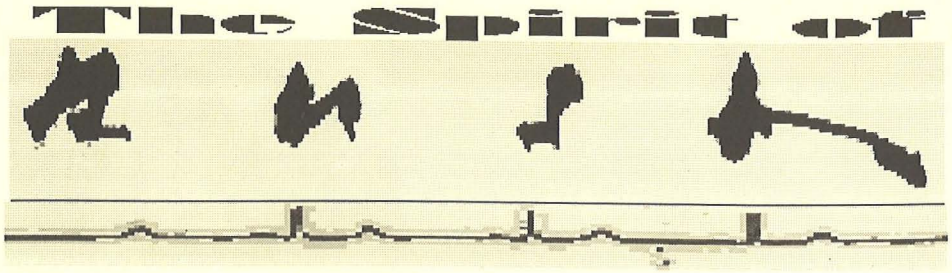
Spirit of RUSH

ISSUE 62
SUMMER 2002





Editorial

Hello and welcome to another Vapor Trails-packed issue of Spirit. Reaction to Vapor Trails has been universally positive so far with only a few negative comments coming our way, please keep sending in your views/reviews of the album for inclusion in our next issue.

The interview with Geddy that we promised for this issue has been held over till the next one due to the overwhelming amount of Vapor Trails content that we have crammed into this one. It's a good one though and will be well worth the wait, believe me.

Only a very short time now 'til Rush take to the stage in North America for the start of what we all hope will be the Vapor Trails WORLD TOUR. Janet, Tom and I along with Cliff, Ian, Neil & Stephan (Spirit readers all) will be making the trip over to meet with our friends there and catch the opening five shows of the tour. If all goes well we shall have an extensive report on the shows along with loads of new pictures of the guys to accompany the piece next issue. The full list of confirmed shows for the tour so far can be found on the inside back cover of this very issue. Those of you planning on going over should contact Simon Lucas as we said in the last issue, he has already helped several readers out and he just might be able to do the same for you. Call him on 01454-314481 today!

With all this Rush activity it has come as no surprise to us here at Spirit that tickets for this years convention at the Limelight Club in Crewe on Saturday August 31st are simply flying out the door, this could be the year that we sell out in advance and have NO tickets for sale at the door on the day. So do not delay get your tickets NOW by using the enclosed order form today to order direct from us at Spirit.

Alternatively you can order them online from www.ticketweb.co.uk or by credit card on the 24 hour line - 08 700 600 100. Our tribute band this year, '2112' (last years Force Ten) have recently played a couple of gigs to near sell out crowds and apparently went down a storm.

They have been leafleting the convention at their gigs which I'm sure has been a factor in the upsurge in ticket sales as well - thanks guys. We intend to bring back as much new Vapor Trails tour merchandise as we can carry for use in the raffle and to sell at the convention. We already have new video interview footage of Alex & Geddy to play on the Limelight's giant screens so this is a year that you really do not want to miss out on, my friends.

Our next issue (the last) before the convention should be with you in early August. Please send in your contributions, gig reviews etc. to reach us by the 20th of July - if you would like them included, otherwise you may miss out. If you have a re-subscription reminder notice enclosed with this issue please return it ASAP so that you do not miss out on your Spirit fix.

LETS ALL CELEBRATE THE MOMENT AS IT TURNS INTO ONE MORE!

Mick

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RUSH

BEHIND THE FIRE
THE MAKING OF VAPOR TRAILS by neil peart

"Success is not the result of spontaneous combustion; you must set yourself on fire."
I found those words on the wall of a bar in Montana, attributed to somebody named Reggie Leach. It seemed an unlikely place to find inspiration, but I carried it away with me, and thought of it more than once during the making of this latest Rush album.
On a cold Monday morning in January of 2001, Geddy, Alex, and I gathered at a small studio in Toronto to start work again. It had been almost five years since Test For Echo, but after twenty-seven years and sixteen studio albums together, we were hopeful that the chemistry among us could be awakened once more, the fire rekindled. Deep down we were a little apprehensive-would we really be able to put together enough songs that we liked to fill a new album?
Always a burning question, and more so this time, when so much life had flowed beneath our bridges. Also, in the past few years both Geddy and Alex had produced their own projects, for themselves and for others, and each of them was used to being the Supreme Boss of Everything. For many reasons, the process of meshing again had to be gradual, exploratory, and careful.
We laid out no parameters, no goals, no limitations, only that we would take a relaxed, civilized approach to this project. No hurry, no pressure, no marathon stints in the studio (at first anyway); we would simply keep working, day after day, trying to strike sparks from each other and feed the slow-burning fire of collaboration and mutual inspiration.
Per our usual pattern, Geddy and Alex started working together on musical ideas in the studio's control room, while I retreated into another little room with pen, paper, and computer to start trying to assemble lyrics. I began by going through my "scrapyard" of jotted notes and phrases I had collected, looking for connections to stitch together, while Geddy and Alex began by simply playing, setting up a rhythm machine and jamming along with guitar and bass. After a couple of weeks I had put down a few lyrics to pass over to them, but it seemed they weren't ready to get serious yet-they just wanted to "play." Sometimes I would take a break from wordsmithing and go down the hall to have a bash at my drums in the main recording room, and I would pass the control room where the two of them were working. Usually I heard them riffing away, exploring some interesting directions and recording everything, but there weren't any songs yet.
We would talk at the beginning or end of the day, and I knew the two of them were starting to get excited about their explorations, but didn't want to stop for the relatively tedious job of listening through all those raw ideas and choosing the best ones to assemble into a coherent structure.
For myself, once I had a half dozen lyrics finished I began to feel a little unsure how to proceed. I wanted to know which ones might be "working" for them, to receive some feedback, and some influence, from where they were going musically. So I stopped lyric-writing for awhile, and started writing a book instead. (As one does.)
Eventually Geddy began to sift through the vast number of jams they had created, finding a verse here, a chorus there, and piecing them together. Often a pattern had only ever been played once in passing, but through the use of computer tools it could be repeated or reworked into a part. Since all the writing, arranging, and recording was done on computer, a lot of time was spent staring at monitors, but most of the time technology was our friend, and helped us to combine spontaneity and craftwork. Talk was the necessary interface, of course, and once Geddy and Alex had agreed on basic structures, Geddy would go through the lyrics to see what might suit the music and "sing well," then come to me to discuss any improvements, additions, or deletions I could make from my end.
Gradually the songs began to come together, "Out Of The Cradle" among the first, along with "Vapor Trail," "The Stars Look Down," and "Earthshine." That last is notable for being the only Rush song I can recall that was later completely rewritten, keeping the same lyrics but replacing every single musical part. "Cradle" also underwent some serious surgery as time passed, and that was the kind of relaxed approach we were taking, allowing us to reexamine songs with the luxury of perspective, and repair or replace any parts that didn't survive that test of time. Sometimes a developing song seemed to lose momentum, or our faith (the critical force), and was abandoned, but that had always been our version of "natural selection."
Once I had the reassurance of knowing that some of the lyrics were working, and had a feel for the musical context, I carried on with the lyric writing. And switching to my "drummer" hat, now that I had some song sketches to work on I started spending a few nights a week creating and refining drum parts, playing along to the still-evolving arrangements of music and vocals as my guide. Alex was my personal producer and recording engineer, as he had been for this phase of many past albums.
More songs came together too, like "Secret Touch," "Sweet Miracle," and "How It Is," and as often happens, once we had a few songs finished that we liked, the newer ones started to get weirder. Daring grows out of confidence (or what the ancient Greeks called "hubris," I guess), and from this combination came "One Little Victory," "Ceiling Unlimited," and "Nocturne."
By that time we had been working on our own for about six months, and felt we had enough material to

benefit from an "objective ear," a coproducer. Paul Northfield had worked with us as recording engineer on albums going back to Moving Pictures and Signals in the early eighties, and on several live records over the years (as well as my Buddy Rich tributes), but this was the first time we had worked with him in a more creative capacity. We wanted someone who knew us and our music well enough to make a shortcut straight into the composing and arranging area, for there were still more songs to be written and organized, and make a transition from there straight to recording. That was an important difference in the way we made this record, compared to any in the past. We used to spend a period of time working on the songwriting, arranging, and our individual parts, then do some last-minute preproduction work with a coproducer before moving to a big-time studio to start the "official" recording. The pressure this imposed on us could be productive, and in particular I found that it could often drive me to a level of performance I hadn't reached before, but this time we wanted to do it differently-more gradually, with more time for revision and renovations.

Some of the songs had been worked on over a period of months by that time, and were ready to record, while others were still under development, and a few hadn't even been written yet. So for the first time we were able to simultaneously work on writing new songs, arranging older ones, and recording finished performances on the ones we were "satisfied" with. Geddy had been able to record the vocals on his own, and Alex the guitars, experimenting and layering to their hearts' content, and some of those performances would remain irreplaceably right. In each case we were "leap-frogging" ahead, improving our individual parts and discussing changes, then responding to the work the others had done on their own. After so many years of playing together we intuitively understood each other musically, and even if we worked in isolation, we were working together.

Paul's influence was strong through this phase, for he could help us judge the performances as "finished" or "not yet," and he saw possibilities that sometimes escaped us (urging "Ghost Rider" from the verge of abandonment to its glorious realization, for example). He also encouraged our "eccentricities" in the later-emerging songs like "Freeze" and "Peaceable Kingdom."

By then certain common musical themes had emerged, like a "veiled complexity" in the parts and arrangements (the drum parts for "Freeze" and "Peaceable Kingdom" took me days to work out and refine, for example). Alex's particular agenda steered us away from the use of keyboards or guitar solos, and Geddy experimented with multi-tracked backing vocals as textural alternatives. Lyrically, no overall concept emerged, but I can trace some interesting sources for particular lines, like Walt Whitman in "Out Of The Cradle" and Thomas Wolfe in "How It Is" ("foot upon the stair, shoulder to the wheel") and "Ceiling Unlimited" (Wolfe's title Of Time And The River and looking at a map of the Mississippi Delta suggested the "winding like an ancient river" lines). "Ceiling Unlimited" also offers a playful take on Oscar Wilde's reversal of the Victorian lament, "drink is the curse of the working class," while Joseph Conrad's Victory gave the "secret touch on the heart" line. "There is never love without pain" echoed from my own experience and the novel Sister Of My Heart, by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and W.H. Auden and Edward Abbey (Black Sun) influenced certain lines in "Vapor Trail."

An article in the magazine "Utne Reader" called "What Do Dreams Want?" contributed to my ideas in "Nocturne" (as well as the enigmatic mantra, "the way out is the way in," for "Secret Touch"), and I was also struck by a psychologist's approach to analysis and dream interpretation, "without memory or desire."

The nineteenth-century Quaker folk artist, Edward Hicks, painted no less than sixty versions of the same biblical scene, "Peaceable Kingdom," and the tarot card "The Tower" seemed a chilling reflection of the events of September 11, 2001. A series of works by Canadian painter Paterson Ewen helped to inspire "Earthshine," and the title of a novel by A. J. Cronin, The Stars Look Down (which I've yet to read), seemed to express a fitting view of an uncaring universe.

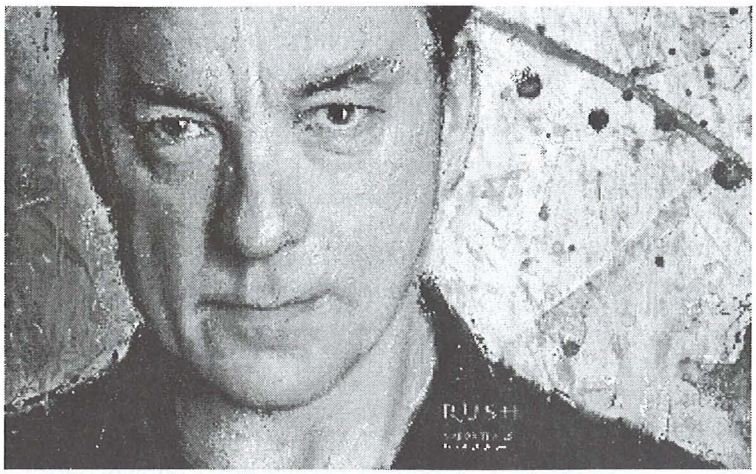
In the self-contained universe of our work, everything had been going very smoothly, and it was only when we moved into the final mixing stage that we got bogged down. It seemed that all of us, Paul included, had become too deeply immersed in the material, and we could no longer step back and hear the songs whole. After a few unsatisfying attempts, we called in a specialist, David Leonard, and he was able to sift through the parts and make them bright and new again, to find the hidden dynamics and textures and bring out the subtleties of the music and the performances.

