing of claws.

'Working Man' and 'Finding My Way' conclude the set in good time rock 'n' roll fashion and the encore, 'Fly By Night' and 'In The Mood' is all nicely enjoyable. I'll say, although the band themselves were not altogether happy with the gig, mainly because of the equipment problems—but problems, certainly, which didn't manifest themselves in any great extent as far as I was concerned.

Rush released an experience, one that I am looking forward to repeating over the weekend when the band play London. As a heavy rock group they're up there with the front runners, you'd be foolish to miss them, mix the shrill, piercing vocals of Geddy Lee, the virtuoso metal guitarist of Alex Lifeson and the drumming thunderings of Neil Peart.

Don't know about the planets of the Solar Federation, but Rush have certainly assumed control of me.

How about you?