

NP: Yes, hello, is Marc there please?

Q: This is Marc.

NP: Hi Marc, this is  
Neil Peart calling from--

Q: Hi.

How you doing?

NP: Not too bad how are you?

Q: Good, thanks.

NP: Good.

Q: Well, where are you calling from today?

NP: Hampton, Virginia.

Q: You playing there tonight?

NP: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

How long a tour are you on?

NP: We went out in the middle of February

and we'll be ending the end of this month.

Q: Oh, so that's not bad.

You can see the light at  
the end of the tunnel.

I want to start out by asking,

did you happen to see the quote

from Randy Johnson, the Mariners' pitcher?

NP: No.

Q: Well, you know, he pitched a no-hitter

the other night and he  
said, this is his quote,

he said, "I just bought a drum set.

I played it an hour and  
a half before the game.

I was listening to Rush but I don't think

the drummer for Rush has  
anything to worry about."

NP: That's nice.

Q: Yeah, I thought you'd  
get a kick out of that.

NP: Yeah, that's cool.

Q: Yeah.

What was I going to say?

What happened to the band's first drummer?

NP: Ill health.

Q: Oh, really?

What is he doing now?

Is he still alive?

NP: Yeah, yeah, I just saw him last week.

Q: Is he friendly about it or-

NP: Oh, yeah, yeah, it was  
a mutual situation, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh.

'Cause you would think  
that, geez, here's a guy,

I mean it's not a Pete Best thing

but it's pretty damn close.

He leaves a band and the band goes on

to have a long successful career.

NP: Yeah, because it was mutual  
at the time, he wasn't happy.

He can't regret a decision like that.

Everybody faces decisions  
like that in their lives,

where they look back and say,

"Well, what if I hadn't done that?"

But the thing is, at the  
time, the circumstances

said this is the thing to do so you do it.

Q: What is he doing now, do you know?

NP: Actually, he hasn't  
played for years and years.

He's just starting to toy with the idea,

he's doing a bit of playing.

Q: Is he just in private business

or something like that now, do you know?

NP: Yeah, actually, gym and  
bodybuilding predominately

as far as I know.

Q: Oh, really, okay.

That's kind of unusual.

One other question about early Rush.

When you first heard Geddy's  
voice, what did you think?

NP: I don't remember thinking  
anything at all really.

Q: Really?

It's just it's such an unusual voice.

I think the first time you hear it,

yeah, you don't think anything of it

and maybe you get used  
to it after a while.

NP: It was the time too.

In the mid 70's a lot of  
singers sounded like that.

It didn't sound, I guess, as strange

as come to seem over the passage of time.

At that particular time, and also

ironically the reason his voice ended up

in those registers was

because of the technological  
limits of those days.

And the reason why a lot  
of other bands' singers

became very stentorian  
was because amplification.

When they're playing in  
basements and clubs and stuff

it was so difficult for  
the singer to be heard

because all the guitar  
players had 100 watt Marshalls

and the singer had the little 50 watt PA.

A lot of times those singers of that time

were driven that way  
just getting the voice

to project over all that noise.

Q: All right.

In his quieter moments, do  
you guys play acoustically

and sit around and work  
things out that way?

Does he sing in different registers?

NP: Oh, of course, yeah.

Part of the great thing is  
having a register that wide

and a lot of times in our songs too,

he sings in normal register  
and pushes himself up higher

just for the musical power of  
it and the vocal power of it

and also because he's able to.

Because his range is that broad.

As I'm told, before I knew him,

he used to sing a lot in a...

Do you know who David Clayton-Thomas is?

Q: Sure.

NP: I guess, apparently in the early days

that's what he used to sing like.

Q: That's a pretty wide range.

NP: Yeah.

Q: Wow, that's very interesting.

Let me see, on to...

I guess we'll go on to the  
new album for starters.

NP: We're just leaping 20 years ahead.

Q: Yeah, for right now  
let's just skip around.

I have these questions but  
they're not in any kind of order.

I'm usually better organized but screw it.

NP: No problem.

Q: One of these record company  
deals that they send out,

this Rush profile thing I was listening to

and there's a quote,  
Geddy's on there saying that

touring is probably the most  
difficult thing for him now

'cause it's basically  
two hours of performing

and 22 hours of doing nothing  
or just going stir crazy.

How do you handle that after so long?

Also, why do you want to handle it?

NP: Yeah, that is a good question there.

Both of them.

It was a very difficult  
decision to make this time,

whether to tour or not,  
and particularly for me

because of that factor.

There are lot of things  
I'm interested in life

and a lot of goals that I want to pursue

and not many of them can be done

while you're moving around every day.

So I was very reluctant  
to think about touring,

committing six months of my life

to basically doing one thing.

It's what you have to  
recognize about touring

is that you're not really  
creating, you're re-creating.

It's like the old joke about the person

that says they have 20 years experience

when they have one year  
of experience 20 times.

