

Spirit Of *Rush*

February '97

Issue 36.



T 4 E

Spirit of Rush

Editorial

Hello and Happy New Year to you all. Sorry this issue is a little late (6 weeks or so) what with work and family commitments it's not always easy to get the mag out on time. This is one reason we do not like to put a "Next issue will be out on..." in case something unavoidable comes up and delays things. If the mag is late please do not waste a stamp by writing in saying "Where's my Spirit?" we will get it out eventually — Honest!

This is has all new layouts which look brill, I'm sure you all agree. Same page count as usual but much more info crammed in. Stewart, Steve (Mr. Trivia) Adams and Janet are all to be congratulated on their work.

There has Been so much going on in the Rush world since 't4e' was released, that we have no room to mention it all here on the editorial page. You will find an all new news page on the following page which should keep you abreast of all that's going on. (it was the last page to be put together so it's bang up to date.)

The 't4e' evening with... tour is doing good business Stateside. Janet, Stewart and myself went over in mid-October for the opening two shows, and by golly we had a ball, look out for the chronicles of our trip in the next issue. If you can get over there for any shows on the 2nd leg (around April, May time),

Details will be in the next issue. You will see a show to remember. The new songs really do come to life and sound great, I may change my opinion of the album (as an album) yet.

The 2nd Annual(?) Rush Convention will take place at the same venue as last years, Leicester University. On Saturday the 30th of August. We have changed the day from Sunday to Saturday by popular request. Many of you had to leave early to travel home for work on the Monday, or due to the usual amount of public transport on a Sunday. Now you can make arrangements to stay in Leicester overnight and travel back home on the Sunday. We will publish a list of Bed & Breakfast places in and around Leicester in the next issue, so if you know of any in the area let us know ASAP so they can be included. We have an extension on a Saturday night until 2am, if you can all stand the pace! Start at 2pm, finish at 2am, 12 hours for the same price of only £12.00 each per ticket as last years. Longer for the same money, can't be a bad deal ca it. We hope to have two bands for you this year playing in a larger hall upstairs with a full sized PA and lighting systems. The room downstairs where The Jack Secret Show played last year, will be turned over to a dealers/fans to trade/sell their Rush collectibles, we have done this once again my popular demand. You want it, you go it. So if you want a table reserved for

you to be ale to do this end an SAE/IRC to me at the editorial address and I'll send you details. We will have all the usual stuff which we had last year with a few new items thrown in. One this planned is the Ultimate Rush Quiz which someone has volunteered to organise, so start squatting up right away.

We have booked the venue and started the ball rolling earlier this year, so you can book your holidays around the convention and not miss out, as I know some of you did last year. If you were at last years you know how good it was and I'm sure you will want to attend again, if you missed it your in for a real treat this year.

We want to advertise it better this year, so if you can help by putting flyers up in your local record stores (on their walls or in the Rush section) placing adverts in you local press entertainment sections etc. etc. Any other ideas you might have please let us know ASAP. So get your orders in NOW for your tickets, Only £12.00 each available now!

If you have received a reminder to renew your subscription with this issue, please do it ASAP. YOU are our lifeline, without your support we will not make our 10th anniversary later this year.

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Mick

DISTANT EARLY WARNINGS

Secret Show Shocker

Rush performed a "secret show" at the Club Phoenix in Toronto on December the 18th 1996 in front of only 800 people.

This was kept strictly hush-hush and the only way to get in was to win tickets (and they didn't even tell you what band you'd be going to see - it was part of what they call the "Molson Canadian Blind Date" series). There were no real "tickets", instead a laminate was handed out before the show to provide your entrance.

Although it was supposed to be secret, many of the fans there already knew it would be Rush playing the show (some however thought it might be The Tragically Hip or Neil Young).

European Tour.

Rush will NOT tour Europe for Test for Echo, but I've been assured by SRO/Anthem that the boys WILL be here again, as to when, who knows, my personal theory is we'll see them on these shores for the Live album, then that'll be it.

The Masked Rider Cycling in West Africa By Neil Peart

Neils novel has been released in Canada by Pottersfield Press. The book will be on general release in the spring. Until then it will only be available via mail order.

Details of the book are as follows:

Genre: Travel Book
Size: 6x9 paperback
Pages: 286 pages
Photos: Yes
Cover: Hugh Syme
ISBN: 1-895900-02-6

The address is:

Pottersfield Press
83 Leslie Road
East Lawrencetown
Nova Scotia B2Z 1P8
CANADA

The prices including shipping are:

In Canada, send \$25 Canadian
In the US, send \$25 US
Elsewhere, send \$35 US

Cheques must be payable to Pottersfield Press.

Please NOTE that Pottersfield Press DOES NOT have a phone number, so all correspondence must be done through post.

VICTOR

According to Bill Bell, he and Alex plan to start writing new material under the Victor banner towards the end of January.

Test for Echo Tour Part 2.

As most of you will know the first leg of the T4E tour ended on December 15th at the East3 Rutherford, NJ. The second leg doesn't start until early May and will continue through to July. The first part of the tour is being planned as a full Canadian tour, making it the first time they've done this since the HYF tour, so European fans please count yourselves lucky we saw them on the Bones tour.

This "vacant" time will be spent going through the various tapes that the band have from the last 3 or 4 tours to select material to go onto the Live album which is due for release during the 4th quarter of 1997.

Neil Peart - The Videos

My god Neil's busy. Not only has he released his book, he's also just released 3 videos.

One of the videos is "The Making of Burning for Buddy". I've not seen anything about it yet, but I have been told it's been released so keep your eyes peeled.

The other videos are from DCI Music Video and Warner Bros. and are called "A Work in Progress". Below is a snippet from the press release and a contact number for more details.

DCI Music Video and Warner Bros. Publications are pleased to announce the release of one of the most eagerly-anticipated projects in contemporary percussion education. Neil Peart: "A Work in Progress" is a two-video box set containing almost four hours of insight, instruction, philosophy, and performance from one of rock's most celebrated drummers.

For more information freefone 0800 376 9100

There's
a Broon
loose
about
this
Hoose.

The Detroit based band *Tiles*, will be releasing their new album during February, titled "*Fence the Clear*". The album was produced by that all round nice bloke Terry Brown.

...The Other Half

The video for Half the World is now being aired on Much Music in Canada and also on MTV (but not very often).

Rush Honoured

Rush have been awarded the "Order of Canada". This is along similar lines to say an MBE, or OBE. They will be presented with their awards in Ottawa during February.

Mick,

Well, you've done it again. Issue 35, another masterpiece!!!

I am pleased there is a photo of Mr Stewart Gilray in it 'cos he signed a photo to my son Matty.

I obtained a copy of the tribute album from your good self, in July (great to have a copy before September) well, what can I say? S**T H*T! Brilliant, sound. Those guys have some talent I can say, and class!

I listened again and again to it and smiled proudly, and thought of the convention at Leicester Uni.

It does relate in a funny sort of way - maybe Stewart should do a solo demo tape of himself and call it "Ghost of Victor, A Tribute To Alex".

"TEST FOR ECHO!" Well Tuesday 10 September could not come quick enough and when it did I legged it round town to obtain my copy but with no luck! My mate Rob got it for me, and it was 'RUSHED' onto my CD player, to annoyingly interrupt Eastenders (but important issues have to come first! Wouldn't you all agree?!). It's brill. A top 3 from the album would be interesting, compiled by fanz. Mine would be 1. Driven, 2. Dog Years, 3. Virtuality.

Keep up the good work, I am sure I can speak for all that we appreciate the 'Time & Motion' (is that corny or what?) you and your team put into SOR.

Regards,

STEVE C

Warrington

Dear Mick & Stewart,

Many thanks for the copy of Spirit 35 that I've just received. It's my first Rush fanzine and I was pleasantly surprised how well you put it together, well done.

Inside you ask for opinions on Test for Echo and the tribute album. I realise that I may be a bit late but anyway here goes. Overall, Test For Echo is a very good album. I must admit to being a little worried on hearing of its release as I was a little disappointed in Counterparts. However, after one play through of 'Test' it was obvious that Alex, Ged and Neil had not let us down. By the time I'd got to Virtuality I was blown away. It's a classic that would stand against any Rush song. Other highlights for me include Totem, Resist, Half the World and The Color of Right. To be honest, there's not a bad song on the album. My six year old son Thomas loves Dog Years. Also, I think the tracks I've mentioned would sound amazing live. If only they would tour, live is the best way to hear Rush.

As for the Working Man album, I think the first four tracks are fantastic, especially Analog Kid. But they murdered 'La Villa'. It's just so over-played, and sounds disjointed. Mission is great, Anthem OK but it's again over-played in the guitar department. Jacob's Ladder, one of my all-time favourites is very good. Final highlights for me are Red Barchetta and Freewill. My only gripe is that the guitar solos are over-played on some tracks. But I do love the album, very refreshing.

I was disappointed to miss the convention. Even more so as it was only an hour's drive away. Unfortunately I only heard of it after the event. I'm glad it was a success. I will be there next year.

Finally, I went to see a Rush cover band last night called YYZ. All the songs were pre-Signals except for *Analog Kid*. If you get the chance, go see them - they were excellent.

Many thanks again, I hope to hear from you. Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully,

JASON CHURCHILL

Dudley

Dear Spirit,

Sorry for the delay in re-subscribing - how can I not keep in touch with Spirit?

Being a 'first time writer' to Spirit makes writing more intriguing I suppose - maybe not.

Just a brief note to tell you folks out there that the Jack Secret Show is not the only Rush tribute band from my neck of the woods who performed on the 26th (October) at Halifax and will be performing at Bradford Rio Campus on Sat 9 November. Apparently these are only one-off gigs. Apart from the standard songs they performed "Between the Wheels" which I must admit sounded even better than the live Rush bootleg from the GUP tour in Montreal! (1984)

I ask you to spread the good word of Rush music by either printing this in your mag if it's published before 9 Nov or let the Internet have a go. This tribute band didn't have a name but rec'd a resounding reception.

By the way, great convention and I was the guy playing drums on Xanadu alongside that guy who had that TIGHT/SMALL green & white EXIT... t-shirt on. Hi - if you're that bass player.

Anyway must dash - Quick note on new albums - Title track and instrumental are weakest songs on album. Dog Years/Totem/Time & Motion/Virtuality/Resist are excellent.

Yours,

ZAHID HASSAN

Bradford

Mick, Stewart, Janet and staff,

In the wake of the debate with Steve Adams' Trivia page (SOR#33), Steve Streeter's rebuttal (SOR#34) and Bill Terney's "National Midnight Star" posting, I would like to make the following observation. In order to prevent confusion, I'll refer to Steve Adams as Mr Adams and Steve Streeter as Mr Streeter.

First, to Bill Terney. I appreciated and thoroughly enjoyed your Rush related experience. Thanks for sharing it with me and the rest of the world!

Second, to Mr Streeter. You're right, Bill's posting was a really positive, fun item of interest. The argument is about nothing and it was a senseless attack on Bill.

Third, to Mr Adams. There is no side to see, everything is clear. Bill was not offending whatsoever. His entire posting was a harmless, Rush-related subject, he simply felt good about sharing with other Rush fans. Your entire point has been contradictory from start to finish. At first it was "This whole thing is surely and purely for our own fun. To treat it as anything more is a frightening proposition." But wait, I thought you said, "Your reaction was horror and fright?, What's wrong with this guy?" and then to carry your point of view even further, with nearly a page and a half more and digging the hole even deeper?

I asked myself, where's the trivia in all this? I hope that's the end of the argument! I spoke too soon. Only this time, it got even worse! The first five paragraphs of the very next issue's Trivia page (SOR#34) was just a continuation and rambling on about the same nauseating subject.

Mr Adams also made the statement that Mr Streeter was arguing the case for his fellow countryman? The case (if you want to call it that) didn't have a damn thing to do with where the posting came from! What's your point? The remainder of the Rush Trivia page was nothing but an effort to slaughter (American mainly, as Mr Adams puts it) Rush tribute bands and a subtle but obvious attack on "A Show of Fans" and Mr Streeter.

Mr Adams, your remarks towards Rush supporters in the US are apparent. Your statement about the drummer of Animation "Boy does their drummer suck" was immature. I'm sure Dan van Schindel appreciates your intelligent comment! I've never seen or heard the band myself, but just the pure fact that they enjoy playing Rush music and have fun entertaining others, wins my whole-hearted respect. No, they are not Rush and there is no trivia (*surely you mean 'tribute' - Ed*) band that has ever claimed to be. Just a few guys out to have a good time. In the liner note of the article, it stated, Rush Trivia by Steve Adams - currently looking for a new sponsor. That was the best line I had read all day!

On to SOR#35... It was a relief not to find a waste of a page in the new issue! Reading about the first annual UK Spirit of Rush convention was indeed exciting. Even greater, if I could've attended myself, but I was out of town (so to speak). I was very happy to hear how well the turn out was and all the positive remarks! It is a relief to know there is still such a loyal and dedicated fan base in the UK.

Having listened to and witnessed various Rush tribute bands here in the US, I'm sure "The Jack Secret Show" was just as entertaining, successful and in the heart of the spirit of all. We here on this side of the ocean are thankful for all the things SOR is accomplishing in recognition of the music of Rush. I am personally a world traveller and have a great sense of appreciation for Rush fans around the globe! All UK fans need to subscribe and contribute to "A Show of Fans", all US fans need to subscribe and contribute to "Spirit of Rush". The rest of the world needs to subscribe to both, and let's all watch Rush kick ass!!!

RUSH ARCHIVES

JERRY "BROON JR." BROWN

1618 Crabapple Cove Ct. N.

Jacksonville, Florida 32225-2500



Hi Jerry,

Thanks for writing, but the point is that a lot of people involved in "Spirit" like, and agree with, what Steve Adams has to say, and the way he says it. Steve's our only bona fide journalist, and has been writing for the mag since the first issue. We don't always agree with him (he generally hates cover bands and I'm in one - you do the math), but on the education subject he struck a chord with all of us. He has opinions just like everyone else - just look at the amount of album reviews in this issue - and likes his words to provoke thought and/or response. Your suggestion that he is anti-American is a pathetic and nasty reaction; he's actually lived there on and off over the years (he's there now, so watch out!). The 'looking for a sponsor' line was Steve's joke. Hope you still find it funny...

Finally, Steve also laid out many of the pages in this issue - including your letter - so I think it's safe to say he hasn't taken your accusations to heart in the way that you've treated his fairly reasoned words.

Stewart (Co-editor)

Dear SOR,

Issue 35 was my first taste of the fanzine, and I'm very impressed. How did you get hold of the "Test For Echo" users manual? The convention sounded like it was a great time - if only I'd found out about it earlier. Always next year, I suppose. Anyway, the point to all of this is that I bought "Test For Echo" on the day it was released, and was very disappointed. To me, it just sounded like any generic Seattle grunge band, and had none of that 'Rush' magic? I noticed that a little on "Counterparts", and it seems that the less keyboards Rush have, the less it actually sounds like them. Can you imagine "Subdivisions" or "Mystic Rhythms" without keyboards? I hope Rush re-introduce synths to their sound at some point - just to stop us all moaning, if nothing else. By the way, I saw that Andy and Matty offer guitar transcriptions of Rush songs. I don't suppose anyone knows where I can get bass transcriptions as well? Apparently, there was a book, but it's now out of print. Looking forward to Issue 36.

HAYDN WALKER
Bristol

Dear Mick,

Oh dear... From the moment I realised that I wouldn't be able to attend the convention, I knew that I would hate the first issue of SOR after the event, simply because of the reports from all the people who clearly had a great time. Jealous? Damn right! Still, I'm encouraged by the plans to hold a second convention next year. I can't miss out a second time!

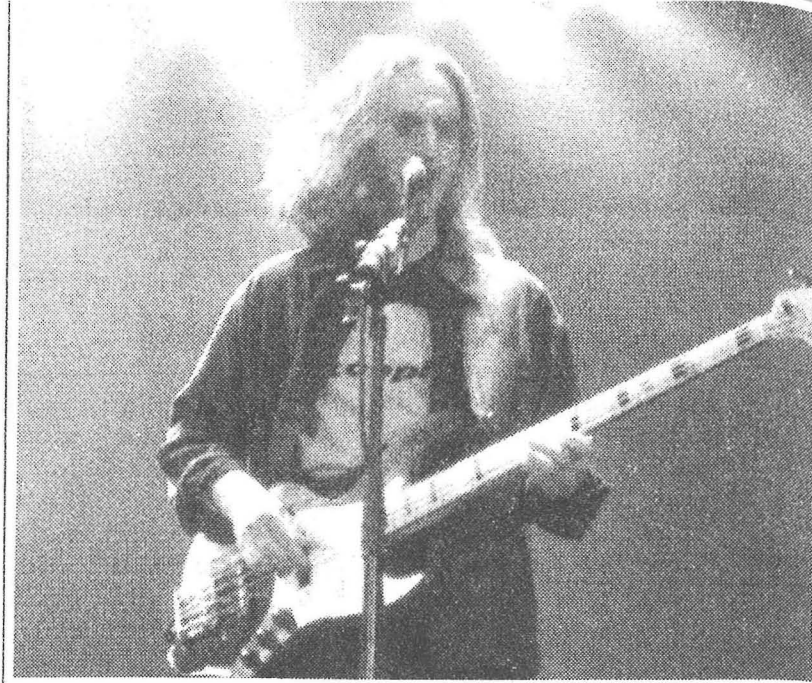
By the way, did anybody see the review of "Test For Echo" on page 624 of Channel 4's Teletext service? I suppose any publicity is a bonus these days, but to dredge up the age-old scenario of "I thought I'd be listening to bearded old men singing about hobbits," was a bit much to take. The actual review of the music consisted of two lines that more or less said, "Not as bad as I thought it would be." I know I should be used to garbage of this kind, but it still rankles even after all these years.

On a more nostalgic note, I'd be interested to hear if anyone out there remembers "Signals" being given the Laserock treatment at the London Planetarium around the time of its release. For those of you who may be wondering what I'm on about, Laserium/Laserock was a late 70's, early 80's evening show at the Planetarium where multi-coloured lasers were fired at the venue's dome and accompanied by selected tracks from such diverse acts as the Eurythmics, Utopia and The Edgar Winter Group. The audience was treated to the whole album plus (I think) "Tom Sawyer" and "The Spirit Of Radio" played wonderfully loud, with a dazzling laser display thrown in. It was quite a spectacle I can tell you! In terms of UK sales, Rush were at their peak at this time, but even so, it was quite an achievement for one album to be singled out in such a way. Ah... happy days.

