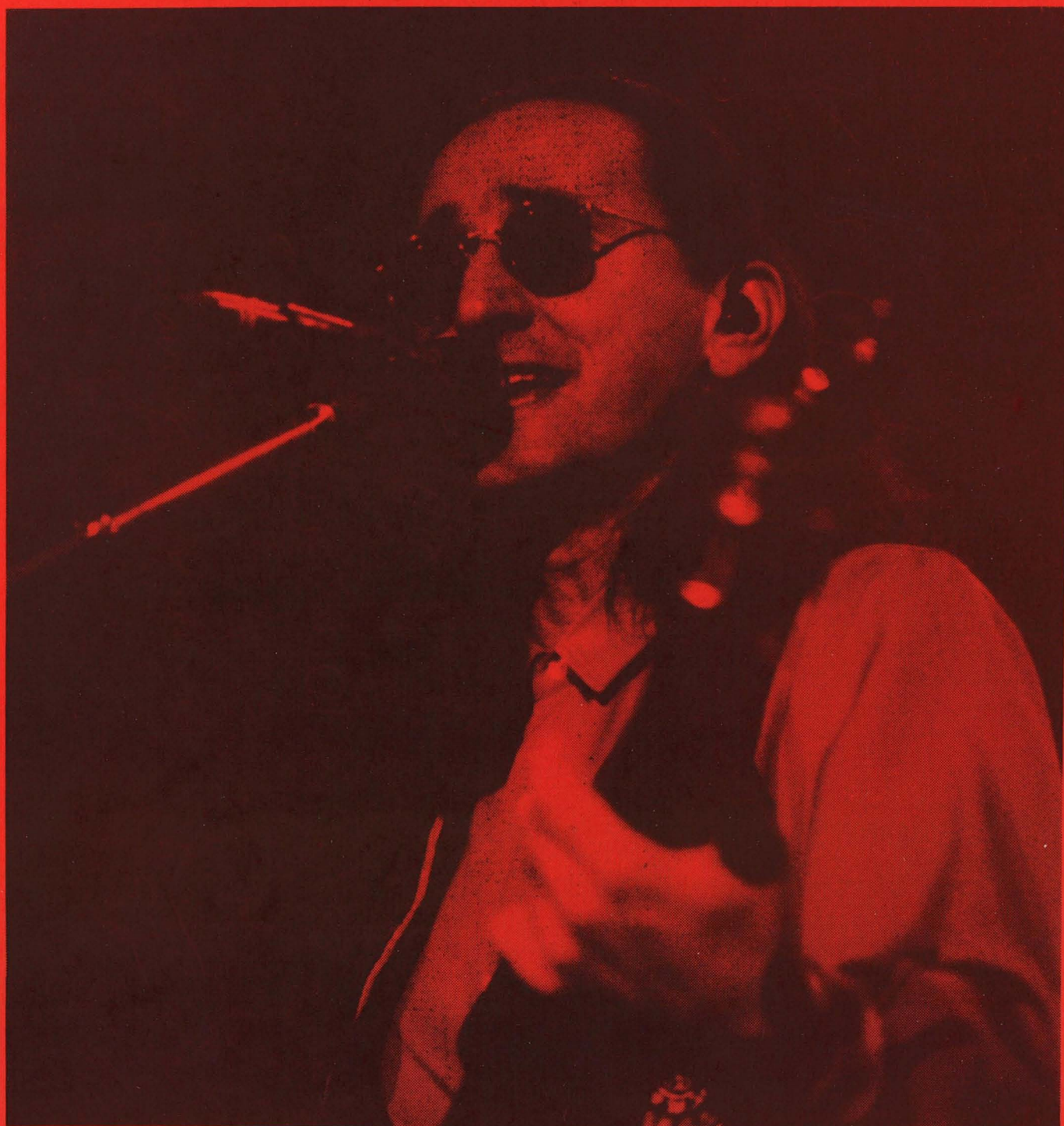


The Spirit of



Issue 41
Winter
1997/98



The Spirit of



Well, this is one of those seasonally 'quiet' times of the year when news is pretty thin on the ground. However, Spirit of Rush set its very own rotweiler (Mick) onto the case and he finally managed to get hold of Anthem and was able to ask them about the band's plans....

The news from Anna at Anthem is that the band are planning to go into the studio around the end of January to put together a live album/CD which is hoped to be completed by the Spring. She had no information as to whether this would be a double CD but confirmed that the band at present have no plans for a video (what about the footage they took on the Test For Echo tour!). We can only hope that they change their minds..... SOR therefore reckons that the live CD should be out sometime towards the end of this year.

Regarding the money that we collected at the convention for the trust fund in memory of Neil's daughter Selena, Anthem have said that Neil's wife Jackie is overseeing the fund and that it has not yet been decided for what the money will be used.

One piece of news which we didn't include in our last issue (we just had SO many contributions!) was the fact that Alex contributed one song to Steve Vai's compilation of Christmas songs "Merry Axemas". Alex plays on the track "The Little Drummer Boy". Here's an extract from the Associated Press' advertisement for the album:

"MERRY AXEMAS": CHRISTMAS FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

'(Los Angeles) -- Christmas as "silent night" won't ever be the same. Epic Records is set to release "Merry Axemas," a collection of classic Christmas music interpreted by eleven of the world's leading rock guitarists. Jeff Beck covers "Amazing Grace," with help from the London Choral Society, while Alex Lifeson of Rush plays all the instruments on his version of "The Little Drummer Boy." Steve Vai (VY), who

Editorial

came up with the album concept, turns in a rendition of "Christmas Time is Here" from the "Peanuts" Christmas Special. Other guitarists contributing tracks include Brian Setzer, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Eric Johnson, Richie Sambora, Steve Morse and Joe Satriani. "Merry Axemas" is due in stores October 14th.

Here's a complete track listing of "Merry Axemas":
"Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer" - Kenny Wayne Shepherd
"The First Noel" - Eric Johnson
"Amazing Grace" - Jeff Beck
"Jingle Bells" - Brian Setzer Orchestra
"Silent Night" - Joe Satriani
"Joy To The World" - Steve Morse
"Christmas Time Is Here" - Steve Vai
"Blue Christmas" - Joe Perry
"O' Holy Night" - Richie Sambora
"The Little Drummer Boy" - Alex Lifeson
"Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" - Hotei'

Finally, Dream Theater have just finished the Japanese leg of their Falling Into Infinity Tour. We are reliably informed that they will play some European dates during late February and March with 5-6 UK gigs planned for April. We'll keep you posted.

Love and kisses *Janet*

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Signals

Dear Mick and SOR,

In reply to your response to Ian Nelson that the band have never played "The Camera Eye" live. I saw the band at Bingley Hall, Stafford in 1981 when they were promoting "Exit Stage Left" and I'm pretty sure they did play it. I'm not 100% positive, but I do have vivid recollections of the pre-show taped music comprising of Visage and Ultravox - a hint of things to come on Signals?

Maybe other readers could confirm or refute my memory? (*They have done Bill boy! Haven't they just - Mick*).

Yet again I missed the convention. I'll have to clear my diary for '98! I would like to express my condolences to Neil and family, my heart goes out to you.

In reference to the re-mastered CDs, maybe some of the readers who have them could review them, giving details of packaging, lyrics and most important, sound! Are the later releases worth getting? (Power Windows, Hold Your Fire). Since these were recorded in the CD era digitally etc. are they any better sounding than the originals? (*Get writing people. What do you all think of the re-mastered CDs? - Mick*).

Finally I would like to recommend the new Dream Theater release "Falling Into Infinity". If you like Rush (why get SOR if you don't?!) you'll love this. Definitely worth the wait.

Yours sincerely,

BILL COLLINS
WILLENHALL, W. MIDLANDS

Dear Mick,

I am writing to let you know of my appreciation of my first year's subscription to Spirit Of Rush, and to renew it. It's been great and I wish I'd subscribed before as I've been aware of it since an ad. for Issue 1 in Kerrang!

Still, nobody's perfect, as you demonstrated in Issue 40 when you said 'The Camera Eye' had never been played by Rush in concert! Shame on you! On the Signals Eurotour they played a 5-6

minute version featuring the 'Westminster' section lyrics, and judging by the photos in the programme, they must have played it on at least one previous tour. I have a tape to prove it! Keep up the good work (check your facts.....).

NICK ROBINSON
HYDE, CHESHIRE

P.S. Am I alone in thinking that 'Caress of Steel' and particularly 'The Fountain of Lamneth' is one of their finest works?

P.P.S. Is anyone really happy with what amounts to a set of remastered album covers? Why can't we have a limited edition (vinyl!) re-issue of 'Caress of Steel', as originally planned by Hugh Syme?

Dear Mick,

Looking through SOR Issue 40, just by chance I was playing the tape 30/3/83, Riverfront Stadium, Cincinnati, Ohio. On Page 5 there is the letter from Mr Ian Nelson of Cardiff. Reading the Post Script regarding the question of Rush playing 'The Camera Eye' live, in your italics you wrote "No Ian, never!" Well, as chance would have it, I kept reading SOR 40 and about 10 minutes after reading this, on that tape there was played - "The Camera Eye" (about half of what's on Moving Pictures)!

While it is still on my mind - you have interviewed Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee individually. Reading previous SOR issues with a piece of their interviews printed I am curious to know what they were like and their attitude or anything like mannerisms or manner! (*They are just normal people like you or I, although I do wonder about Alex - Mick*).