Touring is like that.

You have one night's  
experience, 200 times over.

It is definitely  
re-creating the same thing

and the accomplishment factor  
at the end of it is dubious.

In the early days it was more measurable

and at the end of a tour  
I would feel accomplished

that I learned a lot and I developed a lot



during that time just  
by playing every night.

And by the band playing together

it was good for us as a band

but at a certain time you tend

to peak out in your potentiality.

I felt that learning  
curve getting shallower

and the increments of improvement

becoming less measurable.

Consequently, the  
satisfaction rate was less.

I always feel too, for a band,

playing live is the essence of it.

It is what makes a band  
a living breathing thing

is getting out in front of an audience

and playing live with all the risks

and the spontaneity and  
the immediacy of that.

And the fact that it is  
once night is a microcosm.

Each performance, in  
spite of the fact that

it's part of a chain of

them, each one is unique

and each night when you go  
up the stairs to the stage

it is a feeling that, okay,  
tonight I'm gonna do it right.

The perfectionist aspect  
of it is at every show.

In fact, Geddy and I  
were discussing once that

the pressure of a show  
releases at the first mistake.

The first time you make  
a little inaccuracy

or something that you don't like goes by,

in a sense, you're free.

Because for the first few  
songs everything goes well

and you're playing really  
well and you're thinking,

"Okay, this is it, this is it,

this is gonna be the perfect night."

And the first time the  
little flaw comes out

that's when you're free.

Not that's upset it,  
then now all I have to do

is play as well as I can.

I'm not aiming to achieve  
that perfection anymore.

There are a lot of funny  
little aspects of playing live

that become a very real part

of your life night after night obviously.

But the main factor was that I wanted Rush

to be a living, breathing thing

so I thought, "I really don't want to tour

but I want Rush to be a touring band."

in that kind of a context  
it was the only thing to do.

The only thing worse than not touring was,

Or the only thing worse than touring

was not touring in my mind.

That was the genesis of my  
personal decision to do it.

And as far as how you deal with that is,

I kind of set myself goals  
to achieve during the tour.

I figure the tour's there

and the shows will take care of themselves

as long as I keep the right attitude

when I walk up those stairs every night.

So they can be used.

For instance, this tour I set out to

learn something about American art.

And I figured that could be my mission.

So in every city if I  
have an afternoon free

or a day off or something

I'll go to a local art museum and

browse through the paintings

and try to learn something about it.

Because I didn't know  
anything about it before.

So it was a gap in my knowledge  
that I wanted to fill.

And it's been very satisfying.

Q: Wow, that's--

NP: I've been to 20 odd museums in

different cities on this tour.

And have acquired quite a  
lot of knowledge about it.

So that's satisfying.

In other tours I would decide that

I wanted to see more of  
the real United States.

So I carried a bicycle with me  
and I'd go out, again, on days off  
or an afternoon before the show,  
and ride around the  
city or the country side  
and see some of America  
that I'd been missing  
for the last 15 years of traveling.

I kept thinking, "Well,  
look, I've traveled around  
"the United States for all these years."

All musicians like to think they  
know about the places they've been to.

But, of course, touring  
is not like traveling  
anymore than being a tourist  
is like being a traveler.

I set up to change that too.

And that's really served me well.

That I always have an escape.

As I talk to my bicycle sitting here.

Any time I want, I can  
get on it and go out

and be independent.

And also in the secondary benefit of it

is I have been exposed  
to the real America.

And the real people in America, too.

Not just fans.

And not just promoters.

And not just airport people.

Just get out and ride around and look.

And think about what I'm seeing

and why it is the way  
it is, and all of that.

So, it's very refreshing and  
it's also very stimulating

to have that kind of an experience.

So I tried this time to  
incorporate touring with that.

And I always have an agenda of reading

where I bring out a  
carefully chosen selection of

books that I really want to read.

And Sunday's great because  
of the Sunday New York Times

and I have the crossword puzzle.

All these little things add up  
to other levels of enjoyment

and accomplishment that  
a tour can provide.

Q: So you're like a real  
human being on the road.

Or as close as you can be.

NP: Well that's the aim of it  
too, and that's an incisive

kind of comment too  
when you think about it,

it is a dehumanizing atmosphere.

You're traveling around in a very isolated

and very unreal situation  
where people are constantly

reacting to you in a very unreal

and essentially inhuman way.

They're looking at you as an  
object, rather than a person.

And that gets very alienating.

And of course the history of rock us full

of those kinds of stories of alienation

and the prices that people  
have paid for that alienation.

And people as intelligent as Roger Waters

have been able to articulate  
it for everybody else, too.

But to the people at

large, it is glamorized

and mythologized and seems to  
be some kind of dream world

as if you were traveling  
around in a fantasy castle

and the reality obviously  
is far different than that.

Q: Is that where the line  
"living on the lighted stage

approaches the unreal" comes from?