Finally, a few lines about the tribute album. Having copies of last year's Genesis and Yes tributes from the same stable, I had an inkling of what to expect, but the difference is, where the Genesis and Yes albums were by individual bands, here only "Closer To The Heart" is by a band. The rest of the tracks are collaborations between assorted Rock/Prog musicians, and a pretty good job they do too. I suppose the only real gripe I have is that some of the vocalists do tend to 'Americanise' Geddy's original vocals somewhat, thus reducing their impact and uniqueness. Oh, and George Lynch, great guitarist that he is, goes so far OTT with his soloing on "Anthem" that he practically destroys the song. Still, all in all I like it, and my second favourite Rush track ever, "The Analog Kid", survives well I'm delighted to say.

One thing remains a mystery though, why block the album's release in Canada? Come on guys, lighten up!

Best wishes,
DAVE LACK
Romford



Dear Mick,

First of all let me apologise for taking so long to get my review to you (and after you kindly gave me a copy of the tape, pre-release).

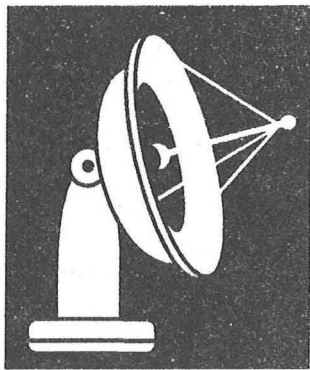
As you can see I've been busy with not just the review but a small crossword that I hope you might be able to use. It's taken a lot longer than I anticipated but I hope it's worth it and that you can find some space for it in a future issue.

Before I go, can you put a request out in the mag for anyone who might have a small black enamel badge of the 'star-man' they don't want, to give me a call. These were on sale back in 1978 at the "Farewell To Kings" concerts and also at the "Hemispheres" gigs a year or so later. I lost mine years ago and am desperate for a replacement.

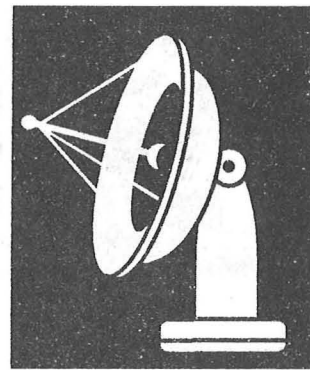
Finally, when we met briefly, I asked what the possibilities of getting a press pass for photographers would be in the (unlikely!) event of the boys touring. You said that it had been done before. Just to remind you not to forget me!

Keep up the excellent work - if there's anything I can do to help give me a call.

Regards,
RICHARD FORDHAM
Banstead, Surrey



Echoes



• YOUR REVIEWS OF T4E • YOUR REVIEWS OF T4E •

“Best album in years”

At last it's out! After all the “pre-match” publicity the question is, is it as good as it's reputed to be? First though, before the in-depth analysis, a complaint. I've collected all Rush material on vinyl since I first bought *Fly By Night* in 1976 and I accept as a sad sign of the times that *Test for Echo* is only available on CD or cassette, however, I'm more than a little pissed off that the *Working Man* tribute album is available on CD only. Being middle-aged, well, nearly, I don't buy enough albums now to warrant buying a CD player. It would cost me a small fortune to replace my Rush collection, never mind the other 300 albums I possess. Oh well, soon my kids will be at the age where they'll want one so I can borrow theirs. Anyway, the review:

- *Test For Echo* – Typical Rush song, multi-faceted and containing the first of several brilliant riffs performed on this album although the solo is a touch subdued for my liking.
- *Driven* – One of the best tracks on the album, its only down points are that it contains the first wimpy acoustic strumming moment and that it cries out for a definitive blistering solo. There are about three points where you think “This is it!”, but it never comes.
- *Half The World* – OK but the repeated lyric does get boring after a while and I can see what “Uncle Tel” means about it sounding like the Rush of a few years ago.
- *Colour of Right* – From a personal point of view I prefer Rush songs to be as intricate and multi-layered as possible, however, although this track has a sparse sort of sound I keep on finding that I'm singing it to myself all the time. This is because basically it's quite a good song, perhaps under-produced compared to some other tracks.
- *Time and Motion* – My favourite! This track contains most of the things I look for in a Rush song, combinations of heavy and lighter passages, variation in tempo and lyrics written by Professor Stephen Hawking after half a bottle of whisky!
- *Totem* – Not a bad song but I just can't get into this one. Another example of something that in the days of eight-track albums might have been developed into a semi-classic.
- *Dog Years* – If you remove some of the canine puns this isn't that bad, although once again I'd have preferred a heavier sound and a decent solo.
- *Virtuality* – Another killer riff and on the whole one of the better tracks on the album but, wait a minute, oh no – the return of the wimpy acoustic strumming and who forgot to overdub the guitar solo again!
- *Resist* – Nice song but the tempo demands a much cleaner sound so the different instruments don't get tangled, if you get my meaning.
- *Limbo* – Hmm, what shall we do with all these left over bits? I know, stick 'em together, think of an obscure meaningless title and voilà – the instrumental. You know, even after playing the album several times I still struggled to remember the title. Actually, it could have become a decent track, with some structural modification and lyrics. Then it would have had an identity. It's bound to be played live as it has a natural break for the drum solo, and so that Alex can clown around to the “Monster Mash” bits.
- *Carve Away the Stone* – My third favourite track. Again very typically Rush but an unusually short song to finish the album with. Once again, I get the feeling that it could have been developed into a five minute classic on previous albums.

So to summarise, despite my critical nature (I thought the new Metallica album was tame) I really rate *Test for Echo* as the best album they've done for several years. Some ideas seem over-developed and some the opposite. As I've previously suggested, there aren't enough solos for my liking either. I've got a feeling that live some of the songs will benefit and hopefully we'll get a chance to hear them. No pun intended, but for a Rush album *Test for Echo* to me seems rushed!

ANDY PARSONS
Dudley

“Tingle and sparkle”

After three weeks of playing the new album to death, I have to say that it is seriously good. It certainly is not *Counterparts 2*, but I never expect Rush to repeat themselves, more a mix of *Counterparts*, *RTB*, and *Presto*. I cannot agree with Mick, there is plenty of tingle and sparkle in this album, for me anyway. So here are my thoughts...

The title and opening track, is truly awesome, and my initial favourite. I have no idea what a “7/8 Fill” is Stewart, but I too have experienced that spine shiver. Ged's multi-layer vocals in the chorus are excellent. A great opener. *Driven* has really grown on me, deceptively simple, picking up pace at the end, if only they'd started off at this rate! Never mind, it's still a great song. *Half the World* has a very commercial feel, whilst being deceptively heavy, very catchy and a good single choice. *The Color Of Right* is another catchy song, definitely NOT Big Country (Uncle Tel).

Now we come onto my big faves of the album, *Time And Motion* and *Totem*. Alex's grinding, heavy guitar work on T&M just can't help but get you hooked. Some fantastic lyrics, “Lives connect in webs of gold and razor wire”... how does Neil come up with them?! Hopefully we will get to hear this one live maybe early next year? *Totem* is more up-beat, again with stunning, poetic lyrics, and a great change of mood towards the end. My favourite by far.

Dog Years, has some great music, and weird lyrics, I am very unsure of this one, sorry guys. Thank god for *Virtuality* and *Resist* to restore my faith. *Virtuality* has some heavy, heavy guitar work from Alex, his *Victor* outing certainly has affected him – all for the better I would say. This would be a great song to do live. *Resist* reminds me, somewhat, of *Closer To The Heart* – in the way that I know its going to be VERY popular, with its haunting lyrics and guitar from Ged and Alex respectively, this is another spine-tingler!

To end – *Limbo* great playing all-round from the guys, for me it's the floaty vocals from Ged which got me hooked, not the same as any other instrumental, very good indeed. *Carve Away The Stone* is like *Color Of Right* in that it's a good song, catchy, and nothing too amazing, 'nuff said!

On first listen of this album I was, as usual, very unsure of what Rush had done. 2.1 million listens later, I am very sure that it is a great album, and well worth the 3 year wait. Let's hope the boys make the effort to come over and tour in the UK.

PETE WILKINSON
Brinsley, Notts

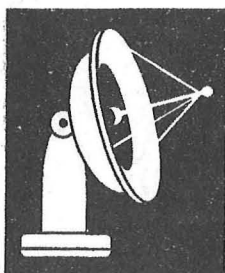
In the latest edition of your excellent mag you asked readers to review *Test For Echo*. Well, I won't do a song-by-song review, I'll leave that to others, I'll just forward some thoughts I have about the album.

First, I think we have to stop and think about Rush and try and put into context what they are and how they figure in a hyped-up music world. What we have are three talented musicians who have a special place in today's rock scene. Rush are not “PR” friendly, they don't push themselves forward, they don't communicate with the music press, they don't pamper with the rock circus, THEY DON'T HAVE TO. What Rush do is make music.

When you can write songs of the quality heard on T4E you don't have to do anything. Just listen to the music. I've had the new CD for a week, played it maybe a dozen or so times and can't stop playing it. It has to be their strongest album since “Moving Pictures”. I can't believe they can sound so fresh and modern after twenty-odd years in the business. If one of the newer rock bands had produced this album it would be acclaimed a classic by the critics.

I have a couple of negative thoughts – Geddy and Neil seem to be very quiet and I'm still trying to understand some of those lyrics. Still, we can't have everything. All-in-all it's a wonderful album – well worth the wait, a definite 10 out of 10.

IAN DAVIES
Merthyr Tydfil



Echoes

• YOUR REVIEWS OF T4E •

TEST FOR ECHO – plods along and never really gets going, becoming cumbersome towards the end. Mediocre by Rush standards – disappointing for opening track. Lyrics 8 Music 3.

DRIVEN – begins brightly with acoustic bursts but it's my turn to drive! although suffers same cumbersome fate as Test For Echo – not sure about dated Maiden-style guitar riff either. Lyrics 7 Music 4.

HALF THE WORLD – upbeat! Catchy – pretty commercial track with universal message. Excellent. Lyrics 8 Music 8.

THE COLOR OF RIGHT – solid chord-work and again upbeat and thrusting – commercially viable. Rush like you've never heard them. Lyrics 8 Music 7.

TIME AND MOTION – interesting tonal hybrid appearing longer and more progressive than it actually is – Dream Theater-style middle eight. Lyrics 8 Music 7.

TOTEM – joint favourite – love the flow of vocals/lyrics – favourite lyrics. Uplifting and is hit potential (not in the UK, of course). Lyrics 10 Music 9.

DOG YEARS – on first play it appeared to be a rare dud, however several plays later live grown fond of its simplicity and philosophical view of life as a dog. Lyrics 8 Music 7.

VIRTUALITY – heavy grunge/funk riffing coupled with layered electric/acoustic melodious chorus and current lyrics make this good but not that good many plays later. Lyrics 8 Music 6.

RESIST – the big ballad, if there is one on here – commercially viable medium paced and laden with neat hooks/changes/vocal harmonies. Lyrics 9 Music 9.

LIMBO – Classic Lifeson riffing. This flows along nicely, building to a crescendo with Geddy's eerie ancient tribe-like harmonies. Music 8.

CARVE AWAY THE STONE – not particularly strong track to end on, being fairly reminiscent of Rush's past – but is OK nevertheless. Lyrics 8 Music 5.

J WATT
Edinburgh

Warts an' all...

I've always found a Rush album to be like a wart... (**WHAT??!!** – Ed) It slowly grows on you, and the more you put into listening to it, the more you get out of it. (*Never had a wart I could do this to* – Ed). Thus after two weeks of non-stop playback in the car and numerous hours on CD in the house I've reached my verdict (Hey, order in the court!). It is brilliant, not classic, but we've been spoiled over the years and expect no less than excellence from the band.

Test For Echo itself is a great song with clever lyrics and a mid-section that puts me in mind of Thin Lizzy's *Emerald* and *Massacre*. *Driven* is a simple song about taking control of your life, with a clever chorus that at first sounds weak and twee but slowly gets more assertive as the song progresses and Geddy 'takes the wheel'. *Half The World* and *Colour Of Right* are catchy and would both make excellent singles. *Time and Motion* has an intro that puts me in mind of Dream Theater, which is no bad thing and is one of the heaviest songs on the album.

Totem: I love this song, it is just so catchy and as usual Neil's lyrics are so poignant. *Dog Years*: Great drums, great guitars, great song, and, being a dog owner, the lyric has a double meaning. Why can't man's best friend live as long as man? Was it WH Auden who said "Never give your heart to a dog, for it will surely break it"? Maybe Lerxst knows!

Virtuality: Topical, and being computer illiterate, I love this song. Great riff, great drumming and yet another of Neil's deceptive yet complex lyrics with a chorus that, once it gets into your head, just won't leave. Give me 'Actual Reality'!

Resist: This is my favourite song at the moment, a lilting melody with a lyric based on an Oscar Wilde quote, as was *The Pass*. I would love to see this become a single. *Limbo*: What can I say? The now almost obligatory instrumental. The band firing on all cylinders, man and instrument combined in aural perfection! Geddy's whoo's very reminiscent of 2112! All this and humour too!

Carve Away The Stone: An up-tempo final track closes the album in fine form.

All-in-all then, a great effort. Although I would like to see/hear a return to Neil's multi-percussionist style from the *Power Windows/Hold Your Fire* era, and KEYBOARDS! Yes, I miss them and don't think they have to be there in detriment to the guitar. Mick complained in his T4E review about the increase in Geddy's whoo's and Ohhh's. Well, I think that if these had been substituted in places for a keyboard riff or percussive fill, it would have made T4E a 10 instead of a 9.5!

BILL COLLINS
Willenhall, W Midlands



When I first read your review on the album, I thought you'd gone mad, build 'em up – knock 'em down, (Geoff Barton in '79), but on getting the album a few days later, I can identify with what you say.

I think it's called *Test For Echo* because on nearly every track, lyrics are constantly repeated (or echoed) – did Neil have a case of *Losing It* (the writer stares with glassy eyes?) – because I think they are the weakest lyrics for many an album. Musically, there doesn't seem to be any real 'progression', especially after *Counterparts*, and the anticipation that album gave you for the next one.

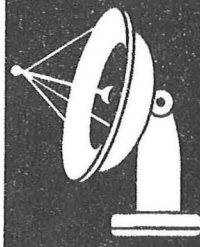
There doesn't seem to be what I call a classic cut (*Pass*, *Hero* etc.) where you can feel everything has come together. And finally, to what I have called the album filler – *Limbo*. I just can't see the reason this is on the album, seems to just fill in time 'cause they couldn't put together another track to fill the gap.

Don't get me wrong, an average Rush album is 100% better than anything else that will be released (till their next one), but there is still something missing.

Just a quick line on the tribute album *Working Man*. Surely the worst album cover ever, ever, made, but on the whole not a bad album. I half listened to this at the Convention, and was sure *Mission* was sung by a woman, I'm still not convinced it's a male voice, have they missed the 'a' off Erica Martin?

I wish someone would have tried their own version of one of the tracks, instead of just trying to copy the original in their own way(s). The highlights – *La Villa* and a corking vocal on *Natural Science*. Enough ranting from me now, keep up the excellent work on the 'zine, fingers crossed on the next album and some UK dates!

ANTHONY NOLAN
Cheshire



'Press this key to hear amazing things'

After waiting three years for the new Rush release, I was forced to endure another three days in hell as T4E was released this amount of time before my birthday and, as it had been bought as a present for me, I wasn't allowed to listen to it (even though it was in the house all that time!)

Perhaps the extra wait contributed further to my great expectations, along with Stewart's and Andy's reviews in the last 'Spirit'. My initial reactions on first listening though were closest to those penned in Mick's review, even to a greater degree of disappointment. The album seemed to lack so many qualities I have come to associate with Rush, and although there were certain parts of T4E I immediately loved, these were overshadowed by unimaginative melody lines, predictable chord progressions and over-simplistic lyrics; often bordering on cliché, sometimes cringeworthy (see Dog Years).

Thankfully, my test for patience has been rewarded. After two weeks solid playing I can now confirm that:

- i) I was wrong
- ii) it's a grower
- iii) T4E is a brilliant piece of work

The title track is for me the outstanding song on the album. Classic Lifeson solo, wonderful drumming (particularly the roll into the last verse) and one of my favourite lines in a Rush song: "Nail biting hood-boys in borrowed ties and jackets..." Neil has this habit of describing things with such detail and yet so efficiently.

Driven features a very Metallica-inspired guitar riff, showing both a new direction and yet a return to a more basic, up-front sonic approach. Thank Ged for the bass solo (NB: Andy - it's possible - only just - without effects, though I doubt it was played/will be played live the way live worked it out!)

Half The World - let's not get dragged into the "Rush aren't a singles band" argument - doesn't everyone like this song? True, it's catchy and commercial, but since when did this make a bad song? There is still enough pure Rush in this song - unique performance, lyrics, standards, whatever - to please both sides.

The Color Of Right features one of Geddy's best melody lines ever and his bass playing, especially in the latter half of the song, is wild - reminds me of his fishing buddy Les Claypool.

For fans of twisted time signatures and evil key shifts, Time And

Motion is the best example here. I love Alex's wacky guitar solo her, like something from the Waves/Pictures era.

Totem makes me feel happy - so uplifting - and what another brilliant vocal. The contrast between the verse and muted chorus (guitar harmonics are a nice touch) work well, although the "angels and demons" lyric grates a little, particularly on the repeats (Mick was right about this - lyrical repetition occurs too much on this album).

Don't you just wish Dog Years wasn't called Dog Years? One of the most rocking songs they've written for years and a return of some 70's-style vocals, and I can't listen to it without wishing he was singing different/better lyrics, especially the chorus when it takes an eternity to sing "Do-o-o-o-g years". I'm just thinking "get on with it" (see also the "tor-toise" and "ooh" sections of this song).

Virtuality is to me Victor's biggest influence on this album - another mean riff, Al! Sadly the song is let down by a bland chorus, a contrast which this time doesn't fit. One of my favourite bits here though; the section which features the return of the crotales. Yes!

Resist is one of those songs which will too often be overlooked, sadly. Reminds me of Madrigal or Different Strings. Ged displays some emotive vocals here, and again, Rush show how to write a ballad with intelligence.

Limbo sees the band let rip and show off a little. At first I thought this track needed vocals, but after multiple listens, it does stand up musically. Are they just teasing us with the 2112 Overture Oh-Oh-Oh-Oh!? or some happy coincidence?

Carve Away The Stone is my least fave track. I like the chorus, the dropped beats remind me of Limelight, but overall this song is too predictable. I never thought I would say that of Rush.

