

Arts & Features

Unknown Canadian band rushes up front

By JONATHAN PLAZONJA

At long last, the Canadian rock group, Rush, have released a live double album, aptly titled "All the World's a Stage." One of the last power-packing trios, Rush are second to Bachman-Turner Overdrive in Canada's

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rock poll, yet are relatively unknown in this country. This is not surprising, since real talent in the rock field is too often passed up for more commercial music geared to a wider audience.

Live albums of this sort have been a very successful vehicle, often times the make it or break it point, for a handful of struggling bands like Rush. The unprecedented success of Peter Frampton's "Frampton Comes Alive!" is undoubtedly the best example. Yet, massive FM airplay plays an invaluable part in this marketing ploy.

Rush have not had the benefit of any FM airplay (in fact, only a few times have they been heard on the air, as background music for a sparkplug commercial). And aside from stocking their albums in stores throughout the country and an occasional ad in a rock rag, their label, Mercury, has done little to promote them.

They have been virtually ignored by critics and by disc-jockeys alike. As a consequence, they have had to gain their fame through word-of-mouth and live appearances. Unfortunately for Rush, this album will not be a chartbuster, though it will undoubtedly widen their listening audience.

The material on this album is culled from Rush's previous studio efforts, and is presented exactly as the actual show Rush performed during their last tour. Side one rocks from start to finish, opening with "Bastille Day," one of their favorites off the "Caress" album, which is followed by an astounding "Anthem," featuring some handy guitar work by Alex Lifeson. A medley of "Fly by Night" and "In the Mood" follows, and the side closes with an electrifying version of "Something for

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Nothing."

Side two opens with a mellow "Lakeside Park", the rest of the side devoted to "2112," an ambitious undertaking by anyone's standards, yet Rush pull it off as few bands could. Side three consists of the story-like "By-Tor and the Snow Dog," another complex multi-part song that builds to a grand finale, and a moving "In the End," one of the few ballads in the band's repertoire.

Rush turns back the hands of time for the fourth and final side, performing three cuts from their first album: a medley of "Working Man" and "Finding My Way", with Neil Peart's drum solo thrown in at the end, and closing with "What You're Doing."

Unlike other bands which rely on electronic gadgets and other gimmickry to cover up for lack of any real talent, the members of Rush are expert craftsmen at their trade. Rush's Alex Lifeson is probably the single most innovative and imaginative guitarist in the rock field today, wrenching sounds from his Les Paul which other less artful competitors would rather obtain through the use of synthesizers.

Neil Peart, in addition to contributing the bulk of the group's lyrics, is probably the most underrated drummer in rock. He is not content to simply plod away at the standard "oom-

pa-pa Oom-pa-pa" pace as so many of his colleagues do. Instead, he keeps a steady beat, yet varies his patterns, punctuating each song with energetic bursts and runs, proving in an extended solo, that his expertise on the drum easily rates him as among the top ten skin beaters in the business.

Bassist Geddy Lee is gifted with, though Rush critics would prefer to say encumbered with, a rather unique voice, at times sounding eerily like that of Robert Plant, though never imitating him. He is equally suited to sing both tender ballads, such as "Soliloquy" and "In the End," or the most thunderous of high-volume rockers, like the "Working Man/Finding My Way" medley, or their encore number, "What You're Doing."

Their debut album, released two years ago and titled simply "Rush", was the strongest effort that a new group could hope to make. As hard as hard rock can get without degenerating into simple noise, it was marked by good musicianship and the whistle clean production of Terry Brown. The group's ensuing three albums, "Fly by Night," "Caress of Steel," and "2112" were each an improvement over its predecessor, both in musical and lyrical content, as well as packaging and design.

While not new, the material included on "All The World's A

Stage' is performed with an energy and vigor not found in Rush's studio efforts. The ultimate test of a band such as Rush, who produce a relatively complex brand of music, is whether they can reproduce it live. Not surprisingly, the album is superb, a true testament to Rush's live performing ability.

The album package itself is very well done and quite lavish. This is a pleasant surprise, after the terrifying cover of Rush's first album showed the Mercury label's packaging deficiencies. One problem with earlier covers was that they showed the band members in a variety of pretty poses, yet gave potential buyers sitting on a dusty store shelf is a no indication of what sort of music

the album contained. The cover of "All the World's A Stage," showing the stage with the band's massive amplification equipment set up before they come on, leaves no room for doubt - you know you're buying enjoyable hard rock. The overall excellent quality of the recording itself is due to the fact that it was made this June in the acoustically perfect Massey Hall, in Toronto, Rush's home turf.

Making it in the rock business isn't easy. As Rush sing in "Something for Nothing":

"You don't get something for nothing,

"You don't get freedom for free,

You won't get wise with the sleep still in your eyes,

No matter what your dream might be."

The release of this live album might disappoint Rush fans who were hoping for new material. Yet, as the band members comment on the inside cover, "This album to us, signifies the end of the beginning, a milestone to mark the close of chapter one, in the annals of Rush."

If you're into heavy metal, and are tired of paying good money for a piece of vinyl full of recorded noise, give Rush a try. With record prices the way they are these days, purchasing the album might leave a small hole in your pocket, but to leave this gem posing, yet gave potential buyers sitting on a dusty store shelf is a no indication of what sort of music sure sign of a hole in the head.

Barnum exhibit on display in Hartford museum

HARTFORD (UPI) — An exhibit of P.T. Barnum's letters, circus posters, and other memorabilia of the famous 19th century showman is on display at the state Library's Museum of Connecticut History through the middle of December.

Barnum, a Connecticut native, was known best for promoting traveling shows and circus performers such as midget Tom Thumb.

Barnum was a Bethel storekeep-

er and, as a newspaper editor, spent several months in the Danbury jail for libel after printing a controversial story. He also became a state legislator and mayor of Bridgeport in 1875.

The museum is located in the State Library and Supreme Court Building at 231 Capitol Ave. It is open, free of charge, weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.