NP: Yeah absolutely.

Q: Well it makes perfect sense really.

NP: If you let it.

That's the choice we  
made early on is that no,

we weren't going to do that.

And part of the good thing for us

is that we did come up slowly in a sense.

Our success came to us  
by slow degrees really.

So we were able to watch other bands

and how they responded to  
it, and how they acted,

and if they chose to play that role

and the price they paid for it.



And we realized that a lot of  
the bands that we opened for,

some people could play that role

successfully because  
they were strong enough

and because they were cynical enough.

But when we looked at other  
people who were more sensitive

or more unstable, they got lost in it.

They played the role and became the roll.

A part of the thing that "Superconductors"

about on the new album too, is that

the role becomes the actor.

And we saw that happen  
to so many musicians.

They went out and played  
this larger than life goal,

and soon they perceive themselves that way

and if they were unstable then that leads

to the substance abuse and the tremendous

unhappiness that even  
success can bring people to.

Q: Yeah, you know you're  
putting it in a way

that I've always thought about it,

but I've never heard anybody  
articulate it that way.

So it's kind of nice.

Because that's so true.

People do, they look at themselves

and if they've been on  
the road for a while

and they're getting good audiences

and they're selling lots of records,

they become so incredibly important.

Or at least in their own mind.

NP: At least in their own mind.

Q: Yeah.

NP: I mean there are really two ways

you can look at that kind  
of adulation I think.

You can either be  
embarrassed about it, as I am

or you can embrace it, and  
say, "These people love me?

I love me too!"

Well then you walk back  
out the backstage door

and you jut want to stand  
there with open arms

and basque in this undulation because

you think you deserve it.

Or if again, like me, you  
don't think you deserve it,

then you're just embarrassed and

you want to run away and hide, you know?

But I think although they  
both have their prices,

I think the latter aspect is  
far healthier in the long run.

Q: When you're out and you're  
in art museums, et cetera

have people run into you  
and know who you are?

Or is that--

NP: I mean, no, and again that's

very much a question of body language.

I had a funny experience in Washington

when I was going through  
the national gallerias

and I kept being in the  
same room with this guy

who was wearing a Rush t-shirt

from the concert the night before,

who had just seen us, but it's  
the way you carry yourself,

again, you don't make eye  
contact, and you look down

and you look away, and  
you look at the paintings,

and the guy never noticed me.

Q: Yeah, that's pretty funny.

NP: It's the same walking down the street.

If you make yourself noticeable,  
then you will be noticed.

But if you try to be anonymous actively,

then a lot of times you can achieve it.

And you pick up little  
tricks along the way.

Pat Travers once taught  
me something years ago

when he wanted me to come  
out to his bus after a show

and hear something he was  
working on, and I said,

"Well, look, there are

how are we gonna get to your bus?"

And he said no no.

Just put your head down and move fast.

And he was right.

We went right through that

crowd and nobody noticed us.

so it is tricks you learn along the way.

Again, if you wanna be that way.

If you wanna protect your anonymity

then you soon learn how to.

Just how not to be noticed  
and how to be anonymous.

So you might walk up to that  
guy in the national gallery

and say, "Hey, nice t-shirt,  
I saw them last night.

Weren't they great?"

Hey man, did you like the show?

Q: That's good.

It'd be funny to do that you know,

'case if the guy  
recognized you, he'd flip.

And if he didn't, you'd  
get a pretty good sense

of what you're average fan was thinking.

Yeah, but unfortunately  
when you've been jumped on

constantly for years and  
years and alarm goes off

when you see a thing like  
that, and all you wanna do

is avoid it as much as possible.

Obviously you can't escape it all the time

I mean when you're in a city playing,

people expect to see you there.

And when you go up to  
the gig to go to work,

or when you come out leaving work,

you're kind of in a context in which

anonymity is hard to come by.

When you deal with that all the time,

when you're away from it, for me anyway,

I try really hard to  
preserve the distance.

Q: Yeah, I always think  
that the guy who has

the best life is the guy who owns Walmart.

Because he's a billionaire,  
and no one knows who he is.

NP: Yeah!

I always thought the same thing.

Having wealth, and freedom,  
and independence and all that

without fame is far preferable,

but then there are

people unlike you and me

who don't feel that way.

Who want the fame, and would  
rather be famous and poor

then rich and unknown.

And that's an aspect of human nature

that you have to deal with, and again,

I see that in a lot of musicians too.

Some of them, the affirmation  
of people loving them

is much more important than  
any of the other parts of it.

That's what they basque  
in, that's what they

in some cases got into it for.

A lot of musicians will tell you,

"well I got in a band to get chicks."

But now as I found, it  
expands into a bigger syndrome

and their personalities,  
and that desire for approval

and admiration and all that becomes

their whole reason for being.

And again, it becomes a very  
unhealthy conflict I think

in a person, just to base your whole life

on what other people  
think of you for a start.