Overall then, a fine album, full of excellent playing (what else?) and a few risks taken (a few more next time?). I'm glad I gave T4E a chance and the time it deserved, for me to get to know it before submitting a review (you should have seen the first one I wrote). Thanks guys. It was more than worth the wait.

MATTY KASSELL
Doncaster

P.S. Spot the cock-up bass intro to Half The World! Geddy in stumbling, finger-lock shock!

P.P.S. Thanks to everyone for a cool day out at the convention. The band

I finally got my copy of SOR with the release date for *Test for Echo* which happened to be the same day. So this morning off I go on the bus to Cardiff. Straight into Our Price to pick up the copies I'd reserved an hour earlier (one for my brother). I gasped them. Yes!! God, I am so sad. Back on the bus through claustrophobic terraces, pant and puff up the hill to home. Inside, at last! Switch on the deck, shove it in and play.

■ *Test for Echo* - "Here we go" well indeed. Slurp of tea while I do the dishes. Bang straight in. If this was foreplay, I'd say we were in a hurry. Then melodic, moody with the words of the chorus and the twist of the music working well. Do I recognise Steve Harris bass lines? I like it. Full of complexities, as are the cynical lyrics.

■ *Driven* - Great opening riff from Alex and a chorus that goes to your fingers. Oh, a naked bass line, we just don't have enough of these from Geddy. I get a little tired of the repeated rhetoric of the fourth verse and I'm glad when it's time to drive again.

■ *Half the World* - Immediately catchy, I'm bopping while I wipe down the surfaces. Rush are obviously all playing the same song as one. Again very repeated rhetoric but it works cos the melody flows to the words. I like the change of key in the chorus. It is very commercial but it's

seriously well played.

■ *Colour of Right* - I recognise GUP and *Counterparts* here. Good lyrics. When Neil writes like this it's always when he's at his best. Is he talking about himself as third person again? The guitar takes the central role with Neil's drumming obvious but not intrusive. Geddy's voice is true but a little lack-lustre, too restrained.

■ *Time and Motion* - I sit down, I can't polish the furniture and listen to this one. My favourite. Haunting, atmosphere, taunting. The lyrics are very visual. Alex's guitar playing grinding and demanding. I like the emphasis on 'long enduring kind' and Geddy backing his vocals one octave lower.

■ *Totem* - this also reminds me of *Counterparts*. I fall in love straight away, but then I always do. I'm bopping again, scattering house mites all over the house. Here comes big Al with his wonderful guitar work with a burbling bass in the background. Yes it's very popular sounding but I love it.

■ *Dog Years* - Aargh! I don't like this song. The music itself is good but the lyrics are crap. Sorry. The analogy of the dog is stretched far too thin. Nope, no thanks.

■ *Virtuality* - Thump, thump, grind, grind and then melodic strumming. I like it. It has some good bass lines amongst all this thrashing. Neil's

cow bells make a welcome return. Its weak spot is the chorus, it's too poppy. I wish they'd just carry on thrashing.

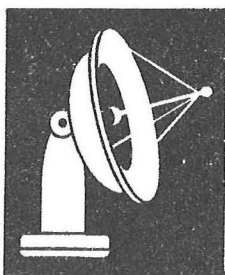
■ *Resist* - I totally agree with the lyrics. Yes, I have that problem too, which is why I'm getting divorced. It weaves in and out, around and down and is multi-textured. Another song that goes straight to my fingers. I hope the cat appreciates my performance. Geddy's voice at last sounds emotional which is something that has been lacking so far.

■ *Limbo* - No I don't like this. It does nothing for me. It leaves me empty.

■ *Carve Away the Stone* - Again Neil's more personal lyrics are his best. It's reminiscent of *Half the World*. Maybe it lacks punch and as such doesn't end the album. It's good but I get tired of all those "oohs".

On the whole I like the album. It's a very popular sounding album but it's good. Alex's guitar playing is superb. It does sound more off-the-floor than previous albums. But it's not a Rush classic, it lacks originality. The songs get your feet tapping but emotionally they don't quite hit it. It's an easy album to listen to but not worth a three year wait.

MARIA KING
Mid-Glamorgan



Echoes

• YOUR REVIEWS OF T4E •

Well, what can be said, only that they've gone and done it again and recorded another superb album, TFE. On its first airing to my ears, I just sort of let it run past me, but on the second and third time I started to get into it, and now I listen to it every day. There seems to be little hints of 2112i, AFTK, PW, MP and Counterparts on this album in places. I love the way Geddy's voice alternates to different tone levels. My fave tracks are Test for Echo, Driven (I love the start of this one.), Time and Motion, the humorous Dog Years, Colour of Right, Totem and Resist. I'm a little confused as to what Neil says halfway through Limbo, all I seem to be able to catch is 'Whatever happened to that's cool'? It's good to hear the guys are still on top form, and it was nice to see photos of them when they were much younger. Once again a brilliant album and well worth the wait.

M V LILLEY
Doncaster

After reading your early review of TFE in the last issue I was getting a little worried. After finally getting the CD on the Friday (no bloody wonder the album failed to chart in Top 20) I listened and listened. About 25 plays later live come to the conclusion that it's split in two parts: musically excellent and lyrically a bit dodgy.

Glad to see the heavy guitar sound from the brilliant, and for me best, Rush albums 'Counterparts' has been retained mixed with some delightful acoustics. Ged's voice seems to get better with every new album. The only negative bits for me are some lyrics like 'net boy/girl', 'V Valhalla Vishnu etc. and in particular the otherwise excellent "Dog Years".

The influence of Peter Collins is evident, virtually ensuring another great CD, his work with Rush and Queensryche is stunning, producing some of my favourite albums ever.

For me the best songs are "TFE" and "Driven" with other major highlights including Color of Right, "Virtuality", "T and M", "Resist", etc. Combined with a great cover/booklet we have another 50 odd minutes of heaven.

BRIAN SWALES
Co Durham

Just a brief word on the new album. Fantastic!

I think it is the best work the boys have done, personally since "Hold Your Fire" and "Permanent Waves". Well I did say personally!

But seriously, I think "Test for Echo" really personifies the talent that the band has both collectively and individually. I feel they the becoming more and more professional with every album now. The best tracks for me, or perhaps I should say the ones that REALLY stand out are "Half The World", "Totem", "Virtuality", "Limbo" and "Carve Away The Stone". Not many minus points on this one for me, although "Time And Motion" doesn't really do anything for me. A mention too for Hugh Syme for another superb art direction job. The live album that we are promised next year should be a cracker. The only real complaint surrounding the release of the record must again surely come from the lack of promotion, by the people responsible for this. But after 17 years of following Rush, I suppose I should be used to this by now.

Anyway that's enough of me, I look forward to the next issue Mick. Many thanks.

MICK WATERHOUSE
Doncaster

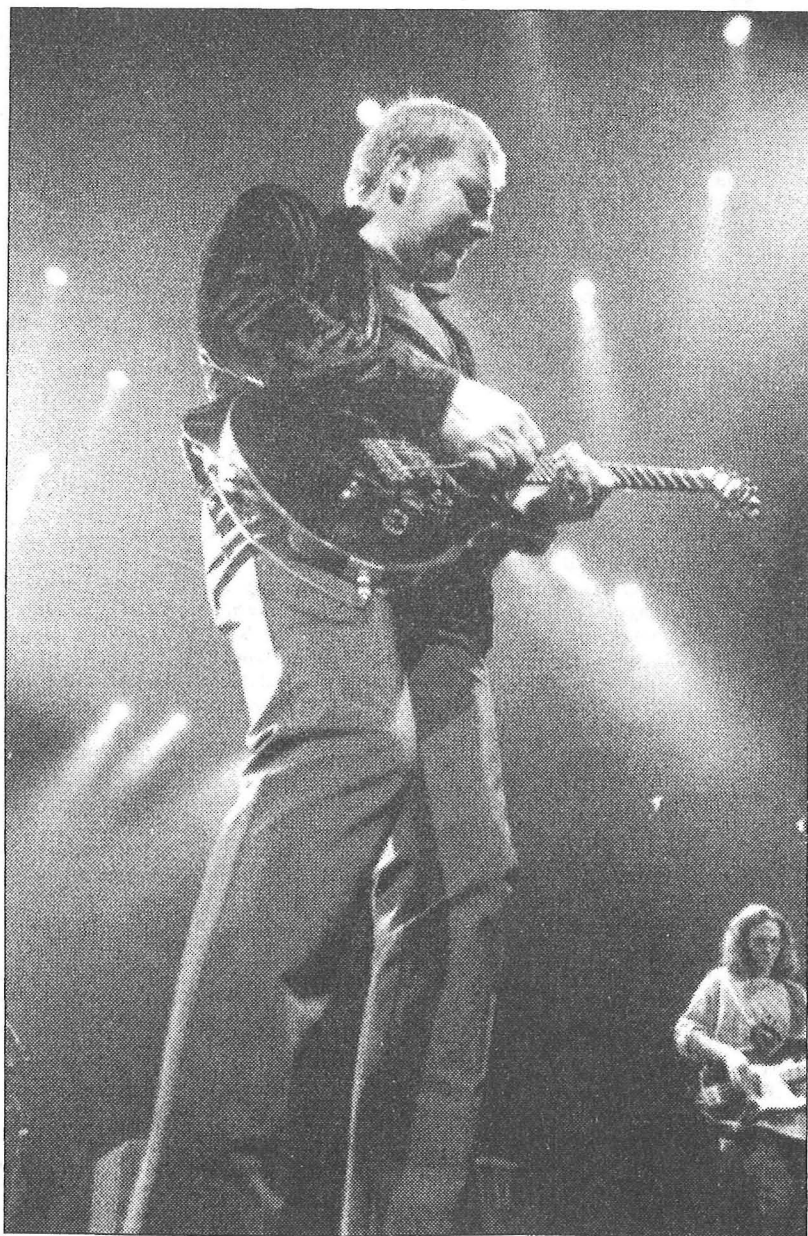
Tried and Tested

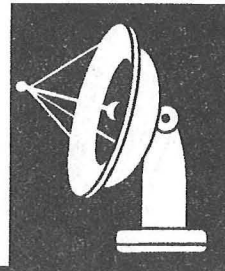
It has often been said by Rush, that they are not frightened to explore new musical areas. Indeed over the years they have tried just about every style there is, and fused them together to produce some pretty fine music. Having said that there are only so many colours in the rainbow, and sooner or later the musical palette was going to get full.

So *Test For Echo* does not hold any great surprises, but it is no less of an album for it. It's too early to say if it's a masterpiece, because I have to be six months down the line to see if it stands up against classics like *Moving Pictures* and *Power Windows*. I remember loving *Signals* when it first came out, but it never gets played now. Having said that, the whole album is beautifully put together, with no weak links. I can honestly say that there is not one track I wish would end so to get on to something better.

From the opening riff of the title track to the closing notes of *Carve Away the Stone* this album is pure class. I've bought some brilliant albums recently (Natalie Merchant's *Tigerlily* and Manic Street Preachers' *Everything Must Go* to name but two), but this just stands a little taller than the rest.

ALAN DUGGAN
Bradford





After reading your own personal thoughts on the band's new album, it inspired me to put fingers on keyboard to relay my own. On the very first listen my impression was that it was VERY VERY DISAPPOINTING, and on many subsequent listens since then it has grown on me to a degree. But three years for this? **T4E:** Classic style of opening track to a new Rush album. Hard driving with some neat riffs from Alex. Moves nicely from the more heavier parts between the subtler verses, and great as a lead-off track. Lyrically, a very good observation of the US TV criminal perspective.

Driven: Excellent opening – very hard and heavy. It seems that Alex has brought some of that aggression he found for Victor, and liberally daubed it on T4E; which is a good thing, from here onwards the song fluctuates between this attacking style and a classy acoustic feel for the chorus. Geddy's grumbling bass is a great sound here, that permeates proceedings of an up-tempo song. The only complaint lyrically is: "It's my turn to drive?!" From here the album starts to go down-hill, drastically!

Half the World: Nice general sound, with a more acoustic feel becoming prominent. The nearest Rush will get to POP! the over use of "Half the world..." etc. becomes a bit laboured, and before you know it, the song is over before anything has really happened. Not destined to be a classic tune!

The Colour of Right: As with many songs on this album, the opening salvo is excellent and rich in sound; only to tail off throughout the mid-section of the song, to be picked up, briefly, before the finale. This track stands up a lot better in this respect than some on the album, but still passes you by fairly quickly without any real barnacles attaching themselves to your taste buds. Especially lyrically, again!

Time and Motion: Positive intro again, which this time runs over the whole track, instead of petering out. We finally get a bit of extra texture, something that is sorely lacking throughout the album, from keyboards! Even though the song is very up-paced throughout, with the vocals and lyrics lively, it still goes through the motions (no pun intended!) without grabbing you by the balls. There is indeed no tingle.

Totem: Without repeating myself too much, we have the same syndrome here as we do with the previous 2 or 3 songs; consistently average (for Rush that is) sounding material that still has many facets and says a lot, but does not really inspire. Things are getting very iconoclastic here, not only with the songs, but generally!

Dog Years: Give me that opening riff and musical content, but please, spare me the atrocious lyrics! I think that Neil has had one too many sniffs of that hydrant, and turned into that tortoise. So much so, that even he doesn't want to live in these dog years. I can sympathise! On hearing this song for the first time, it was stunned amazement, and total disbelief dispersed amongst hysterical laughter. It was THAT bad.

Virtuality: A much improved song, probably since the opening 2 cuts. Absolutely dynamic backbone sound with Alex's guitar showing that aggressive attack that is missing all too much from the vast majority of the album. The only slight downside, I think, is the chorus(es), which is/are a bit cheesy, and come across as though a computer literate virgin is trying to jump her bones in Virtual Reality, instead of getting down to it for real!

Resist: A gem! This will be an unsung classic, and probably ignored because of its more melodic and mellow approach. Lyrically, Neil has got it spot on, with his wonderful use of phrase and turn of phrase to get his message through. The music builds up nicely and carries you through on a buoyant wave.

Limbo: This shows you the guys at their light-hearted best, with samples from "The Monster Mash" thrown in for good measure. Not being a great lover of the band's instrumental journey's in the first place, this still hangs in there for me with them, but is more lighter and easier on the ear than say La Villa and YYZ.

Carve Away the Stone: This once again, and probably very aptly, puts us in the Sisyphus situation with the songs on this album in general. We keep coming up that hill with the same rock, only to roll down to the same point and start over again. Good riffs and fills, but somewhere along the way we lose the thread again, to a degree.

Overall, this is not a bad album, it is a competent album, but it is a very average Rush album from the guys; containing some good sounds, a couple of excellent tracks, and some definitely decidedly dodgy lyrics. After the refreshing sounds of "Victor", I would have hoped that a decent slice of it would have rubbed off here, but alas no! Let's hope that in the live set-up, things come across a bit better?

NOGGIN
Surrey

Not a classic but...

I hate getting a new Rush album (*What?!! – Ed*), I'm always initially disappointed – but then after a while it all falls into place... no other band, just Rush. My first impressions were not unexpected then, but I played it all day for three days and now I understand...

Test For Echo: A totally unexpected start, a real 'metal' intro building up to ... a slow verse! Strange, but it does grow on you, and what a heavy bridge – it almost sounds like double bass drumming. Overall, a good track but sometimes I wish it didn't keep slowing down.

Driven: I really haven't taken to this. Iron Maiden riffing meets strummy acoustics and stop/start arrangements. Hmm....

Half the World: A very contemporary sounding bass line on this, but a little but repetitive. This track reminds me of *Different Strings* for some reason – I think it's Geddy's voice.

The Colour of Right: Again a bombastic opening which leads to a somewhat downbeat track. It's OK but I don't think anybody will be screaming for it at concerts. Geddy's vocal sounds a bit convoluted in places too.

Time & Motion: At last, a chance to be positive. *Jacob's Ladder* meets *Natural Science* would describe this track for me, great stuff and nice to hear an out of time riff in there too. Even Alex's solo sounds more like it's a refugee from the late 70's – spooky.

Totem: This track's OK, but again I really can take it or leave it. There's some nice parts in it and the lyrics are quite interesting but...

Dog Years: Surely the fastest song Rush have written in ages. Pity the lyrics are so awful (sorry Neil). Worst track on the album I reckon.

Virtuality: And now the best track, I love this song – the album needed a track like this. Almost like *Counterparts* high point *Cold Fire* (don't argue!!!) yet totally different – both containing a chorus that makes you appreciate Rush's immense talent for songwriting. If the chaps can be bothered to come over then I suggest this be played.

Resist: A great ballad. At first I thought nothing of this track – but it's a real grower, again it reminds me of *Different Strings*. So simple, yet so effective.

Limbo: I'm glad Rush still give us an instrumental to get our teeth into, the last two have been excellent and this one's pretty damn good too. I must confess to preferring *Leave That Thing Alone* due to its monstrous bass lines though. I think Ged's vocals fit excellently and lend a new dimension instead of falling back on the keyboards.

Carve Away the Stone: This is weird, every song that I've compared to an old song has had one thing in common – the comparee has come from *Permanent Waves* (not a great fave of mine) and this track brings *Entre Nous* to mind.

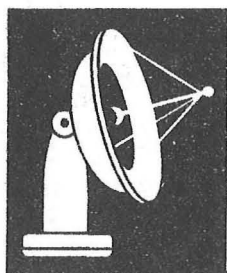
It's still a great track though if surprisingly up-tempo for a closing number.

So, make of that what you will! On other fronts Peter Collins' production is superb as ever and Hugh Syme's artwork is totally brilliant. He gets about you know, Kiss, Megadeth, Fates Warning etc... All brilliant. I really don't know what else to say... It's not a classic but I'm not at all sorry I bought it.

PS. Having lived with *T4E* for a week, I can't help feeling that my review is a little harsh. If *Dog Years* was anyone else I would probably say it was an average song – but we expect so much don't we? Rush have spoilt us... in the mid-80's we got three albums (*Grace* - *Power* - *Hold*) where every track was amazing and we expect every single track they record to be awesome – no band could keep that standard up indefinitely. It's incredible that Rush did it 3 times in a row as it is.

Maybe what I'm trying to say is that we should give 'em a break, and maybe allow ourselves to be slightly less ridiculously over-critical.

ROB CARRIER



Echoes

• MORE REVIEWS OF T4E •

"Best album since 'Power Windows'..."

Well, the wait was finally over! On the 9th September you could have followed the trail of dust all the way from my house to the local record store. After the obligatory anxious moment as I waded through the 'R' rack to see if *Test For Echo* was actually present and the inevitable comment from the bloke behind the counter: "Rush, eh? Thought they'd split years ago!", I paid my (extortionate) £15.35 (!), and rushed (oh, groan!) home to find out if the album was as disappointing as Mick seemed to think it was last issue...