And so it was that we suddenly found we had been working on this project for over a year. It was not because we had any special difficulties, or because it was at all "overwrought," for many of the final takes of the songs had been captured fresh and spontaneous, more than they had ever been in the past. Far from being stale or over-rehearsed, often they had only been played that way once. The difference this time was that instead of working to schedules and deadlines, we simply carried on writing songs and recording them until we felt the collection of music was complete. (Someone wise once said, "no work of art is ever finished, it is only abandoned.")

While putting so much time and care into every detail of the content and performance of the songs, we hadn't paid any attention to their length, and now we began to worry if all thirteen songs would even fit on a CD, which can only hold 74 minutes. There was some talk of saving a couple of songs for a compilation or something, but Rush has never left any "previously unreleased tracks" for anybody to capitalize on, and we weren't about to start now. All of these songs had taken a lot of time and effort, and we simply couldn't imagine leaving any of them behind. Fortunately they added up to just under 67 minutes, so we were spared any painful choices.

Then there was the album title-never an easy decision. A unifying theme sometimes appears in the collected songs and suggests an overall title, like Counterparts or Power Windows; other times a particular song seems emblematic, like "Test For Echo" or "Roll The Bones." Neither approach seemed right this time, so we went with the song title we liked the best, "Vapor Trail," and made it plural to refer to all the songs. Then I went to work on cover

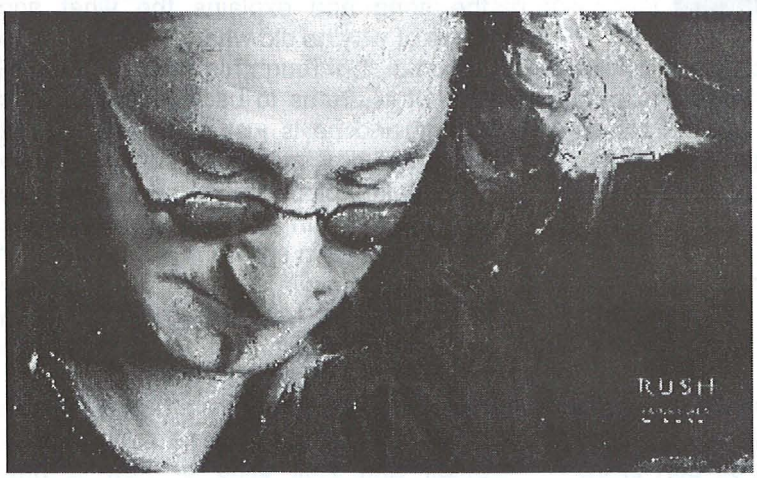
ideas with our longtime art director, Hugh Syme.
The last big challenge we faced, as always, was the running order of the songs, and we fiddled with that right



up until the last minute. However, we never doubted which song would open the album, for "One Little Victory" made such an uncompromising announcement, "They're ba-a-a-ack!"
Knowing that our music is nothing if not idiosyncratic, and doesn't really cater to popular "taste," we also envisioned advertising slogans along the lines of, "If you hated them before, you'll really hate them now!" Or, "And now-more of everything you always hated about Rush!"



But of course, like everyone, we do hope people will enjoy our work, and that our shared enthusiasm, energy, and love for what we do communicates itself to the listener. When you set yourself on fire and aim for the sky, you hope to leave behind some sparks of heat and light.
Like a vapor trail.



RUSH NEWS

Vapor Trails In the Charts

Vapor Trails debuted at # 6 in America's Billboard Chart with sales of 108,000 units. It entered the UK chart at #38 in the first week and rose to # 31 the following week.

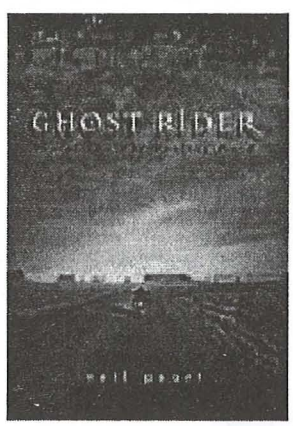
Vapor Trails on Vinyl

Just a quick note for Rush collectors. If you weren't aware of this already, Vapor Trails is available on vinyl, and at 68 minutes it is being pressed as a double album!

Eric @ http://www.2112.net/powerwindows

Ghost Rider: Travels On The Healing Road

Neil Peart's first book,The Masked Rider, covered introspection and perspective through the setting of bicycling through West Africa. Ghost Rider takes us on a motorcycle journey across North America and deeper into the mind of Canada's most extraordinary lyricist/poet.



Ghost Rider is the story of a pop culture icon who experienced overwhelming tragedy in his life and a first person account of how he set out on an extraordinary motorcycle odyssey to save his own life.

Canadian Author ISBN: 1550225464
Published: June 2002. Published by ECW Press

Ghost Rider - Travels On The Healing Road" will be available through bookstores, and will also be part of the official merchandise at the up-coming Rush concerts on the Vapor Trails tour.

Neil Peart - 'A Work in Progress'

Neil Peart's instructional drumming video, recorded during the production of Test for Echo, was released on DVD April 23, 2002. Originally released as a two-cassette set, the video is now contained on a single DVD

The DVD has already sparked favourable reviews.....

DVD?? I can't believe it!, April 26, 2002
I just knew this would never be released onto DVD, so I bought the VHS "back then". I should have known but nothing of RUSH's was on DVD then either so I certainly didn't think this would make it so early.
I have really enjoyed the depth that this goes into. Neil shares some insightfu information into the construction of the songs beyond just the percussion arrangements. The interludes of philosophical discussion are interesting too. The accessibility that will come with the DVD format will only make this more fun. Guess I gotta' buy it!

R D Bittle at amazon.com

Masterpiece!, May 4, 2002
I was captivated and completely enthralled when I first bought and watched this masterpiece. It is well over 2 and 1/2 hours of pure amazement and wonder. Neil as I expected is an excellent teacher and does a wonderful job explaining each song in beautiful detail and example. Every song from Test For Echo is played by Neil and afterwards he explains the major parts of the song and explains the what and whys of why he did what he was trying to accomplish through his drum parts. Neil plays the drums to backing tracks sans drums and he is just such a master at the art of drumming. The majority of the video takes place inside a studio, but he is shown out in nature, rowing a boat, walking through snow in snowshoes and is even shown on a back porch demonstrating how he warms up on a practice pad. Nature is used to explain his new technique by speaking in terms of roundness. His drum study with drum guru Fred Gruber is gone over in great detail and Neil talks of how a new approach of drumming was taken on. A definite must have!

Freis968 at amazon.com

RUSH NEWS

Rush Fans at NASA?

The following appeared on NASA's Earth Observatory - Natural Hazards webpage....

Vapor Trails Over Canada



One little victory in the life of a cloud - conditions were good for contrail formation over Eastern Canada on April 12, 2002. This true-color Sea-viewing Wide-Field-of -View Sensor (Sea WiFS) image reveals dozens of long, linear clouds around Nova Scotia that were left behind by jets between Europe and North America. (Rush hour flights leaving Europe in the early morning would have been in this part of the world in early afternoon when Sea WiFS was flying overhead.) Image courtesy the Sea WiFS Project NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, and ORBIMAGE.

Red Star: Sacred Cities by Dennis J Barton

Published in March 2002, although not endorsed by Rush, this novel blends the stories put forth in "2112", "Red Barchetta", and other songs with similar themes. The first in a series, the book is paperback, 500 pages, and sells for $24.95.

Welcome to the year 2112. Enter the Temples of Syrinx. Hold the Red Star proudly high in hand. Surrender. Obey.

The year is 2112. Religion and technology have been leveraged to control the lives and minds of humankind. Truth is a lie. Oppression is the rule. The Great CPU and His prophet have sought to do away with free will.

But there remain a few righteous hearts. A boy who dares to question; a disillusioned Vigilance officer; an old man with a country-place that used to be a farm. The future of human destiny rests in the hands of these disparate few, and theirs is the anthem of freedom, of rebellion.

A ground-breaking science fiction epic inspired by the works of Rush, Red Star: Sacred Cities is the first of a series sure to thrill hard-core Rush fans and sci-fi addicts alike.

THIS WORK HAS NOT BEEN ENDORSED BY RUSH

Dennis J. Barton was born and raised on LevOne, but now lives far outside the wire, where he does his best to defy both priests and Eyes, and follows the dictates of his own free will.

Andromeda

You may recall that Alex Lifeson composed and performed the theme music for the first season of Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda, the Star Trek creator's final series which is now concluding its second season. The theme is the first track of the Andromeda Soundtrack album availalbe at Scifi.com. It is rumored that star/executive producer Kevin Sorbo (of Hercules fame) never liked Alex's theme, and wanted to change it after the first season. However, the review of the Soundtrack at Scifi.com begs to differ.....

> "The strongest composition on this collection is actually Alex Lifeson's invigorating "Season One Main Title." The cue lasts for only 59 seconds, but it packs a punch that, for the most part, is lacking throughout the rest of the CD...With the exception of Lifeson's lone contribution, the 25 cues on the collection are all written and played by Matthew McCauley...While McCauley's artificial Andromeda arias are invariably expressive, his tunes are also consistently mediocre and, in many respects, surprisingly rough-edged."
>
> **Eric**
> **@www.2112.net/powerwindows**

RUSH NEWS

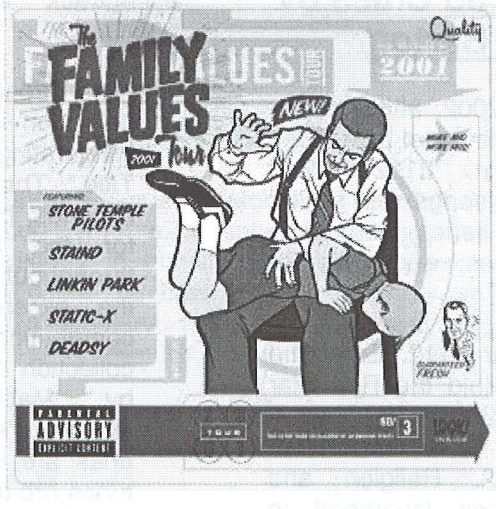
In a Word: Yes (1969 -) Geddy Writes

May 28, 2002 - Rhino/Atco Records will be releasing In a Word: Yes (1969 -), the most definitive Yes retrospective ever produced, featuring more than three decades of music. The package was produced by Steve Howe and the band while each of the 55 tracks spanning the band's exceptional career has been remastered for sterling sound quality. The box set will be available on July 30 at all retail outlets.

Also included is an 80-page booklet, featuring liner notes from rock journalist and author Chris Welch, an insightful essay from author and Yes expert Bill Martin, as well as tribute quotes from Academy Award®-winning writer/director Cameron Crowe, Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, Geddy Lee of Rush, and Jon Fishman from Phish, among others. In addition to numerous rare photos from the group's personal archives, the box itself features new cover artwork from Roger Dean.

Family Values Tour CD

We now have the track listing for the Family Values Tour 2001 CD which features a live performance of "Tom Sawyer" by goth-rock band Deadsy. A studio version of Tom Sawyer is on the



new Deadsy studio album, 'Commencement' released May 14, 2002

Deadsy is led by lead singer and guitarist Elijah Blue Allman, son of Gregg Allman and Cher. Originally slated for release in 1999, Atlantic apparently held back its release, prompting the band to eventually add 5 new songs (one of which is "Tom Sawyer") and change to Korn's label

Track Listings
1. Vasoline - Stone Temple Pilots
2. Runaway - Linkin Park
3. Fade - Staind
4. Wonderful - Stone Temple Pilots
5. Push It - Statix-X (feat P. Exeter Blue)
6. It's Been a While - Staind
7. Wicked Garden - Stone Temple Pilots

8. Cold - Static-X
9. Black - Aaron Lewis of Staind
10. Creep - Stone Temple Pilots (feat. Aaron Lewis)
11. Tom Sawyer - Deadsy
12. One Step Closer - Linkin Park (feat. Aaron Lewis)

Audio CD (May 7, 2002)
Number of Discs: 1
Elektra/Asylum; ASIN: B000063UZ6
Eric @ http://www.2112.net/powerwindows



Blazing New Trails
Rush Experiences Rebirth - By Barry Walsh

There aren't many institutions left that one can rely upon these days. Sports heroes succumb to bum knees and abused ligaments, politicians and movie stars fall prey to scandal, and the rock stars that don't overdose on something wind up eternally retracing their steps on the comeback trail. Especially in the ever-fickle rock world, evolving and maturing is one thing, surviving is quite another.
Thus, when Canadian progressive-rock institution Rush took a prolonged hiatus following their 1997 release Test For Echo, due to a crushing series of tragedies involving drummer/ lyricist **Neil Peart's** family, the question of if and when Rush would return hung heavily in the air for fans. And it was a question the band wasn't taking lightly. That makes the arrival of the new studio album from Rush, the intense and direct Vapor Trails, an event of almost spiritual dimensions for the band's ardent fan base, and indeed for the trio itself (Peart, bassist/ vocalist **Geddy Lee** and guitarist **Alex Lifeson**). It was a birthing process fraught with difficulty and pain, but in the end, healing and hope prevailed.