About the Moving Pictures platinum award that Kevin Owen won at the convention - did you ask Anthem for it or did they give it to you? I am just curious! (*Yes I asked them for it and they sent it to me. Very kind of them, I'm sure you will agree! - Mick*)

At the Radio City New York 21/9/83 concert, Rush announced a new song. The tape I've got is distorted and I can only make out the last word of the title Geddy Lee said at this concert. He said "Here's a new song for you from our next album This is called ???? ???? ???? Elvis". Hearing the song it is Kid Gloves! Any ideas on the first three words that have been distorted? (*Can anyone help Martin out? - Mick*) Yours sincerely,

**MARTIN REAPER
PETERLEE, DURHAM**

Dear Mick,

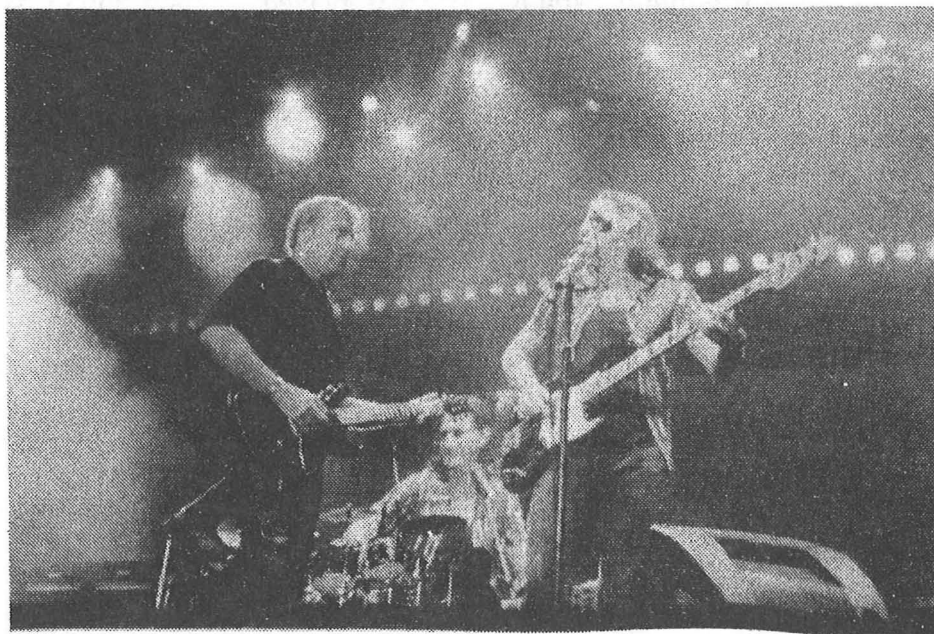
First of all, thanks for enrolling me into your fraternity! The magazine is packed with enjoyable reading material, especially as most of it is made up of letters and articles written by the fans themselves!

My first and only live experience of Rush to date was on Friday the 13th (!) of December 1991 at the legendary Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, Canada. The feat itself probably classifies me as one of the few long distance travellers desperate to see the trio on stage. Imagine - a ten hour flight from sunny Malta (in the Med.) to the sub-zero Great White North (and that's not including five hours in transit at Heathrow)!!! I'm not even contemplating on the expenses I had to incur - let's face it, what better way is there to see Rush live, if not their hometown?!!! And what better way is there to start off your journey from

Heathrow than to hear Dreamline on the in-flight entertainment as the 747 speeds down the

The show itself was an adrenaline surge all the way, kicking off with Force Ten, Limelight and runway for take-off?! (No, I did not bribe BA in any way!)Freewill in sequence. Other unforgettable renditions included Subdivisions, Bravado, Dreamline, Ghost Of A Chance, The Pass, Xanadu, Where's My thing, YYZ, plus the obligatory standards - Tom Sawyer, Spirit Of Radio and Closer To The Heart - which I'm sure none of us are ever tired of listening to. Neil brought down the house with his solo - a tribute to sheer human power! My only disappointment was that in my opinion, merchandise was bloody expensive - \$50 for a sweat-shirt! And that's 6 years ago!! But at the end of the day, the whole mission was worth every single buck I paid.

Kindly allow me now to give my opinion vis-à-vis the Presto debate and a letter by Paul Humphreys printed in the last issue. Presto is one hell of an album - tracks like Chain Lightning, The Pass, Anagram and Available Light, sum it all. On the other hand I feel that each and every Rush album stands in a class of its own, and thus comparing one to another is a useless, if not even a degrading process! Obviously, each and every one of us will have their own personal favourites and I feel that's the beauty of music (definitely one of the most prestigious art forms). And incidentally, Rush have proven that they are pretty good at it (Mr



Humphreys, please take note!).AND HOW MANY OF YOU OUT THERE THINK THAT THE BEST EVER RUSH ALBUM HAS YET TO BE MADE?!?!?!?!?

ALAN MICALLEF
PAOLA, MALTA

Dear Spirit of Rush,

I read Paul Humphreys' letter in Issue 40 with great interest, being as I am one of the 'hybrids' who saw Rush in Canada in June. I found his letter to be not just disturbing, but pointless.

Why bother writing such a negative piece to a magazine read by converts? Did Paul really expect us to stop flying across the pond to see Rush, stop listening to their albums and transfer allegiances to Radiohead? Perhaps he was just trying to illicit a response (it worked, Paul).

Let's get specific. Laying into Rush for not touring the UK is so selfish. If you'd been on the road for 20 years solid would you even want to get on a stage these days? Why tour the UK when it's not financially prudent, when your record company ignores you and when there will be people like Paul in the audience?

As for my article "The Best Week Of Our Lives", Paul would rather I hadn't written it. Would it not have been insensitive to go to see those gigs in Canada and then not tell anyone in Spirit about them? Some people are interested in the set list, Neil Peart's drumming style and so on. I was careful to say at the start of the article that I was trying to convey the spirit of the occasion, not to show off or brag about being there.

Before Paul put the boot in about being able to afford to go to Canada, he should have given Mick or myself a call. My budget for the trip, including fares and hotels was about £500; I had to save and make sacrifices for six months prior to the trip so I could go. Seeing Rush in concert was a priority for me, so I made the sacrifice. If it's not a priority, or you don't want to make the sacrifice, or you just can't afford it, then that's completely fine. Just don't have a go at those of us who did go.

To call Rush a band who don't have the inclination to make an effort for their fans is just naive. If that was the case, why tour at all? Why make albums? Why play a little club in Canada for competition winners? Why do interviews for

Spirit? (a magazine that won't sell them any more albums and which is read by fans only).

Paul doesn't like **Test For Echo**. Fair enough. But to say that "one bad apple spoils the bunch" is a sign of his ignorance and shallowness. Just because I didn't like **Signals** I didn't stop listening to the rest of the albums. Everyone knows Mick hates **Presto** and **Echo** but he still runs the fanzine. *(I don't hate them, they do have tunes which I like. I just think they're weak "albums" for Rush anyway - Mick).*

In short, Paul, I would recommend you put your x@!?-x# brain in gear before you next write in to **Spirit**. There's enough bad vibes in the camp already without you adding your tuppenceworth. As Buzz Lightyear once said, "you're a sad, strange little man".

ANDREW FIELD
MANCHESTER

Dear SOR,

Enclosed are my subscription fees for the forthcoming year and many congratulations for reaching the 10 year mark. Let's hope we're all still reading about RUSH in another 10 years. It's a remarkable achievement and you all deserve a 'pat' on the back for giving us readers such valuable information and insight on one of the rock world's premier bands. I expect that when you first started this venture you never thought that not only would you still be going strong a decade later you would also have 2 RUSH conventions under your belt with the prospect of many more to follow. *(You're not wrong, pal - Mick).*

I was lucky enough to see RUSH on the 'TFE' tour last year at Boston and Hartford and I do urge anyone who has not seen the band 'live' to start saving their pennies and get over the pond next time they tour, because as the saying goes "If the mountain won't go to Mohammed, then" It was well worth the visit and tickets were not a problem since despite both shows being virtually full we easily managed to get in thanks to our 'friendly ticket tout' who doesn't just exist over here, and, even more importantly, doesn't charge you your mortgage as a surcharge.

I have been wondering as to whether you guys/gals at SOR have thought about producing

a car sticker or if you know of anyone who does as it would be great to advertise not only yourselves but the band as well. *(It's a thought Paul - Mick).*

I won't take up any more of your space suffice to say THANKS TO YOU ALL AT SOR FOR THE PAST 10 YEARS AND HERE'S TO THE NEXT 10!!! You've started something very special and it would be nice to see you down the pub where I would quite happily buy you a drink or two. Yours,

PAUL BLUETT
CHINGFORD, LONDON

Dear Mick,

Many thanks for the 10th anniversary issue, which arrived a couple of days ago. Yet again, let me compliment you on an excellent publication. It's been good to read the gig reviews in the last couple of issues. Much as I would have liked to have seen the gigs in Canada or the USA the current financial situation (i.e. two kids aged 3 and 1) dictates otherwise. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances also prevented me attending the convention. Hopefully next year. As a father myself I had a tear in my eye reading about Neil Peart's tragic loss. One can only guess at the pain and heartbreak that he must be suffering. Well done on your collection at the convention - a nice touch.

On a different note, re. Test For Echo, let me say that I joined the fan club on the strength of this album, having been meaning to join since seeing Issue 2 or 3 on sale at Wembley in '87! 'Driven' is awesome.

Anyway, keep up the good work. All the best.

MARTIN BROOKS
POTTERS BAR, HERTS

Dear Mick,

Just a note to say thanks for the excellent mag, keep up the good work. Two things - re. Ian Nelson's letter, Issue 40, I saw Rush play all The Camera Eye on the Moving Pictures tour. On the night they played the whole album except Witch Hunt. Rush also played the first half of The Camera Eye on the Signals tour.

Also, how come on the original CD of All The World's A Stage, What You're Doing was missing to keep it to a single CD but the re-mastered version has it on? Better technology? *(yes - Mick).* I've now 4 versions of that album - two vinyl and 2 CD. It's what a fan DOES innit! Anyway keep up the good work. Yours sincerely.

DEAN HAYLES
BARRY, S. GLAMORGAN

Dear Mick,

Thanks for the excellent issue of No.40, I just hope that you have some good news for the next issue, e.g. Rush dates, Rush video, Rush single (Resist), new Rush live triple CD etc.

However, in the latest issue someone asked if Camera Eye was ever performed live and you replied "NO". Sorry Mick, but amazing as this may sound, you are WRONG, Rush have performed the Camera Eye live. I know because I was actually there when they did it (so were about 8,000 others).

I am not crystal clear which tour it was but it was either Signals in 1983 at Birmingham NEC or Wembley in 1981. I can check for you if you doubt my words. Also they did play a part of it in a medley at some point as I have it on CD somewhere.....

Anyway, keep up the good work and let's hope I will still be reading Spirit of Rush in 10 year's time! Next year I definitely think I'll make it to the convention bash. Sounds good fun.

The Dream Theater CD is a cracker, not sure whether a single would be a success though, not in Britain at least where the charts are full of tosh like the Spice Girls or god knows who. How about a Rush/Dream Theater live double bill for next year? A dream ticket... All the best.