Q: On a couple of the songs, well first,

back to the Profile disc,  
you mentioned on there

about Chain Lightning,  
and you explain that song

and I was wondering, how  
old is your daughter?

NP: 12.

Q: 12, okay.

Is War Paint written for her?

NP: No.

Q: No?

Okay.

NP: No, in fact that's written  
for, in a sense all ages.

But I was thinking more of people

who are supposed to be grown up,

but are still acting that way.

I set it in the imagery of adolescence,

but I was definitely thinking of,

and my theme arose from thinking of people

of my own age who still act that way.



Vanity is the great liar, you know?

And I see that so much, where  
people that I've grown up with

and if they haven't done well in life,

it's all somebody else's fault.

And that kind of thing,  
that they're just waiting

to be discovered, and people  
that have done well are lucky

and they're just unlucky  
because they just haven't.

All of that, it really  
just comes down to vanity

at the root of it, and  
that's all the stuff

I was thinking about,  
and then I just chose

to use adolescent imagery to express it.

Q: See my reading of it  
was maybe your daughter was

at an age where she was ready to go out,

and it was kind of like  
a fearful father song.

NP: No, actually, not at all.

Q: Okay.

But I guess people get out

of I what they, you know.

They see what they wanna see, right?

NP: Yeah, I have no  
problem with that at all,

but there are a lot of songs  
on this album particularly

where I think I've tried  
to learn in lyrics,

to project myself into a situation

and express it as if it  
were autobiographical.

But in fact, most of the time, it's not.

A lot of the little vignettes,

songs like Presto or Hand Over Fist,

they express little, what  
seem to be dramatic situations

and they seem to be true,  
but in fact they're not.

I made them up to express  
a point, you know.

I made them up to  
illustrate something I guess

in a literary sense.

But no, I'm lucky my  
daughter's not superficial,

so I don't have those fears.

Q: Yeah, or the way I  
just looked at it was

here's a girl who's growing up,

wants to grow up a little  
faster than she should.

NP: Right, well I understand that,

it's certainly not a bad reading at all.

But no, in the context--

Q: The wrong reading, but not bad.

NP: No not even wrong.

I think the essence in it is you try

to allow for all of those.

And one of the reasons  
I chose that imagery

was certainly to allow that interpretation

and part of the idea of  
reconciling the universal ideas

with the personal ideas is  
to try to be a little bit

either ambiguous or ambivalent

I guess is more the right word.

Just trying to allow for  
both of those interpretations

and as long as there isn't  
an opposite one available,

you know which happens in some songs.

There was a song of ours  
called Middle Town Dreams

on Power Windows, and it was  
about the power of dreams,

and how about people at  
any stage in their lives

can go out and do something.

You know, can go out and  
make their lives true.

And make their dreams come true.

And to the cynical people though

in the world, they read  
it as a cynical song,

the fact that these were  
all washed up people

who were tragedies of life,  
and in fact in each case

of the characters I drew in that song,

I did draw from life.

And I talked about, or I thought about

a writer like Sherwood Anderson,

who, when he was 40 years old,

decided to stop being  
an insurance salesman

and become a writer.

Or Paul Gauguin, who decided to stop being

a stock broker and become  
a painter, you know?

I was thinking of real  
people like that in the song,

And expressing the fact  
that at a certain point

in their lives, they just said enough.

I'm going to go back to the dreams

that I left behind and make them true.

But a lot of people read  
the exact opposite thing

into the song and thought  
I was being very cynical

about how these  
insignificant little people

were failures and tragedies.

When I meant exactly the opposite.

Here are people that would  
be perceived as being small

who went out and made  
big dreams come true.

Q: One of my favorite lines on the album,

and I really think that  
this is the best Rush album

that I've heard, and it's

amazing to me that you guys

can keep making good albums  
and just because I would think

that creatively you start  
to just get tired of it.

And I would think you'd get  
board with the whole process.

But, anyway.

NP: No I think it's more  
dangerous for a single artist than

it is for the three of us, you know.

Q: Anyway, the line I like  
is from the title song,

where you say, "I radiate  
more heat than light."

NP: Right

Q: And I wondered, what  
do you think about Rush?

Does Rush radiate more heat or more light?

NP: Hopefully a balance of the two.

Actually the germ of the line

is actually kind of interesting.

During the American presidential debates

I got very interested in it all.

I love debates anyway, but the  
way that they were all set up

and the whole stage managed show business

of it and all that.

So I was faithfully  
watching the presidential

and the vice presidential debate,

and coincidentally in  
Canada there was an election

going on at the same time,  
with the same kind of debates

among the leaders of  
the parties and so on.

But at the end of one of the  
American presidential debates,

that line was used, I think  
by Dan Rather or somebody,

saying that during the  
course of the debate

created much more heat than it did light.

And I thought that was a beautiful image,

so I wrote that down and kept it.

Q: That's good.

