

THE SPIRIT OF

ISSUE No.44 – AUTUMN/FALL 1998



EDITORIAL

Hello and welcome to the latest 'Spirit Of Rush'. Without doubt the highlight of this issue is our exclusive interview with Jimmy Johnson, (see opposite). It was a real pleasure talking to a very open and generous man (thanks must go to Russ Ryan for introducing us) cheers mate! We promised you three exclusive interviews last issue; however the promised Larry Gowan and Kevin Shirley interviews were squeezed out by the length of the Jimmy Johnson one, they will of course appear in the next issue No: 45 which will be with you in November.

The response to the readers poll which we sent out with the last issue has been less than enthusiastic, hence we will not be bringing you the result of it at the convention as we stated last issue. Instead you will find the poll once again enclosed with this issue, so please take the time to fill it out and mail it to us at the address on the right. Many thanks to the people who have already taken the trouble to send them back. If you do not have a poll enclosed and would like one send me a S.A.E and I will send you one as soon as possible.

We recently travelled up to the 'Limelight' club in Crewe (great venue) to see the excellent Rush cover band 'YYZ' in concert. Should you get the chance to see them perform in your area do not miss them. We would like to see them playing some gigs down South, if we hear of any we'll let you know.

Big thanks to Janet for working so hard to get this issue ready for the printers on time, at the time of writing she has now swanned off to Greece for a well earned two week break. Hope your batteries are fully recharged for all the hard work thats ahead of you.

If you still have not purchased your convention tickets yet what are you waiting for? Ticket sales have increased substantially since the last issue, but we still need more of you there to make it a day to remember. Anthem have confirmed the list of prizes they will be supplying us with as follows:- 1st prize will be a 'T4E'

Gold Award. A complete set of re-mastered CDs, various T.shirts some black and white promo photos and some promo CDs. Worth coming just for a chance of winning one of those. We are lining up a big surprise (if it works out) as well nudge nudge wink wink! There will also be a Rock Disco and another live band playing provided by the university themselves. This will help keep our costs down re-bar staff and security etc. Hope to see you all on the 19th of the 9th.

Details of the forthcoming live album continue to emerge (all unconfirmed) The title is 'Different Stages' one CD will feature a show from the 'Kings' tour London 1978. The other two will feature songs from Rush's most recent tours, and will include Dreamline, Driven, Animate, Bravado, nobodys Hero, 2112, T4E, Roll The Bones, Stick It Out, Resist, Natural Science, Leave That Thing Alone, Analog Kid, Drum Solo. There is also talk of a special limited edition box set, containing tracks that do not make the official release. There is NO WORD yet on a live video.

Editorial Address:

**23 Garden Close
Chinbrook Road, Grove Park
London SE12 9TG
ENGLAND**

Please e-mail letters etc. to:

balmerj@syncordlon.agw.bt.co

Editor: Mick Burnett, Co-editor/typist: Janet Balmer

Thanks to: Anna at Anthem, Jimmy & Susan Johnson

Contributors: Ray Wawnyzniak, Monica Davidson
Jimmy and Meg at the NMS, Jock Cornell

Dream Theater photos: Janet Balmer

Printers: Blue Print Printers

An interview with.....

Jimmy Johnson



Spirit of Rush talks exclusively with

Alex's guitar tech....

ALEX USED HIS OLD DOUBLE NECK GUITAR FOR THE 'COUNTERPARTS' TOUR, DO YOU KNOW WHY GEDDY DID NOT USE HIS ONE?

WELL, ALEX NEEDED HIS FOR THE SONG AND GEDDY DIDN'T. I CAN'T IMAGINE GEDDY EVER PICKING HIS UP AGAIN (ANDREW MACNAUGHTON CURRENTLY HAS GEDDY'S ORIGINAL DOUBLE NECK GUITAR). I'M SURE ANDREW WOULD HAVE LET HIM USE IT BUT IT NEVER CAME UP.

NOW THAT ONE IS OUT OF THE WAY (SEVERAL PEOPLE WANTED TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT ONE) WE'LL GET STARTED PROPER. HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS YOURSELF?

WELL, A FRIEND OF MINE WAS A SINGER IN A LOCAL RnB BAND, WHEN I WALKED INTO A REHEARSAL ONE DAY I HIT IT OFF WITH EVERYONE THERE, ESPECIALLY THE DRUMMER, ONE NEIL PEART. WE WOULD PLAY HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE AREA AND ONE-NIGHTERS WITHIN A DAY'S DRIVE OR SO. WHEN NEIL LEFT THIS PARTICULAR BAND I WENT WITH HIM TO ANOTHER ONE.

WHEN WOULD THIS HAVE BEEN?

THIS WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO BACK IN 1968. NEIL AND I BECAME VERY GOOD FRIENDS. HE LIVED IN ST CATHERINES AND I LIVED AT NIAGARA FALLS ABOUT 15 MILES AWAY. WE WOULD TRAVEL BACK AND FORTH HANGING OUT WITH EACH OTHER. OF COURSE WE USUALLY SPENT ALL OUR TIME IN MY PARENT'S BASEMENT LISTENING TO ROCK MUSIC, SPECIFICALLY HENDRIX, THE WHO AND BLUE CHEER. AS A FUNNY INCIDENT; THERE WAS A NEW HOME BEING BUILT UP THE STREET FROM MY PARENTS AND BEFORE THE FINISH WORK WAS COMPLETED ON THE WALLS, NEIL AND I DECIDED WE'D GIVE IT OUR OWN SPECIAL TOUCH. WE CHALKED EVERY SQUARE INCH OF THE INTERIOR WITH ROCK AND ROLL GRAFFITI. WE WERE CERTAINLY PROUD OF THE FINISHED PRODUCT AND THOUGHT WE WERE REALLY COOL IN THOSE DAYS. NIAGARA FALLS HIGH SCHOOL WAS PRETTY REDNECK BACK THEN, SO BEING COOL HAD ITS PRICE. I USED TO GET BEATEN UP ON A REGULAR BASIS FOR HAVING LONG HAIR. NEIL STILL TEASES ME ABOUT IT.

SO HOW DID YOU FIRST BECOME INVOLVED WITH RUSH?

NEIL CAME OVER TO MY HOUSE ONE DAY YEARS LATER AND TOLD ME HE WAS IN A BAND. I WAS VERY SURPRISED BECAUSE HE HAD TOLD ME THAT HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN BEING IN A BAND ANYMORE BECAUSE HE WAS FED UP WITH NOT BEING ABLE TO MAKE A LIVING AT IT. HOWEVER, HE SAID THIS ONE WAS DIFFERENT. THIS WAS RUSH, WHO OF COURSE I'D HEARD OF. BEING IN THE LOCAL BAR SCENE YOU CROSSED PATHS WITH EVERYBODY SO THEY KNEW ME - I KNEW THEM. LIAM BIRT WAS ALSO WITH THEM AT THIS TIME AND I KNEW HIM FROM THIS LOCAL SCENE AND I HAD MET ALEX AND GEDDY AS WELL OF COURSE. NEIL TOLD ME THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY TO GO ON THE ROAD WITH THEM TO LOOK AFTER GEDDY'S BASSES. AT THE TIME, I HAD A GOOD JOB IN THE CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS AND I WAS RELUCTANT TO GIVE IT UP SO I DECLINED. LATER THAT WEEK AFTER A PARTICULARLY BAD DAY AT WORK, I GOT A CALL FROM HOWARD UNGERLEIDER ASKING IF I WOULD CONSIDER TAKING THE JOB. AFTER THE DAY I'D JUST HAD, I SAID YES AND PROMPTLY QUIT MY JOB. SO THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY I DID MY FIRST GIG WITH RUSH WHO WERE SUPPORTING NAZARETH. I CANNOT REMEMBER THE EXACT DATE BUT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN MID 1974.

SO HOW COME YOU'RE NOT GEDDY'S BASS TECH THEN?

I ONLY DID GEDDY'S BASSES FOR THE ONE NIGHT, THE NAZARETH GIG.

WHY WAS THAT?

GEDDY AND I WERE FRIENDS, BUT LIAM CAME OVER AND DID GEDDY WHILE I WENT OVER TO WORK WITH ALEX. ALEX AND I HIT IT OFF RIGHT AWAY.

AND YOU HAVE BEEN THERE EVER SINCE?

PRETTY MUCH. I TOOK TIME OUT FOR PERSONAL REASONS BETWEEN 1978 AND 1983 AND I MANAGED AN ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT STORE DURING THAT TIME. BEING THE KIND OF PEOPLE THAT THEY ARE THEY LEFT THE DOOR OPEN FOR ME TO RETURN WHENEVER I WAS READY.

RUSH AND THEIR ROAD CREW HAVE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY, MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WITH THEM SINCE THE BEGINNING. IS THIS HOW IT FEELS TO YOU?

YES IT DOES. HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR RUSH I WOULD NOT HAVE STUCK IT OUT IN THIS BUSINESS FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE. THEY'RE WONDERFUL PEOPLE.

IT'S A FUNNY WORLD, YOU HAD KNOWN NEIL FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS PRIOR TO HIM JOINING RUSH YET YOU END UP WORKING FOR ALEX, THE GUITARIST!

NEIL ALREADY HAD SOMEBODY TAKING CARE OF HIS DRUMS AND THE ONLY POSITION THEY HAD OPEN WAS FOR A GUITAR TECH WHICH I DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT AT THE TIME, BUT THEY LIKED ME AND WANTED ME OUT THERE WITH THEM.

DID YOU PLAY THE GUITAR YOURSELF?

NO, NOT AT ALL.





DO YOU PLAY NOW?

NO I DON'T.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT TUNING THE GUITARS THEN?

THERE ARE PLENTY OF TOOLS TO HELP YOU DO IT. STROBE, ANALOG AND DIGITAL TUNERS AMONGST OTHERS.

BUT WHAT ABOUT BACK IN 1974 WHEN YOU STARTED?