SIMON DUCKETT
YORK

Dear Mick and SOR,

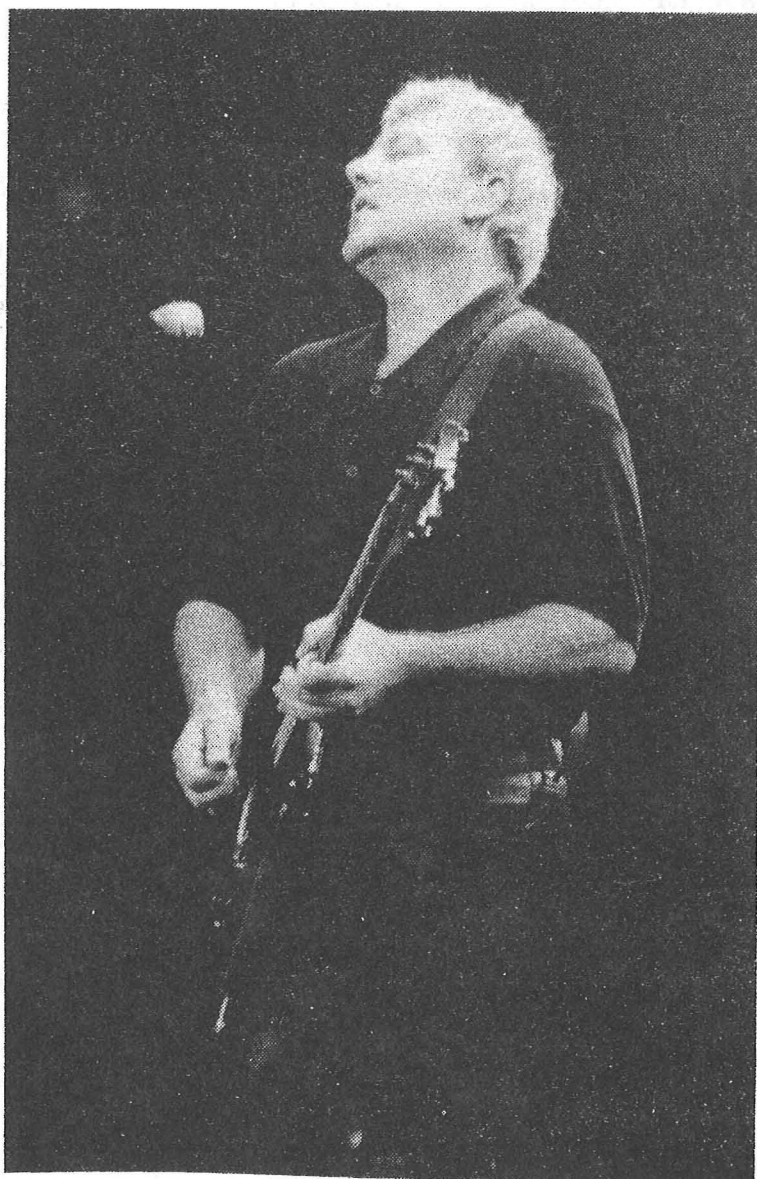
First off, congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the magazine, let's hope there are many more years to come. Keep up the good work.

Secondly, thanks for another enjoyable convention to all who organised it and all who got up and 'had a go'. After all, you only get out of something what you're willing to put in.

Thankyou to Rob Hunter and Simon Harris for your compliments - I'm not sure how much of what I did was down to alcohol or sheer exhibitionism, but it was fun (and scary!). A 'show of hands' for Tom Sawyer and the Jack Secret Show for being two excellent bands.

The biggest thanks go to Rush for 23 years of brilliance and inspiration. I'm sure we all consider them as an extension of our families and share equally in their joys and sadness (I'll stop now before I get all mushy). Hope to see you all next year!

**ANGELA GRANT
ROTHERHAM**





The Toronto Sun

December 27, 1997

**Rush retro CD takes
in best of three decades
by Andrew Flynn**

Geddy Lee's wail, Alex Lifeson's blazing guitar licks and Neil Peart's furious drumbeats -- these are the signatures of Canada's foremost rock dignitaries. After almost 30 years, Rush has found its way into the international pantheon of hard rock: a Canuck power trio who earned their stripes through hard work and a technical prowess that awed fans and fellow musicians alike. "We started the band when we were 15 years old," Lifeson said in a recent interview from his home north of Toronto. "So it's been such a part of our lives -- it's been our lives -- and everything has been centred around it for all these years."

To celebrate their longevity, the band's record company has released a retrospective on two separate CDs, featuring remastered Rush originals from albums released between 1974 and 1987. "Listening to this retrospective, I guess I realized maybe how important Rush was and is," says Lifeson. "It's unique, in that there aren't too many bands around that have had that kind of history."

And they don't call Rush the ambassadors of Canadian rock for nothing. They broke new ground for Canadian bands in the '70s and '80s by being the first hard rock act to make it big south of the border. Unlike other Canadians such as Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, Rush chose to return to their home and native land.

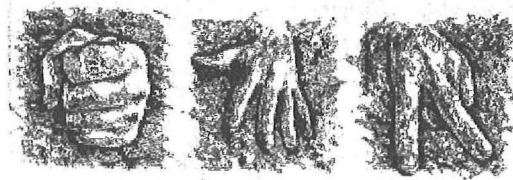
"In 1974 when we had our first American tour and (album) release, that really opened a lot of doors," Lifeson says. "We worked so hard, we spent so much time down there that we showed there was something that Canada had to offer in terms of music on an international scale." It wasn't until the late '70s that Canadian artists such as Loverboy and Bryan Adams began to crack the American market. The fact that Rush had already been there gave them a leg up, Lifeson says.

"Perhaps we just opened the door a little bit -- or at least unlocked it -- and made it a little bit easier. "Before that it was very difficult to get anything happening in the states. Bands like The Guess Who and B.T.O. (Bachman Turner Overdrive), of course, were successful on a certain level down there. But I think they were gone by mid-'75 -- nothing really lasted very long."

Official recognition of Rush's status as a national treasure came earlier this year when the trio -- also noted for raising millions of dollars for charity -- were awarded one of the country's highest honors, the Order of Canada. They are the only rockers to be given the medal of distinction in its 30-year history. "Something about our home country has kept us here and moments like this make you feel like you've made the right decision," Lee said after receiving his medal.

While this year has been a time for Rush to reflect on their career, it was also marked by terrible tragedy when Peart's 19-year old daughter Selena was killed in a car accident in August. Her death was a great shock to Peart, his family and the band. In deference to Peart, says Lifeson, Rush has put itself on hold for now. "He needs time right now and so do the rest of us. We'll make sure he gets it."

Lifeson, Lee and Peart have always been good friends. Part of the formula for their success has been good communication and respect; Rush has never fallen victim to the petty squabbling that has destroyed other bands. "We've always been lucky: we've never had any of those internal problems," says Lifeson. "It's very rare. We've worked with so many bands and seen so much stupid infighting and silly little games that people will play."



The Presto Debate

by
Andrew Field

Those of you with good memories may recall Spirit's Canadian adventure last summer was inflected with arguments concerning the merits (or lack of) of Presto, our trio's 13th Studio album. In my discussions with other fans I have rarely encountered such disparate opinions on one subject. For some, Presto is the unlucky thirteenth record, for others it shines like a beacon - drawing your hands toward it when you're in the mood for a Rush album on the stereo.

I for one subscribe to the latter opinion. I also believe that Presto deserves revisiting - especially for those who have passed over it when you've been deciding what to listen to today.

I recall vividly how confused the critics were when Presto hit the shelves in 1989. Kerrang! could only muster 2 out of 5, whilst RAW (remember them?) journalist Dave Ling was so uncomfortable reviewing it he actually asked the question in print "does anyone else want to review this?", to which the sarcastic editor replied with a stern "NO"! At the back end of the 80's Rush were still darlings of the rock press, with Kerrang! writers in particular having drooled over Power Windows and Hold Your Fire. A Show of Hands had been a politely received and expected stop-gap before normal service resumed. No-one was expecting Presto.

Early in 1989 I had been working closely with Derek Oliver at Atlantic Records on an article about Dream Theater for publication in Spirit and my own fanzine. One Thursday night Oliver called me to say the new Rush album was finished and that he didn't like it. He wondered if I wanted a copy (silly question). So, a few months ahead of its release, I received Presto in the post and immediately dashed over to Spirit HQ's old offices in downtown New Cross. Mick banged the cassette in the stereo, cranked it up and sat back as Show Don't Tell hurled itself at us. About an hour later, our faces told different stories. I had been properly blown away; Mick had been totally underwhelmed. Our polarised opinions exist to this day.

The first misconception about Presto is that the songs are either weak or second grade (or, in Mick's words, "wank"). Frankly, all you dissenters must be deaf. Reel them off: Superconductor, The Pass, Available Light, Show Don't Tell... and on and on. How can you fault the raw experimentalism of War Paint, the cleverness of Anagram, the bizzareness of Chain Lightning? Hand Over Fist often takes a kicking, but its deftness of touch is wonderful.

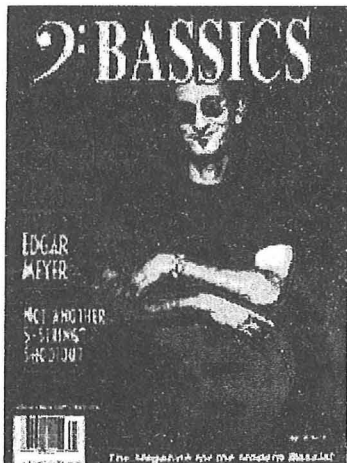
Many say the production is lifeless. On the contrary, Presto is blessed by a clarity, a sheen, a dynamic even, that only Rupert Hine could have brought to the band. On previous albums, the production job had swamped the band - making Power Windows too grand, Hold Your Fire too slick and A Show of Hands just like the studio versions. Hine was particularly kind to Neil's drums and put the keyboards into their proper perspective for the first time since Grace Under Pressure.

Presto showed Rush rocking again - something they had done little of in the studio for some time. Superconductor was, and still is, a lesson in how to wig out without turning your brain off. The title track holds a mystery of sound so prevalent in the early albums, and saw Lifeson getting to know his acoustic guitar again.