"When everything happened in '97, the last thing we thought of was the band," says the soft-spoken yet enthusiastic Lifeson, ensconced in the basement of the band's management offices in downtown Toronto (or, as the label's publicist remarked upon surveying the rows of gold and platinum albums mounted on the office walls, "the house that Rush built"). "It was so unimportant. We circled the wagons and came to Neil's support. I think we felt if that was it for the band, that was it for the band. It would be a terrible way to end it, but we didn't think about it.
"Neil's recovery was very long and painful, and he had to go through hell before he could start dealing with the world again," Lifeson says thoughtfully. "We really left it up to him, and if he never came to us about working again, then so be it. But he called one day and said 'I think I'm ready to talk about possibly maybe getting back to work again.' He'd met somebody, and he was starting a new relationship and starting his life over again, finally. Certainly a lot of ghosts were following him, but he was making an effort to move on. And we understood that this was something he felt he needed to do. And he now had the support of somebody who understood him and cared for him very much."

That support would prove to be immeasurably important in bringing one of rock's premiere drummers back to a place within himself where he could actually sit behind a kit again. And once that river was crossed, the band could think about moving forward. But it wouldn't prove to be easy.
"It was difficult at first," says Lifeson. "We spent the first couple of weeks just talking, getting used to being in the same room together. And the stuff that we wrote in those first couple of months was generally pretty lousy. It was very derivative and boring, There was a lot of old Rush, old styles in those first weeks. But there were a couple of nuggets in there. We took a couple of weeks off, came back and suddenly everything was very clear to us and that's when it started happening. We had to clear out cobwebs in working together again."
Indeed, from the propulsive Peart-led percussive attack of lead track 'One Little Victory' to the melodic, driving 'Ceiling Unlimited' (which owes a little bit to U2's 'I Will Follow'), the new Rush material has a direct quality, an emotional intensity that even the band's staunchest critics will have to acknowledge. Whereas past lyrics have come very close to resembling intellectual treatises, Peart is decidedly writing a little closer to the heart (pun intended) of matters this time out. And the songs, while still sounding like the work of three very proficient individuals, sound more like the work of three very *passionate* individuals - an important difference.
"With this record, unlike some Rush records over the last ten years or so...there's a level of passion and intensity in this record that I don't hear in our other albums," concurs Lifeson. "I think spending 14 months on it made all the difference. We really took our time with the writing and anything that we didn't feel 100 per cent about we could rewrite, eliminate or fix. Time was a necessity. We've been away for five or six years between records, and so much has happened in that time that we couldn't work under the same pressures that we had in the past. It took us four to six months to make a record in the

past, other than the early records that would take us five or six days. But we really needed to know there was no external pressures around this record - it would take as long as it was going to take."

But surely that mode of working - allowing time for creativity and respecting the possibilities of 'happy accidents' - must have been quite a switch for a band used to planning every moment down to the last second. "We're very organized - we're anal about it," says Lifeson about the band's usual approach. "'Everything has to be written in six weeks, two weeks for pre-production, a week for drums.' And to throw that all out the window after so many decades, to go in on a day and know that everything you're doing on that day is possibly a keeper, changed the way we worked. The criteria was if we can beat this take when we re-record, then great. But if not, the first try has to be great. And a lot of this record is from those early jams. In fact, 'Peaceable Kingdom' is almost completely from a jam that Ged and I had. That song was played once ever. It wasn't practiced, it wasn't rehearsed. And I love the thought of that." Thus, the band came to the realization that if it was to continue, it would have to acknowledge change - not changing trends (which Rush have always been oblivious to anyway) or external changes, but the changes within. With all of the members having worked on solo projects, and with circumstances illuminating other areas of living that might've been ignored in the past, there are new priorities for the band that have as much to do with maintaining their friendships as with maintaining the million-selling institution that is Rush.
'We're going on the road soon, and once we finish the tour if everyone is feeling healthy and happy having worked that hard, we'll dive into the next project," muses Lifeson. "I think everything's going to happen much quicker, and we'll get to the end result much faster. "We're out of the routine that existed for 25 years, and now we're a little lost in a way. I think it's like a rebirth for us, and where it goes to from here I don't know. We're taking it a little bit at a time. You know, we've always been really close friends. Geddy and I have been friends since we were 13 years old. This has brought us together in such a way..."
The guitarist trails off, laughs, and then resumes. "You know, I was watching 'Spinal Tap' the other day and there's a scene where Nigel Tuffnel says ' We're so close, we're beyond brothers.' And I had to laugh because we've said that so many times, but it's really true. We are very close, it's great to work together, and that's a great part of our relationship, but above that we're friends. Neil lives in Los Angeles now, but Ged and I still live three minutes away from each other. And if we don't talk to each other every couple of days we get weird. We miss each other! And it's bizarre - to have known someone that long, to have been through so much together, you'd think we really wouldn't want to spend that much time together. But we're really lucky for it - we truly are best friends, and here we are almost fifty years old."

So then, perhaps the best is yet to come? That might be hard to imagine for those of us who've grown up with such benchmark moments as **2112** or **Moving Pictures** - and indeed, for Lifeson, the legacy of the band, when he does think about it, is both daunting and inspiring.
"I think this record has more in common with 2112 than any other record we've done," he reflects. "There's a passion on that record - it came at a time that was almost the end of us. There was flagging support from the record company, management was concerned as they were hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt at the time. The record was not very successful commercially, but we needed to make that record before we could make a 'Moving Pictures.'
"I think in the last ten years we've done good work, but not *great* work. And this is the first time that we've made a step towards getting to that point in our heads where we feel we're doing great work."

Mike Portnoy's liner notes for Japanese edition of Vapor Trails

Rush's impact on mine and Dream Theater's lives and career is immeasurable. I think it is pretty safe to say that if it is weren't for Rush, ***there would be no Dream Theater!*** When I met John Petrucci and John Myung at the Berklee College of Music in the Fall of 1985, there were two immediate things we found we had in common:

1. our homebase of Long Island, NY and
2. our love (no...make that OBSESSION) with Rush.

Right from the very first rehearsal, we began jamming on all of our favorite Rush songs: *The Spirit of Radio, YYZ, La Villa Strangiato.* We found a common language of musical communication between us that stemmed from this music that we loved with all of our hearts, souls, minds, hands and fingers. We were 3 Rush fans who were so inspired by their musicality and obvious personal comradery, that we decided to devote our lives and careers to making music from a similar blueprint and background. Even the band's original name *Majesty* stemmed from a description one of us used to describe the ending of Rush's *Bastille Day* that we were listening to while sleeping out for tickets for their Power Window tour!

He we are 17 years later and I am both honored and privileged to have been asked to write these liner notes for the much anticipated return of Rush with their new album *Vapor Trails.* Since those old days in the mid-80's at Berklee, Dream Theater has gone on to much international success and acclaim, selling millions of albums worldwide and selling out year-long tours around the world. (and all the while still getting the occasional comparison to our Canadian heros.)

But the most shocking thing to us is that there seems to be a whole new generation of progressive music fans (especially throughout Asia and Europe) that have started their journey of progressive music with bands like Dream Theater....and unlike us, haven't necessarily had the exposure to and influence from some of the pioneer bands that created this unique genre of music.

If you are one of those lucky people, I must say I ENVY you!! You have a tremendously rewarding musical journey lying ahead of you. I cannot begin to tell you how incredibly inspirational my first experiences of discovering albums like *2112, Hemispheres, Permanent Waves and Moving Pictures* were. The thought of some of you being able to listen to those albums for the very FIRST TIME, is something I truly do envy!

If you are already a Rush fan, then you realize how special today is: you are holding in your hands THE BRAND NEW Rush CD!!! An occasion such as this used to be a national holiday in the Portnoy, Petrucci and Myung homes. And this is a CD that many Rush fans feared would never be made. Although I cannot say I ever doubted their return, it does happen to come off of a 5 year hiatis which is the longest in the band's career. And it is obvious that they have come back with a vengeance. All of the classic Rush qualities are intact: Geddy's totally unique voice and virtuostic bass playing, Alex's chordal guitar textures and wall of sound, and Neil's legendary drumming and breathtakingly poetic lyrics. But there is also an obvious new sense of exploration. The playing is fresh and vibrant. The songs are immediate yet constantly venturing into new territories. The production is tight enough to be crisp and balanced yet loose enough to *feel* their new surge of life.

Here they are ladies and gentlemen, the unveiling of Rush in the New Millennium....Listen, learn, enjoy.... I know I will be!

Mike Portnoy
New York
April 2002

Alex Lifeson on the making of Rush's 'Vapor Trails'

By PAUL CANTIN -- JAM! Music

TORONTO -- Rush's ordeal creating their new record "Vapor Trails" extended right through the music-making process to the album's final mastering. Guitarist Alex Lifeson told JAM! Music that even after 14 months of touch-and-go writing and recording the 13 songs that make up "Vapor Trails" (the group's first album since 1996's "Test For Echo"), there were serious technical problems late in the process.

The protracted writing process got off to a rough start, but after an early break, guitarist Lifeson, bassist Geddy Lee, and drummer Neil Peart hit their stride. The new album's more streamlined, harder-edged sound came together quickly.

"Once we got over the three-month hump, this record took on a life of its own, and we were along for the ride," Lifeson explains in a basement meeting room at his manager's downtown Toronto office.

But in rock 'n' roll, it ain't over till it's over. And even after the trio went their separate ways at the conclusion of the album, there were more challenges. "Geddy went away to do the mastering. I went away on a golfing trip as soon as we finished (last February)," Lifeson says. "It had been 14 months

(making the record), and in the past, we spent four to six months making a record ... I just had to go. I felt badly, because everything was dumped on Geddy, to do the mastering and make all those decisions."
Even as he was hitting the links, Lifeson was on the phone four or five times a day with Lee, who was forced to deal with unexpected glitches that didn't emerge until late in the recording process. "We found problems that we didn't hear in mixing that were apparent in mastering. To get the kind of levels (we wanted), we had digital distortion. We remixed a couple of songs half-way through the mastering, through the remix, back to mastering," says Lifeson. "The poor guy (Lee) was doing this on his own. It really shook him up."
Still, Lifeson took a final, mixed-and-mastered version of "Vapor Trails" with him to Hawaii for a holiday with his wife. And even then, he couldn't bring himself to listen to the finished product until late in the two-week vacation, when he settled onto the beach, slid the finished disc into his Discman, and pressed play. "I was really thrilled by the fact that I heard the songs and I really liked the songs a lot. I was really proud of the work we did. It all unfolded for me," he says with obvious satisfaction. "When I got back, I called him and said, 'Ged! The album is great! We did a great job! We got through it, we stuck to everything we believed in and we did it!' "He said: 'I don't know what to think. I think it's awful.' I said, please do me a favour. Just don't put it on for a couple of weeks. Be relaxed and open'."
Lifeson said he's still not sure Lee is at a point where he has separated himself from the trauma of finishing the album, to where he can listen to it as a whole. But given how intense an experience creating "Vapor Trails" was, that's not surprising.
"Honestly, we had no life for 14 months. That was our life," the guitarist says. "It is one thing to go into the studio and have easy hours and take weekends off and a week off every four weeks. But you never stop thinking about it. When you get down to the crunch of mixing, it becomes an unruly beast." Fans will be able to assess the "unruly beast" for themselves on Tuesday (May 14), when "Vapor Trails" arrives in stores. After Lee and Lifeson complete press duties, they'll hook back up with drummer-lyricist Peart to complete preparations for their first live dates since 1997. The tour will likely take Rush through Christmas, and then Lifeson anticipates a lengthy vacation. But he won't rule out the possibility of more new music coming from Rush.
"I think one of the lessons we learned in the last five years is it is not prudent to make plans. Things can change in a flash," he says. "We should all take a break. We had a great time making this record. Geddy and I love working together on music. I wouldn't be surprised if we started working together on another record some time next year."
During a wide-ranging conversation, Lifeson spoke to JAM! Music about the making of "Vapor Trails," the impact of Sept. 11 on their new record, the absence of synthesizers on the album, the group's burgeoning status as a hip influence on contemporary bands, plans for the upcoming tour, and the second-annual Rush fan convention in Toronto.