First up:

■ *Test for Echo* itself. What an opener. Nice to see another collaboration between Neil and Pye Dubois, too. The breaks between verses give way to such an avalanche of instrumentation that I think it's fair to say that Alex's iVictori project has certainly had an impact in the Rush camp. Neil, as ever, seems to have a metronome welded to the inside of his head - this contains some great Neil 'moments'. And, jeez, that chorus is memorable - I've been singing it ever since the first play!

■ *Driven* ... Wow! Lerxst is well and truly unleashed here (and not for the last time on this record). This contains some of the best guitar Alex has ever committed to record, no question. The way the choruses build is great, and once again, the lyrics are seriously memorable. Things are looking Very Promising Indeed.

■ *Half the World* ... Well, I have to say that I don't think this is as bad as Mick seemed to think it was. Sure, it's worryingly short (though any longer and I think it'd be badly in need of some more lyrics!), and sure it's quite a commercial-sounding song, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that it sounds like anyone could have written it - it's definitely got a Rush 'feel' to it. Alex's mandola parts really add substance to this one. The lyrics, though simple, work to great effect thanks to the catchy repeating melody - this'll be a real singalong type affair if it's played live. Some might say that the sentiment here is an obvious one, but there's always room for fine sentiments to be heard again if they're expressed this well.

■ *The Color of Right*... This has an amazing opening, and it doesn't disappoint. This would also make a fine single, if such a thing has to be considered. Great lyrics again, too: "I'm so full of what is right/I don't know what is good", something a lot of politicians could do with absorbing! Love the picture of the Northern Lights in the CD booklet too... Thanks, guys!

■ *Time and Motion* ... Another monster riff kicks this one off - Alex really excels himself here - to great effect. This has to be, at the moment, my favourite track from this new album. Full of fine Rush 'moments', from Geddy's triumphant vocals to Neil's pounding drums and Alex's Monster Guitar From Hell™. I love the bridge part where Alex's mighty riffing collides with the gentle keyboards and Geddy sings "The mighty ocean dances with the moon..." They've rarely sounded better than this. Fantastic!

■ *Totem*... Sorry, Mick? "Get the Irish jig clothing out for this"? Whaaat? If you think this is all that folky, I think you must be a serious metal fiend who spends his time playing early Slayer LPs at 78rpm! Seriously, this is well cool. Nicely optimistic lyrics (love the chorus), and a hypnotic multi-layered riff that Zeppelin would have been proud of. And on the subject of sleeve piccys again,

nice to see a homage to *2001* by someone who actually understood the film in the first place! Nice one, guys!

■ *Dog Years* ... Will this guitar heaven never end? I was a bit concerned about Neil's lyrics after reading Mick's review last ish, but I'm happy to say it's yet another instance where I feel I have to disagree with Mick's harsh words (at this rate, I'll be lucky to have my letter printed!). They are uncharacteristically full of puns, but who else can you think of who'd dare to write a song with a reference to "doggie heaven" while still making a serious point? Ironically enough, the theme here seems to be a continuation of that explored in *Time Stand Still*, with Neil bemoaning the fact that life flashes past before we have time to appreciate it. I guess some fans who can't handle the humour in this song will react somewhat strongly against it, and that's a shame. Especially when the music's this good!

■ *Virtuality* ... My God, what were they feeding Alex when they were recording this album? Raw meat, or something, by the sound of it! Metallica would be in collective awe of what is achieved here! One of Neil's best lyrics here - I wondered when he would tackle the Internet in this way. This would be seriously awesome live.

■ *Resist* ... Fantastic, another big favourite this. The break for the bridge part, where all is silent except for some mellow acoustic guitar and Geddy's vocals is just sheer bliss. Geddy does himself proud here, singing some of Neil's best lyrics with genuine emotion.

■ *Limbo* ... Oddly enough, this is the one track I just can't get to grips with. It does seem, as Mick said, very disjointed, and the samey feel of Alex's massed guitars throughout just isn't very interesting. Having said that, Geddy's spooky wailing works well, and the whole feel is very eerie, despite the guitar-fest going on higher in the mix. I can't help thinking that this is one track where Alex should have eased the throttle down somewhat.

■ *Carve Away the Stone* ... A strong closer, with another churning riff from Alex. Geddy excels himself here, the bass sound is awesome... I have to confess I didn't much like this one initially, but it's definitely a grower.

All in all, I'd say that this is probably their best since *Power Windows*, with *Counterparts* not very far behind. I loved *Counterparts* and I really didn't think that the boys could better it, but to my absolute shock and disbelief, they have. All this makes my whinge about Rush not touring in Europe a couple of issues ago all the more pointed - the *Test For Echo* tour is going to be something else, what with the last two albums being so amazing. I hope that the guys do decide to come back to Europe soon, even if it's only a handful of dates. C'mon guys, how about it? It seems like forever since their last dates in 1991...

Meanwhile there are other questions to be answered ... Like what do those runic symbols on the *Test For Echo* sleeve mean? And can Rush continue to produce albums of the quality of *Counterparts* and *Test for Echo*? The band are definitely on a roll at the moment - long may it continue! Well done to Geddy, Alex and Neil... Just don't take so long next time, eh?

DAVE COOPER
Evesham

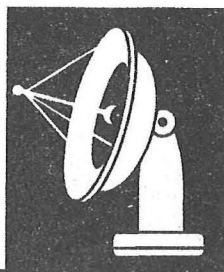
Test for Echo, the rhythmic, well... drive of *Driven*, or the refreshing simplicity of *Half the World* and *The Color of Right*. In each case the feel is from the bottom up, determined by where Neil decides to emphasise the beat. And he has fun being in control of the pace. And Neil's lyrical presence is strong as ever. These are simply excellent lyrics. The sea is the exactly the right metaphor to use in *Virtuality*: the prefix 'cyber' comes from the ancient Greek word for 'steersman'. William Gibson coined the term 'cyberspace' to depict a new medium in which to exist, one to be travelled and explored.

This song will probably date pretty quickly though. And, indeed the swift passage of time, and how we mark out our life are examined in several songs; *Dog Years*, *Carve Away the Stone*, *Limbo* (? - that vocal is reminiscent of *2112*) and *Time and Motion*. This song is quite a pastiche: starts like *Helmet*, quickly becomes *Dream Theater*, and then in to that dark new style of *Lifeson's*. The guitar solo, like the intro, is again quite *Page Hamilton*.

On the subject of guitar solos, I remember in the interviews for *Counterparts* that Alex said he would have liked to have done far less soloing on that record, but Geddy wouldn't let him. Well, it looks like this time he got his way. *Totem* is a notable exception: Neil's audacious drum fill at the end of Alex's edgy solo is wonderful stuff - Working Men take note.

This album shows Rush more at ease with themselves than ever. They are certainly still advancing - though they have a great record of achievement, they are not resting on their laurels. What they are doing is kicking back a little and are dipping into the wealth of skills that they have developed over the years. And they're enjoying it! Reviews of *Detroit* and *Chicago* shows to follow.

M W HENRY
Nuneaton



“Das ist zer gut!”*

(*no offence intended)

Isn't it funny to spread your opinion on something that's called TEST FOR ECHO. After a few listens I can't really describe it, but for me it's clear, that they did it again.

There isn't a record dealer in my hometown, so I had to drive about 100 kilometres to get my copy. I don't think that I've ever been in a record shop for only three minutes. Go in – recognise Geddy's voice from the speakers – seek it – grab it – buy it – fly away. Because of the fact that I'm from Germany, my critique of the album tends to be more music orientated and I don't know about you Mick, but I love every second of the new record. Maybe you've changed your opinion on some things by now. *Test For Echo* is one of the best songs I've ever heard and Neil's drums just kill. What drives a man that was/is so perfect to take drum lessons and start it all over again? I don't know but the results are amazing. There's everything on the album that you can wish: complexity, madness, exotic wrist-spraining fills. And it's the same with Alex and Geddy, all of them in top form. *Time & Motion* is just weird, with Geddy leading the song – you can sing along to *Totem*. In my opinion you can't compare *Limbo* with their instrumental before, it has its own charm. For me, the whole album is similar to *Counterparts* from the point of its heaviness, but it's more complex this time, there is more acoustic-guitar on the record and maybe because of that there's more melody in some of the songs. Just hear *Resist* to believe me. Geddy's performance is just brilliant.

Every time a new Rush album comes out I think it's the ultimate thing and I'm trying to find words to express my feelings. And now years later I have to do that again, but there are no words to top my own criticism. So it's better for me to stop, and don't bore you with trying explain my feelings in English.

Finally I want to say hello to Chris, Kevin, Lee, Kevin and everyone else that I met at the convention. And there's one thing I'd like to know: *Is it true that I'm the only fan from outside the UK that has got the loyalty to Rush to take a trip from Germany to England to join the convention?*

JOHN
Germany

What a wait, what a disappointment! I've listened and listened, honestly, but having been a RUSH fan for some twenty years, I have to admit that *TEST FOR ECHO* is the triumvirate's weakest album since *SIGNALS*, whose only saving grace was the superb *Subdivisions*, a classic track – something the new opus does not possess.

I won't go through the new offering track by track; there's an emptiness to it that is unreal! It's not, I feel, a very accessible album. As usual, it's faultlessly performed, but you'd expect that from premier musicians.

To be honest, the title track is a stormer; but, one usually leaves a Rush track 'THINKING', and there's an intellectual void, almost, on this disjointed hotch-potch of an album. I may well be in a minority, and music is all about opinions, but I believe *TEST FOR ECHO* is a failure.

EUROS WALTERS
Llandysul, Cymru

Rush's 16th studio album again finds them in fine fettle. The emphasis has quite rightly shifted along the course of the last 3 albums and Alex's guitar is without doubt ever more 'in the face' than before. *Test for Echo* is not as immediately accessible as its two predecessors but it is ultimately more satisfying. The Rush 'formula' is there in abundance – Geddy's low octave vocals and fine bass work, Neil's usual lyrical input and excellent drum work and Alex's excellent fret work which has developed on this album to include some mighty riffing. Some of his riffs, probably spurred on by his solo outing, are the best he has ever laid down.

Highlights include *Virtuality* – a track surely likely to figure in future Rush polls, with its numerous twists and turns it is the standout track on the album. The title track itself which grabs you and begs attention like most Rush album openers.

Driven with its underlying menace, *Time and Motion* with its mechanical feel and *Limbo* another classic instrumental track.

Obviously as an album which features 11 tracks there are one or two average songs – *Half the World* and *Carve Away the Stone*. However that should not detract from another solid consistent album – fingers crossed that somehow they manage to find their way across the Atlantic to play here!

NAVEEN RATTI
Studley, Warwickshire

Are you sure this is by Rush! I thought I was listening to some 'run of the mill' rock band – what the hell has happened lately to Rush! Where's the atmosphere, the complexity! Very disappointing album this one!

Eleven tracks of 'background music' that's all I can describe this album as – what a waste of talent. I thought after *Counterparts* we might be lucky and get a classic sounding Rush album. Well we must wait once again! WHY? WHY? WHY? – this one will just sit next to *Counterparts* – and never get played. I wish...

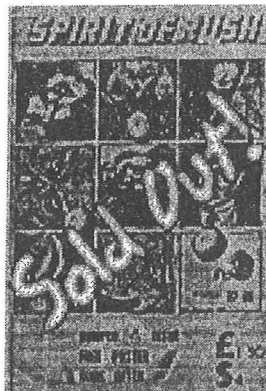
RICK GRAHAM
Farnham



1 - Summer 1987
 "All The World's A Stage" press kit
 "Pressure Release" by Neil Peart
 "Looking Through Power Windows" by Neil Peart



2 - Autumn 1987
 "Innerview: In Retrospect" by Steve Adams
 2112 press kit
 Sounds magazine article — September 1977
 Creem magazine article — March 1976



3 - Winter 87/88
 "Innerview" with Neil Peart
 "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 "Interview w/Alex Lifeson" — Scotland, Sept. 1987
 "Fireworks: The making of Hold Your Fire"



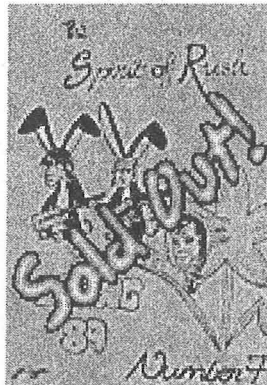
4 - Spring 88
 RUSH! tourbooks by Geoff Sheard
 Beetle '74 - Paul Sterling
 Hemispheres - Sounds Review 1978
 Rush in concert April/May 1988 - reviews from Europe
 Beetle '74 - Bob Dunne



5 - Summer 88
 Hemispheres Bio by Geoff Barton
 Ray Danniels interview Sprint 1980
 "A Nice Morning Drive" by R.S. Foster
 Moon Records/SRO Rush promos
 Circus Rave from Nov. 1975
 New Musical Express - March 4 1978



6 - December 88
 Rush UK Singles Pt. 1 by Geoff Sheard
 Caress of Steel Press Kit 1975
 A Condensed Rush Primer by Neil Peart
 Innerview Pt. 1 with Geddy Lee 1982



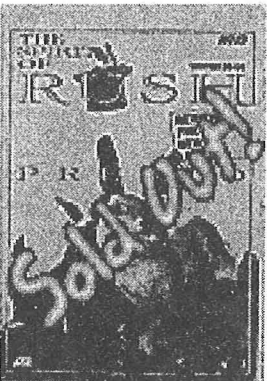
7 - Spring 89
 Rockline with Geddy/Alex 1989
 "Aging Gracefully", Interview Jan/Feb 1989
 Rush UK Singles Pt. 2 by Geoff Sheard
 "The Weigh-in" by Keith Sharp/Music Express Jan/1989
 Innerview Pt. 2 with Geddy Lee 1982



8 - Summer 89
 Interview with Neil Peart 1984
 WPHD Interview with Geddy Nov. 1987
 "Rock groups hardly satanic" by Neil Peart
 "A Total Access Pass to Rush" June 1984
 "Horns" Interview: Howard Ungerleider Feb. 1988



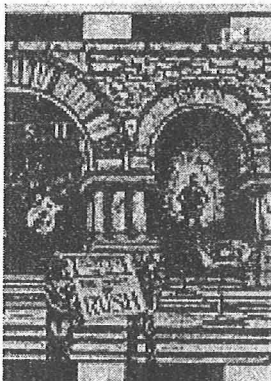
9 - Autumn 89
 Moon Records collectibles
 "For Whom the Bus Rolls" by Neil Peart
 "The Songs Remain the Same?" Pt.1 by Neil Elliott
 SymInfo Interview: Geddy Lee
 Innerview with Neil Peart 1986



10 - Winter 89/90
 Letter from Neil Peart
 SI Magazine: Alex Lifeson interview
 "Scissors, Paper, Stone" by Neil Peart
 Presto reviews
 "The Songs Remain the Same?" Pt.2 by Neil Elliott
 "Off The Record" by Steve Adams



11 - Spring 1991
 "In The Studio" - for Moving Pictures
 "The Songs Remain the Same?" Pt.3 - by Neil Elliott
 "Moving Pictures World Premiere" - February 11, 1981
 "Off The Record" Pt.2 - by Steve Adams



12 - Summer 1991
 "BBC Rock Hour" with Alex Lifeson - July 1981
 Alex Lifeson interview - December 15, 1987
 "Off The Record" with Geddy Lee - 1981
 "Another Rush Newsletter" by Neil Peart - August 1982
 Sounds review of Moving Pictures - February 1981



13 - Autumn/Winter 1990/1991
 Hemispheres Radio Special, 1978 Band Interview
 "Rock Stars" Interview with Geddy - Dec. 24 1989
 "Show and Tell" from Music Express Feb. 1990
 "Another Rush Newsletter" by Neil Peart



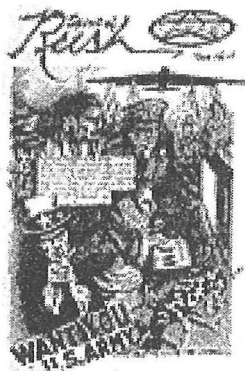
14 - Spring 1991
 Interview w/Geddy at the 10th Pinkpop Festival
 "Off The Record" for Grace Under Pressure
 "Our Great Computers..." by Andy Currid
 "Another Rush Newsletter" by Neil Peart
 "Interview w/Alex" on Q107



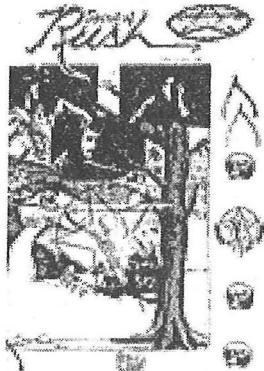
15 - Summer 1991
 Rockline — April 30, 1990
 Rush Trivia — Rush support acts
 "The Purple Prevost" — by Ken Fergmaglich
 "The CD Revolution" — by Neil Elliott
 "The Whole of the MOON" — by Jerry Brown



16 - Autumn 1991
 "World Premiere of Roll The Bones"
 "Kubla Khan" - by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 "Dem Bones, Dem Bones" - Geddy interview by Steve Adams
 Roll The Bones reviews
 "Row The Boats" - by Neil Peart



17 - Winter 91/92
Part 2 of Steve Adams's exclusive interview with Geddy Lee
Neil Peart on Rockline
"Behind the Camera Eye" — An Interview with Andrew MacNaughtan (Part One)



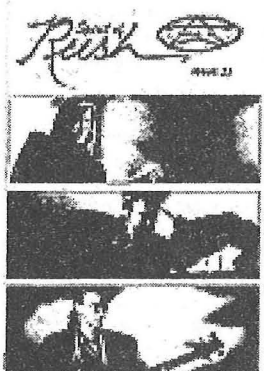
18 - Spring 1992
Roll The Bones Radio Special
Readers reviews of the shows
"Behind the Camera Eye" — An Interview with Andrew MacNaughtan (Part Two)



19 - Summer 1992
"Rush Job" — Steve Adams int. with Alex Lifeson
"Slippery Jobs" by A. Jenness Pt.1
"From Brainwaves To Tidal Waves" — Cream Magazine int. w/Hugh Syme



20 - Autumn/Winter 1992
Prestio interview on 102.1 FM
"Legends Of Rock"
"Slippery Jobs" by A. Jenness Pt.2
Circus article about All The World's A Stage
"Grace Under Pressure Radio Special"