There's so much about Presto that shouldn't work, but does. The utterly strange backing vocals on War Paint, the African rhythms of Scars, the almost childlike simplicity of The Pass, the piano solo on Anagram, the sparsity of Available Light. Presto as an album is one you can get really lost in, discovering some thrilling new nuance with every play.

Presto was an important transitional album. With the 80's over, the trio needed to move away from the grandiosity of much of the former decade's output. In Seattle grunge was brewing, waiting to slay the big hair bands and the remaining prog monsters still trapesing the earth. In one fell swoop Rush saved themselves from extinction, and set themselves up for one of their biggest decades yet (remember Counterparts was kept off the number one spot in the States by Pearl Jam - they charted higher than Michael Jackson). Without Presto Rush couldn't have made moves towards the homogenous Roll The Bones, the heaviness of Counterparts, or the sheer majesty of Test For Echo. In short, Presto is vital, important, and a breath of fresh air. Make sure you play it soon.





You Can't Hurry Change

by Philip Dawdy

Taken from Bassics - Volume 6, Number 2

Counterparts, Rush's 1993 album, ended an era. An era that needed ending. Although the album was good, both critics and fans greeted it, as they had Roll The Bones, with yawning interest -- alt-rock was at its zenith moment and Rush was never a very alt-band. The band knew something was up.

"It had been a tough couple of years in terms of the band," Geddy Lee says. "Counterparts was not what I'd consider to be a tension-free record. There was a lot of pressure." Pressure from the label, who wanted a chart-topper. Pressure from fans unhappy with Neil's dabbling in relationship-based song writing. And, according to rumors, internal pressure, too. Soon after the Counterparts tour, the rumors started flying. Rush were on hiatus. Atlantic was dropping Rush. Rush were breaking up. Rush were going to sue anybody connected with the Working Man tribute album.

Not that any of this was true. It's just that in the back of every Rush fan's mind is the creeping half-knowledge that each album might be the last. So, when word began leaking out of Toronto that Rush had no plans to tour or write, all the worst fears seemed true.

Alex was doing a solo album -- 1995's Victor. Neil was working on the Buddy Rich tribute. Then Neil disappeared into the deserts of North Africa on a motorcycle. And Geddy? No one had heard a peep out of him. That sealed it. One of the most influential bands in all of rock 'n' roll was history. Wasn't it? No. After two decades of almost solid recording and touring, Geddy, Alex and Neil were actually living their lives. And, in a roundabout way, were plotting their return.

"I can't talk for the other guys," Geddy says in 1996, "but it sure helped me. It really helped me a lot. I was tired, in need of some kind of change of life. I had that whole domestic thing. You know, I think everybody needs some change, to do something else." Did Geddy's something else include playing bass? "Very little," he says. "I would say during the first year I did nothing. Then I slowly started to get desperately itchy and started to feel a little hollow, so I started rehearsing more. I made a demo. Then I started getting into the Logic (Audio) program."

Band members hardly saw each other. "We have very different lives now," Geddy admits. "His (Alex's) kids are getting ready to move out of the house. It's a different world, but we try to keep in contact. We see each other every couple of weeks, anyway. I remember the first day I saw that guy's mug. It was junior high and he was wearing a really weird paisley shirt. I remember the smarmy look on his face. I've known the guy all my life."

Test For Echo/Sniffing Around

With one era in its grave, Rush gathered in early '96, attempting to begin another. Neil came into the Toronto area from wherever it is that Neil was. Once again, Rush set up composition shop at what's known

as "Boys' Camp." Neil off at one end, typing lyrics into a computer. Alex and Geddy at the opposite end jamming, writing, knocking down basic tracks on Macintosh-driven Pro Tools software.

But after all the down-time, trepidation was in the air. "I would say that the first few days were a little bit of walking on eggshells," Geddy says. "A little bit like three dogs circling each other and sniffing each other. Alex and I did no writing for the first four days, we were just sitting there trying to get on the same page. You can't take three people and throw them into a room, especially with three people who have so much baggage, so much history that you have to feel each other out, make sure that you really want to do this."

This time even their accustomed writing practice was different. "Alex and I, the last four or five records, worked more in isolation from Neil," Geddy says. "So traditionally when we get a song to the point where it sounded like a song, we'd bring Neil in and he'd make his comments on the song and we'd carry on. But this time, I think, ideas were flowing fast and furious. We'd get 3/4 of the way through one song, when an idea would come for another song.

So instead of leaving that idea in limbo we'd move on and get a second song. We ended up having five songs that were kind of under construction. We just wanted to keep following the energy, when the creative energy was there. We got a little obsessive about getting the songs finished to present to Neil. I guess it must have been very frustrating for him without us even realizing it.

When we presented the first five or six songs to him they were pretty well finished. Thankfully, he loved them. It was great for Alex and I to feel that we were so charged and creative. I think we were just getting off on it too much and that felt so good after such a long break. And the previous writing sessions for Counterparts were not easy ones. We were enjoying the moment."

What emerged from those Lifeson-Lee-Pearl moments was Test For Echo, released in early September. It's the best Rush opus since the band's early '80s work. The sound is stripped-down drums/bass/guitar (nary a keyboard to be heard). Hooky songs that rock with renewed honesty. Of course, it's a Lyrics By Pearl situation -- meaning it's Man vs. Technological Society straight out of the school of Ayn Rand. His lyrics can be forced at times, but there are gems in here like "Dog Years" and "Driven."

"I was really kind of in a void making this record," Geddy admits. "I hadn't listened to the radio much. I'd kind of pulled myself out of the music scene and everything about it for about 18 months. When the songs were written and being recorded, it kind of dawned on me: I wonder what this record's like in the context of our past? And in terms of what's going on out there. Then I went through this period where I started listening to the radio and I kind of got the horrors: Boy, where do we fit into all this? It's kind of mild compared to other stuff."

Writing and Recording

There's an unmistakable expansiveness and spontaneity to TFE (not a bit mild), one that's been missing the past few albums. It seems so organic, so jam-like, and that's not too far from the truth.

"Alex and I jam, that's how we write everything," Geddy says, although he's quick to emphasize that jamming produces but a kernel of the song. When Geddy and Alex get to where they're happy with a song's direction, they record it. Then Geddy goes to work. "With this record, we've used a lot of computer technology in terms of recording straight into a hard disk. The luxury that gives us is that if Alex and I get an idea for a song, we can play it straight into our computer, which is essentially a hyped-up tape recorder.

From there, I can play with that arrangement and kind of assemble the song. That really worked tremendously well this time, because a lot of that you can do, I can basically sit there with headphones on and play with the arrangement. It gives you a little bit more objectivity instantly. So, I guess, in a sense because you're not playing the thing a million times, it does have a bit more spontaneity."

Not that technology is always a blessing. Alex commented in one interview that a hard drive gone-south almost took a song with it. Geddy confirms this. "We did have some problem with "Driven" -- the hard drive. It was really the only problem we had. When we were doing Counterparts, we were using other computers - it was a nightmare. This time saving device was costing us our lives."

Therein rests a major irony. Throughout their two-decade plus history Rush have embraced everything from synths to MIDI triggers to computer-based recording. And, yet, atop all this digitally-made music, Neil has offered a running commentary on the ills of technological society. Check "Virtuality" on the new album.

Geddy assesses it thus: "I think he's more skeptical than cynical about the rush to embrace the Net. I can't say that I agree with him on that front. The song 'Virtuality' deals with that and, you know, in one sense I disagree with what the song says and, in the other, I kind of understand that point of view. So I can do the song even though I don't wholly agree with it. There is an aspect of it (the Net) that, like anything, can be abused, that can be a waste of time. But the benefits are tremendous -- if you're researching something, it's out there."



In particular, the band has caught heat on the Net. "Neil's had experience with this, where a rumor almost becomes a fact. It gets talked about by so many people so quickly. What was our supposed reaction to the tribute album got so distorted and mangled through the Internet conversations (on the very active alt.music.rush newsgroup).

It's scary. The album came out and there were rumors that we were suing people and we were upset at the musicians involved -- and we never said any of that stuff. It was totally distorted. The fact was, we asked one question: Is this a 'tribute' or is it some record company trying to exploit our fans? From that sprung all that other crap. It comes with the territory.

"In a way it's a continuing story from 'Vital Signs' forward," Geddy continues. "We've been caught up in the technology ourselves. We've been victims of our own criticism to a certain extent. We've fallen into that trap in terms of how we've gotten carried away by technology in writing our music, but it's all acceptable under the guise of experimental music which, in some sense, we make, even though it's accessible music. It's not Brian Eno ambient music. It's an experiment that goes on with us during the making of every record. There's not a straight path to success for every record, there's no blue print -- you never know what's going to happen."

As Funky As White Canadians Get

Geddy's gone back to the basics with his bass. As on Counterparts, he's using his early 70s Fender Jazz with its original passive pickups. Although he owns two new Jazz basses, the old one gets the nod because it has those distinctive characteristics older instruments have -- which Geddy's weak to define. The difference between old and new is "subtle but not so subtle -- it's got a meatier sound."

Which might account for the underlying funky moments on the new recording. Rush funky? Yes, there are funkified moments on TFE, although Geddy just laughs about them. "About as funky as white Canadians get," he says. Seriously, TFE is a grooving album, a direction Geddy's been moving in over the past three albums. And he produced the groove with a slightly different amp lineup -- no amp at all.

"I used a different combination of DIs. It's the first album where I recorded without the use of a live amp. It's weird -- I never expected it to work. I used a Demeter Tube Direct and then I would send that direct sound into a Palmer Speaker Simulator. And then I would send direct sounds separately from the Demeter to a

Sans Amp and I would distort the Sans Amp in such a way that it gave it kind of a live amp sound. And with a bit of compression and EQ, I ended up with two tracks -- one purely a tube DI, the other that was a combination of the Sans Amp and the Palmer Speaker Simulator. It gave me that amp sound but without any weird phase canceling." Geddy credits recording engineer Cliff Norell: "he got a great sound without using the amp. He thought he could and I said, 'Go for it.'" On tour, Geddy is using his recording setup for house sound and a Trace Elliot (head and cabinets) for stage sound.

Neil Peart: Off His Cycle & Behind The Kit

That Neil is no fan of technology is no secret. But a little secret of Neil's was ruined on the Net, in his mind at least, and you can't help but think that it's expanded his bitterness with technology.

