



New Rush Live Disc A Thank You For Fans

By John Powell, *Jam!Showbiz*, November 9, 1998

When you clean out your basement, you'll never know what you'll find. Old high school year books. Keepsakes from getaways past. Boxes of treasured family photographs.

A couple of years ago, Rush frontman Geddy Lee went rooting around his cellar and discovered a link to his past. The last time Lee laid eyes on the "lost" Rush tapes was following the group's monumental concert at London's Hammersmith Odeon during their 1978 "A Farewell To Kings" tour, a concert that established Rush as an international force in rock music.

Recorded for a radio show that never made it to air, the tapes went into Lee's road case before he took them home. There they sat collecting dust for 20 years. Listening to them again instantly transported Lee back in time courtesy of Terry Brown's outstanding engineering work on the original recording.

Shortly thereafter, Lee and Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson went into the studio and mixed the tapes "just for fun". Both were blown away by the potent performances.

"It sounded really good to me. I wasn't crazy about the little, tiny details but the overall performance and energy was startling," Lee recalled enthusiastically in a recent interview with JAM! in the Anthem Records studio in downtown Toronto. "I was really impressed with the tightness of the band that was playing. The atmosphere of the Odeon immediately put me back in the venue."

Looking relaxed (as is required in the bass player's guide book) in a pair of faded jeans, a dress shirt left untucked, comfortable running shoes and his trademark red-tinged sunglasses, the soft-spoken Lee described the third CD of the new "Different Stages" live collection (out Tuesday) as a special limited-edition "bonus" for Rush fans, the band's way of saying thanks for the loyalty and devotion.

"This is a very well-recorded performance from a period in my mind that was pretty fascinating for our band and from a venue that had a lot of meaning to us at that time. So, I thought it should be used in some fashion," commented Lee. "In the end, we decided that the best way to do it would be to give it away as part of this package. So, that's what it is. A gift."

Recorded mostly during the band's 1997 "Test For Echo" tour, "Different Stages" chronicles the powerhouse trio's boundless growth from the Led Zeppelin--J.R.R. Tolkien-inspired era ("A Farewell To Kings", "2112") to the progressive "thinking-man's" rock found on "Power Windows", "Hold Your Fire" and "Presto". While the band's previous live albums -- "All The World's A Stage", "Exit...Stage Left" and "A Show Of Hands" -- showcased Rush at particular points in their career and focused primarily on their new material at the time, "Different Stages" is a true retrospective compilation.

Fans are treated to the complete "2112" suite performed live, a combustible staging of "Driven" and an exhilarating rendition of "Closer To The Heart", which stands as the best performance of the song ever recorded. It even overshadows the version on "A Show Of Hands", if you can believe that's possible.

Sharing the producer's duties with Paul Northfield, the discriminating Lee weeded through more than a hundred hours of recordings in search of performances he felt would capture Rush at their finest moments. Only the best of the very best made the final cut.

Guitarist Alex Lifeson and drummer-lyricist Neil Peart had "very little" input in the selection process placing complete trust in their long-time friend's sound judgement.

"For all three of us to be involved it would have been unnecessarily complicated. We've done a lot of live albums together and I know what they like. They have faith in me so it was really just a matter of simplicity to have done it that way," said Lee.

Sorting through the tracks Lee was surprised to discover that the majority of the "final cut" came from their show in Chicago ("Bravado", "Show Don't Tell" and "Analog Kid" coming from the 1994 "Counterparts" tour). Though he doesn't recall anything particularly special about that night, the sound the venue generated heightened the listening experience and faithfully documented the band's cohesiveness.

"It was just a great show, and every time I tried to find a show that beat it ... I couldn't. I found performances that may have been better, but when combined with the sound, the excitement and the ambiance of the room, they weren't better. When in doubt I used Chicago."

The release of "Different Stages" comes at one of Rush's highest and lowest times. Honored with the Order of Canada last year, their pride at being recognized for their artistry was dampened by two deaths in the family. In August of last year, Selena, the 19-year-old daughter of Neil Peart and his wife Jacqueline, died in a tragic motor vehicle accident. Then Jacqueline died after a battle with cancer this July.

In answering the very awkward questions that must be asked about the dual tragedies and their effect on the band, Lee spoke sternly but honestly.

"It's a personal devastating tragedy that's been heartbreaking for all of us, and I don't think there is much to add to that," he said stoically.

And what of the band's future plans? Lee wouldn't discuss them, except to say that it would be inappropriate to delve into the subject while his close friend is still in mourning, and that any decisions would be made--as they always have been--by all three members.

So what keeps Rush going after 25 years in a cutthroat industry where, as the sage-like Peart accurately put it, "glittering prizes and endless compromises shatter the illusion of integrity"? Lee credits the tremendous respect that they each have for each other as people and as artists. Also, it doesn't hurt that they have a blast working together.

"After all we've been through together, we are still very close," Lee said. "Our decisions are based on music not ego or financial reasons. Our vision is very united as to what we want to accomplish as artists. Those things make a nice combination."

When asked to comment on the group's contributions to the music scene as a whole, Lee responded as any self-respecting Canadian artist would, humbly declining the chance to toot his own horn and choosing to let Rush's body of work stand on its own merit.

"Oh, you know. That's not for me to say," he responded laughing. "I think that's for somebody else to say. I'll just do the work and someone else can tell me if it's any damn good or not."

"Different Stages" will be in stores Nov. 10th.

Complete "Different Stages" track Listing Disc One (Enhanced) Dreamline Limelight Driven Bravado Animate Show Don't Tell The Trees Nobody's Hero Closer To The Heart 2112

Disc Two Test For Echo Analog Kid Freewill Roll The Bones Stick It Out Resist Leave That Thing Alone The Rhythm Method (drum solo) Natural Science The Spirit Of Radio Tom Sawyer YYZ

Limited Edition Bonus Disc: Live At Hammersmith, 1978 Bastille Day By Tor And The Snow Dog Xanadu A Farewell To Kings Something For Nothing Cygnus X-1 Anthem Working Man Fly By Night In The Mood Cinderella Man

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(<mailto:pwrwindows@yahoo.com>)



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