I HAD TO LEARN TO TUNE A GUITAR PRETTY QUICK BACK THEN WITH SOME STRANGE EQUIPMENT. I WAS INTO ELECTRONICS FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE AND WAS ALWAYS TINKERING WITH THINGS, BUILDING PA SYSTEMS ETC.. SO, I ALSO ENDED UP GOING TO COLLEGE FOR ELECTORNICS. BY THE WAY, RUSH WASN'T THE FIRST BAND TO OFFER ME A TOURING JOB. WHEN I WAS 15, A FRIEND AND I USED TO SNEAK INTO LOCAL CONCERTS BY CARRYING IN AN AMPLIFIER AND PRETENDING WE WERE PART OF THE CREW (SO DON'T TRY THIS AT A RUSH SHOW, THAT'S ONE TRICK WE KNOW!). THE AMP ALSO DOUBLED AS A FRONT ROW SEAT. SO, HERE I AM SITTING ON AN AMP BEFORE A ZOMBIES SHOW WATCHING THE KEYBOARD PLAYER STRUGGLE WITH AN ILL LESLIE SPEAKER. I FINALLY GOT ATTENTION BY YELLING OUT THAT I COULD HELP HIM AND HAD IT REPAIRED WITHIN MINUTES. AFTER THE SHOW, THE KEYBOARD PLAYER ASKED ME IF I WANTED A JOB ON THE ROAD WITH THEM. I CONSIDERED RUNNING AWAY FORM HOME BUT I HAD TO DECLINE SINCE I WAS ONLY 15.

YOU MUST HAVE SEEN MANY CHANGES IN EQUIPMENT OVER THE YEARS.....

SURE, EVERY TOUR BRINGS NEW CHALLENGES, ANOTHER PAGE.

WHAT DOES ALEX'S RIG CURRENTLY CONSIST OF?

ALEX USED FOUR MARSHALL STACKS ON THE 'T4E' TOUR, USING ANNIVERSARY SERIES HEADS, EIGHT 1960 MARSHALL CABINETS WITH VINTAGE 25 WATT SPEAKERS IN THEM. THREE OF THE FOUR HEADS ARE PRE-AMPED WITH MESA-BOOGIE V12 RACK MOUNT PRE-AMPS AND THEY'RE RUNNING RIGHT INTO THE FRONT OF THE HEADS, NOT INTO THE POWER AMP SECTION. THE FOURTH HEAD IS PRE-AMPED WITH A DIGITECH 2101 PRE-AMP PROCESSOR. THAT PROCESSOR GIVES ALEX A LOT OF HIS SPECIAL EFFECTS.

AND ALEX'S ON-STAGE RACK?

ALEX HAS FOUR BEHRINGER DNR 2000 DYNAMIC NOISE REDUCTION SYSTEMS. THERE'S ONE OF THESE ON THE INPUT OF EVERY MARSHALL STACK TO KEEP EVERYTHING NICE AND QUIET. AS

FOR WIRELESS SYSTEMS - WE USE TWO SAMSON UL5d RECEIVERS, ONE FOR THE ACOUSTIC AND ONE FOR THE ELECTRIC RIG.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 'T4E' TOUR, ALEX WAS USING A GODINS ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC GUITAR FOR 'NOBODY'S HERO', 'CLOSER TO THE HEART', 'RESIST' ETC, BUT BY THE SECOND LEG OF THE TOUR HE HAD SWITCHED TO A PRS ONE. WHY THE CHANGE?

WE HAD ASKED PRS IF THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MAKING A HYBRID ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC FOR A FEW YEARS BUT UNFORTUNATELY THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO BE THAT INTERESTED. WHEN WE WERE IN REHEARSALS FOR THE TOUR WE HAD GODIN SEND ONE OVER, WHICH WORKED OUT QUITE WELL. WHEN PRS HEARD THAT ALEX WAS USING THE GODIN THEY GOT TO WORK AND CAME UP WITH A GUITAR WITH AN ACOUSTIC PICK-UP IN THE BRIDGE POSITION - RIGHT IN THE BRIDGE ACTUALLY. THEY SENT IT OVER FOR ALEX TO TRY AND IT WAS GREAT. THEY EVEN MADE US A SECOND ONE WITH A DIFFERENT TUNING FOR ANOTHER SONG IN THE SET, RESIST.

DO YOU WORK WITH ALEX IN THE STUDIO AS WELL AS ON THE ROAD?

YES I DO. I WORK WITH ALEX EVERYWHERE.

COULD YOU EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO? .

WHEN YOU'RE ON THE ROAD YOU GO INTO PRE-PRODUCTION AND YOU GET A SYSTEM TOGETHER THAT WILL DO WHAT ALEX REQUIRES OF IT FOR THE SONGS THAT THE BAND ARE GOING TO PLAY. WHEN YOU GO INTO THE STUDIO YOU TAKE EVERY AMP THAT YOU CAN LAY YOUR HANDS ON, EVERY GUITAR THAT YOU HAVE - NOT THAT YOU WILL USE ALL OF IT OF COURSE, BUT JUST IN CASE YOU NEED A PARTICULAR SOUND OR EFFECT, THEN YOU HAVE IT THERE. I LIKE TO BE AS PREPARED AS POSSIBLE. I'D RATHER BE LOOKING AT IT, THAN FOR IT!

SO YOU ARRIVE AT THE STUDIO ONLY WHEN THE BAND ARE READY TO RECORD - OR BEFORE THAT?

NO. I AM IN THE STUDIO WHEN THEY ARE WRITING AS WELL, RIGHT FROM THE INITIAL WRITING SESSIONS. LARRY ALLEN AND I GO IN MONDAY TO FRIDAY AND LIVE-IN. WE GO HOME AT THE WEEKENDS AS A RULE. THE BAND WILL WRITE ALL WEEK AND LARRY AND I ARE THERE IF THEY WANT SOMETHING CHANGED OR SET UP. WRITING TAKES ABOUT 3-4 MONTHS.





I EXPECT THINGS HAVE CHANGED WITH REGARD TO THE WRITING/RECORDING OF MATERIAL SINCE THE EARLY DAYS. WITH SUCCESS COMES THE FREEDOM TO RELAX A LITTLE, I IMAGINE?

AS YOU KNOW, ALEX AND GEDDY WILL WRITE TOGETHER WHILE NEIL LOCKS HIMSELF AWAY GETTING HIS LYRICS TOGETHER. AS THEY HAVE BECOME MORE SUCCESSFUL IT HAS TAKEN ON A MORE RELAXED NATURE BUT THEY DO WORK HARD AND THIS METHOD SEEMS TO WORK WELL FOR THEM. IT'S AMAZING, JUST LIKE MAGIC!

DO YOU GET EXCITED LISTENING TO NEW SONGS FOR THE FIRST TIME?

YES, I ALWAYS DO. PEOPLE SAY TO ME 'WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE RECORD'. IT'S A HARD ONE TO ANSWER BUT ULTIMATELY I ALWAYS SAY THE CURRENT RECORD IS MY FAVOURITE ONE, BECAUSE I HEAR IT FROM THE FIRST CHORDS TO THE FINISHED SONGS AND I CAN RELATE TO IT MUCH IN THE SAME WAY AS THE BAND WERE FEELING WHEN THEY WROTE IT. I ALSO SEE HOW MUCH THEY PUT INTO IT. REALLY, I LOVE THEM ALL. RUSH IS MY FAVOURITE BAND.

YOU'RE MAKING ALL OUR READERS JEALOUS NOW, YOU KNOW THAT?

(LAUGHS), I KNOW, BUT I'M JUST TELLING IT THE WAY IT IS. I DO NOT MEAN IT TO SOUND LIKE THAT. I'M JUST BEING HONEST. I FEEL VERY FORTUNATE TO BE IN THE SITUATIONS I'VE BEEN IN AND TO HAVE WORKED WITH THE GUYS FOR ALL THESE YEARS. MY FAVOURITE MEMORIES OF WORKING WITH THE BAND ARE DURING THE WRITING

HOW MUCH HAS ALEX'S RIG EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?

WHEN I FIRST STARTED WITH HIM HE WAS USING MARSHALLS. IT'S KIND OF FUNNY BUT WE'VE COME FULL CIRCLE NOW THAT HE'S USING THEM AGAIN. AS FAR AS HIS EFFECTS SYSTEMS GO, IT'S TOTALLY CHANGED. WAY BACK HE USED TO USE AN ECHOPLEX, A MXR PHASE SHIFTER, A WAH-WAH PEDAL. WHEREAS NOW THE LIST GOES ON AND ON. I'VE ALREADY MENTIONED A LOT OF HIS EQUIPMENT EARLIER BUT HE ALSO USES A HENTRON VOLUME CONTROL SYSTEM (WHICH IS A MASTER VOLUME CONTROL FOR THE WHOLE RIG), AN UPTOWN TECHNOLOGY DIVIDE (THIS IS A SIGNAL SPLITTER TO DIVIDE THE SIGNALS TO DIFFERENT SYSTEMS), TWO BEHRINGER ULTRALINK MIXERS, TWO TC ELECTRONICS 2290 DELAYS, A TC ELECTRONICS 1210 SPACIAL EXPANDER (THAT'S HOW HE GETS HIS INCREDIBLE CHORUS), A DIGITECH TSR24 MULTI-PROCESSOR (FOR REVERBS AND SHORT REPEATS) AND A DIGITECH DHP55, WHICH IS HIS HARMONISER. ALEX HAS USED DIGITECH HARMONISERS FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, CERTAINLY MORE THAN 12 YEARS NOW. HE USES A BOSS METALZONE DISTORTION PEDAL FOR

ONLY ONE PART OF ONE SONG - THE CENTRE SECTION OF 'ANIMATE', WHILE IN THE STUDIO HE USED AN E-BOW. THE SWITCHING SYSTEM IS A CUSTOM AUDIO ELECTRONICS SWITCHER AND A YAMAHA BFC-1 MIDI-CONTROLLER. IF IT EXISTS, ALEX WANTS TO TRY IT.

DO YOU SET ALL THIS UP YOURSELF OR DO YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL HELP?

NO, I DO IT ALL MYSELF.

HOW ARE ALEX'S MIDI-CONTROLLERS ORGANISED?

AS I JUST SAID, WE USE THE YAMAHA BFC-1 MIDI-FOOT CONTROLLER. THAT GOES INTO THE TOP TC2290. AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH SONG, ALEX WILL HIT THE ADVANCE SWITCH TO GET THE WHOLE RACK TO THE NEXT PRE-SET OF THE NEXT SONG. I HAVE IT SET UP AS A SONG LIST ON THE MIDI-CONTROLLER. ALL HIS DELAY AND HARMONY SETTINGS - ANYTHING LIKE THAT - WILL GO TO THE NEXT SONG. ALEX JUST HAS TO HIT ONE SWITCH AND HIS RACK IS READY TO GO WITH WHATEVER THE NEXT SONG IS IN THE SET.