[See next issue for interview]

VAPORISE ME

VAPOUR TRAILS REVIEWS

A CELEBRATION OF SPIRIT AND ENERGY:
An admission of loyalty (and a nod to our fearless editor!)

by Ray Wawrzyniak

So Mick asks me, 'Ray, would you mind putting pen to paper (or in this case, flesh to keyboard), and writing a little review of the new album?' Well, first of all Mick, nothing I write is ever 'little'. I think I've established that by now. And second of all, do I want to write? You better believe I do! Heck, I'll write about the bread rising, the ice melting, the color of the grass. You give me a topic, and I'll write. It just so happens Rush is an easy topic to write about, so I gladly accept the assigned responsibility. So, Mick, you asked for it, you got it; here's my 'little' review of the album...

By this point, I've read quite a few reviews of Rush's new effort, 'Vapor Trails'. I'm sure you have as well. Why, I'll bet the pages of this very edition of our beloved fanzine are filled with reviews of 'Vapor Trails'. Normally, the reviewer takes a track-by-track look at the record, compares the record to others in Rush's extensive catalog, and assigns a certain number of stars as a final 'grade'. Well, I'm going to deviate from that routine in this dissertation. As flattered as I would be that you would actually take time our of your busy schedule to read my review of each song, I know darn well you might disagree with what I'd have to say about some of the tracks. And plus, do you really care what I think about 'Peaceable Kingdom', about 'Out of the Cradle', or about 'Secret Touch'? Maybe you do, maybe you don't. So, rather, let me tap into another angle that we might all be able to share common ground upon.

Ever since I came to the realization that I am a Rush fan, I have always reaked of neutrality when it comes to claiming favorites. 'Hey Ray, who's your favorite band member?' 'I respect them all equally,' I'd answer. 'Hey Ray, do you have a favorite tour?', I'd be asked. 'Yes. All of them,' I'd answer sarcastically. 'C'mon, Ray; you gotta have a favorite song!'
All right. I'll admit. There is a tie for #1, between about 120 songs,' I'd answer again, seemingly unflappable to the pressure to commit. Eventually, the inquisitor would reach the penultimate question. Heck, I've asked this same question to you, in the most recent fanpoll ran in these same pages about two years ago. It's the most popular question asked by fans of not only Rush, but of any band/act that has ever recorded at least two albums. That question, of course, is, 'What's your favorite album?'

Aaah yes. That question. The mother of musical committal. Answering this question honestly is a risk not many (including yours truly) are willing to take. Think of all the ramifications of an honest answer. Think of how you will be labelled. What's your favorite album? '2112' you say? You must be an old fan! You say you like 'Hemispheres' the best? You must be really cerebral, they would say. You like 'Moving Pictures' the best? You must just know their popular stuff. You're a lightweight. 'Roll the Bones' is your favorite? You must be a new fan.

You see, whenever you commit to having a favorite, you open yourself up to those aforementioned labels. I'm not saying those labels are necessarily accurate, or that I believe them. I'm just establishing the fact that an identification of your favorite labels you. And then, what about the potential backlash from those who don't agree with your selection?!!? The reaction can range from cries of 'Blasphemy!', to borderline physical abuse. The conversation might go something like this...

'Hey dude, what's your favorite Rush album?' 'Um, probably `Power Windows'. 'What? Are you nuts? You don't know what the hell you're talking about!! `A Farewell To Kings' rules!!! You don't know anything about Rush!'

I mean, things can get that temperamental. I'm sure you've seen it. Also, an open admission to your favorite often relates to the era that you first 'got on board' with Rush. If 'Grace Under Pressure' was the first album that you actually were anticipating the release of, then that's probably your favorite album. If 'Exit...Stage Left' was the first new album you bought on the day it came out, then that's probably your favorite album. So, identifying your favorite album also more than likely has connotations as to when Rush became a part of your life.

O.k., so back to me, and 'Vapor Trails'. For the longest time, I've maintained my neutrality when answering any Rush 'favorite' question. However, I would always answer the 'album' question this way: 'Well, if you held a gun to my head, I'd say `Signals'. The ol' 'gun to the head' prefix usually worked for me. It provided me enough absolution, yet at the same time allowed me the freedom to test the waters of committal. I knew deep down inside, though, that it really was my favorite album. It contains my all-time favorite Rush song ('The Weapon'), as well as two of my other all-time top fives, those being 'The Analog Kid', and 'Subdivisions', the latter of which is quintessential '80s Rush. The wash of keyboards on that record just worked for me. I was 16 when it came out, and it was just the right album, the right statement, for me at that point in my life. To this day, 'Signals' is a flawless album. Nothing could ever top it. It's what made me decide to live my life as a Rush fan. Until,...

I have a new favorite. Put your guns down. I need no prompting. I need no threats. I need no 'What if's...'. I am willing to set myself up for ridicule, and proudly announce on the pages of 'The Spirit of Rush', that 'Vapor Trails' is

my all-time favorite Rush album. There. I did it. I can't believe I did it. I can't believe I said it. I can't believe I'm reading what I just said.

My counterpart/sounding board/brother/comedic partner/friend named Joe, who is feeling the same way I am about 'Vapor Trails', asked me, 'Do you think it's just because we were so hungry for new material, that at this point, anything would've sounded good to us? Maybe do you think it's simply because it's the newest one, and that's why we're feeling this way? I really don't think so. I mean, I've lived with this album for more than a month now. I've listened to absolutely nothing else other than 'Vapor Trails' for that long now. I've shunned live Rush tapes, other new CDs in my collection, and anything else that got in my way. I was gonna live with this album, and only this album, for better or worse.

After almost a month, I was getting some feeling about this album. But, the problem was, I couldn't identify what that feeling, those feelings, were exactly. Sure, I had the same out of the box reaction that you did most likely. I'm sure, like me, you had a couple songs that you just absolutely loved ('Secret Touch'), and a few that, you'd politely say, you just need 'a little more time with' ('Peaceable Kingdom'). But, once I got past that initial reaction, I was having these feelings that I really couldn't identify. Until I realized...

It's not that I couldn't identify the feelings, it's that I could identify them, and didn't know how to react to them. I realized that my feelings were, 'Oh my God; this is my favorite Rush album of all time!! I just know it! What am I gonna do? What if someone asks me about my favorite album?' I mean, here I am more than a month later, loving just about every song. 'Secret Touch' is not only a masterpiece, I am already wondering as to the security 'The Weapon' has on it's hold as the all-time fave. 'Ghost Rider' is the perfect marriage between music and lyric. The chorus of 'Horizon to horizon' in 'Vapor Trail' builds beautifully, emotionally. Ged's atmospheric delivery of 'Oh salvation' in `Sweet Miracle' is just so emotive. I mean, in a real distorted sense, I almost felt like I was cheating on 'Signals'!

In the days that followed this life-altering realization, I have heard Geddy and Alex do a variety of radio interviews here in the States and Canda to promote 'Vapor Trails'. During the course of one or two of those interviews, Alex mentioned a 'spirit' and 'energy' that he felt were accurately captured on 'Vapor Trails'. 'Right on!', I answered. I think that was so accurately put. It was the exact adjectives I had been looking for, to identify my feelings about this album. Because of the intangible nature of 'spirit' and of 'energy', it would naturally take one longer to identify their presence in an intimate piece, such as a song. But, identify them I have.

Friends, this is a special album. I feel the energy. I feel the spirit. I feel the passion. I'm anxious to see how this energy & spirit will translate live, but that's for another time. In the meantime, I am proud to announce 'Vapor Trails' as my all-time favorite Rush album.

In an addendum, I think it would be an appropriate time to recognize the great Mick Burnett, the tireless editor of this great fanzine. It has been fifteen years since Mick and I first met, under the umbrella of being fellow Rush fans. He has spent the last fifteen years of his life doing something that you/I have benefitted from. Without Mick's energy, Mick's spirit, and MickÕ' passion for Rush, we would not have this forum, this publication, as a means for sharing what we have shared in the last fifteen years. Indeed, never before has the simple name of this publication, 'The Spirit of Rush', been more appropriate. So, as much as I want to thank Rush for making 'Vapor Trails', I'd like to thank Mick equally for his spirit, his energy, and his passion.

VAPOR TRAILS - RUSH

Celebrate the moment! Indeed - It's been a long wait but has it been worth it? Well my assessment would be a resounding YES! True to form, the band has embarked upon the next chapter of their career by embracing the influences around them and creating a new sound. As different as 'Signals' was to the preceding four studio releases, so is 'Vapor Trails' to its previous four. Opening with the pumping double bass drum attack of 'One Little Victory', the album kicks off to a heavy start. Before every album, we always hear the same thing, "this one's supposed to be a lot heavier", but never before has this been more true. Without a doubt 'Vapor

Trails' is the band's heaviest outing since the 70's with nary a keyboard to be heard. The combination of heavy guitar and bass riffs hits you over the head like a sledgehammer!
While the influence is not overt, it is obvious that Rush have been listening to a lot of Tool over the past year (and maybe vice versa?). Tracks like the oddly titled 'Ceiling Unlimited', 'Peaceable Kingdom' and 'Secret Touch' all display a flair and an experimentation in their arrangements, which just shows that they are continuing to be progressive yet contemporary. Although consistently heavy throughout (no ballads here folks!) there is a pervading upbeat feel to the album's mood. There is a very youthful energy on display here, a rejuvenation of sorts. You can almost sense how much fun they're having here by just doing whatever they want.

Alex's playing is very fat, riff based throughout with quite a different approach to his usual trademark solos. The album has a lot of bottom end and is very bass friendly. Geddy is really at the forefront both in the mix and in his playing. His voice is also superb. He hasn't sung like this since 'Permanent Waves'. Interesting to hear him trying some different things with his voice too, such as the increasing use of vocal harmonies and falsetto. What can be said of Neil? He puts in a powerhouse performance as expected, full of dynamics and driving rhythms, while injecting plenty of interesting little tricks from the toolbox. I am yet to really analyse the lyrics on the album (as I don't have a lyric sheet) and I'm sure everyone is going to be keen to see how the past few years have affected Neil's writing. I don't think Neil would allow too much of his personal experiences to creep into his lyrics although from what I can hear, the excellent 'Sweet Miracle' sounds like it could be interpreted as being somewhat personal. What I do sense throughout though is a very positive feeling surrounding the album.
Having only heard the album a few times to date, it's difficult to give a concise opinion although it's certainly made an interesting impression so far. It hasn't been an instant connection but that's also a good thing.
It's going to take a few more listens before it sinks in completely but the Signs are good. Standout tracks for me so far are 'Ghost Rider', 'Vapor Trail', 'Earthshine', 'Sweet Miracle' and 'Freeze'. With 13 tracks and a running time of 67 minutes, it's the band's longest recorded effort and I feel there is plenty on offer for both hardcore Rush fans and fans of well written hard rock. Now for the tour, if only they'd make it down here to Australia!
Rush are back and boy are they rocking - endlessly rocking!!

Matthew Goodluck
Adelaide, Australia

' Celebrate the Moment !'

This album is a sonic delight to hear – VT has the pure energy, enthusiasm and freshness you'd expect from a band making it's first cut but, executed in a style only this bunch of seasoned professionals can pull off .
The uplifting 'One Little Victory' sets the tone, a fitting opening salvo from Neil says he's very firmly back and as powerful as ever, joined by heavy riffing, arpeggios and a far eastern flavour that come at you from all sides. Though much of the drum work comes across as a economical and minimalist, don't be fooled – check out the fabulous cymbal work on 'ceiling unlimited' and the astounding time changes in 'Freeze' (Part IV of 'Fear').
This is a composition of moods and textures made possible by Alex's creative and courageous approach to this 13 track cd as you will be hard pressed to find a single guitar solo, (In fact I thought I'd received some kind of early studio version at first listen !). 'Secret touch' 'Peaceable Kingdom' 'Vapour trails' show evidence of the different hues and colours present. 'Alex' style guitar arpeggios in abundance but coloured with driving metallic riffs, hard raw edges and a kind of tension not apparent from Alex since earlier days. One other notable omission is the lack of keyboards, giving Alex and Geddy more creative roles to play and *what a breath of fresh air that is !* This alone really opens up the dynamics between them on some of these tracks.
Geddy really surpasses all past vocal offerings here, making use of some nice layering and harmonies not unlike some pieces on his solo album 'MFH', which really add a delicious dimension to these songs, check out 'Vapour Trails' 'Peaceable Kingdom' 'Nocturne' ' Ghost Rider'
Lyrically there are some poignant moments from the recent events in Neil's life like the moving 'Ghost Rider' – ''Carry all those phantoms through bitter wind and stormy sky's, from the desert to the mountain from the lowest low to the highest high, like a ghost rider'' and the grateful tones of 'Sweet Miracle' perhaps an ode to new found love.
Overall VP really 'rocks' and will be just incredible played live. As with any new offering from Rush, 'VT' requires further exploration but over time and just gets better – '*Celebrate the moment*' again and again !!