Neil had a ritual he enjoyed. Fans would write to him in care of Modern Drummer. Every so often, the magazine would forward these missives to Peart and he'd, then, take a day or so penning replies and sending them off at his own expense. A nice, touching thing in the fairly sterile world of fan-artist relations. The trouble is that word got out that if you wrote to Neil, he'd answer you.

Somebody posted this information on the Net. Modern Drummer was deluged with cards and letters for Neil, which were passed on to Neil, wherever Neil was. There was no way for Neil to possibly answer all the correspondence, so rather than select some, he decided not to answer any of them. He made his decision public in a biting open letter in the August Modern Drummer.

Wrong or right on that count, Neil was unafraid to criticize his own drumming. After playing on the Buddy Rich tribute, the most revered drummer in rock, changed. Since Neil only does press once a tour starts, Geddy explains the changes.

"Neil's changed his style quite a lot, although he's maintained his style. As he likes to put it: he's added more tools to the toolbox. He wasn't happy with the way he was grooving, he wanted a little more snap to his playing."

A new snap came courtesy of study with Fred Gruber. "They mostly talked about philosophy of groove, swing, and stuff like that," Geddy says. "He spent a year, anyway, changing the way he holds the sticks, the height of the snare drum, the position of his drums. Some pretty profound stuff for a drummer to suddenly change. He spent a good solid 8 months practicing every day to get that to the point where he thought we could make a record. He couldn't hit the drums as hard as he wanted to because you have to develop new muscles.

I noticed that through rehearsals and up into recording his drumming got more and more back to the same kind of power. It really sounds different than on previous records. It just has a bit more bounce and if you listen to his work, particularly on the high hats, there's a great groove thing happening. Of course, he's still thunderous and his parts are still as mental as they ever were. He hasn't really lost the bombast, he's just added some more swing to the whole thing."

Respect

Even with the odd blip of an album (name your suspects), Rush have been one of the most consistent powerful rock bands over the last two decades. Ask any drummer who influenced them and you'll hear Neil's name. Ask people about songs and out comes the Rush catalog.

But have you ever seen the band on the cover of Rolling Stone or Spin? Player-oriented mags get in line to talk to these guys, but -- even as they top the charts -- the mainstream press can hardly be bothered to give an album review. Odd situation for a band that has been "as influential as Black Sabbath and jazz as a

whole on rock 'n' roll" (as declared in *Rolling Stone* magazine). Part of the answer rests with the band, part with the attitude of certain publications.

"It's a weird thing," Geddy sighs. "Partly of our own creation, I think, because we've never gone out of our way to court that kind of press. And, also, we don't make ourselves available. If they want us to get together for a special photo session (a *Rolling Stone* won't put a band on its cover without fresh photos), well, they're not big priorities for us."

"Admittedly, it's not the smartest thing for promoting a record, but from our point of view we'd have to totally turn our lives upside-down, Neil would have to come down from Quebec. It would have to be a whole big thing just to have a photograph. I think we've generated some of that ourselves, just because we shy away."

"But also there's always been a lack of recognition among the older critics who are established. We're like a cult band and they would prefer to see us remain that way. The other thing is that we don't go kill ourselves to go and play Europe and Japan every time. We go to those places very sporadically. Even though there's demand, we can't fit it into our lives and that has a toll to pay on our total image. We recognize the importance of having a life outside of the band -- sometimes that takes precedence over promotion."

Noting a time when that wasn't the case, Geddy says, "we've had to slow down a bit. We're not 25, we just can't keep doing that. It amazes me some of these guys -- like Bryan Adams who go on the road for 3 or 4 years."

Sounds Different

Testify is very different-sounding album for Rush. It's not polished and airy, there's none of the band's trademark layer-upon-layer of instrumentation. That was the plan from the get-go.

"We very rarely know what we're going to do before we end up doing it," Geddy says. "But with this album the only thing we kind of agreed on was to go for a specific sound. We didn't know what kind of music we'd be writing, but we wanted the sound to be more upfront, a bit more stripped down, and for lack of a better description, kind of more 'American' sounding. Our roots, in some ways, we thought were always kind of British. Our early records were quite dry and up-front. That's why we used an all American production team on this record strictly for that purpose. To see if we get a different sound this way, to see if there's a different sensibility working with these people. And there certainly is. When the guys in your band never change it's nice to have people in the control room who do."

Is Rock Forever?

I posed that question to Geddy. Asked if we weren't coming to realize that rock 'n' roll is like jazz and blues - a valid form with artists who will make valid art until the day someone takes the Marshalls and Fenders away.

"Well, I hope that's true," he says. "And it seems to be proving itself to be true. Well with some artists anyway, who are still hanging out and are productive in their 40s. Certainly, for my sake, I hope it's true. That was a fear of mine before making this record: you know, is it time to give up? Is this a young man's thing and should I be moving on to finally getting a real job? I missed it too much. The time off really recharged my interest in it and I didn't feel it was wrong for me to be there."

And it probably never will feel wrong.

The
Tale
of



PROLOGUE

The great white beast pounded a course across the silent snow fields of the Northern wasteland, as straight as a raven in flight, head down tail held aloft like a white banner. Stars flickered and twinkled overhead in the night sky and a grim silence held the land in a velvet grip for miles around. From a distance the huge animal resembled a white Timber wolf, but upon closer inspection the creature's awesome size became apparent. The SNOW DOG stood fully six feet tall at the shoulder and its heavily muscled body was four times the length of a man. Deep set within its massive head two coal black eyes glimmered with burning intelligence, for this was a servant of darkness and destruction. As the SNOW DOG skimmed across the snow's surface he let forth a mighty growl from deep within his throat, he could sense that within a few miles of his own position the mighty forces of darkness were rising from the pit to challenge the forces of light in open combat.

The SNOW DOG turned and opening its massive jaws let out a resounding bark far deeper than any Northern wolf, the sound was a signal; far away came the answer, the blowing of silverhorns, clear and strong came the call of the army of the SNOW DOG. They were on the march to catch up with their general, but they still had many miles to travel over the snow fields before they were united with their leader against the powers of the dark.

AT THE TOBES OF HADES

Upwards from the dark and smoking pit wound a long and twisting passage leading from the very gates of Hell to the entrance to the "over-world". The passage was silent, but from far, far below came the sounds of the clash of arms against shields and the harsh laughter of a minion of demons, the legions of hell. Then came the sound of marching feet and the harsh bray of corrupt and tuneless horns. The sound echoed from roof to floor in the dark tunnel. The forces of evil were rising from the pit to claim a prize - the very world of mortal man - and only the powers of the light could stop the flow of the black tide.

At last the entrance to the tunnel was filled with the shifting dark shapes of the legions of hell. The horns and trumpets of the pit brayed and screamed in defiance and the hoards of Hades issued forth howling and shrieking as they came.

ACROSS THE STYX

The SNOW DOG surveyed the far bank of the swiftly flowing river. The STYX ran clear and true as it wound its way from the Northern Ice Hills to the far sea of whales away South. The SNOW DOG could sense the arrival of the forces of darkness even before his army let forth a blast upon the silver horns of light, heralding the coming of the vanguard of darkness.

Both armies surveyed one another across the STYX, both were silent each knowing what was to come. The SNOW DOG scanned the ranks of demons with silent hatred awaiting the arrival of their general - his adversary. The ranks of Hell began to part as their champion drew ever closer.

Clad from head to foot in black armour wrought in the very fires of deepest Hades, Prince BY-TOR centurion of evil sallied forth to challenge the powers of the light. In one hand he held a black javelin and slung across his back he carried a huge black broadsword fully twice the length of a mortal man. BY-TOR stood ten feet high and mounted upon his head was a helmet topped with the likeness of a striking serpent. Between helmet and breast-plate all that was visible of his massive frame was the glitter of his green eyes like those of a jungle cat. As he strode towards the STYX the snow under his feet blackened and melted into pools of black sticky liquid and the ground shook beneath his stride. In the sky, above the forces of hell, rose the sign of ETH - the harbinger of doom and destruction. Before BY-TOR could reach the edge of the river, the SNOW DOG leaped its width and stood upon the far side confronting the general of Hell.

OF THE BATTLE

For the space of ten heart beats all was silent, then suddenly BY-TOR roared and launched himself against the SNOW DOG. Without a sound, the white beast side-stepped the on-rushing demon. As BY-TOR thrust his huge javelin toward the SNOW DOG the Prince of Hell stumbled and almost fell. Roaring in anger and disgust BY-TOR leapt sideways and turned to face the SNOW DOG, lashing out at the beast's head with the razor edge to the javelin. As he did so the SNOW DOG grasped the mid-section of the weapon with his huge jaws and twisting his head snapped the javelin into two pieces. Roaring and cursing BY-TOR unstrapped the huge broadsword from his back and whirling it above his head prepared to strike the SNOW DOG with the awesome weapon. The SNOW DOG's heckle rose up the full length of his back, he knew the sword to be BAYLOC, "stealer of the heart of the light". The blade was engraved with runes of death and torment and the sword had claimed many lives and souls of the servants of light. With a howl that sent the legions of hell reeling the SNOW DOG leaped toward the huge dark form of BY-TOR. The Prince of Hell whirled the sword at the flying body of the SNOW DOG almost scything the hind quarters of the white beast from its body - but the guard of the Prince of Darkness was down and the SNOW DOG was through. BY-TOR crashed backwards into the snow. The SNOW DOG glowed white hot and the death sword shattered into a million smoking fragments. Downwards the beast's eyes fell, looking straight into the eyes of his fallen foe and the green light faded from the eyes of the demon prince. The SNOW DOG stepped backwards and let out a howl of

triumph and the silver horns of the light roared and reverberated with power. BY-TOR hauled himself upright and the howl of despair he uttered, echoed upwards into silent air. Towards the dark tunnel's entrance, downwards to the gates of Hell, the screaming and bewildered legions of darkness followed, crushing each other in their fear and defeat.

The "overworld" was once again safe from the black tide for another age of the world. The army of the SNOW DOG swiftly left the scene of the battle as the white form of the disappearing beast melted into the rise and fall of the eternal snow fields. He was travelling back to the ice fortress of the far North, he was returning home.