HAS ALEX EVER FORGOTTEN TO HIT THE SWITCH BETWEEN SONGS?

YES, VERY RARELY, IN WHICH CASE I WILL DO IT FOR HIM.

SO YOU HAVE TO STAY ON THE BALL THROUGHOUT THE SHOW?

IT'S CRITICAL AND I TRY TO BE.

DO YOU USE A DATA DUMP TO STORE ALEX'S SETTINGS?

I USE AN ALESIS DATA DISK TO STORE ALL OF ALEX'S MIDI PRE-SETS.





HOW INTEGRAL WERE THE DINOSAURS TO THINGS?

WELL, RUSH HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE MUSIC SCENE, ON THE LEADING EDGE, SO I THINK THEY'RE PRETTY IMPORTANT (LAUGHS)!

(LAUGHS)

OH, YOU MEANT THE LITTLE BABY DINOSAURS.....

DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE BABY ONES OR WERE YOU TOO BUSY?

NO, I DIDN'T, I HAD TO STAY ON THE SIDE. THAT WHOLE GODZILLA DINOSAUR THING GOES BACK MANY YEARS WITH ALEX AND I. IT'S SOMETHING WE JUST KEEP GOING. I WOULD PICK UP A LITTLE DINOSAUR FROM A TOY STORE ON A DAY OFF AND IT WOULD SHOW UP ON HIS PEDALS, THEN ADD ANOTHER AND ANOTHER UNTIL IT BECAME WHAT YOU SAW AT THE END OF THE TOUR LAST YEAR. WHEN ALEX CALLS ME, HE OFTEN JUST LEAVES MONSTER ROARS ON MY ANSWERING MACHINE AND HANGS UP. I KNOW IT'S HIM. THAT'S THE KIND OF GREAT SENSE OF HUMOUR THAT HE HAS.

WHOSE IDEA WERE THE FRIDGE MAGNETS?

THAT WAS GEDDY. HIS TECH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TOUR WAS STEVE COHEN WHO USED TO WORK WITH 'COLLECTIVE SOUL' AND WE'D KNOWN HIM FOR YEARS ANYWAY. WHEN HE JOINED US FOR REHEARSALS ON A DAY OFF HE PICKED UP AN OLD REFRIGERATOR AT A GARAGE SALE AND BROUGHT IT ALONG TO REHEARSAL. GEDDY LOVED IT RIGHT AWAY - SO NOW YOU HAVE A FRIDGE ON STAGE. YOU CAN'T HAVE A FRIDGE WITHOUT FRIDGE MAGNETS, SO EVERYBODY STARTED BUYING THEM ON DAYS OFF. NEIL PICKED THEM UP EVERY DAY BECAUSE HE WAS MOTORCYCLING BETWEEN CITIES.

SO YOU HAD AT LEAST ONE FROM EVERY CITY ON THE TOUR?

OH, AT LEAST. WE HAD A LOT FROM PLACES WE DIDN'T VISIT AS WELL. EVERY TIME WE WOULD STOP AT A TRUCK STOP EVERYONE WOULD PILE OUT LOOKING FOR FRIDGE MAGNETS,

IS ALEX'S SIGNAL FED THROUGH THE PRE-AMP SECTION OR DIRECTLY INTO THE POWER SECTIONS?

IT'S FED RIGHT INTO THE PRE-AMP SECTIONS.

WHAT SAMPLERS IS ALEX CURRENTLY USING?

WE'RE USING ROLAND 770'S COUPLED WITH DYNATECH HARD DRIVES TO GIVE US ENOUGH ROOM, BECAUSE THERE'S NOT ENOUGH HARD DRIVE SPACE ON THE 770'S. SO WE USE OUTBOARD HARD DRIVES - THEY'RE ALL CONTROLLED USING ROLAND MFP1 PEDALS.

WHAT DOES AN AVERAGE DAY HOLD FOR YOU WHEN YOU'RE OUT ON TOUR?

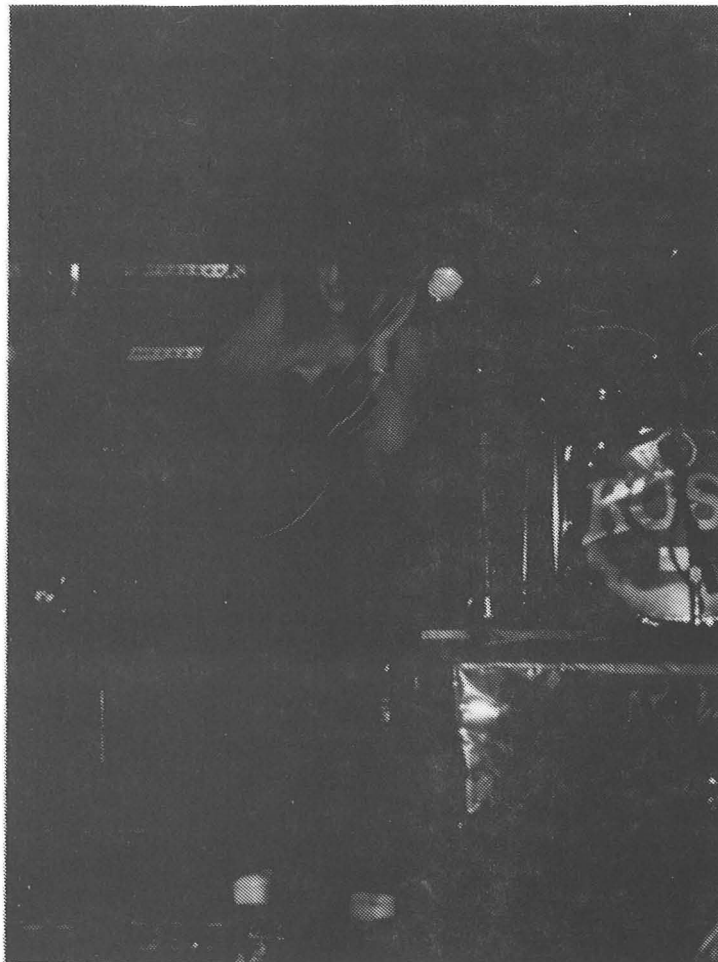
LARRY, RUSS AND I WILL START AROUND NOON WHEN OUR EQUIPMENT COMES UP ON STAGE - THE BACK LINE EQUIPMENT. IT WILL NORMALLY TAKE ME ABOUT AN HOUR EACH TO SET UP EQUIPMENT AND AFTER THAT I WILL BEGIN STRINGING UP ALEX'S GUITARS.

YOU HAVE YOUR OWN LITTLE HOUSE UP THERE NEXT TO THE STAGE NOW SINCE THE 'COUNTERPARTS' TOUR....

YES, I SHARE THE STAGE RIGHT TENT WITH JACK SECRET, THE KEYBOARD TECH, WHERE I'LL SPEND THE WHOLE AFTERNOON STRINGING GUITARS (AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT ALEX THINKS I'M DOING ANYWAY! - [LAUGHS]). I SPEND ALL DAY WORKING - UNTIL THE BAND SHOWS UP AT 4.30PM FOR THE SOUNDCHECK (LAUGHS).

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE THE SHOW HAS FINISHED?

ONCE ALEX HANDS ME HIS GUITAR I'LL PUT ALL THE GUITARS AWAY, POWER DOWN HIS COMPLETE RIG, PULL IT ALL APART. THE STAGE HANDS GIVE ME A HAND PUTTING IT ALL BACK INTO THE CASES. FROM THERE IT ALL GETS PACKED INTO THE TRUCK. IT TAKES ABOUT 35/45 MINUTES TO GET THE BACK-LINE INTO THE TRUCKS (GUITARS, KEYBOARDS, DRUMS AND BASSES). THE SOUND EQUIPMENT WILL FOLLOW THAT.





DO YOU ALWAYS DRIVE TO THE NEXT CITY OVERNIGHT?

ALWAYS. WE NEVER STAY OVERNIGHT IN THE CITY WE'VE JUST PLAYED IF WE HAVE ANOTHER SHOW LINED UP. I'LL GO TO SLEEP ON THE BUS AND WAKE UP IN THE NEXT CITY. EVEN IF THERE IS NO SHOW THE NEXT DAY IT'S BETTER TO WAKE UP WHERE YOU NEED TO BE AND HAVE THE DAY OFF THERE. SOME CITIES SELL SO MANY TICKETS THAT WE DO TWO SHOWS. L.A., CHICAGO, NEW YORK. THAT WOULD BE THE ONLY EXCEPTION.

WHO READS THE MANUALS FOR ALL THE EQUIPMENT?

ALEX AND I BOTH DO. ALEX LIKES TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING ON IN HIS RIG. HE DOESN'T MISS A TRICK AND HE UNDERSTANDS EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON WITH HIS SET UP - WHICH IS VERY RARE. MANY GUITAR PLAYERS MAYBE DO NOT UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING ON IN THEIR RIG. THEY KNOW HOW TO PLAY IT, KNOW HOW TO GET THE SOUNDS THAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR BUT THEY DO NOT KNOW WHY IT IS HAPPENING. ALEX WILL READ THE MANUALS FRONT TO BACK.

DOES ALEX CONTINUE TO LOOK AT NEW EQUIPMENT?

ALWAYS, BETWEEN TOURS. BUT ONCE WE ARE OUT ON THE ROAD WE ALMOST NEVER BRING NEW EQUIPMENT IN, EXCEPT IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, AS I EXPLAINED EARLIER REGARDING THE PRS GUITAR PROBLEM. WE HAVE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANY OF THE COMPANIES THAT WE USE AND THEY ALWAYS SEND ALEX SAMPLES OF THEIR NEW EQUIPMENT FOR HIM TO EVALUATE. OCCASIONALLY, ALEX WILL REMEMBER A PIECE OF EQUIPMENT THAT HE HASN'T USED FOR 10 TO 15 YEARS AND REQUEST IT FORM THE WAREHOUSE.....HE HAS AN AMAZING MEMORY THAT WAY.

WHAT CAUSES YOU THE MOST HAIR LOSS (IF ANYTHING) WITH ALEX'S RIG?