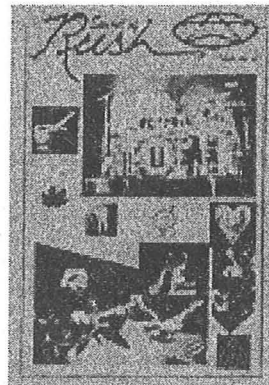
21 - Spring 1993
SI Magazine article with Neil Peart
"Signals Radio Special"
Bootleg CD's
"Moving Pictures Radio Special"
"A Guide To Rush On Film & Video"
Sounds review of Exit... Stage Left



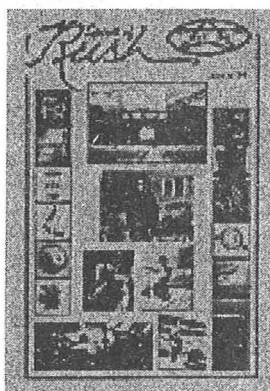
23 - Autumn/Winter 1993
Exclusive interview with Geddy Lee
"Hold Your Fire" Tour Rider
"The RUSH Tapes" — Part One
Collector's Corner — Permanent Waves



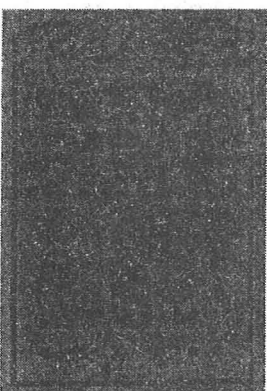
24 - January 1994
"Wilderness of Mirrors" — by Neil Peart
Counterparts Album Launch World Premier (Part One)
Readers' views on the new Rush album



25 - March 1994
"Spirit of Rush Counterparts Tour '94"
"Countdown Cafe: An Interview with Alex"
Network Magazine article — November 1993
Counterparts Album Launch World Premier (Pt 2)
Interview w/Howard Ungerleider
"Hold Your Fire" Tour Rider (Part Two)



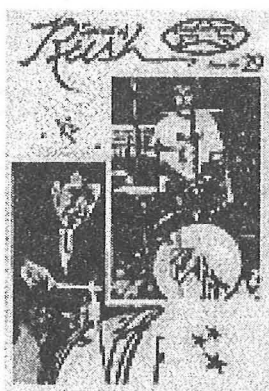
26 - May 1994
Rush Backstage Club Q&A w/Neil Peart
"The RUSH Tapes" — Part Two
Sounds magazine article — July 1976
"Hold Your Fire" Tour Rider, 1987-1988
"Hatchet, Axe and Saw" — by Brian Czernik
"Rock In The Environment" with Neil Peart



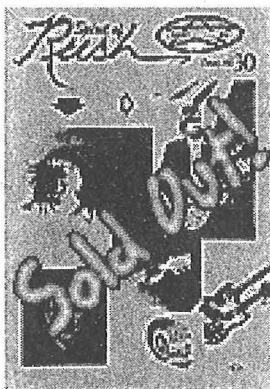
27 - July 1994
"Face 2 Face w/Alex Lifeson" — by Stewart Gilray
Rush Trivia — Rush endorsements
"Can't Stop Moving" — by Dave Lythgoe
"To Be Totally Obsessed — That's The Only Way"
"Grand Finale" — by Janet Balmer



28 - October 1994
"A Port Boy's Story" by Neil Peart
"Some Rush: 20 Years to (Juno) Hall of Fame"
"13 Years and 3000 miles" Toronto May 7 1994
"Different Strings" for Rush guitar fans
"And the Lights" by B. Parmerter - conversation with Howard Ungerleider



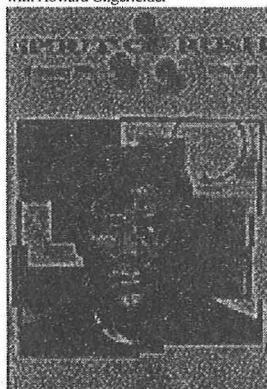
29 - April 1995
"Drumbeats" Pt.1 - by Kevin J. Anderson & Neil Peart
"Signature Guitars" - by Andy Piercy
"Burning For Buddy" by Neil Peart



30 - September 1995
Guitarist article - May 1995
"Drumbeats" Pt.2 - by Kevin J. Anderson & Neil Peart
"Pause & Play" int. w/Neil Peart
Car Stereo Review article about Alex's Mercedes



31 - Winter 1995/1996
Alex Lifeson: Victor
"Kumbaya '95: A Fabulous Pricel"
"Into Africa" by Neil Peart
"There Is A Lake Between Sun & Moon" by Pye Dubois



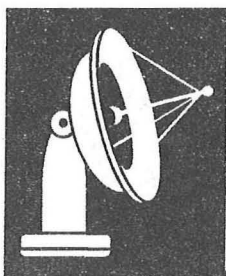
32 - February 1996
"To Atlantic's Victor Go Spoils..." by Paul Verna
"Starting Over" by Neil Peart
Rush on the .net
"In Conversation with: Alex Lifeson" - by Stewart Gilray

All back issues that are still available cost £1.00 including packaging. Send your request for back issues to the usual editorial address along with payment.

There are quite a few issues Sold Out, you'll even notice that there are few issue missing from these 2 pages.

Those issues are so Sold Out we didn't even have a copy to scan the cover from.

If we get enough requests we will reprint some issues, mainly for selling at this years convention.



Echoes

• YET MORE REVIEWS OF T4E

Well, where to begin? Having been very kindly given a copy of the long awaited opus from the Maple Leaf Three by our intrepid editor (thanks, Mick), I sat in the car, removed "Chronicles" from the tape deck and waited with baited breath.

I have to say at the outset (and some of you are going to instantly label me a Philistine for this, but what the hell), I was not the world's greatest fan of "Counterparts" – certainly not initially. "Stick It Out" and "Cut to the Chase" still leave me somewhat cold. Having said that the album contains some absolute classics ("Double Agent" and "Everyday Glory" being for me the outstanding tracks). What I guess I'm trying to say is that some of the rhythm changes and riffs did not sit happily on these particular shoulders and I wasn't comfortable with them. They weren't what I look for in a Rush album personally and so I approached this new offering with a certain amount of trepidation. And.....I love it!

Test for Echo is, for me, one of the best openers since "Tom Sawyer" or "Spirit of Radio". I agree with Uncle Tel, it has immediate impact with a capital T. Overall the first six tracks are the best in terms of what I look for in a Rush composition. "Half the World" and "The Color of Right" being the tracks which have instantly hooked me, with "Totem" close behind. (By the way Mick, if Gaddy's "ooh-oohing" pisses you off – try listening to Pat Benatar's "Ooh Ooh song" – you'll love that!)

You might have gathered from my opening salvo that I prefer some of the, dare I say it, more melodic tracks the band have produced over the years. I suppose if I were to pick an era that stands out for me it would be the "Power Windows" to "Presto" period. I have been avidly following the band since 1978 and I just felt they lost their way a little with both the RTB and "Counterparts" suffering from a few undistinguished tracks – having said that they still knock the bollocks off any other band around!

Anyway, enough of this rambling and back to the record... "Dog Years" has to be the band's strangest output in terms of lyrics ever but what a rocker the track is. Opening with some cracking guitar from the Lerxst, it also features some superb bass from the Ged Monster, which unfortunately appears to be lacking from the album in general. I love this track and I reckon you will too.

Virtuality carries on with the riff standard being as high as ever and Gaddy's bass is more evident here also. Neil's loose drumming on this track reminds me of Mark Brzezicki's output on the Big Country classic "Porrohman" – overall an outstanding track.

Next up is "Resist". This is for me another outstanding track, returning to the melodic theme found in a couple of the earlier tracks. Listen to this and you'll understand what my earlier comments were driving at.

The obligatory instrumental and the closing track "Limbo" and "Carve Away the Stone", whilst not being weak tracks do not stand out for me. The album needs a stronger finish along the lines of "Everyday Glory" "You Bet Your Life" or "Available Light".

Well, I'm into week three and the car and home (and Walkman on holiday) have echoed to nothing else, so I reckon the Fun Boy Three have got it right again and are back on course. I know Mick's not convinced and some of you won't agree with my comments about *Counterparts* but who gives a toss – you'll buy it anyway!

RICHARD FORDHAM
Banstead

"A major achievement..."

This really is just what we all needed. Over the last few years Rush fans have had little to be optimistic about. A three year lay-off; rumours and speculation about Gaddy's commitment to the band, about whether they would tour the UK again, about how many more records we would get from them. Then there was Neil's lukewarm Buddy Rich tribute, Alex's fair to middling "Victor" project, and Ged's slide into sproglet-cum-house husband hell. But then along comes "Test..", the most complete and focused Rush effort since "Moving Pictures", and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

This is undoubtedly Lifeson's album. Isn't it a joy to hear him grind away at that riff in "Virtuality", and present us with a solo as awesome as the one in "Time and Motion". Even when he's simply strumming away on his acoustic ("Half the World" etc.) a shiver goes down my spine.

It's great to see the three of them messing around with time signatures again, particularly during the close of "Driven". It must be stressed, though, that they sound most alive on the pop songs. For some time we've known that Gaddy in particular likes the simple "Half the World". But what a tune, what a truly beautiful song.

And then there is the title tune. It's been a long time since they sounded as self-assured. And when have they ever sounded as sprightly as on *Dog Years*?

This may not be Neil's finest hour lyrically, but as a band effort "Test" is a major achievement. Let's hope that this album marks the opening of another chapter for our favourite threesome. Isn't it great being a Rush fan?

THE ANALOG KID

"Not a duff track..."

I did something I always try to avoid doing and instantly regretted it: I read the reviews in SOR before I got T4E. Having got myself in a real state of excitement as the months (years!) ticked by towards September 9th, I was devastated to read Mick's response to the new album. He made it sound so SHIT.

God, no! Not after all this waiting! So it was with great trepidation that I put the CD in the machine and sat back to take it all in... I know I never EVER appreciate a Rush album until I've heard it a few times, but I ought to be able to get a 'feel' for it first time around. I listened and with dreadful realisation all Mick's points of criticism fell into place. Oh, no. I felt so depressed. Yeah, true, *Driven* was instantly likeable, but the rest?

But this story has a happy ending. It is now 3 days later and here is my review:

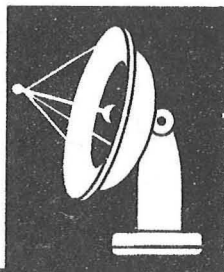
Mick, you are absolutely 150% wrong! It's a bloody excellent album. As always, each successive play impresses me more.

The cover and design is excellent – a huge improvement over *Counterparts*. The one thing missing though are some nice MODERN portraits, although I love the ones of the guys from their childhood.

I won't do a track by track 'cause others have done it. Not a duff track on the album – although *Resist*, *Limbo* and *Carve Away The Stone* have yet to root themselves in my subconscious. The rest I love. My favourite being *Time & Motion*. Best moment of the album is the middle bass section on *Driven*. If I had to criticise it would be in the overall sound. I'd prefer Ged's bass to be more to the front. I'd also prefer more 'space' in the album – for the most part Alex is a wall of sound across the middle range. Ged's doubled vocals are excellent and really show off his voice, which continues to improve.

I hope Mick has given it a second chance. I think you just have to find the right frame of mind and just fall into it. After all they were written by an 'old friend' and that makes all the difference.

JON BAKER
Oxford



"An extremely fine album (but in the wrong order)"

My first impression of *Test for Echo* was, what on earth is going on here? The cover is a revelation! A marked improvement on that of *Counterparts*, and those pictures of the band as youngsters are really cool. That's two albums in a row however that have not included any new pictures of the band (I think they're going bald!). The other thing that caught my attention was, that these songs were so strikingly different to what I was expecting (as with any new Rush album). Here are my views on *Test for Echo* and opinions. Okay here we go:

Test For Echo I read that this was a blistering title track and expected something like *Stick It Out*. It took a few listens but I was very quickly impressed, especially with Alex's quirky riff during the chorus. After spending most of the year listening to (and loving every minute of) *Victor*, it was very refreshing to hear Geddy and Neil again, those long lost friends suddenly assault my stereo again!! I felt that this track was a little subdued to be an opening track. My only criticism being that it's a little bit on the long side but hey, I'm sure the guys aren't going to listen to the likes of me.

Driven This is a marvellous riff once again and musically everyone is on top form. I think Neil really shines on this track. Okay so the part with "It's my turn to drive", takes a bit of getting used to, but what a guitar solo. To be honest, all he solos are very subtle throughout the whole of this album, I found that they all fitted so perfectly that at times they would pass you by, so expertly were they crafted. This is one of my current favourites.

Half The World There was talk of Rush 'selling out' on this track, to be honest I really don't see it! This is simply a bunch of guys playing some very fine music indeed. Why shouldn't they write commercially sounding songs? I suspect that some people would be a bit possessive if they become mega stars. If they did, they would have earned it, let's face it, we've had 22 years of great music from them, they deserve to do exactly what they want, and this is exactly what I wanted to hear. Superb!!

The Color of Right Woaaaaa!! this has got to be one of the best tracks that Rush have ever released. Geddy sounds absolutely amazing on this track. If there's one thing I have to say about this album, it's that it is not the follow up that I expected after *Counterparts*. I thought that we would be hearing more aggressive guitar parts, raw drums, great lyrics and ear-splitting vocals. This song goes to show that some serious song writing went into this album, which I believe shows astounding maturity. In many ways, this album knocks the life out of *Counterparts*, which I thought they might struggle to top. All in all, fabulous drums, superb guitar and Geddy Lee!! This was worth the price of the album on its own!

Time and Motion This is one of the most interesting songs on the album. Spooky middle part, yet another great riff and brilliant lyrics. To top it all off, the only distinguishable keyboards on the album (apart from *Resist* obviously). I find it hard to describe how I feel about this song, I guess I just have to keep playing it over and over again.

Totem Hey, another brilliant track! More brilliant lyrics!! Great guitar!! Great vocals and kick ass drums!! This could easily be the next single, and it should! Stewart said that he wasn't too keen on the ooh's on this track. I think that they actually enhance the song. This, I declare is one of my favourite songs on the album. This is Rush once again on top form and came as something of a surprise after hearing the first part of the album.

Dog Years Play this extremely loud!! What a really funny subject for a song, albeit an interesting one. The chorus is a bit suspect but, after three years of

waiting for this album, you'll get no complaints from me. I really like the guitar part during the quieter section. With a better chorus, this would have made a great opening track.

Virtuality What hit me??? Where did all these brilliant riffs come from?? Oh yes, this is something very very special indeed. Rush at their best. A kind of mixture of *Presto*, *Stick It Out*, *Double Agent* and god knows what else. I would dearly like to see this one live. I read that Neil's opinion of life on the super highway is not a favourable one. To be honest, can't say I blame him, there are a lot of sad individuals surfing the net. Used correctly it can be a valuable source of reference. This song is definitely very valuable.

Resist This is a really nicely put together song. This would have closed the album brilliantly. Geddy is really on form throughout this song, let's face it, nobody does it better! Just listen to *Working Man* and you'll know what I mean. The keyboards are a welcome release from the pounding that my ears have taken so far (Alex has been putting in a bit of overtime with his riff chord book by the sounds of things).

Limbo Interesting, but as previous reviews have stated, not on the same level as the last two instrumentals. There was great excitement prior to the release of *Roll the Bones* of an instrumental. I really wasn't all that keen on the idea at the time, as I felt that the songwriting was what the band were best at throughout the eighties. I think that Geddy, Neil and Alex had achieved so much in respect of their writing during that period, that they didn't really have to prove that they could play anymore. We all know that they are more than capable. However, who are we to argue? It's their album, if they want to include an instrumental, I'm not going to discourage them. All the same, a fine addition.

Carve Away the Stone This has been slated as a weak track. Not at all, this is a great song. I have listened to this one repeatedly and I think that it may have been better placed nearer the beginning of the album. I really like the lyrics on this song and Geddy once again has shown that a three year rest has done his vocal chords the world of good. It has to be said that the drums on this song are up to the usual standard. How many drummers do you know that would have played what Neil does over that guitar solo? Alex has plastered his hallmarks all over this song and why not? If you have the CD, play this one first and then start the album, you'll see that it's actually much better than some people would have you believe.

Well there you go, that is my humble opinion. An extremely fine album. My only suggestion would be that the track listing doesn't show off some of the songs at their best. Programme your CD to the order of *Virtuality*, *Carve Away the Stone*, *Totem*, *Dog Years*, *Time and Motion*, *Limbo*, *Driven*, *Half the World*, *The Color of Right*, *Test For Echo* and *Resist*... you may find that the so called weaker songs fit a bit better. I understand that we can expect another live album sometime next year. All I'm saying is, guys, if you're reading this, make sure that the following songs are on it: *The Pass*, *Double Agent*, *Time and Motion*, *Presto*, *The Color of Right* and *You Bet Your Life*, and I'll be a very happy man. Keep up the great work and please, please, speak to SRO Management about getting the band to play the UK again. I'm sure that we would all be more than willing to pay their plane fare, I'll even put them up at my house if they want! All the best!

COLIN HENDERSON
East Lothian

"Some great songs... and some rubbish"

Some great songs, but also some rubbish that in my opinion is just there to make up a 50 odd minute CD. The songs fall into two distinct categories - *Counterparts* if you like! - as follows:-
Songs that are up there with best
Test for Echo, *Virtuality*, *Driven*, *Limbo*, *Time and Motion*, *Dog Years*, *Totem*
Some of the best stuff they've done in years - guitar riffs left over from *Victor*, the return of

cranky time signatures and brilliant drumming, it's all there in this lot (although on reflection *Totem* is a bit suspect).
Songs that can be binned!!!
Resist, *Half the World*, *Colour of Right*
Bland, Bland, Bland!!! Great to get you off to sleep, just like *Chemistry*, *The Speed of Love*, *Hand Over Fist* and the like. Please no more of this mid-tempo stuff.

If the last bit upsets those of you who believe that Rush should never be criticised or disliked... tough! But remember it's only my opinion and anyway I'm sure that those who subscribe to that view will let me know I'm wrong. Keep up the good work and see you at next year's convention.

JEAN-PAUL SRIVALSAN
Milton Keynes

"Murder One!"

After reading the review of this album in the last issue of 'Spirit', I decided to fork out a few bob and buy the CD. I thought it would be nice to hear how other musicians would interpret some of Rush's finest moments.