Do lyrics come to you like  
that from other sources?

NP: Oh definitely so.

That's why I keep a notebook in hand

and from the newspapers or from television

or something somebody says, or a passage

in a book that I'm reading  
or just a combination

of two words that occurs to  
me when I'm riding my bike,

all those kinds of things, I often

come back from a bike ride with my map

covered with little notes.

Q: So you're always working,

even if you're enjoying yourself.

NP: Yeah, that's right.

I read a great quote once,  
a writer, saying that

the hardest thing for a  
writer's wife to learn

is that when he's looking  
out the window, he's working.

Q: That is great, that's a good line.

I'll have to remember that, my wife says

what am I doing, you know.

Let me see, um.

Since you were talking about politics,

I was just in Canada  
a month ago, and found



the Meech Lake Accord quite interesting,

And really the entanglement of it all.

What do you think is gonna happen,

and what do ya hope happens?

NP: Oh, it's just so confusing.

It's as if the United states  
had had no constitution

and no bill of rights  
for 200 years you know?

And suddenly today, President  
Bush and all his buddies

decided to sit down and  
ratify a constitution

and a bill of rights.

You can imagine what kind  
of chaos that would lead to.

Q: Oh yeah.

NP: And to have it in place,  
and that's what Canada faces.

Basically we had no  
constitution except that which

tied us to Britain, and it  
was so called repatriated

eight or nine years ago.

But still, nothing was done with it.

It wasn't drawn out,  
and it wasn't agreed to

and all of the premises  
of life for instance

weren't put down the way they  
are in the American model.

So that's basically what  
they're trying to do right now.

And trying to do it in  
this point in history

with so many factions and so  
many waring points of view

and especially in Canada,  
with the Quebec situation too,

oh, its jut a big mess.

Q: I wonder, do you think Quebec  
can leave, and will leave?

NP: Not in practical terms, no.

I spent a lot of my time in  
Quebec, so I'm very sympathetic

to the Quebec cause, but in real terms,

one of the pundits said that  
if Quebec wants to leave, fine.

Just tell them to pay off their portion

of the national debt and they can go.

And that right away makes  
it an impractical situation.

Q: Yeah, we were in Prince  
Edward Island, and the,

I don't know who it was, Buchanan,

what is his job there, title there?

NP: Premier?

Q: Premier, yeah.

And he had made I guess an offhand comment

that there wouldn't be anything left

for that part of Canada to do but to join

the United States, which of course

everybody just went berserk about,

they didn't want anything to do with us.

By the same token, I  
asked people about that,

and they said well, you know we like

our national health insurance  
and some other things

and they said by the same  
token, the United States

wouldn't want us because we're the poorest

area of the country.

NP: I'm not a nationalist by any means,

in fact I would quite  
happily sign a petition

to join Canada to the United States

because I'm equally at home here

in the States as I am in Canada

and I don't perceive a  
lot of differences really

although that would have me lynched

if I was saying this in  
Canada, but you know,

I think all of that is  
just kind of stupid.

And so much of our election  
hinged on the free trade

issue too, which has completely died down

into business as usual.

Q: Well I think that biggest  
difference that I perceive

is just the general  
awareness that Canadians

are just more aware of the United States,

then the United States is of Canada.

NP: Yeah, but that's strictly  
a question of degree too.

There are 200 million in the States,

and 20 million in Canada,  
It's a big neighbor to us,

where a big neighbor in

humanistic terms to us,

where the reverse doesn't really apply.

So I don't have a problem with that.

And the same thing in Canada.

We learn a lot about British history too.

What's the point of it?

The only reason is that  
historical, you know,

tying of the apron strings, really.

Although we don't learn  
about African history,

we don't learn about Chinese history,

so it isn't really objective either.

The fact that Canadians know  
a lot about the United States

well so they should.

So anyone in the world should know

a lot about the United States  
as far as I'm concerned.

Q: Well, I think there's  
some truth to that.

Now we just tend to have  
very little idea here

about what goes on in  
other countries, you know.

Unless it's the country of the moment.

NP: Yeah, well so does everybody else.

I was doing some writing  
about Africa recently

and I came across a  
tragedy that took place

in the country of  
Cameroon where a bubble of

volcanic gas came out  
of a lake in Cameroon

and killed 1,700 people in their sleep.

Or whether there's an earthquake in China

and it kills tens of thousands of people

it might get a few column  
inches on an inside paper,

but if there's an earthquake  
in San Francisco, you know,

with 40 people killed, you don't hear

about anything else for weeks!

And Canadians are exactly the same.

If there's a murder in Barrie, Ontario,

our newspapers are full of it for months.

But you know, again, if  
tens of thousands of people

are killed by a horrible tragedy in China,

nobody really cares.

It's a tribal thing really,  
and the farther away

from your tribe something happens,

the less important it seems to be.

That's just human nature more  
than a national attribute,

Q: Okay, I had two other  
things I wanted to ask you.