WELL, IF YOU COULD SEE ME (LAUGHS) YOU WOULD SEE I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH HAIR LOSS (SEE PHOTO). THE ONLY PROBLEMS THAT I DO ENCOUNTER WOULD BE IN PRE-PRODUCTION. I TRY TO IRON THOSE OUT BEFORE WE EVEN LEAVE TORONTO AND FINAL REHEARSALS. WE REHEARSE EXTENSIVELY IN TORONTO BEFORE HEADING FOR THE FIRST DATE OF THE TOUR AND THE FINAL FEW DAYS OF FULL DRESS REHEARSAL. NO PROBLEM IS EVER THAT BAD THAT YOU WOULD LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT THOUGH.

HOW FAR IN ADVANCE OF THE START DATE OF A TOUR WOULD YOU BECOME INVOLVED?

AFTER WRITING AND RECORDING, WHEN REHEARSALS BEGIN, APPROXIMATELY EIGHT TO TEN WEEKS BEFORE THE FIRST SHOW. ALEX AND I WOULD SPEND TIME BEFORE THIS ON THE PHONE DISCUSSING ANYTHING NEW HE MIGHT WANT TO USE AND THEN THOSE EIGHT TO TEN WEEKS WOULD BE A VERY BUSY PERIOD.

ARE THE SETTINGS ON ALEX'S RIG CONSTANT, OR DOES HE TWEAK PATCHES THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF A CONCERT?

EVERYTHING REMAINS THE SAME - EXACTLY AS WE SET IT. ALL THE SETTINGS ARE MARKED. ALL THE DIGITAL STUFF IS PRE-SET, EVERYTHING RUNS LIKE CLOCKWORK. NOTHING CHANGES UNLESS YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, OF COURSE. THIS IS ALL DONE DURING REHEARSALS.

DOES ALEX HAVE AN ALL-TIME FAVOURITE GUITAR THAT YOU'RE AWARE OF?

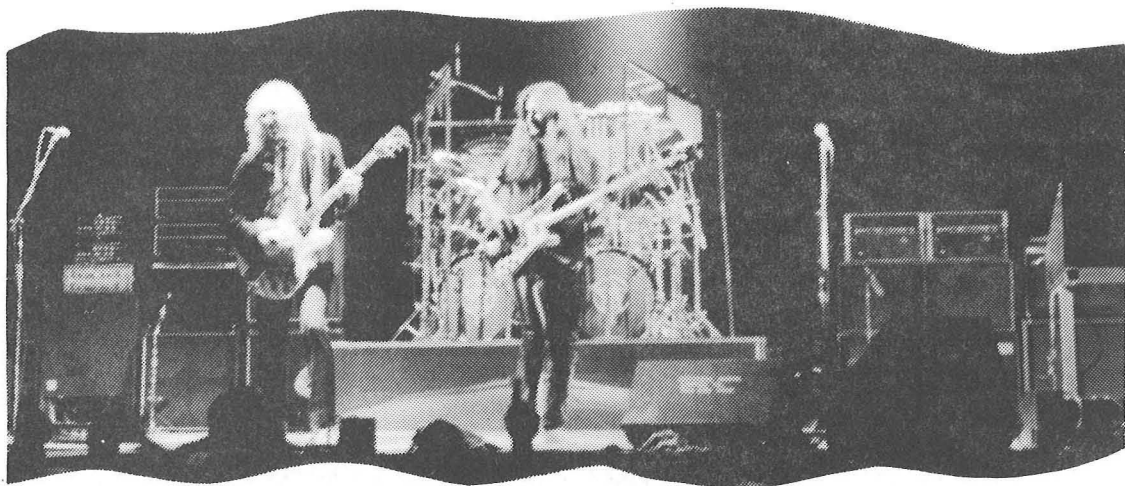
I WOULD THINK HIS FAVOURITE IS THE VERY FIRST PRS ONE THAT HE GOT - THE SUNBURST ONE. HE SEEMS TO KEEP GOING BACK TO IT. IT IS SHOWING ITS AGE NOW BECAUSE ALEX USES IT IN THE DRESSING ROOM BEFORE THE SHOW TO LOOSEN UP ON. IN THE STUDIO HE SEEMS TO FAVOUR HIS OLD TELECASTER FROM THE LATE '70'S.

HOW MANY GUITARS DOES ALEX OWN?

OH, ABOUT A MILLION (LAUGHS). I'M NOT SURE. MORE THAT 50 BUT LESS THAN 200, I WOULD SAY, BUT I DON'T REALLY KNOW. LIKE COUNTING THE ROOMS IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE, NO ONE REALLY KNOWS FOR SURE.

IS ALEX A GUITAR COLLECTOR?

NO, NOT AT ALL. PEOPLE SOMETIMES CALL ME WITH GUITARS THEY HAVE FOR SALE BUT ALEX IS RARELY INTERESTED. HE DID BUY A 1969 GRETSCHE MODEL A FEW YEARS AGO BECAUSE HE ALWAYS WANTED ONE. IT WAS USED ON 'COLD FIRE'.





DOES ALEX PLAY STOCK INSTRUMENTS OR ARE THEY MODIFIED AT ALL?

THEY'RE TOTALLY STOCK. THERE WAS A TIME BACK IN THE EARLY '80'S WHEN EVERYONE WAS MODIFYING GUITARS - FLOATING BRIDGE SYSTEMS WERE COMING OUT (AMONG OTHER ITEMS) AND ALEX DID USE SOME MODIFIED STUFF BUT NOW THE PRS GUITARS ARE GREAT STRAIGHT FROM THE BOX.

THE PRS SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO DUPLICATE ALL THE GUITAR SOUNDS THAT ALEX HAS USED OVER THE YEARS SO THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TAKE ALL THE DIFFERENT GUITARS ON THE ROAD WITH YOU.....

YES, IT DOES. IT'S AN INCREDIBLE INSTRUMENT - SO MULTI-FUNCTIONAL. IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS THAT ALEX HAS STUCK WITH THEM, BESIDES THE FACT THAT EVERYONE AT PRS IS SO GREAT TO DEAL WITH.

WHAT GAUGE STRINGS DOES ALEX USE?

STARTING WITH THE HIGH E, IT'S A 9, 11, 14, 26, 36, 46 - LIGHT TOP, HEAVY BOTTOM.

HOW HIGH IS THE ACTION ON HIS GUITARS?

THE LOW E STRING IS SET AT 5/64 AND THE HIGH E IS AT 4/64.

DOES ALEX STILL OWN THE LES PAUL GUITAR HE USED ON 'ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE' (SHOWN IN PICTURES ON THE SLEEVE)?

YES, HE DOES AND IT WAS MADE THE SAME YEAR AS THAT ALBUM IN 1976. HE USED IT ON THE 'T4E' TOUR ON 'STICK IT OUT'.

HOW MANY GUITARS WOULD YOU TAKE ON TOUR?

ROUGHLY 10/12 OR SO. SOME ARE DESIGNATED AS BACK-UP ONLY. IF YOU HAVE ONE WITH AN ODD TUNING FOR INSTANCE, YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE A BACK-UP GUITAR FOR THAT ONE.

IS ALEX A DEMANDING EMPLOYER?

YES, HE CAN BE. BUT WHEN EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL HE LEAVES ME TO GET ON WITH IT. HE SETS VERY HIGH STANDARDS WITH EVERYTHING HE DOES. I KNOW WHAT'S EXPECTED OF ME AND I TRY TO DELIVER IT 110% - JUST LIKE HE DOES.

ARE THERE ANY RITUALS THAT ALEX GOES THROUGH PRIOR TO GOING ON STAGE?

NO, NOT THAT I AM AWARE OF (BECAUSE I'M BUSY DOING WHAT I DO BEFORE ALEX TAKES THE STAGE SO I DO NOT SEE HIM). HE JUST WARMS UP, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, ON HIS PRACTICE GUITAR.

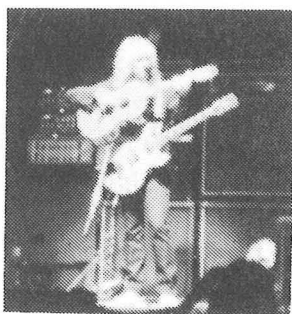
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GET THE LUXURY OF A DAY OFF ON THE ROAD?

WELL, IF MY WIFE'S OUT VISITING ME THEN I'M OUT SHOPPING (LAUGHS) BUT IF I'M ON MY OWN THEN I LIKE TO RELAX PLAYING A PLAYSTATION RACING GAME WITH RUSS RYAN. ONE DAY

WE'LL BOTH BE WORLD CHAMPIONS. WE ALSO PLAY TOMB RAIDER. RUSS BLASTED HIS WAY THROUGH TOMB RAIDER 1 AND HE HAS JUST COMPLETED NO. 2, I BELIEVE.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST VIVID MEMORY OF LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH RUSH?

AS I THINK I SAID EARLIER, MY BEST MEMORIES WOULD BE THE ONES FROM IN WRITING. EVERYONE IS AT THEIR MOST RELAXED AND BEING THEMSELVES - MORE-SO THAN NORMAL BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE THE PRESSURE OF PERFORMING IN FRONT OF THOUSANDS OF FANS. WE HAVE LOTS OF FUN AT THE STUDIO - IT'S NO HOLDS BARRED! A FEW ALBUMS AGO, WHILE IN WRITING, ALEX AND I BEGAN WORKING ON A ONE-EIGHTH SCALE FLYING MODEL AIRPLANE, COMPLETE WITH FOUR STROKE MOTOR. NEEDLESS TO SAY, WE NEEDED A LARGE WORK SURFACE AND SINCE THE DINING ROOM TABLE WAS USED DAILY, WE COMMANDEERED THE POOL TABLE. BY THE TIME WE WERE FINISHED, THE POOL TABLE WAS TOTALLY DESTROYED, COVERED IN GLUE AND PAINT. SPEAKING OF POOL TABLES, WE ALSO HAVE A GAME CALLED SCOOZEBALL, A VARIATION ON SNOOKER. WE HAD SAMPLERS RIGGED UP IN ALL THE POCKETS SO EACH BALL HAD ITS OWN UNIQUE SOUND. MAKING SURE THAT THE BALL IS HIT HARD ENOUGH TO LEAVE THE TABLE IS THE PRIMARY RULE IN SCOOZE, OF WHICH LIAM IS THE KING (RESULTING IN THE REPLASTERING OF THE NEAREST WALL). ALL THE SHOTS HAVE NAMES, THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS BEING THE "LERXST WAKE-UP CALL". THIS IS WHERE THE BALL BECOMES AIRBORNE FOR ABOUT TEN FEET, BOUNCES DOWN THE STAIRS AND INTO ALEX'S BEDROOM DOOR.