EPILOGUE

A snowy owl beat its weary way home across the tundra, far below its downy wings all was silent. Its head turned this way and that, suddenly catching sight of a black object in the snow. Upon closer inspection the white bird found the broken and splintered shaft of a javelin: a snow flurry partly covered the object. The bird hooted in disgust and beat its wings in silence as it rose into the sky.

By dawn, the shaft had been completely covered, no trace of the battle remained and the owl had a very short memory!

**BY SIMON MUSK
LEEDS, W. YORKS.....**

BY-TOR AND THE SNOW DOG

Characters created by Howard Ungerleider, Music and lyrics by Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson & Neil Peart. RUSH.



Rush at La Colisée 'ROCK MASTERED'

Translation of article from Le Journal de Québec printed in SOR No' 40
by Janet Balmer (with apologies to anyone French!)

Last night, in a worked up Colisée, the holy trinity of Canadian rock took 7,000 of their fans to seventh heaven, by offering nothing less than the greatest show of their 25 year history! Absolutely awesome!

After almost a six year absence, there were warm reunions between Rush and their faithful fans, to whom they offered a special anniversary present: intelligent rock, a solid set, in a spectacular fiery presentation. The audience who were not won over in advance, were knocked out by the calibre of the show, which was filled with nice surprises.

The three Torontonians, considered as the only Canadian rock group to have accumulated world-wide fame, had decided to allow themselves the luxury of a change from their regular routine and so carried on the show full tilt - both visually and musically. In this respect the Test For Echo tour will remain memorable.

Nine lorries were used. According to one local organiser, there were even more than there were for the first Metallica show at the Quebec Hippodrome. The incredible sound equipment covered the vast hall, which was graced with two additional p.a. units hanging at the far end of the Colisée for the quadraphonic effect. This permitted the transformation of what was a superb drum solo, into an absolute symphony.

The movements of our three maestros were followed by cameras that simultaneously broadcasted huge images onto a screen that covered the width of the stage. One extra camera followed the drummer from on high. The older Neil, as always remains impressive and similarly he still refuses to show the least emotion on his face.

The others also continue to amaze. Alex Lifeson masters his guitars better than ever and that veteran of the bass, Geddy Lee, always displays passion and the same great respect for the audience.

Never have Rush dazzled so much their eye catching show-pieces. Not only flash bombs, but bright lightening effects which heightened the movements of the lasers that ran and danced about.

For the band, who were visiting us for the seventh time, it was their first experience of a complete evening without support. This was sheer happiness for the fans who were able to delight in three hours of Rush. And there were so many classics in the set "Red Barchetta", "Closer To The Heart", "Freewill", "The Spirit Of Radio", not forgetting 26 minutes of "2112" which kept this new crowd standing. The same was true for "Natural Science", which is rarely played live. Of course, at the finale, there was the unstoppable Tom Sawyer which shook the Colisée with a thunderous noise - the screams and clapping of an astounded crowd who couldn't believe their eyes or ears.

Liberty -- September 1997

A Rebel and a Drummer
by Scott Bullock

Rush's outspoken individualist drummer talks to Liberty's interviewer about Ayn Rand, his left-wing critics, and the pleasures of not selling out.

Mention that you like Rush to a libertarian or conservative between the ages of 25 and 40, and you might be surprised at the response. Rather than immediately assume you are talking about a tubby right-wing radio commentator, the person will likely think you mean a hard rock power trio from Canada whose songs have vigorously defended individualism and technology for over 20 years.

With no Top-40 or MTV exposure, Rush -- guitarist Alex Lifeson, bass player and vocalist Geddy Lee, and drummer Neil Peart -- has nevertheless built up an enormous fan base. Its last 16 albums have gone gold or platinum, and the group is one of the most successful and enduring live acts. Rush has a strong allegiance among young people tired of the nearly monolithic leftward slant of rock groups. Even a cursory listen to Rush will explain its attraction. As Bill Banasiewicz said in *Visions*, his biography of Rush, the main interest in the group throughout its career, in addition to making great music, has been in promoting human freedom.

The band released its first album in 1974, chock-full of Led Zeppelin-like guitar riffing, vocal wailing, and pedestrian lyrics. Things got much better by the second album with the addition of drummer Neil Peart. Not only did Peart bring an exciting rhythmic influence to the band, he also became the group's lyricist.

Peart's lyrics were a surprising change of pace, and unique in the annals of rock. At the time most rock lyrics fit into one of three categories: collectivist, left-wing political songs, maudlin singer-songwriter fare, or macabre heavymetal posing. While some of Peart's musings resembled the science fiction-fueled sagas popularized by Yes, Genesis, and other progressive rock groups, Peart's main inspiration was novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand. Indeed, Rush's epic 1976 album, *2112*, was inspired by Rand's novel *Anthem*, a dystopian tale of one man's struggle to revive individualism in a world so collectivist that even the word "I" is prohibited. In the liner notes to the album, Peart sets forth his appreciation for "the genius of Ayn Rand." Peart actually signalled his interest in Rand in 1975's *Fly by Night*. In that album's "Anthem," Peart writes:

I know they always told you
Selfishness was wrong
But it was for me, not you
I came to write this song.

Rand's influence and philosophy is evident in numerous other Rush songs, including many that have become FM rock staples. Peart's lyrics for "Free Will" neatly sums up the victim mentality of many alternative rock bands (and fans):

There are those who think that
They've been dealt a losing hand...
All pre-ordained
A prisoner in chains
A victim of venomous fate.

Here Peart could have been writing about Billy Corgan of Smashing Pumpkins, who screams "Despite all my rage/I am still just a rat in a cage." But the Rush song rejects this sense of helplessness, insisting that

You can choose a ready guide
In some celestial voice
If you choose not to decide
You still have made a choice
You can choose from phantom fears
And kindness that can kill
I will choose a path that's clear
I will choose free will.
(from Permanent Waves [1980])

In the early 1980s (and even today on album-orientated rock stations), it was hard to escape Rush's best known song, "Tom Sawyer," from 1981's Moving Pictures album. Transforming Twain's young individualist into a "modern-day warrior," the song celebrates maintaining one's independence and inquisitive spirit in an increasingly collectivist world. The song contains perhaps the most Randian nugget in all Rush songs: "His mind is not for rent/To any god or government."

Rush's response to their increasing fame was the majestic "Limelight," also from Moving Pictures. Rather than whine about how rough it is being a rock star, the song takes a clear-headed approach to dealing with the pressures and temptations of stardom. While admitting that "living on a lighted stage approaches the unreal," one must nevertheless put aside alienation and all of the other bogus complaints of rock stars, and "get on with the fascination" of making music. (If only Kurt Cobain had listened.) Driving home the point, the song features a blazing guitar riff and an electrifying solo by Alex Lifeson.

All these songs represent the band's most successful period, 1980 to 1984, when they transformed their style from sometimes meandering progressive rock suites to catchier, more tightly crafted songs. Nowhere is this new approach more evident than in the first song from Permanent Waves, "The Spirit of Radio," which was also literally the first song released in the 1980s, on January 1, 1980. Hearing it in the car, amidst late '70s disco dreck, was a welcome shock, and instantly made fans of many who had overlooked the less radio-friendly Rush songs of the '70s. The song has an insistent, muscular sound that fairly leaps from a car stereo and is itself a paean to radio, and to the sheer exhilaration of driving a car with a great song coming over the airwaves.

The song represents another consistent theme of Rush -- an appreciation and defense of science and technology. While many rock songs bemoan progress and technological advancement, Rush uniquely embraces science, space exploration (most noticeably in "Countdown," from Signals), and, on the band's latest album (albeit with some reservations), the Internet and global communication.

"The Spirit of Radio" also represents, however, a certain ambivalence in Peart's philosophy. Although his lyrics almost always affirm individualism, several reveal a degree of suspicion about a fundamental tenet of Rand's philosophy of "Objectivism" -- its belief in the morality of commerce. "The Spirit of Radio" glorifies the technology of radio, but it also rails against the corruption of this bright medium by, of all people, "salesmen!" (sung in one of Geddy Lee's patented shrieks). In "Natural Science," from the same album, Peart states his belief that ultimately "art as expression/not as market campaigns/will still capture our imaginations."

Peart, a thoughtful, self-educated man, was introduced to Objectivism by reading The Fountainhead while a teenager. When he was 18, Peart moved from Canada to England to pursue a music career; but unlike most of his peers, he never viewed music as a "mercenary endeavor." Music, to Peart, is pure expression, and to play only for a paycheck is "prostitution" and "pretty evil." He worked a day job to support himself, and played only music he loved. It's little wonder that he was so entranced by The Fountainhead. As Peart commented in an interview with me, speaking from his home in Toronto, Howard Roark, the book's hero, affirms the principles of integrity, individualism, and self-reliance by which Peart was already seeking to fashion his own life.

Howard Roark stood as a role model for me -- as exactly the way I already was living. Even at that tender age [18] I already felt that.

And it was intuitive or instinctive or inbred stubbornness or whatever; but I had already made those choices and suffered for them.

Shortly after Peart joined Rush, the group faced a crisis. Rush's first three records had sold fairly well, but the record company wanted more and pressured the group to change its style. Consultants were brought in, and Rush was on the verge of "selling out" to make its music more marketable. After much debate and tension with the band, and between the record company and Rush's management, the group members decided to stick to their artistic visions and reject the advice of their would-be handlers. The result was 2112, a very successful album that both increased Rush's reputation and record sales, and vindicated Peart's artistic vision. So it isn't surprising that Peart expresses some hostility toward salesmen, marketers, or anyone else who would undermine artistic integrity.

The dilemma faced by Rush in the mid-1970s reflects a certain tension in Rand's philosophy -- between her insistence on integrity and individualism on the one hand, and the demands of the marketplace on the other. After all, businesses are in a certain sense slaves to the preferences and desires of others (a fact often overlooked by those on the left). If the consumer does not like its products, a business fails, no matter how principled the capitalist or excellent his offerings.

Of course, Rand never claimed that making money (or selling records) should be the ultimate aim of an entrepreneur (although certainly he is entitled to the money he makes). Rather, a businessperson, artist, scientist, or musician should realize his own dreams and ambitions by adhering to the highest standard possible. Hopefully, others will appreciate quality and be willing to pay for it. If not, then the individual still keeps his integrity. And Peart doesn't attack capitalism so much as he criticizes anyone, inside or outside the business world, who would try to stop an individual from achieving his vision.