One is, what do you think it is

that's kept the band together for so long?

NP: As trite as it might  
seem, I'd say friendship.

Just the fact that we've  
retained not only respect,

but also affection for  
each other over the years.

And there are many factors  
that contribute to that too

in terms of the kinds of people we are

and the way we relate to each other

the different kinds of personalities

that we can each complement,  
all that's a part of it.

But essentially it does come  
down to just being friends

and respecting each other.

And satisfaction, I suppose  
if we weren't satisfied

with the work that we did together

that would end it all  
regardless of friendship.

But I think as I outlined  
in the Scissor Paper Stones

story, but at the bottom line of it

we have fun together.

We have fun working together,

and we have fun playing together.

In essence, what else would you want?

That's why there haven't been solo albums

and that's why there  
hasn't been a band breakup,

and that's why there haven't  
been crises and scandals

in the papers, it's because  
those immutable things

are those matters of longevity

as far as job satisfaction and good

interpersonal relationships  
to put it in corporate terms.

Some kinds of things  
have survived, you know?



Q: But you know in bands that  
have existed for as long as Rush,  
and how many have existed  
for a shorter time  
you know the members just hate each other.

NP: Oh yeah.

Much more than people  
perceive, and you probably have  
more insight into that  
than most people do.

How people go to a concert,  
and they see the band playing

on stage together, and  
then at the end of the show

they see them all bow and  
hold hands and all that stuff

and then at the end they go to  
their separate dressing rooms

and get into their  
separate cars and sometimes

even stay at separate hotels.

I saw the live video the  
Police did just near the end

and I realized that  
during the whole course

of like an hour and a half, they never

looked at each other once.

There was no interaction  
between the guys in the band.

But not only that, there was no

acknowledgment of each other,  
it was three guys on a stage

play, not together, but playing  
individually under one name.

So yeah, that I think is the reality far

far more than people have any idea.

Q: So you must have felt very good

when you saw something like that,

because you're a three person band--

NP: Yeah, being in the middle of a tour

and knowing the kind of interaction

the three of us go  
through on stage and off,

where that just could never be

for Geddy and Alex not to be  
punching each other around

at the front of the stage  
or chasing each other around

and all the silly things that we do

to entertain ourselves on stage,

its hard for me to imagine

working without all of that.

To me it's such a part of  
what we are and have been

that being in the middle of a tour

and seeing sort of an  
object lesson like that

of the opposite, it makes  
you feel very fortunate,

and I just feel really glad that this band

happened to have worked  
out interpersonally

the way that it has.

Q: That is really nice.

You had mentioned earlier  
that you had some interest

in some things that you might not

have pursued otherwise had you not toured.

What kinds of things are  
you doing with yourself?

NP: Prose writing interests me enormously.

Just learning about it and  
trying to develop a skill

of putting what you think into words

versus kind of a very  
different discipline.

So working on lyrics is a

very different mentality

than thinking in terms of  
sentences and paragraphs

and the structure of  
chapters and all of that,

so prose is something that  
I've studied by reading.

Obviously all of the  
greats that have done it,

but also by trying to do it myself.

You never know how hard something  
is until you try it really

so that's something that has absorbed me,

more as a hobby, really.

I don't try to see myself  
as some of the great

Canadian novelists by any  
means, but it's something

I really wanna know how to do.

It's a skill that I want to develop.

So I spend a lot of my  
time outside of the band

working on that in one area or another.

Q: So do you have a work in progress now?

NP: Always, yeah, but I  
hate to dignify it that much

because I don't have aims to publication

or anything like that.

It's just to me an apprenticeship  
in a way that I keep

turning out pieces of work  
just to teach myself things

and then I put them aside  
and six months later

I look at them and see that  
I've progressed from them,

so it's lik taking on anything new.

The learning curve is steep.

Where with music after  
having played drums for

twenty-odd years now, the  
learning curve is very shallow.

You know, I've learned a  
lot, and practiced a lot,

and really put a lot of time  
and effort into learning

the craft of it, so learning new things

is partly not that appealing,  
and also partly futile.

To spend six hours a day  
everyday learning how to do

a faster paradiddle seems pretty  
much irrelevant to me now.

Where I can spend six hours a day,

day after day, learning how  
to put sentences together

and it is very satisfying.

Because it's new, and because

the improvements so measurable.

I can understand what I'm  
learning and read a lot

of other peoples' ideas of how to do it,

and try to apply them and all of that.

So I don't like to dignify it too much

consider that I'm a writer by any means,

but I'm trying to learn how to.

Q: A couple other things.

Since CDs have become dominant,

has that changed at all  
the way you have worked

the way you have recorded,  
the way you've done your

album cover art, anything?

NP: Yeah, it's actually been a pretty

wide ranging change of things.

But suddenly the record  
which we always considered

sort of the standard

medium for all years past,

is no longer anymore.