WE ALSO HAVE THEME DAYS FOR OUR MEALS, ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR BEING "MEXICAN DAY". THE CHALET THAT WE WORK IN IS CURVED ACROSS A HILLSIDE IN THE MIDDLE OF A PINE FOREST. THE ROOMS ARE LARGE AND OPEN, RATHER LIKE AN OLD HUNTING LODGE, WITH THE DINING ROOM AT ONE END AND NEIL'S BEDROOM, WHERE HE WRITES, AT THE OTHER. ON OUR MEXICAN THEME DAY THE LUNCH BEGAN WITH THE BLARING SOUND OF HERB ALBERT'S "TIJUANA BRASS" AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE SIGHT OF NEIL BURSTING OUT OF HIS BEDROOM, RUNNING AND LEAPING INTO THE DINING ROOM SCREAMING "ARIBA!!! ARIBA!!!" THERE'S A LOT OF OTHER STORIES I COULD TELL YOU BUT SPACE IS LIMITED AND I DON'T WANT TO LOSE MY JOB.

WHAT OTHER BANDS HAVE YOU WORKED WITH?

I'VE WORKED WITH STYX, METALLICA, TESLA, TED NUGENT, NIGHT RANGER, TOM COCHRANE, COLLECTIVE SOUL PLUS MANY MORE WHO DO NOT COME TO MIND. RUSS AND I HAD A LOT OF FUN AS THE GUITAR TECHS FOR THE BLUES BROTHERS MOVIE THIS YEAR.

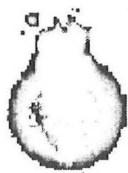
WHAT ARE YOUR IMMEDIATE FUTURE PLANS?

I'M OFF TO JAPAN NEXT WEEK TO START A TOUR WITH NIGHTRANGER. WE WILL BE COMING BACK AND STARTING A USA TOUR RIGHT AFTER THAT. AFTER THAT, I DO NOT KNOW RIGHT NOW - I'LL JUST WAIT FOR THE PHONE TO RING, I GUESS.

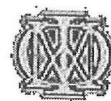
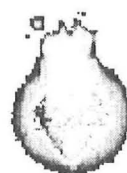
WE, AT SPIRIT ARE HOPING THAT THE MAN ON THE OTHER END OF THE LINE WILL BE ALEX TELLING YOU THAT THE BAND ARE HEADING TOWARDS THE STUDIO, THAT WOULD BE REALLY NICE.....

WELL ALEX AND I TALK ON THE PHONE EVERY WEEK - JUST PERSONAL, YOU KNOW - BUT YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.....

[EVERYONE INVOLVED WITH 'SPIRIT' WOULD LIKE TO THANK JIMMY FOR BEING SO GRACIOUS WITH HIS TIME IN MAKING THIS INTERVIEW SO WORTHWHILE, WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK HIS WIFE SUSAN FOR HER INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERVIEW.]



Dream Theater **NEWS.....**



The latest from Mike Portnoy

On the up-coming double live CD 'Once In a LIVE time' and home video

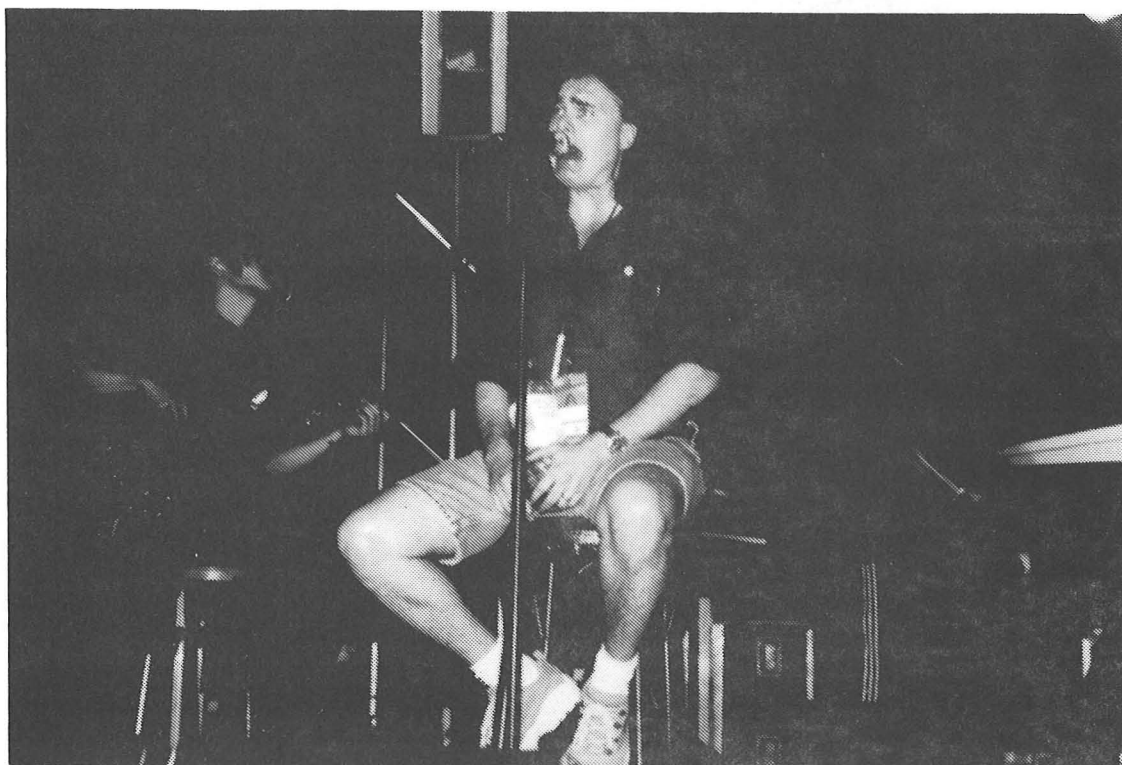
Once in a LIVEtime thoughts.....

After 6 years of semi-constant touring and 2 live mini-EP's, it seemed the right time in our career for a "proper" live album to represent our musical catalog thus far.

This whole double CD is taken from one show in Paris. This was one of the final headlining shows on the "Touring Into Infinity" tour. In order to capture as much music possible (and also because some of our songs are very LONG), we performed a set that evening that was over 3 and a half hours in length.

A live Dream Theater show is really the only way to understand and experience what this band is all about. Besides getting to see us actually PLAY our instruments (which seems to be the biggest appeal of DT), you become part of a society or a secret club which is exclusive to these fans that are absolute FANATICS!! Our fan base has never been casual. They are hardcore fans that go to dozens of shows on a tour. They know every set list we play. They know every nuance of the music. And it is this interaction with these great fans that can only be fully understood & appreciated by going to a Dream Theater concert.

The songs represented here in this collection cover a spectrum of our 10 year recording career. There is a balance of material from different albums, a balance of "popular" songs and cult favorites, a balance of heavy songs & softer songs, a balance of our very complex songs & our more simple songs. And of course, what Progressive live album would complete without the obligatory self-indulgent solo spots!!!! The arrangements to the songs are almost never the same as the album versions. Some songs are extended and have improvised jams thrown in, some songs are shortened and have been combined to create medleys, some songs have bits & pieces of cover tunes thrown in..... It's this variety and these embellishments that I think make our live show, and this album, exciting to listen to everytime.



Here's the latest details I can give.....

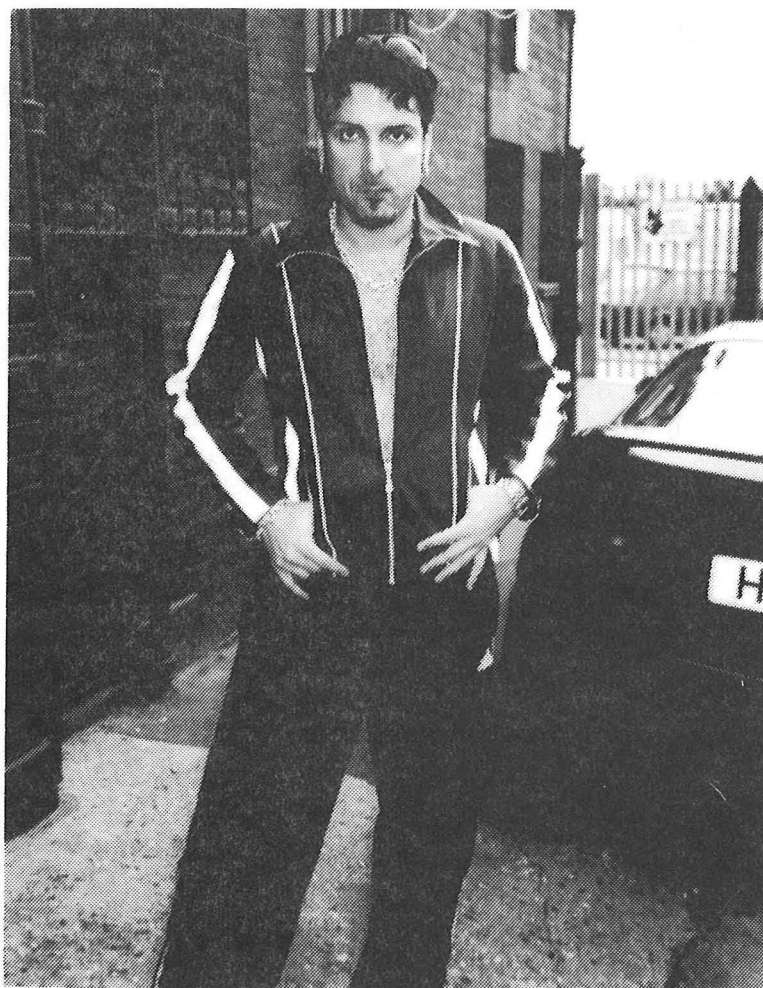
**Dream Theater - Once in a LIVEtime
scheduled release date - Oct. 1998**

CD1:

**A Change of Seasons Pt. 1 & 2
Puppies On Acid
Just Let Me Breathe
Voices
Take The Time
Keyboard solo
Lines In The Sand
Scarred
A Change of Seasons Pt.4
Ytse Jam
Drum solo**

CD2:

**Trial of Tears
Hollow Years
Take Away My Pain
Caught in a Web
Lie
Peruvian Skies
Guitar solo
Pull Me Under
Metropolis Pt. 1
Learning To Live
A Change of Seasons Pt.7**



**Enjoy!
Mike Portnoy
July 1998**

Signals

Signals

Dear All at SOR

Hope all is well. I've enclosed my subscription renewal so that Spirit may continue with a little of my help (*thank you - ED*). I just thought I'd drop you a line or two about the Rush poll questionnaire. At 29 years old I must admit to feeling a tad embarrassed at filling it in. you see, I couldn't help feeling that some of the questions were on the side of obsessive, anorak-type questions. You know, the people who write in after a new album saying they didn't like the production or Geddy sounded like he was using new hair mousse or something! I've been a fan for 15 years and these people frighten me. You can tell from my answers that I hopefully don't fall into the trainspotter fan category. I just think that Rush are a bloody good band and there's no need to analyse every little aspect of them until you disappear up your own arse.