"Subdivisions" (1982) also seems to attack one of the crowning achievements of modern capitalism, the suburbs. Long a target of leftist culture critics, suburbs are generally defended by free marketers as a place where the working class can gain a modicum of comfort and independence unknown in pre-capitalist or socialist societies. Peart, however, sees the 'burbs quite differently:

Sprawling on the fringes of the city

In geometric order

An insulated border

In between the bright lights

And the far unlight unknown

Growing up it all seems so one-sided

Opinions all provided

The future pre-decided

Detached and subdivided

In the mass production zone.

Nowhere is the dreamer

Or the misfit so alone.

Subdivisions --

In the highschool halls

In the shopping malls

Conform or be cast out...

The unattractive truth
But the suburbs have no charms to soothe
The restless dreams of youth.
(from Signals)

To Peart, the suburbs can crush individuality. But is this a repudiation of Objectivism? Most Objectivists and libertarians, and even some conservatives, share Peart's thoughtful skepticism toward mass culture. We may defend suburbs, strip malls, and a Boston Market on every block, but we truly glorify the upstart entrepreneur, the non-conforming artist, and others who challenge conventional wisdom and powerful institutions (many of which are dominated today by the left).

Furthermore, though he loathes the suburbs, Peart writes tributes to cities:

The buildings are lost
In their limitless rise
My feet catch the pulse and the purposeful stride
I feel the sense of possibilities
I feel the wrench of hard realities
The focus is sharp in the city.
("The Camera Eye" from Moving Pictures [1981])

Rand would probably not have objected to Peart's contrast between subdivisions and cities. She lived in and glorified Manhattan, not Westchester County.

For long-time observers of Rush, it is clear that Peart has drifted from his more obvious attachments to Objectivism. The more overtly Randian references in Peart's lyrics have dwindled. *Power Windows* (1985) even contains a song called "Mystic Rhythms," in which Peart takes an almost worshipful, animistic view of nature. On Rush's latest album, he seems to attack the West for supposedly causing Third World poverty:

Half the world cares
While half the world is wasting the day
Half the world shares
While half the world is stealing away.
("Half the World," from Test for Echo [1996])

But Peart says that he has few problems with Rand's philosophy, citing only two specific areas of disagreement. Contrary to Rand's rejection of any form of government welfare, Peart supports a safety net for those in need. Although he would prefer that welfare be funded voluntarily, he is not convinced that private charity alone could support the truly needy. Also, Peart was turned off by Rand's attacks on hippies and Woodstock:

I always loved machines, and I always loved the workings of mankind in making things. I stayed up all night to watch the Apollo moon landing, and at the same time I was just as excited by Woodstock. There is in fact no division there. In both cases you're talking about the things that people make and do. So I didn't see any division, but of course Rand did, in seeing us all as the unwashed Bohemian hordes.

Although Peart is now inclined to write off Rand's hostility toward the Woodstock kids as a "generational thing," it was her essay on Woodstock and rock music which forced him to realize that he did not agree with Rand on every issue.

That was when I started to not become a Randroid, and started to part from being a true believer. I realized that there were certain elements of her thinking and work that were affirming for me, and others that weren't. That's an important thing for any young idealist to discover -- that you are still your own person.

Over the years, Peart has made fewer direct references to Rand, and he admits that one cause of the decline has been the intense hostility such sentiments have evoked among rock critics, especially in Britain:

There was a remarkable backlash, especially from the English press -- this being the late seventies, when collectivism was still in style, especially among journalists. They were calling us "junior fascists" and "Hitler lovers." It was a total shock to me.

Flip through any Rush review from the '70s and early '80s, and you're likely to find a reference to the supposedly fascist overtones in Rush lyrics -- invariably in reaction to Peart's admiration for Rand. Peart says he was "shocked, stunned, and wounded" that people could equate adherence to individualism, self-reliance, and liberty with fascism or dictatorship. This savage reaction awakened Peart to a "polarity" between Rand's philosophy and that of critics.

For me, religion is life, and nothing else is worth living or dying for -- or killing other people for. But a large part of the world is convinced otherwise, so you tend to just allude to it in writing, but shut up about it when you're in an intolerant group. You know, the Salman Rushdie lesson.

Convinced that he should stop sending up "flares" by directly referencing Rand, Peart worked to incorporate her ideas in a more subtle manner. The Randian elements in such songs as "Tom Sawyer," "Free Will," and the more recent "Mission," (from 1987's *Hold Your Fire*) are far more effective than the heavy-handed style of "Anthem" and 2112. This movement away from hard-core Randianism paralleled Peart's rejection of involvement in the organized movement:

In the late seventies I subscribed to the Objectivist Forum for awhile. And it could be such a beautiful thing, it could be like a breath of fresh air coming in the mailbox. But it became petty and divisive and also factionalized....I tend to stay away from it [now]. It's in the nature of the individualist ethos that you don't want to be co-opted.

[Also], the ones most devoted to the cause are the ones with least of a life. A friend of mine who was involved in the Ayn Rand estate and the initial institutes and so on noticed that all of the coteries surrounding her didn't do anything....

The whole philosophy is about doing things... with an eye towards excellence and beauty. And that was the one thing that was lacking in any of the coteries surrounding her. So that's another reason people stay away from [the official Objectivist movement], saying, "Well, I have a life and I'm living the philosophy -- so why do I want to stop and talk about it with other people who aren't doing it?"

Peart acknowledges that other thinkers besides Rand have influenced his philosophy. Jungian psychology, for instance, provides themes for a number of songs, and Peart also cites John Dos Passos as an influence on his thinking. Still, the Objectivist influences persist. Encapsulating the Objective cultural critique, Peart remarks that in too much of popular culture today, only the "poor and dumb" are glorified, never the "rich and smart." And his "Heresy" (1991) is perhaps the only "fall of communism" song that recognizes the essential link between personal and economic freedom:

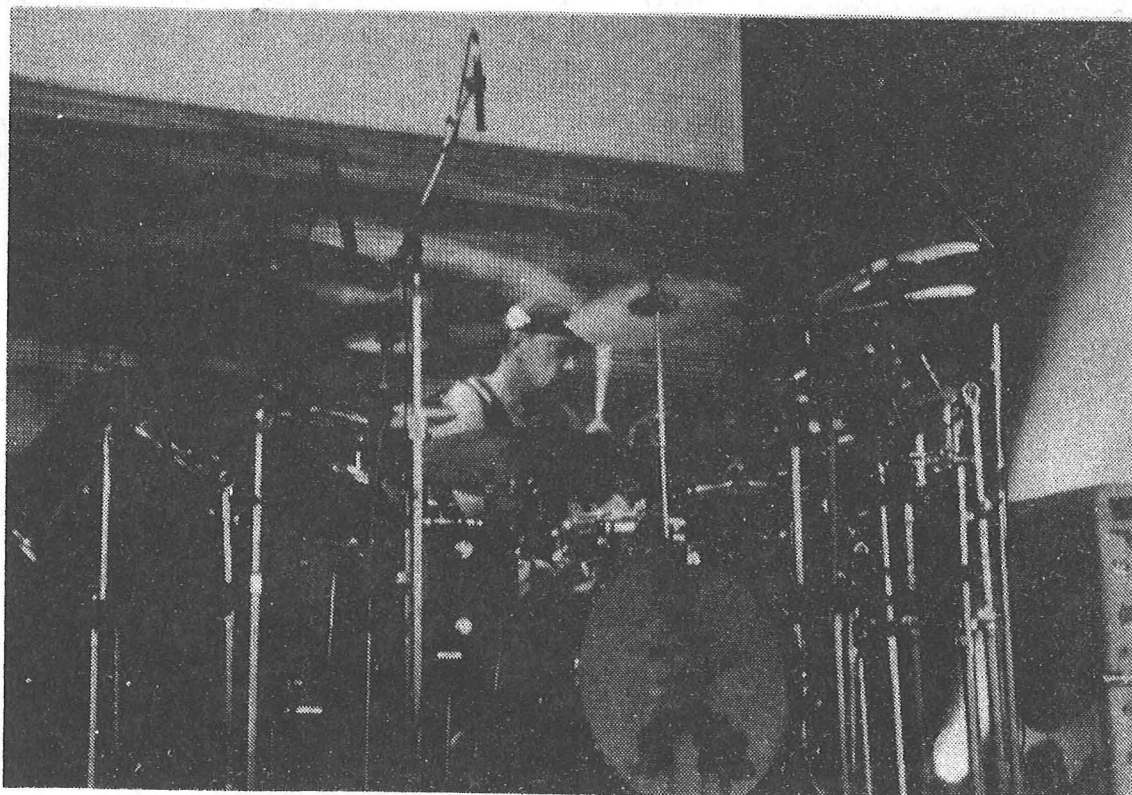
All around that dull gray world
From Moscow to Berlin
People storm the barricades
Walls go tumbling in
The counter revolution
At the counter of a store
People smiling through their tears.
(from *Roll the Bones*)

Politically, Peart describes himself as a "left-wing libertarian," noting that he could never be a conservative due to the right's intolerance and support of censorship. Moreover, the rise of religious fundamentalism in America and throughout the globe "terrifies" him. But he also sees rising intolerance coming from the left, exemplified by a Toronto law "forbidding smoking in any bar, restaurant, coffee shop, doughnut shop, anywhere." Thus, though he believes that economic freedom is generally increasing, Peart also observes that "socially it seems to be the opposite -- there is actually more oppression."

Apart from the unique lyrics and world view, another aspect of Rush that makes the group so appealing, especially to hard-core music aficionados, is that all three members are virtuoso musicians. Each one of their albums demonstrates a refinement of their musical skills. The members take music seriously and constantly explore new musical ideas. Neil Peart is one of the most admired percussionists in any genre of music, a sort of drumming ubermensch whose extraordinary technique dazzles and delights musicians and non-musicians alike.