Best Wishes to all at 'Spirit'
Sean McCabe

RUSH
Vapor Trails

There is a standing joke that says Rush is what you get when you let the drummer write the songs. Unfair? A little, for several of Neil Peart's efforts here possess a stronger melodic content than you have any right to expect from a power-rock trio. Try the hook-laden ***peaceable kingdon*** or the jangling ***freeze*** for example. Yet ***vapor trails***, their seventeenth studio album, is hardly the "bold step forward" that the band claims. The guitars riff loudly. The drums pound even louder. Geddy Lee's voice soars. But then what else would you expect from Rush?

Reviewer: Nigel Williamson - The Times

Rush: *Vapor Trails*
By Mike Mettler

It's been 6 long years between studio albums for the pioneering Canadian power trio Rush, but the hiatus comes screeching to an end with the unrelenting *Vapor Trails* (Anthem/Atlantic). *Trails* is all sinew, rocking harder than anything they've done in over 20 years. The thundering fury that opens the jugular of the lead track "One Little Victory" shows that messrs. Lee, Lifeson, and Peart are all on the same page — one that's clearly marked "rock, and rock hard." Bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee ignites the powder keg of "Secret Touch" and the stark "Ghost Rider," guitarist Alex Lifeson careens into overdrive with the gnarly jangle of "Freeze" and the backwards riffs smeared throughout "Stars Look Down," and drummer Neil Peart is a rhythmic powerhouse as always, propelling tracks like "Earth-shine" and "Nocturne" with a deft mixture of authority and grace. There are scant few light, midtempo moments here — just some of the verses of "How It Is" and "Sweet Miracle" slow the roll before those tracks crash back into pummeling choruses. I can think of few bands who sound this vital and vibrant 30 years into their career. *Vapor Trails* is a life-affirming statement that says "eat our dust" to bands half their age. Good luck trying to catch them.

MERIT RATING:
SOUND-QUALITY RATING: 9

Rush Vapor Trails

Our Rating:
B+
Our Review:
A lot has changed in the world in the six years since prog-rockers Rush released their last studio album. But Rush fans everywhere will be happy to hear that the band hasn't budged a bit. Follow this *Trail* for the guitar-driven, power-trio sound of Rush's early days on tracks like "One Little Victory" and "Earthshine." Meanwhile, "Stars Look Down" and the title track have a mix of the metallic and the melodic that recalls the classic *Permanent Waves* album, while "Secret Touch" and "Ceiling Unlimited" find the guys displaying the jazz-like precision that has become their trademark. A welcome return.

E-online

VAPOR TRAILS REVIEW

After nearly 6 years it is finally here, the album many of us thought may never happen following Neil's awful personal tragedies. There is no doubt having listened to it continuously over the last week that this is one of their strongest releases ever. Recent releases since `Presto` could be defined as good albums containing some great material however; `Vapor Trails` is probably the first potentially great album for a while. In other words it can be compared to the past greats such as `2112`, `Moving Pictures` or `Power Windows`, it is that good.
There is no let up in terms of quality starting with the propulsive opener, `One Little Victory` to the energetic closer `Out of the Cradle`. There are simply no weak tracks on offer here at all. As usual the individual members shine on their respective instruments with Alex's guitars providing a tapestry of different textures. Everyone seems to be commenting on the lack of guitar solos however, I remember interviews in the past where he has stated he would add a solo if it enhances the song and the songwriting on the album is so strong I suppose it was decided solos were not required. His riffs on tracks like `Ceiling Unlimited`, `Peaceable Kingdom`, `Earthshine` and `Nocturne` are brilliant. Geddy`s bass playing is awesome and his vocals are probably the best-recorded performance for a while in terms of range and delivery. Neil lays down some great drum work as ever particularly on `OLV`. `Secret Touch` and `Freeze`.

Lyrically the tone is obviously more personal with ``Ghost Rider` and `Sweet Miracle` being two direct examples of the recent past. Elsewhere occasional lines appear to make reference to his experiences like in `Secret Touch` - `there is never love without pain`. Yet there is a whole lot more going on; from recent interviews it has been confirmed that `Peaceable Kingdom` was a direct result of the awful atrocities of 11/09 and `Ceiling Unlimited` contains some of his best lines ever- `culture is the curse of the thinking class` - brilliant.
Personal favourites include the melodic muscle of `Secret Touch`, the grooving rock of `Earthshine`, an emotional `Ghost Rider`, a driving `Peaceable Kingdom` and the atmospheric title track but in all honesty I like the whole album. It is stuffed full of potential classics. There is even a potential hit single in `How it is`. Whether the record company in the UK would get behind it is another matter in light of their dismal showing in attempting to promote the album, which has probably cost us the chance to see them on these shores again.
Despite this, I don't want to end the review on a negative point. It is just great to see my fav band back in action again after all the problems of the last few years making great vibrant music. A welcome return for the best band around and who knows there might just be more new Rush in the future.

Nav, Studley, Warks.

This is my first time of writing to you so it must be a special occasion. First of all while I enjoy reading the mag and the letters although I find myself not agreeing with most of your writers . To put this in perspective here are my particular foibles:

1. My favourite Rush albums are Signals and Grace Under Pressure.
2. I think that Presto is a better album than Roll The Bones.
3. I don't particularly like The Camera Eye or Natural Science.
4. T4E was a very patchy affair and Alex's 'in your face riffarama' (too far up in the mix?) was not to my taste. Also lyrically this was not Neil's finest hour.

And so to Vapor Trails (cheers to Mike for the address of play.com). The comments made by the guys who had heard it did not fill me with hope. To my surprise this is the most immediate likeable (sorry to disagree again!) Rush album since HYF. Neil is back to top form on the lyrical front and Alex's guitar work is undoubtedly his best for some time even without solos. Reminds me a bit of his work on Signals. Geddy is, as always, on top form (loved My Favorite Headache) . Vocally he just gets better and better.
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I'd like to recommend a band called Threshold. Their last album Hypothetical is a stormer, great music and intelligent lyrics Just the job for any Rush fan.

STEVE MASON
CARDIFF

'Vapor Trails' Rush (Atlantic)

****

If Rush is going to make an album this good, they should take six years off more often. Of course, the band had good reason for the extended hiatus: Drummer and lyricist Neil Peart lost his wife and daughter shortly after the band finished its last tour, for 1996's *Test for Echo*.

Vapor Trails shows the Canadian trio continuing down the guitar-driven path of its '90s discs. Keyboards are practically non-existent, and Peart's lightning fills are pushed to the fore. The furious riffage, frantic drumming and distorted vocals of the opening *One Little Victory* will send fans into ecstasy or cause them to give up on the album immediately. Once you adjust to the heavier attack, however, *Vapor Trails* reveals its intricacies. *Freeze* seems like almost an upbeat Tool tune, and other '90s influences are deftly incorporated into the Rush palette.

That's not to say that *Vapor Trails* is a relentless metal assault a la Rush's early tracks, like *Working Man*. The acoustic intro to *How It Is* conjures memories of such prog-rock classics as *Closer to the Heart* or *The Trees*. Despite the heavier sound and "nu-metal" touches, the music is still immediately identifiable as Rush, and not just because of Geddy Lee's helium vocals. Tricky time changes and great melodies hark back to Rush's halcyon days. *Vapor Trails* may not be *Permanent Waves* or *Moving Pictures*, but it's a welcome return for Canada's biggest musical export.

- Michael Senft

RUSH: "VAPOR TRAILS"

Canadian power trio Rush attempts to stay relevant with "Vapor Trails," but as usual the result will thrill fans - and bore the rest of us who thought dinosaur rock was extinct.

Still, the disc isn't without merits. "How It Is" is optimistic in lyric and melody and the instrumentals aren't overwrought. And while the lyrics to the dreamscape tune "Nocturne" are silly, the backing instrumental work finds the band at its best. As for the rest, if you aren't a fan, you won't care.

By DAN AQUILANTE

REVIEW, OF VAPOR TRAILS

I dunno, I'm 41soon and it's been a quarter of a century since I bought A Farewell To Kings, but seeing Dream Theater play the closing few minutes of 2112 at Hammersmith recently had me jumping up and down like it was Hammersmith 1978 all over again.... That's the kind of effect Rush has on me even after all these years, so when Vapor Trails popped through my letter box on 14th May, six long years after their last studio album, it was only then that I realised how much I'd missed them being around.

The early signs, for me weren't encouraging though. I hadn't really got into My Favorite Headache, and hearing One Little Victory on my crummy PC speakers a few weeks earlier hadn't really filled me with any great sense of expectation. A first listen in its entirety and still nothing. Already I was forming opinions on ,music that had taken months to create,. All part of living in an instant, disposable society I suppose, (wow, heavy stuff!).

I knew I wasn't being fair so I resolved to stick with it just like the reviewers in the last issue said. And I'm so glad that I did. I must admit though that One little Victory still leaves me a little flat but this is all part of how challenging this album is. Ceiling Unlimited, to my mind, throws up images of mid-80's Rush. With a few keyboards thrown in I can picture it sitting nicely on Power Windows or Hold Your Fire. Here, where the stripped down feel of the whole album starts to bite. It is excellent and gives the feel of a band really enjoying playing together again after a long time away. Ghost Rider is very atmospheric with Geddy turning in his first great vocal performance of the album (but definitely not his last).

Peaceable Kingdom, with it's intro reminiscent of Half The World, was initially my favourite track and is still right up there as a real sledgehammer of a song with lots of subtleties thrown in for good measure. There are also some very direct and sad but true lyrics by Neil here with more than a small nod to the mood of the western world post-September 11th. I've not always been a big fan of the harmonising vocals that Geddy has used more frequently I later albums but here it's just perfect. The Stars Look Down suffers a little from being placed next to Peaceable Kingdom but the line 'What is the meaning of this?' is beautifully sung and is easily the best part of the song. You can see How It Is being the second single as the chorus is wonderfully catchy. The lyrics here give the initial impression of being upbeat, but they are a touch bittersweet when looked at a little more closely. Vapor Trail is the pivotal track sitting slap-bang in the middle of the album. Is it me or does this song have a Presto feel to it? Not unlike Ghost Rider in its outlook, this is the album's real grower as it passed me by the first few times that |I played it. Now, with Alex's playing really shining, it's the start of the album's purple patch that doesn't let up until the end.

Secret Touch is excellent, the album's longest track and not a second wasted. Just listen to Geddy's bass on this track. Earthshine with its monster riff and lovely vocal fills from Ged is yet another high (was that a guitar solo I heard?). When I heard Sweet Miracle for the first time it made me wonder if Neil, after what he went through, ever again envisaged writing something as uplifting and, once again, I love those vocal fills from Ged. This is getting better and better. And it's not over yet. There's Nocturne, another outstanding track with a wailing guitar and a full-on belting chorus. Freeze sees the band in full flight. Ged's bass complimenting Neil's drums perfectly, with Alex's discordant guitar weaving in and out in fine style. Part Four of Fear eh? Who'd have thought it? And just when you get over that along comes Out Of The Cradle, closing the album with such a high and yet another of those atmospheric vocal fills. I just love this track and the sentiment of Endlessly Rocking... oh yes, we can but hope.

You've probably gathered by now that it's blown me away. The guys can still do it for me 25 years after I heard Xanadu and Closer To The Heart for the first time. Endlessly Rocking.... Enough said.

Dave Lack

Signals

Dear Mick and all,
Thanks for the latest issue and I have sent off my money for the next issues as they should be quite interesting. The only problem is that you lot have the album before the rest of us mere mortals and we have to make do with your compliments of the latest and hopefully not last offering from the band.
Never mind, in a couple of weeks normal service should resume and the rest of my family will start reminding me where my headphones are after the umpteenth listening; a little like Six Degrees...!
Have you any idea at all if the band might be touring these shores ? It would be a shame if they didn't, although I am a bit long in the tooth now not to be too disheartened if it didn't happen. When it was a regular occurrence we were all a lot younger and didn't really have a care in the world, and memories seem a lot more colourful from those times, but they were the best of times, so let's hope for some more.
Good luck with the future of the mag and for effort put in over the years to keep us in touch with the world of Rush, it is much appreciated.
Regards,

Ged Bretherton.
Golborne.