I also appreciate that Rush are hardly high profile and that you need to keep the readers and fans of the band and SOR interested. From some fan's letters, you can detect dissatisfaction brewing with the lack of tours etc. but I must admit to feeling that we'll be lucky if we get to see Rush here again especially with the recent tragedies to hit poor Neil. I imagine the next tour will be the last (probably called A FAREWELL TO THINGS!). At the end of the day, Rush are still my favourite band, even as I've got older and my tastes have broadened.

Keep up the fine work.

PAUL COOK
EAST MEON, HANTS

(Have you sent your poll in yet? If not, do it now!
- ED)

Dear Mick,

So for the second time in less than a year fate decides to deal Neil Peart a devastatingly cruel blow. I don't think there are any words that can describe the kind of torture the poor guy must be going through at present. I know

there are many, many people across the world who will be desperately sorry for his loss and I hope that he can take some small crumb of comfort in that thought during this very sad time.

I was dismayed to read that the convention was in doubt due to slow ticket sales. I hope that your editorial plea will spur people on to send their applications in. If there is anyone reading this that is undecided as to whether to come along, my advice is GO FOR IT!" you will not regret it. As someone who went last year, I can't recommend the event enough. I posted a memo on my work's E-mail Bulletin Board about the convention, but apart from a few good natured replies from my work mates, I have had no reply yet. Still, it's their loss.

I was interested in Simon Duckett's letter re: the Remasters. Although I am more of a fan of Signals than Simon clearly is, he is completely right to say that the album is transformed by the remastered process. If anyone has got the new version, try listening to Countdown through headphones, you'll be amazed!

Finally, I would just like to make a case for the song Second Nature from Hold Your Fire as an undiscovered gem. I believe this has to be one of the most underrated songs the band had ever done. I cannot recall it ever being mentioned as a great tune before, perhaps it gets overshadowed by the likes of Time Stand Still, Mission and Turn The Page, but to these ears it's just sublime. Anyone else?

Best wishes,

DAVE LACK
ROMFORD, ESSEX

To Spirit of Rush,
The Visions book is available at the 2 stores below :

Tower Records - Piccadilly Circus
HMV - Oxford Street

From: DAVID COTTLE
(E-MAIL)

Dear Spirit,
Thank you for printing my piece about the White Ribbon concert last issue. It brought back many happy memories. As you know I have been collecting/trading Rush memorabilia for years now. Would you be kind enough to print my address in your next issue to put me in touch with fellow traders across the globe. If anyone would like a copy of my current list simply to look at or to do

some trading (or to send me your list) contact me at the following address:

**Ray Wawnyzniak
11, Marion Road
Amherst
New York 14226
USA**

Dear SPIRIT

I have read with interest the debate over the last few issues of Spirit of Rush with regards the Presto album. The issue 43 letter from Simon Duckett (are you the Queen and Doctor Who Fan?) was very interesting and prompted me to give my views.

I have to say that Signals is the best post Moving Pictures album Rush have made. I could even say probably their last classic album. As much as I love the albums they made after Signals there was always at least two tracks that let the side down. Between the Wheels and Red Lenses on Grace Under Pressure, Middletown Dreams and Emotion Detector on Power Windows, Open Secrets and High Water on Hold Your Fire, The Big Wheel and You Bet Your Life on Roll the Bones, The Speed of Love and Everyday Glory on Counterparts and Driven and Limbo on Test for Echo.

Presto though contains more than two weak tracks. Chain Lightning, Presto, Red Tide, Hand Over Fist, Available Light and the awful Scars which is possibly the worst track (not including the first album) they have ever recorded. Lyrically I find the album strong, it is just that the music is weak. I find myself bored when I listen to these songs. The production is excellent as are tracks such as The Pass and the superb Anagram.

On the other hand though Signals contains six excellent tracks and two good ones. Countdown, The Weapon and Losing It are amongst the best tracks they have ever committed to vinyl. The imagery in Countdown "Venting vapours like a sleeping white dragon" The Analog Kid "A hot and windy August afternoon has the trees in constant motion", and Losing It — "flooding through her memory the echoes of old applause" are sheer poetry.

This period of Rush has been criticised for the use of Synthesisers/Keyboards and lack of guitar. The onslaught of guitars on side 1 of Counterparts is awesome, but the synth riffs in Countdown and Subdivisions is brilliant as well as is the keyboard choir on The Analog Kid.

There is plenty of great guitar on Signals. The great solos on Subdivisions, Chemistry and The Weapon are proof of this. It would be interesting to hear how the album would have sounded if recorded five years ago or produced by Rupert Hines, Peter Henderson or Peter Collins, but you could say this about any of their albums. I think Terry Brown did a great job on the album, but as with many Rush albums I think that Neil's drums are too deep in the mix. This is a real shame as because we all know that Neil is the greatest drummer in the world and his drums should be right in your face.

The album has so many highlights. Neil's pounding drums on The Analog Kid and his military drumming on Countdown, the great intro to Subdivisions, the Pink Floyd like sound effects on Countdown. It still is one of the few albums of theirs that I can play from start to FINISH! without skipping a track and then going back to the beginning. Whenever I play Signals I always think back to 1982 when I owned a Rega Planar 3 turntable and those eight tracks used to blast out in my bedsit. '82 was a great year for me and this album reminds me of it.

It would be interesting to read about albums that fellow Rush fans have a particular soft spot for and why.

Best Wishes

Kevin Henry

A Canadian Rush

The Metal Marvels That Took the Rock World By Surprise

by Debra Frost

Taken from Circus -- February 14, 1977

A subterranean voice growls across the phone wires, hesitates, and growls again -- this time more softly. Canadian telephone service might be different, but it's not supposed to be that foreign.

"No, no," she explains, "Robert Plant sounds like the first voice, Geddy Lee is so much smoother and more subdued." There's no denying a fan's word, but Circus Magazine caught up with the vocal chords in question in Spokane, Washington, to settle once and for all whether Rush wasn't just another "junior Led Zeppelin." And learn a little more about the growing success of *All the World's a Stage* (Mercury), the live double-record set of this Northern power outfit, Rush -- Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson and drummer Neil Peart.

"I don't acknowledge the resemblance the way most people do," said Geddy Lee, as he stretches out in an all too familiar hotel room. *All The World's A Stage* is not just a catchy title for Rush's most recent record, but a fact of life for the hardworking band who have relentlessly crisscrossed their native Canada and the States.

"Superficially, we are similar... yes," allowed the urbane bassist. "I have a very high voice, so does Robert Plant, but it's an entirely different voice. Both bands play at a pretty high volume, but the music is different. And when you look inside at what motivates the music, you see it's very different."

Geddy expounds on the Canadian identity which has produced a synthesis of musical genres -- the rock and roll hybrid that is Rush. Living in Canada, he explains, a rock musician will share many cultural reference points with his American counterparts. Thematic concerns like "driving around in your car" and high school proms are naturally foreign to Europeans. Rush enjoyed the best of both worlds. "In Canada, you're influenced by American things, but you also absorb a great deal of the Commonwealth country's British background," Geddy continues.

Yet theirs is a debt common to all "Third Generation" rockers. Whereas bands such as the Stones and Led Zeppelin could transform rhythm and blues into a powerful new musical mode, the bands of the 70's must incorporate the rock heritage of their predecessors. And like their contemporaries Kiss and Aerosmith, Rush reveals utmost respect for their rock and roll roots, regardless of national origin.

"Our influences are still around -- that makes it a bit tougher. We're still a young band... with us, we're still competing with some of our very influences." It's easier to categorize new music in simple terms of what is already familiar. Yet Rush is quite capable of functioning in the face of such comparison. The band spent five grueling years playing in tiny provincial bars where patrons had no interest in a sneak preview of stardom. Mostly, they wanted a living jukebox.

"The worst was Northern Ontario," Geddy recalled, "They don't care what you do. They don't care if you do the greatest original material in the world if their ears haven't heard it before. They just want to get drunk and hear their favorite tunes." When so many weaker characters would simply hang up their Flying V's, how did Rush survive the endless thankless 5 set nights that would barely pay for the equipment van's

gasoline? "It was just persistence," said Geddy, "We only did tunes that we liked, and we'd sneak in an original here and there. Eventually, we built up our own little following."

The determination and rugged individualism that developed so early in the band's career were essential when Rush finally took the leap into the recording studio. Their initial offering was rejected by record companies. Undaunted, they formed their own record label and released their first LP independently. "We just kept ourselves going," Geddy remembered, "My family didn't understand what I was doing... until I started making money!"

But the long climb to the top was not without casualties. One who fell by the wayside was the band's original drummer, John Rutsey. "Just before we were planning our first American tour," explained Geddy, "just before things really started happening, it was obvious that his heart wasn't into it. So we thought we'd better get it out in the open before things really started coming at us fast. He just wasn't thinking the way Alex and I were and he decided it would be better for himself and for us if he left. And it turned out for the best." Because, it was love at first sight for drummer Neil Peart and the surviving 2/3 of Rush.

"We had pretty definite ideas as to what we wanted," Geddy recalls, "and as soon as Neil came in and sat behind his kit, we just knew he was right. He was just doing things we'd always wanted to hear behind our music. And right from the beginning, he was very excited and took a very dominant role."