In fact it's definitely  
and endangered species.

So certainly in the terms of cover artwork

you're trying to deal  
with something that can be

perceived and dealt with  
in a 3x5 piece of cardboard

in a cassette box, or in the 5x5 CD box,

or 6x6 or whatever it is.

That's part of it, but  
also in terms of the music.

The division between side  
one and side two for instance

was always a really important part

of the writing order to us, you decide

sort of the progress of side one,

and what song should end side one,

and then a lot of times the  
song that began side two

would be an important consideration  
and there would be a flow

in terms of the dynamics of it,

almost comparable to a live performance

that two sides really  
made much more interesting

and much more workable, where  
when you're dealing with

a CD, where it's essentially all one side

you have to rethink that too.

But the other perimeters  
of time are very positive.

Having more time to work with,

it hit us on both of the last two records

in terms of the live album,  
we knew that we wanted it

to be a single CD, because we  
weren't about to ask people

to pay a ridiculous amount  
of money to buy two CD's

just to get a couple of extra songs.

So it limited our choice of material

in wanting it to be I forget, 72 minutes

or something like that, it had to be

to fit on one CD.

But in terms of the Presto  
album, it set us free.

Because we weren't  
worried about 40 minutes

being the ultimate length of a record



or the ideal length of a  
record, 20 minutes a side.

Suddenly with a CD or a cassette

the limitations were much greater,

so we could have more songs

and thus spread out more stylistically.

'cause when you're judging  
individual approaches

a lot of times as more songs get written,

you're thinking about  
what's been written already

and stylistically what you  
would still like to cover.

So having more time to work with

allows you to get I think  
more into the corners

stylistically and to bring out things that

are maybe a little more excentric than

you might have bothered to  
put into a 40 minute piece.

So I think yes, the difference  
has been pretty evolutionary.

Q: In the show that  
you're bringing to town

in a couple of weeks, is there  
anything special going on?

Anything new?

Anything different that people  
will be interested in seeing?

I mean longtime Rush fans, you know.

'cause you guys seem to have  
a very solid base of fans

who just, they're devoted  
to the band, etcetera,

and I just wondered what's new for them?

NP: Yeah it's always really hard to answer

because you don't like to  
sort of pump out the hype

in once sense, and in another sense

you hate to spoil the surprise.

But in broad parameters at  
least, we did rethink it

from the ground up, in terms  
of choosing the materials

we would play, both new songs  
and particularly old songs.

You know, which old songs  
we would continue to play

and which old ones we  
haven't played for a while

that we would bring back.

So I think the substance of the show

is very much different than it  
has been in preceding tours.

As far as the presentation  
goes, again, we try to

rethink from the ground  
up, and not do anything

just because that's the  
way we did it last time.

SO the whole visual  
presentation of, for instance,

rear screen videos have always  
been a big part of our show,

but a lot of those, they can  
tend to become cumulative

in the sense of playing  
the same songs every tour

you tend to show the same  
films to accompany them.

So again, we threw out that presumption,

and dropped a lot of the films  
that we've used in the past

and created some new ones,  
both for new and old songs.

And sometimes kept the  
songs but dropped the film,

you know, just to keep  
something fresh about it,

and also to avoid staleness

I guess in the opposite side.

So there was a big rethink  
right from the ground up

and I think the show is very different,

but at the same time,  
we're still drawing from

the same well of material and a definite

healthy balance in the  
course of a two hour show

between old and new stuff.

And there'll be some  
surprises and songs maybe that

people haven't hear for a  
while if they've seen us live

from tour to tour that will be  
a pleasant surprise to hear.

Q: Do you play The Pass?  
NP: Yes.

Q: Good.

'cause that's my favorite one.

NP: Oh good!

Q: I really like that.

I get drumming on it, there are  
just some little intricacies

that I really find attractive,

but I think the whole song is just great.

NP: Oh that's interesting.

It's always nice to know  
which songs people respond to

the strongest, but it's  
funny that in addressing

the drum part particularly,  
Is that it's essentially

so simple, and through  
Modern Drummer Magazine

I got a letter complaining in fact,

that thought the drumming  
on the song was too simple.

And it just was so stupid  
because I spent more time

on individual parts for  
this album than ever

ever in the past, just  
constantly refining down

each little element of  
what I was doing and why,

and some of the passages took more time

individually to come up  
with than any of the more

overtly complicated stuff  
we've done in the past.

But part of the essence of that,

or part of the essence of any  
kind of proficiency I guess

is making the difficult look simple.

So if you spend all of the time,

like The Pass, the drum  
part took me days of work

to refine down to be exactly  
what I wanted it to be.

But in essence from a  
technical point of view,

it's relatively simple to play.

So consequently from  
a superficial judgment

of a young teenage drummer,  
who just wants to see Flash,

it seems simple, but it's the old thing of

if it's easy to play that must  
mean it was easy to think of.