This is my first time of writing to you so it must be a special occasion. First of all, while I enjoy reading the mag and the letters, I find myself not agreeing with most of your writers. To put this in perspective here are my particular foibles:

1. My favourite Rush albums are Signals and Grace Under Pressure .
2. I think that Presto is a better album than Roll The Bones .
3. I don't particularly like The Camera Eye or Natural Science .
4. T4E was a very patchy affair and Alex's 'in your face riffarama' (too far up in the mix?) was not to my taste. Also lyrically this was not Neil's finest hour.

And so to Vapor Trails (cheers to Mike for the address of play.com) . The comments made by the guys who had heard it did not fill me with hope. To my surprise this is the most immediately likeable (sorry to disagree again!) Rush album since HYF. Neil is back to top form on the lyrical front and Alex's guitar work is undoubtedly his best for some time even without solos. Reminds me a bit of his work on Signals. Geddy is, as always, on top form (loved My Favorite Headache). Vocally he just gets better and better.
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With regard to featuring other bands I think it is a good idea . Dream Theater have at last produced an album to match Images & Words. Most of the other albums in between are disappointing (haven't heard Scenes to be fair).
I'd like to recommend a band called Threshold. Their last album Hypothetical is a stormer, great music and intelligent lyrics. Just the job for any Rush fan .

Steve Mason
Cardiff

Dear Mick;
Firstly Vapor Trails - a cracking album, 13 great tracks. The ones that stand out for me are Ceiling Unlimited, Ghost Rider, Vapor Trail, Secret Touch, Earthshine, Sweet Miracle and Nocturne. If Rush ever wanted a hit single, How It Is looks a certainty. Even my wife, Margaret, who doesn't even like Rush thinks Ghost Rider is a great track and even got me to tape it!
A much improved album from T4E. It's been well worth the wait.

Classic Rock only gave it 3 stars - and that's from a so-called Rush fan....
I recently saw 2112 twice. The first was at The Office at South Shields. I went along hoping for a decent crowd - I was not disappointed - 240. The place was jumping as if it was the Limelight Club itself. I gave out flyers (thanks Mick) and most people had not heard of SOR or the Convention. They have now. I got some great feedback from everyone there.
There was also a lot of the same crowd from South Shields at Trillians, Newcastle. Another excellent night. I'm hopeful a lot of people from the two gigs will make it to Crewe. 2112's singer said that they will play 4 tracks from Vapor Trails at Crewe.
Michael Kerr and I are off to see Rush at Milwaukee, July 19th and Chicago, July 20th. My last gig was Roll The Bones, '92, Wembley Arena - can't wait!
I'm sure with the new album and tour that this year's Convention will be the best ever.

John Gilchrist
Choppington, Northumberland

P.S. Mick, in fanzine #61 it states that the Limelight Club in Crewe will hold the convention from 12 noon to 1am the following month. Good value for £10!!!!

Dear SOR,
Two weeks to go before the release of the new CD and I'm 'lit up with anticipation'! Vapor/Vapour, Theatre/Theater? In the lyrics to Countdown it's spelt Vapour!
The classical tribute sounds interesting. I'll put that on my shopping list.
In reply to Andy Ball, I would like the Dream Theater/Spock's Beard pieces to stay. I'm in DT's fan club but not having access to the internet find it difficult to get info on the Beard. I got into DT after favourable reviews of the Dream and Day album in Kerrang! (when it was a decent read!). So keep recommending other bands. The prehistoric reviews turn me off! They tend to repeat themselves with some braindead US DJ asking banal questions ad infinitum.
On the subject of Dream Theater, the new CD is superb - the only downside is the rip-off price some stores are charging - £28 in HMV! I got mine from mail order firm 'Groove Machine' for £16 inc p+p. Anyone see them on the Infinity tour in Manchester in the middle of one song effortlessly slipping Maiden's The Trooper and Rush's YYZ into the jam section?
Here's a suggestion Mick. Once again, due to unforseen circumstances I won't be able to attend the convention - how about selling raffle tickets by post to non-attendees? I'm sure any winners would pay postage costs and you could raise more funds for the 'zine'.
I'll end on a polite plea..... Neil Alex and Geddy...please visit Britain on the tour. To use the film 'Field of Dreams' as a (bad) metaphor! "If you build it, they will come". If you play here, we will come (on all dates!). Looking out for your Vapour Trails.

Bill Collins
Willenhall, West Mids

Hi Mick,
Many thanks for issue 61 of SOR - I encourage you and your team to keep up the good work. In response to the letter form Andy Ball inviting further comment, whilst I have maintained my enthusiasm for all things Rush for the past 25+ years, it's thanks to SOR that I've discovered great mustic from Dream Theater, Spocks Beard, Transatlantic etc. While new material has been a bit thin on the ground relating to Rush in recent years, it's good that SOR can use this platform to inform us of other bands and music out there.
On the subject of recommendations, what about a possible future supergroup called 'Mostly Autumn'? I've seen them perform live twice now, they are regularly on tour both here and Europe and have released 4 studio albums over the last 3 years.... and they are excellent. They are a 7 piece band from York. 'Is There Anybody Out there' heard of or seen them as they have Pink Floyd/Tull/Alan Parsons/Steeleye Span influences. A mix of rock and folk, superb vocals and meaningful lyrics. I'm sure some of you Rush fans out there would appreciate their music. Kind regards,

Chris Pheby
Hampshire

Dear Mick Burnett,
Hello and sorry for my terrible English! I've learned your address in the magazine called The Pavillion which I swapped here for another thing and have decided to write you a letter hoping you'll be able to help me a bit.
I'm a man 40 years old, married and have a son 7 years old and of course, I'm a big fan of progressive rock music ...but Rush music was always very special for me. A long time I'm trying to collect all studio CD albums of this great band. But good music is a great problem here, as always been and it's absolutely impossible to get any good progressive rock CD albums and of course, Rush CD albums as well.

Although in times of Perestroika I was pretty fortunate to get some Rush CDs but since that time nothing has changed at all and there's no perspectives in future for me. Nobody listens to such music here, except a few 'crazy' ones like me. Everybody's listening to only Russian pop/dance music and therefore nobody's bring Rush CDs or other progressive CDs over here at all. But if only somebody would bring such CDs to here .....anyway nobody would be able to buy any. The prices would be as high as $10-15 for each CD! Of course that's a normal price for western fans but it's too expensive for average Russians like me ☹ My monthly wage is equal only to $50 and its an average payment here....

As you can see, all those small money goes only for my family's feeding ... I don't telling about buying such luxury things like clothes or moreover CDs! Our family budget will not afford this never. But dream is a dream and I can never forget about it.

I'm writing to you hoping you'll find a chance to help me. Could you be so kind and supply me with some of my favourite CD titles? I would be happy even with used/second hand CDs as well, that's no matter for me at all. I will list you all those Rush titles that I'm so dreaming to collect. How all those CDs would raise my spirits for the further struggle for surviving. I'm so hoping on your helping...

Maybe you could say to the readers of your magazine about my situation and my dream and maybe somebody will like to write to me and even maybe will like to help me. I just haven't any other ways to collect all those my dream CD titles here at all and really you're my last chance! Write me back please as soon as possible. Yours truly,

Boris Ignatov
PO Box 2689
Omsk 644099
Russia

P.S. Here's my dream list of Rush titles which I'm so wishing to collect on CDs that were factory manufactured in the western world.

Rush, Fly By Night, Caress of Steel, A Farewell to Kings, Hemispheres, Permanent Waves, Signals, Grace Under Pressure, Power Windows, Presto, Test for Echo, and the latest CD album which maybe was released already ... I don't know and I also don't know if there were any solo CD projects ever released. Can you tell me such information? Could you also tell me about Burning For Buddy, two volumes. Is these releases a real studio album or just compilations. Take care and bye, Boris.

Dear Mick et al;

A few weeks ago I decided to visit an old friend of mine who runs his own restaurant in Lancaster. I had not seen him for quite a few years and wondered what he was like and if he had changed and if we would still get on and had anything in common. We met on a Saturday afternoon and again in the evening when my wife and I were treated to a sumptuous meal, excellent service ... and all on the house (if I had known this earlier I would have ordered more!)

Added to this was that my old buddy had not changed and, although a little greyer, was the same person who I grew up with years ago. Well, what has this got to do with Rush, I imagine you ask? It is that I find Rush like an old friend, somebody that although you might not see for a while or indeed a long time, does not fade away. After my re-acquaintance I also found out that 'Vapor Trails' was about to be released and so another old friend was about to be greeted.

I saw a letter in the last mag about play.com and duly ordered a copy on my sisters pc, (I am still a Luddite!) and awaited my copy which arrived 3 days later. Being 38 years old I tried to remain dignified and told my wife I would play it when I had made a brew and a couple of pieces of toast, and that I had my slippers on! I bet that at least one of the group sport a pair of slippers before you all laugh.

To be perfectly honest, after the first listen I didn't know what to think of it. It wasn't what I was expecting, but I didn't really know what to expect .... confused ? Well, I was, so left it before I had a second bite at it. A few days later and after a headphone session, the penny dropped and I realised that it was indeed a classic and that my old friend had returned and was as healthy and as 'off the wall' as ever. I also realised just how fortunate I was to have such a friend who had been around for years and who had grown and matured but at heart was still the same. It brought home the line from one of my favourite tracks 'Circumstances', 'plus la change....' you all know the one, and how true and prophetic this has turned out to be.

The point I am trying to make is clear (but not in an articulate abstract Peart-like way) - it is great to have my old friend back again and I suppose you lot feel the same way. Oh happy days....the more that things change, the more they stay the same .... for a little longer if possible. Regards.

Ged Bretherton.
Golborne.

VAPORISE ME

VAPOR TRAILS REVIEWS (cont)

I think this has got to be the strangest Rush album to date. I sat there speechless upon hearing the album for the first time. What is going on???? Where are the instant melodies, and where is the lead guitar... where is the feeling of YES! Satisfaction? But wait, I have been here before facing new ideas and not knowing what to make of them...Signals/Grace Under Pressure/Test For Echo and even Met 2000 by DT. They were all strange to the first listen. My brain could not work it out But who seeks the instant sugary-hit when there is the savour of salt. A much more satisfying and lasting taste, trust me. So I listened carefully to Vapor Trails...5/6 times and Presto, it sticks, it actually works! Fantastic!
So what if there are no lead breaks - I will just have to get my guitar out and try and play what Alex would have played. Thanks Alex (well I can pretend...) And so what if there is not the immediate sugar-buzz of 2112/Moving Pictures. If the thing sticks, it works. And as far as I am concerned here is the ultimate test, can you still hear the music when you are not playing the record/CD/tape? YES! I keep hearing tracks even as I talk, walk and work. This for me is the magic of Rush - they manage to work the tunes so that they are vibrant and alive and get in your head (and melt your brain).....Great! Who needs drugs when you can have music like this? Rest assured, mind blowing.
The highlights for me are, the lyrics (deeply personal), the concept (transience), the drums and bass (strong as ever) and Alex's European...almost Celtic rhythms (Mr Mandola). Ultimately there are links to Test For Echo and Geddy's My Favorite Headache. Also Red Lenses somehow had the feel of this album. My favourite track? Earthshine then Sweet Miracle - both real gems. Though if I was to put out a single it would have to be (does anyone else think this sounds like REM?) How It Is. If you want an album to satisfy you, buy Vapor Trails.

Tony Anderson
Northampton

After nearly 6 long years of waiting we are finally blessed with a brand new studio album from our heroes. Different Stages and My Favorite Headache were both superb time fillers as we wondered and waited for any news of the band's future plans. Thankfully, Alex, Geddy and especially Neil, came to the decision that they still had plenty to offer as a trio and that a more permanent break up was still in the (distant) future. Of course I was a little worried about which musical direction they would take, however my fears were laid to rest once I got a first listen to it under my belt.
I was well pleased the more prominent feature of the previous two studio albums - the heavy guitar sound - had been retained. The opening minute of music from One Little Victory is a blistering start to any album. It's hard and fast and blows your balls off. I believe it's a natural way forward for the band. They have been working with less keyboards over the last couple of CDs and with Ged listed in the liner notes as vocals, bass guitar only, it's the first clue to the overall sound we are to expect. I am a bit surprised at the lack of obvious guitar solos and amazed at the near running time of 70 minutes.
It's still a bit difficult for me to choose my favourite tracks. I do feel the final songs are ok but the other eleven are great. Actually some of the vocal melodies and also Ged's singing in parts remind me of the Presto album , especially How It Is and Vapor Trails. I won't say it's the best album since..... and then have a bad comment about the following ones; but I will say it's the best album since the last one (and with no dodgy lyrics this time).
Hugh Syme has done a fantastic job with the artwork. I felt some of his designs are a bit suspect - C/parts and Presto spring to mind. The new photos are also good. I'm still struggling to get used to seeing Neil with so much hair again. Fingers crossed, that you Mick, and the rest of us will be rewarded with a long overdue tour here in Europe. I think this will be my last chance ever to see them live. I do hope you who are catching some of the US shows have a great time. Full reports in future issues of this fanzine will be most welcome. With a bit of luck, plenty of videos and audios will surface for us collectors although this would be topped off with a personal appearance by the band over here. Here's wishing. Overall the album has been well worth the wait - hard rock at its best... is back.