The debonair drummer also assumed responsibility for the band's lyrics, an unusual contribution for the average tub-thumper. "Neil is our man of words," says Geddy, "but he also dismissed the notion that the remaining members of Rush are just strong silent types. 'The things I write about are real close to my heart,' he admitted, 'and I can only write if I'm personally motivated by something, whereas Neil is very literate and can just pull things out of the air.' Neil's fertile imagination was invaluable in the creation of 2112, Rush's fourth, and concept album (Mercury), that was a daring project for the young band.

The pressures of touring can also cause the wells of inspiration to run dry, sometimes forcing a band to put out a live album for lack of new material. That, however, was not the case with *All The World's A Stage*. "We always wanted to do a live album as a sort of historical thing," Geddy pointed out. "In fact, we wanted to do it as our fourth album, but we thought it might be too early so we did 2112 instead."

One criticism leveled at *All the World's a Stage* is the FACT that its packaging, imitative of Kiss' incredibly successful *Kiss Alive* format, features what almost amounts to an advertisement for Rush's earlier LPs. "We didn't want it to look like that!" sighed Geddy, "It wasn't supposed to look like a commercial. The record company did that. I guess from a business point of view it made sense but our original intention was to furnish a historical package, a discography. We wanted people to be able to tell where the songs came from."

"The next album," Geddy reveals, "will be recorded in England. It will be a natural progression, though not a major concept like 2112. We've always looked up to the English progressive bands and it's gonna be a good opportunity to go over there and try to capture the same sort of atmosphere. We're also expanding what we can play," he added "We're getting into more instruments, there will be more texture. We would never forsake our hard rock framework, though! We'll just update it," the bassist states emphatically. "A lot of bands underestimate their audience. But if you look at the very big bands with longevity, they've grown and progressed and their audiences have grown and progressed with them. We're not looking for immediate results, we're hoping to be around for years and years."

Interview with ALEX LIFESON by Ted Veneman

[Taken from Harmonix -- January/February 1983]

This is an interview conducted by Ted Veneman, the owner of Veneman Music in Rockville, Maryland. He and Alex had been friends for many years - you will still find images of Rush in the store. The music store published a music paper / ad supplement for quite a few years (I don't think they do any longer) called "Harmonix" in which this interview appeared. On the front page there is a photo of Alex on stage with his black strat; within the body of the interview are five photos of Alex during the interview (wearing a T-shirt from The Commons). The interview took place during the Signals tour.

Remember that Ted Veneman is a music store owner and NOT a journalist - the interview is reproduced here (without permission) exactly as it appears in the paper - punctuation, grammar, and the rest. I hope you enjoy it. Alex Lifeson, Rush's dynamic guitarist, was raised in Toronto, Canada and began his career much the same as everyone else -- from basements to bars and eventually, after many years of hard work, to the concert stage. He is talented, yet down-to-earth and quite unaffected by his success.

Alex and I had talked about doing an interview for nearly a year. Actually, we both prefer to call it a conversation that took place on tape. Over the years he's done many interviews, all of which brought up the same old questions: How old were you when you started playing ... who were your major influences ... what do you like about this guitar ... etc., etc. He really wasn't interested in another typical interview and frankly, I wasn't either so I suggested that we just have a conversation with the tape rolling. We don't see each other that often so it was a convenient way to catch up on lost time. Our conversation runs the gamut from life on the road to cars and food and even the space shuttle. I hope you enjoy this different look at one of rock's finest players, a real gentleman and good friend.

Harmonix:

You were saying that you can't wait for this leg of the tour to be over. What are you going to do?

Alex:

It ends on the 15th of December and I welcome the rest that's coming. We've been away so much. Actually the problem is we went down and spent a week on Neil's boat in the Virgin Islands. So that put us two months away from home.

Harmonix:

That's not a bad way to be away from home.

Alex:

No, it was great. We had a riot and it's a fantastic thing to do. But, had we been home at some point in there and then gone away and done that, it would have been different. I mean we had a great time. I don't know if we'll get around to doing it again but it was fantastic and we all got really close on the boat and drank more and laughed more -- I think we had the record of non-stop laughter. But like I said, it was tough not being home. Everybody's got families and we'd like to spend some time at home. Then we played in Toronto and that was really crazy. It's always crazy when we play at home. The backstage area is packed, there are ten thousand people backstage that you haven't seen in a while. It's a tough thing to deal with. I don't feel relaxed at all.

Harmonix:

So, even when you're home it's almost like being away.

Alex:

I mean even being home for one week once a month there's so much stuff you have to catch up on that you really have to get your scheduling together and decide how much time you are going to spend with your family or what time you are going to allot for your family so you will not be distracted by anything else. That's tough when there is so much to do. But listen to me complain. It's not that bad. It's all relative.

Harmonix:

A lot of people would trade places with you in a minute.

Alex: **Sure.**

Harmonix:

What do you think you'll do when it's all over? Have you thought about that?

Alex:

I don't know. I've been working on the studio at home and I'm just ironing out the last few bugs in electronic things. I'd certainly like to try my hand at a solo project, which I've been saying for quite some time now. We've worked together for so long that it's not easy to just sit down by yourself and write everything. There isn't someone to bounce your ideas off of or to tell you whether it stinks or whether it's a valid idea worth pursuing. That's another thing that takes time and patience.

Harmonix:

I remember you talked about a solo album. Did you sort of put that on hold?

Alex:

Yeah, it's on hold. There's just not enough time. I thought I would get some work done on it in the summer because we initially planned on having at least two months, maybe two and a half months, off. As it turned out, "Signals" took a month longer. I got home, I relaxed for the first week. The second week started getting hectic and then we went into rehearsals soon after. Plus, we did a month here and a month there late last fall. It was really hectic getting everything together again, so there was no chance to work on it then. When I'm home for a week I try to get downstairs and work for two or three nights out of the week spending four or five hours after the kids go to bed.

Harmonix:

You do everything yourself -- all the parts?

Alex:

Well, so far I am because it's late at night and I'm not really committed to doing something right now. They are just rough ideas.

Harmonix:

Are you playing anything besides guitar?

Alex:

Well, the synths are out on the road and when we're off the road I usually take them home. Right now I'm using a Roland drum machine and I play bass and guitar. When I get the synths back I'll plug them in and give them a whirl. Having a studio gives you lots of flexibility, but sometimes it's distracting because you get hung up on one little sound or one little effect that you're trying to achieve and you end up spending two or three hours trying to patch it in the right way. In that sense it's distracting, so I try to work on the basic ideas with a Teac 244. I get a good idea and I can do some overdubs on it and it gives me something to listen to for awhile. Then I can put it down on a multitrack if I want. I haven't gotten to that point yet, but a lot of the last album was written like that -- just ideas on a Portastudio. Putting down idea after idea and then, for the fun of it, overdubbing a bass or guitars. I sort of shelved that when we decided to go back to work. We realized that both Geddy and I had done so much work on our own in the meantime. Why not use that for the album? It made writing easier on this last album.

Harmonix:

Do you think that the solo effort, when it comes, will be similar to what you're doing now or be radically different?

Alex:

It's hard to say until you really sit down and do it, until you formulate some kind of concept.

Harmonix:

You don't have a concept in your head?

Alex:

No. I don't. But I think probably the single thing that I do have in mind is something very different. More a rhythmic kind of new music sort of vein. It's hard to say, maybe something a bit jazzy and I'd like to do songs, proper songs, not a really indulgent kind of guitar album. That doesn't really appeal to me.

Harmonix:

I think your role in Rush for so long has been a member of the group, not the guitar player per se. It is a group -- everyone contributes and everyone has to gel.

Alex:

That's certainly the way I look at it.

Harmonix:

Listening to Rory Gallagher tonight -- the band's built around him and Rory stands there and just tears up the guitar. That's great, but that's his way of doing it.

Alex:

Exactly. That wouldn't work in the context of this band. I think it helps that everyone sort of diversified. We went into keyboards and a little more percussion for Neil. Bass pedals for me. It shifts the focus a little on what you're doing and makes it more of a band effort.

Harmonix:

Do you think you'll sing on your solo effort?

Alex: I'd love to try.

Harmonix: Are you a shower singer?

Alex:

It's kind of weird with me. I've got excellent pitch I must say. I can hear something if it's out of tune even slightly. I have that ability. Even something that's slightly out of tune can be very jarring to my ear. But when it comes to singing, I can't get into pitch. It's just very difficult for me. I just don't lock in on it. Maybe it's a physical inability.

Harmonix:

I've often wondered why over a period of so many albums that Geddy sings exclusively. Why hasn't someone else experimented?

Alex:

We have. We've tried. But it just hasn't worked out. Maybe in the future. Maybe some coaching will help. Again it's a factor of time. But then again, I'm sure it wouldn't hurt to go for two or three weeks during a summer break or a winter break. Maybe two or three times a week -- I've got my studio at home -- go down there, lock the door and practice.

Harmonix:

Everytime I see you, you're constantly changing. I mean personally. You're growing, expanding, trying new things. Maybe singing will be the next thing.

Alex:

It would certainly add another dimension to the band and Geddy wouldn't mind sharing the load. I know that.

Harmonix:

You once said, and this is a quote, "We're not out to be stars. We're just out doing what we like doing." Do you still feel that way?

Alex:

Oh yeah, that's the way we've always thought about things. You know us pretty well, and even though we don't see each other often I think you can sense that. With the crew it's family. It's indicative of the way we feel about what we do. Aside from the pressure, the stress and anxiety that are a part of long tours, we really enjoy what we do and we try to do it the best we can. Not so that we end up number one in the polls or go on some kind of trip. We just really enjoy what we do, and we're normal people.

Harmonix:

Do you consider yourself a star?

Alex:

No, the thought embarrasses me. It's weird, that's my reaction. Really, for all of us, the adulation that comes with doing this -- it's embarrassing at times.

Harmonix:

Do you find that you're detached from the adulation?

Alex:

I don't know because it has always been like that for us. I suppose you can only go by what you see in other bands and how they react to that kind of thing. I try to make an effort to be polite and try to take some time and talk to people, because I know it's important. It was important to me when I was in their shoes.

Harmonix:

Like it or not, you're now an influence. There's a certain responsibility. You can say screw them, let them buy the records.

Alex:

Yeah, you do that and people never forget that. They never forget that one exchange they had with you.

Harmonix:

I think your audience on an average is at an impressionable age. A lot of people would categorize your audience as being a little on the restless, perhaps a little on the violent side. How do you feel about that?