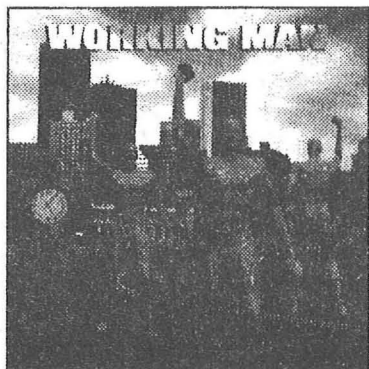
After one listen I started to have doubts, after two, I realised what a heap of crap it was.

What they have done here is take some of the most innovative and individualistic songs ever written, and totally murdered them by adding every rock cliché you can think of, from the glitzy 'American' rock guitar solos, to the oh so macho vocals. The only thing that rescues this album is *Closer to The Heart* by Fates Warning which ain't too bad, the rest is terrible. Especially the bloke who sings on *Natural Science* – he wants putting out of his misery.

The only thing this album has done for me, is to go rushing for the originals to hear them in their glorious original form. No wonder the boys had it banned in Canada. I would ban it all over the world if I had my way. Do yourselves a favour and buy the *Kula Shaker* album instead (marvellous).

Mr Augar, if I see you in the street I will duff you up (not if you see the size of him – Ed). You've made me waste 15 quid.

ALAN DUGGAN
Bradford



This was certainly a nice idea and I'm sure all the people involved had a lot of fun making it. Given that element of fun, are we supposed to take it seriously?

On the positive side, it is interesting to hear these songs re-recorded. The mix is generally less atmospheric than the originals, but this has the consequence that it is easier to tell what is going on in the individual parts. Those parts themselves are generally authentic, which shows respect. However, most of the solo spots are not handled so carefully. Most of the guitarists – with the notable exception of Steve Morse, the only player as mature as Lifeson – take the solos as an opportunity to show how much faster and more fluid their playing is than Lifeson's.

It doesn't work though does it? Alex Lifeson is the master of the guitar solo, and it wouldn't surprise me if he were a bit dismayed at hearing these 'tributes' which seem to largely reject his own considered approach.

Much the same can be said for the drumming. I know that Deen Castronovo had a good laugh playing this stuff because he always does. He doesn't play Neil's parts exactly but he stays within the spirit of them, e.g. pushing himself beyond the limit on *Anthem* the way that Neil had done himself.

Mike Portnoy though. What's the matter with him? I'm sure Peart is this guy's hero drummer so why hasn't he learnt anything from Neil's development over the last 20 years? It was a joy to hear him play the solo spots in *La Villa* exactly right, but only because the rest is too much showing off. Take the beginning of *Jacob's Ladder*: even Neil in 1980 knew when not to solo. Portnoy sounds like Dave Weckl, which is simply inappropriate.

If you think I've taken the project too seriously, fair enough, but I'm sure that Rush would agree with me on this (oh yes!), and after all it was supposed to be a tribute to them, rather than the speed-techniques of some unfashionable metal-heads.

Yes, a nice idea, but it doesn't half make me appreciate the originals, which are so much better. If you want a final example listen to both versions of *The Analog Kid*. The dramatic superiority of Lifeson's solo is obvious, but listen to Neil drumming in the solo: carefully omitting any lead cymbals, but bringing them back in with a perfect fill of crashes at the climax of the solo. No one could improve on this beautifully judicious approach, but Portnoy plays as if he'd never even noticed the effect.

I think I'd rather hear Rush play other people's songs, or even better, musicians who don't like Rush playing Rush songs. Now that would be fun.

MATTHEW HENRY
Nuneaton

Oh, dear! Musically competent but vocally akin and about as much fun as a bad dose of aural haemorrhoids. Nuff said!

RICHARD FORDHAM
Banstead

TRIVIA

Aside from the music – particularly the latter segments of *2112* – and the cardboard Pamela Anderson, my most enduring memory of the *Test For Echo* tour took place at the end of the last show I saw, at the Palace, Auburn Hills (that's more or less Detroit to you and me).

Sitting on the sidelines completely failing to get backstage with our illustrious axe-wielding, Lifeson-haircutting co-editor Stewart (he had the pass; I was just the driver), I was witness to a very sad and contemptible scene. As the road crew disassembled the stage – actually well worth watching if you've never done it – a particularly bolshy guy (let's call him character A) made his way to the stage dragging his son (kid B), who must have been all of about eight years old, alongside him. This guy then starts imploring the roadies to offer up a pair of drumsticks as a souvenir for the lad. I say implore, but in reality Mr A was pretty much demanding them – as if the fact that the kid's age made him a worthy recipient. A couple of roadies apologised that there were no sticks around and tried to get on with their business, but this guy was having none of it. "Hey, he's only 8-years-old man, how can you let him down?" (at this point kid B obliges his old man by looking appropriately miserable).

Eventually one of the roadies figured it was better to toss the guy a couple of sticks than endure the distriebe, and did so.

End of story? No. Throughout the entire episode Mr C – no, not Richie's dad in *Happy Days*; more a traditional rocker-looking dude clad in denim and in desperate need of a comb – had been watching with interest. As soon as the drumsticks take flight from the stage, so does Mr C... headfirst (no word of a lie) across – and into – a row of seats to get their ahead of Mr A and kid B. Grasping them to his chest tighter than a prize-winning lottery ticket, he flips the finger to A & B, offers a curt "fuck you" in response to their distress signals, and flees the scene.

Without delving too deep, this episode surely reflects much that is wrong with the humans of this world. Greed, selfishness, the attitude of Mr A for expecting the sticks in the first place...

Wow. And all from a rock & roll show. Still, at least I could find something negative to write about, which I know you would expect. For what it's worth Mr A, kid B or Mr C if are reading this, you have my total and utter contempt for casting a shadow over a great evening out.

postsript: For any worried members of our esteemed readership, Mr A & kid B did ultimately get their drumsticks, but only after another few minutes' haranguing of the road crew.

postsript2: Particular thanks are due to the fascist member of the Palace security staff who managed to prevent the three (four counting me) people with the highest-ranking backstage passes from getting backstage.

general postsript: I was going to reply to my latest knocker in the Rush/education debate (see letters page) but can't be bothered. If Mr 'Broon Jnr' didn't get the drift at the first, or the second, time of asking then there really is no use going into a third time. And sorry to disappoint you but I did write a page in the last issue, as the guy with the arse cleavage will no doubt confirm.

Hitting the beats with

Neil Peart.

The Rush drummer talks past and future.

By BRIAN McCOLLUM Free Press Pop Music Writer

So what kind of show are we gonna see?

Well, for the first time, we're gonna do an "Evening With" format, something we've always stayed away from, because of course we came up as an opening act and we hated to close that door. It's such an alternative route. Without having radio or particular media support, as we didn't in the beginning, we were still able to go out and tour as an opening act and build an audience that way. In the short of it, we've always resisted that idea up 'til this point, based on that, and we finally decided that at this point in the program we owe ourselves that sort of latitude. And of course for the audience too it'll be a quite larger scope of music that we're able to do, and a completely different format of presentation, so we thought, "OK, NOW's the time."

I know there's an intermission — any sort of chronological division between halves?

Nothing artificial like that. I think it would be really crazy to try to impose an "early" or "late" time frame on them or anything. For us, it's more important that we can play the songs with a conviction, so songs are being chosen or rejected based on how they are to play. Which might sound selfish, but no one else has to play them a few dozen times over and over. You want to make sure that it's something you're gonna be comfortable with. And I think that translates to the audience in a subtle way, too. If they know that you're playing a song that you really believe in — or don't! — somehow that becomes apparent.

We've been frivolous about it, and we've passed each other lists over the past few months of ridiculous choices — "What do you think about doing this?" or "How about if we did that and did a rearrangement of it?" — and entertaining all sorts of wild ideas, and whittling down what's possible from there.

Even our non-short list was about 3 1/2 hours of music.

"Ridiculous choices"? What are some of the off-the-wall songs you're talking

about?

That's a qualified term — these are just songs we haven't even heard or thought of for tens of years. So just that — we were kind of racking our brains for the least likely suspects, I guess, and trying to put them forward and actually consider them. And in fact some of them are being used. We're already into the process where some songs we might have thought we'd never play again or hadn't even thought of for a long time we have resurrected and brought back and gone, "Hey, this is good!" So there are pleasant surprises available there in the back catalogue.

Is it an attempt to give fans something they've been itching for?

You can't go with the pretend altruism. I mean, we're fans of the band too. One thing about Rush is that it's a genuine reflection of ourselves at different times. If we can go back to a song from '78 or '82 or whatever and still connect with it, then great. And of course, the fan gets the benefit too.

But we're not saying, "Hey, man, the fans would really like to hear that song, let's play that." That would be as phoney as could be, as far as we're concerned. So I think by accommodating one desire — which is our own, to go back into the archives and find interesting things — we serve the interests of the fans as well.

Can you give me a couple of titles?

Uhhh, not yet, of course.

I knew you wouldn't.

No false promises! (Laughs) We might not end up doing any of them.

There's word from close sources that this is the last tour.

I've heard that, honestly, for 10 years, every time we go on tour: "I hear this is your last tour!" Yeah, sure it is. There's no answer to that, because no one knows.

So this is not a grand finale...

Not by plan, no.

This last break was certainly longer than other stretches between albums and tours.

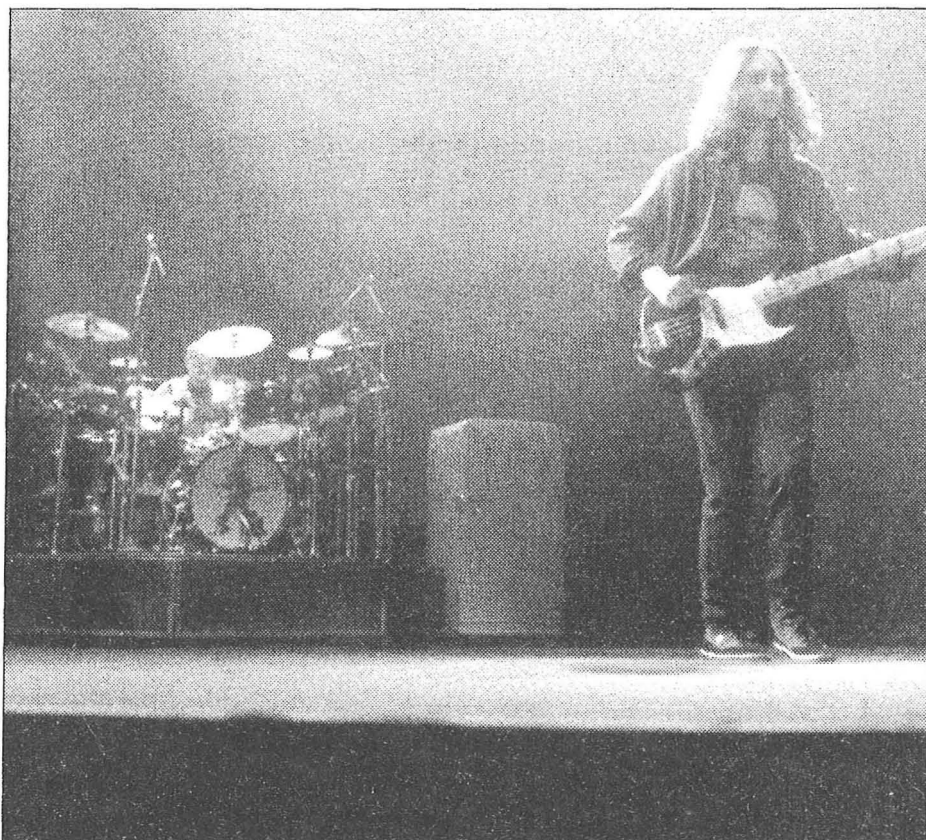
Yeah, but not to us. I mean, from our point of view it was filled with so many interesting and productive things, and I've been fond of saying lately I accomplished more in my basement in the last two years than I ever would on two years of concert stages. So I'm not sure it was a break, really. It was kind of a sabbatical or something — it was a working holiday, if you like, where everybody was very active and did some interesting things on their own, and brought all of that back into the fold to build from again. So it was an exciting break. It was an exciting reunion for us getting back together, and I think the music is the better for it. So it certainly wasn't a conscious revulsion, on our part, it wasn't a desire to step away from it all. It was a desire to do those things.

It seems a perfectly natural thing to me that there were no bad feelings about it, there was no tension of "maybe we'll never work together," or anything like that. There just wasn't anything like that, that "sources close to the band" might tend to dramatise. It wasn't like that. It was a natural thing, as things that we do are.

People want to always put more drama, more black and white, on things than there really is: "What do you plan when you get together from now on?" Well, we don't plan. We get together, and start playing, and see what happens. It's as genuine and organic as that, and if we don't do a tour or make a record, then we'll do something else that interests us or makes us excited. It's all part of the big thing. Without being a grand plan, it's certainly a grand architecture of some kind.

Give me a nutshell summary of "Test for Echo."

It's always a strange thing. On "Counterparts," any overarching theme really only appeared afterward, when I realised that it did deal with duality's and fundamental relationships in the literal sense, rather



than the pop terminology. This was the same really. They started out as individual essays. But of course they reflect a particular period of life and time, and even the little inspirational snippets that I've written down over the past few years, they all do reflect a time and a sensibility, so I suppose it's inevitable that they should also reflect a kind of unity, as much unity as a person's life is capable of, anyway.

So I don't know. There are a lot of themes to me that are woven in there, and no song is about any one thing, certainly as far as I'm concerned. I try to weave as much in there as the basket will possibly hold. In the little bio thing I kind of settled on the overall theme of affirmation, which I thought was quite important throughout, and the echo being that if you go "hello," you want somebody else to say "hello." As simple as that. And the song ("Test for Echo") itself, looking around at the world and thinking, "This is weird — does anyone else think this is weird?" You know, those kind of feelings, I think, are at play throughout.

But at the same time there are many, many sub-themes and other little ideas woven into it. Questions of morality: "The Colour of Right" and "Resist" both look at what morality consists of, and why it's different for one person than for another. You can say, "Well, I thought it was the right thing to do!" and the other person can say, "That was totally the wrong thing to do!" And I got to wondering how those kinds of divisions arise, especially in context of relationships.

The phrase itself came out of my daughter's law homework. There's a point of Canadian law called "the colour of right." And I just thought it was a beautiful metaphor to come out of legal language. Like I did in "Cold Fire" on Counterparts, a little argument between two people, I dramatised it and made it illustrate a larger concept. Those are really satisfying ways to go about it, where you can make something appear really personal and small when in fact it reflects something very large and abstract. Those are woven in there.

"Time and Motion," too: seize the day, carpe diem, things as simple as that are in there. So there's a lot of stuff in there, obviously, as much as I could get into each line and each carefully weighed word, days and days of revisions and so on. It's always hard for me to then kind of turn around and contract that down to one little germ.

You tell me.

Perhaps it's a glimpse at post-modern society four years from the millennium — maybe the frazzled pace, or this concept of the global marketplace of ideas. With such a wide variety of belief systems to choose from, the paradigms continually shift. "Virtuality" and "Totem," particularly, speak to that. Is the "I" in "Totem" true first person, or are you in someone else's head?

I would never use my first-person singular. It's always an imagined person. Somebody asked me recently, "Are you a solipsist?" I said, "No, I'm writing about other solipsists." (Laughs)

It's true that on a bright sunny day the world looks really nice if you're in a good mood, but if you're depressed or just in a bad mood, the sunniest day suddenly is dark. And the way people behave according to their moods really astounds me sometimes — they're charging around in a bad mood, offending and upsetting people, as if they have the right to do that. And it is about exactly that kind of solipsism — that the world does change according to how you feel. But again, the words are very carefully chosen. I said "how I feel changes how the world appears," not "how the world is." I think that's a really important distinction, and one that I was careful to make, because that's what I see these people doing.

I'm fairly gifted with equanimity, I guess, as far as

being the same person every day mood-wise. But of course I see in the people around me all kinds of extremes of not only mood-swings but inflicted mood-swings — moods used as an unshielded weapon sometimes. That really astonishes me. How come people think they can get away with that, and why do they think other people should have to put up with it? But they do, and so they behave, and I found that interesting, and wove it in there.

And religion makes the perfect filter for that. People see the world in the way their religion filter makes it appear. They see what appears.

So is it a stab at religion? Or are you embracing this school of subjectivism?

It's pointing out the good parts of them all. It's a stab at the divisions, certainly, in the sub-theme of it, but on the surface, no, it's very genuine. It's not cynical. It's saying that a Buddha smile is a beautiful thing to have, and 12 Apostles are a beautiful thing, and I'd love to have Aztecs and Mayas dancing around my totem pole. I mean, that's all genuine, and perfectly artless. It's not meant to be anything at all cynical or jaded. It's a genuine response to the beautiful parts of all these beliefs. That part of it was true — I'll take it, I'll take all those things, just leave your wars out of it and leave your moralising out of it and leave your missionaries out of it, but give me the Buddha smile.

So you're revelling, then, all the different ways somebody can filter things...

Yeah, though the filter is something that I stab at. Religion as an organised thing — I do stab at that.

And "Virtuality" (a song about the Internet) is certainly a little bit sardonic. I'm saying, again using the first person, "I can do this," and "I can do that," and the subtext is "no, you can't." You can't hold the world in your hand, you can't save the universe in a grain of sand, you can't smell her perfume, all these things. The character is operating under an illusion, really. Those kind of things I was taking a stab at, at the same time affirming the echo, affirming the affirmation among people — it's nice to go "hello" and hear a "hello." And while not discounting that, at the same time I dislike when it gets blown up into an illusion.

I'm looking at a big map of Africa on my wall right now, thinking that as far as the Internet goes, more than half of Africa doesn't have any kind of access to the Internet or the World Wide Web. The virtual reality thing, too — it's not real, you know. You can't dance to a virtual song.

The virtual reality thing, it's not real

The subtext of it all is this character in kind of blithe naiveté saying, "I can do this!" and "I can do that!" and "The Internet can do this!" And underneath it is the voice of reality going, "No, you can't." You can go have fun in the ultimate video game, but you can't hold the universe in your hands.

It's no secret Rush has a big following on the Internet. Was there any fear of alienating those fans?

Well, not fear, because it's not the sort of thing you're

supposed to be afraid of, but certainly I'm aware of it and think it's unfortunate. But, again, if you're puncturing illusions. ... It's religion. If you're afraid to poke fun at religion because somebody will get offended, then you're gonna run away from a lot of subjects in fear. As they say, you're not supposed to talk about religion, sex and politics. Well, I like to talk about them all! You're gonna offend people.

I see this kind of religious zeal, and "filter" is a well-chosen word you offer there, in all these cases, because it's not the reality that I'm ever criticising. I happen to love reality. I love the world. It's everything there is. But it's the idea that people think they're really connecting, in an overblown way like I'm taking a stab at, because it's wrong. The world isn't like that.