Brain Swales
Thornley, Co Durham

P.S Can I say a quick hello to Michael, John and Kevin. See you on Aug 31st and to Ray Warwzyniak - enjoy the US tour mate!

Transcript: Alex Lifeson of Rush

June 3, 2002 Posted: 9:43 PM EDT (0143 GMT)

(CNN) -- At age 15, fledgling guitarist Alex Lifeson teamed up with a couple of kids from his suburban Toronto neighborhood to form Rush. Now, more than 30 years and 17 studio albums later, the band is still going strong.

In a wide-ranging interview with CNN's Geneen Pipher, an enthusiastic Lifeson shared his thoughts on Rush's new album, "Vapor Trails," the musicians who inspired him and making music with his son.

CNN: Congratulations on your new album -- it sounds amazing ...

ALEX LIFESON: Thank you so much.

CNN: It (the album) sounds to me like ... I don't know ... my first impressions of the album were that it was just three old friends just getting together, jamming, having fun, letting it all hang out, I guess is the term ...

LIFESON: You know, you're not far off the mark, actually. It was very gradual. I think coming from, you know, everything that happened in the last five years with Neil ... and Geddy doing his solo record, me doing some other things it took a little while to get going, but once we did it took on a life of its own and we were just along for a ride. And, it felt very much like that, you know, like it was just us getting together and playing and having fun with it. We're really going back to a more organic three-piece kind of thing.

CNN: Can you tell me a little bit about how you approached coming back after such a long time off?

LIFESON: I had done some work producing some different bands, done some work with television, we got a call from Neil ... and it was really up to him ... everything was suspended in terms of what Rush was about; there was just no joy in it anymore when all that stuff happened. But about six or seven months before we actually started work we got a call from Neil and he said, "I think it's time that we sat down and started talking about what we're going to do as a band." We got together and we were all a little apprehensive and a little unsure about how to go about it. But he indicated that he was ready to try it at least working again and we slated January 2001 as our beginning. And we got together and it was very slow ... the first two weeks we spent just talking about everything ... I don't think we played a single note while we were in the studio-and this time around rather than going to some country location and writing for six or seven weeks and then going into the studio and recording we started in the studio from day one and the intention was to work in a way where we could keep everything that we did rather than view it as a demo period of writing and then the actual recording. So that made things a lot less pressured. It was key, I think, for us to make everything very comfortable for Neil make it a stressless environment, and -- as I said -- it was a gradual, you know, move towards getting back in shape again. He hadn't played drums for a long time and he needed the time to just build up his chops again. And for us, Geddy and I hadn't worked writing together in a while and because we'd been doing such diverse things we needed some time to get used to each other again.

CNN: So your hiatus was basically ended by Neil, you weren't going to approach him at any point?

LIFESON: No. No, not at all. In fact as far as we were concerned whatever happened with Rush was gonna happen. It was out of our control. For us the important thing was to support our friend and brother in a ... during a very, very difficult time.

CNN: How is he doing these days?

LIFESON: He's doing very well. He remarried a year and a half ago. His wife is great. She's very supportive of him and strong. And he's learned to find happiness in life again. It was a very long, painful recovery and it's not over. It's a lifelong thing and the scars are very, very deep, but they are healing. And he seems ... you know Neil's never been really big on touring ... at least not for the last 10 or 15 years anyways. He's a very private person and not particularly comfortable around crowds and ... I mean he's in the wrong job for sure ...

CNN: Yeah, he's always struck me as the solitary writer kind of guy ...

LIFESON: Absolutely. He is. And he's a wonderful person and he is very, very funny and great to be with, but he, you know, with strangers it's difficult for him. But I sense an excitement in his voice, and when he talks about the preparation he's been going through for the tour and his involvement with the set list and all of that. I sense an excitement and I think he is looking forward to it ... on one level anyways.

CNN: You mention the set list for the upcoming tour. Can you give us any hints on what you're thinking about? Are you going to delight fans with some old stuff?

LIFESON: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean we're aware of the Web sites ...

CNN: RushPetition.com and the like?

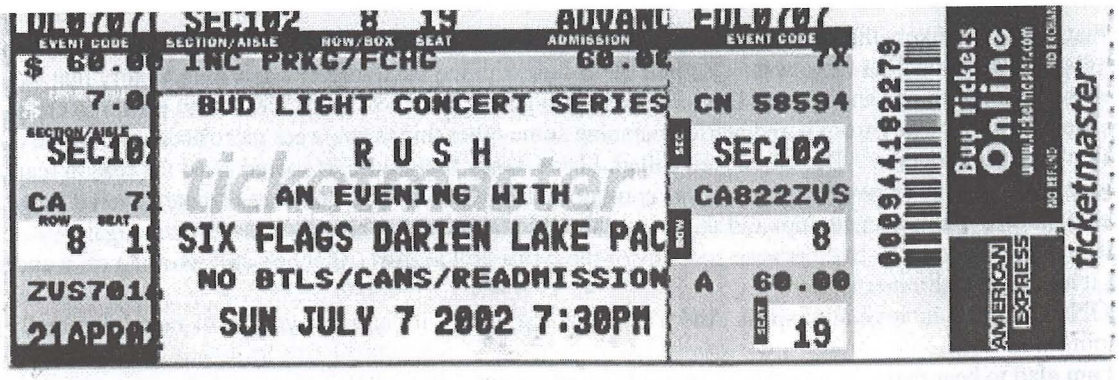
LIFESON: (laughs) Yeah. And we're taking all of that into consideration, you know it is also important for us to pick songs that we won't get bored with over the course of a long-ish tour and we're talking about having some surplus songs where we'll just add them in on a nightly basis and switch [them] around to keep us on our toes. And I think we're going to drop some of the older classics that we've played for a long time and replace them with other old songs that we've never played before or at least haven't played in a long time. So until we actually get into rehearsals, I am not really sure what we'll do. We probably have about four and a half hours of material right now that we have to condense down into three hours.

CNN: So you're going to drop some of your old classics ... can you give me any idea of what those might be?

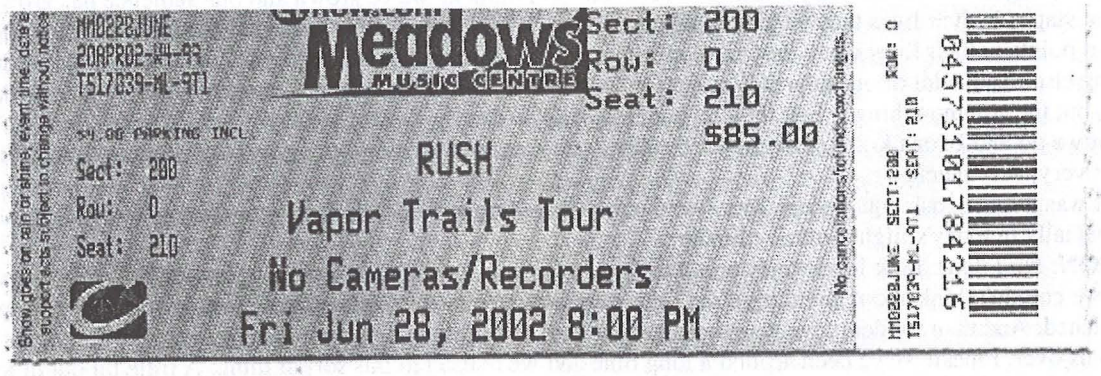
LIFESON: Well, "Closer to the Heart," for example. We've been playing it for, my God, 25 years -- every tour, every time! And I think we have like four different video versions of that song and its appeared on a few live records, so that's one I think it's time for retirement. And, I won't say what we'll replace those songs with but we are looking at older material to bring that at least into the first set ... You know (on) this record there are no keyboards we really liked playing as a three-piece. It was very energetic and the music is very driving and quite intense. And when Geddy and I listened to all the old material when we were getting the set list together, we went back to "Fly By Night" and we spent an afternoon going through all our old records and it was WEIRD because we hadn't listened to these records in ages ... and we got off on a lot the very

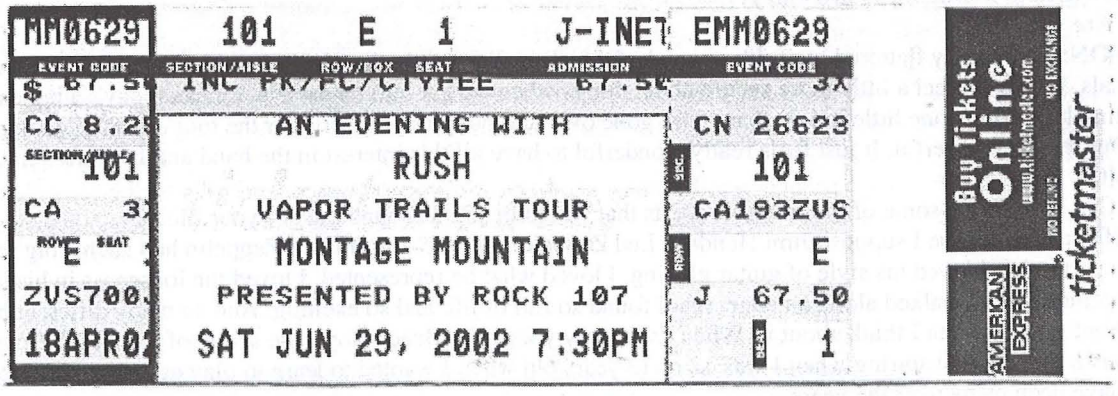
old stuff. We're really enamored with the idea of freeing ourselves up on stage a little bit. We've been trapped by the technology for quite a few years and we'd like to feel a little freer and have fun, you know? And feel like we're making a little more contact.
CNN: It's interesting that you say that because my entire impression of the album was that it was just like you were having fun. I got a message of joy from it despite some pensive lyrics ...
LIFESON: Yes. You know the album is about hope and recovery and optimism and looking forward to a future. And there are moments that are ... very moving on this record. Lyrically, it is obviously autobiographical. But both Neil and Geddy worked hard to make sure that, certainly from Geddy's point of view, that it was a little bit more universal so that he could really get behind them and really sing them with the passion ... I think these are the best vocals he's done on any of the records and you come out of it feeling very positive.
CNN: I was particularly taken with "Ceiling Unlimited." Can you talk to me a little bit about that song?
LIFESON: Yeah. That came from one of the later jams. Most of the record was written in these groupings of jams that went on and would last like a week or so and then we would sift through all of these hours of jams that we'd do and we'd pick out bits and pieces that we really got off on and we'd start the song construction. And, "Ceiling Unlimited" came from the same grouping that "Peaceable Kingdom," "Freeze," and "Nocturne" came from. So they are all kind of related in that way. And, really, just the title is pretty obvious ... that anything is possible, and even out of the darkest darkness there's light. And, just reach for it.
CNN: You were mentioning the lack of keyboards. On this album you really seem to come alive.
LIFESON: Yeah.
CNN: You just seem to have come out of the woodwork. I was really struck by the stuff that you were doing on this album. He's out there. He rocks. Who knew?
LIFESON: Yeah, you know I am partly to blame for that. I'm a little bit lazy and I like ... I like things to be smooth. And in the past when we've worked on records, I've had strong feelings about keyboards and the competition between guitar and keyboards. I'd much rather spend time creating sounds on the guitar that are organic ... that would do the same job that keyboards do, which to me are very one-dimensional. ... And it is so much more fun to create these more unusual sounds. To an extent, Geddy did that with his voice on this record too. He used his voice more as an instrument to create those same sort of backdrop sounds that we used keyboards on the past with. And, consequently, the album sounds bigger and more ... I don't know how to describe it ... more *passionate*. There's more "feel" to it. I mean, I have been doing that for the past five years. The stuff that I do at home ... I have a studio at home, and for me it's like going to the gym. I go to my studio and I basically exercise at the studio and try a bunch of things and I write a lot of stuff that ends up being exercises, you know? I go back and I review it and I think "oh that's an interesting texture I got there," or "that doesn't sound like a guitar at all, I should keep that in mind." It's wonderful to be ... to have that flexibility and freedom to be creative.
CNN: How would you say that your guitar work on "Vapor Trails" differs from previous albums -- especially the ones in the later '80s and '90s?
LIFESON: Well certainly in the later '80s my guitar sound was much cleaner and brighter ... it had a very active sound rather than a passive sound. I think we were peaking on our keyboard explorations at that time too, so I gravitated to a sound that was a little more biting to get through that. I think, in retrospect, one of the mistakes that we made with "Power Windows" and -- I won't say they were mistakes -- but with "Power Windows" and "Hold Your Fire," just because of time and scheduling we did the keyboards before we did the guitars and we just loaded those records with keyboards, particularly "Power Windows." When it came time to do guitars, I was ... I really had a tough time trying to fit pieces in ... and to me they are very fragmented and there isn't the kind of cohesion that, say, "Vapor Trails" has on it. It almost seemed to me like the guitar was secondary at times and that really has haunted me over the years, and I really wanted to get away from that. Geddy knew full well by the time that we got to this record that I really wanted to get away from keyboards entirely. And, you know, his feeling is: if keyboards work for something, fine, let's use them, but if they don't work, fine, I don't care. I really don't want to play them. And, you know, we do that stuff together so it became more natural with this one. And we've been moving in that direction for the last few records. And it was just a mindset to know that they weren't included at all on this record. I hope it stays that way.
CNN: So that was a conscious decision ...
LIFESON: Yeah. It was. It always is. And you know, I always go through that at the beginning of a record. For the last few records I have talked to Ged about getting away from the keyboards or using them much less ... and we try to ... or in the past we've tried to use more organic sounds ... in the recent past ... kind of organ sounds or piano sounds, rather than synthesized abstract sounds. But it was a ... this record was all about our hearts and it shows, I think.
CNN: This is something that could break wide open.
LIFESON: Well, we've had terrific success so far with "One Little Victory." We came into Atlantic on Sunday night and they were all going crazy yesterday morning when we went to number one with the first single on, I guess, Heritage Rock Radio, and all the other charts, they have been up and up and up and up. So it's a really overwhelming feeling 'cause you know we're not a big radio band. It feels good.
CNN: Was there any point at which you thought Rush might not make another record and, if not, would you have been OK with that?
LIFESON: Yeah, I think were just so upset by the events that unfolded. For us music is a celebration and all of that left us when those events happened. And it was hard to get interested in music again. And certainly after a while with both Geddy and myself, we needed to move on and that was part of closure of that period. With Neil it was a different story. We really had to wait for him ... before music could come back to him. And, really, he didn't listen to any music for four years really.