Alex:

I don't know if I really agree with that. Perhaps in the first few years that we started getting some kind of notoriety, that was possibly the case. But now our audience seems to be subdued but very energetic. You look at an audience that goes to a Van Halen concert for instance. I realize that there's a cross between our audience and their audience, but on the whole their audience is much more fired up. The whole gist of a band like that is different than what we're about. With us, I think, possibly our music is a little more important and people come to see the band play.

Harmonix:

How do you feel about the readers' polls in musicians' magazines?

Alex:

It's flattering for one thing, especially in the case of "Guitar Player," because it really is your peers. On the other hand, I don't know if I'm really worthy of that kind of position.

Harmonix:

I remember "Guitar World" magazine did you on the cover and said, "Alex Lifeson -- is he too good for rock?" Did they tell you they were going to do that?

Alex:

Oh, no. For that I did an interview with John Swenson in the hotel room and that was that. I don't think I even knew I would be on the cover of that particular issue. That's something they do to catch your eye. To go back to polls, with a lot of people you get in a position where you become very popular and people think, "Yeah, I like that band and that's the guitar player. I'll put his name down because he's pretty good." It's all so relative. You go into some bar and you hear a guitar player that makes you feel guilty that you're not in your room practicing ten hours a day.

Harmonix:

Since you don't consider yourself a star, do you consider yourself successful?

Alex:

Oh, certainly. We've considered ourselves successful for a long time. It depends on how you measure success. We felt we were successful for a long time before we had any kind of financial satisfaction. We were hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. It was difficult to pay rent but we had control over what we were doing at least. We had control over the way we wanted to project ourselves and in that we found a lot of satisfaction. It's nice to have the money but we worked hard for it. We were quite happy with what we had before we had any kind of financial success and that's really only been a fairly recent thing. It's very difficult when you're touring to make money.

Harmonix:

Just from touring, it's true. A lot of expenses.

Alex:

A lot of expenses! You have a crew of thirty people that you're taking care of and they add up. If you're not willing to work a lot, then there's no way you're going to come off the road in the black. Even though we worked a lot we had to break a lot of ground for ourselves.

Harmonix:

Where haven't you played that you'd like to play?

Alex:

Japan is one place. Actually, Japan is about the only place.

Harmonix:

Why haven't you played in Japan?

Alex:

We just haven't had the time. It takes us a good six or seven months to tour in North America. We have to do Europe for about a month and then a couple of months off and then recording. So we haven't been able to get that together. Plus, we've gone through some record company changes in Japan. It's different to go over and blow a couple hundred thousand dollars doing a weeks worth of dates there.

Harmonix: Is that all it would be -- a week?

Alex:

For our first tour without any kind of record company support.

Harmonix:

Does that mean that you're not that strong in Japan as far as record sales?

Alex:

We're not as strong in Japan as we are in North America or England, but I think that if we went over we could probably do a lot for the tour and break a lot of ground.

Harmonix:

A lot of groups have taken the reverse philosophy and decided to start in Japan.

Alex:

Or go there as a last ditch effort to stay alive.

Harmonix:

Are you still allergic to Japanese food?

Alex:

I am, but I eat it anyway. Who cares. I got a twenty or thirty pound tuna that my brother-in-law got in Vancouver and brought frozen to Toronto. We sliced it up, bought the proper rice and made sushi. It was fantastic.

Harmonix:

This is a very bourgeois question, but why does the band drink only Dom Perignon?

Alex:

We really don't. It just happens that we got a deal on Dom and we bought Dom. Everybody is very budget conscious this tour and rather than going through promoters or in-house caterers, we stock our own and eliminate it from the rider.

Harmonix:

How elaborate is your rider?

Alex:

Ours is not very elaborate really. I suppose some promoters would say it probably is, but ours is quite straight forward. All we ask for is meals for the crew; breakfast and lunch when they're loading in; fruit, vegetables, nuts for us and then after the show some hot hors d'oeuvres.

Harmonix:

I've seen some riders where they've asked for a sit-down dinner for fifty.

Alex:

That doesn't happen much anymore.

Harmonix:

When you're on tour are you responsible for any kind of advertising? As an example, the last week before you arrived in Washington, two popular rock stations were both claiming each was the official welcoming station for Rush.

Alex:

That's totally outside of what we do.

Harmonix:

They claimed they had interviews lined up, etc. I don't know who they're interviewing, but I don't think it's the guys in the band.

Alex:

No. I can tell you it's not.

Harmonix:

I imagine there was a time in your career when radio stations were important.

Alex:

Yeah, they were. Or at least they were made out to be important to us. A lot of times we went to a station and did an interview and they didn't play any of our songs because we weren't on rotation at that station. For a long time we did anything that we had to do and then we made it a policy that we would only go to stations that supported us. We went to those stations for a few tours and now there's just no time, so we don't really do those types of interviews. We do some newspaper and telephone interviews. We haven't done an interview at a radio station in years.

Harmonix:

On the new album, it seemed that you guys had a baseball theme. Explain that to me.

Alex:

There's a bar called "The Commons." It's in an old hotel in Morin Heights and it is really the only bar in town. It is a crazy raging place and in the number of years we've recorded up there we've gotten to know the people who work at the bar. They have a girls softball team so when we got up there they challenged us to a game. Everybody got baseball gloves -- we got all set up for this game. We had a bit of field practice and we played them a game and we beat them. Then the guys team offered to play us. All of a sudden we got a little too busy. (Laughs) So it started there and then when we were doing the credits we thought let's put in everybody's position from that game, and that's exactly what we did.

Harmonix:

You also mentioned Warren Cromartie, who is a player for the Montreal Expos.

Alex:

Warren Cromartie, oddly enough, was really into the band and through some friends in Montreal called and asked if we'd mind much if he came up to the studio while we were recording. So he came up and we met him. He was really into the band and we were really into the Expos. Geddy's a baseball nut and he was well aware of Warren.

Harmonix:

Is he a musician.

Alex:

Yeah -- he's a pretty good drummer. Neil, of course, is a great influence. He came out on the road with us for a few days in Chicago and St. Louis and we've become good friends.

Harmonix:

Another thing on the album that seemed to be a real influence for you was the Space Shuttle launch.

Alex:

Oh, yeah.

Harmonix:

I know you flew down there to see it. It obviously made quite an impression.

Alex:

It was incredible. We went down there the first day and, of course, they postponed the launch and we went back down a couple of days later and watched the launch. It was an amazing thing -- an amazing sight to witness. I've never heard anything so loud in my life. Your pants are flapping, you could feel the ground vibrating and this was three miles away. That's the closest you could get. We decided right then that on the

next album we'd like to do something. We've become good friends with a couple of people at NASA that have been really helpful. I think you were here when Gerry Griffin was down. I guess it was the last time we were here. He's a director at NASA. They've been very cooperative and quite friendly.

Harmonix:

They've provided you with some excellent footage.

Alex:

Yes, they did. It's not easy to get that kind of footage. It's very difficult. I know Carl Sagan had a problem looking for some footage.

Harmonix:

Was it just a matter of asking?

Alex:

Gerry knew that we were writing a song about the space shuttle. Like I said he's been very, very cooperative all along the way with any information that we've wanted from NASA. Our office approached him about possibly getting some film and they said, "No problem." They got it all together and we had it like that.

Harmonix:

A lot of people have gotten on a waiting list to go on the shuttle. Would you go?

Alex:

I'd love to. It would be great. It is something that can't be written off because of budget cuts. It is really an important project.

Harmonix: Are you still flying?

Alex:

Not as much as I like to. I haven't flown in about a month. I'd like to get my instrument rating but I'd like to be a lot more current on it. I'd like to be able to keep it up.

Harmonix:

Have you started working on it?

Alex:

Actually I have about ten or twelve hours instrument time logged on fairly big twins. I have some hood time, but I'm not really current on all that.

Harmonix:

When are you going to start flying the band around?

Alex:

That's a heavy responsibility. At the end of the night you don't really feel like sitting down and getting your flight plan together. Plus it takes a lot out of you and if it is a long three or four flight and you're going through lousy weather, who wants to really deal with that. We have the busses and they're comfortable.

Harmonix:

Have either Geddy or Neil flown with you, just the two or three of you?

Alex:

No, but they've flown in the aircraft when I've been flying with a co-pilot. We flew to St. Catharines once in a Cherokee and we went up to Neil's and hung out for the day. When he drove us back to the airport we said let's go up -- you fly the plane. He's not too keen on flying. He flew the airplane and he really got off on it. We just flew around for half an hour and he really enjoyed it, but that's the only time we've ever done anything like that.

Harmonix: Geddy stays on the ground?

Alex:

Pretty much. He's not afraid of flying or anything. He drives his turbo.

Harmonix:

What are you driving these days?

Alex:

Actually, I'm shopping around for an "E" Type. Something that I can work on as a project car. I've always enjoyed doing that. I've had cars that I've taken apart and worked on myself.

Harmonix: The British syndrome.

Alex:

Yeah, you have to. I had two MG's that were like that -- constantly working on them. But the "E" Type is a very sensuous car.

Harmonix:

You're still not a big German car fan?

Alex:

Well, I have two German cars now. I drive a Mercedes and we have a second one.

Harmonix:

You told me once you thought the seats were too hard.

Alex:

Teutonic seats! I like the car. It's a great car and extremely reliable but to get into something that's hot, fast, outside of something like a Porsche; I'm not really too keen on Porsches. I like and respect them and I admire them, but I don't think I'd want to own one. It is just a matter of personal taste. I've had English cars and I like the smell of the leather and way they feel and sound. It's quite different. I should probably get going.

Harmonix:

Listen, I really appreciate this.

Alex:

Finally we did it -- it was great. It was just too bad it had to get so late. We started getting into some good things.

Harmonix:

I'm going to make you a star Alex!

Alex: Me?

[illegible]

This is a new book that has just been published about Rush in the USA. To order a copy by credit card phone The Borgo Press, Tel: 00 1 909 884 5813 Fax: 00 1 909 888 4942 (PO Box 2845 San Bernadino, CA 92406, USA). Opening hours 9am – 12noon Pacific Time (8 hours behind GMT). The book is available in paperback at \$22.00 inc. airmail P&P and in hardback for \$32.00 inc. airmail P&P. Please mention 'The Spirit of Rush' when ordering.

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