I always realise it when I travel and I go to some little village in Ghana or Sicily and look at all these people living their lives completely oblivious to us, and of course all of us living our lives completely oblivious to them. It maybe seems facile, but it's not. It's a very deep realisation, that all these people go through their births and loves and triumphs and tragedies and deaths without us even knowing or caring a thing about it. So any kind of global consciousness is achieved only by going out there and sweating in these villages with these people and drinking their bad water and eating their sandy food and understanding a little bit of what their life is like from beginning to end, you know. And the idea that you can dial up someone on the computer who happens to be another white adolescent male, and have the idea that you're connecting with the world ... well, it's too much. It's just an overblown sense of accomplishment.

That's all. I'm poking fun at the hot air, not at the reality, and not at the genuineness of the impulse. All those things I'm careful always to glorify, but at the same time: Don't overblow the self-importance aspect. I ride herd on myself about that all the time, and thus I consider it my duty to ride herd on everybody else about it, too.

Do you ever hop on and skim the Rush chat rooms?

Well, 10 years ago I did, when I was first introduced to it by a guy who worked at Hewlett-Packard, who took me in and showed me this growing thing. I thought, "Oh, that's very interesting. Very cool." And even at that time — 10 years ago, in the very dawn of the Internet — there were already

I imagine it could drive you nuts after reading it awhile.

It would be awfully self-important for me to want to sit down and sift through The response to it would be either: You'd think you're wonderful, or you'd get mad at this kind of invasion and these people with nothing better to do but talk about your life and your work.

It's a double-edged sword, as so many things are. It can be very beautiful, and I have friends who get a lot of use out of it in very productive ways in terms of their work and their research, and the actual connections with people and libraries and institutes of learning and everything. Those things are very valuable, so it's not to be discounted. I'm by no means a Luddite about it. I mean, I'm computerised, and CD-ROM-ized, and fax machine-ized, and everything else, so I'm hardly a reactionary about it. But at the same time I don't like it when things are touted beyond their real meaning.

But thinking back to "2112," it would be easy for someone to make the quick conclusion that maybe you're a little afraid of technology, or the possibility that society will be overcome by machines.

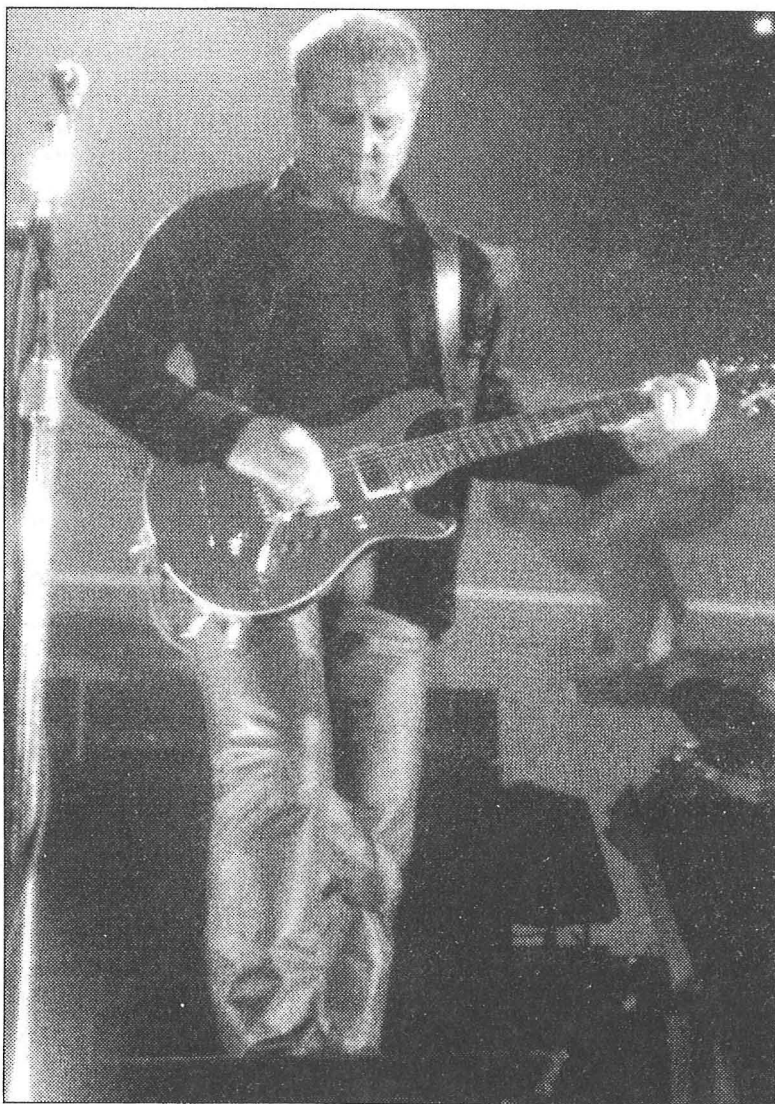
Anger and fear should not be mistaken. I saw "2112" as championing technology. My hero in that was reintroducing technology to a non-technological world. There are so many shades of meaning in there.

The word "Luddite" is so much bandied about today, but in history the Luddites weren't against technology, and they weren't against progress, they were only against labour-saving devices — because they wanted to have jobs. It was as simple as that. It wasn't some kind of religious or fanatical wish to destroy all machines. They just wanted to make sure people had jobs.

On to another familiar Peart theme — time and motion. "Time and Motion" is certainly one of the album's top cuts.

It started from a simple little seed. A friend of mine in a letter once remarked, just in an offhand way, that life shouldn't be what you can get out of it, but what you can squeeze into it. And I thought that was very profound and very insightful, so I developed it into the metaphor of the box cars and a train, and you're responsible to load the cargo. This train doesn't pull into the station full of stuff for you; you're the one who's supposed to go and load the train. I thought that was a very profound and interesting thing. And as you point out, it is a common theme of mine — of self-determination, and the power of will, not waiting for things to happen but going out and making them happen.

Also response to nature, weather, those are fundamental things for me, the worship of essential beauty and the phenomena of nature on a day-to-day basis. When people discuss the weather, it's often disparaged — "oh, we didn't talk about anything but the weather" — but really that's a post-modern comment too. Because in our whole history as a species, nothing's been more important than weather, more fundamental to our lives and livelihoods. Our hopes for next winter, our survival to next summer. All of that was entirely predicated on weather for generations and generations, so it's hardly strange



'Alex can be effortlessly brilliant'

that it's the most important thing in the world to us. And it remains so to me. But of course some of our urban types consider weather to be at worst an intrusion.

Musically the album is very 1996. Like "Counterparts," it's a little more raw.

It's such a genuine response of us still being music fans, and remaining aware of the music going on around us, going out and buying CDs and listening to the radio and all the stuff that any other music fan does. So of course your time and your consciousness is moulded by what's going on around you.

I think rock and pop music continue to be really interesting and really satisfying, so I stay in touch with them just as a human being, and consequently, of course, that does mould your idea of what modern music is.

So, what, does the band just show up at the studio and say, "OK, we're gonna make a raw record"?

No, we've been working on it for two months at that point, for one thing. (Laughs) But we never sit down and discuss those kinds of things. We just start work and try to make it as natural and organic as that. Geddy and Alex are working away on musical ideas for the first days, whatever gets them excited enough to be bothered working on. As for me on the words, too. If I'm not interested in it, I'm soon gonna lose the energy and determination that it takes to sit there day after day and plug away at it, and throw words away.

All of that is so genuine and so natural, and when we get playing together and the songs start to take shape, and the drum part influences the bass part, and that influences the guitar part, and I'll take cues from the guitar melody to try to build drum parts around that — it's all so natural. It's almost like a slowed-down

session of an improvisational session of a three-piece group. We're responding to what each other is doing, trying to put forward our own ideas, and trying also to create something larger musically than any of those elements.

So all of that's going on. Instead of happening spontaneously in the moment, it's happening over a slow period. But it's exactly the same organic response to each other's playing and the ideas that we've learned and things we want to use in the music, the overall sense of structure that we have about it. All that just happens so naturally based on what we like and don't like at the time, you know. It almost seems too facile to term it that way, but that's exactly how it goes.

The guitar has a beefed-up role here again.

Yeah, the last couple of albums we've leaned that way. And they're just genuine responses to the time.

Our dabblings in keyboards were really a product of the time when that technology became available to us, when foot pedals and drum triggers could cause so many new sounds. That was really exciting to us, and it also helped push back barriers to what a three-piece group could accomplish, especially live. So a lot of our experiments were predicated on our time in time, you know. When digital synthesizers and sequencers came along, they were tools. Electronic drums, the same thing for me — I couldn't resist. And I do continue to use them, but they occupy less focus after a while. They just become an article in the tool box that you can bring out when you need it.

I didn't use any electronics on this record, because I didn't need them and because I was so focused on drum-set playing. But I'm still using them live and I still really love what they can do. So a lot of those things are just genuine reflections of the time in which they happen. Our keyboard period reflected a time when keyboards were dominant, and it had as

much to do with technology as with style, which I find really interesting too. It wasn't just that everybody said, "Let's use a lot of keyboards." It was that people said, "Hey, we've built keyboards you can use!" That's an important distinction, but nonetheless it was the time in which we were growing and building.

And we used keyboards on this record quite a lot, really, but in more a subtle way and more of a supportive role, certainly. Alex has growing confidence in what he can accomplish texturally, too. (In the '80s) it was partly wanting to expand the limits of a three-piece, so keyboards were an easy way to do that. And as Alex has gotten more experience — and also, guitar technology has improved so much — what he can accomplish, mixing acoustics and different guitar textures ... It's his confidence and his ability, too, to play all those roles that negate the necessity for keyboards in a lot of those cases.

Did he seem to come in empowered by the solo project he released earlier this year?

Certainly, in the same way I was by my forays into big band music and studying with a teacher the last couple of years and practising every day. I came very much empowered by a facility on the drum set I'd never had before in my life. Those are life-changing things. For Alex, yes, just to see a project through from beginning to end himself ... he does tend to be of a more spontaneous nature. It's part of the chemistry among us that he's often the one to come up with a brilliant idea just off the top of his head, just to sit down and play it, where Geddy and I are more methodical, and any quality we tend to come up with is mostly the product of time and effort. Alex can be effortlessly brilliant. (Laughs)

That's a great quality to have, but it makes it hard for him to be applied. For him to sit down and do a whole project like that was a real challenge, because



it's just not the way he's made. So, yes, that becomes a very affirming part of his life.

So what in the world can a drum teacher teach Neil Peart?

Well, you never finish learning. And the best comparison, I think, is with tennis players. You know, the world's best tennis players have coaches — what can their coaches teach them about the game of tennis? Well, nothing. But they can watch them serve, they can watch their cross-court backhand, and say, "You know, if you kept your shoulder a little higher, and follow through like this ..." So that's what he was for me, very much like a coach — just watched the way I moved and suggested ways in which that could be more natural and more comfortable, and hence more musical.

It wasn't ever about teaching me a drum beat or a paradiddle or anything, but more on the macroscale, just watching my game and suggesting ways it could be better. And sure enough, it could.

Any more solo projects in the works, more stuff like the Buddy Rich tribute (released in 1995)?

Yeah, I'm certainly interested in pursuing that because I enjoyed it so much, and also because I have so much music still unreleased on it. I definitely plan to do at least one more volume, and possibly two more of it.

I took the opportunity this spring, just after we did the recording, to do an instructional video based around the recording of the album, drum part-wise. And then right after that I went in and was doing some more work for Volume Two of the Buddy Rich thing. I would definitely like to more work personally with that, but I would also like to do more with the material I already have.

Is there any one area that's becoming more gratifying at this point in life? Are the priorities shifting at all musically?

Not stylistically, no. It's more work space, I would say, and personal enjoyment.

My favorite part of everything is when we go away to the country and work on new songs, and we're kind of isolated but we're together, and there's the whole collaboration enterprise, which I just love. I love bringing in lyrics and having the other guys first of all like them, and then suggest ways to make them better, and I go running back to my desk all excited to incorporate those improvements. It's just a great time, you know. We're very comfortable and friendly together, so we enjoy that time and we produce good work. There's a sense of satisfaction of having accomplished and made something out of nothing, but at the same time the very process itself on a day-to-day basis is really enjoyable, and not nearly as stressful or as fraught with surprises as the more public side of it can be.

So is playing live still a high priority?

It's less valuable after a while. You know, I realised I spent the last two years in my basement basically playing drums for the spiders, and that did me more good musically than two years of touring, or five years of touring, would ever have done.

There's a point in your building years when there's nothing better you could do than go out and play every night on a stage, you know, and force yourself to that level. We would feel it, as a band, getting better and getting tighter as a unit, all of that. But of course once you've achieved that after 20 years, you have it! (Laughs) So we don't need to build that anymore.

On the other hand, it's still the ultimate challenge to walk up on a stage with all the spirit of the moment, when it's not like in the studio where you can stop the tape and go back. There's no opportunity to re-do it and refine it — it has to be right on the moment. So that's a tremendous challenge, to walk up those stairs every night, especially with 20-odd years behind you, and a certain expectation from the audience about how good the performance is supposed to be, so that's different too. You're no longer trying to prove anything to someone who doesn't know you. You're trying to live up to something. So that's a certain level of pressure itself too.

But it is the crucible, I call it. It's the ultimate ordeal by fire.

So there's still nervousness, excitement in those moments before you take the stage?

Oh yeah, man. It's enormous just to walk up that stage every night and deliver. It's a huge thing, and it's not to be discounted.

My parents get phone calls -- Is it true Neil's dying of cancer?! I saw it on the Internet!

But in the past it had an overweening value that was cumulative, that I don't really think is there now. ... (As a tour starts) the first few times you present it, it's a massive challenge, and then it just becomes a process of re-creation, even though it of course changes from night to night, and we've tried to make it over the years freer and freer for that eventuality of spontaneous magic on the night.

But at the same time you're trying to live up to a certain standard, so it takes on a chasing-your-tail kind of aspect.

As you've gone back through some of these old songs, songs you haven't played in some time, are you finding you need to make some real seismic shifts in your current performance style?

From time to time. Again, we're very experimental, and there are limbs we've gone out on that we chose not to go out on again! (Laughs) But that's OK, and I think it's the right thing to do, and I respect us for doing that. There are definitely songs we wouldn't want to revisit.

But the times when we really did hit something, some combination that was just right — and there's no way you can know it at the time — we can go back and find songs that are just as good as they should be. We've learned a lot since and improved in subtle ways since, but it's important that all these improvements and tools that we acquire are subtle, and very much internal, I would say. Even though the shift that I've gone through drumming-wise in the

last couple of years is not really for the listeners' benefit, except in the most subtle and felt way. That's the story through all of it.

We find gems all the time. Last tour when we revived the overture from "Hemispheres" from 1978, we hadn't even heard for probably 15 years. And you go back, "Hey, it sounds pretty good! And it's great to play!" When you do find those, it's a wonderful thing — something that you do still like and also that's enjoyable to play. It's not impossible. That's almost 20 years old and we found real pleasure in rediscovering it for ourselves.

At the same time, there are other things from that time or earlier — or newer, even songs from the last couple of albums — that we have no wish to revisit.

So there are musical moments from 20 years ago that make you squirm now?

Of course! Do you want to see your kindergarten paintings hanging on the refrigerator? (Laughs) That's the unfortunate part of it — so much of your growth and development takes place in public. That is tough, to know that things you did 23, 24 years ago are still out there in front of people. Of course it's embarrassing.

Anything in particular?

Oh, nothing I wish to share with anybody. No, no!

How often do you just kick back in your living room and play your old records?

Never.

Never?

Nope. Just before a tour, when we're looking for things, then I'll go through and read the titles, really, and think about them and go, "Maybe." And "Maybe not."

Over the last couple of months the three of us were sending faxes back and forth of potential lists. Some of them were intended to be ridiculous suggestions, but even some of those worked out to be — somebody else took it seriously and said, "Well, wait a minute, what if we did this? It could really work."

The idea, again, of self-importance — I would never think of sitting down and reading through my press, or listening to my work from that point of view. It's just wrong.

You may not read your own press, but you've certainly got to be aware of the revisionist thinking that's come Rush's way in the '90s. Maybe it's a younger generation of critics. And others seemed to have stopped to take stock and decided they gave you too hard a time two decades ago.

Yes, thank God for that. I am aware of that, certainly, and grateful for it. But it was part of a revolution.

Just before that time, in the late '80s, I was concerned for the whole state of music, even just for drummers. What were drummers doing? There were drum machines out there playing these stupid beats

all the time, and I wasn't hearing, obviously, inventive drumming going on, or any drummer getting an opportunity to be inventive or creative, and I really feared for the future of the instrument.

And then in the '90s, along comes the whole shift, from Guns N' Roses right through the Seattle bands, and suddenly it's all different, it's about real musicians playing real instruments again. And suddenly people like us, who have championed that, are respected again, instead of being disparaged.

So that was a really pleasant turnaround, not from a personal view so much — although there's nothing wrong with that — but more on a larger scale. Music was an awful lot healthier for that change.

As you get older, is it...

I haven't started that process yet! "As time goes on..."

OK. As time goes on, is it harder physically to do some of the stuff you do? Drumming, particularly yours, is a

very physical performance.

It hasn't yet. One of the gifts of maturity, if you like, is stamina. That's not a problem. When you see endurance sports, for instance — marathons and triathlons — older guys do pretty well at that, where the younger ones are quickly snapped out.

Fortunately drumming is much more about the long run than it is about sprinting. You don't have to give that up. Buddy Rich was almost 70 and still playing like a madman. It gives you hope when you see that level of performance going on at that age. It certainly doesn't have to stop.

So rumours of Rush's demise are definitely premature...?

That's another unfortunate by-product of the Internet, that anything anybody says suddenly takes on electronic gospel. Part of our frustration is constantly having to fight these rumours that blow up on there. My parents get phone calls — "Is it true Neil's dying of cancer?! I saw it on the Internet!" So it takes on the wealth of fact.

(Author) Douglas Coupland had an article in the New York Times a few weeks back saying that he thinks the big problem with the Internet is that it doesn't have an editor, and he hopes it never does. The title of the article was "Why the Internet Should Remain a Mess."

And that's just how it is. But people aren't adjusted to that reality yet, and just in the same way that people believe the National Enquirer — it's in print, it must be true — they still believe what they read on these bulletin boards. "If it's in pixels, it must be true."

At the same time, would you commit to saying, "Yes, there will be another tour?"