Which of course is not the case.

And I remember when I was starting out

young guitar players would learn Jeff Beck

guitar solo and then think,

"hey, I'm as good as Jeff Beck."

Q: Yeah, try writing it, you know?

Try creating it.

NP: The contradictions  
in that are obvious,

but they're not obvious to a beginner.

You know, you think if you can play it,

you could have written it.

And I think that's probably  
true of all the arts.

It's all a constant criticism.

Painting, you know, "oh,  
my kind could paint that."

Q: When I was especially in high school

and I think we took  
this extremely seriously

that we'd have long-running arguments

whether Jimmy Page was a better

guitar player than Steve Howe and such.

The one thing that we ever agreed on

was that it came down to writing,  
and who wrote better songs

and that's just--

NP: And I was glad to realize  
from the beginning too

was really an important insight  
that I had in my young years

is the difference between  
taste and quality.

That I could recognize

for instance Eric Clapton

I was always thought  
was a good guitar player

but never really liked his guitar playing.

Whereas I know there's a lot  
of music that isn't that great

technically and a lot of reggae  
and a lot of R&B and stuff

but I still really like it, and just

learning that difference to say, well,

this isn't that great, but I don't really

like it, or this is great,  
but I don't really like it

it's a really important  
distinction to make,

but a lot of people never do make it,

they think if they like  
something, its great.

And if they don't like it, it's shit.

It's a very simple equation, but of course

in any kind of art, it  
doesn't really apply.

Q: I wanted to leave you  
with this observation,

and that is, people, but I  
think Rush is a good example



you know, where there are people who,

I mean I tell people I like Rush,

and they kinda cringe, sorry.

And I'm sure you know how  
it's just a fact of life.

NP: Oh yeah, sure.

Q: People ask me why and  
I think after this album

I've got a really good idea of why.

And the reason is, because I'm 31 now,

and I think Rush is  
playing the kind of music

that even though it's  
the 90's, there's still

a lot of throw back to the 70's.

And that's when I grew  
up, and you're playing

the kind of music that I like.

But I'm older now, and I'm smarter now,

and I can enjoy it and  
I don't have the hassles

of teenage life to contend with.

So that's--

NP: That's a very good  
observation actually,

it's one that people  
often miss, is that we are

still writing for our  
peers, and a lot of people

of your age and my age, I'm  
only a few years older than you,

a lot of our peers have grown out of music

and not loner really  
have any interest in it.

So they don't really  
come into the equation.

But guys like you and I who  
grew up through the 70's

and loved all those bands and that

our lives have gotten bigger,  
they've gotten broader

and our interests have gotten more subtle

and the parallels that we draw to life are

more interesting now and that's  
all the stuff that I think

has changed our music too,  
and we've grown up with it

and when I look out into  
the audience like last night

and see a few bald heads  
and a few mustaches,

and a few couples who have  
obviously had to get a babysitter

to come to the Rush show, I think yes,

those are the kinds of people  
that are most gratifying.

I mean it's nice to have people there

that weren't even there when  
we started playing together.

That is very gratifying in another way.

But in a sense it's deeper somehow,

to have grown up with somebody.

When I get letters too from  
people that got into our music

in college, and now that  
they're out in the world,

they're set designers or  
writers, or scientists,

or whatever, but Rush is  
still a part of their lives.

And I think of all the tributes,

I think that's probably the highest one.

That you stayed part of  
someones life through all

of the changes from teenage to adulthood

through all the changes  
that that engenders.

Q: Yeah and that you've  
been able to change also.

I mean, obviously you're  
not playing the same songs.

I mean there's variety in your music.

It's still there, I mean  
there's still a hold.

You know, I can hear a little  
Emerson Lake and Palmer

or a little Yes, or something  
like that, and I think

oh that's good, cause you know those guys,

they're either not doing it anymore,

well in the case of  
Emerson Lake and Palmer

or in the case of Yes,  
they're not doing it

nearly as well, so.

NP: I understand what you mean.

Q: Anyway, well, when you're  
here, are you gonna have

the afternoon free to go to a museum?

Or do you not know?

'cause our art writer's  
sitting right next to me here

and I was gonna ask him if  
there's someplace special

that you should go to see.

NP: Right, well I have  
an excellent little guide

called Art in America Museum Guide,

and it gives all the art  
museums in the United States,

and what traveling exhibitions they have

and what their hours are  
and what their address is

so it's been kinda my bible this tour.

Q: Oh, okay.

NP: Whenever I have a day  
in the city, wherever it is

I just look up what they have

and then choose what to go and see.

Q: Nice.

NP: So I know Indianapolis is in there.

Q: Okay, then you don't  
need our recommendation.

okay.

Well I really enjoyed talking to you,

and I'm looking forward  
to seeing the show.

NP: Okay, thanks, Marc.

Q: Okay thank you, bye.

NP: Good to talk to you, bye.