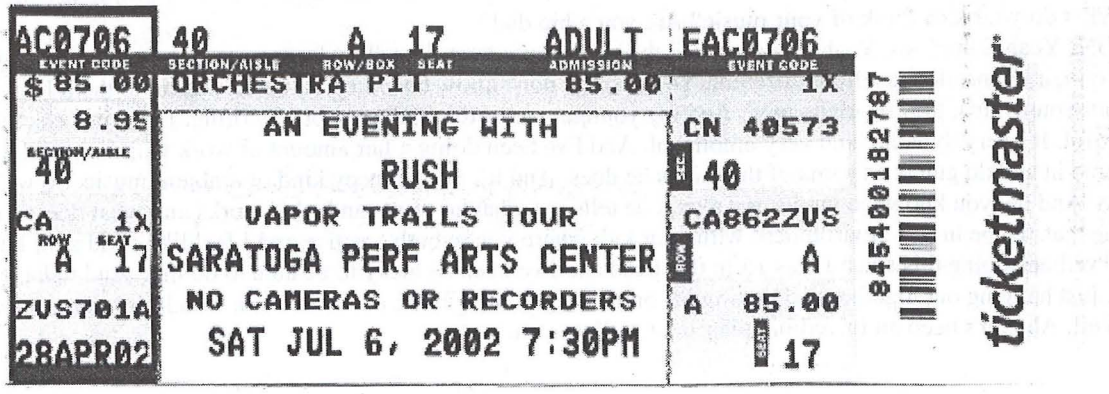
I think that, we felt unlikely that things would get back together ... and, yes, I think we were OK with it. It was definitely a feeling of sadness. I think that there wasn't a sense of closure with the band, that it was a long history that we had, we'd accomplished a lot of things and if that's the way it was going to end, then so be it. We had no power to change it. And I think as we got further away from it and started pursuing some other things, we were more accepting of the possibility that we wouldn't get back together. But when Neil called, I have to say that my heart soared. And the reason really was because it said so much about his recovery ... that he was coming back to the world of the living. I mean, even if he wasn't really ready for it, he was making an attempt and there was that little faint light in him that was glowing again.
CNN: It's interesting you say that because so many of the lyrics hint at that ... that he's still working on it and still coming through it all, but the glimmer is there ...
LIFESON: Yeah. It's the revival of spirit. And it's an ongoing work with him, but you know he's doing really good. He is really doing well.
CNN: I am glad to hear that.
LIFESON: Yeah. Everybody is, you know ...
CNN: Just as a human being, to say nothing of the music ...
LIFESON: Exactly! Exactly. It didn't matter about the band, a record or any of that. And it was great with our fans too because everybody was so hurt and pained by the experience and our fans really feel such a special association with the band and everybody was so ... you know, they handled it so well ... No one was pushy or prodding or anything like that. We were given some space and we really appreciated that.
CNN: That's another thing I wanted to ask you about. Your fans. What is it about your fans that makes them so incredibly loyal?
LIFESON: I guess we've always been outside of the mainstream. We've always been sort of a "cult" band. We haven't gotten much airplay over the years. It's been all about touring and playing live for our fans. And also lyrically, there's more to think about. We try to be thought-provoking, not, I don't think in Neil's lyrics it dictates one way or another of thinking but the important thing is just to think and make your own opinions and that's always been key with us. It's more of a thinking person's kind of music, I suppose, in an area of rock where it can either swing from partying like crazy to totally depressed (laughs) ... and basically nothing in between. So I think as we've grown and our audience has grown and reaching different stages in their lives they've made that connection. It seems that we've provided something for a lot of people at different points in their lives when they needed some support or some kind of influence. And that's what we hear more than anything else. And, a lot of our fans they're doctors, airline pilots and engineers ... You know it's a really wide spectrum of people, but the common thing is that they all hold the band so dear to them. I mean we are so lucky. That has allowed us to do what we do and I don't know if we'd ever be able to do that today if we were a new band signing to a record company. I doubt it very, very much.
CNN: I was going to ask you if there was ever a point where you worried the fans might not be there after such a long time off, especially in today's flighty music climate ...
LIFESON: No I don't think I did worry about it. I mean I was ... I wondered how things would go and once we started the record we couldn't think about anything else ... the work was so intense. We couldn't come up for air for 14 months until it was finished. And then suddenly we were barraged with all this press and promotion to an extent we've never done before. It bowled us over. I mean we've been around a long time and we're used to this sort of thing. A little bit out of touch maybe, but we're used to it. But this is just crazy!
CNN: Are you glad?
LIFESON: I am totally flattered by it. It's a wonderful feeling. I'm a little tired by it that's for sure and I want to get into rehearsals. I think I'll feel a little more secure about things when we get into rehearsals. I mean today's a big day. The record is out finally, so that's one little hurdle that we've gone over and now it's preparing for the tour and then getting out on the road. But it feels wonderful. It just feels really wonderful to have all this interest in the band and it seems very, very heartfelt.
CNN: Can you tell me some of the songs or artists that would be on the soundtrack of your life?
LIFESON: Well for me I suppose Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin for sure. I mean Led Zeppelin had such a big impact, Jimmy Page in particular. I loved his style of guitar playing, I loved what he represented, I loved the looseness in his playing ... it was structured, yet it walked along an edge, that I found so full of life and so exciting. And so many different bits of music throughout my life when I think about it. When I was very young the Beach Boys, the sound of the Beach Boys, the joy in their music was really inspiring when I was 12 or 13 years old when I wanted to learn to play guitar and learn to play music. There have been many over the years.
CNN: What do your kids think of your music? Are you a hip dad?
LIFESON: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, they've liked the music for a long time. They've been on the road when they were very young, so their connection is a little different. You know, I don't know how they view me. I think to them I am just Dad. But they're not young kids, they're adults now. And my younger son, Adrian, does a lot of writing. He writes electronic music. It's beautiful. It's very dynamic and very emotional. And I've been doing a fair amount of work with him lately, he's asked me to come in and do guitar on some of the things he does. And it's very trancey kind of ambient music. So we're having a lot of fun. And he, you know, he guides me along, he tells me what he wants and what works and what doesn't really work and I *love* that. To be in that environment with your kid, where you're both creative and I feel like a kid still. I am 48 years old and I've been doing this since I was 15 in this band and I've been so lucky to be able to do that. And to have my son there with me, just hanging out together and getting off on the music and getting all excited is a wonderful experience.
CNN: Well, Alex, it's been an incredible pleasure to talk to you.


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VAPOR TRAILS TOUR DATES ANNOUNCED TO DATE:

> June 28: Hartford, Conn. (ctnow.com Meadows Music Centre)
> June 29: Scranton, Pa. (Montage Mountain Amphitheatre)
> July 1: Charlotte, N.C. (Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre)
> July 3: Virginia Beach, Va. (Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre)
> July 4: Raleigh, N.C. (Alltel Pavilion @ Walnut Creek)
> July 6: Saratoga Springs, N.Y. (Saratoga Performing Arts Center)
> July 7: Darien Center, N.Y. (Darien Lake Performing Arts Center)
> July 9: Bristow, Va. (Nissan Pavilion)
> July 11: Holmdel, N.J. (PNC Bank Arts Center)
> July 12: Mansfield, Mass. (Tweeter Center)
> July 14: Camden, N.J. (Tweeter Center)
> July 15: Wantagh, N.Y. (Jones Beach)
> July 17: Toronto (Molson Amphitheatre)
> July 19: Milwaukee (Marcus Amphitheatre)
> July 20: Tinley Park, Ill. (Tweeter Center)
> Aug. 1: Bonner Springs, Kan. (Sandstone Amphitheatre)
> Aug. 2: Maryland Heights, Mo. (UMB Bank Pavilion)
> Aug. 4: Cincinnati (Riverbend Music Center)
> Aug. 6: Burgettstown, Pa. (Post-Gazette Pavilion)
> Aug. 8: Columbus, Ohio (Polaris Amphitheatre)
> Aug. 9: Noblesville, Ind. (Verizon Wireless Music Center)
> Aug. 11: Clarkston, Mich. (DTE Energy Music Theatre)
> Aug. 14: Nashville, Tenn. (AmSouth Amphitheatre)
> Aug. 16: The Woodlands, Texas (C.W. Mitchell Pavilion)
> Aug. 17: San Antonio, Texas (Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre)
> Aug. 19: Dallas (Reunion Arena)
> Aug. 21: Albuquerque, NM (Journal Pavilion)
> Aug. 23: Salt Lake City, UT (Delta Center)
> Aug. 24: Englewood, CO (Fiddler's Green Amphitheatre)
> Sep. 14, Seattle, WA (The Gorge)
> Sep. 15, Portland, OR (Rose Garden)
> Sep. 17, Concord, CA (Chronicle Pavilion)
> Sep. 18, Sacramento, CA (Autowest Amphitheater)
> Sep. 20, San Francisco, CA (Shoreline Amphitheatre)
> Sep. 21, Las Vegas, NV (MGM Grand)
> Sep. 23, Los Angeles, CA (Staples Center Arena)
> Sep. 25, San Diego, CA (Coors Amphitheater)
> Sep. 27, Phoenix, AZ (Cricket Pavilion)
> Sep. 28, Irvine, CA (Verizon Wireless Amphitheater)
> Oct. 10, Miami, FL (National Car Rental Center)
> Oct. 11, Tampa, FL (Ice Palace)
> Oct. 13, Atlanta, GA (Phillips Arena)
> Oct. 15, Cleveland, OH (Gund Arena)
> Oct. 16, Rochester, NY (Blue Cross Arena)
> Oct. 18, Toronto, ON (Molson Amphitheater)
> Oct. 19, Quebec City, QC (Colisee Pepsi Arena)
> Oct. 22, Toronto, ON (Air Canada Centre)
> Oct. 24, New York, NY (Madison Square Garden)
> Oct. 25, Hershey, PA (Giant Arena)
> Oct. 27, Philadelphia, PA (First Union Center)
> Oct. 28, Boston, MA (Fleet Center)
> Oct. 30, Chicago, IL (The United Center)
> Nov. 1, Ames, IA (Hilton Coliseum)
> Nov. 2, Minneapolis, MN (Target Center)

Spirit of RUSH

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