No. I could be dead! Or anything. It's none of anybody's damned business anyway! (Laughs)

No, like I said, the only thing that's clear in my mind is that as long as we're able, we'll continue working together. But everything else is subject to revaluation.



“Press this key to see amazing things...”

by Brad Parmerter

Thirty-one years is the sum of two men's work with the Canadian trio Rush. These years of experience combine to create one of the most impressive visual concerts of the nineties. As the t4e tour rolled across North America this fall so did technology's finest lighting system and one of rock's best lighting directors.

Howard Ungerleider first met up with Rush in 1974 when as an agent, he was told by a record representative that the band would be the next Led Zeppelin. He was “Road Master” from the get-go and he has been touring with Rush for over twenty years. Matt Druzbik's first tour was the 1987-88 Hold Your Fire world tour and has been working with Howard since. Together they form a powerful team working to provide a stunning visual presentation night after night.

Howard is a friendly and open person to speak with and has always been willing to share a few minutes for fans. He runs a lighting company called Production Design International, Inc. just outside of Toronto and has been involved in the music business since the late sixties. Although he has worked with Rush since the band's start, he has also worked with such acts as Queensryche, Def Leppard, the Tragically Hip, Kim Mitchell, Tesla, Utopia, The Who, and even Rod Stewart.

When I caught up with Howard on the t4e tour in Boston we set up a meeting the following day in Hartford. It was around 3.30pm and the lasers were being adjusted as I entered the Civic Centre. For each stop the lights must be fine tuned to the size of the arena. Matt spent roughly three hours going through each song of the set, reviewing each light cue to make sure each lamp was positioned and focused correctly.

Both Howard and Matt have a StatusCue console interfaced with a 486 Austin computer (using Microsoft Windows 3.11) which is then interfaced with their main type of moving light. Each has control through an A/B switch (which enables them to trade songs during the show). Each song is programmed and stored in the computer in a series of cues which are triggered from the StatusCue console. For the first time Howard has his cues totally computerised which means that each cue is computer-controlled, even the fades. Instead of manually fading or activating scenes, Howard must precisely time the execution of the cue so that the fade or scene arrives at the exact time desired.

Howard also has a manual console where he controls the stationary lights and effects. These lights may at times provide a background, or wash for the moving lights. They are also used for symmetrical lighting scenes and effects. These are fixed into the trusses, which are the metal rigging that holds the lights above the stage. For the t4e tour, Howard has brought back the original circular trusses that he designed for the 1981 Moving Pictures tour and armed them with Cyberlight's.

Before the Counterparts tour, Rush used the popular Vari-Light which was made popular by Genesis in the 1980's and still remains a popular light on the concert scene. On the 1994 Counterparts tour, Howard brought the look of the LSD Icon light to the Rush set - advantages of this light were that it had more versatility than the Vari-Light, it was more reliable, and a single beam could produce more than one colour at a time (notable in Cold Fire and Mystic Rhythms).

After that particular tour, Howard found an even better light which he used on the Promised Land Tour with Queensryche, the Cyberlight. It is produced by an Austin, Texas based company, High End Systems (as is much of Howard's set-up) and, as

Howard describes, it is similar to the Icon, but superior: “The CyberLight does the same thing the Icon does and it's twice as bright. Plus you get what you want “cause it's your light and you can custom design the interior optics to do what you want them to do, it's not like the standard optics that you use.”

For the t4e tour, Howard is once again using the Cyberlight (What better way to illuminate the CyberSea?). The Cyberlight features multi-prism effects, split colour effects, variable speed strobes, focus, variable zoom, and variable frost from hard to soft edged beams. Combining the vivid colour selection and features of the Cyberlight with another High End System light, the Studio Colour, Howard has a multitude of possible lighting effects. The Studio Colour also features remote controllable position, colour, intensity, beam shaping and variable beam angle. These provide an array of washlight for bathing the stage in colour, while offering a number of more sophisticated options.

Forty-four Cyberlight's, forty-eight Studio Colour lights, forty-eight AF1000 digital strobes, two Hughes JVC 360 video projection units (Rush is using front projection for the first time - the video segments are stored on laser disc and were created by Howard, Geddy and Norm Stangl—with the exception of the Half the World video which was directed by Geddy's brother Alan Weinrib), and nine spotlights combine to provide Rush with a top-notch visual performance. And once again Howard is working with New York based See Factor, as he has since the late seventies, for custom trusses and lighting.

How long does it take to put a show of this calibre together? One would think it takes a great deal of planning and rehearsal, but that would be only partially correct. Howard had a vision of what he wanted and from there the planning and construction took place. The sets and lights were tested and bugs were ironed out in eight days in nearby Glens Falls, NY. The rehearsal however took much less time. For those who caught the Albany show they were seeing the second performance of Rush's longest set ever. The full production (with the band, video and lights) was practised only once before opening night: the night previous. That's what experience and expertise can do and the Albany crowd saw one of the tightest opening night's in years.

In Hartford, while Matt was adjusting cues, Howard was having trouble with the strobes. He had activated them from the manual console and they failed to stop. They kept flashing until they burned themselves out (a safety precaution). When they recharged, they would start to strobe again, yet Howard could not stop them. Technician Andy was called in to look at the DataFlash AF1000 and after a time the problem was not only solved, but he had changed things so as to enable Howard to use more strobe options—anyone who was at the Hartford show will know that he had a lot of fun with these new options. Most notably were: the “follow-me” strobe effect running across the front truss from stage right to left (as in the end of Grand Finale), and the dynamic and powerful strobes in Animate after each line of the verses. For the foreign “animates” at the end Howard kept the strobes flashing until the song's conclusion.

It was interesting to see the interaction between Howard and Matt as they worked to modify the cues. Their knowledge of the songs and scenes was impressive. They worked for some time on the ending section of Red Barchetta when Alex is mid-stage and on camera. Previously they had eight white lights from the back truss focused to the front edge of the stage, but during this time of fine-tuning they modified the cue. Matt changed the middle four lights to a dark blue as per Howard's suggestion. The blue would work better with the video than the blinding white light. After experimenting further with tones and beam intensity, they finally decided on changing all eight to a light blue.

Meanwhile, a DAT of Animate was being played over the house PA. Howard said that the sound engineer's test the acoustics of the hall with tapes from previous shows. A section of a song or two is played to tune the house sound before the band even steps on-stage for soundcheck. Howard pointed out a member of the sound crew in the back of the arena with a remote control board on his lap used to adjust the levels. For the Hartford Civic Centre they played back portions of Animate (which started as “a, b, c, d...e, f” instead of the numerals used on the studio version), the end of Red Barchetta, and parts of The Spirit of Radio.

At 5.05pm Alex arrived on-stage for soundcheck with his Les Paul and soon after Neil started practising for a few minutes. Geddy announced to the crew at 5.14 “We're gonna drop Time & Motion and do Resist every night.” This was received with smiles from Howard who listed Resist as one of his favourites of the show (along with Force Ten, 2112, and Red Sector A).

The band soon broke into Test For Echo with full video — Neil's set was turned towards the screen and both he and Alex (with red PRS) seemed transfixed by the video. Driven was next and Neil still had his back to the empty arena. For the last chorus of this song Geddy's vocal was isolated and emitted through the PA a cappella which was simply magical.

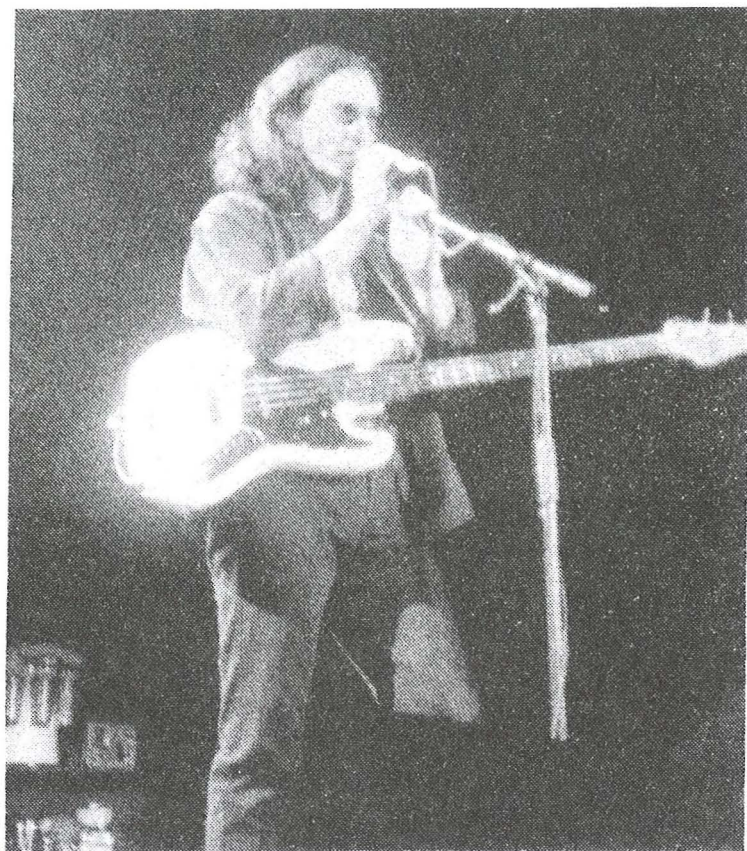
As 5.30 rolled around, Andy was still tinkering with the Dataflash AF1000, Matt was going through the light cues for the second set and Geddy, Alex and Neil dove into Half the World. Red Sector A was next with video footage of Neil in circles. On the subject of cameras, the camera for the head-on stage shots (which provides the majority of Geddy's appearances on the screens) was a Canon J45X9.513 IE.

After soundcheck Matt and Howard worked together to refocus the star-field for the third cue in Resist (at the end of the first verse-beginning of the second verse). It was exciting to watch the reconstruction of this cue from moving the position of the lights to cover the rear screen to seeing them re-run the cues over and over again to fine-tune to perfection.

Also during the show I noticed some interesting effects during the first set: the follow-me purple to blue lights (from stage right to left along the top of the stage) at the beginning of Alex's solo; the brilliant yellow during Virtuality; the pan to the Alex's side "the other half" prop for the coinciding line in Half The World; and for Nobody's Hero the very moody red for Alex's solo and the rainbow effects. 2112 was full of wonderful moments—the angry yellow and red's for Overture and then the switch to all white flooding the stage for Alex's "screaming solo"; the Syrinx chorus with a wash of yellow covering the stage and red spots on the band created a very intense scene. The moody blue's for Alex's interlude's, and the purple floor Studio Colour lights for Soliloquy and the rising blue cone shaped beams.

"I'm sending a signal..." kicked off the second set and the crowd went wild for Test for Echo. The satellite dish lasers emitting green and blue lasers looked fabulous—even better from the back of the arena than up close. At the end of the line "some kind of drama live on satellite" Howard's hand went down and the lasers were in a frenzy, criss-crossing over the whole arena.

The lasers on this tour are housed not only from the back of the stage, but there are also laser scanners inside each of the four satellite dishes. At the beginning of the tour in Albany, there were six satellite dishes, but Howard mentioned that the stage was cramped and after the next show in Buffalo the props from the Half the World video were placed mid-stage. Numerous mirrors are located on-stage and eight are hung from the truss over the crowd which houses the video projectors. These mirrors are used to bounce the lasers from mirror to mirror in order to



create the desired image. The lasers being used are "class b" which are used in surgery and need to be kept at least fifteen feet from the audience.

The beginning of Free Will featured a nice sweeping white effect across the stage and for the last verse the crowd was bathed in white from the front of the truss. Matt handled the computerised portion of Roll The Bones using the StatusCue board and controlling the cues while Howard used the manual board to trigger other lighting effects. Howard was back on the StatusCue for Resist and the song was one of my favourites of the night. I appreciated all of Howard and Matt's hard work when I saw the cues fade beautifully with the music creating a magical feel.

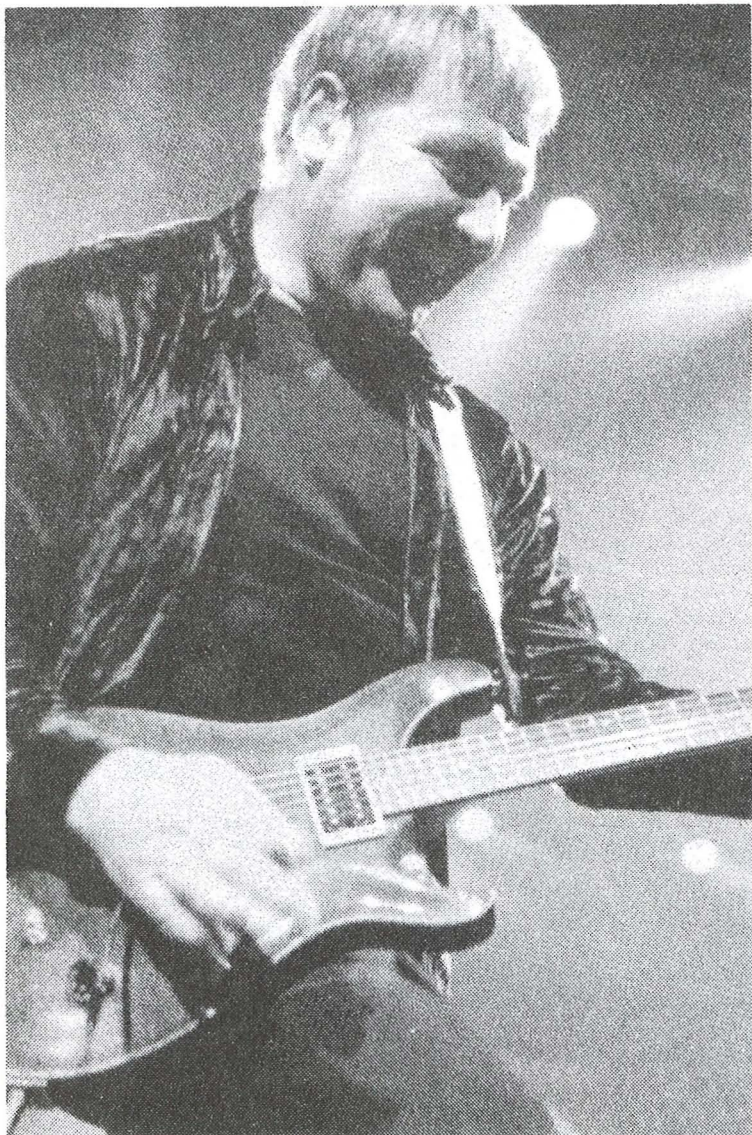
YYZ was perhaps the most interesting song of the night though. I not only noticed that they were using the sample of Neil striking a chair with plywood (which I'd never heard live before), but I also wore a set of headphones which enabled me to hear Howard calling the cues. During the whole performance I observed Howard calling the cues to his crew (the spotlight operators, the laser operator, and the video) but until I heard him I didn't fully appreciate how intense his job is. Every few seconds a new cue is being called or prepared for: "Spot's 1 and 5 get ready for frame 2 (gel colour) and go - laser ready and go - spot's 4 and 7 standby to join 1 and 5 for frame 2, spot's 3 and 8 frame 4 and all go..."

It was exciting to hear Howard at work—every move of the show is choreographed by him. He gives the spot's a warning for colour and location and then gives a countdown to execution, as well as when to start the video and lasers. Howard really has a very intense job, one might think that he just presses buttons, but he design's and is in charge of the majority of the visuals at a Rush show.

Is it any wonder that Rush has filled arena's for over twenty years. A Rush concert is a very impressive show simply on a musical level, their performance speaks for itself, but live music in an arena without a solid light show is little more than a club show in a large venue. It is when this music is combined with Howard's lighting cues and design that it becomes a visual experience which is almost unparalleled.

Thanks to Matt, and Debi at H.E.S. and very special thanks to Howard.

Brad had taken some photos of the soundcheck and other points during his time with Howard, unfortunately they did not arrive in the UK when we went to press, so next issue I'll be putting the accompanying pictures on a page of their own with some text. Stewart...





Rush makes a fine blind date in Toronto

By JOHN POWELL.

No fog machines. No video screens. No fireworks screams. No laser beams. No floppy-eared bouncing Presto bunnies either. Tonight's Blind Date show at the Phoenix Concert Theatre in Toronto was a Rush fan's testimonial. Stripped of all the appealing high-tech sensory theatrics that are the band's calling cards, what lingered were three guys on a stage playing their guts out and enjoying every minute of it. Like slapping a CD on your player and slipping the headphones on, the distractions disappeared. The music and emotion coming in loud and clear.

"We're gonna play a whole bunch of absurd music for you tonight," said bass player Geddy Lee in his best English accent. And he wasn't joshin'. The 19-song set was a diverse sampling of Rush's 20 album magical mystery tour which pleased the loyal devotee as well as the enthusiastic newcomer.

Tacking a surfin' safari jam onto Big Money was a small hint of the carefree levity in store. Currently on a North American tour (to promote their new disk *Test For Echo*), the dates are crammed with large stadium shows. Rush, which hasn't played an intimate venue since they dumped that church basement gig approximately 27 years ago, were basking in the atmosphere. Lead guitar god and clown school graduate, Alex Lifeson, was zanier than ever, making faces at Lee behind his back, kidding with the fans and striking your typical "I am a guitar God" poses throughout the show. Lee dabbled in foreign accents and duelled Lifeson. Hell, even Neil Peart whose masterful concentration while bashing the skins couldn't be diverted even if a squad of giggling cheerleaders pranced across the stage, cracked a fleeting smile. Will miracles never cease?

The hometown boys even sprung for a cardboard cut-out of Pamela Anderson Lee holding a plastic cup (for spare change?). Hint. Hint. Nudge. Nudge. Wink. Wink.

The air drums were out in full force during *Red Barchetta*, *Animate* and *Subdivisions* but were packed up as the audience loudly gabbed during the slower tunes *Nobody's Hero* and *Virtuality*. *Roll The Bones*, *The Spirit Of Radio*, *Closer To The Heart* and *Tom Sawyer* had the crowd singing along.

The trio on-stage tonight wasn't the Rush of 1996, or even 1986 for that matter. They were once again the wild-eyed young 'un's prowling the club circuit pocketing just enough dough to buy that new amplifier. Stealing a swig from the fountain of youth, Lee was hitting those high notes again. Peart taught those drums a lesson or two but spared them the renowned solo. Lifeson strummed those strings as if the group was still opening for The New York Dolls.

It has been said that Rush is closer to the end of their career than the beginning. Flush the *Geritol* and toss the *Depends*. They won't be needing them quite yet, thank you very much. In Lakeside Park the grass is still green.

Rating: FIVE OUT OF FIVE

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