Last year, Rush released its 20th album, *Test for Echo*, and will tour again this summer to sold-out venues. Whether the band will break up after this tour is discussed passionately among fans over the Internet. Whatever the future of Rush, libertarians and Objectivists can delight in a band whose music they can enjoy without having to ignore or cringe at the lyrics. Some of Peart's lyrics can be strident or contradictory, but most are eloquent and desperately needed defenses of individualism in a collective age:

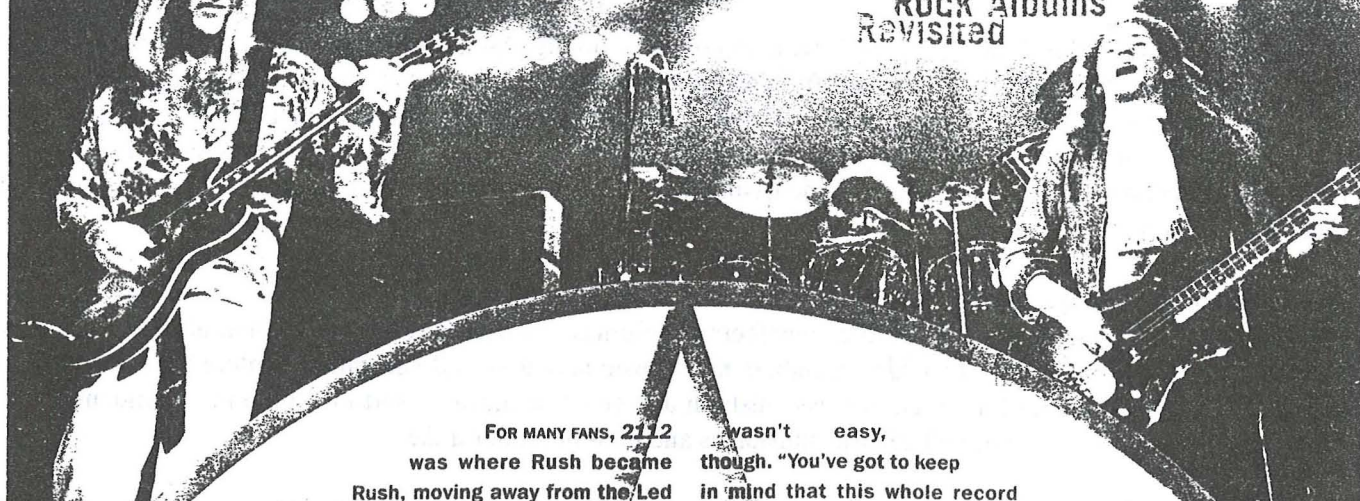
I'm not giving in
To security under pressure
I'm not missing out
On the promise of adventure
I'm not giving up
On implausible dreams --
Experience to extremes
Experience to extremes.
("The Enemy Within," from *Grace Under Pressure*)



RUSH

ON THE RECORD

Classic
Rock Albums
Revisited



FOR MANY FANS, **2112** was where Rush became Rush, moving away from the Led Zeppelin-derived hard rock of its first three albums and toward the flabbergasting complexity of its early-Eighties sound.

The fans aren't the only ones who see **2112** that way. "I think so, too," says guitarist Alex Lifeson. "I think we shook off any comparisons to Led Zeppelin with **2112**. We developed—or at least started—our own sound and our own style with this record.

"Obviously, Jimmy Page was a terrific influence on me, and Robert Plant for Geddy as a vocalist. Plus, we were young, and everyone gravitates to some band, or some artist, as they're beginning. That certainly was the case with us, and it took us a few records to come out of that."

Yet as much as Rush yearned to forge ahead stylistically, the folks at the record company wanted the songs to remain the same. "We released *Caress of Steel* prior to **2112**, and we tried doing a whole concept piece on one side of that album. So it was a real learning experience for us. But it didn't do that well, and the record company was concerned. Their feeling was, 'Why not do another first Rush album, something that's simple rock and that people can latch onto more quickly?'

"We were pissed off at the lack of support. We decided, 'Well, we're going to do it our way, whether you like it or not. If we go down the tubes, then we go down the tubes. But at least we're going down fighting.' And **2112**, of course, when it came out was our strongest record to date, and one of the stronger records over the course of the whole history of the band.

"So we proved to everybody that what we were doing was right for us, and I guess once you have that kind of success, then it's hands-off. They let you do whatever you want, and that's the way it's been with us for these last 23 years."

Getting to that point

wasn't easy, though. "You've got to keep in mind that this whole record

was recorded in about a week," says Lifeson. "We couldn't afford the studio time, so it had to be done quickly. Also, we couldn't afford the down time. So we had to be prepared. I would say 90 percent of **2112** was written before we went into the studio, and we knew what we were going to do: We'd rehearsed it, so it was just a matter of going in the studio and playing it."

Lifeson says most of the album's material was developed while on the road, touring behind *Caress of Steel*. "We would go over stuff in the tuning room after soundcheck—or even in the back of the van," he says. "Whenever we had a minute, we would work on things.

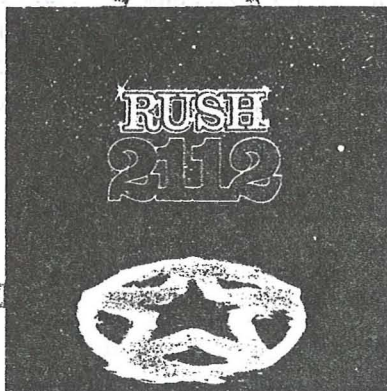
"Some of the album was written in the studio. For instance, 'Discovery' was just an improvisational thing that happened in the studio. But we were pretty set in the way that we wanted the thing to develop."

Because the band had to be back on the road in a hurry, the week or so it spent recording was given to 18- or 19-hour days. Even so, Lifeson doesn't remember the process as being a grind. "It was relatively relaxed," he says. "I mean, we felt like we were doing something important, something that was pivotal to our future.

"It was a very strange time. The tour for *Caress of Steel* didn't go that well, and it was difficult to get the music across to most of the audience—except for true, die-hard Rush fans, of which there weren't that many back then. So this was really a make-it-or-break-it kind of record, and I think we all felt that pressure.

"But in those days, we worked best under pressure. We really pushed ourselves to the limit, and then took one step beyond that."

—J. D. CONSIDINE



RUSH
2112
(MERCURY, 1979)
PRODUCED BY RUSH &
TERRY BROWN



“Falling Into Infinity”

(EastWest Records)

Ah, such sweet nectar! Following on from the lame “A Change Of Seasons” mini-album I was hardly waiting for a new DT album with baited breath. What a pleasant surprise, then, to discover that their sixth long player is their finest to date.

“Falling...” really is the album the previous three-and-a-half were mere rehearsals for. It looks great thanks to Storm Thorgerson’s stunning artwork, it sounds great thanks to Kevin ‘Counterparts’ Shirley’s bang-on production job, and it contains the type of songs we all knew the band had in them all along.

They say that the best artists steal, and so it is with this New York quintet. It’s possible to be a cynic and play “spot the influence”, noting which bits are lifted from Rush/Queensryche/Floyd/Metallica albums and cooked up in the DT melting pot. What the band do best is to mix their heroes’ music up good and proper and add their own particular imprint. The result is particularly effective on epic opener ‘New Millennium’, a thoroughly modern sounding cruise through much of what made the 70’s such a cool musical decade.

The biggest difference this time out is the input of new keyboard maestro Derek Sherinian. What he does is never overbearing, but always adds a certain sensibility to the songs. James LaBrie sounds more comfortable fronting the band than at any time before. Mike Portnoy remains the finest drummer on the block, this generation’s Peart for sure.

Although the songs are still long and most have passages of frightening technicality, there’s a much more commercial slant to this extraordinary album. Nowhere is this more obvious than on ‘Hollow Years’, a big ballad that somehow steers clear of being excessively clichéd or cloying.

The real treat on “Falling...” is the 12 minute bomb that is ‘Lines In The Sand’. It starts off like classic Pink Floyd before becoming a musical hell’s kitchen - replete with Portnoy’s pyrotechnics, some funk, a dose of jazz, heavyweight riffing, a touch of Steely Dan and a guest appearance from Doug Pinnick of Kings’ X.

At this stage in the Nineties it’s not cool to play hard rock unless you sound like Machine Head, Korn, Green Day or Bush. All the decent progressive rock bands (and I use that term with some hesitation) are trading on former glories (Yes, Genesis et al). It’s good to know that Dream Theater remain willing to go against the flow, producing intelligent rock music for those of us who care to listen. More power to them.

Purchase now.

Andrew Field

Those SOR readers with access to the web might want to check out the following site - before 31 January!

<http://aar.vrx.net/auction>

(Here is an extract from the page)

ARTISTS AGAINST RACISM'S ON-LINE
FUNDRAISING AUCTION

The rules are easy--just browse through the list of autographed items below, then E-MAIL US with your bids which we'll update daily so that you can out-bid others! Check out our BIDS PAGE to check the daily bids and out-bid others!

BASIC RULES!: The bids must be in increments of \$10 (US Dollars), and your full name, snail mail address, AND both work and home phone numbers (the latter two will remain confidential) must be emailed to us in the bid's message. *Please* list **SUBJECT HEADER** in your email as **AUCTION**, then in your message please give us the exact name of what you're bidding for. Also include your email address in the message as the server will be so inundated with emails they often don't give us the email address in the subject headings.

THE AUCTION ENDS: at 11:59 pm on Jan. 31, 1998. We will email all the winners the next day, and we must receive your bid via certified cheque or money order by Feb. 10/98 or the next lowest bidder will qualify instead (so be sure to send it by air mail!!!). Also, items you win are non-refundable after you've bought them.

GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN!!!!

Here are the exciting items! Please check the BIDS PAGE for the latest bids before bidding so that you can out-bid others! You may bid as many times as you like! Also, we don't email individual bidders with updates, so please just check the BIDS page daily!

ALL THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE AUTOGRAPHED (of course!!!)

- 1. DRUM HEAD by (autographed by NEIL PEART)**
- 2. RUSH CHRONICLES CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 3. TEST FOR ECHO CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 4. MOVING PICTURES CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 5. RUSH 2112 CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 6. COUNTERPARTS CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 7. EXIT STAGE LEFT CD (jacket autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS)**
- 8. NEIL PEART-autographed AAR T-shirt (Autographed by NEIL PEART, GORD DOWNIE, SARAH POLLEY, and many more!)**
- 9. CONCERT GUIDE (TEST FOR ECHO CONCERT) (autographed by ALL RUSH MEMBERS):**

(There are also other items donated by other bands/artists)